

THE BEAST OF GRAENSESKOV

DM's CHEAT SHEET

This cheat sheet provides tips for running *The Beast of Graenseskov*, including quick prep, a clue checklist (page 1-2), using the tarokka (pages 3-5), tips on running the Beast (page 5), and a decision point flowchart (page 6).

DM QUICK PREP

1. **Basics:** Familiarize yourself with the basics of the adventure, the Beast, the curse, and the Graenseskov region as described on pages 5-7 and 11-12.
2. **The Beast:** Decide which of the four suspects begins as the Beast in your tale, referring to pages 7-9 and 31-35 to make your decision. Alternately, you can draw from the Tarokka deck to determine the Beast and its motives.
3. **Adventure Hook:** Choose an adventure hook for the party from the options listed on pages 9-10:
The County's Bounty sets up Strahd as an early patron of the PCs.
A Groom's Dilemma provides connection between Barovia and Volchykrov Manor, and introduces Ismark the Lesser.
A Hunter's Letter ties the PCs to the monster hunter Radke Iliev.
Madame Eva's Reading works best for PCs already in Barovia.
A Squire's Plight works best for PCs new to Barovia.
A Vistani's Gambit ties the PCs to Eris Corvara, a Vistani smuggler and horse thief, fated to be imprisoned by the boyar.
4. **Curse of Strahd:** If you're using this adventure in conjunction with *Curse of Strahd*, consider whether you want to use it to introduce the PCs to Barovia at 1st level, or if you want to run it after *Death House* (or other starting point of your choice) once they're around 3rd level.
5. **Starting the Adventure:** If you want to jump straight to the heart of the adventure, narrate the PCs arriving at Volchykrov Manor and being their audience with the boyar (pg. 22).

CLUE CHECKLIST

Clues come in three varieties: **critical clues** which require no check to discover, simply investigating the corresponding area or NPC is sufficient; **special clues** (a variety of critical clue of which only one is used corresponding to the Beast's identity); and **secondary clues** which are helpful but not necessary to solve the mystery.

CRITICAL CLUES

- ☐ Jovich's cowardice nearly cost Cedomir victory and life
- ☐ Jovich was one of the manor-folk who stoned Fiofan
- ☐ Jovich left offerings to Pretty Kolchya, Merje's nemesis
- ☐ Jovich stood by when wolves killed Ruzina's adoptive mother
- ☐ The boyar is Cedomir's alibi for the feast day...unless Cedomir is the Beast, in which case he has no alibi, claiming he was butchering a goat for the feast
- ☐ Fiofan has no alibi for the boyar's feast day, claiming he was at the rookery tower tending ravens
- ☐ Merje has no alibi for the boyar's feast day, claiming he was performing a sacrifice in the woods
- ☐ Ruzina has no alibi for the boyar's feast day, claiming she was sulking at the smithy after an argument
- ☐ Cedomir lost a molar due to an infection as a boy
- ☐ Fiofan had a molar knocked out when he was stoned
- ☐ Pretty Kolchya stole Merje's molar while he slept
- ☐ Ruzina claims Ser Branimir knocked out her molar while sparring, and out of guilt Branimir backs up this story
- ☐ Cedomir knows trapping and location of underground stream
- ☐ Fiofan devised a contact poison simulating running water
- ☐ Merje transcribed a scroll of control water
- ☐ Ruzina knows trapping and location of underground stream

OPTIMIZING THE ADVENTURE

If you have a customizable GM screen, such as the landscape version of The World's Greatest Screen (Hammerdog Games), you can slip pages 5-6 into the screen. You can print pages 1-2 as a checklist for keeping track of which clues the players have discovered in *The Beast of Graenseskov*.

SECONDARY CLUES

- ☐ Q&A with the boyar

Track and sign

- ☐ Track and sign indicates wolves are abnormally aggressive
- ☐ Track and sign indicates wolves preferentially attack the throat
- ☐ Track and sign indicates wolves will eat human flesh
- ☐ Track and sign indicates the wolves' alpha is dire wolf-sized

Cursed Wolfskin

- ☐ All the suspects' cloaks radiate transmutation magic if viewed with *detect magic*

Sites in the Graenseskov

- ☐ Brass key to chest hidden in Grey Sisters' Tower
- ☐ The ritual burning of a dire wolf's heart at the Graven Garden
- ☐ Urn of Amaliza Latrova's ashes invisible in the Graven Garden
- ☐ Hags took Old Man Vykov's eye, hinting at the *hag eye*
- ☐ Picking up the "trail of sweets" at the Tree-with-a-Swing
- ☐ Amaliza Latrova's sad fate
- ☐ Pretty Kolchya uses the alter-ego of Lady Molot Kosti
- ☐ Curse bundle stashed in the wolves' den

