

Foreshadowing in 4-2:

- Emphasize the Vistani's prediction of a murderous winter.
- The furs and skins they find at the camp won't be enough -- not for the village, not for the Vistani.

Spooky Set-Up:

- A couple weeks have passed since the unfortunate business with Alina and Laszlo. The PCs have spent that time in Orasnou, waiting out the worst of the winter. Also, where else are they gonna go?
- There's a lot of talk among the locals at the Seven Tables (basically the only place to hang out around here) about the winter weather. Many say that Strahd must be angry, but debate *why*. One woman is positive that the runaway wolf pup was somehow Strahd's offspring, and now he's seeking him. One man blames the Vistani, whom he's sure have cursed Orasnou for reasons unknown.
- The gossip is interrupted by the unmistakable sound of fingernails on the inn's chalkboard. Marku Grelon, the grizzled old innkeeper, growls:
 - Quiet, the lot of you! None of you's old enough to remember the old legends, but *I* am. I'll tell you what's brought this damnable winter upon us: *love*.
 - (Everyone settles in. They know Marku's about to launch into another one of his stories.)
 - Long years ago, before I was a boy, there was a handsome young man of noble birth named Sergei. His was a life lived in the shadow of his two older brothers, and many was the time that Sergei stood by while they won fame, glory, and the favor of desirable noblewomen. But there came a day when Sergei's eye fell upon a simple peasant girl named Tatyana -- Tatyana Federovna. Tatyana was possessed of surpassing beauty, both within and without. Good-hearted and selfless, she was a beacon light to Sergei. He lavished her with gifts and affection in equal measure. For her part, Tatyana could not reject his attentions, not because of his higher station, but because she knew that she alone saw Sergei for the man he was.
 - Before long the two were to wed in a sumptuous ceremony at Castle Ravenloft -- for such was Sergei's ancestral home. But this is Barovia, my friends, and in this land, happiness, as we know all too well, is an elusive quarry. It seems that Sergei's oldest brother also had eyes for Tatyana -- and when Strahd Von Zarovich wants something, as we also know, he will not be denied. On her wedding day, my Lord Strahd told Tatyana of his desire, but she remained faithful to her beloved Sergei. So Strahd removed this obstruction... by murdering his younger brother. On the parapets of Castle Ravenloft, my Lord again approached Tatyana, pleading that his desire was so great that he was driven to kill Sergei to win her heart. Horrified, grief-stricken, and cornered, Tatyana saw only one way out. She leapt from the parapet to her death, denying Strahd his prize.
 - It is my belief that somewhere in our little village is something that once belonged to Tatyana. I've not seen it, nor do I know what it is, but I assure you, my friends,

my Lord Strahd is seeking it. It is his only connection to Tatyana. She was the one thing in life he desired but could not have, and I do not doubt that he desires her still. Mark my words: This evil winter he sees fit to bring us will not abate until this object is found.

- (low rumbling thunder)
- Okay, so where could this thing be?
 - The Eyes of Midnight has all kinds of weird junk. Could Fillar have it in his shop? His wares are both too unusual and too plentiful to have been legitimately obtained. I mean, there's kinda nothing around here. Perhaps the fancy newcomer Arik Lavus sold it to him after one of his sojourns abroad.
 - They say the Burgomaster has all kinds of valuables in his cellar. He's collected many valuables from the villagers in the name of taxation -- much of which has no doubt gone to line his fat pockets. Could it be that the gift is among them?
- Note: You may notice that Marku's story doesn't jibe with the account given of these events in *Curse of Strahd*. That's fine -- he's telling a story that was passed down to him, a local legend. It doesn't have to be true. It just has to get the players moving. His version of events also seems to indicate that Strahd IX is the same as Strahd I, which *is* true but not common knowledge. How does he know this? Who knows! It's not super important, but it's also not beyond plausibility that he, for whatever reason, has inherited some insider knowledge about Barovia.

Combat Encounters:

- Town Square: Undead shamle through while a bunch of ravens burst from the tree and attack.
- Vaduva Home (or wherever it makes sense for the final encounter to be): Laszlo himself! When he's defeated, the Dark Powers take him, so he's not dead-dead.

