

The Beast of Graenseskov

An Introductory Ravenloft® Adventure for 1st-4th Level

by Aaron “Quickleaf” Infante-Levy



East of the village of Barovia lies the Graenseskov, a mist-shrouded borderland stalked by fearsome wolves. The wolves are kept at bay from the village by an old troth (agreement) and by the grizzled warriors of Volchykrov Manor. But in recent years the wolves have grown unnaturally aggressive, driven by a Beast of malign cunning that terrorizes the Barovians. Whether adventurers are freshly embraced by Ravenloft's Mists or native sons and daughters of the dread domain, uncovering the Beast's identity and ending its curse will take all the cunning they can muster.



Requires the DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE® and MONSTER MANUAL®

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The Beast of Graenseskov

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Lands of Barovia

Graenseskov

Svalich Woods

to village of Barovia

Gorgon's Grin

Old Svalich Road

Deadman's Creek

Gingerbread House

Geist Caverns

Borderwood

Ivlis River

Thousandfurs Bridge

Howling Hills

Svalich Woods

Werewolf's Hovel

Tree-with-a-Swing

Barrow of the Boyars

Volchikrov Manor

Graven Garden

Halan Witches' Circle

Wolves' Den

The Beast's Lair

Wending Byways

Vistani Camp

Borderwood

Grey Sisters' Tower

Ulvand River

1 hex = 1/4 mile (0.4 km)

N



Aaron 2016



INTRODUCTION

Wolves have always run in large packs through the Graenseskov (“Borderwood”, pronounced *grah-yen-sesk-off*), but as long as they were left alone, the packs avoided the village of Barovia, keeping to plentiful game, deer, and black elk. However, a fell force stirs the wolves to strange and violent behavior, a force Count Strahd von Zarovich does not yet understand, and therefor cannot control. While the knights of Volchykov Manor once were able to keep the wolves in check, they are losing men and horses to the wolves faster than they can replenish. Dozens of peasants have had their throats torn out, and entire herds of sheep and goats have been slaughtered. Even a veteran monster hunter was presumably killed after failing to trap the Beast. Rumors are spreading of the “Beast of Graenseskov,” something far more intelligent than the worgs, and even fiercer than the dire wolves of the Borderwood.

What haunts Graenseskov is no werewolf, but a loup du noir, a skin-changer who transforms using the *cursed wolfskin*. The adventure entails discovering the loup du noir’s identity as well as finding a way to break the curse. Who is the loup du noir? That depends on the story the DM wants to tell. There are four NPC suspects for the DM to choose from: Ser Cedimir Volchykov, Father Fiofan Kolotov, Merje the Seeker, and Ruzina Noskova. Each of these NPCs, and the clues exposing them, are described in **Chapter 2**.

The *Beast of Graenseskov* is divided roughly into a beginning, a middle, and an end. In **Chapter 1**, the PCs learn of the Beast, meet the NPCs of Volchykov Manor, and explore the Graenseskov. In **Chapter 2**, they investigate recent attacks, examining the manor and nearby sites as they tighten their net about the Beast. However, attacks continue to occur until the PCs take decisive action to accuse a suspect. In **Chapter 3**, the PCs choose a strategy for confronting the Beast and face the hag who created the *cursed wolfskin*, ultimately deciding the Beast’s fate.



BACKGROUND

For years, the aging boyar Borje Volchikrov fought to protect the realm of Barovia from horse thieves, goblins of the eastern mountains, invaders from the Mists, and wolves of the Graenseskov. He lives in both awe and terror of Count Strahd von Zarovich, but being at the fringes of Barovia affords the boyar a measure of independence in how he handles affairs.

The boyar had a complex relationship with the green hag Lagetha, whose prophecies helped him secure his power and whose magic helped him avoid retribution from the Vistani for a crime he committed against their people. At the same time, Lagetha brought out the darkness in the man, and even bedded the drunken boyar in the guise of his wife. The boyar realized the deception afterward, but kept quiet about it.

When Lagetha prophesied the boyar would displease Strahd and be beheaded, however, it was the final straw for Borje. The boyar nearly lit the woods ablaze hunting Lagetha down. At last the druid Merje, no friend of the hags and unable to stand seeing the slaughter the boyar caused, revealed the secret tower of the hags hidden in the Mists. Borje led a bloody assault that left the boyar scarred to this day. After losing many men and horses to his pride, Borje brought Lagetha in chains back to the manor to be executed.

The boyar was not without an ironic sense of humor, ordering the hag's beheading. A fine executioner's axe was fashioned of cold iron by the blacksmith's daughter Ruzina. The manor priest Father Fiofan blessed the axe and performed last rites for the hag. And the boyar's own son Cedomir hefted the blade and severed Lagetha's head from her shoulders. At the moment of Lagetha's death, the skies darkened and one of the onlookers revealed herself to be a most hideous hag with shriveled skin the color of midnight and eyes like twin balefires. She cursed those present before vanishing as if she'd never been there at all, speaking thus: *"You who've raised hand against my sister, I curse you to reveal your true self, turning against kith and kin. I curse you to show your monstrous self under the sign of the soul's true form."*

THE CURSE

Curses in Ravenloft® are given life by the Dark Powers and are far more terrible than the relatively benign curses found on cursed items or invoked by a *bestow curse* spell. Channeled by vengeance or self-induced by committing a terrible transgression, such curses are not laid to rest with a simple *remove curse* spell. Breaking them requires true repentance, destroying the forces that created the curse, or finding a loophole in the curse's wording.

The Curse of the Soul's True Form was both invoked by Pretty Kolchya for vengeance, and it was self-induced by the boyar for violating his ancestor's troth (agreement) with the Grey Sisters. All four NPCs who had a direct hand in Lagetha's killing — Ser Cedomir, Father Fiofan, Merje the Seeker, and Ruzina Nostova — have been cursed, though only one of them begins as the Beast. However, should the Beast be slain without the curse being broken, then the curse "awakens" in another of these NPCs who becomes the new Beast of Graenseskov.

Technically, boyar Borje Volchikrov is also cursed. However, because the curse is strongest on those who had a direct hand in Lagetha's death, and the boyar merely ordered her death without raising a hand, he would only become the Beast in the unlikely event that all four of the other NPCs were killed first.

Each of the four NPCs possesses a wolfskin cloak, a sign of bravery and loyalty, that was secretly imbued with transmutation magic due to the hag's curse. Only one of these cloaks, however, is the *cursed wolfskin*.

Though the first transformation may have been involuntary, each subsequent night of transformation since then has been wholly of the afflicted NPC's volition. At first, the Beast's change was traumatic and it ravaged the land in a haze of bloodlust. The NPC gained a measure of control over the transformation, but it is a false security. Even as the afflicted NPC struggles to maintain some glimmer of their humanity, the Beast grows stronger each time they don the *cursed wolfskin*. Eventually, the NPC will cease to be and there will only be the Beast of Graenseskov.

TIMELINE

-740 years ago: Sordje the Justifier, the first boyar of the Graenseskov, makes a troth with the Grey Sisters to protect his lands from wolves. In retaliation, Strahd condemns the boyars to undeath.

-40 years ago: Claes Volchkyrov fights off barbarian invaders worshipping a wolf-headed god emerging from the Mists. During this time, the dwarf Fiofan stumbles into the manor and, appearing as one of the invaders, is stoned to death by the fearful manor folk. However, he does not stay dead. When Claes dies, his son Borje takes his seat as boyar and finishes his father's campaign against the invaders from the Mists.

-26 years ago: Lagetha the Spinner seduces the drunken boyar in the guise of his wife, and switches a hagspawn for their human child. The hagspawn is raised as Cvetlana, while the human child is named Erelida and she is raised by the hags to infiltrate the circle of Halan witches.

-13 years ago: Daria Nostova is killed by dire wolves; no one raises a hand to help her.

-10 years ago: Suffering from bandits made up of remnants of the "invaders from the Mists", the boyar attempts to withhold taxes from Strahd, and the wrathful Count demands the boyar's son Pyotr as a sacrifice. The boyar tearfully gives Pyotr over to Strahd; presumably the boy is killed by Strahd.

-9 years ago: The bandits are hung. Not all rest eternal.

-8 years ago: Katerina and Cedomir have an affair, but when Katerina learns that he plans to violently overthrow the boyar, Cedomir orchestrates her death by feeding her to dire wolves.

-4 years ago: Ser Cedomir eradicates a lair of mountain goblins, bringing the mongrel Krabka to the boyar court. Little do they know the mongrel had its eyes replaced with a *hag eye* by Pretty Kolchya.

-1 year ago: After Lagetha's prophecy of the boyar's death, the boyar destroys the Grey Sisters coven and orders Lagetha's execution. The hag Pretty Kolchya utters a curse of vengeance. Three days later, the Beast's attacks begin, ravaging the Graenseskov.

-2 months ago: The monster hunter Radke Iliev comes at the boyar's bidding to hunt the Beast, but he vanishes, presumably killed.

-2 weeks ago: The boyar's feast day. Lubomir is bitten by the Beast, but survives in the infirmary.

-3 days ago: The "knight" Jovich is killed by the Beast.

SPECIAL EVENT TRIGGERS

Sleigh Ride of Slaughter: Three days pass; after the PCs investigate the knight Jovich's murder and the bite victim; or when the players flounder for what to do next (DM's choice).

Mob Injustice: Six days pass; after the PCs accuse the wrong suspect; or if draconian measures are taken to find the Beast (DM's choice).

The Boyar's Wolf Hunt: One week passes; after "Mob Injustice" in Chapter 2; or when the PCs reach 2nd level (DM's choice).

The Star-Crossed Wedding: Two weeks pass; a lull in the suspense occurs or the PCs take several days of downtime; or after the PCs explore the Gingerbread House and discover Cvetlana's secret (DM's choice).

Death of the Boyar: One month passes; the PCs go after the wrong suspect repeatedly or are otherwise unable to solve the mystery; or the PCs falsely think they've solved it (DM's choice).

ADJUSTING THE ADVENTURE

While *The Beast of Graenseskov* is designed for a party of 4-6 low-level PCs, the mystery can be adapted for most groups irrespective of party size or level.

To increase the adventure's challenge... Just add wolves! An NPC betrays the PCs. Pretty Kolchya is a night hag. The Beast uses stats for an abominable yeti. Tempt the players with Inspiration for giving into their PCs' flaws. The Beast strikes at night!

To decrease the adventure's challenge... Just add healing potions! The boyar gives the PCs extra support. Radke Iliev was dead, but he got better. Krabka the mongrel joins the party. Pretty Kolchya is easily manipulated. A howl calls off the wolves.

THE TAROKKA KNOWS...

If the DM wishes, the Tarokka deck can be used to determine which suspect is the *loup du noir**, as well as the details surrounding their plight. To perform this reading remove the 14 cards of the High Deck, so there are just the 40 suit cards. Then simply turn over one of the suit cards — each suit refers to one of the suspects — and consult the corresponding table below.



Coins (Ruzina Noskova)

The Rogue. Ruzina originally donned the *cursed wolfskin* to feel free of her onerous duties, but she has since become indistinguishable from the wolfskin and won't part with it.

The Swashbuckler. Ruzina hunts down the rich and corrupt, anonymously leaving sacks of bloodied coins at the doorsteps of peasants.

The Philanthropist. Ruzina loathes the Boyar Borje Volchikrov who unfairly taxes her father, and received the wolfskin to avenge her family on the Boyar and his men.

