

Borca's Dread Possibilities and other Gaz cut material

By John W Mangrum

Here's some of the cut material from the Borca chapter of Gazetteer IV. Some of it was immediately contradicted by Legacies of the Blood anyway (sigh).



This first DP accompanies the Landscape section, and expands on the text about Mt. Gries. Poor Night Swarm -- I cooked it up for an obscure 2nd edition adventure, then tried to fit it in -- and ended up having to cut it from -- three Gazetteers in a row.

Dread Possibility: The Night Swarm

The Scarlet Prince was not a vampire, but he was a creature of the night. Vladimir Nobriskov was a true werebat (see Monsters of Faerun). He wooed a long string of young damsels, draining them of their blood before moving on to his next conquest. Nobriskov actively mimicked a vampire's habits to mislead possible hunters, but his ruse eventually failed him. His final conquest was Lady Jenica Pretorius, a lovely but somewhat smug and wanton young Borcan noblewoman.

After the Prince's downfall, the shaken Lady Jenica married another suitor, Baron Amthor Ocrotire. The Ocrotires moved to a manor in the Steading, hoping to leave their horrific memories behind, but sadly, their tragic tale had just begun. Jenica is now an afflicted werebat, and her trigger is the sound of screeching dire bats.

The bats within Mt. Gries grow large and fierce, and several have developed a cruel and unnatural cunning (Int 6; considered magical beasts). One night they accidentally triggered Jenica's transformation, and she involuntarily joined their swarm. Jenica's bat empathy in hybrid form allows her to draw hundreds of Mt. Gries' denizens under her control, and her human intelligence allows the swarm to act with preternatural purpose and guile. Whenever Jenica transforms, the Night Swarm roams the Balinoks, decimating any unprotected herds or settlements they encounter.

Although Jenica is the uniting factor, her dire bat "lieutenants" are the true menace. The bats instinctually understand her nature and the benefits her presence brings. Whenever Jenica reverts to human form and flees, they track her down and force her to unite the Night Swarm once more. Should Jenica be killed but the dire bats survive, they will seek out new werebat figureheads to enslave. They may even shadow Jenica's murderers, waiting to see if any of them have contracted her lycanthropy.

The Ocrotires are desperate for a cure, but they know only the most basic lycanthropic lore. Baron Amthor has of late taken to locking Jenica in a soundproofed chamber at sunset, but the tenacious dire bats often manage to "free" her. Despite their desperation, the Ocrotires are highly secretive for fear that Borca's lords may find her affliction "amusing." Heroes may hear rumors of a noble who keeps his wife imprisoned in their manor, or be recruited to rescue Lady Jenica from her "abductors."



This next sidebar accompanies the Populace: Religion subsection (it was, in fact, an extension of the existing The Church of Ezra Revisited sidebar). This is the material that most obviously doesn't gel with LotB.

Secret Society: The Scions of Yakov Dilisnya

For the last seven decades, elite families have often placed their lesser-born sons and daughters in the Home Faith's clergy. Most of these anchorites have been faithful members of the clergy, and many have risen to prominence within the Church. Felix Wachter, founder of the Mordentish sect, was himself one such blessed son. Regardless of their faith, all scions provided their houses with information on the Church's activities, and some swayed decisions that would affect their families.

In recent years, a handful of anchorites with Dilisnya blood in their veins have chosen to use the Church for their personal benefit. Yakov Dilisnya promised his sister Camille that the Home Faith could be a tool for societal control, and the current members of his bloodline feel they deserve the keys to that control. In time, the self-proclaimed Scions of Yakov Dilisnya believe the Home Faith can grow strong enough to overthrow Borca's landholders and turn its splintered sects into puppets. Unlikely to inherit their families' wealth, the Scions intend to unite the Church and with it carve themselves an empire.

The Scions' power lies in plotting and patience, not numbers. Their erstwhile leader is Oton Boritsi (male human Clr4 of Ezra, LE), second son of Lady Ivana's youngest (and deceased) brother, Anton. Currently just 33, Oton plans to guide himself and his kin into positions of power. Once all are in place, Oton will take his rightful place as Praesidius of the Church of Ezra and bend it to his will. To date, Praesidius Postoya does not know of the conspiracy under his roof, but he is suspicious of the house of Dilisnya on principle.



