

The Time of Unparalleled Darkness

By. Charles Phipps

The Time of Unparalleled Darkness is essentially the endgame for the Dark Powers.. It is a plan that has lasted since Strahd Van Zarovich made his pact with the darkness and will culminate after so many centuries in the final confrontation between good and evil in the Demiplane of Dread. This mini-supplement is not meant to answer the questions of who the Dark Powers are, what their motivations are, or even the nature of the Demiplane but it is meant to provide a summary of the events that are the greatest conflict of the PC's likely existence.

The apocalyptic nature of the events that occur during the Time of Unparalleled Darkness may leave some DM's scratching their head over whether or not the PC's can actually have an effect on the nightmarish activities unfolding. The PC's themselves are unfortunately 'riding' the waves of a plot that was begun centuries ago and has involved every single individual that was ever brought to the Demiplane or created by it. They can make significant changes and save the world from a grizzly fate but much of the events will be beyond their power. It is up to the DM to make sure that they feel their efforts are meaningful in the small scale that they will initially be restricted to.

This work is somewhat inspired by White Wolf's 'End of the World of Darkness' series.

Important NPCs

The Dark Powers

The touch of the Dark Powers is all throughout the Time of Unparalleled Darkness.. Whether they are good or evil is ultimately left to the imagination but they have been willing partners with the other actors in this drama to the creation of the ToUD. There is even the possibility that there are forces both good and evil at work for Doctor Van Ritchen's resurrection was as clearly a beneficent activity as their aiding of the Gentleman Caller and Mallochio. Ultimately, their goal is to have woven a cataclysmic battle between light and darkness with the evil having the upper hand by far in numbers.

What certain people THINK the Dark Powers want decidedly plays a role in the story though.. In the case of The Gentleman Caller, the fiend believes that they are trapped like him and thus he intends to 'aid' them in escaping. Drigor merely believes they are powerful and malignant entities and thus worthy of his servitude.

The Gentleman Caller

The Gentleman Caller is one of Ravenloft's few genuine fiends and his activities are amongst the most diabolical, but even compared to other demons he is unique.. The

Gentleman Caller made contact with the Dark Powers at some point during his wanderings across the Demiplane and discovered more about the nature of the world than any other being. The Gentleman Caller has styled himself as their servant and since then wandered about the Demiplane with a purpose to set up the events of the Time of Unparalleled Darkness.

To that end, he has allied with Azalin to bring about the Last Prophecy. That the Caller might also benefit from the powerful Lich King's aid is also something that pleases him and he uses the Darklord's patronage to try and rid himself of an old foe in the first Episode.

Azalin

It is arguable that the Lich King Azalin is the favorite toy of the Dark Powers, even above Strahd Von Zarovich. The wizard's constant attempts to escape and gain his revenge against the 'gods' of Ravenloft has never ended or shrunk in its audacity.. Ultimately, the events of the Grand Conjunction and Grim Harvest have unhinged his mind (if you assume there was much left to unhinge). Haunted by the escape of the Lord of Sithicus and Lord of Cavitius, Azalin fully intends to succeed this time or destroy not only himself...but all of the Demiplane.

Strahd Von Zarovich

Strahd Von Zarovich has always been the lynchpin of the Demiplane of Dread. His action with the murder of his brother and his pact with darkness has remained the defining attribute that marks the Demiplane as home to ironic evil. He desires not to escape the Demiplane but merely to 'win' it and thus gain the love of his life in Tatyana. It is in this series of events that he will get his wish, for a time, and the price is only that he set himself against Azalin's plan. Little does Strahd know that this is part of what brings about the ruination of all things (though whether he'd care is questionable).

Drigor

Drigor the Fiend author of the Mandrigorian is one of the most educated individuals to the nature of the Demiplane. Even more than Azalin, Drigor is aware of the relationship of the Demiplane to the rest of the Multiverse. This is because Drigor is one of the very few individuals that actually escaped from Ravenloft. Drigor escaped from Ravenloft into Gothic Earth and promptly became faced with the influence of the Red Death. Inasmuch as a fiend can go mad, Drigor was driven insane by the exposure to the power of the darkness that it embodied. Wanting to aid it and what he presumed to be like beings of power, Drigor has actually returned to the Demiplane of his own free will.

Drigor believes the Demiplane is part of a plot by the Dark Powers to gain power from the suffering and evil therein to eventually rule the cosmos. He thus believes Hyskosa is a danger to their plans and has set himself to stopping Azalin's plan..