The Trader. Ruzina is doing the bidding of Strahd, who has promised a way to "cure" her sister Cvetlana. In exchange, she is to hunt down the names that Strahd gives her.

The Merchant. Ruzina acquired the wolfskin from a Vistani merchant, completely unaware of the curse upon it.

The Guildsman. Ruzina's adoptive father Uri knows what she is, but he believes her to be a wholly innocent victim. To protect her he will even falsely admit to being the Beast.

The Beggar. Ruzina, the boyar's illegitimate daughter, seeks the love and recognition that the boyar would rather bestow upon his legitimate sons, driving her to frenzied rage.

The Thief. Ruzina is terrified of being caught and killed, and so she hunts down the boyar's knights, seeking the axe she fashioned to kill Lagetha - the one item most lethal to her.

The Tax Collector. Ruzina's sympathies are with the druids and Vistani, who she covertly arms with fine blades, in exchange for them covering up her monstrous nature.

The Miser. Ruzina doesn't realize what she is, and instead hordes various silver weapons and werewolf-hunting tomes to hunt down the monster that killed her mother.

Glyphs (Merje the Seeker)

The Priest. Merje originally donned the *cursed wolfskin* to fight the boyar's abuses, but he has since become indistinguishable from the wolfskin and won't part with it.

The Monk. Merje made a deal with Kolchya to take on the curse and spare the others, thinking his meditation could keep the Beast in check, but he could not.

The Missionary. Merje wishes to share the "divine gift of Hala" (the curse) with his fellow witches, and intends to initiate them one-by-one as new *loup du noir*.

The Healer. Merje secretly pays visits to a "healer" in the woods to sooth his inner Beast, but in reality she is the hag Kolchya who only exacerbates the curse.

Glyphs (Merje the Seeker)

The Shepherd. Merje is sworn to protect Ruzina from her half-brother Cedomir who may try to kill her if he learns that she is favored by Borje as his replacement. Merje uses the wolfskin to cloak to hunt down Cedomir's supporters.

The Druid. Merje has grown more concerned with the plight of the hunted wolves and mongrelfolk than with the people of Graenseskov.

The Anarchist. Merje plans to root out the corruption in Volchikrov Manor in one fell swoop. Along with his wolf allies he intends to kill the boyar and drive the manor citizens into the purity of the wilds.

The Charlatan. Merje is the mongrelfolk Krabka's secret master and only friend, using the wolfskin to exact revenge on those who persecuted the mongrel in the past. He sees how one treats a beast as the truest test of character.

The Bishop. Merje maneuvers Cedomir and Borje into conflict with one another, hoping to lead the household he despises into its own undoing.

The Traitor. Merje blames the boyar for not killing Kolchya when he could and for bringing the curse down on them through his pride. Merje will stop at nothing to deliver the boyar into the hag's hands, hoping to end the curse and perhaps kill two birds with one stone.

Stars (Father Fiofan Kolotov)

The Wizard. Fiofan originally donned the *cursed wolfskin* to help recall his shrouded past, but he has since become indistinguishable from the wolfskin and won't part with it.

The Transmuter. Fiofan has grown obsessed with returning through the Mists to the homeland that exiled him, and he deals with Vistani, witches, even hags to learn the secret.

The Diviner. Fiofan fears the boyar's beheading of Lagetha has set in motion a self-fulfilling prophecy of the boyar's death, and he covertly works against the boyar's plans to save the boyar from himself, using the wolfskin for anonymity.

The Enchanter. Fiofan has convinced himself that he can end the curse when he desires, using the wolfskin only until he can unearth the truth about his past. Then, so he thinks, he'll be able to set the wolfskin aside and face justice.

The Abjurer. Fiofan believes his faith in the Morning Lord and his study of ancient texts protects him from the curse, but it slowly dawns on the dwarf that he is not in control.

The Elementalist. Fiofan hunts down all who entered Barovia through the Mists on the same stormy night he arrived, thinking one of them must know about the dwarf's past. However, each encounter is fated to end disastrously.



Stars (Father Fiofan Kolotov)

The Invoker. Fiofan desperately searches for forbidden lore that might illuminate his past, the Beast growing stronger the more he learns. The truth is darker than he imagined.

The Illusionist. Fiofan despises the boyar who “tricked” him into performing last rites for Lagetha (and thus becoming cursed) and withheld the scrolls the former boyar promised. He hunts for secrets that might ruin the boyar.

The Necromancer. Fiofan is remembering how the former boyar ordered him stoned (thinking Fiofan a werebeast), and he puts his learned mind toward revenge.

The Conjurer. Fiofan has learned the terrifying truth about himself and now he kills everyone who holds a clue about his true nature. Despite this, he is convinced that any price is worth paying (even his own lycanthropy) to depose Strahd.

Swords (Ser Cedomir Volchikrov)

The Warrior. Cedomir donned the *cursed wolfskin* to protect Barovia from invaders in the Mists, but he has since become indistinguishable from the wolfskin and won't part with it.

The Avenger. Cedomir seeks revenge on Strahd for taking his brother Pytor, even if it brings ruin to his family. Without the wolfskin's powers, Cedomir fears he'll never have justice.

The Paladin. Cedomir learned of the black annis that gave him the wolfskin through his father's subtle manipulation. Despite his evil, he retains a family code of honor.

The Soldier. Cedomir's attitude toward the wolfskin is conflicted, hating the power it exerts over him, but craving the animalistic might it can grant him.

The Mercenary. Cedomir wishes to share the “gift” of the Beast with his fellow knights, and intends to convince them one-by-one and initiate them as new *loup du noir*.

The Myrmidon. Cedomir was publicly humiliated at a recent wolf hunt that ended in the village of Barovia. Those he hunts are those who laughed at and scorned him.

The Berserker. Cedomir revels in the power the wolfskin grants him, especially enjoying challenging others.

The Hooded Man. Cedomir stays hidden by feeding the PCs misinformation about the Beast and turning the sentiment of the peasants of Volchikrov against a decoy NPC.

The Dictator. Cedomir's driving purpose is to overthrow his father, and he grows increasingly brutal in suppressing the peasants, even ordering his knights to murder in cold blood.

The Torturer. Cedomir desperately wishes to be free of the curse placed on him by the black annis Pretty Kolchya, even if that means death.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Choose one of the following adventure hooks that best suits your gaming group.

THE COUNT'S BOUNTY

Strahd is displeased at the Beast's predations because he does not yet understand what the Beast is, meaning he cannot control it. Moreover, the wolves of the Graenseskov no longer respond to Strahd's command. Thus, he has issued a bounty worth 100 gold pieces on the head of who or whatever the Beast may be. However, the “bounty” also has an ultimatum implied by the Count. If no one rises to his challenge by the next full moon, Strahd will show his displeasure against the village, just as he did with the burgomaster of the past. Additionally, several Barovians who've lost loved ones to the wolves may offer small purses of silver, pigs, goats, and free room and board to characters who stop the Beast and avert Strahd's wrath.

A GROOM'S DILEMMA

Ismark the Lesser (see *The Curse of Strahd*), son of the dead burgomaster of Barovia, faces a dilemma. He is to marry Cvetlana Volchikrov, the beautiful but vainglorious daughter of boyar Borje Volchikrov of the Graenseskov. This is an important political move to oppose the bandits and horse smugglers of Barovia, and it also ensures that both the burgomaster's and the boyar's family lines will go on. However, the boyar's expectation is that once Ismark becomes his son by marriage, Ismark will lead the hunt for the Beast. The thought terrifies Ismark, who is no brave warrior. He is looking for stout souls who can help him evade certain death against the Beast, keep his bride safe from the Beast's predations, and buoy his courage to go through with the wedding.

A HUNTER'S LETTER

A messenger raven arrives bearing a letter from Radke Iliev, a monster hunter known to one or more of the PCs, who requests their aid.

Though it has been many years, I find myself in need of your aid, my friends. I am hunting a Beaste most foul that vexes me at every turn with its cunning and evil like none I've encountered before. The contract came from boyar Borje Volchykrov, an old drunkard who governs lands known as the Graenseskov. Already, I've seen the savageries of the Beaste first-hand: slaughtered herds and eviscerated guards. I am told a fifth of the people of the Graenseskov have fallen to the Beaste's predations.

Follow the directions to the foot trail I have enclosed, and continue through the misty Borderwood. Do not give any mind to the will-o'-wisps in the woods, but continue until you reach Volchykrov Manor. I pray you come swiftly, for there are dark forces arrayed against me and I am uncertain how much longer I may keep them at bay.

— Radke Iliev, Esq.

MADAME EVA'S READING

When Madame Eva (see *The Curse of Strahd*) performs a Tarokka reading for the PCs, she has a vision of four magical items in the Graenseskov that may be of use in the PCs' fight against Strahd. These are the *circlet of Hala* ("a crown of wise serpents"), the *ghost lantern* ("a lantern whose light does not frighten spirits"), *Sordje's sword* ("a blade from the time of the boyars"), and the *cursed wolfskin* ("a cloak of the wilds beyond Strahd's reach"). Though Madame Eva can't tell exactly where these items are located, she knows they are somewhere in the Graenseskov, and that the PCs' destiny awaits them there. Little does she mention the wolfskin's curse; defeating Strahd is more important to Madame Eva than the well-being of the PCs.

A SQUIRE'S PLIGHT

While traveling through strange Mists, the characters hear howls and screams echoing in the Mists, only to behold a screaming 12-year-old boy with braided blond hair running ahead of a pack of 4 **wolves** (CR 1/4) in hot pursuit. The boy is slowed by the large wooden shield he carries (emblazoned with a wolf charge rampant on a field of gold). When the characters pursue the wolves to intercept them or to rescue the boy, they are drawn into Strahd's realm at the Wending Byways (see pg. 20). The boy is named Dusan, squire to Ser Cedimir Volchykrov, and is prone to forgetting where he puts his master's things when he naps. The wolves only fight until badly wounded or half are dead at which point the rest retreat into the woods. Dusan offers to lead the PCs to Volchykrov Manor and introduce them to his lord, boyar Borje Volchykrov.

A VISTANI'S GAMBIT

A young Vistani man named Eris Corvara was caught trying to steal the horses of a group of 3 **thugs** identifying themselves as "Knights of the Volchykrov family," though Eris refers to them derisively as "Hounds of the Borderwood" and claims the horses actually belong to the Vistani. The "knights" intend to exercise a rough justice by hanging the Vistani from a tree. Eris pleads for the PCs' intervention, claiming that he's certain the boyar Borje Volchykrov will dispense justice at his manor. Eris is counting on the *giogota* (half-Vistani) Ruzina helping him, but he isn't above attempt to steal a horse (again) and escaping to the Vistani camp (see pg. 18). Either way, the "knights" escort the PCs to the manor to audience with their boyar.

WHERE TO START?

The DM can play out the PCs' travel through the Wending Byways using random encounter checks. Alternately, the DM can simply narrate the party's journey through the disorienting Mists. Once they reach Volchykrov Manor, boyar Borje Volchykrov holds an audience with the PCs (see pg. 22) wherein their quest begins.

CHAPTER 1

WOLVES OF THE BORDERWOOD

The Graenseskov is Barovia's frontier, with sparsely settled wooded foothills where snow covers the ground much of the year. Wolves dominant this landscape, their howls echoing though the chill mists at night, never so distant as one would wish them to be. The people of the Graenseskov are a hardy lot and accustomed to living alongside the wolves. While children may laugh at tales of the wolf-turned-bard Barking Piet, and stern parents may falsely threaten to leave an unruly child to the wolves, being inured to the threat doesn't mean they aren't aware of it. Every man, woman, and child of the Graenseskov carries at least a dagger or club, prepared to defend themselves from the wolves. In times of need they rely on the boyar's mounted knights known as the "Hounds of the Borderwood" to keep aggressive wolf packs at bay.

