

GAME SESSION 85: BAD SLEEP - 12

(played January 27th, 2019. Martin, Yvon, Jean-Guy, Sylvain. Austizel played by Sylvain, Macrazbunare by Martin)

June 19th, 748, 10 pm (day 4)

They heroes face seven ghosts, all former friends of Van Richten. They are now controlled by Mme Radanovich. Ottélie Farringer is in the center of the group, kneeling and with arms bound.

The voice cackles and she shouts “Attack, my pets! Destroy them!”

The echo of the crone’s voice still reverberates in the room when the battle starts!

Geddar runs toward Petrak and hit him with his mighty axe (-18).

Samuel moves toward Austizel and put his hand on Austizel’s face : his flesh melts! Austizel’s mouth is sealed shut!

DM note: this Shape Flesh ability usually takes one minute (which I changed to one round, but with a lower DC).

Van Richten tries to parley with his former friends but most ghosts ignore his attempt. Erasmus answers that they are controlled and can’t do a thing to resist this control.

Exigu throws three arrows at Samuel, and luckily all do reach their incorporeal target.

Ingrid’s shape flicker between young beauty and beaten pulp. She seems unsure at what to do.

The players see a hole being opened in the roof! As if the ghosts were not enough, there are also ghouls and zombies on the roof!

DM note: not much of a threat compared to the ghosts, but a way to increase pressure ;)

Erasmus is in full ghost vampire mode. He attacks Petrak but misses.

Austizel moves away and use a dagger to open his mouth (so he can cast spells). He takes damage as well as charisma damage.

Alannthir casts a spell at Varadan, *Baleful Polymorph*. Varadan resists the effect.

Petrak casts *magic circle against evil* on himself, hoping it will disrupt the control over the ghost. But this part of the spell doesn’t change Geddar and Erasmus’s behavior.

Varadan moves and attacks Erasmus.

Claudia Deshanes casts a *ray of exhaustion* at Varadan, who again resists the effect.

Tora attacks Samuel. Macrazbunare casts *magic missile*.

A zombie falls from the roof hole and enters. They see ghouls coming from the elevator shaft.

Dr Harmon Rusheider runs toward Petrak. An aura of cold surrounds him (this former Van Richten friend was killed by a *cone of cold*). Rusheider touches Petrak. Disdainfully, he says “Your mind is so weak” and the attack drains Petrak’s intelligence.

As the heroes fight the ghosts, two more ghosts appear in the room. One is a young teen vistani, that they identify as Radovan Radanavich (the young teenager that Van Richten could not heal in year 706, starting this whole thing). His eyes are haggard.

The other ghost is a very old crone dressed in vistani garb. Madame Radanavich! At first sight, the heroes know that this creature is one of the most evil creature they met. Her shape is radiating with power like heat from a camp fire.

She has Ottelie’s hairs in one hand, a black dagger in the other.

“This foolish spirit thought she could resist me! Ah! How mistaken she was! Now, Van Richten, watch your beloved Ottelie being eradicated forever!”

She pulls the ghostly dagger and slits Ottélie’s throat! Ottélie dies while looking at Van Richten in the eyes, with courage. Ghostly blood flows from her throat and she vanishes ...

Van Richten hurls in rage! He drops the crossbow that was in his hands.

Petrak is hurt again by Geddar, and Austizel’s mouth is again melted shut by Samuel!

Van Richten runs toward Mme Radanovich and his hands closes on Mme Radanavich’s neck, who seem very tangible to him. She continues laughing at his face. “You’re a fool! I will have my revenge!”

The battle goes on. At one point, another ghost appears! Karl the gardener! Being already overworked, the heroes are relieved to see Karl is not fighting the heroes but instead protecting Tora from something he appear to expect from Mme Radanavich.

Moments later, Joseph Bierce, Elise and Gretta, Casimir and Thane (Casimir’s dog) also appear! They all protect one hero.

