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Curse of Strahd: Reloaded

A Campaign Guide by /u/DragnaCarta

Chapter 3: Tser Pool Encampment

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Chapter 3: Tser Pool Encampment

Strands of Fate - The Railroad to Tser Pool

The Tarokka Reading is one of the most important components of the Curse of Strahd module. It drives the plot forward, invests the PCs in the lore and land of Barovia, and forms the backbone of a natural narrative between Strahd and the adventurers. It is critically important that your PCs are incentivized to receive a reading from Madam Eva soon after departing Barovia.

You can do so in one of the following ways:

- Ismark or Ireena hint that Madam Eva is a skilled diviner, and suggest stopping by her camp to receive insight into their future, or advice on how the PCs may depart Barovia.¹
- Madam Eva appears to the PCs in dreams, either before or during the campaign, and invites them to learn their fates face-to-face by Tser Pool, “where the mists do not cloud the Inner Eye.”
- One or more of the Vistani sisters at the Blood of the Vine tavern advise the PCs to visit Madam Eva to learn their fate in Barovia.
- The Vistani caravan in the *Mysterious Visitors* adventure hook guide the PCs directly to the encampment. *Warning: This will likely cause your PCs to skip over the Ismark & Ireena plotline, unless Madam Eva advises them to return to Barovia following their reading.*

¹ /u/paintraina, [What I have learned from running Curse of Strahd twice - Barovia and the road to Vallaki edition](#)

- As dusk begins to fall over the Svalich Road,² Ismark suggests making camp at Tser Pool, where he knows an encampment of Vistani keeps wild beasts at bay.³

Arrival at the Encampment

The Sound of Music - Vistani Camps

Feel free to use any, all, or none of the following tracks when your PCs are within or nearby a Vistani encampment:

- [Vistani Camps](#)

When the PCs approach the Vistani encampment, those with high passive perception can hear happy, festive music echoing from the trees toward Tser Pool.⁴

As soon as a Vistana catches sight of the approaching PCs, they call out to the party as though greeting a host of long-lost friends. The PCs are ushered into the camp and seated by the campfire where the Vistani provide them food and wine. The PCs find themselves thrust into a world of color, music, and laughter far removed from the bleakness and darkness of Barovia and Death House, respectively.

Two Vistani serve as the PCs' "handlers" while the party is at Tser Pool. The first is Arahja, a larger-than-life boisterous man whose laughter booms across the clearing. The second, Rina, is a quiet woman who speaks little; what she does say, however, is either profound or full of mischief. While other Vistani may greet and interrogate the PCs, Arahja and Rina will ask most of the questions, and provide most of the exposition.

The Vistani may ask the PCs any of the following questions:

- Where are you coming from?
- From where do you hail?
- Where are you headed?

The Vistani are happy to speak of their arrangement with Strahd. They have no opinion of Strahd's dominion over Barovia, and tend to keep out of his way. They do not warn the PCs about Old Bonegrinder, and if asked, refer to it as "the windmill-upon-the-hill."

At some point, Arahja should make a passive joke about the PCs' entrapment in Barovia. "Look at this one, Rina!" Arahja might say. "His skin is so tan! Almost like Vistani, himself, eh?"

Rina might reply: "Yes; show it off while you can, *giorgio*. The coming years without sunlight are sure to steal it from you."

² /u/MandyMod, [Fleshing Out Curse of Strahd: Tser Pool, the Vistani, and the Ultimate Tarroka Reading](#)

³ /u/cudder23, [DM question: Railroaded to Madame Eva?](#)

⁴ /u/cudder23, [DM question: Railroaded to Madame Eva?](#)

If asked, the Vistani somberly inform the PCs that no one leaves Barovia, and welcome them to their new home. The Vistani don't know how one might pass through the mists, but invite the PCs to ask Madam Eva for insight.⁵

Vistani of the Encampment

The Vistani are a joyful, cheerful people. They enjoy mischief, but honor hospitality above all else.

Their culture is bound up in an oral tradition - to a Vistani, a story is inseparable from the person who tells it. Because of this, Vistani culture is an ageless one; there is no separation between a youthful storyteller and a centuries-old story. Conversely, the stories of the present meld with the legends of the past in Vistani society. The Vistani at Tser Pool have seen dozens if not hundreds of adventurers find their deaths in Barovia, and expect the same to occur to the PCs. They are not, however, a morbid bunch (though dark humor is not uncommon), and are eager to add the tales of the PCs' past and future adventures to their oral mythologies.