Ezra (Isolde)

The only (known) celestial in the Demiplane of Dread is a spirit that has not been untouched by her exposure to the evils here. Celestials and similar spirits of pure law and good deliberately isolate themselves from 'normal' humanity because their ability to interact with them is affected by the ultimate standards that they thrive on but humans simply cannot match. Isolde managed to contain her disgust for the petty evils of mankind so long as she had her Carnival but its destruction by the Gentleman Caller in Episode 1 (see below) results in her deciding to set herself against all the forces of darkness in the Demiplane.

Though not evil, Isolde's power is enough that she is able to unleash unimaginable carnage upon both the servants of evil that exist across Ravenloft and those simply caught in the middle.

Rudolf Van Ritchen

Rudolf Van Ritchen is a figure that holds legendary status in the Demiplane of Dread.. The Foxglove sisters could never match the simple 'hope' that Rudolf Van Ritchen provided people not only with the information to destroy evil but also the tales of his victories over evil. The Dark Powers (or perhaps something else) have selected Rudolf Van Ritchen as their 'true' champion of the forces of light in the coming apocalypse.

For the past twenty-five years, Rudolf has trained in the "Bleak House" and been prepared for his ultimate role in leading the armies of 'good' against the forces of evil.. He has also been bestowed mighty abilities and perpetual youth. However, Rudolf's original personality has not been entirely eradicated by the miraculous changes to his personage and he is no one's pawn. Rudolf may yet not play the role that the Dark Powers wish him to.

Mallochio Aderre

Mallochio Aderre is the Dukkar and the one that is supposedly 'destined' to bring about the ultimate destruction of the Vistani. However, Mallochio's powers are all that provide him with this ultimate 'glory' that he believes drives his existence. Mallochio himself is bored, vain, arrogant, and causally cruel to the point that he has no qualities of a man that could 'change' the world. Indeed, he is a being that serves solely as a pawn to those whom covet the awesome abilities that are his to command. He dismisses this ultimately servile role because of his place as the Dukkar.

Mallochio is scared of someone though....Hysoksa. The Dukkar whom nearly brought about the dissolution of the Demiplane in the first place is a being that Mallochio believed to be dead but is yet frequently reported as alive. He is utterly terrified that his 'unique' place in the world is threatened by the elderly prophet and that he might actually

be nothing at all in the grand scheme of things.

Hyskosa

Hyskosa is an individual whose good and evil have long been debated. In truth, Hyskosa is an individual whom is as much 'The Dukkar' as Mallochio and may in fact be the only 'real' Dukkar. Mallochio Aderre possesses Vistani powers but is only a quarter of the race and how much of his vaunted abilities could be merely his fiendish heritage has not occurred to those impressed with him.

Hyskosa is not a man who wishes to slaughter Vistani though nor does he believe his actions are to the detriment of his people. Instead, he has come to destroy the Vistani so that they can be rebuilt. Hyskosa sees in his *tarokka* deck that the Vistani have a destiny that they have forgotten and he believes that it is his place to fulfill that destiny. He knew that the Grand Conjunction would fail the first time that one of his 'prophecies' was tried to be fulfilled by mortal hands. This was by design.

Hyskosa now intends to fulfill the *Final Prophecy* that he gave before his death and which drives the story. The fact that the supposedly dead man has returned from the grave is something that only lends credence to the idea that this prophecy cannot be stopped.

The Vistani

The PCs have probably long been the focus of the Vistani's attention. In this case, Madame Eva herself is the woman that plays the part of representative of the most mysterious people of the Demiplane. Madame Eva has long feared the power of Hyskosa and has attempted to destroy him since she came to the mind of his birth. Indeed, it was Hyskosa's existence that lead her to make the pact with the mists that allowed her tribe to defy time and death to oppose him.

She hopes that the PCs will be able to thwart the Final Prophecy and thus end whatever plan the Dark Powers have been attempting since perhaps the beginning of time. The thought that she might be serving their ends has occurred to her but Eva has chosen not to back down. Throughout the storyline, the Vistani hope to oppose Azalin and the Gentleman Caller's plan.

Other Players

This work will routinely reference others whom are not the main movers and shakers of this plot. The Weathermay Sisters, George Weathermay, Jander Sunstar, and the other Darklords of the Core are not inactive while the entire world starts to (literally) crumble around them. The difference is that they are largely motivated by a smaller motivation than the 'salvation or destruction of everything' and do not have a clear enough picture of the situation to influence it themselves. The PCs might oppose them or recruit them to their cause as their personalities dictate.. Some will even join with or die at the hands of their enemies in the course of this plot.