This sidebar was to accompany the opening section of The Realm section, expanding on some notes about Borca's leaders.

Dread Possibility: Heirs and Prefenders

The Heirs: In 716 BC Ivan Dilisnya took a wife, Lucretia Marzeya. She bore him twins the next year and a third child in 720 BC, a year before he finally poisoned her. However, each time Lucretia grew heavy with child, Ivan would mutter darkly like a cuckolded husband. Fearing that Ivan would turn on his own children, Lucretia had her nursemaids secret each newborn away. She never saw her children again, and Ivan was told they had all been stillborn. The infants' ultimate fates are unknown. They may have been raised as commoners by the nursemaids themselves, perhaps under Ivan's own roof. A rival house may have adopted them, hoping to one day use them to usurp Ivan's power. They might even have been whisked far from Dorvinia, their heritage forgotten.

The heirs' birth records in Degravo include descriptions of identifying marks. If any of the heirs are still alive and can prove their heritage, they would have a claim to Ivan's properties in the event of his death. Such heirs would be unwise to reveal themselves before such a time, however; Ivan's own kin whisper that he would murder sons and seduce daughters.

The Pretenders: Starting around 717 BC, while Ivana Boritsi was between marriages, a peculiar rumor arose — likely started by jealous rivals — that she had secretly borne, then abandoned, an illegitimate daughter. Ivana’s confidantes know that the venom flowing through her veins renders her barren and thus consider the idea ludicrous, but the tale has proven stubbornly persistent among the peasantry and has even spread far beyond Borca. In lands throughout the Core, many a wintry beauty has posed as the “dispossessed heir of Borca” to avail herself of the sympathy and prestige such an aristocratic heritage provides. Some of these women were charlatans, but others were simply naïve orphans tricked into believing a false heritage by unscrupulous advisors.

Over the years, a few foolish pretenders have even traveled to Borca to present themselves to Ivana as her long-lost daughter. Ivana sees these deceivers as cruel reminders of her own bitter solitude, and rewards them accordingly.



This next DP was to accompany the Economy subsection, and explains the presence of the Sympathetic Spell feat in the DM's Appendix.

Dread Possibility: Corporeal Collateral

Many Borcan banking houses insist that a borrower fill a small vial with her own blood, which the banker keeps until the loan is repaid. Most folk believe this is merely a symbolic gesture or intimidation tactic. It often is, but a few bankers can call upon dark forces to enforce their contracts — or know someone who can. Should a borrower attempt to renege on her debts, the bankers can use sympathetic magic — a technique originally stolen from the Vistani — to inflict grievous punishments from afar.

The greater the debt, the more powerful a spell the lender is likely to use to ensure compliance. Debt collectors typically utilize troublesome spells like bestow curse or geas rather than deadly spells like flesh to stone or phantasmal killer; dead men cannot pay their due. See the Sympathetic Spell feat in the DM’s Appendix for one such method for lenders to reach out to errant debtors.



This sidebar was to accompany Sturben.

Secret Society: The League of Nine

Somewhere in Sturben is the Cerulean Chamber, meeting place of the infamous League of Nine, a self-appointed court of justice composed of apothecaries from Borca’s ruling houses. When the law fails and duels are not an option, those who think themselves wronged can petition the League for retribution. No petitioner ever meets the League members in person. The Nine work through various proxies, and although they know each other by name, they ritually don cloaks and masks during their tribunals. So secretive is the League that many who have used its services are still unsure that it actually exists.

If the League accepts a petition, the Nine convene to debate its merits. They mete out only one punishment: the subtle slumber. Within a month of the League reaching a decision, the “guilty” party will almost inevitably die of “natural causes.” On that day, the petitioner receives a bill for the League’s services, usually equaling half the legal fine for the victim’s murder.

These genteel assassins operate by several rules that are not well known to the public, however. First, the League is lawful evil, and its members' primary goal is to strengthen their own positions. They mete out "justice" as best suits themselves, so they will not execute members of their own families, nor will they strike directly against the sefs. Second, once a petition is made, the ruling lies entirely in the League's hands. Should the Nine decide that the petitioner is the true wrongdoer, it is she whose end is near. The unwitting accused soon receives the bill.



This DP accompanied Ilvin.

