# **Fleshing Out Curse of Strahd: The Fanes and the Origin of the Winery Gems**

Not very long ago, the wonderful [u/DragnaCarta](https://www.reddit.com/u/DragnaCarta/) posted a tantalizing write up on the Fanes of Barovia and I'm unashamed to admit that I latched onto the idea like a bee on honey. Not only have I borrowed the idea, but I've also edited and expanded it for my own campaign. Some of this is repetitive of Dragna's post while other parts are of my own making. As always, this might not be for everyone, but if you find the ideas interesting, you're free to use them.

## The Fanes of Barovia

### A Brief History

* + Long before Strahd came and civilized the valley, Barovia was once a wild land. The valley was largely populated by scattered familial villages, usually no larger than a couple dozen people living in three or four houses to a village. These people were used to the harsh landscape and were overall hearty, somewhat barbaric people.
	+ In addition, there were also groups of forest folk (druids) that lived in the wilds and didn't settle. The settled people and the forest folk have had a famously tumultuous relationship over the centuries, with periods of hate and periods of peace scattered across history.
	+ In a general sense, the land was separated into three Fanes, or environments: The Swamp Fane, the Forest Fane, and the Mountain Fane. This isn't the exact definition of a fane, but for the sake of this history it's the easiest way to picture them.

### The Ladies Three

* + The original residents of the valley worshiped a trio of Archfey that were magically connected to the three fanes of the land. Because of their magical nature, these Archfey were literally "the land." They were:
		- The Weaver from the Swamp Fane
		- The Huntress from the Mountain Fane
		- The Seeker of the Forest Fane.
	+ The Ladies of the Wood almost never showed themselves to the people that worshiped them. Instead, they would appear in auguries, dreams, and omens, speaking through the mouths of animals and in the wind that mused the leaves on the trees.

### Shrines

* + The people of the valley used to worship the Ladies through a series of shrines scattered across the land, some small and some large. The three most prominent shrines were located inside large stone circles that still stand during the present time of the campaign.
		- The swamp shrine is the circle of stones in Berez.
		- The mountain shrine is the circle atop Yesterhill.
		- And the forest shrine is the collection of monoliths behind Old Bonegrinder.
	+ The worship of the Ladies usually came in the form of minor religious practices and offerings. It's easy to let pop culture taint our imaginations and let us picture some horrific blood sacrifices for this worship, however that isn't the case here. The offerings were usually things like, "The best fruits from the first harvest" or "the antlers of a buck we killed on hunt." Sometimes the people left small, carved statues or other bits of artistic labor.
	+ The practices were usually communes with nature, where folk would wonder into the woods and live entirely alone in respect for the Ladies. Those who survived would return home spiritually awakened. Other rituals were long nights spent in respect and worship or village wide pilgrimages to the major shrines.

### The Fall of the Ladies

* + The Ladies presided over the valley until Strahd conquered the land. Strahd, seeing the power of the fanes, desecrated the three main shrines to the ladies and reconsecrated them in his own image, giving him dominion over the valley. Now, Strahd is literally, "The Land."
	+ By taking over the Fanes, Strahd has the following benefits:
		- The permanent protection of a *nondetection* spell
		- Resistance to Fire, Cold, and Lightning damage
		- +4 to his Armor Class
		- With the combined control of all three Fanes, he controls the waters, winds, and wildlife in the valley. The only of Strahd's environmental powers that does *not* come from the Fanes is the ever-overcast sky. That comes from Vampyr.

### Reinstating the Ladies

* + Part of defeating Strahd will entail disconnecting him from the land. He's obscenely strong at the moment, even for a Darklord. Breaking down his power is key to his fall.
	+ To reconsecrate the shrines and therefore bring back the Ladies of the Wood, certain rituals will have to be performed.
		- To reconsecrate the shrine of the Mountain Fane at Yesterhill, someone must survive a journey through the caverns under the Gulthias Tree and prove the worth of their soul. (A dungeon of my own making detailed in a later post.)
		- To reconsecrate the shrine of the Forest Fane behind Old Bonegrinder, the players must face one of their possible dark futures, to understand just how far they could have fallen.
		- To reconsecrate the shrine of the Swamp Fane in Berez, someone must provide a great service to the Weaver to prove their respect and servitude. More specific to the campaign, someone will have to kill Baba Lysaga, the witch currently poisoning the swamp fane, and present her heart at the shrine.

## The Ladies Now

So where are the Ladies of the Wood now? Here are a few options you may use to incorporate the Ladies into your game.

### Physical Beings or Ephemeral Spirits

* + Firstly, you should decide whether you want the Ladies to be physical beings in your campaign or extrasensory entities. Are you prepared to use them like NPCs throughout the story? Are they actual people that exist and have their own personalities? Or are they more insubstantial? A presence that lives in the very wind and doesn't have an actual form or voice?
	+ If you prefer a non-physical route, there are less NPCs to deal with, but it becomes a bit more difficult to communicate the idea of the fanes and the shrines to your players. You'll likely have to use a living devout follower of the Ladies to advance their agenda and incorporate this information into a new or existing NPC. The Martikovs, certain werewolves, and Exethanter the Lich are people who might have knowledge of the Fanes.