Raunie's Object Readings

- ☐ Object reading: Beast's molar tooth
- ☐ Object reading: Cold iron greataxe
- ☐ Object reading: *Cursed wolfskin*
- ☐ Object reading: *Ghost lantern*
- ☐ Object reading: *Hag eye*
- ☐ Object reading: old cradle in manor
- ☐ Object reading: Pretty Kolchya's dream bundle
- ☐ Object reading: *Sordje's sword*

Faces of the Manor

- ☐ Aco is actually a vampire spawn spying for Strahd
- ☐ Cvetlana is actually the hagspawn daughter of Lagetha
- ☐ Erelida is actually working with Pretty Kolchya towards the boyar's downfall, and Ljerka gathers components for the hag
- ☐ Krabka's eye is actually the *hag eye*
- ☐ Truth from Katerina's ghost about how Cedomir orchestrated her death at the jaws of dire wolves

Areas of the Manor

- ☐ Lycanthropy "remedy" in Fiofan's alchemy lab
- ☐ Old scrolls about Fiofan's lycanthropy in the boyar's bedroom
- ☐ Floorboard compartment in Ruzina's bedroom in smithy
- ☐ Radke Iliev's secret note under mattress of his room at the inn

The Cursed Suspects

- ☐ Cedomir is plotting to overthrow his father the boyar
- ☐ Fiofan was stoned to death and resurrected by the Dark Powers
- ☐ Merje is hunting a suspected hagspawn at the manor
- ☐ Ruzina's true parentage (Amaliza Latrova and the boyar)

Peasants of the Graenseskov

- ☐ Noseks report the Beast has grown more cunning
- ☐ Pavlovics report strange cloak-like pattern in snow
- ☐ Stojanovics report weapons didn't hurt the Beast

The Knight's Murder

- ☐ Exhuming Jovich's corpse to see throat precisely torn out
- ☐ *Speak with dead* with Jovich's corpse to learn Beast spoke to him

The Bite Victim

- ☐ Lubomir, the bite victim, has no signs of lycanthropy or rotting disease, and his madness is unrelated to disease

The Hunter's Trail

- ☐ Lovrek Kosar is a werewolf, but not the Beast
- ☐ The witch Finka Franic's command word revealing scene of Radke Iliev making map in Gingerbread House playroom painting
- ☐ Radke Iliev's corpse and the *ghost lantern* in the Geist Caverns

The Witches' Circle

- ☐ Vision granted by the *circlet of Hala* during attunement ceremony

Lair of the Beast

- ☐ Optional cave painting clues (see p. 51 for details)

The Gingerbread House

- ☐ Faded toy in the playroom is a clue about the Beast's identity
- ☐ Anya Stojanovic's revelation that Erelida works for the hag

Folktales & Handouts

- ☐ The true story of *Sordje and the Dire Wolf*
- ☐ *Radke Iliev's Hunting Journal*
- ☐ *Pretty Kolchya's Recipe Book*

USING THE TAROKKA

You can use an actual Tarokka deck (like the one produced by GaleForce 9 or found in the old *Forbidden Lore* AD&D boxed set), adapt a deck of playing cards, or roll dice to determine the identity of the Beast and its motives. This result also can be used to determine the location of both the Beast and the hag Pretty Kolchya when the PCs arrive at their respective lairs.

Tarokka. 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.

Playing Cards. To simulate this Tarokka reading using regular playing cards, remove all face cards and Jokers but keep the Aces. The suits are then interpreted as follows: Coins - Clubs, Glyphs - Hearts, Stars - Diamonds, and Swords - Spades. Turn over one card and interpret using the corresponding table.

Dice. To simulate this Tarokka reading using dice, roll a d4 to determine the suit (the identity of the Beast), followed by a d10 to determine the card (the Beast's primary motive in the adventure). Refer to the corresponding table.

1 — Coins (Ruzina Noskova)

1. 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.

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

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

4. 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.

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

1 — Coins (Ruzina Noskova)

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

2 — Glyphs (Merje the Seeker)

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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*.

4. 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.

5. 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.

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

7. The Anarchist. Merje plans to root out the corruption in Volchykrov 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.

2 — Glyphs (Merje the Seeker)

8. 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.

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

10. 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.

3 — Stars (Father Fiofan Kolotov)

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

3 — Stars (Father Fiofan Kolotov)

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

10. 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.

4 — Swords (Ser Cedomir Volchikrov)

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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*.

6. 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.

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

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

Where is the Beast?

d4	Tarokka suit	The Beast's location
1	Coins	The Beast is tending to mundane affairs at the manor, where it will spend the night.
2	Glyphs	The Beast is visiting another area of the Graenseskov, and won't return until sunset or sunrise.
3	Stars	The Beast is out hunting and killing, and it will return in 1d6 x 10 minutes.
4	Swords	The Beast is in its lair, mostly keeping to Areas, 3, 5 and 6.