Erasmus hits Varadan, and Varadan’s blood flow in Erasmus’s mouth, healing him!

Austizel again uses his dagger to open his mouth.

Then Alannthir runs toward the middle of the room and let out a chilling *wail*! Macrazbunare, Exigu and Petrak dies! (*these PCs missed both fear and then death save*).

The manor seems to shake a little, like if reacting to this slaughter...



DM note : ooops, half of the party dead. TPK on the way! I knew that was going to be difficult but didn't expect this badluck... I had planed two scenarios if that was going to happen. Scenario #2 was that they opened their eyes on Juste's theater scene. But I didn't need this, as scenario #1 worked. Here it goes ...

The heroes shift their strategy: forget the other ghosts, lets finish Mme Radanavich first, with the hope the other ghosts will leave when she is killed. Varadan runs to the old crone and attack her. Claudia Deshane throws a *magic missile* at him. Élise Bierce moves near Varadan and act as his protector.

Then Casimir, who was protecting Exigu, says "I give you my life so you can continue" and he vanishes! Exigu opens his eyes!

More zombies and ghouls enter the room. Two zombies run toward the prone Macrazbunare body!

Rusheider drains Tora's intelligence. "You are feebleminded", Rusheider sneers. (*which is now down to 5 ;)*)

Just moment before she was going to launch a magic ability, they see a last ghost enter the battle! A young woman unclutching Van Richten's hands and pushing him away. It is Van Richten's sister, Maria! The heroes recognize her from a portrait in the house.

She says angrily at Mme Radanavich "You can't have him, not as long as I'm here!"

Van Richten is pushed back and his surprise overcome his anger.

Mme Radanavich has a look of hate in her face when she looks at Maria. "You? No! I won't let you save him! I will have my revenge!"

Mme Radanavich launches a magical wave of grey ghosts that strikes everybody in the room. It appears as a wave of insubstantial spirits, moving from her in a quickly expanding circle.



<https://www.saatchiart.com/art/Painting-BETWEEN-THE-BLACK-AND-DIVINE-1-DARK-BEAUTY-ABOUT-DIVINITY-CREATION-BLACK-HOLE-COSMIC-LIGHT-LIGHTSPACE-BY-O-KLOSKA/58551/4031762/view>

The day ghosts try to protect their chosen hero from this attack. Maria shields Van Richten.

DM note : an eerie ability I made up. In the adventure, it was lightning. Same damage (10d6)

Karl moves to Petrak and “gives his life” and vanishes. Petrak opens his eyes.

Van Richten is now very calm. He speaks to the vistani crone “I will not let you fill my heart with hatred again. I refuse to let you this victory. I renounced my hatred and revoked my curse years ago. You are not my sworn enemy, you are nothing to me but a victim of your own hatred”

“How dare you!”, shouts Mme Radanavich, “I have already suffered too much! Too late to save yourself or your friends! I will win!”

“No more!”, Van Richten shrieks. “No more killing! You are dead while we are alive! I do not allow you to hurt us!”

“No fear”, Van Richten murmurs. He falls to his knees. “I have no fear. I understand completely now. You have no power over me, witch. I am HOME! No one has power here.”

And he shouts “No one but me!”

The zombies and the ghouls suddenly look at Van Richten in fear, as if only them saw something. They move away from him.

Thane the dog, that Macrazbunare protected from Karl, gives his life to Macrazbunare and vanishes. The druid opens his eyes to see two zombies were going to attack his skull to eat his brain!

Alannthir casts another *Baleful polymorph*, again Varadan resists.

Petrak casts *spiritual weapon* and the force spell attacks Mme Radanavich. Varadan also hits the hateful crone.

The Manor suddenly becomes very agitated and it shakes wildly! But the heroes do not feel this effect! But they see the ghouls and the zombies stagger! As if the manor was shaking off dirt, through the windows, they see zombies falling from the roof to the ground!

But Mme Radanavich launches a second wave of the grey ghosts! Again, the remaining day ghosts try to protect their heroes. But Petraks isn’t protected and falls unconscious!