Hyskosa's Final Prophecy

Hyskosa's Final Prophecy is much like the previous one in that it links various seemingly unconnected events into a massive tapestry. Unlike the previous prophecy, it gradually increases in the grandeur of the events that ultimately makes each one more devastating to the Demiplane. Hyskosa identifies the fulfillment of these events as the "Breaking of the Seals" and thus refers to not only event themselves but the freedom (or destruction) of a Darklord.

The Prophecy reads as...

The Seven Seals that will bring an End to the World of Shadows that we dwell in shall be known by....

The Unholy Child of Woman and Abyssspawn shall shatter his chains with the slaying of thirteen righteous women under the light of an Eclipse. The woman find her child a nightmare and her crown shall fall to nothing.

The animals shall fight rise up to consume man. The Man Beast King and Beast Man King will do battle as a race dies.

The Falcon shall do battle with the Hawk and the True Conqueror will emerge.

The House of Light shall bring forth its champion whom shall cleanse the House of Darkness

The Prodigal Son of Science shall become the Father and the Father the Son. The Daughter shall inherit the Throne.

The dead will outnumber the living and the Son shall be reclaimed by the Father. The Armies of Light and Darkness will clash and the flames shall burn across the Demiplane..

After the Once King and Future King do battle in the land of the Morninglord, The light of the maiden shall be quenched by corruption and the First King Shall Become the Last King.

When this is fulfilled, so shall the mists part and the twilight give way to a eternal...

(The last mark is unidentifiable)

As prophecies go, this is actually meant to be fairly straight forward. Its meant to reward players whom have mastered their 'Ravenloft-Fu' enough to know that The Unholy Child is undoubtedly Mallochio, The Prodigal Son of Science is almost certainly Adam, and the House of Darkness could be The House on Gryphon Hill or the House of Lament.. The fact that Ravenloft has several figures that could fulfill some of the prophecy will also keep them guessing. The DM is furthermore encouraged to make more of the prophecy to deal with his own adventures and also the PCs themselves. That the last line of the prophecy is incomplete also helps keep the ambiguity whether its a good thing or a bad thing for this to be fulfilled. The PCs could find this prophecy in many locations on their journeys but will most likely find it in the cannon of the Nevuchar Spring's sect of the Church of Ezra.

Backstory to this Point

Azalin's failed attempt to ascend to being a Demilich nevertheless brought him incredibly close to the Dark Powers and the sights that he witnessed gave him the realization that it was possible to bring about the dissolution of the Demiplane. To do this, he would merely need the aid of the previously disdained Church of Ezra that unknowingly had incorporated the "Lost" Final Prophecy of Hyskosa into their cannon as a bit of local folklore. This had been done deliberately by their founder whom, despite being a cruel and sociopath religious fanatic, recognized that the Vistani had powers that might aid the stopping of the evil 'Ezra' warned him about.

Knowing that the Dukkar would be involved due to the fairly obvious nature of the first stanza, Azalin then proceeded to contact the Gentleman Caller whom was continuing to raise Hell (or perhaps Abyss) with his ever growing army of children. The Gentleman Caller had strangely been expecting Azalin and happily agreed to aid him in his latest plan. Azalin had precious little trust in a fiend, let alone a demon, but he put aside his prejudices in order to avail himself to the monster's knowledge.. Combining their knowledge of the Demiplane, Azalin finally deduced a method for breaking the seal of Mallochio's prison (unsurprisingly involving the sacrifice of women and an eclipse).

Azalin has since spent the last two decades in his castle preparing for bringing about the events of the Time of Unparalleled Darkness. This has involved finishing the work of his favorite "chronicler" that included information on how best to manipulate the local passions of each domain to preparing massive magical rituals and political aid to his opponents. Azalin's previous failures have taught him that events of this magnitude can rapidly spiral out of control and he's done his best to leave nothing to chance this time. Furthermore, a great part of Azalin's soul has been ruined by his experiences and he will not be able to survive another loss. To that end, Azalin has unconsciously made events so that if there is a failure...the Demiplane is still likely to be consumed by it.

Azalin's unusual activity has not gone unnoticed and Strahd Von Zarovich is unsurprisingly the one to figure out that he's planning something huge. Strahd would not pay it any real mind, Azalins plans having a history of failure, were it not for the fact that the fiend Drigor contacted him with the news that this one might actually not only succeed but destroy the Demiplane that contained his precious Tatyana. It is thus the desire of Strahd to thwart him. Strahd has sent his agents to interfere with the doings of Azalin but has sadly been largely unsuccessful (even if the fact its taken Azalin close to two decades to get his goals close to completion).