The Vistani that tells the tale of the Wizard's Rebellion does so with an edge of mirth mixed with a tone of genuine awe. The PCs may find themselves unnerved by the fact that the Vistani view them not as heroes, but as doomed gladiators whose stories will spin the tales of a thousand entertainments.

Three families dominate the Tser Pool Encampment: the Funars; the Vasilles; and the Ig'ars.

1. The Funars

The Funars dwell in a large wagon painted in stripes of dark pink and bright yellow.⁶

The mother, Bela, is 26 years old. She is fat and loves jewelry, specializing in trading rare and exotic adornments at markets beyond Barovia. She married her husband, Lee, at age 16, and still adores him. They quickly - some say too quickly - had a baby, who they named Tara.

Lee is a 28 year old man. He is very skinny, hates exercise, and finds wine disgusting. He is very kind, and adores his children. Other Vistani secretly refer to him and his wife as "the Prats," but neither Lee nor Bela knows this.

Tara is a 10 year old girl. She doesn't show much interest in her mother's jewelry-making, and instead enjoys playing the flute. She is quite good for her age, and often warms up crowds with her music. Her brother, Baby Karol, is a 6-month-old boy who constantly drools.

2. The Vasilles

⁵ /u/MandyMod, [Fleshing Out Curse of Strahd: Tser Pool, the Vistani, and the Ultimate Tarroka Reading](#)

⁶ /u/Blasted_Skies, [Random Vistanis](#)

The Vasiles live in a bright orange wagon with blue doors and shutters.⁷

Grigori Vasilie is a 40-year-old strapping man with a plethora of tattoos. He has had many relationships, but has never been married. Some say that no woman's cooking has ever lived up to his mother's, but in truth, he fears commitment, and so continues to live with his mother and brother. He and his brother are excellent actors, with Grigori often playing the villain.

Stefan is Grigori's 35-year-old younger brother. His first lover cheated on him, and he never quite got over it. He loves apples, and can often be found munching on one as a snack. He serves Strahd as a spy. As a younger man, he was cast in plays as the handsome prince, but has grown too old to serve in that role.

Ursula is the 60-year-old mother of Grigori and Stefan. Her husband, Varus, died many years ago, but she was secretly glad because he became cruel in his later years. She doesn't mind her boys living with her because otherwise she would be lonely, but she does wish that they would grow up a bit. She enjoys reading romantic tales, but finds them difficult to come by.

3. The Ig'ars

The wagon of the Ig'ars is painted with children's drawings.⁸

Eliza Ig'ar is a 40-year-old woman with dark hair and green eyes. She feels uncomfortable without her "face" of makeup, and spends at least an hour preparing it each morning. She loves children, and especially enjoys bossing them around. She is a renowned storyteller at the encampment, and is the Vistana that tells the story of the Mage's Rebellion around the campfire.



Plot Hook - Picking Up a Present

As the party is preparing for bed, Eliza approaches one of the PCs. She carries a large magpie on her shoulder, and a bright red sash. She greets the PCs warmly, and notes that few non-Vistani outsiders come to Barovia - after all, only one group has ventured into Barovia since the Mage. She asks the PCs whether they are powerful mages come to tear down the stones of Ravenloft, like the last notable visitor.

Eliza does not suspect Ireena's true identity, but is a spy for Strahd. She seeks to uncover the nature of the PCs' abilities and backgrounds, and intends to report their goals and current destination. To conceal this, however, she uses a cover story: Eliza's niece's nameday is approaching, and she is unable to purchase the girl's gift herself, both due to her own familial commitments and the ban of Vistani from Vallaki. She asks the PCs if they are heading toward Vallaki, and offers a payment of 25 gold pieces if they purchase a toy for the girl - Arabelle - from Blinsky's Toys in Vallaki and deliver it to Luvash in the Vistani encampment outside town. She offers a brief note addressed to Luvash as a token to gain entry into the camp.

⁷ /u/Blasted_Skies, [Random Vistanis](#)

⁸ /u/Blasted_Skies, [Random Vistanis](#)

After speaking with the PCs, Eliza retires to her wagon. Her magpie, an intelligent, but cruel bird named Gurgeh, whose name means "Darkwing," is sent off into the night soon after midnight, a message tied to its leg addressed to Rahadin. That message contains all of the knowledge she has gained regarding the PCs' capabilities, backstories, intentions, and destinations. This message may serve to set up a Strahd-directed encounter on the road to Vallaki (e.g., a meeting with Vasili von Holtz).