Geddar attacks Tora. Samuel hits Tora, who falls to the ground! (-2 hp).

Macrazbunare cures Petrak.

Van Richten, still on his knees, closes his eyes. “Ghosts!”, he shouts, “Be gone! Leave my house! Rest in peace, and I hope that nobody ever troubles your rest!”

The evil ghosts vanish without a word, and the day ghosts look at Van Richten with gratitude before vanishing too...

Then the house shakes again, and the zombies and the ghouls start to scream! To the heroes' surprise, the undead are being drawn *through* the wooden attic floor, not like in a quicksand, but like if they were drawn *in* the very boards : they hear the bones crunching and ichor and flesh spurts from their legs as they writhe and claw helplessly in the air. After a moment, the sickening noises end, and all that remain from the undead are disgusting poodles of blood and fluids...

Only Madame Radanavich and Radovan remains! She shrieks from rage!

Austizel hits her with a magic missile, and Petrak with his spiritual weapon. Varadan hits her hard too!

But the crone ignores them and runs to Van Richten. He doesn't look scared. She strikes him and he falls to the ground! But she looks like she feels something is wrong and doesn't appear satisfied from killing him.

Austizel hits the crone and her son with a *lightning bolt*, while using the power of the Harrowstone *warden badge* (3/day, ignores the incorporeal random).

They resume their attack on the crone and a *spiritual weapon* finishes her! She vanishes in a scream of rage!

Then they focus on Radovan and destroy him too.

The room is suddenly eerie silent. Even the storm outside seems to quickly fades...

They look at Van Richten and find no vital sign on his body.

Then a ghostly Van Richten appears! He looks a little confused, and looks around.

"Friends, I do not understand all that is going on with me. But I know I have to stay here now. It is my house, it is my fate. My swan song. I accept it. I deeply thank you for their help, but now I ask you to leave. ..."

"Take care of the twins...", he adds.

Petrak asks if he wants them to raise his body from the dead? He answers negatively. "I do not understand everything, but I know I have to stay here".

They tell him they will bury him in the family parcel in Rivalis. He agrees.

They question him more, but he doesn't say much more. When the heroes stop talking to him, he quickly vanishes.

DM note : the players were then incredulous that Van Richten was gone for good. I had to show them the cover of the boxed set "Bleak House, the Death of Van Richten" ;). That was an emotional moment, the players were sad!

If you are familiar with the Boxed set, you will see I changed a lot.

1) The role of the "day" ghosts in the adventure was to neutralize the "night" ghosts. So the day ghosts would fight the night ghosts and annihilate one another. There were no stats planned for

either set of ghosts. But I thought that was cheesy, and didn't work realistically in the D&D world.

But also, as written in the Boxed Set, it feels like the PCs had nothing to do but munch pop corn while watching the chosen end. I wanted them to feel they did something.

So I gave stats to everybody, and planned a more realistic fight.

See the night ghosts basic description in session 82.

The "good" ghosts were low hit points ghosts, but they were able to protect a PC and neutralize a magic spell from Mme Radanavich half of the time. Also, if needed (my TPK scenario #1), they could "give their life" to a PC during the battle and raise him from the dead.

Of course, I needed a well detailed plan for the battle (having 9 evil NPCs to handle, plus 8 "good" ghosts, plus Van Richten, plus the House and the ghouls and the zombies), so the DM work didn't slow the battle.

I had a battle sheet with all NPC initiative order already planned (only the PCs' to add), and that also worked well to quicken the game (if anyone wants them, let me know ☺)

2) The battle "plan" :

Round 1 – fight with the night ghosts. End of round one : Mme R appear and kills Ottélie.

Round 2 – VR attacks Mme R. The day ghosts appear and are helpful. End of round two : Mme R blasts the room with her wave of ghosts. Maria VR appears and separates VR from Mme R.

Round 3 – VR calms down and refuses to let go to anger. This enrages Mme R.