Dread Possibility: The Prodigal's Web

Iliana Foami, proprietor of the Black Hourglass Inn, is a most unusual creature. She hatched seven years ago, a red widow exhibiting ambition and curiosity rare for her kind. Iliana soon came to the attention of Ivana Boritsi, who transformed the fiery beauty into an ermordenung. Like most of Ivana's subjects, Iliana was not a willing participant, but she quickly grew accustomed to her new, lavish lifestyle — particularly the promise of venom of life. When Ivana discovered that Iliana was a shapechanger, however, she shunned the loathsome creature.

Iliana returned to Ilvin, where she quickly seduced and disposed of the Black Glass' former proprietor. Heroes may interact with Iliana in several ways, each scarcely less dangerous than the next. Iliana is no longer driven to mate, but she still must feed. Iliana occasionally invites lone, male travelers into her private quarters. The inn's attic is now choked with the husks of previous men to accept the offer.

More importantly, Iliana is desperate to obtain the formula for venom of life. Without it, she knows she will be lucky to live another decade. Iliana often uses the goods stolen from her victims to recruit discreet adventurers to steal the formula for her. To guard her own secrets, however, she never warns her hirelings about the true nature of the ermordenung. Iliana and Ivan Dilisnya know that they share similar goals, but they seldom attempt to coordinate their efforts. Each finds the other entirely too monstrous.



Here's the DP for Lechberg.

Dread Possibility: All the World's a Stage

Many Borcan plays are based on existing stories, so it was normal when Cezar Vercezzo based his 749 work, *The Blind Gypsy*, on a common tale. In the opera, a Vistana whose family is killed seeks to prevent future tragedies by trading his eyes to an evil hag for a pair of gems that can see the future. However, every future he sees depicts the subject being murdered by an unseen creature. The Vistana is soon cast out and forced to live among the giorgio, most of whom rashly try to use the "seer's" visions for themselves. One by one, the giorgio fall to the curse, including a kind girl who has sheltered the Vistana. In the end, the Vistana races to save her, but discovers the girl dead in the hag's arms. In the climactic aria, the hag chides him for tempting fate and gloats that her gems did show him the future: her own.

On opening night, a blindfolded beggar accosted Vercezzo, warning him that he had "stolen" the man's tragedy. "If you dare steal the pain of the world for your art, then the world will steal it back." Since then, whenever a performer in Vercezzo's operas plays a role for a few months, her

real life slowly and subtly comes to mimic her character's experiences. Sadly, the dominant themes in Vercezzo's oeuvre are uncontrolled passion, romantic betrayal, scheming women, violent men, and third acts awash in blood. In Lotharia, a woman plays three suitors against each other; when two kill each other in a duel, the third kills her to avenge his friends. In The Silent Child, a poor serving girl — traditionally played by a halfling — falls in love with the oblivious master of the house and turns him against his family to win him for herself.

Vercezzo has only recently started to comprehend the power his operas have over his casts, and he is considering the best approach to take. He is unlikely to change the themes that keep him in Lord Ivan's favor, however.



This next one was to accompany Vor Ziyden

Dread Possibility: A Curious Sediment

In 727 BC, workers at the Andaas vineyards discovered a few splotchy mauve toadstools growing among the vines. Corpsewort usually grows only in the Tainted Wood, miles away; to this day, no one knows how the fungus was transplanted. The toadstools were quickly burned and the harvest completed. It was thought that no harm had been done, but years later, after the wine had been aged, bottled, and shipped across the Core, the truth came to light: At least three-fourths of the harvest was tainted with lethal spores. Andaas Brimbubbly '27 is now one of the most notorious vintages ever produced. Collectors pay outrageous prices for a sealed bottle, while other bottles have been implicated in several deaths. The Andaas family still employs agents to recover the remaining bottles, hoping to stem the damage done to their reputation.

Corpsewort spores infect living creatures as a disease: ingested or inhaled, DC 16, incubation 1 day, damage 1d4 temporary Constitution. Within 2d6 hours of infection, the victim begins to experience euphoric hallucinations (see Madness effects in the Ravenloft Player's Handbook). The victim grows increasingly giddy and disorientated, both drawn to sound and motion and oblivious to her own worsening condition. Meanwhile, the fungus grows beneath the skin, slowly emerging as new toadstools. When the victim dies, the toadstools burst, spraying spores in a 20 ft. radius. All living creatures within this area risk exposure.