### Physical NPCs

* + **Hags or Beauties?**
		- Dragna and I had a brief talk about this and in the end, I loved both ideas. They're different, but equally valid takes on physical representations of the Ladies. So, I've decided to detail them both here for you guys.
	+ **Hags**
		- In this version, the Ladies of the Wood appear to their followers as beautiful women. They are idolized for their beauty and so inspire all the more devotion.
		- However, the Ladies' beauty is only a magical glamour. In reality, they are hideous hag-like creatures that love to toy with all things. They are beings of nature, yes, but they have a semi-sadistic streak and love the influence they have over mortals.
		- This idea plays right into the theme of CoS. The players might believe they are helping these beauteous goddesses from days old. And then, once they reconsecrate the shrines, the Ladies "gift" the players with an in-person thanks and their true forms are revealed. The Ladies in this version don't have to be evil, necessarily, but their grotesque appearances should shock and disgust the players.
	+ **Beauties**
		- The Ladies are naturally beautiful, in their own wild and magical way. In this version, the Ladies of the Wood are naturally glorious in appearance. However, their separation from the land has drastically drained their powers and warped their image. During the time of the campaign, they appear as withered old women, some with hideous deformities.
		- When the shrines are reconsecrated and the Ladies restored to power, their hag forms will melt away to reveal their true beauty.
		- I like this version of the Ladies because it goes against the dark nature of CoS. In a campaign filled with so much darkness and evil, towards the end it might be nice to throw in something beautiful, especially if you sense your players are getting emotionally worn out by all the horror.

### True Neutral

* + Should you decide to add the Ladies to your game, ugly or beautiful, you should make their personalities directly reflective of nature itself. They can be both beautiful and terrifying, as ever changing as the winds and as fickle as a lightning bolt. Sometimes they bless, sometimes they punish, and sometimes they don't answer at all. The Ladies are the chaos of nature personified and do as they please in the end.

## Within the Campaign

Should you place the Ladies in your campaign as physical entities, here are the NPCs I developed to help out. I personally went with the Beauties subplot, in which the ladies all appear as ugly hags until reinstated and assume their true forms.

### The Swamp Fane

* **Appearance and General Notes**
	+ The Weaver is an old hag named Jeny Greenteeth. You can actually find this witch throughout the dnd Adventure League modules, but I took her and changed her rather radically for the Ladies.
	+ Jeny is a quirky old bag who lives as an herbologist just outside the walls of Vallaki. You can find the location of her shop in my Shops guide [here](https://www.reddit.com/r/CurseofStrahd/comments/96we3t/fleshing_out_curse_of_strahd_shops_and_shopkeepers/).
	+ Otherwise, to quote myself: Jeny is an old woman with an eye for mischief. She knows just about every plant in Barovia and is a master potion maker. She takes no nonsense from anyone and loves playing pranks on people with her potion making. For instance, she sells a love potion meant to "help men in areas of physical conquest." However, if Jeny senses her buyer is adulterous (or is just an overall pompous butt to her), she sells him a "faulty" version of the potion which makes his entire manhood grow long, course hair for a month.
* **Campaign Sitings**
	+ Jeny is likely the most helpful of the three ladies and is more than willing to gently guide the party towards restoring the fanes. Unfortunately, she can't actually tell anyone she's a Lady of the Wood, because believing in the fanes is a part of reinstating their power.
	+ The players can meet Jeny in her shop when they get to Vallaki. They may also encounter her much later in the campaign, on her way to Berez to try (for the umteenth time) to save her sister from Baba Lysaga. If encountered on the road, Jeny rides in a tiny rickshaw puled by a giant boar named Toady.
	+ If the players make a friend of Jeny, she'll give them a little wooden coin with the words, "Pretty peny, show me Jeny" carved into the surface. If a player flips the coin and utters the rhyme, a massive tree will grow from the earth beneath where the coin lands, with Jeny inside. She warns the players that the coin should only be used in emergencies and never indoors, but is otherwise elusive to its function. (much thanks to whomever on discord came up with this wonderful idea! <3)

### The Mountain Fane

* **Appearance and General Notes**
	+ The eldest of the three ladies, the Huntress of the mountain fane is currently an old, withered hag by the name of Laura Stoneheart. Unlike the fun and quirky Jeny, Laura is crude and blunt, detesting company and mortals altogether. She's the harshest of the sisters and borderline rude when met in conversation.
* **Campaign Sitings**
	+ Though hags and drained of their power, the ladies are still immortal archfey connected to the land. As such, even as hags, they can't die. To truly kill them, one would have to burn and salt all of Barovia.
	+ This is truly unfortunate for poor Laura, because she fell into the hands of Baba Lysaga many years ago.
	+ Instead of killing goats to keep her alive, as the published book tells us, Baba instead has Laura tied to the ceiling of her hut, right above her bathtub. Every week or so, Baba slits Laura's throat and baths in her blood. The blood of an archfey is naturally uncannily powerful and has been keeping Baba alive and well all these years. The goats are just food. ;)

