

Author's note: Welcome to my first ever written encounter! While I have been DM'ing for a while, I've never put my crazy DM notes to paper in any form of official capacity. This was a fun encounter I ran in my game that my players loved and I wanted to share with the community. I build maps for D&D, specifically Curse of Strahd so this encounter was written with Curse of Strahd in mind. You could change a few of the names / NPCs to fit your campaign though. If you like the map included with this encounter and want more, you can support me over on Patreon where you can find all of my grim dark inspired maps! You can find my page here: https://www.patreon.com/DM_Andy I hope you enjoy!

Chapter I: Starting the Adventure

Content Warning

This adventure is set in a brothel and so is intended for a mature audience. It includes sexual overtones, flirtations, drug and alcohol use, murder, and demons. As a warning to the DM, roleplaying many of the courtesans could result in a flirtatious interaction with your players. Make sure you and your players are comfortable with this type of interaction before playing this adventure. It is vital to establish clear and concise boundaries to ensure everyone's level of comfort is being respected. Lastly, sexual orientation is not specified in the adventure and it is assumed the courtesans who work at the Sanguine Rose are sexually fluid.

Overview

This adventure details the role Ernst Larnak plays within Vallaki along with the Keepers of the Feather's secret war against Strahd and his minions. It takes place in Vallaki in a new location: The Sanguine Rose, the only brothel in town. Your players will be invited to the Rose in a few ways (or enticed) and once there, they will be informed by Sorina Antonova, a member of the Keeper's of the Feather and courtesan at the Sanguine Rose, her suspicions of the owner of the establishment. Or, they may be enticed by Ernst himself to help him acquire a new business in exchange of vital information that may help your players. It will be up to

the party to decide who to help in a web of lies and seduction.

Chapter 2: Roleplaying NPCs

Ernst Larnak

This background is in addition to what is written within the module. Ernst still works as Lady Fiona Wachter's spy but will sell her out in a minute if it means he will get a leg up on her.

Here are the points you will need to know about Roleplaying Ernst and his background:

Instead of the **Spy** stat block as mentioned in the module, Ernst is a modified Cambion as detailed at the end of this Adventure.

Ernst is the owner of two businesses in town: Larnak Publications and the Sanguine Rose

Larnak Publications is the only print shop in town and Ernst has an exclusive agreement with the Baron to print all flyers for his festivals. Ernst uses this business relationship to feed any information he learns about the Baron or his family to Lady Fiona.

Through the back room of Larnak Publications, there is a large underground basement with a hidden entrance. Here is where he set up his second business, the Sanguine Rose.

The Sanguine Rose is a high end brothel within Vallaki. It is up to the DM to decide if a brothel is legal or illegal within Vallaki. Either way, Ernst has many Thugs and Spies working for him and has an extensive security process for all those who enter the Rose.

Ernst's mother was a Succubus who mated with a human male to produce Ernst, a Cambion baby.

Both mother and son argued over the best way to leave Barovia so they may pursue their collection of souls. His mother wanted to destroy Strahd while Ernst thought it best to get in his good graces and earn a way out of

Barovia, much like the freedom the Vistani have. Eventually, Ernst's true evil nature took over and he killed his mother, seeing her as a liability to his freedom.

Two other fiends, a brother and sister named Jarix and Armenia (Incubus & Succubus) offered to work for Ernst in exchange for their attempts to corrupt and steal souls. (They are unaware Barovian souls do not belong to them) Ernst is looking to expand his business empire to increase his hold on Vallaki and impress Strahd. He has his eyes on taking over the Blue Water Inn. He is looking to oust the Martikovs and take over the Inn for himself. He can use this as a great place to recruit and hear rumors around town, not to mention drive business to the Sanguine Rose. When Ernst is not with Fiona spying for her, he can be found at the Sanguine Rose, either in his office, bedroom, secret room, or in the main parlor talking with guests.

Ernst is suspicious of his newest Courtesan, Sorina and is keeping a close eye on her

When roleplaying Ernst, it is important he learns as much about the players as possible. Ernst uses his vast network of information to appeal to those he interacts with either by way of bribery or flat out blackmail. Make sure he is always prepared to have discussions with your players and ensure he is not caught off guard. Ernst will often twist the truth or leave out important aspects of the truth to get what he wants. He uses his sibling fiend employees to gain information about a target before attempting to convince them to help him.

Sorina Antonova

Sorina is a Wereraven (who also knows Thieves Cant.) and a member of the Keeper's of the Feather. She is a bold, if somewhat reckless, member who is a bit of a maverick. Sorina is confident, charming, and extremely flirty with players, especially those she thinks she can get information from. Recently, Sorina has taken up a job as the newest courtesan at the Sanguine Rose in pursuit of suspicions she has about Ernst and Fiona Wachter. She is at odds with other members of the Keeper's who feel her aggressive field tactics will get their order exposed and bring trouble upon them. However, Danika Martikov and her have become friends and

Danika finds the information she tells her to be useful in keeping a leg up on the enemy.

When roleplaying Sorina, keep the following in mind:

She is fun and flirty with just about everyone she interacts with. She has a keen eye for those who seem strong or that could be used as pawns in her fight against Strahd and his minions.