Round 4+ – VR takes control and frees all ghosts. The House eliminates the ghouls and the zombies. So it is now a battle only with Mme R + Radovan. Mme R kills VR. The PCs finishes the Radanavich. VR appear as a ghost.

The gamble on my part was that the PCs would last until round 4, until they could fight Mme R alone.

3) The ending. As I said before, I wasn't fond of the random part for the end. So as you saw, I merged the best parts (IMHO) of the four scenarios to melt into one cinematic and hopefully cool end.

Without them noticing when it happened, the heroes are now in an old dusty house, filled with crates and old furniture... The roof is whole. They are back to present day they think.

They are eager to leave this place and find their horses at the carriage house. They are a little thin from hunger but they never were short of water. They let the horses eat and they go to Rivalis (30 minutes ride).

At 11h30 pm, they are at the Traveler's End Inn. They sleep the night.

June 20th, 748, 8 am

They arrange the funerals of Van Richten at the cemetery. The cemetery keeper, Erdar Eaglecut, tells them to meet with the family notary, Mr Oriorin, an old halfling. They ask him if their name is on the testament (not for the money, but if Van Richten left them a task to do). Oriorin tells them it will take a week to unearth the document, and proof check it. They agree that should there be anything he will write the heroes in Mordent, where the twins are too.



The heroes send a message to Ivana Boritsi about Van Richten's death. They explain he died while trapped in a plan by his old enemy, Madame Radanavich, and add a few more details to satisfy her. They send it through the local Boritsi Trading Co. office.

Exigu buys a +1 bow, and they sell a rapier +1/+3 vs human (profit of 6 000 gp).

A little before noon, they bury Van Richten with the proper rituals, led by Petrak and the local anchorite priest, Brom Grevotsk. The possessions of Van Richten are given to notary Oriorin.

The heroes say a few good things about the passed scolar and mentor. They are surprised that word of mouth worked and a group gathered for the funerals, of which a saddened Gayle Tallgallows. To her, they give more details of the final days of van Richten.



After the funerals, they break the *ghost trap*. The ghost of Davvyd appears! He is confused, and doesn't appear to remember much of what happened at Van Richten's estate. He asks for the current year and say he died 7 years ago. The heroes's explications only appear to confuse him and he vanishes ...

At night, the topic of the day at the inn is the death of the famous hero. People drink to his resting in peace.

June 21th, 748

Travel from Rivalis to Ludendorf. They stay at the Breaking Wave Inn.

June 22th, 748

They take a boat they already boarded, the *Black Pelican*, with Captain Howe. He is going directly to Mordentshire, without stopping at Port-a-Lucine (-60 gp fee).

June 23th, 748, 7 pm

They arrive in Mordentshire and go to Daniel Foxgrove's house. They find him in conversation with Lord Jules Weathermay. Soon, the twins are there too.

The heroes bring them the sad news. Everybody has watery eyes. They speak highly of their passed friend. They ask a servant to fetch Miss Polk, the old lady tending Van Richten's estate, and tell her the sad news too. The old lady is shaken.

The twins are however quickly in their usual enquiry mode and they ask a lot of questions about the last days of Van Richten, Mme Radanavich's plans, the estate in the mists and the exact words Van Richten said while he was a ghost. They wonder if they should visit the estate to try to talk to him.

The twins wonder if Van Richten is in peace? They say they will pay the local priest to make some divination spells about it.

Later in the evening, Laurie shows them the brooch she is wearing : the blaustein gem sparkles! Laurie says that Raoul Morrel in Blaustein wrote him many letters and they are intriguing. He found out that Laurie is now the owner of a Blaustein gem and is flattered that such a rare gem now belongs to a distinguished lady. The heroes warn her not to go there alone. She answers that she isn't that foolish, and that she would make the trip only with Andrez Weissritter or with the heroes.

It is a long evening where Daniel opens his finest bottles. The heroes go to sleep shortly after the twins.