And finally, the DP for Levkarest.

Dread Possibility: Anything for the Muse

Elgin (male human ermordenung, Rog3/Exp6) and Rozalina Dezuni (female human ermordenung, Rog2/Exp7) were among the lucky few: betrothed who were also deeply in love. Ivana Boritsi attended their wedding in 745 BC, and was so taken with the young couple's charm and beauty that she transformed them into ermordenung that very night. Their lover's touch forever lost to them, the Dezunis seek other ways to sate their longings. They now operate the renowned Spaima Gallery and are talented artists in their own right; the walls of their townhouse are covered in portraits of each other. When Ivana sends the Dezunis to dispatch troublesome couples, Elgin and Rozalina try to arrange the killing so that they can stare into each other's eyes as their victims die in their arms.

Several years ago, the Dezunis appropriated a ring of regeneration from one such victim. With it, they have discovered new sensations to share. They cannot touch each other, but their blades can. Their secret experiments have produced a new school of art, “Glamour Grotesque,” in which horrific and sadistic subject matter is depicted in an overtly sensual and aesthetic manner. In Elgin and Rozalina’s newest portraits, their expressions are serene, their bodies stylistically maimed.

The Dezunis also occasionally hire attractive commoners as models. These folk are drugged with wine, bound, gagged, given the ring to wear, and skillfully butchered for several days. After the “sitting” is complete and the wounds have sealed, the ermordenung reclaim their ring and send their victim staggering into the streets, a few coppers her pocket. These folk spread tales of their torture at the Dezunis’ hands, but lack the scars to prove it.

An attractive hero may be asked to model for the Dezunis, or the heroes may even discover a ravaged corpse floating in the Luna — one of the artists’ few “accidents.” Alternatively, a model could recover sooner than expected and flee into the night, still wearing the ring of regeneration. The Dezunis may hire reputable heroes to recover their “stolen heirloom.”



Cut text on cities in Borca:

In the original order of presentation, S's route of travel goes Sturben -> Ilvin -> Lechberg -> Degravo -> Vor Ziyden -> Levkarest -> Misericordia.



Ilvin

My cab coach crossed an old tollhouse marking the former border of Dorvinia during the short trip to Ilvin. Ilvin straddles the deep clefts where the Strecura River joins the Vasha. The Scythe Highway continues through Ilvin, forming its main thoroughfare as it curves north. The bulk of Ilvin — known informally as the “Flesh Quarter” — sits on the western banks of the Vasha, its fortifications solid and secure. Ghiare Keep rises near the center of town, alongside the Vasha. This garish structure of red brick and verdigris-stained copper is the central armory for the Borcan militia, erected here in 730 BC so reinforcements could be sent quickly anywhere along the Falkovnian border.

The surrounding town is perhaps the least aesthetically appealing in the country. In addition to its role as a trade waypoint, Ilvin is the heart of Borca’s leatherworking industry. Every year, Steading herdsmen and lowland trappers bring their animals here to market. Southern Ilvin is given over to slaughterhouses and tanneries, and the sickly stench of blood and death hangs heavy over the surrounding slums during the warmer months. A graceful temple of Ezra stands near the main marketplace in the northern half of town. The temple is relatively humble, but its clergy take great pride that Praesidius Postoya once served among them. Another temple is all but hidden in the slaughterhouse slums, a ramshackle structure maintained by a sole priest of the Morninglord. The temperamental old Barovian seemed intent on being left alone with his stacks of books, reacting with deep suspicion to my most innocuous questions.

A stone toll bridge crosses the Vasha just above the mouth of the Strecura, leading to the smaller but more spacious Lord’s Quarter, home to the guild houses and manors of Ilvin’s elite. Here one

also finds the home of Baron Olszanik, Ilvin's stapan. A cruel and unpopular fellow, the baron breeds and trains attack dogs as a pastime, turning them on condemned criminals and using them to patrol his estate. "Dogs are more loyal than men," he remarked.