The Burgomaster Job Set-Up:

- This almost *completely* rewrites the adventure's intended plot, so it's a more extreme solution, but it works. If you don't mind deviating significantly, give it a shot.
- Only for parties of a fairly larcenous/criminal bent. Or those who are interested in sticking it to The Man.
- Arik approaches the PCs directly, telling them he'd like them to procure something from the Burgomaster's cellar while the man's away -- specifically, a hat box. Or maybe he just tells them to get the powderbox, because how would he know it's in a hat box? Some groups will get fixated on a detail like this, while others will gloss right over it. Anyway, he says it's a family heirloom and the Burgomaster has no right to it.
 - And/or: Gregori mentions to them what a relief it is to have the Burgomaster out of town -- he's been taxing the citizenry something fierce, but his absence has given them something of a respite. He goes on to tell them about all the things the Burgomaster's tax collector has taken in lieu of actual money, with an angle that emphasizes the injustice of it all. "As if it's not bad enough that this cursed winter may mean the death of us! What kind of man taxes a *child*?"

- Let's say the PCs do this. I mean, we've come this far, right? Anyway, they get down there and the scene is as-written. Fillar's just been here and gotten to the powderbox first.
- If they tell Arik about this, he mutters "Fillar!" through clenched teeth and tells them it's probably in the Eyes of Midnight. He'd steal it from Fillar himself, but he doesn't want to jeopardize their business relationship, which is otherwise very lucrative. So... maybe the PCs could talk him into handing it over instead? Like, with extreme prejudice. He tells them to meet him at the Vaduva home, but doesn't call it that -- just describes where it is. (The PCs aren't from here and don't know whose home that is; they'll *never* put it together. That's his thinking, anyway.)
- Insert a combat encounter in the town square somewhere around here. This isn't strictly necessary, but a) it makes use of the Town Square map, b) there isn't much in the way of combat to be had here otherwise, and c) it breaks things up a bit.
- If the PCs break into the Eyes of Midnight, probably at night, they're surprised by Fillar, in raven form, returning to the place with some more goodies. He's not interested in fighting.
- If they get to talking to Fillar about this, and the idea here is that they would, it turns out he knows more about Arik than anyone in town. He warns the PCs about Arik -- namely, that he's a wight, and extremely dangerous -- and tells them that he suspects he's in service to the Dark Powers. If he wants this powderbox that badly, it can't be for a good reason. Furthermore, he suspects the goods that Arik brings him are from people he's killed -- adventurers from afar, much like the PCs. Even if they give him what he wants, he'll no doubt kill them.
 - Why hasn't he said anything about getting all these dead-people things? Well, he's turned a blind eye for the sake of his business. And also, they're so shiny! Look at this stuff.
 - The players may hear this and say, "Huh. Maybe we should kill Fillar and take that powderbox for ourselves." I... don't have a *great* answer for this, because my players usually aren't quite so sociopathic, but emphasizing that anything of interest to the Dark Powers probably isn't safe to get involved with *may* help. In fact, Fillar tells them he'll keep it safe tonight, and then the next day his shop's been ransacked and there's no sign of him.
 - Fillar knows the powderbox is unusually valuable, but not its importance otherwise. He's hidden it in his secret stash, which is somewhere other than his shop, and Arik obviously doesn't know where it is. (The adventure doesn't exactly say what Arik does with the powderbox once he gets it, but as per 4-4 he hasn't delivered it yet, so there's no reason he has to have it yet in 4-3. And since the PCs can't get it either, as-written, worst-case scenario, he finds it between adventures.)
- As alluded to in the adventure, Arik can only do so much to keep his wight-ness in check. So when the PCs meet up with him to deliver the news, or however it is that they end up meeting with him at the Vaduva house, he wights out and attacks. There's really any number of reasons for a fight here. If Arik alone isn't enough of a threat, throw in

some undead adventurers -- some of the adventurers he'd killed previously. But let the combat run its course.

- If all of the undead besides Arik are killed, Arik is reclaimed by the Dark Powers, vanishing in a cloud of black smoke and free to appear in later adventures.
- If Arik is killed (and subsequently reclaimed) before the other undead, they all fall inert.
- If it's important to you that they find out that Arik is Laszlo, when they encounter him in the house, he angrily confronts them -- one of those "You fools have failed me for the last time!" speeches -- and tears off his hat of disguise, revealing himself before the combat begins (and he wights out).
 - Alternately, when he's "taken up" and vanishes, he could momentarily show his true self as part of that -- I mean, he leaves his hat behind, so it makes sense -- but that could easily be too little, too late and end up feeling unsatisfying. By then it's too late for them to interact with him or anything. For my money, this is only really an option if you're planning to run 4-4 with the same group, because spoilers.