### The Forest Fane

* **I've personally made the Seeker Madam Eva.**
	+ Now, Madam Eva as written is a baller concept, but I had trouble consolidating her into the campaign into a way that the PCs could actually find out about and then make relevant to the story. Yes, she's Strahd's long lost sister, but how has she been alive so long then? How in the world would the PCs find out her goals without her actively telling them? And if they did find out she was looking for a Strahd successor, how would you rework that to be relevant for your party's overarching goal?
	+ Since starting my campaign, I've seen some super interesting answers for these, mainly from the wondrous [u/guildsbounty](https://www.reddit.com/u/guildsbounty/). For instance, the semi-canon info about Vistani being immortal and out of place from the natural flow of time. That's super interesting, but was still harder for me to figure a logical way to tell my party. Also, my players are the kind of people who'd find witches much more plausible than an immortal race of humans.
	+ You can take or leave my idea of making Eva a Lady, of course. But if you find the time traveling bit more interesting I *highly* recommend going and reading guildsbounty's reworks of Eva and Arabelle. While I didn't use the ideas in my own campaign, they're super cool and may fit your own game. ;)
* **Madam Eva's new Background as a Fane**
	+ So. All that about Eva being Strahd's sister? Scratch it. We're starting fresh here.
	+ Instead, way back in the day when the Ladies were at their peak, the Forest Fane took an interest in offering predictions to her followers. Glimpses of the future and the gift of foresight often came to her most avid followers. Over time, she eventually became entwined with the Vistani and their blood became saturated with her gifts.
	+ One particularly gifted fortune teller and most avid follower of the Ladies Three was a woman named Eva. Eva eventually grew old and died, but passed her gift to a successor who became the next Madam Eva. And so on and so forth. However, when Strahd came to the land, desecrating the shrines and entombing the Ladies in their hag forms, the Forest Fane herself decided to take up the position of Madam Eva and live safely with the Vistani.
	+ Though her common name is Maggie Treenail, the Seeker has gone by Madam Eva for quite literally centuries now. Though the Vistani know she's powerful, they have long since forgotten the Ladies for the most part and don't know Eva's true nature.

## Ladies in the Endgame

If you're going with a super buffed Strahd, as many DMs do, the Ladies can prove a fun addition to the game and a vital tool to Strahd's defeat.

As modified, Strahd is immortal due to his connection with the Dark Power, Vampyr. He literally controls the weather and has extra buffs because of the Ladies. And, you'll likely end up buffing his stat block and spell lists to extend his terror throughout the game. After all that, Strahd is verifiably a terrifying demon for any party. Chipping away at his defenses will prove crucial to taking him down and give most parties much needed purpose to go galavanting across Barovia.

## The Origin of Lycanthropy in Barovia

As another bit of lore and practical application for the Ladies, they are actually the origin of Lycanthropy in Barovia. As I detailed in my [Lycanthropy post](https://www.reddit.com/r/CurseofStrahd/comments/97xjai/fleshing_out_curse_of_strahd_running_werewolves/), I separated Lycanthropy into two categories: Inherited and Infected, or natural born and cursed. While similar, one version is a blessing and incredibly useful and the other is a game shifting curse.

The Ladies originally used Lycanthropy to gift their faithful followers and to curse their blasphemers. The Huntress (Mountain Fane/Laura Stoneheart) is responsible for wolf lycanthropes in Barovia while the Seeker (Madam Eva/Forest Fane/Maggie Treenail) is responsible for raven lycanthropes in Barovia. In their current, weakened states, they are incapable of granting or curing lycanthropy however.

## The Winery Gemstones: Gifts from the Ladies

The book tells us that the gems were created by a wizard long ago. Now, I find it almost too convenient that there are three magic gemstones that seem to inspire plant life and three Ladies of the Wood who rule over nature. So, a tiny rewrite was in order.

To borrow directly from [u/DragnaCarta](https://www.reddit.com/u/DragnaCarta/) again, a young mage came to Barovia long before Strahd's time and fell in love with the land. She formed a bond with the locals as well as the more nature-based tribes living in the woods (the old druid tribes) and managed to broker a peace between the two factions. Her negotiations brought a beautiful era of peace and understanding between the early settlers of the valley and the forest folk, which impressed the Ladies significantly. To help the mage settle the land and start a bountiful vineyard, they each gifted her with a gemstone to plant in her fields.

# **Fleshing Out Curse of Strahd:  The Fanes of Barovia II - Reconsecration and Lore**

I wanted to write about the Fanes and the Ladies Three. Throughout my Fleshing Out series, you may have noticed that I've heavily incorporated the Fanes into this section of the campaign. So having everything nicely and clearly outlined is probably a good thing. :)

## The Symbolism of the Ladies Three

The Fanes of Barovia were originally conceived in previous editions of dnd, but were largely expanded upon by [u/DragnaCarta](https://www.reddit.com/u/DragnaCarta/) and myself in [my first Fanes post](https://www.reddit.com/r/CurseofStrahd/comments/9l5zfh/fleshing_out_curse_of_strahd_the_fanes_and_the/). In short, the original goddesses that reigned over the valley of Barovia were a trio of nature based archfey. When Strahd came to the valley, he displaced the Ladies, desecrated their shrines, and reduced them to the forms of simple hags.

### The Weave and the Threads

* + In ye olde time, long before the Morning Lord, the people of Barovia believed in the Weave. Basically, the Weave represents the fabric of the world and the passage of time. The Threads of Fate are the theoretical strings that make up the grander Weave.
	+ While most of this old religion has been lost to time, the Vistani still believe in the Threads. I mention so in my [Tser Pool post](https://www.reddit.com/r/CurseofStrahd/comments/8ymg7y/fleshing_out_curse_of_strahd_tser_pool_the/), actually.