Where is Pretty Kolchya?

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 Graenseskov, 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.

RUNNING THE BEAST

As the recurring villain, the Beast needs to be handled carefully. In particular, the DM should (1) demonstrate its unique character corresponding to the NPC that is the Beast, and (2) provide at least one early encounter between the Beast and the PCs before they are aware of its nature and equipped with blessed or silver weapons. Such encounters are not meant to be a fight to the death, rather an

opportunity for the PCs to learn about the Beast and its capabilities. Either have the Beast stick strictly to whatever its objective is in the scenario or provide the PCs with a means to escape it (e.g. using the chase rules in **Appendix C** to reach safety). Possibly early encounters with the Beast include:

- Random encounter with the Beast as it hunts.
- Stumbling across its lair while exploring the Graenseskov.
- Geist Caverns, where it attempts to trap the PCs within and let the geists destroy their minds.
- During the “Sleigh Ride of Slaughter.”

SER CEDOMIR, THE POLITICAL BEAST

Cedomir (♂ HUMAN **THUG**, NE) is a self-aggrandizing bastard whose disdain for his father grows stronger. His preferred victims are knights who behave cowardly or are loyal to his father, NPCs who sacrificed Pyotr to Strahd, and those who humiliate or embarrass him.

FATHER FIOFAN, THE QUESTING BEAST

Fiofan (♂ DWARF **SPY**, LN) grows dangerously obsessed with discovering his missing memories. His preferred victims are “invaders from the Mists,” NPCs with-holding information about Fiofan's past or leveraging it against him, and NPCs who stoned him to death.

MERJE THE SEEKER, THE WILD BEAST

Merje (♂ HUMAN **DRUID**, CN) grows spiteful and disdainful of the ‘civilized’ manor. His preferred victims are anyone in league with or appeasing Pretty Kolchya (including Cvetlana), NPCs who disrespect the “Old Ways” of witchcraft, and those who needlessly slaughter wolves, werewolves, or mongrelfolk.

RUZINA NOSTOVA, THE GUARDIAN BEAST

Ruzina (♀ HUMAN **SCOUT**, N) grows increasingly brash and aggressive towards the manor-folk. Her preferred victims are the rich and corrupt, NPCs who've harmed her family or stood by while her mother was mauled by dire wolves, and those who know too much about her smuggling weapons to the Vistani.

DECISION POINTS FLOWCHART

Do the PCs stop the wolf hunt? (p. 29)

No. The polymorphed hunters are killed.

Yes. The polymorphed hunters are saved.

Do the PCs prevent Cvetlana's transformation? (p. 29)

No. Cvetlana turns into a green hag at her wedding.

Yes. Cvetlana remains human and likely marries Ismark.

Do the PCs help Vitomir escape? (p. 42-43)

No. Vitomir dies. Barovian merchants distrust the PCs.

Yes. Vitomir lives and offers his "special stock" in Valliki.

Do the PCs take the Beast's molar to the *raunie*? (p. 19)

Yes. The *raunie* sees the Beast's identity but falls into a catatonic state for 24 hours. During this time, if the Beast learns of what the PCs did with its tooth, it will pay the *raunie* a visit to kill or threaten her into silence.

Do the PCs stop the mob? (p. 44-45)

No. Lovrenk turns into hybrid form and goes berserk.

No. Krabka engulfed by *fog cloud* and taken by Kolchya.

No. Fiofan is beaten to death but resurrected again.

No. Eris is beaten to death and Vistani swear a blood debt.

What do the PCs do with the *cursed wolfskin*? (p. 47)

They steal it. Increase encounter die one step. The Beast makes schemes to get it back (or destroy it to make a new one).

They destroy it. Increase encounter die one step. The Beast must spend a long rest at night performing a new Dark Rite to make a new *cursed wolfskin*.

Do the PCs accuse the wrong suspect? (p. 47)

They wrongly accuse Cedomir. The knights and boyar comes to his defense. The boyar exiles the PCs from the Graenseskov.

They wrongly accuse Fiofan. The boyar sentences Fiofan to hang, but soon after Fiofan is resurrected again by the Dark Powers, only with his werewolf lycanthropy active.

They wrongly accuse Merje. The Halan witches come to his defense, using pressure tactics to secure his freedom.

They wrongly accuse Ruzina. Her father Uri, however, gives a false confession convincing the boyar that he's the Beast. If the boyar hangs Uri, Ruzina swears revenge. If they convince him Ruzina is actually the Beast, the boyar has her imprisoned.

Do the PCs kill the Beast? (p. 63-64)

No, but they end the Curse and redeem the Beast.

Yes, and they end the Curse which dies with the Beast.

No, and they don't end the Curse. The Beast kills again!

Yes, but they don't end the Curse. Choose a new Beast!