Mostly, however, man and wolf have lived alongside one another in the Graenseskov, the wolves' aggression mysteriously tempered. This unspoken troth (agreement) surpasses common sense protective measures like keeping an eye on young ones, not venturing out alone, and returning home when the horn at Volchikrov Manor is blown at sunset. It dates back to the first boyar of the Graenseskov, Sordje the Justifier, who raised a wounded wolf pup as his own. According to the folktale, when Sordje returned the beast to its pack, the pack leader — an ancient werewolf — was grateful for the return of the pup and ever since that day the wolves have given Volchikrov Manor and the surrounding farms and homesteads a wide berth. Regardless of how much stock one puts in the folktale, whatever supernatural providence kept the wolves in check can no longer be relied upon, with the Beast's presence twisting the wolves toward murderous ends.



LIFE AMIDST THE WOLVES

The people of the Graenseskov are a hardy lot and accustomed to living alongside the wolves. While children may laugh at tales of the wolf-turned-bard Barking Piet, and stern parents may falsely threaten to leave an unruly child to the wolves, being inured to the threat doesn't mean they aren't aware of it. Every man, woman, and child of the Graenseskov carries at least a dagger or club, prepared to defend themselves from the wolves. In times of need they rely on the boyar's mounted knights known as the "Hounds of the Borderwood" to keep aggressive wolf packs at bay.

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Mutual understanding, however, does not mean entirely peaceful cohabitation. Opportunistic wolves are the terror of every mother and shepherd unfortunate enough to call the Graenseskov their home. Hunters sell grey wolf pelts, gained during the boyar's wolf hunts, in the village of Barovia.

Wolves are even a part of the rites of passage for youth of the Graenseskov. Every fourth autumn, youth at Volchikrov Manor and surrounding homesteads who are on the cusp of adulthood are gathered. They are given a task by the boyar: to hunt or trap a wolf and kill it. The one among them whom the boyar deems the bravest gets to keep its pelt which is turned into a wolfskin

cloak. Dozens of these wolfskin cloaks are worn by various folk, a sign of their courage and the boyar's favor. While folk of the Graenseskov generally know where to find lone wolves (thus avoiding the deadly packs) and are shrewd trappers, encountering a lone dire wolf or worg is a deadly prospect. Sometimes a young adult dies during the rite of passage, and these "blessed dead" are buried in the Graven Garden (see "Sites in the Graenseskov") where it is believed their spirits watch over the land.

However, whatever supernatural providence kept the wolves in check before can no longer be relied upon. The Beast's presence twists the wolves toward murderous ends.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Over the course of the adventure, the Beast grows more aggressive, and with it so do the wolves. Use the rules governing encounter frequency found in *Curse of Strahd*, but instead of the table included there, use the following table for encounters in the Graenseskov. At the adventure's onset, roll a d4 on the table whenever the PCs have a random encounter. Various events that transpire during *The Beast of Graenseskov* cause the encounters to become increasingly dangerous and terrifying, increasing the die rolled on the encounter table in the following escalating pattern:

d4 > d6 > d8 > d10 > d12

Escalating events include those marked in the text as well as the following:

- Two weeks or more pass while the Beast still stalks the Graenseskov.
- Boyar Borje Volchikrov leads the wolf hunt (described under "Special Events").
- A PC learns the Rite of the Dark Wolf from Pretty Kolchya's recipe book.
- The curse jumps to a new Beast after the last Beast is slain without breaking the curse.
- The PCs accuse the wrong suspect.
- The PCs steal or destroy the *cursed wolfskin*.
- The PCs assault the Beast's Lair or attempt to trap the Beast, successfully or not.

d4+	Graenseskov Encounter
1	Track and sign (with a d8, d10, or d12, roll again)
2	Hounds of the Borderwood
3	Victim
4	Wolf pack (small)
5	Lone dire wolf
6	Worg omen-bearers
7	Barking Piet
8	Wolf pack (large)
9	Dogs gone mad
10	Dire wolf pack
11	Kolchya's cur
12	Beast of Graenseskov

BARKING PIET

A moody bard wearing a black cloak and a silver wolf mask, introduces himself as Barking Piet (like the folktale in **Appendix D**). Who is he really? The DM may make up his or her own explanation, or choose one of the following possibilities:

- The **arcanoloth** Inajira in disguise, subtly promising to fulfill a PC's heart's desire in exchange for their immortal soul.
- The **mongrelfolk** Krabka, inspired by the PCs' heroism to become an adventurer... and cast out of Volchikrov Manor by the boyar in a drunken fit.
- A **wolf** granted intelligence and turned into a man or **jackalwere** by Pretty Kolchya's curse.

BEAST OF GRAENSESKOV

The Beast of Graenseskov, a **loup du noir***, comes after the PCs in dire wolf form, intending to kill one or two of them. It only fights until reduced to half hit points or less, at which point it flees to its lair (see "Hunting the Beast" in **Chapter 3**). The chase rules in **Appendix C** may be useful.

DIRE WOLF PACK

3 (1d4+1) **dire wolves** stalk the land.

DOGS GONE MAD

Kolchya's curse causes all domesticated canines in the Graenseskov to turn rabid and attack their owners. This indicates an encounter with 5 (2d4) **mastiffs** afflicted with rabies (treated as a disease like that borne by **giant rats**). However, it also entails changes to the entire region, with all hunting dogs at Volchikrov Manor killed on the boyar's orders.

Regarding players whose PCs have canine familiars or animal companions, the DM should discuss with them what they see happening to their companion. If they agree for their companion to temporarily run wild in the woods, the DM can reward the player with Inspiration.

HOUNDS OF THE BORDERWOOD

3 (1d4+1) **thugs** mounted on riding horses patrol the woods with 2 (1d4) hunting **mastiffs**. These "knights" serving the boyar's family are known as Hounds of the Borderwood, an unscrupulous lot made up largely of Barovian criminals. They may harass maidens, run small protection rackets, steal credit for the PCs' heroism, and send warning "messages" from Cedimir to those who've displeased him.

If Ser Cedimir is the Beast, these "knights" may attempt to lead the PCs into a trap, claiming they could use help hunting a dire wolf, only to lead the PCs to a dire wolf pack or even the Beast's Lair (see **Chapter 3**).

KOLCHYA'S CUR

Pretty Kolchya sends a mangy **hell hound** after one of the PCs who she acquired a bit of hair, blood, or a precious belonging from (required for the ritual binding the hell hound to hunt down that PC). The hell hound is invisible to all creatures except the targeted PC until after it attacks. It single-mindedly pursues the PC whom the hag singled out to the exception of all others.

LONE DIRE WOLF

A lone scarred **dire wolf**, a survivor of a wolf hunt or the rites of passage, attacks. It might be warded off with fire.

CHAPTER 2

THE INVESTIGATION

As the characters explore the Graenseskov, they conduct an investigation into the nature, identity, and motives of the Beast. While multiple NPCs were targeted by the hag's curse, the DM must choose one of the following suspects who begins as the Beast. This decision influences the tone of investigation and will determine which clues the PCs receive.

Ser Cedomir, the boyar's son, schemes to overthrow his father, and as the Beast he only becomes more cruel and fixated on power.

Father Fiofan, a dwarven exile ensnared by the Mists years ago, is driven to discover the tragic truth of his past, but as the Beast the dark secrets he unearths turn him against the manor-folk.

Merje the Seeker, a priest of the old ways, is an enemy of the hags, but as the Beast he takes his fight too far and is willing to sacrifice too much.

Ruzina Nostova, a *giogota* (half-Vistani) smith, seeks love from her birth father the boyar, but as the Beast what she learns turns her against him.

The investigation can be divided into three distinct yet interwoven aspects:

Nature of the Beast. First, is determining exactly what creature the PCs are up against, comparing what they learn from witnesses, hearsay, and crime scenes against the monster hunter Radke Iliev's hunting journal (see **Appendix D**).

Face of the Beast. Next, is identifying which of the four suspects is the Beast. This involves gathering clues over the course of the entire adventure, using a process of elimination to hone in on one of the NPCs. Most of **Chapter 2** is concerned with this aspect of the investigation. What the PCs do once they know the Beast's identity, however, is up to them and resolved in **Chapter 3**.

How to Break the Curse. Lastly, is figuring out a way to break Pretty Kolchya's curse. The principle sources for this information are the Halan Witches' Circle and the Gingerbread House of the hag herself, though the PCs will need to exercise their own creativity in devising a suitable ritual. Various approaches to breaking the curse are described in **Chapter 3**.



PEASANTS OF GRAENSESKOV

Several peasants in Graenseskov have had close encounters with the Beast, some tragic and some simply sightings. The boyar can inform the PCs of these three families, though the DM should sprinkle rumors liberally in with their accounts.

THE NOSEKS (INNKEEPERS)

Stravko and Emilika Nosek (see pg. 28) lost their eldest son Kostadin, as well as their prized breeding horses to the Beast earlier that year. The Beast devoured the horses, and Kostadin was killed when he tried to intervene. Since then, the innkeeper couple have watched and listened for signs of the Beast, scrutinizing all travelers passing through the Weary Horse Inn and Stables. They've heard the Beast has grown craftier in how it attacks travelers, collapsing trees to direct its victims into ambushes and using other tactics indicating it is as intelligent as a man.

THE PAVLOVICS (OX HERDERS)

While many shepherds have suffered the thinning of their herds due to the Beast's predations, Jagoda and Ilyna Pavlovic have suffered crippling financial setbacks at the loss of half their oxen. The Beast seems to have a taste for cow flesh. Each time, the cattle bay horribly, and when they've run out to check on the herd, they find a half-eaten corpse. The only hints of the Beast's presence are large wolf prints around the kill, that then vanish at the forest's edge where strange sweeping arcs are found in the snow, like a cloak being swept about the shoulders or a broom dusting the snowy ground.

THE STOJANOVICS (SERVANTS)

Milvan, Rade, and Stanz — cousins of Ratimir Stojanovic (see pg. 28) — were brutally killed when they set out to trap the Beast. They tried luring it out with a lamb in a wooden cage, but the Beast overwhelmed them. Mortally wounded, Milvan managed to hide himself in the cage, surviving long enough to tell the boyar's men who found him that the Beast was completely unharmed by their arrows and steel blades.