Where to Stay in Ilvin

Most travelers stopping over in Ilvin are drawn to the warm and lushly furnished rooms of the Black Hourglass (good quality rooms, common quality meals), by the north gate, though the cuisine is mediocre and the service inattentive. Indeed, most patrons seem to come to admire the inn's alluring proprietor, a young widow who had scarcely wed the former proprietor before his funeral. The only notable competition is Gaspar's Trifle (poor quality rooms, good quality meals), by the west gate and all too close to the slaughterhouses. Rumor has it that Gaspar won the lease in a drunken card game, and now begrudgingly runs the inn and gambling parlor simply to cover its rent. To combat the permeating stench, Gaspar plies his wealthier gamblers with a steady flow of complementary wines, ales, almonds, and imported tobacco.

Ilvin (large town): Conventional; AL LE; 3,000 gp limit; Assets 615,000 gp; Population 4,100; Isolated (human 94%, halfling 5%, other 1%).

Authority Figures: Baron Baldassarre Olszanik, male human Ari7; Captain Ciprian Stricatti, male human Ftr10.

Important Characters: Sentire Olivia Pustnic (anchorite), female human Clr4; Geier Turbatoff (cleric of the Morninglord), male human Clr8.



Vor Ziyden

My work in the Doldak Heights complete, I retraced my steps to Ilvin, then took a barge up the Strecura to the bucolic, oft-overlooked agricultural community of Vor Ziyden. The town is unfortified, nestling between the Ziyden Woods and a sharp bend in the river. During the War of Silver Knives, Vor Ziyden was a thriving work camp for the Steading's loggers and miners. As these industries slowly dried up, the community turned to more genteel pursuits to survive. A few remnants of the past remain, including a handful of old logging mills, though only one is still in operation. Abandoned mineshafts are rumored to honeycomb the earth beneath the town. On rare occasion, cellar floors have collapsed under a person's weight, dropping them into the tunnels. Local children insist that wicked monsters glide through the lightless maze, but most adults believe that if the tunnels do see any activity, it is likely from mundane smugglers.

Homes here are generally small and sedate — even the local bathhouse and temple are simple structures — but the streets are wide and airy. Most of Vor Ziyden's inhabitants are servants or tenant farmers who work in the cleared lands surrounding the town. These gentle hills are home to the most acclaimed vineyards in Borca. Power in the region, including the town itself, is controlled by a consortium of the three most powerful wine families. Although Vor Ziyden is generally a quiet, secluded refuge from the deadly waltz of Borcan politics, whenever anything does go wrong, the stapan are quick to blame their neighbors.

Where to Stay in Vor Ziyden

Vor Ziyden's sole inn is the Silver Vein (poor quality rooms, common quality meals), which is also the general store. I was the sole guest during my stay; the chatty proprietor rents out his few rooms only on occasion, perhaps as an afterthought. My room in particular grew much more inviting after I gave it a day to air out the mildew.

Vor Ziyden (small town): Conventional; AL N; 800 gp limit; Assets 48,000 gp; Population 1,200; Isolated (human 95%, halfling 4%, other 1%).

Authority Figures: Baron Hedeon Andaas, male human Exp 10; Baroneasa Marta Fortich, female human Exp5; Baron Burian Septow, male human Ari2; Captain Valeska Vanator, female human Rgr3.

Important Characters: Sentire Duscha Yanoff (anchorite), female Clr3; Dima Mojic (innkeeper), male human Com5.



JWM: On the dragon topic, I wrote this Dread Possibility for Hroth (Sithicus, Gaz IV). It was cut (for space, I assume).

Dread Possibility: Remembrance of the Wyrn

Not all Sithicans have forgotten the god-wyrms of their blasted shrines. Thaumiol (male elf Sor5/Dragon Disciple7, LE) an outcast from the arcane caste, pieced together the ancient legends and became a devoted disciple of the Many-Headed Devourer, seeking to draw her attention back to Sithicus and reap the power she bestowed. So intense was his fervor that his body slowly began to change, taking on aspects of a green dragon. The deformities forced Thaumiol to retreat to the marshland south of Hroth, where he eventually discovered what he considers a literal godsend: The preserved corpse of a massive, five-headed lernaean cryohydra, sunken in a bog. Thaumiol believes this body to be an emissary of the Many-Headed Devourer, and now seeks the means to animate it as his servant. That done, he intends to hunt down the rangers who protect Hroth, then teach its faithless citizens what comes to those who forget their gods.