### The Seeker

* + The Seeker of the Forest Fane basically represents the coming of the future. She "seeks" because, according to the old tales, she can see the future.
	+ In hag form, the Seeker has been locked into the body of Madam Eva. So Madam Eva isn't just a great fortune teller, she's the *god* of fortune telling. Sort of. In a nature-y way. XD
	+ The Seeker is often represented in the form of ravens, since they're highly intelligent birds that have high-seeing eyes. The Seeker is also the creator of wereraven lycanthropy in Barovia.

### The Weaver

* + The Weaver of the Swamp Fane represents the remembrance of the past. She's sort of like a magical librarian that remembers everything. She's the keeper of the Weave after all.

### The Huntress

* + The Huntress of the Mountain Fane is a bit different from the other two. In old lore, they didn't believe in the concept of the present, just the past and the future. Instead, she represents the dark, underside of the Weave. If the Weave is like a cut of fabric, there can be a top and bottom, which is a very basic representation of light and dark, day and night, life and death.
	+ The Huntress is basically a nature-based Death god. But remember, she isn't evil. Death is supposed to be a natural occurrence, meant to be accepted and not feared. That's why she's the Huntress, since hunting has to do with taking life. Strahd and other undead are therefore her natural enemies, as their very existences are perversions of death.
	+ The henge like circle of stones atop Yesterhill was once a sacred shrine dedicated to the Huntress. The shrine itself is completely surrounded by graves, after all. Even the Gulthias Tree, a tree of undeath and evil, is representative of her power.

## The Ladies' Appearances

This is optional and easily changeable for your campaign, but I came up with a few quick descriptions of the Ladies in their true, youthful forms if you want to use them. I wanted them to be beautiful, but also obviously fey-like and magical. Lovely, but dangerous.

### The Seeker

* A tall, angular woman with ebony skin that is almost completely black, making her look more like a moving shadow. The Seeker has white eyes, without irises or pupils, and a mane of raven feathers where her hair should be.

### The Weaver

* A little shorter and sprite-like in appearance. She has a giggly, playful air about her. The Weaver has yellow-green skin that's a bit more reminiscent of bile and her dark hair floats around her head as if perpetually underwater. Her mouth sports two rows of sharp, shark-like teeth.

### The Huntress

* Tall and chiseled with grey skin like that of a drow. Her physique is well toned, like that of an Amazonian woman and her long, white hair sits upon her shoulders like snow on the cold stone of a mountain top. She has a pair of enormous, stag antlers growing from her temples, adding significantly to her height.

## Learning of the Fanes

The Fanes are generally forgotten lore in the valley of Barovia. Most civilized folk will have heard absolutely nothing about them. So, how can we help our players learn about them and set them on the path to restoring the shrines?

### Strahd and Ravenloft

* + This should go without saying, but I always feel the need to mention it just in case. Strahd knows everything about anything in Barovia. From the Dark Powers to werewolf politics, Strahd knows. Naturally, he knows about the Fanes as well. He stole their power for goodness sake.
	+ If, by some miracle or chance encounter, the players get to talk to Strahd about old Barovia, it's possible he could talk to them/tell them about the Fanes.
		- Though, remember that he wants to keep his power. Strahd's not just going to outline the path to reconsecrating the shrines for the players willy nilly. He likely knows better than to mention the shrines at all.
	+ It's also safe to say that Ravenloft probably has some book or twenty somewhere on the Fanes with the same information.

### The Amber Temple

* + The library in the Amber Temple contains every bit of lore the players can fathom on Barovia. You can bet your butt that its got everything the players would need to know about the Fanes too. Exethanter, the helpful lich librarian, would be happy to pull out the appropriate tomes and research for the party.

### The Vistani

* + The Vistani know of the Fanes of Barovia, but only about half actually believe the Ladies were actually real beings. They know old folk tales and legends, but don't know all the details about the Ladies.
	+ Of the three, the Vistani know the most about the Seeker of the Forest Fane. The Seeker was their patron goddess long before Strahd and supposedly gave the Vistani their gift of foresight (this is entirely true, though the Vistani don't know this for certain).

### Werewolves

* + The werewolf pack in the northwest of Barovia remembers the Fanes and still worships their "mother," the Huntress of the Mountain Fane. I changed the statue of Lady Night to the Huntress and will detail that further in my future Werewolf Den post.
	+ The werewolf pack is a bit primitive however, and worship the Huntress in a very simplistic, honorific manner. They wouldn't know much of anything about the other Fanes or their shrines.

### The Martikovs / Wereravens

* + Similarly, the Martikov family would remember the Seeker of the Forest Fane, as she created wereraven lycanthropy in Barovia. They would have a set of knowledge similar to that of the Vistani: old myths and folk tales without much ground. They respect the Seeker and the other Fanes, but treat them more like old fables than real history.

### Highly Educated / Well Read NPCs

* + Depending on the nature and background of certain NPCs, there are Barovians that would recognize the Ladies Three as old pagan goddesses. Beyond such initial recognition, they'd know little else though. These NPCs might include:
		- Fiona Watcher
		- Lady Fidatov (from my Homebrew Kresk work)
		- Van Richten and Ezmerelda

### Baba Lysaga

* + Baba Lysaga knows *everything* about the Fanes and their shrines, as well as how to reconsecrate them. Though you can imagine she's not about to readily offer that information to any player.