RUMORS

There are many rumors about the Beast, and while the peasants of Barovia and Volchikrov Manor may not know much, there are kernels of truth behind their fearful tales.

d10	Rumors
1	Hanging a wreath of birch and wolfsbane on the door will protect a home from the Beast, and a diet of wolfsbane will ward the Beast away from one's herds. (false)
2	The Beast is a werewolf living in a cabin in the southern Borderwood where it smokes human flesh and eats babies. (false, but hints at the non-evil werewolf Lovrenk Kosar)
3	Werewolves have long haunted the Graenseskov and the Beast is their king, come to wage war upon Count Strahd von Zarovich. (false)
4	A year ago the Beast killed indiscriminately, but now it selects its targets with malign cunning to devastate Barovia. (mostly true)
5	The Beast suckled on the tit of a hag growing up and her curdled milk turned it into a monster, but if the hag is killed the curse will be broken. (false, but hints at how Pretty Kolchya created the curse and thus may know how to remove it)
6	The Beast is Strahd's murderous bastard son freed from 750 years imprisonment in Hell. (false)
7	Whatever foul witchcraft birthed the Beast, the peasants of the Graenseskov have had enough. Soon, they'll take the law into their own hands, with torch and pitchfork. (true)
8	The Beast's claws are sharp as iron, its gaze inspires terror, and its hide is so strong any mortal blade will shatter against it. (mostly true)
9	The boyar's wives are doomed to die in the jaws of the Beast which kills each woman the boyar comes to love. (false, but hints at the terrible ends each of the boyar's loves has met)
10	Leader of bandits hung years ago, the Beast conjures their missing right hands to exert his foul will upon the Graenseskov. (false, but hints at Kolchya's creeping claws)

SPECIAL EVENTS

SLEIGH RIDE OF SLAUGHTER

Triggers. Three days pass; after the PCs investigate the knight's murder and the bite victim; or when the players flounder for what to do next (DM's choice).

Overcome by guilt and wracked by nightmares, the portly merchant Vitomir Alkaev (♂ HUMAN NOBLE, N) staying at the Weary Horse Inn confesses his sins to the PCs and offers to hire them as his bodyguards for 50 gp.

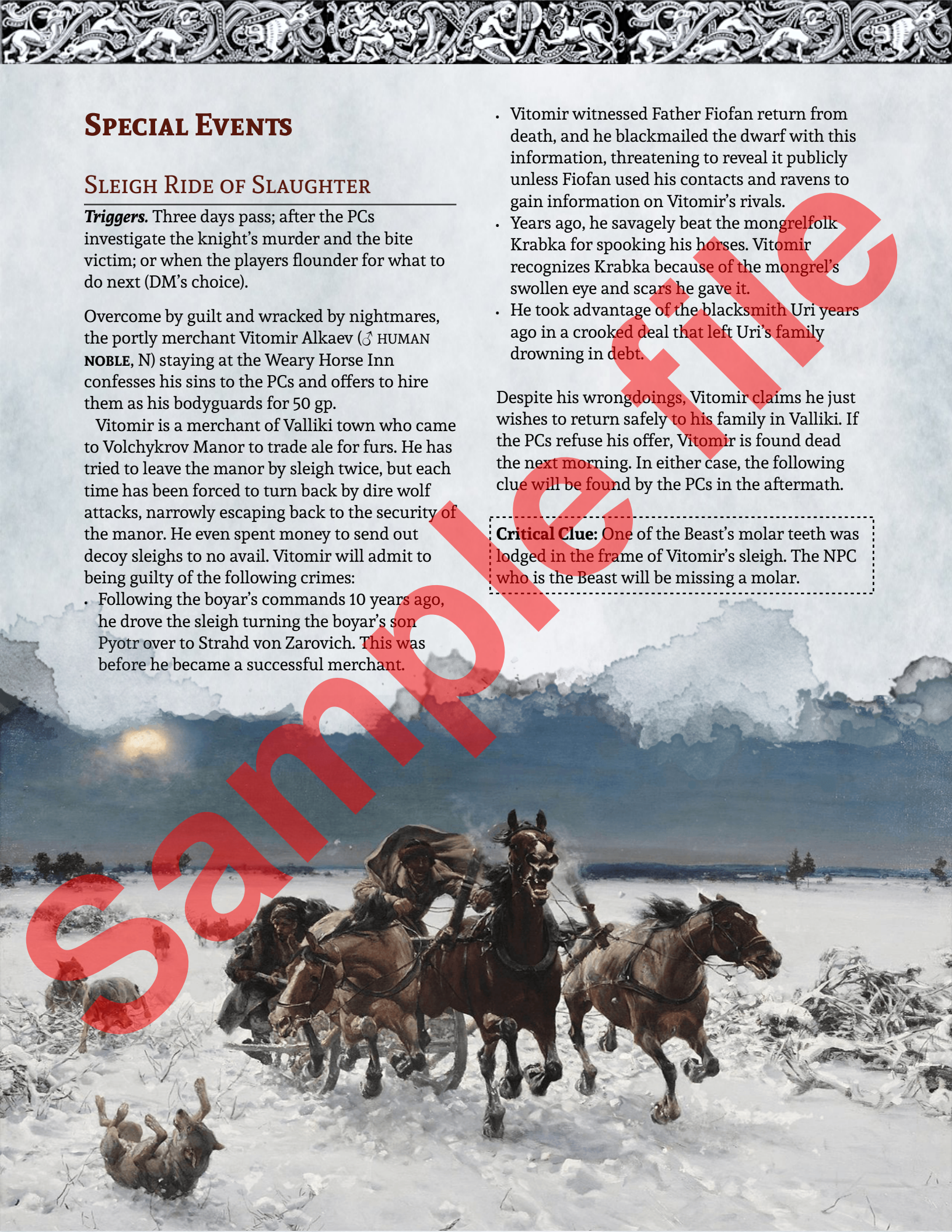
Vitomir is a merchant of Valliki town who came to Volchykrov Manor to trade ale for furs. He has tried to leave the manor by sleigh twice, but each time has been forced to turn back by dire wolf attacks, narrowly escaping back to the security of the manor. He even spent money to send out decoy sleighs to no avail. Vitomir will admit to being guilty of the following crimes:

- Following the boyar's commands 10 years ago, he drove the sleigh turning the boyar's son Pyotr over to Strahd von Zarovich. This was before he became a successful merchant.

- Vitomir witnessed Father Fiofan return from death, and he blackmailed the dwarf with this information, threatening to reveal it publicly unless Fiofan used his contacts and ravens to gain information on Vitomir's rivals.
- Years ago, he savagely beat the mongrelfolk Krabka for spooking his horses. Vitomir recognizes Krabka because of the mongrel's swollen eye and scars he gave it.
- He took advantage of the blacksmith Uri years ago in a crooked deal that left Uri's family drowning in debt.

Despite his wrongdoings, Vitomir claims he just wishes to return safely to his family in Valliki. If the PCs refuse his offer, Vitomir is found dead the next morning. In either case, the following clue will be found by the PCs in the aftermath.

Critical Clue: One of the Beast's molar teeth was lodged in the frame of Vitomir's sleigh. The NPC who is the Beast will be missing a molar.



CHAPTER 3

BLOOD AND WOLFSKIN

Once the Beast's identity is discovered by the PCs, the focus of the adventure becomes bringing down the Beast. Should the Beast become aware the PCs know its identity, it will begin to push back. At this stage of the game, there is little mystery left, and the PCs are pitted on a collision course with both the Beast and the hag Pretty Kolchya that created it. These conflicts may play out in different ways depending on the PCs' approach, however. Nothing is certain, not even breaking the curse, as there are multiple ways to go about doing so that require both investigation as well as creative interpretation. While this is likely the deadliest part of the adventure, it is also the part with the greatest amount of choice given to the players as to how they tackle the challenges presented in *The Beast of Graenseskov*.

THE BEAST PUSHES BACK

In addition to being the underlying cause of escalating random encounters (see pg. 12), the Beast will push back as described below:

- If the Beast's Lair is attacked or robbed by the PCs, the Beast repays the favor by attacking the PCs (or their horses or hirelings) at the Weary Horse Inn & Stables.
- If the PCs stockpile silver or blessed weapons, the Beast sends underlings to steal, destroy, or sabotage the weapons (thugs for Cedomir, Gorgon's Grin bandits for Fiofan, acolytes for Merje, Vistani bandits for Ruzina).
- If the PCs' investigation is moving with alarming speed over a day or two, the Beast visits Lovrenk Kosar and triggers his werewolf lycanthropy, creating a false trail of dead herd animals to throw the PCs off its trail.
- If the PCs publicly decry the Beast or assemble a mob, it attempts to escape to its lair, killing a PC or other enemy in the process if it can.



THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE

Pretty Kolchya's lair is a rotund decaying cottage built 20 feet (6 m) up in the branches of an ancient gnarled lightning-blasted maple tree oozing black sap that reeks of iron. The porch around the treehouse is festooned with shiny baubles, children's shoes and caps, dangling sweets, and whimsical totems. Parts of the exterior are even edible, like the sugary "icicles" dangling from the eaves. A warm inviting light glows thru the windows and the smell of baking gingerbread wafts through the air. However, closer inspection reveals the facade: skulls are hidden among the totems, the ravens pecking at the sweets actually nibble on severed fingers, and the white "snow" clinging to the roof is actually bleached hides of human flesh.

Archways. Archways in the house are designed to just barely allow Pretty Kolchya to slip through without needing to squeeze.

Components. Fingernails, hair, and teeth (such as Merje's molar) are scattered through the house.

Light. Scattered candles burn with pale blue continual flame that only provide dim light.

Sweets. Every room of the house has sweets in it, either on display or part of the house itself.

Windows. All windows have metal bars and are enchanted with an illusion depicting rainy stormy weather no matter the actual weather outside.



WHERE IS PRETTY KOLCHYA?

Unless the DM already has an idea where the hag is, or the PCs have made plans to lure her out, the following table can be used to determine Kolchya's location when the PCs come to the Gingerbread House. Roll a d4 or draw a card from the Tarokka deck.

d4	Tarokka suit	Pretty Kolchya's location
1	Coins	Kolchya is snoring as she sleeps in her bed (Area 5) after gorging herself.
2	Glyphs	Kolchya, in an illusory guise, is elsewhere in the Graensenskov, and won't return until sunset or sunrise.
3	Stars	Kolchya is out in the woods dragging dinner or treasure back to the house, and she will return in 1d6 x 10 minutes
4	Swords	Kolchya is in the kitchen (Area 4) or adjoining areas tormenting Anya.

REACHING THE HOUSE

Reaching the Gingerbread House is a challenge in and of itself, as it lies deep in the mist-shrouded Borderwood. Clever PCs might track Kolchya or one of her minions back to the house, or even let her steal an item only to cast *locate object* on the stolen item. However, by far the most common method is following the trail of sweets.

TRAIL OF SWEETS

Pretty Kolchya leaves trails of sweets in the Borderwood to lure children: walnut brittle, amandine (little chocolate cakes), or plum dumplings being her favorites. Viewing these sweets with *detect magic* reveals they are imbued with divination and enchantment magic. While Kolchya is at the Gingerbread House she has a vague sense whenever creatures are following her trail of sweets, though she learns nothing about the creatures, only that guests are coming. Any creature consuming a sweet must make a DC 10 Charisma saving throw or be compelled to follow the trail all the way to the Gingerbread House.

FIGHTING THE HAG

While the **black annis*** hag is overconfident that no man can beat her in a fight, she also recalls how the boyar's forces destroyed the coven and executed Lagetha. Thus, Pretty Kolchya is careful to avoid facing a group of warriors all at once. If encountered out of her lair, she will use *fog cloud* to disorient and attempt to pick PCs off one at a time. However, she won't hesitate to use Pretty's Bower to teleport back to her lair where she makes optimal use of her lair actions and the various hazards in the Gingerbread House.