How to Run the Adventure

This probably should mark either the end of a campaign for the PCs or a dramatic shift in tone. Ravenloft is a very Gothic world and the mood is one where very rarely does the supernatural step out of the shadows to assault you. Instead, you are kidnapped in the night and never heard from again. The Time of Unparalleled Darkness is more the supernatural attacking in broad daylight and slaughtering your entire town while the moon is dyed red and the cemeteries are empty. It's as close to Armageddon as likely as ever to occur in Ravenloft.

The events will normally be beyond the ken of PCs to stop by the fact that they are wars, plagues, famines, and similar epic problems. However, it should be noted that the PCs (rather than the villains) are the stars of the ToUD. It will be the PCs whose actions determine what plots succeed and do not and they, by their action, can save tens of thousands of lives or lead to the destruction of all life on the Demiplane..

The players should not feel as if the Prophecy is railroading them and it is alright if they manage to thwart it. The DM should play honest and fair even with the strangest plots. So long as the PCs are aware of the difficulty of thwarting such epic events themselves, there should be little problem.

Episode 1: The First Seal

The First Seal is one that the players will probably be unable to prevent (that is unless the DM wants to have a very short adventure). It is the time of a Lunar Eclipse in Ravenloft and Mallochio has been gathering young women from the local region for some years now. Kept pure and suitably virginal (despite Mallochio's wishes), The Gentleman Caller is supervising his son and the Kargat wizards Azalin has lent to perform a ritual to break the Vistani curse binding him to Invidia. It is a black sacrifice that will channel the power of the land into Mallochio and allow the Dukkar his freedom.

To 'celebrate' this activity, Mallochio intends to launch an attack on his mother the moment that he is free and he has teleported 'far far FAR' away from Invidia. This 'attack' has already begun with a siege of Gabrielle Aderre's Castle and both Matton's men along with Gunderak rebels kept in uneasily close confines. The rebels would normally be able to deal with Mallochio's goons but a massive number of Darkon reinforcements have effectively pinned them down. It isn't helped by the fact that Gabrielle is afraid her child will demonstrate her true nature as a Werewolf any time now.

To simply add to the fun is the dual presence of both Carnival and the Zharovan tribe of Vistani in the area, both having sensed the evil that is afoot but only one (in the Zharovan) having a grasp of what is at stake. The Gentleman Caller is actually ecstatic that Isolde is in the area since his aid from Azalin means that he has practically nothing to fear from his ancient foe. Instead, the Gentleman Caller intends to launch his own attack on Carnival with the near endless army of the undead at his disposal once the ritual is done.

Madame Eva will attempt to recruit the PCs to their cause at this point and instill within them the gravity of this situation. However, given the likelihood of arriving at the Dukkar's residence at the time necessary to stop Mallochio being practically nil (just enough time for the PCs to probably witness the Gentleman Caller and Mallochio getting away), they will have the choice to try and save the rebels or Carnival since there will be ample evidence of both being attacked. The Zharovan will flee of their own methods once it's clear that they haven't been able to prevent Mallochio's escape.

If the PCs don't save the Gunderak Rebels, Gabrielle Aderre is murdered by her daughter Nyssa, whom was seduced by Mallochio in one of his 'games' (before he had more important things to do), and she thinks this will make her darklord. The rest of the rebels are butchered by the Darkonese and Nyssa takes command of the foreign troops by Mallochio's command. Matton quickly subordinates himself to his daughter and aids her

in subjugating the realm. However, Nyssa is not a tragic character and instead Invidia will be swallowed by Strahd and Alfred Timothy's realm (To Nyssa's horror). If they somehow save Gabrielle, she will be freed from the backlash of the magical energies from Mallochio's ritual and find the land similarly Darklord-less. If the PCs don't save the Carnival, they are quickly and unceremoniously put to the sword. Isolde will survive in either case and realize the Gentleman Caller is beyond her power now. That results in her abandoning the Carnival.

The first shots have been fired in a powerful war that will affect all of Ravenloft.

Episode 2: The Second Seal

The Second Seal is something Azalin had to deliberately arrange for it to be fulfilled. With Mallochio now at his side, the irritating half-demon living it up at Azalin's castle, the Lord of Darkon has decided to begin a war between those Dark Lords whom fit the role. Specifically Nathan Timothy and Harkon Lukas. To make absolutely sure that things won't go wrong, he's even made the contingency of involving Baron Urik Von Kharcov (another beast who became a man).