### The Forest Folk

* + The forest folk are the most well informed about the Fanes. They know all the history and symbology and all that. But, of course, they're a rather barbaric people who pretty much only speak Druidic. Plus, the party would have to deal with the corrupt ritual at Yesterhill before even thinking about talking to the forest folk in a civil manner.

## How Strahd Stole the Fanes

* **Strahd's Power**
	+ As I wrote in my first Fanes post, Strahd desecrated the shrines to the Ladies Three and quite literally became "The Land." Because of that stolen power, Strahd has control over the very elements of Barovia. This power is the reason Strahd was able to drown Berez. It's also the reason Strahd can control the cycle of the moon, control the weather, and command various wild animals in the valley. With this stolen power, Strahd is as close to a god as a person can get.
	+ Vampyr's Contribution
	+ Of course, Vampyr - the Dark Power of Barovia and owner of Strahd's soul - also gives him power. Vampyr is the reason Strahd is a vampire and has the abilities associated with that. Vampyr is also the reason Strahd is immortal.
	+ Vampyr likely always keeps the sky overcast as well. With the Fanes, Strahd can control the weather and make it thunder and rain anytime he pleases. Without them, the sky would merely be a constant overcast.
	+ Strand's Natural Abilities
	+ We also mustn't forget that Strahd himself is a powerful individual even without all his divinity. Before the Fanes and Vampyr, Strahd was a successful General, Prince, and Mage. Without all his godhood, Strahd would still be an incredibly charismatic and skilled individual you would *not* want to meet in a fight.
* Desecrating and/or Consecrating a shrine is no laughing matter. To do either requires a great deal of effort and planning. Before I get into how to reconsecrate the shrines, I'll tell you how Strahd desecrated them in the first place. And warning, it isn't pretty.
	+ **Desecrating the Mountain Fane**
		- Part of the faith of the Huntress involved giving your blessed dead to the Gulthias Tree to consume. The bodies of those fed to the tree were said to rest with the Huntresses herself. It was a considerably high honor for the dead, similar in stature to a Viking funeral ship pyre.
		- To desecrate the Mountain Fane, Strahd gathered a series of undead minions (mostly zombies and vampire spawn) and fed them to the Gulthias Tree over a long period of time. The undead, remember, are a perversion of everything the Huntress represents. So feeding undead to her sacred tree was a horrifically blasphemous practice.
	+ **Desecrating the Swamp Fane**
		- Under the guidance and assistance of Baba Lysaga, Strahd and his nursemaid managed to capture a handful of high priestesses from the Forest Folk. They dragged the women to the shrine in Berez and lashed the girls to the stone menhirs.
		- Strahd and Baba proceeded to torture the girls for several days and nights, telling them to forsake their faith to the Ladies. It took time, but each priestess eventually succumbed, damning the Ladies Three as false gods.
		- Once each priestess surrendered their faith, Baba cut out their hearts and presented them to Strahd. With the foul gift, Strahd took the power of the Swamp Fane.
	+ **Desecrating the Forest Fane**
		- The desecration of the Forest Fane is actually how the hags of Old Bonegrinder first got their start in Barovia.
		- Strahd knew that ravens were a particularly important and sacred animal to the natives of the valley. In the early days of his time in Barovia, Strahd found the hag coven and bade them to bake ravens into pies and feed them, unknowingly, to the masses of Barovia. Strahd personally caught the ravens, presented them to the shrine of the Forest Fane, and snapped the birds' necks before bringing the carcasses to the hags. He did this for a year.
		- At the end of the year, Strahd gained the power of the Forest Fane. Though he never told the hags the reason for this long term ritual, he gifted the coven with the land surrounding the Forest shrine for their service, including the remains of Old Bonegrinder. Morgontha's grandmother was one of the original hags who conducted this ritual.

## Reconsecration

In order to reconsecrate the Fanes, players will have to set right Strahd's wrongs in honor of each Lady.

### Learning the Rituals

* + Though players might come to know and understand the Ladies Three through the various rumors detailed above, they can only learn the reconsecration rituals from three possible sources, all of which should only occur late in the campaign:
		- The Amber Temple. The library will have a way to garner specific instructions, especially with Exethanter's help in understanding and interpreting the notes.
		- The Forest Folk. After Yesterhill is dealt with, some of the forest folk come to respect the players as agents of the Ladies Three. Towards the end of the game, the players will be accosted by a group of druids and/or barbarians, who escort the party to a forest folk priestess. This priestess gives the players the rituals in broken Common.
		- The Keeper of the Feathers. At the end of the campaign, one of the agents of the Keepers manages to recover some missing pages from the Tome of Strahd. These notes detail the desecration and possible reconsecration of the fanes in Strahd's own words. Once recovered, the Keepers fly the notes to the players.