If a character wields the cold iron greataxe used to execute Lagetha, then Pretty Kolchya begins the first round of combat frightened, though by the start of her next turn the fear wears off.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Pretty Kolchya takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects, though she can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- **Long Enough to Reach You.** Pretty Kolchya extends her claws through a patch of shadows in the Gingerbread House, and her claws emerge from any other shadow within the house, allowing her to attack any creature within 5 feet (1.5 m) of a shadowy surface or area. If she cannot see the creature she attacks, then she gropes blindly. However, if she grapples the creature, then on her next turn she can pull the creature through the shadows as a bonus action.
- **Off the Porch, Into the Oven.** An object in the Gingerbread House animates and makes a shove attack (using the black annis' stats) against a creature, pushing them up to 15 feet (4.5 m). If this pushes them into the oven, the oven door opens and the character takes 1d6 fire damage and is lit on fire, taking 1d6 fire damage at the start of each of their turns until an action is taken to extinguish the flames. If this pushes them off the porch, then they fall 20 feet (6 m) for 2d6 bludgeoning damage.
- **Pretty's Bower (1/long rest).** While in dim light or darkness, Kolchya teleports to either the

kitchen (Area 4) of her Gingerbread House. However, this imposes a level of exhaustion on Kolchya, and she cannot use this lair action again until she takes a long rest.

- **Sweets Are for Eating.** One creature in the Gingerbread House must make a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be compelled to eat one of the sweets, becoming charmed by the black annis for 1 day or until she takes hostile action against that creature.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region containing Pretty Kolchya's lair is warped by foul magic, which creates one or more of the following effects:

- **Trail of Sweets.** Within 6 miles of the lair, trails of sweets, nuts, or fruits lead to the Gingerbread House.
- **Naughty Children.** Within 3 miles of the lair, children have any character flaws exaggerated.
- **Corrupted Forest.** Within 1 mile of the lair, trees exude a sickly sweet black sap that smells of iron, and fog is both common and dense.



APPENDIX A

MONSTERS

HAG, BLACK ANNIS

Black annis, also known as night witches, are the most vicious and sadistic of hags. They appear as hideous seven to eight foot tall crones with bloated dark indigo or blackish aquamarine flesh, hooked noses, glossy black hair and nails, and malevolent yellow eyes. Embodying children's nightmares of wicked witches waiting to carry off the naughty ones to be cooked or eaten alive, black annis indeed have an insatiable desire for human flesh. Legendarily vain, black annis can't sustain covens amongst themselves, though they may with other hags and some black annis congregate in temporary groups peasants call "sabbaths" to hunt down a particularly special child or during inauspicious times like an eclipse or blood moon. As their lairs, black annis favor ruins, abandoned villages overcome by plague, sylvan caves called "bowers" or creepy tree-dwellings known as "gingerbread houses." Though they do not fly on broomsticks, some fight with magical ironwood broomsticks which they wield as mauls. Black annis like to deceive and torture their victims, preferring to take a creature captive rather than kill it on the spot.



BLACK ANNIS

Large fey (shapechanger), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 68 (9d10+24)

Speed 30 ft. (9 m)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons that aren't forged of cold iron

Senses darkvision 60 ft. (18.2 m), passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Giant, Sylvan

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Sadistic Grappler. The hag has advantage on attack rolls against any creature grappled by her, and her attacks deal an extra 7 (2d6) damage against creatures grappled by her.

Innate Spellcasting. The hag's spellcasting ability is Charisma. She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components: 3/day: *fog cloud* (cast as if using an 8th-level spell slot creating 160-foot-radius sphere)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The hag makes a bite and claw attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. (1.5 m), one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft. (3 m), one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6+4) slashing damage, and the target is grappled by the hag if it is Medium or smaller. If the hag has two creatures grappled she cannot make claw attacks.

Illusory Appearance. The hag covers herself and anything she is wearing or carrying with a magical illusion that makes her look like a creature of her general size and humanoid shape (e.g. a tall human, a small giant, or an ogre). The effect ends if the hag takes a bonus action to end it or if she dies. The changes wrought by this effect fail to hold up to physical inspection. For example, the hag could appear to have no claws, but someone touching her hand might feel the claws. Otherwise, a creature must take an action to visually inspect the illusion and succeed on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discern that the hag is disguised.

LOUP DU NOIR

Most lycanthropes have no choice in what they are, either born with lycanthropy or afflicted by another lycanthrope's bite. Not so for the loup du noir. Also known as skin-changers, loup du noir don a magic wolfskin to assume the form of a dire wolf. The dark sorceries of the transformation drive the skin-changer mad with murderous urges.

ANCIENT CURSE

Loup du noir are bestowed with lycanthropy in cabalistic rites passed down through the ages by other loup du noir, by fiends, and by hags. Each loup du noir chooses to accept its curse, seduced by the wolf's strength. While the curse is not heritable, it is often passed down as a family tradition among hunters.

OUT FOR BLOOD

No matter a loup du noir's intentions in taking on its curse, its mind grows clouded by an intense bloodlust. Far exceeding the normal predations of a dire wolf, the loup du noir will become a threat even to friends and innocents.

MAGIC WOLFSKIN

See the *cursed wolfskin* in **Appendix B** for details.



LOUP DU NOIR

Medium humanoid (shapechanger), chaotic evil

Armor Class 11 (or by character) in humanoid form, 13 (natural armor) in dire wolf form

Hit Points 71 (11d8+22)

Speed 30 ft. (9 m) (40 ft. (12 m) in dire wolf form)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +5, **Stealth** +4

Condition Immunities charmed, paralyzed

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered or blessed

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from magical weapons that aren't silvered or blessed

Senses darkvision 60 ft. (18.2 m), **passive Perception** 11

Languages Common (can speak in dire wolf form)

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. The loup du noir has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Magic Resistance. The loup du noir has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects. However, dousing it with holy water strips it of this trait until the start of its next turn.

Magic Wolfskin. Nonmagical weapons that are not silvered or blessed break after striking the loup du noir while it wears its magic wolfskin.

Shapechanger. The loup du noir can use its action to polymorph into a Large dire wolf, or back into its true form, which is humanoid. Its statistics may be the same (besides AC, speed, and attack options), or its statistics may change to an NPC's in its humanoid form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. The loup du noir reverts to its true form if it dies.

Vicious. Against a creature granting the loup du noir advantage on an attack, it deals an extra 9 (2d8) damage.

ACTIONS

Bite (dire wolf form). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. (1.5 m), one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8+3) piercing damage, and the target must succeed a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. On a natural 20, and when it reduces a target to 0 hit points, the loup du noir tears the victim's throat, dealing 9 (2d8) bleeding damage to the target at the start of each of its turns until a creature takes an action to bind the wound or the target receives magical healing.

Longsword (humanoid form). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. (1.5 m), one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) slashing damage.

APPENDIX B

MAGIC ITEMS

CIRCLET OF HALA

This *headband of intellect* appears as a braided leather circlet geometrically interwoven with copper snakes. It was made by the early witches devoted to Hala as a weapon against hags, and hags who see the circlet become hostile to its wearer (though hags are such malicious creatures anyway their hostility may not be immediately apparent).

While attuned to the circlet, you experience cryptic and troubling dreams from Hala at the DM's discretion. Additionally, during a short rest you can meditate with the circlet and sense the direction to the nearest *hag eye* present within a 5 mile radius sphere. This awareness lasts until you take a long rest. While aware of the *hag eye*, you can use an action to see through it as a hag would. However, any hags attuned to the *hag eye* may make a Wisdom (Insight) check opposed by the your Charisma (Deception) check to *sense* you watching. If the *hag eye* is destroyed while you are looking through it, you suffer 16 (3d10) psychic damage and are blinded for 1 day.

THE CURSED WOLFSKIN

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

This wolfskin cloak *functions* like a *cloak of protection*, though when you are presented an opportunity to act in a selfish or malevolent way, it subtly *heightens* your *urge* to do so.

Curse. If you *learn* the Rite of the Dark Wolf, you can attune to the wolfskin. Attuning to the wolfskin *curses* you. Thereafter, while wearing the wolfskin you can use an action to polymorph into a dire wolf, gaining **loup du noir*** stats. This *curse* is *unaffected* by *remove curse*.

However, you develop the urge to transform every night and indulge in murder. Resisting this urge requires a DC 10 Charisma saving throw, increasing the DC by 1 for each day that has passed since your last transformation. If you fail this saving throw you can no longer resist the

urge and you transform to go on a killing spree that lasts 1d12 hours.

If you are driven to attack someone or something you are familiar with and care about, you may repeat the saving throw to resist *killing* them. No matter how long you resist the murderous urges, over time your alignment shifts toward chaotic evil.

GHOST LANTERN

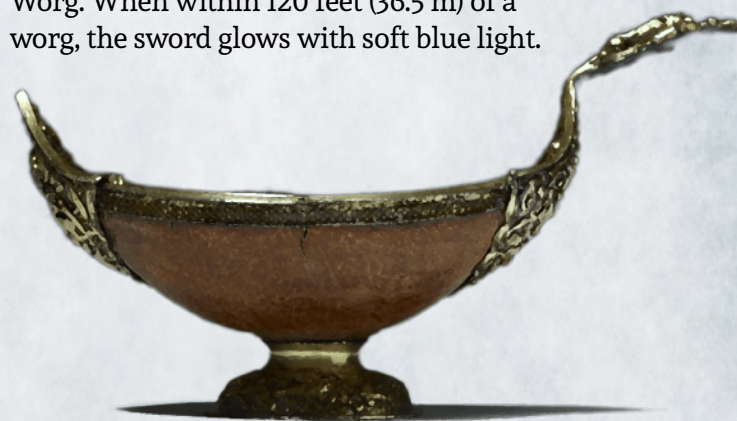
A *lantern of revealing* that *sheds* a ghoulish washed out blue-tinted light, the ghost lantern is forged of black iron that feels cool to the touch. When used to shed *dim light* it also reveals ethereal creatures like *ghosts*. The origins of the lantern are shrouded in *obscurity*, though it is believed Dr. Van Richten's contemporary Emilion Lacousto *wielded* the lantern in defeating the Phantom Army.

KOLCHYA'S KOVSH

This *alchemy jug* is a traditional drinking vessel in the *shape* of a boat, carved of buoyant wood with a gilded rim. In addition to the liquids an *alchemy jug* normally yields, it can produce 2 gallons (7.5 L) of blood, 2 gallons (7.5 L) of rat stew, 1 gallon (3.25 L) of green slime (see DMG pg. 105), or 1 ounce (30 mL) of salty paste which dissolves the hardened sap from the Gingerbread House's maple tree.

SORDJE'S SWORD

Sordje's sword is a *longsword* +1 with a handle fashioned of elk antler and the blade of cold iron (see pg. 23 for details on cold iron and shadow fey). It grants you the ability to speak and understand Worg. When within 120 feet (36.5 m) of a worg, the sword glows with soft blue light.



APPENDIX C

CHASE RULES

While the chase rules in the DMG are suitable for simple scenarios where an enemy flees a fight and initiative sequence carries on as normal, they may prove insufficient for a DM wanting a fast, dynamic, and tensely cinematic chase that involves quick decision-making and an opportunity for limited conflict between pursuer and prey. *The Beast of Graenseskov* includes several run-ins with the Beast that require evading it, and later on those tables may be turned if the PCs opt to hunt the Beast down. Sleigh races also may take place to beat the Beast to a location, or in a deal with the Latrova Vistani. In these cases, the following chase rules may provide a faster, more gripping scenario for the group.