Nathan Timothy's leadership troubles have always been bothersome to him but Mallochio used his powers over beasts to pretend to be an avatar of the Wolf God in order to induce Nathan to attack the surrounding 'human' kingdom of Invidia with his beasts.. This, Nathan believed, would also distract his political enemies in the pack and solidify his position as the Wolf God's voice.

While Vebrek is not exactly his idea of a grand and glorious kingdom, the idea of expanding his wandering domiciles considerably and killing a large number of werewolves is not something that is unappealing to Lukas either. Mallochio made a more direct appeal to Lukas, also promising that he'd turn over the now leaderless lands of Invidia to him if he triumphed. When the sudden outpouring of werewolf attacks occurred across the land, Harkon Lukas was there to lead the people in battle against them. The fact that he had to abandon his lands in Kartakkas meaning nothing to him.

Given that this takes literally the span of minutes to perform and the unlikelihood of the PCs storming Castle Avernus to stop Azalin, there is also little that can be done to stop the Second Seal. The war between the humans (with their unknown Wolfwere allies) and the werewolves is something that becomes fairly famous very quickly though. The PCs most likely will be compelled to intervene on behalf of the humans as well. Lukas is a master of showmanship and there is a surprisingly large outpouring of those whom wish to fight 'evil' from other lands. The Church of Nevuchar Springs is especially 'helpful' by sending their fanatics and lunatics.

Both Lukas and Timothy are most interested in finding the other for some personal combat though. Timothy to solidify his actually decreasing position as a military leader in the pack (mostly because werewolves are winning reknown in battle while he stays at home) and because he believes Lukas to be a normal human being. Lukas believes that killing Timothy will solidify his place as Darklord of Vebrek. Lukas is also willing to cheat and if he can recruit the PCs to aid him in his 'wolf hunt' then he will. Astute PCs will take the occasion to rid themselves of both Darklords.. Lukas will discover to his horror if he dies that it will be quite permanent this time. All dire wolves

in Invidia had been killed by the fearful populous.

In truth, Baron Urik Van Kharcov is waiting on the wings for the war to wind down. As a former member of the Kargat, he's familiar with Azalin and while loathing the man...respects his power. The Baron has been waiting to swoop down on both sides after they are exhausted from fighting each other. Using a special plague crafted in Azalin's labs, the Baron proceeds to release it on Vebrek and Invidia after the battle between their darklords. It targets both wolfweres and werewolves with equal vehemence. The second prophecy will leave few people mourning as Valachan troops move in to dominate both lands.

Episode 3: The Third Seal

The Third Seal is a matter that Azalin takes no small pleasure in. Taking the matter to refer to the final uprooting of Vlad Dracov. Azalin starts supporting the rebellion of the noble knight Gondegal. Vlad Dracov's countryside is woefully under-matched for arming the populous with guns from Lamordia and foreign troops from the alliance that desires to take a proactive stance against the Butcher.

The PCs underestimate Azalin if they think that this is a clear cut case of good and evil.. The Gentleman Caller's son Viggo is believed to be Vlad's son and Azalin is also aware of how utterly difficult rebellions can be to win (he's crushed countless ones) even with the incompetence of Dracov. Infecting Viggo with a were-Falcon version of lycanthropy and forming a brigade known as the "Black Falcon", Azalin fully intends to have the half-fiend murder his father at his most vulnerable.

It is during this time that Strahd Van Zarovich will likely pay call on the Pcs by sending one of his agents to 'fetch' them. Strahd, despite a desire to likely frighten them with Castle Ravenloft's morbid nature, doesn't mean them any harm. He instead desires to employ them in the thwarting of Azalin's plans and probably utterly misreads them with promises of wealth, title, and sexual slaves (possibly immortality too) for their cooperation. If the Pcs accept, they will gain the powerful aid of some of his agents and an inexhaustible supply of information from Strahd's network...but also the soul corrupting truth of being aligned with a monster.

The Civil War in Falknovia is one that is largely a stalemate unless the Pcs can figure something dramatic out to change the nature of the war. Ultimately, Gondegal intends to sneak his way into the palace of King Dracov and defeat the man in personal combat.. This is to Viggo's desire as he fully intends to kill the winner of any such combat. Strahd's own agents have predicted this course of action and intend to kill Viggo once this is done (and hopefully thwart the prophecy here). If by some chance that Gondegal should survive both Viggo and Dracov, then they will want to kill him. Confusing? Just assume that everyone largely wants everyone else dead except Gondegal and the PCs.