A DC14 Wisdom (Insight) check can reveal that Eliza is not being completely forthright with the PCs. The "Arabelle's nameday" trick is one that she has practiced with Luvash and Arrigal several times; most times, the Vistani brothers are able to steal away the 25 gold pieces from Blinsky's shop and eventually return them to her. However, both brothers play along with the charade while with the PCs, and Blinsky is happily ignorant of his role in the ruse. If challenged by the PCs, Eliza "reveals" that she is estranged from her brother, and has been barred from visiting Arabelle in person, which is why she requires adventurers to do it for her. She refuses to divulge any more information on their "argument."

Iosif, Eliza's husband, is a 43-year-old man with golden hair. He plays the lute and usually plays the trickster in plays. He also loves children and loves taking them on adventures.

Sofya is 15-year-old sullen teen girl with golden hair and green eyes. She spends most of her time in the family's wagon, writing poetry. She dreams of becoming a published poet. Despite repeated requests to attempt "spoken word poetry" at shows, her parents have thus far refused each time. She is considering spying for Strahd, and views him as a grand romantic.

Nicu is a 13-year-old boy with dark hair. He follows his father everywhere and is currently learning the lute from him. He dreams to one day play the part of the trickster like his father.

Simione is an 8-year-old boy with red hair. He loves dancing and will rush out of the family's wagon no matter the hour if he hears people playing music outside.

Lil' Rosie is a 5-year-old girl. She is always excited and adores listening to Sofya's poetry. Eliza and Iosif have a hard time getting her to sit still to learn her letters and numbers.

Madam Eva's Tent

The Sound of Music - Madam Eva's Tent

Feel free to use any, all, or none of the following tracks when your PCs are within Madam Eva's tent:

- [Madam Eva's Tent](#)

When the PCs approach Madam Eva's tent, she calls for them to enter before they even announce themselves. She addresses each of the PCs by name without needing an introduction, and uses their full birth name instead of nicknames.

When the party has been ushered inside and is sitting around her table, she proclaims, "It took you all long enough! I have been expecting you. Are you ready to learn your fate?"

If the PCs ask how she knows them, Madam Eva tells them that her cards grant her sight into the Threads of Fate that bind all things. Her Inner Eye, she tells them, told her that champions were coming to the land and that she would guide them on their path.⁹

After the Tarokka reading, Madam Eva shoos the party from her tent and tells them to go and have fun. The night proceeds festively, with more wine and laughter. The Vistani happily provide their guests with some bedrolls and a spare tent.¹⁰

The Tarokka Reading

To combat memory issues and solidify the story's narrative arc, you may want to allow the players to keep their cards after they have drawn them. You may also choose to provide the players with written notes containing the exact wording for each one of Madam Eva's predictions.¹¹

It is recommended whether you stack the deck or not that you practice the Tarokka reading in order to hone your acting, sleight-of-hand, and reading of the results. You may also choose to prepare additional reactions for Madam Eva depending on the cards drawn. A nearby treasure may be accompanied by an encouraging hint; a distance, challenging treasure may be paired with a despondent sigh and a suggestion to pursue it last. You may also choose to add additional information that strongly hints to the location of more ambiguous hiding places. For example, a treasure hidden in Sergei's crypt may be paired with a warning that it rests beneath "the Devil's tower itself."

Feel free to use additional props, such as dimmed lights, a crystal ball, or a black velvet cloth. To heighten apprehension, Madam Eva waits for absolute silence before revealing each card. Above all else, your goal is to make this Tarokka reading feel special, atmospheric, and memorable.¹²

⁹ /u/MandyMod, [Fleshing Out Curse of Strahd: Tser Pool, the Vistani, and the Ultimate Tarroka Reading](#)

¹⁰ /u/MandyMod, [Fleshing Out Curse of Strahd: Tser Pool, the Vistani, and the Ultimate Tarroka Reading](#)

¹¹ Eidolon108 & Ryan Veeder, [How do I make the Tarokka Deck reading in Curse of Strahd suitably dramatic?](#)

¹² Eidolon108 & Ryan Veeder, [How do I make the Tarokka Deck reading in Curse of Strahd suitably dramatic?](#)