1. The DM determines the starting gap and other conditions of the chase.
2. The chase should last between 3 to 6 rounds, which may be anywhere from a normal combat round to 20 minutes in length. It depends on the scale of the chase.
3. "Initiative" is side-based and determined by bidding on Difficulty of the "chase check."
4. At the start of each turn, each side makes a special group ability check (a "chase check") according to the nature of the chase.
5. One creature representing each side of the chase then rolls 1d12 on the Chase Events table, which may affect just that creature, all creatures on its side, or all creatures in the chase depending on the results. On the players' side, a different PC should handle this roll each round.
6. Creatures in the chase may opt to take actions or try unusual strategies, which may change their individual position.
7. This process repeats each round until the chase's end conditions are met, typically: finishing all rounds of the chase, the pursuers reduce the gap to 0, or the prey doubles the starting gap.

STARTING THE CHASE

Determine who is on which side of the chase. Generally, creatures are clumped together on their side, but a creature whose speed is different from others on its side by 10 or more, certain complications, and outlandish strategies may involve a creature being tracked separate from the rest of its side.

A good starting gap is twice the speed of most creatures in the chase (e.g. a mounted chase might start with pursuers and prey 120 ft. apart).

The DM determines other conditions of the chase, like visibility, cover, and line of sight. Especially if there are spellcasters with crippling spells like *hold person* or *sleep*, consider placing terrain that limits line of sight.

The DM determines how long the chase lasts. A good length is one round per PC, though the DM can also use other end game scenarios (see "Ending the Chase").

CHASE CHECKS

Each round, both sides makes a chase check, a group ability check that does not require creatures on the same side to use the same ability or skill. For example, during a foot chase through the woods, one creature might make a Strength (Athletics) check, while another makes a Wisdom (Survival) check to quickly navigate the path of least resistance. Which checks are permissible are left to the DM, though this is a great occasion to say "yes" to the players.

The Difficulty of this check begins at a value determined by the DM (e.g. 12), and is then increased via a bidding process by both sides. The side to bid the highest Difficulty chooses whether to go first or last.

If at least half the group succeeds, then that side may widen or close the gap by a number of feet equal to d10 per 10 feet of movement (rounding up). For example, a speed 25 halfling would 3d10 feet. Thus, it is possible for both pursuers and prey to succeed the chase check, causing the gap to widen and close on the same round.

ENDING THE CHASE

In the case of a chase to a safe haven of some kind, the chase ends when either the pursuers reduce the gap to 0, or the prey reach the safe haven by keeping the gap above 0 for the entire chase.

In the case of a race to a finish line, the race ends after the last round. However, who is pursuer and who is prey may change as the chasers jockey for the lead position.

In the case of a chase with no specific end point, instead of a set number of rounds, the chase ends when either the pursuers reduce the gap to 0, or the prey increases the gap to twice what it started at. Alternately, the chase might end if the prey deceive or hide from the pursuers.

Depending on how a chase ends, it could represent the prey being driven into a dead-end.

ACTIONS DURING A CHASE

During a chase, most creatures focus entirely on evasion or pursuit, and are assumed to take the Dash action each turn. However, a creature moving independently (i.e. not on the same horse or vehicle as another) may forgo taking the Dash action, in which case its position in the chase drops by an amount equal to its speed (or the speed of its mount). The creature is then free to take any action it pleases, such as making a ranged attack if it has line of sight.

Additionally, there are a few special actions unique to chases:

- Create a Complication
- Lookout
- Outmaneuver
- Reckless Sprint

Getting a Clear Shot

In situations where line of sight is in doubt, a Wisdom (Perception) check may be called for to determine whether a creature can get enough sustained line of sight to get a clear shot. This check should begin very hard (DC 25) or nearly impossible (DC 30), but each round the chase progresses the DC should lower by 5, representing creatures looking for an opening to take a shot or cast a spell.

CREATE A COMPLICATION

Creatures in a chase may be able to create a hazard or obstacle to afflict the opposite side as an action. The DM should adjudicate such situations on a case-by-case basis.

LOOKOUT

During a chase, creatures are assumed to be moving at a fast travel pace (-5 passive Perception). Additionally, in most chase scenarios opportunity attacks are not possible due to the focus required.

By taking the lookout action, the creature does not suffer this penalty to passive Perception and may take opportunity attacks as normal. In addition, the DM should provide forewarning of the next upcoming complication or chase event.

OUTMANEUVER

A creature may attempt to outmaneuver its pursuers or its prey.

For prey, this usually involves a Dexterity (Stealth) check opposed by the pursuer's passive Perception, though other checks may be possible at the DM's discretion. If successful, the prey may improve the cover available to their side by one degree for that round (i.e. no cover > half-cover > three-quarters cover > total cover).

For pursuers, this usually involves an opposed check associated with knowledge of the terrain, like Wisdom (Survival) or Intelligence (History), though other checks may be possible at the DM's discretion. If successful, the pursuer begins forcing the prey into a disadvantageous route, dictating which skill must be used in the chase checks next round.

RECKLESS SPRINT

Pushing itself (or its mount or vehicle) to the limit, the creature's gap closes or widens twice what it otherwise would that round. However, it suffers disadvantage on any ability checks to navigate chase events. At the end of the round, the creature must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or accrue a level of exhaustion.

CHASE EVENTS

d12	Chase Events
1	Convolved Terrain. Neither side has line of sight to the other this round, and the prey may attempt a group Dexterity (Stealth) check to hide from the pursuers, who make a group Wisdom (Perception) check. If the prey succeed, the chase ends as they can't be found. If the pursuers succeed, reduce the gap to equal to the average speed of the chasers.
2	Crowd/Herd. A group of creatures impedes the progress of that side. One or more characters on that side may attempt to influence the group to assist them (DM discretion), or clear a path, on a DC 13 check. On a failed check, the opposing side rolls to close or widen the gap.
3	Difficult Terrain. Creatures (determined by the DM's judgment) face difficult terrain, moving at half speed unless they have a means to circumvent or avoid the difficult terrain. The difficult terrain lasts the entire round.
4	Dilemma. The creature who rolled this result, and possibly others on its side, faces a dilemma: if they don't alter course to a harder path, something bad happens (e.g. innocents hurt, mounts or vehicles damaged, supplies lost, they're spotted by other enemies). This harder path might increase the DC of all checks by 2, require intermittent Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks to avoid falling, prevent line of sight, or change the chase's length.
5	Hazard. Some kind of hazard suiting the terrain requires all creatures on both sides to make a saving throw determined by the DM. A result of less than 10 results in "dangerous" damage, a result of 10-14 results in "setback" damage, and a result of 15 or higher indicates no damage. Refer to the Damage Severity and Level table in the DMG pg. 249.
6	Obstacle. A physical obstacle suiting the terrain bars passage. Each creature on that side must make a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) group check to surmount the obstacle. If the group check fails, the opposing side rolls to close or widen the gap.

d12	Chase Events
7	Opportunity. The creature who rolled this result can take an extra action that turn, though the DM should require the decision on how to use the action be made quickly. If the action is used to make a ranged attack, consider lowering the DC of the Wisdom (Perception) check required to get a clear shot.
8	Paths Converge. The creature who rolled this result and one creature on the opposing side of the DM's choice cross paths momentarily, coming into melee range. They can each make an attack against one another, before they are forced to resume their former gap by circumstance and terrain.
9	Risky Shortcut. A shortcut presents itself to the creature that rolled this result. It can pursue the shortcut alone or convince its side to follow. The creature makes a DC 13 ability check of the DM's choice to avoid whatever risk is associated with the shortcut. If the creature succeeds, it rolls twice to widen or close the gap. If it fails, however, the other side rolls twice instead.
10	Separated. The creature who rolled this result is somehow separated from the rest of its side. If prey, it begins tracking its gap from any pursuers breaking off to pursue it separately from the main chase. It must make a DC 10 Wisdom check to reunite with the rest of its side next round, otherwise it is on its own for the rest of the chase. If a pursuer, it must make a DC 10 Wisdom check or become lost and drop out of the chase.
11	Straightaway. Each creature in the chase can opt to push itself, closing or widening the gap by an amount equal to its speed. A creature pushing itself must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw; on a failure it accrues a level of exhaustion. Additionally, both sides have unobstructed line of sight to one another this round.
12	Twist. The basic conditions of the chase change. This may include adding creatures on either side (or perhaps adding a third side), swapping who is pursuer and prey, altering the end conditions of the chase, changing what will happen when the chase ends, or radically changing the environment, visibility, cover or line of sight.



GRAENSESKOV CHASE EXAMPLES

Convoluted Terrain

- Misty criss-crossing woodland trails
- Gully with many passages

Crowd/Herd

- Herd of spooked deer
- Pack of wolves (may join in chase)
- Vistani campsite

Difficult Terrain

- Dense gnarled woods
- Patches of ice or soft snow
- Steep hillside

Dilemma

- Wolves endanger an innocent nearby
- Mount is tiring, or sleigh is breaking up
- Pack of wolves lies ahead of direct path, but haven't yet noticed the PCs

Hazard

- Brambles and thorns (Strength)
- Trees weeping black acidic sap (Constitution)
- Unstable slope (Dexterity)

Obstacle

- 10-15 foot wide chasm, spanned by log
- Old logging site
- Narrow gap in between gully walls

Opportunity

- The mists part momentarily
- Ascending a rise gives a view of the scene

Paths Converge

- High road swoops down into low road
- Sliding down a slippery mossy hill
- Mists confound actual distances

Risky Shortcut

- Unsteady snowy embankment
- Downhill with a chasm below
- Log spanning waterfall pond

Separated

- Miniature avalanche
- Falling rotted trees
- Forest floor drops abruptly into gully

Straightaway

- Wicked bend of the woodland trail
- Ice-slicked hillside
- Tunnel carved through thick canopy