### The instructions shouldn't include all the details of the reconsecrations however, just the basics. These are:

* + **Locations**
		- The stone henge at Yesterhill for the Mountain Fane
		- The stone henge at Berez for the Swamp Fane
		- The stone formation behind Old Bonegrinder for the Forest Fane
	+ **Honoring the Ladies by Name**
		- This is an important step to triggering each reconsecration ritual. Players will have to proclaim themselves and/or their offerings in honor of the appropriate Lady for anything to count.
		- This doesn't have to be a fancy poem or anything, though. So long as the players are like, "Weaver! We're here for you. Here ya go!"
		- The important thing is recognition. Even if a random NPC strolled through a shrine with an epic offering, nothing would happen in they had no idea who they were worshiping.
	+ **Basic Offering (Again, no intricate details, just the following)**
		- The players will have to honor the Huntress by enduring her trial. Find the Lady beneath the Gulthias Tree.
		- The players will have to slay the defiler of the Swamp Fane and present her blasphemous heart at the Weaver's shrine. The defiler is a swamp witch called Baba.
		- The players will have to vanquish the visions of the Seeker and return to her a sacred relic of ravens, her kindred.

## The Trial of the Mountain Fane

The trial of the Huntress involves players traversing through a dungeon beneath the Gulthias Tree. I know, I know, I keep mentioning this dungeon and I *promise* it's coming. It just takes me time to write all this. XP

This trial is essentially a path through the land of the dead, where players can both reconcile with lost loved ones, deal with the angry dead, and atone for their wrong doings. At the end, they come to the altar of the Huntress and receive her visions. Emerging from the caverns signifies the proper reconsecration of the Mountain Fane.

## Echoes from the Swamp Fane

This one is the most self-explanatory: Kill Baba Lysaga and present her heart in honor of the Weaver at her shrine.

If the players have already killed Baba when they get this information, they can return to the site of Baba's death, find her corpse, and successfully harvest her heart. If the players scorched her or something, her heart remains mostly intact anyway and can still be retrieved. If, by some chance, your players erased her from existence somehow, her heart is instead kept in a jar within her hut, removed by Baba herself years ago and can now be retrieved by the players.

### Baba Lysaga's Heart

* + Baba Lysaga's heart is sickly grey in color. Swamp reeds and vines weave in and out of the muscle, flowing through ventricles and sinew in unnatural tangles. When the main arteries are cut, brown swamp water spills forth where blood should be.
	+ Though it stinks of bogs and decay, the heart has no other magical properties.

Once the heart is presented at the shrine, players standing within the stone circle will experience a series of visions. Remember, the Weaver is representative of the past. And now the players will bear witness. You can read the following or interpret it in your own words for your players if you like. And if you're afraid of having a long cut scene like event, go ahead and refer to the first episode of Critical Role Season 2, where Matt Mercer spends a lot of time describing the circus show. This scene should be akin to that.

### Turning Back Time

* + You stand in the center of the stone circle, the heart in your outstretched hand. For a moment, you feel like a fool. But just as you're about to give up, to try something else, you notice a change in the light.
	+ You all look up to the sky and see the distant light of the sun - obscured by layers of cloud cover - as it moves much more quickly than usual. More than that, it seems to be moving West to East. Backwards. Wrong. Suddenly it's dawn. And then it is the darkness of midnight and then it dusk and then it is yesterday.
	+ You all gather together in the center of the circle as the sun seems to soar through the sky, days passing in the blink of an eye. It is day and then night, day, night, day, night, over and over until you can no longer distinguish the difference. The world is flying in perpetual twilight, seasons changing too fast for you to feel the frosts of winter for more than a second at a time.

### The Flood

* + Suddenly, time stops. It is midday and Strahd stands before you in the circle.
	+ But... he isn't looking at you. Doesn't even seem to notice any of you. He's holding up one hand as if in a mock wave, facing the river and the ruins below. Except, you each do a double take and see that they aren't ruins. In the once boggy marshes now stands a village. And the river... it's *gone*. The muddy bed lays ripped into the earth but there is no water. None at all.
	+ Strahd lets out a low breath and closes his open hand into a fist. As you catch a glimpse of his face, you feel the blood leave your cheeks. You've never seen him so angry.
	+ And then you hear it. At first, it sounds like a storm, or perhaps the thundering of a distant army. But no. You all look south and there, up river, roaring down the mountainside is an unholy torrent of water. [Insert a couple player reactions by name if possible] One of you screams and turns to run, always a little faster than the others. Another rushes to hide behind a menhir. But neither of you are fast enough! The water slams into Berez, drowning out the screams of the villagers! The water hits you! Soaks you to the bone and knocks the air out of you! But just before it washes you out of the Weaver's shrine, time stops and again begins to move backwards.

### Marina

* + Time moves backwards only two days, stopping in the dead of night. Strahd walks into the circle and his face falls in horror. You follow his gaze down into Berez and you see the bonfire; hear the final few screams of a woman dead.
	+ And time moves backwards again. Just one day this time. It's dusk and Strahd stands with a woman. *Ireena*. You recognize her immediately.
	+ "Come, my love," says Strahd. "Let us go and I shall give you all you have dreamed of."
	+ Ireena smiles widely, her eyes shining with unfamiliar joy. And then her smile falters, but only a little. "My family... I know they'll never understand us. But... I must say goodbye at least. I'll meet you here tonight?"
	+ Strahd frowns, but bows low and kisses Ireena's hand. "What are a few more hours after centuries of waiting? Of course, my love. Tonight."