Depending on who survives; Viggo will kill the other heirs of Vlad Dracov and invade Darkon under Azalin's orders. Azalin will causally let him 'take' the entirety of the Eastern Coast of Darkon and thus fulfill him being a conqueror.. Viggo will furthermore become fast friends with Mallochio and use their powers to strip lords like D'Honraire of their status so that Falknovia can lay waste to other lands. Viggo has none

of Dracov's 'problems' with conquest and is instead tormented by his father's ghost. Gondegal's reign will instead be a time of peace and growth even as Dracov's ghost becomes the impotent darklord that watches the land's prosperity.. Gondegal's newfound hope for the land will sadly be put to effect in 'Ezra's service.'

Episode 4: The Fourth Seal

The Fourth Seal Azalin doesn't actually have to do anything to bring about. He has dozens of plans for houses of light and darkness to 'fulfill' the prophecy but instead the Dark Powers take the matter out of his hands..

Doctor Rudolf Van Ritchen, looking not a day over twenty, emerges from Bleak House and starts slaying monsters on his way back to Mordent. The Doctor has gained the instinctive method of 'sensing' monsters and also regenerates any wound he suffers (only a righteous man can harm the Doctor now). He fairly quickly develops a cult of personality around him even as the Doctor is no less the kind and generous person that he was before.

Once in Mordent, the Weathermay Sisters are disbelieving of his resurrection even as he vows to go to Gryphon Hill in order to cleanse it of evil. It is a mission that is suicide and one that he will not succeed in without the PC's help (though Godfrey cannot kill the Doctor, he can certainly hold him in painful bondage). The Doctor desires their aid in slaying the Darklord in order to convince the people that they no longer have to fear the Dark. Van Ritchen, not previously a religious man, believes that Ezra has chosen him to perform a great duty that will end the hold of evil on the Demiplane. He also senses the PCs have some great part to play in it.

The PCs, by simply walking away, have the power to stop the Prophecy here and now but most likely won't. If they need any extra incentive, Sir Godfrey has decided to take a lesson from the surrounding chaos and make himself directly the leader of Mordent. He sends his ghosts out to kidnap the first born child of every family in Mordent in order to 'feed' the house with their gruesome deaths..

Sir Godfrey can only be destroyed by slaying (or exorcising) the ghosts of his wife and child.. Once done, Sir Godfrey ceases to be tormented and the House itself becomes the Darklord. If the Pcs can slay both Godfrey and destroy the house then Van Ritchen will have fulfilled his duty. They will return as conquering heroes and the Church of Ezra will nominate them as saints destined to fill the prophecy of their holy canon (that they have a considerably more optimistic view of).

Mordent, like many other domains, will become unstable because of this and exist even without a Darklord. Weird events will start occurring though such as rains of frogs and other apocalyptical omens.

It is during this time that Isolde appears in Nevuchar springs as a manifestation of the goddess Ezra and suddenly makes that religion the most powerful in Darkon. Thousands start flocking to the worship of the 'manifested' Ezra.. Azalin holds back the Gentleman Caller from interfering in her gathering an army in order to make things 'smoother' down the line.

Episode 5: The Fifth Seal

The Fifth Seal of course takes the PCs to Lamordia. Victor Mordenheim is up to his usual demonic experiments and everything seems to be normal (in a relative sense). It is from Adam that the next seal will be fulfilled. Adam has abandoned his home on the Sea of Sorrows and is nowhere uncivilized to be found.

Contacting the Darklord of Lamordia, Azalin offered Adam something that couldn't be refused in a chance to gain humanity...and revenge on Mordenheim at once.. Having located Mordenheim's adopted daughter, Azalin recruited her for the construction of the Apparatus. Gleefully reunited with the child that he thought lost, Adam intends to take the body of his father and switch places with him. He also has some rather unwholesome designs on Victor's daughter once this is done.

Strahd's agents have warned Mordenheim of the danger to him but he's dismissive of the primitive Barovians and frankly can't even conceive that Adam would do something scientific to him (attempts to mention the Prophecy didn't help their case). The fact that he has no idea his adopted daughter is alive, much less a brilliant Doctor like himself, has not helped his awareness..