June 24th, 748, am

Early morning, the heroes find Jules and Daniel are still in the salon, still discussing.

The heroes say their *au revoir* and leave early. The stop at James Martigan's church to say hello and bring him the sad news. Tara is not there, probably still sleeping.

They travel to Levkarest.

June 27th, 748, 7 pm

They stop and get rooms at the Defraya Manor Inn. In the dining room, they listen for rumours and to learn what is the talk of the town. Many talk about art and galleries, of a specific artist, and a few about the woman vanishing.

“Ezra punishes the unfaithful, and those women surely deserved it”, says one man. A woman replies “The church's top clergy hides something sinister, I do not trust this masked priest.” He is speaking about Severin?

They also learn that many dark haired woman have discolored their hairs, or cut them short, to differentiate them from the victims' look.

Later they hear one patron saying “The Cathedral was built on an old forgotten cemetery and it is cursed!”

Another, a bit drunk, says of the vanished women “may be they were looking too much like the Black Widow, you know?” but his friends tell him to stop talking about *that...*

They go to sleep, with a watch guard.

June 28th, 748, am

They go to the Cathedral to meet Nicoletta Ladubay, Petrak's superior. They are again struck but the Church's size and beauty.

They are asked to go in a meeting room in the second floor, and Johann Severin is there too, with Nicoletta. They are pleased to meet the heroes again, and have gratitude that they will now start the enquiry.

Nicoletta “Thank you for taking care of this problem. The church did an investigation, but our means are limited: we do not want anyone in town to know that the clergy are investigating, not to panic people. You must never say that we have mandated you. Be extremely discreet!”

“Praesidius Levin Postaya wants to hear from this special inquiry. We all are very troubled by it, and the repercussions to the church. The number of penitents goes down every month, especially among women.”

“Please report to me or Severin often, as the Praesidius will also often ask us about the investigation”.



“The Cathedral was inaugurated in May 6th, 746, for the Feast of the First Epiphany. The mass started inside the building early as 740, but the final stone was set in May 746 and that is when it was officially inaugurated.”

“The first vanishing happened in July 746. And there have been at least 19 since. For long it was a rare event, but now we are at 3 a month! All except two disappeared in the streets around the Cathedral. Two vanishing happened while the women were at home. We think most vanishing happened in a 500 meters radius, or a maximum of one kilometer from the Cathedral. Also, those happen at night.”

Tora: “did you find any bodies? What happened?” Nicoletta “No, these woman vanish! No body was ever found. Once or twice a little blood in the street but we are unsure if it is related”

“All vanishing are young woman. They all have more or less the same look : long black hair; pale eyes, often blue. We have a list of 19 victims, but there might be more, as Levkarest is a religious center and we do not keep track of all visitors entering and leaving the town.”

“It would be nice if you could solve the problem before the July 15th, an important worship day.”

Tora : “we heard a rumour that the church is built on a cemetery?” “Nonsense. I think more of a maniac roaming the streets.”, replies Johann. “Perhaps”, Nicoletta quickly adds, “we don’t know”

Petrak asks about Ivana. The priests are a little uneasy but Nicoletta says “She never publicly commented on the matter, we do not know what her thoughts on this are.”

“She is quite pious. She comes at the church 2 or 3 times a week, and on all important ceremonies. She never misses one. She is a generous donator to the church. She has her private bench.”

“The vanished woman all looked the same, but they had very different backgrounds, from prostitute to fresco painter to young priest apprentice.”

Nicoletta will give them a master key for the church, and a pass explaining they can have access anywhere, should they need to enter when it is closed. However, you cannot enter the Vaults or the Praesidius office. If you need to go there, arrange it with us. The pass is good for the Cathedral, the walled compound north of it and the “Annex”, where the young priests live. She will give it to them the next day.

“Do not abuse of this privilege!”

When Johann says that there are no links between the Ezra iconography and Ivana, Petrak notices Nicoletta rolling her eyes ...