### The Loss of the Swamp Fane

* + Again, time moves backwards. The clouds overhead move so quickly it hurts your eyes to look at them. How many years are passing? Hundreds at least. Finally, it slows to a stop again. Berez is nothing more than a collection of huts on the riverbank.
	+ But that is nothing compared to the scene before you. Five young women are lashed to the surrounding menhirs, each wearing hides and foliage. Four are dead, their chests carved out. But you can tell they were tortured many days before their deaths. Strahd stands in the center of it all, the witch Baba Lysaga at his side. His face bears no emotion, no sympathy.
	+ The last girl, no more than fifteen, breathes ragged, wet breathes. Her shoulders are bent at odd angles from being lifted for so long and tears stain her cheeks. As she cries, she whispers something. Though the language is unfamiliar to you (unless a player speaks Druidic), the meaning flows into you like grief incarnate. *"They are gone. Left us. My Ladies are dead."*
	+ Baba Lysaga walks forward and plunges a dagger into the girl's chest. The process is long and bloody, but eventually the old witch turns with a freshly cut heart in hand. She gives it Strahd with a manic grin and watches the dark lord slowly lick the severed muscle.

### Accepting the Gift

* + Time moves backwards, undoing the horrible scene. This time, the cycle is somehow faster than before. You're surprised when the clouds break and beam sunlight upon you for the first time in months. Berez deconstructs on the river, for a flash you see an army on a distant hill and a dragon, its silver scales catching the sunlight, dash across the open sky.
	+ When time finally stops again, you're surprised to see Baba Lysaga standing before you. She seems out of place in this bright, serene world of ages passed. But... she's different. She's not a memory! She sees you! Baba stalks towards (player who was originally holding the heart) and you are so taken aback that you don't react in time!
	+ Just as she's about to reach you, (player), an arm bursts through Baba's chest! It's clutching the old witch's rotten heart. You blink and find that your own hand is still outstretched, meeting the new appendage in the middle.
	+ Baba Lysaga's form melts away. Behind where she stood, holding her heart, is a young woman with yellow tinged skin, her black hair drifting about her brow as if floating underwater. Her lips stretch up to reveal a Cheshire grin made up of rows of sharpened teeth. The woman brings the heart to her grinning lips... and takes a bite.

The vision ends and the players are left standing in the stone circle, present day. The heart and the woman (the Weaver) are nowhere to be found.

## Visions from the Forest Fane

Reconsecrating the Forest Fane comes in two parts. One, the players have to face their possible evil selves. and two, they have to return an artifact to the Seeker, ideally the Symbol of Ravenkind.

### The Symbol of Ravenkind

* + Okay. I totally reskinned this object to be a relic of the Ladies, instead of some long-lost vampire hunter that's not Van Richten.
	+ Why?
		- Ravens are basically the spirit animal of the Seeker, so tying in this object just by name fit perfectly.
		- It helps bring the plot full circle. The players were tasked with retrieving this object in their prophesy reading in the beginning of the campaign specifically for this purpose. Now, the item ties directly into defeating Strahd, instead of feeling optional.
	+ If you're not okay with that, of course you can make up an alternative item if you want. Or perhaps even get rid of the offering altogether. But I personally really like the tie in.
	+ **Symbol Reworked**
		- In short, the Symbol of Ravenkind was a gift from the Seeker to the faithful of valley. It is made entirely of sculpted bone and is carved with etchings of ravens, eyes, and feathers across its surface. Fixed in the center of the bone amulet is a large, unpolished red gemstone.
		- To follow in the Seeker's theme of foresight, I remodeled the Symbol's abilities to suit:
		- The Symbol has 10 charges. The Symbol regains 1d6+4 charges each dawn.
		- *Mental Barrier.* Anyone who wears the Symbol of Ravenkind gains the benefits of a *nondetection* spell and is immune to psychic damage. As an action, the wearer can expend 2 charges to project this effect in a 15 ft radius around themselves, protecting any other creature within range. This effect lasts one hour.
		- *Raven's Eye*. As an action, you can expend 3 charges to magically summon 1d4 **swarms of ravens** to aid you in combat. When combat ends, the summoned ravens burst into feathers and disappear.
		- *Sunlight*. (This one is the same from the book) As an action, you can expend 5 charges while presenting the Symbol to make it shed bright light in a 30 ft radius and dim light for an additional 30 ft. The light is sunlight and lasts for 10 min or until you end the effect (no action required).

### Approaching the Shrine

* + When players offer the Symbol of Ravenkind at the shrine and call out to the Seeker, a layer of dirt and overgrowth on the menhirs suddenly falls away all at once. What's left are smooth, reflective, obsidian surfaces. Players can see themselves clearly within the stone.