The situation in Lamordia is unstable to begin with to make matters worse. The Brain, realizing that his time in Dementlieu is no longer as profitable as it once was while Falknovians pour across the border have made the situation explosive for civil unrest. The Baron's (arranged) death at the hands of Rudolf Von Aubrecker has only made the situation worse. The Monks of the Divine Spark have 'coincidentally' been revealed by the agents of Strahd to heighten the paranoia and thus make their jobs better covered as they search for Azalin's agents.

Ultimately, Adam simply kidnaps Mordenheim while the Kargat is dispatched to keep the PCs busy. Victor is horrified to find himself the subject of one of his own experiments and strangely recants everything he's ever done in a gibbering madness as his daughter uses the Apparatus upon him. If the PCs make it to the unhallowed warehouse where this occurs, they find Adam's body strangling Mordenheim in a strange reversal of fate. Because of the switching of lifeforces, both have curiously lost their regenerative abilities and are capable of being slain.

The nightmarish betrayal of her father and Adam (whom she played upon the emotions of in order to study) results in the title of Darklord shifting to the younger Doctor Mordenheim during this period. Her curse will haunt her if she survives. Dame Mordenheim will be ever haunted by her own mother that re-animates as a golem once her brother and father are no more.

It is noteworthy at this time, that if the Pcs haven't yet encountered Hyskosa, the elderly Prophet's vardo will meet with them and he will offer up the idea that the Vistani were meant to fulfill this prophecy and thus bring about an end to the Demiplane. He believes that humans were never meant to inhabit the Demiplane and that their presence allows ever greater amounts of evil energy to be fed on by monsters. It is Hyskosa's belief that should the prophecy be fulfilled then the humans of the Demiplane will awaken in a new world while the Dark Powers will be sealed away forever. This may all be a lie of darklings though.

Episode 6: The Sixth Seal

Azalin has wrecked havoc across the Core of the Demiplane and it is now the time that he has most anxiously awaited. Azalin could have used Mallochio to escape the Demiplane at any time but it would not have satisfied his perverse need for revenge against his tormentors. The Sixth Seal is where he intends to break his own bonds though and make Ravenloft into his own personal kingdom as 'compensation' for his centuries of torment.

Darkon becomes the realm where the dead shall outnumber the living. Azalin, simply put, animates every corpse in Darkon and prepares to start adding the rest of the population to the dead. He cares nothing for the people of the land as he will soon be returning to his own homeland on Oerth. It's a nightmare of *Dawn of the Dead* proportions with other lands being looted by Azalin's minions as they kidnap individuals from Tepest to be made into monsters once across the borders.. Azalin further has Mallochio free Death in order to aid in this mass culling. The fact that Azalin seals the borders is something that renders no hope for what he believes will be the utter end of life. He even goes so far to have assassins go to Keening in order to assassinate its Darklord on the off chance she might add her undead city to his ranks.

The people of Darkon swiftly flee to the Church of Ezra and huddle around their goddess whom prepares to forge them into a mighty army in order to cleanse the land of all evil.. George Weathermay, now an old man, is restored of his youth by the angel and named her General. 'Ezra', the totally insane by any human definition Isolde, intends to fully sacrifice the entirety of the human population of Darkon if she believes it can destroy the Gentleman Caller or Azalin. By her logic, it will prevent a greater evil and thus is 'acceptable losses.'

Rudolf Van Ritchen is a much more canny fighter of the undead and if he could be placed in charge of the humans then the undead armies of Azalin might be able to be repulsed without incredible loss of life. Isolde cares nothing for saving her minions and actually believes their dying for a 'noble cause' would be good for their souls. It will be up to the Pcs to somehow expose the fraudulent goddess or perhaps even destroy the celestial.

They might even be more focused on what Strahd and Drigor's own actions are concerned with in thwarting Azalin's resurrection of his son. Capturing and torturing a Zharovan Vistani, they discover from him the secret of reaching beyond the Mists and capturing Azalin's son's soul. The unholy resurrection will make Irek into a Skeletal Knight that Azalin places at the host of his armies. The moment he is resurrected, even if he is mercifully put to death by the Pcs, the Sixth Seal is broken. For, despite if the Pcs defeat the dead that assault Ezra's followers, their numbers have swelled to the ranks of passing the living.

Episode 7: The Seventh Seal

The Final Seal's breaking signals Azalin pouring his armies across the Demiplane in an orgy of slaughter and mayhem. If the Pcs have done well, the armies of Gondegal and the forces of Rudolf Van Ritchen will thwart Azalin's efforts and with no ability to reanimate the dead at will....Azalin's armies will eventually dry up. The now totally

insane Lich has no further care for Darkon though and abandons it utterly. His final goal is in sight for the destruction of the Demiplane.