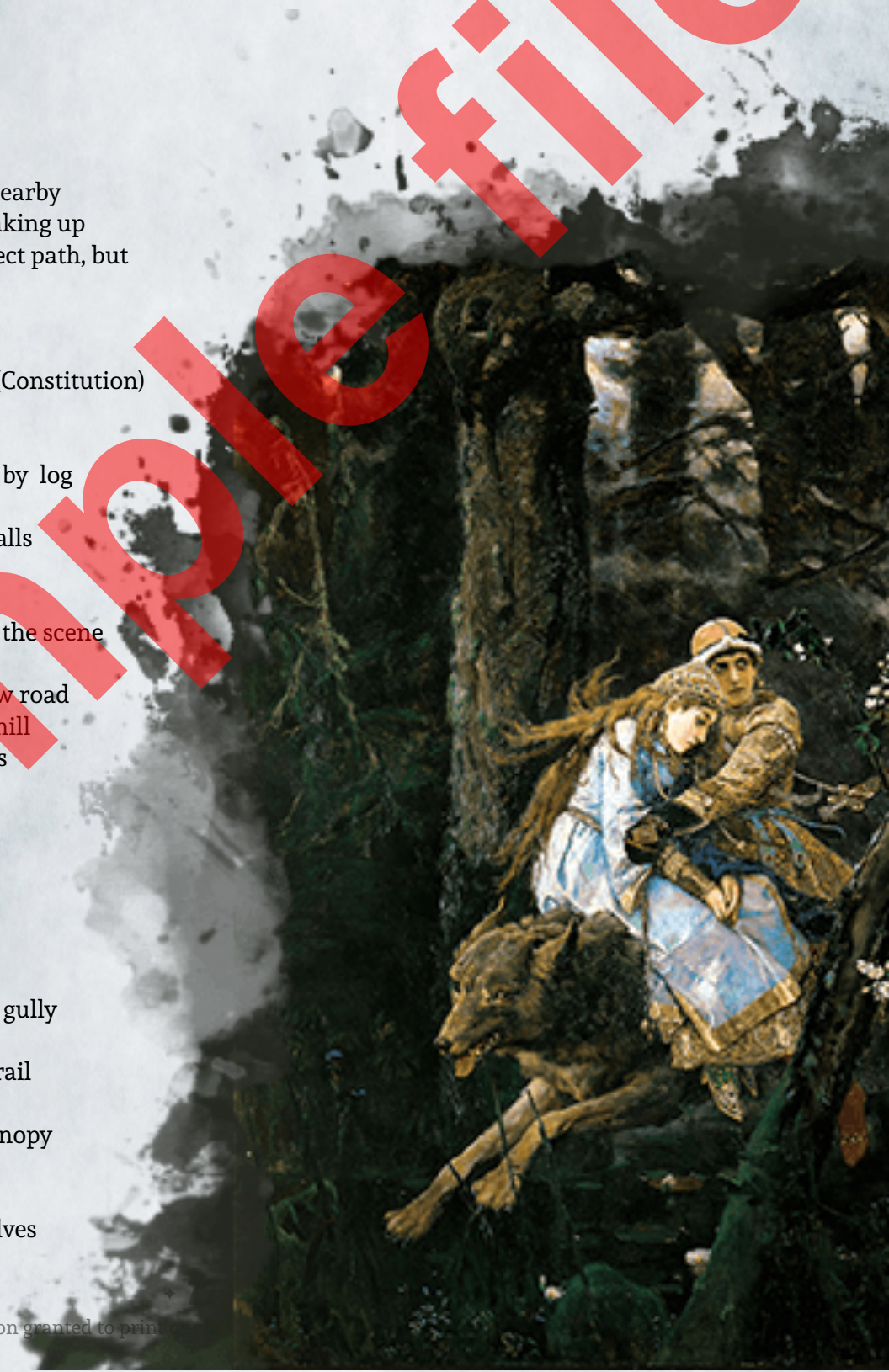
Twist

- Snow or opaque fog moves in
- Safe destination overrun by wolves

SLEIGH

Speed: 60 feet (equal to riding horses drawing it), can only move over snow and ice, ignoring any difficult terrain due to snow or ice.

Crew: 1 **Passengers:** 5 **Cargo:** 1/2 ton
HP: 50 **AC:** 11



APPENDIX D

FOLKTALES & HANDOUTS

BARKING PIET

Once upon a springtide, the boyar called a gathering of bards to lift the malaise that had fallen over his daughter Malena. No matter how pleasing the melody, or raucous the jig, nothing would stir the boyar's daughter. All she ever did was sigh and slip deeper into despair. Blaming the odious music of the bards, the boyar commanded each have his tongue burned by coals or his fingers eaten by pigs. Knowing the punishment that awaited should they fail, the bards stopped coming to Volchykrov Manor.

Years wore on and Malena became a young lady. Catching sight of her one day, the poor bard Piet swore he'd marry her, but he knew he had no talent with the viol and was sure to be tortured or killed. Sneakily following Malena on a walk through the woods, Piet spied her playing with a grey wolf, and the delight on her face enchanted him. Determined to learn the secret of how the wolf lifted Malena's spirits, Piet waited until she left and then laid a trap for the hound. Once he had the wolf in his snare, Piet held a sword to the wolf's neck and demanded to know how to make Malena laugh.

"Making Malena laugh is simplicity itself. You simply must get on all fours and bark and growl like a hound!" Explained the wolf with a smile.

The very next day, Piet put the wolf's teachings to practice, and sure enough Malena broke into unwitting laughter. Astonished, the boyar demanded that Piet return the next day to make his daughter smile. Piet returned to the wolf.

"Making Malena smile is easier than growing tulips," assured the wolf. "All you must do is respond to any question asked of you by barking."

Uncertain but undaunted, Piet returned to Volchykrov Manor and put the wolf's teachings to practice. So furious did the display make the boyar that it seemed certain he'd order Piet's head removed, but once Malena caught onto the trick, she smiled broadly and pointed out the

ruse to her father. Again, the boyar was astonished at his daughter's sudden cheer, and demanded Piet return one final day to make his daughter eternally happy. Piet went back to the wolf and explained his dilemma.

"Why, making Malena eternally happy is the simplest task of all, dear bard," explained the wolf with crossed paws. "You simply must behave like a wolf in every way. And, if you would be so kind, bring me to the boyar's manor so that I might enjoy life as your pet."

Distraught but determined, Piet brought the wolf to the manor. At first the guards wouldn't let him in, but Piet had a way with words and the wolf was on its best behavior. Before the boyar's court, Piet nervously acted like a wolf in every way. His performance was so convincing that Malena proposed her father should lead his men on a merry hunt of Piet! Glancing at the wolf nervously, Piet was uncertain, but the wolf gave him an encouraging nod.

So Piet ran and ducked and dodged and weaved, trying to escape the boyar's archers and hounds. The more he ran, the more like a wolf he became, and meanwhile the more like a man became the wolf. As it turned out, the man was a beautiful prince who'd been cursed into the form of a wolf by a wicked hag. Thus freed, he and his true love Malena were soon married.

And Piet? Though he escaped the boyar's huntsmen, he fell victim to the curse the prince had tricked him into taking on himself. Till this day Piet wanders the villages and byways of Barovia, still no better with the viol than he was, hiding his wolfish face behind a silver mask. However, his true identity is always revealed because Piet is only able to speak with the voice of a wolf, trapped by his own foolishness between being a wolf and being a man.

Morals: Beware who you trust.

Don't try to be like what you're not.

Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.

You can't please everyone.

You can't take the wolf out of the man.



SORDJE AND THE DIRE WOLF

There are two version of *Sordje and the Dire Wolf* — the commonly known popular version and the true version known only by Sordje's spirit.

POPULAR VERSION

Sordje the Justifier, the first boyar of the Graenseskov, was a close confidante of the von Zarovich family and general of their forces. Returning home from battle, he found a wolf pup wounded by a stray arrow. Weary of battle and taking pity on a creature, Sordje swooped the pup up in a bundle and carried it home. As fate would have it, the wolf was a dire wolf, feared by all inhabitants of the Graenseskov. In his later years, Sordje and the dire wolf pup were close companions, and though it was trained to love all the boyar's family and defend them, none trusted the dire wolf like Sordje.

One day, the von Zarovich nobles called upon their trusty general one last time to root out dire wolves plaguing the realm. Donning his old armor and bearing his old magic sword, Sordje took his dire wolf with him to face whatever evil was causing unrest among the dire wolves. After many dire wolves were slain, Sordje and his faithful companion reached the heart of an ancient werewolf's sanctuary. So old was the werewolf that its hair had turned silver and its eyes cloudy with age. "Have you come to kill me, boyar of the Graenseskov? Or have you come to return my wayward child?" Asked the werewolf, gesturing to Sordje's dire wolf companion.

Seeing the truth in the werewolf's words, Sordje sorrowfully said goodbye to his faithful companion, but made the werewolf swear to leave the settlements of the Graenseskov in peace. Thus, they struck a troth (agreement), and the dire wolf returned to its kind, and Sordje went home to live out his final days.

Ever since Sordje's sacrifice, the wolves of the Graenseskov have restricted their attacks to the wilderness, not venturing too close to manors, villages, and homesteads.

TRUE VERSION

The secret of Sordje's military success was an unholy pact made with two seemingly undying worg omen-bearers. In return for not interfering in the affairs of the worg's hag masters — the Grey Sisters — Sordje would be gifted with respect and victory in battle. For many years, Sordje thought he'd outsmarted the hags and reveled in his goof fortune. However, when he brought home the dire wolf pup his fortunes seemed to change. Try as he might to convince himself to return the dire wolf pup to the wild, Sordje grew to love the animal, trusting it as he trusted none other save his own flesh and blood.

Venturing to the Grey Sisters to learn why his fortune was failing him, Sordje implored them for an answer. The Grey Sisters told Sordje that by bringing a creature of the wild to be civilized he had intruded on the hags' demesnes, and to put matters right he must bring the dire wolf to the worgs who he'd made the deal with as a sacrificial offering of peace.

Tearful, Sordje did as the hags bid, bringing the dire wolf to the worgs, whereupon the worgs tore into the dire wolf's flesh and tore it to pieces. To Sordje's horror, a black worg crawled from the dire wolf's corpse, ushering in the completion of the Grey Sisters' ritual to give birth to Pretty Kolchya, the black annis and third of the sisters. Realizing he'd been tricked into serving the Dark Powers, Sordje swore vengeance upon the worg omen-bearers but could find them no more.

KOLCHYA'S RECIPE BOOK

- The notes at top left are about the additional properties of *Kolchya's kovsh*.
- The Rite of the Dark Wolf at top right describes how to attune to the *cursed wolfskin*.
- At the center is a description of the Curse of the Soul's True Form with clues on how to break the curse.
- The command word at bottom left activates the broom closet portal in the Gingerbread House.
- The riddle in the bottom right refers to the key to Kolchya's treasure chest hidden in the Grey Sisters' Tower, behind the archway's capstone.



Journal of Radke Iliev, beast hunter

Barovian Year 735

Countless reports by peasants and guards alike, and I feel no more certain of the nature of the Graenseskov Beast than before when the boyar hired me. I can only pray that my visit with the olde knight Lovrenk Kosar by Cailleach Falls bears more fruit. Owing to the Beast's great size, territory, and the influence it seems to exert over wolves of the region, I have limited my inquiry to four specimens of malevolent beasts surpassing the 'common' werewolf in cruelty.

DREAD WOLF (of unusual size)

The Vistani tell of witches who can animate undead wolves to serve as their eyes and will, by means of a foul ritual binding a shadow to a wolf corpse. Dread wolves regenerate all injuries like a troll and their bite inflicts a rotting disease which may cause madness. As the witch

controls the dread wolf, it may act according to the
It is feasible a powerful shadow could be bound



witch's intelligent designs.
to the corpse of a dire wolf.



GREATER WOLFWEARE

Children of Harkon Lukas, Lord of Kartakass, greater wolfweres are exceptionally cunning and charismatic, able to take the form of a man, large man-wolf, or dire wolf. The greater wolfwere resists weapons not crafted the old way of cold iron, and it has an allergy to wolfsbane.

Ancient enemy of werewolves, the greater wolfwere is a solitary creature opposed to humanity whose greatest weapon is its charming gaze and somnambulant song.

LOUP DU NOIR (skin-changer)

Dark sorceries allow the loup du noir to transform into a dire wolf by donning a magic wolfskin, though the price of this dark magic is a terrible bloodlust. The loup du noir cannot be harmed by weapons unless silvered or blessed; all others break against it. The wolfskin also fortifies it against magic, though a priest's benediction may be of use here. Whether solitary or in a pack, the loup du noir closely guards its magic wolfskin for without the skin, it is but mortal.



LOUP-GAROU

Fearsome creatures born of the union of two werewolves, loup-garou are thankfully rare and I've heard few tales of them beyond Barovia. The loup-garou can assume the form of a man, large man-wolf, and a worg or dire wolf. Like its lesser cousin, the loup-garou cannot be harmed by weapons unless silvered. Its bite inflicts lycanthropy and its howl makes the blood of men curdle while it evokes obedience in wolves. Some ancient feud between the loup-garou and wolfwere cause them to murder one another on sight.

Kovsh, kovsh, blessed be,
Gifts bestowing eternally:
Blood of one that need not rhyme,
Neither stew of rat, nor green slime.
But salty paste that sets us free,
Needs rhymes to break from
auld maple tree.