### What Could Have Been

* + This trial is supposed to represent just how horrible the PCs could have become. It's a fight against a reflection of their darkest selves, given over to pure evil. More specifically, when given over to the Dark Powers.
	+ **The Darklord PC**
		- I've mentioned before how I have [Beast Mode](https://www.reddit.com/r/CurseofStrahd/comments/9zswmf/fleshing_out_curse_of_strahd_running_the_dark/) versions of my players for when certain times come. These are basically duplicates of their sheets, raised to level 19 and given some extra magic items and traits curtesy of a Dark Power.
		- Well, in my own campaign I've only had the opportunity to use a single one once, helping the Warlock survive a near TPK. And that's good, I suppose, because it means my players avoided the Dark Powers and corruption of that nature. But also, I know they'd *love* to see that stuff.
	+ The PCs' reflections all show the upgraded, semi-possessed champion versions of themselves. And as they look at their reflections, each reflection simply says, "Choose."
	+ Players will have to decide which Beast Mode version of themselves to fight. When chosen, the reflection steps forth and fights the party until dead.
	+ Once the reflection dies, it disappears. A swarm of ravens flies down and turns into the Seeker. She holds up the Symbol of Ravenkind, which she's now received, and disappears.

### How this Went with My Players

* + I know this is terribly reminiscent of the mirror fight I put in the Fidatov Manor, but this actually went over really well with my players.
	+ For one, my players are at a point now where they are wickedly powerful. Or at least that's how it feels. XD. Even if a fight does leave them bloodied, most end up in simple hit-be-hit combos until the enemy dies first.
	+ However, *this* fight forced them to think and consider their options. First, they had to look at each other's abilities and decide who was the most plausible to take down.
		- This was actually terribly funny. Because they felt like they were choosing the weakest link. But then when they faced the darklord version of the rogue, they learned fear *real* fast. He was *far* from the weakest link and it was great to see them all realize that. :p
		- To quote the same said rogue, fighting himself, "Jesus, it's like fighting f\*cking Predator!"
	+ Also, it's been literally months since they were at the Fidatov fight (five or six I think) so the memory certainly isn't fresh.
	+ And lastly, they actually had to band together to face the darklord rogue as a solid unit, instead of running around like a chicken with their heads cut off (most fights in my campaign tbh). It was gratifying to see them rely on each other like that and the success felt really good.
	+ Oh! And for reference, I had 3 PCs plus Izek at level 10 for this fight. And it was a pretty fair match.

## Rewards from the Ladies

Once all three Fanes are restored, the Ladies can and will hand out some truly sweet boons to the players. Remember that this should only happen in the late game stage of the campaign, as outlined in my [first post on prepping the campaign](https://www.reddit.com/r/CurseofStrahd/comments/acvaoa/fleshing_out_curse_of_strahd_a_full_guide_to/).

Wherever the players are - Yesterhill, Berez, or Old Bonegrinder - the 3 hag versions of the Ladies will appear, hobbling up to the shrine. As they approach, their age melts away and reveals the true forms of each Lady. They then hand out their gifts. I would recommend personalizing the boons to each player, so they feel like they fit. Here are some examples from my game that actually ended up fitting super well.

### The Sunsword

* + I had my card reading tell my players the sword was around the Gulthias Tree. This was both true and untrue. Since prophesies are so interpretable, I mad the Gulthias Tree just a step towards the sword. By reconsecrating the Mountain Fane, players would be on the path the finding the sword. This could also work if you have the card reading pointing the players towards Baba's hut or Old Bonegrinder.
	+ Once all the Fanes had been reconsecrated, the Mountain Fane gifted the sunsword to the fighter.

### A Patron

* + Throughout my campaign, the warlock in my group got her magic from a Dark Power. This has been a consistently painful connection for her character and she's had to struggle between getting more powerful and remaining a moral character. The player has had fun. But her character most certainly has not. XP
	+ After reconsecrating the Fanes, I had the warlock switch her patrons from Great Old One to Archfey, with the Ladies as her new gods. It was pretty awesome.
	+ **A Word of Warning**
		- I was very careful about this. I know that players can get super attached to their sheets and abilities, so I made sure to talk with my player about possible changes *months* before this event actually happened. It was fun because I had to talk in roundabout circles to avoid spoiling anything as well.
		- My player made it clear to me that they were open and trusting of my DMing, so the switch of patrons went over really well. But, in general, don't do something so radical unless you know your players are okay with it.

### New Abilities

* + You might also want to reward a player with an ability indicative of their fighting style.
		- I gave the rogue in my group a modified version of the Time Stop spell, which he could use once every long rest. My mod just lets him use Actions during the time stop so he can attack and interact with objects without breaking the effect.
		- As we all know, rogues are primarily based in stealth and speed. And the Seeker, the Lady having to do with seeing the future and the threads of time, was also closer to him than the other Ladies. So Time Stop, a spell having to do with speed and time manipulation fit well for him.

### Other Personalization

* As another example, [u/Gwynbleidd\_WhiteWolf](https://www.reddit.com/u/Gwynbleidd_WhiteWolf/) left me a comment a while ago about one of their players who had a hard time deciding wether to be a monk or a druid. The player eventually chose monk, but Gwyn had decided to make this player's Dark Power possibly give them the ability to shape shift into an animal to lure the player's desire of having an animal form. Of course, the Dark Power's gifts would be corrupt and would eventually go badly for the player.
* However, it's entirely possible that the Ladies could gift such a player with the ability to shape shift in a *good* way by this point in the campaign.
* The Seeker might give them the ability to transform into a raven as a Action. Or the Huntress might give away a wolf form.
* It's also possible that either Lady might give out some Inherited (the good kind) of lycanthropy. For more info, check out my [lycanthropy post](https://www.reddit.com/r/CurseofStrahd/comments/97xjai/fleshing_out_curse_of_strahd_running_werewolves/).