Meanwhile, the entire Demiplane is no longer capable of ignoring the insane nature of the events around them. There is a revolution in Vaasa with the nobility largely put to the sword, Lady Kateri Shadowborn and Alexi Shadowborn rise from the grave to battle with the disbelieving Elena Faithhold, The Black Knight returns to Sithicus to reclaim his throne, The Lord of the Amber Wastes and Diambel due battle in a war of the religions, and all of the Clusters become part of the now vast ocean filled with islands of terror. Even the impossible freedom of Gwydion will occur as the mammoth monster will break free and terrorize the Shadow Rift before fleeing the dimension entirely. The people turn to anyone to blame and the Vistani are killed by the hundreds, especially when its realized their curses no longer work right.

Azalin and his entourage head directly to Barovia though where they join the final member of their conspiracy in Duke Gundar. Duke Gundar has taken advantage of the chaos to lead a rebellion in his former holdings and seized most of them back. He cannot be Lord until Strahd is dead though and the master of Castle Ravenloft has no intention of letting his domiciles be taken by a pitiful excuse for a vampire. Jander Sunstar has his own intentions of seeing both sides destroyed and has temporarily taken to playing the role of Morninglord.

Drigor and the Gentleman Caller both will approach the PCs before the final conflict though and make their own cases. The one thing that both agree on though is that the Dukkars have outlived their usefulness and they causally offer up Mallochio to a trap by giving the PCs the news that they have suppressed his teleportation powers.. The PCs might take this time to also defend Hyskosa's vardo even as the fiend's chosen assassins are Vistani of the Zharovan. Hyskosa proves immortal though and whether they aid him or not, the True Dukkar reveals to Mallochio that he was never the Dukkar at all upon the fiend's dying moments....merely a pawn. The PCs are welcome to try and dispatch Drigor and the Caller at this time as well....both will still take the better part of valor if they can.

Unless the Pcs intervene on Gunderak's behalf, Gundar is fairly easily dispatched in single combat by Strahd despite the elder vampire's arrogance. That is when Azalin offers Strahd his hearts desire as he's already made sure that Strahd is away from his territories by now deceased Mallochio's hand when he offers his final gift...a bound Tatyana reincarnation. If Strahd can make her a vampire....then the final seal is broken and the Prophecy fulfilled.

Episode 8: Fall Out

It's up to the DM to determine whether the Prophecy being fulfilled is a good thing or a bad thing but some suggestions on both end are as followed....

Good Prophecy Ending: Vampire Tatyana then proceeds to drink Strahd's own blood before slaying the dread Lord of Ravenloft. Hyskosa then announces to Azalin that Strahd was the lynchpin of the Demiplane and that his loss has utterly undone the evils that have dominated the land for so long. Tatyana begs the PCs to kill her to join her beloved (whose ghost will meet hers if they do so) even as Azalin suddenly finds his

body crumbling to dust for the ritual that created him was of the Dark Powers.

Ravenloft becomes a Prime Material World as the Vistani's purpose in guarding the Dark Powers is fulfilled by utterly removing all vestiges of the Prime Material world from the land. The Dark Powers and all the evil souls that they consumed are imprisoned forever thanks to the PC's efforts. It is then revealed that there truly is an Ezra and gods of light that drove this effort.

Rudolf Van Richten then returns to his normal age and is allowed to die a gentle death in order to join his son and lover in the afterlife. The world is nearly anarchic and still filled with huge numbers of monsters though but the Pcs have removed its innate evil. No more Power Checks or Darklords exist in this world and eventually the darkness will be beaten back.

Bad Prophecy Ending: The Dark Lords of Ravenloft are freed from their host and a dreadful Armageddon is unleashed on the universe...yeah....you better hope the Pcs thwart this one.

Prophecy Breaking: Hyskosa screams as he is destroyed in the resulting backlash of energies as there are rumblings across the Demiplane of Dread. The Final Conjunction results in the destruction of all those Darklords away from their realm at the time of the Prophecies breaking and the end of any chance of the world ever being brought back into the physical universe.

No new Dark Lords will be brought into the world of Ravenloft thanks to the PCs actions and escape has become even more difficult....but maybe a life can be lived in a world of shadows.

Azalin, having been thwarted for the last time, will not join this group though. The Lich King takes his own existence and Darkon instead comes under the rule of other Lords. Lords presumably better designed than the last time this happened.