RITE OF THE DARK WOLF

The wolfskin may only be reborn in the blood of its former slave. A circle of smokeless flame must be lit under the moonlight, and the supplicant must stay awake through the night, focusing on the vengeance and wrath that makes it draw breath. Thereupon, in the morning it shall awaken blessed by the sign of the Dark Wolf.

Curse of the Soul's True Form

"You who've raised hand against my sister, I curse you to reveal your true self, turning against kith and kin. I curse you to show your monstrous self under the sign of the soul's true form."

Beware, pretty, the creatures who make the cursed ones kind, wise, temperate, and generous. They are enemies of the Curse.

Beware also the witches of accursed Hala who devise magic at cross-purposes to your sisters. The Curse will endure so long as how it came to pass is not inverted with a stroke of mercy.

Lastly, beware the fools who would claim the Curse as their own, for though surely great wickedness will come of them, the bloody boyar and those who harmed your sister may not be the ones who suffer as they should.

Beware. Beware. Beware.

LOCKED CHEST

I wear a cap,
but neither gnome nor man I be.
A poor troll too,
for I let men pass without a fee.
Keeping to my sister's house,
I am a watchful ghost.
Many pass beneath me,
but fall ones I like the most.



Be pretty, not forgetful!
The portal's command word is:
"Sisters three, sisters thrice,
I shall be with ye in a trice."

APPENDIX E

DESIGN NOTES

The Beast of Graenseskov is my love letter to Ravenloft® and I hope it provides your group with a several nights of great gaming. The adventure owes its creative origins to three rather different sources.

First, there is the historical tale of the Beast of Gévaudan which attacked hundreds of people in the Margeride Mountains of France during the 1760's. *The Beast of Graenseskov* borrows its basic premise from this tale.

Second, there is the 1819 Brothers Grimm fairy tale *Allerleirauh*, or Thousandfurs, which tells of a woman who escapes marriage to her wicked father by finding true love. No matter whether she wears fine dresses or a tattered fur cloak, her true love sees her for who she is. This motif influenced the NPCs Borje and Ruzina in *The Beast of Graenseskov*.

Third, there is the 2001 film *Brotherhood of the Wolf*, itself inspired by the Beast of Gévaudan. The unique mix of brooding horror, intrigue, a detective story, and fantastical action bled into my work on *The Beast of Graenseskov*.

DESIGN GOALS

Hopefully, I've crafted an adventure which emphasizes investigation, exploration, and role-playing. 1st-level characters can be particularly fragile, as groups running the *Death House* have found. While *The Beast of Graenseskov* certainly has climactic moments where death is possible, it focuses more on challenging the players' wits and decision-making skills. Do they trust the boyar? Is the risk of using the circlet of Hala worth the reward? How do they choose to lift the curse, if at all? These are the sorts of questions I hope the adventure evokes during play.

LEVELING UP & MILESTONES

Experience points in *The Beast of Graenseskov* can be broken down into four roughly comparable chunks: XP from quests, XP from random

encounters, XP from the Beast (loup du noir), and XP from Pretty Kolchya (black annis). My intention with *The Beast of Graenseskov* is that the PCs can gain XP for defeating the main villains — the Beast and the hag Pretty Kolchya — without necessarily engaging them in a fight to the death. That's one approach they can take, absolutely, but there are others like trapping or tricking the Beast or besting Kolchya in a riddling game.

For DMs using "milestone leveling", consider leveling the party up to 2nd level either after the wolf hunt (see "Special Events" in Chapter 1) or after they learn the Beast's identity. By the end of the adventure, after they break the curse or slay the Beast, the characters should reach 3rd or 4th level.

TREASURE

Treasure is scattered throughout the adventure, amounting to five rolls for treasure hoards on the Challenge 0-4 table in the DMG. In addition to silvered weapons, art objects, gems, and gold, the following magical items appear in *The Beast of Graenseskov*. Note that none of these items is "just a sword +1," rather each has a place within the adventure's story. If you decide to add or modify magical items in the adventure, keep in mind the gothic horror motif.

- 2 potions of healing and a potion of greater healing. One can be provided by Merje the Seeker and the other can be found in the font in the Graven Garden in Chapter 1, while the potion of greater healing can be brewed by Mirsada Latrova.
- 2 spell scrolls, a potion of climbing, dust of sneezing and choking, oil of slipperiness, and Kolchya's kovsh (an alchemy jug) can be found at the Gingerbread House in Chapter 3.
- Gloves of thievery can be found at the Tree-with-a-Swing in Chapter 1.
- Sordje's sword (a longsword +1) can be found within the Barrow of the Boyars in Chapter 1.
- The ghost lantern (a lantern of revealing) can be found by PCs exploring the Geist Caverns in Chapter 1 or during Chapter 2.
- The circlet of Hala (a headband of intellect) will be bestowed upon one of the PCs when they go to the Halan Witches' Circle in Chapter 2.

INDEX OF NPCs

NPC Name	Brief Description	Appears on...
Aco "Four Eyes" Koslov	Insidious vampire spawn merchant spying for Strahd, drinking companion of the boyar; potential victim of the Beast	p. 23 p. 44
Amaliza Latrova (dead)	Vistani mother of Ruzina, elder sister of Mirsada, "killed" by the boyar or died in childbirth depending on one's perspective	p. 19
Anya Stojanovic	A missing girl held captive by the hag Pretty Kolchya	p. 57
Black Dane	Vengeful captain of the Gorgon's Grin bandits	p. 15
Boyar Borje Volchykrov	Boisterous ruler of Volchykrov manor and a vassal of Strahd	p. 23
Boyar Claes Volchykrov (undead)	Former boyar who fought off barbarian invaders and bandits	p. 7
Boyar Sordje the Justifier (undead)	Spirit of the Graenseskov's first boyar cursed as a specter	p. 14
Ser Branimira Syrncevic	Bandit leader turned bodyguard for the boyars	p. 24
Bruno Herzeg (undead)	Early victim of the Beast whose severed head still speaks	p. 51
Ser Cedomir Volchykrov	<u>Cursed</u> son of the boyar and leader of the boyar's "knights"	p. 31
Cvetlana Volchykrov	Concealed hag-spawn daughter of Lagetha and boyar Borje Volchykrov	p. 24
Devishka of the Mists (?)	Hag who vanished during the boyar's attack on her coven	p. 16 p. 64
Dusan	Squire to Ser Cedomir and potentially a rabble-rouser	p. 10 p. 44
Eris Corvara	Vistani horse thief in league with the Gorgon's Grin bandits, who once loved Amaliza but abandoned her; imprisoned in manor barracks	p. 10 p. 45
Father Fiofan Kolotov	<u>Cursed</u> dwarven sage from the Mists who serves the boyar	p. 32
Iancu Silvertongue	Vistani camp trader missing his brother Iulia	p. 19
Ismark the Lesser	Son of Barovia's dead burgomaster, he is to marry Cvetlana; appears in <i>Curse of Strahd</i>	p. 9 p. 29
Iulian (undead)	Iancu's brother who ran off with the disguised Pretty Kolchya, and has been cursed as a poltergeist	p. 19 p. 59
Ivanka Stojanovic (dead)	A missing woman mourning her lost sons killed by the Beast	p. 28 p. 51
Jasna Federov	Widow of the murdered "knight" Jovich	p. 37
Jovich Federov (dead)	One of the boyar's "knights" murdered by the Beast	p. 22 p. 37
Katerina Volchykrov (undead)	Ghost of the boyar's wife slain by dire wolves	p. 19 p. 24



NPC Name	Brief Description	Appears on...
Krabka	Mongrelfolk in the boyar's court with a hidden <i>hag eye</i>	p. 24
Lagetha the Spinner (dead)	Green hag executed by order of the boyar; Cvetlana's mother	p. 6 p. 16
Lovrenk Kosar	Werewolf hermit fighting his curse, once loyal to the old boyar	p. 20 p. 45
Lubomir Pavlovic	Ox tender bitten by the Beast and under observation at infirmary	p. 22 p. 38
Merje the Seeker	<u>Cursed</u> priest of the old ways leading Halan witches	p. 33
Milvan, Rade, and Stanz Stojanovic (dead)	Three cousins of Ratimir Stojanovic who went out to <u>trap</u> the Beast only to meet their grisly end	p. 36
Mirsada Latrova	<i>Raunie</i> of the Latrova Vistani gifted with psychic ability to read <u>objects</u>	p. 18-19
The Noseks	Family tending the inn and stables who <u>witnessed</u> the Beast; include Stravko, Emilika, Evdoyika, and Jakso	p. 28 p. 36
Old Man Vykov	Caretaker of the Thousandfurs Bridge, whose eye was taken by hags	p. 17
The Pavlovics	Ox caretakers outside the <u>manor</u> and <u>witnesses</u> of the Beast; include Ilyan, Jagoda, Lubomir, and Stepjan	p. 36 p. 44
Pretty Kolchya	Black annis hag who <u>bestowed</u> the <u>curse</u> creating the Beast, sometimes uses the <u>disguise</u> of Lady Molot Kosti	p. 6 p. 60-61 p. 65
Pyotr Volchykrov (dead?)	The boyar's youngest son <u>sacrificed</u> to Strahd to appease his wrath	p. 7 p. 23
Radke Iliev (dead)	A monster hunter who was <u>hired</u> by the boyar to kill the Beast	p. 10 p. 15
Ratimir Stojanovic	Loyal <u>servant</u> of the Volchykrov aristocracy who feels betrayed by boyar's <u>inability</u> to handle the Beast; potentially a rabble-rouser	p. 28 p. 44
Ruzina Nostova	<u>Cursed</u> <i>giogota</i> blacksmith who is also the boyar's illegitimate daughter; potentially a rabble-rouser	p. 34
Stepjan Pavlovic	Eldest man at the manor, adopted Lubomir as a young man; potentially a rabble-rouser	p. 38 p. 44
The Stojanovics	Peasants serving the Volchykrovs for a long time and witnesses of the Beast; include Anya, Bozidar, Ivanka, Jelica, and Ratimir	p. 28
Vasilija Gavrauh	Half-elven caretaker of the ravens in the manor's rookery	p. 27
Vitomir Alkaev	A guilt-ridden merchant who the Beast tries to kill	p. 42-43



The Beast of Graenseskov

The Beast of Graenseskov is a 79-page **Ravenloft®** adventure for characters of 1st-4th levels focused on mystery and exploration. It can be used in conjunction with *Curse of Strahd*, either as an introduction to Barovia or adapted as a side quest, or it can be used as a stand-alone horror adventure-setting independently of *Curse of Strahd*.

In the mists at the edge of Count Strahd von Zarovich's realm lies the Graenseskov, a land of deep woods and bleak hills overrun with wolves. A Beast haunts these misty lands, leaving bloody corpses and terror in its wake, the product of a hag's curse placed upon the boyar's manor. But the Beast is no arbitrary killer. The PCs find themselves drawn into the mystery of uncovering the Beast's identity and breaking the hag's curse before the Beast's final victim gurgles their last breath and the Beast is beyond any hope of redemption.

Features:

- The DM (or the Tarokka) determines the guilty suspect and their motives, offering a different experience for each group's play-through.
- A vivid cast of characters with a NPC index.
- Escalating random encounters, special events, and techniques for DMing a mystery.
- New monsters: black annis hag & loup du noir.
- All units given in SI & metric.
- Handouts and maps for DMs and players.