Though she is friendly, she is slow to trust and suspicious of those too eager to help.

Sorina knows Thieves Cant. and uses it to secretly talk with Danika about reports from the Rose. If she senses one or more of your players might know this secret spy language, she will test them by attempting to speak a few hidden words and see if they pick up on it.

When not working at the Rose (late night hours) she can be found hanging out at the Blue Water Inn. Therefore, it is quite possible your players will run into Sorina as she is leaving to go to work at the Rose. If she sees them hanging out at the inn, she will attempt to perceive their strength and see if they seem like they would be of use to Her.

Sorina will invite any player who might seem interested in getting to know her better, a chance for them to get better acquainted and to seek her out at the Rose. She will give them instructions along with the password for the door (Which is "Roses are best enjoyed with wine")

Sorina knows a great deal about Vallaki and even areas surrounding Vallaki thanks to her involvement with the Keeper's. If she feels she can trust players, she will offer to exchange information if they would help her.

Jarix and Armenia

Jarix and Armenia are an Incubus / Succubus brother and sister. They were drawn to the decadence of the Sanguine Rose and were able to sense Ernst's fiendish nature. They revealed their true forms and offered to work for him, so long as they are given a "playground" to corrupt souls.

When roleplaying Jarix and Armenia, keep the following in mind:

They are looking to corrupt souls and believe once they deliver their final draining kiss, they will be rewarded with their victims soul. They are unaware the dark powers of the realm own all souls and are toying with the fiends in making them believe the souls belong to them.

They are extremely competitive with each other and will often fight over the same victim. The more challenging they feel the target is, the more they want them. They will be especially drawn to any good aligned players such as clerics or paladins or even elves for their natural resistance to charms.

For fear of being discovered, they are not reckless. While they will pursue their targets relentlessly, they will not go too far as to get caught and have their true nature Revealed.

They love to hunt at the Blue Water Inn for new clients, even before their prey have heard of the Sanguine Rose. They will go into the Ethereal Plane and fly up toward the window looking in to any sleeping players. They will attempt to charm the one they desire the most while they sleep. Have the player take a Wisdom save against their charm. If they fail, their thoughts will be filled with pleasing and lewd dreams of their deepest desires. Or, appeal to their sense of justice and have one of the siblings call out for help in their dreams. Jarix and Armenia will assume their humanoid forms in the player's dreams and seduce them while telling them to seek them out at the Rose. Remember, Jarix and Armenia can only have one player charmed at a time and any who pass their save are resistant to their charm for the next 24 hours. If a player saves, they will either attempt to charm another player, or wait until the next day if your players are planning on spending time in Vallaki.

For any player(s) who are charmed by the fiendish pair, tell them in secret about any telepathic whispers or commands they might get from the fiends. The siblings love to spy on their victims from the Ethereal Plane and

toy with them throughout the day. Enticing them to seek them out at the Rose. Remember, they only claim a soul from a target who willingly agrees to corruption, but they use their charm to get into the target's head and get them to do their bidding. Have fun with your players and give them commands that are out of character for them to do. This is also a clue to your other players that something is affecting the mind of the charmed targets. If Sorina invites the players to the Rose, any charmed player will leap at the opportunity to seek out the desires in their dreams.

Jarix and Armenia will assume the most pleasing humanoid form to your players and will make it a point to show themselves while your players are out and about in Vallaki. Maybe in passing a sly smile from the woman your player has been dreaming about or maybe hands touch reaching for the same potion at the alchemist shop from the man your players has seen before in their dreams. Most important of all, have fun but remember to respect your players boundaries when it comes to character romance. (See the trigger warning at the start).

Chapter 3: Areas of The Sanguine Rose

Detailed below is each area of the Sanguine Rose and their descriptions.

Area 1: Entryway & Basement

The entry to the Sanguine Rose is located in the back of Larnak Publications near the Vallaki town square. Around the back is a small door that leads to the shop's basement. During the day, this door is watched over by a Thug from the opposite balcony of a nearby building. Any attempts to break in, this Thug will shout for the guards claiming them to be thieves.

Otherwise, during the nighttime hours, there is a Thug on the other side of the door who will slide open a small hole in the door and greet the party with "All is well in Vallaki". If they say the correct password ("Roses are best enjoyed with

wine”) then the thug will let them in. He will lead them to the basement of the shop where you can read the following boxed text:

As you descend down the stone stairs, hardly illuminated by dim torchlight, you find yourselves in a basement. The walls and floor are made of brick and stone and there is a large printing press in the center of the room; It is old and covered with cobwebs. Otherwise, this room is full of various crates, parchment, and ink supplies.

The Thug will lead them into a secret door set in the northern wall.

Loot:

Ink
100's of sheets of paper
Calligrapher's Supplies

Area 2: Security Rooms

The Thug will lead them into an empty stone room with three arrow slits along the western wall. On the other side of the arrow slits are three more Thugs with crossbows. They will fire on anyone causing trouble or posing a threat. The Thug will open the northern doors which lead into another stone room. Read the following boxed text:

The northern doors swing open to reveal another stone room. You see four individuals playing cards, drinking and gambling around a small table to the north. On the table are glinting piles of coins and other valuables. To the east is a caged room which contains numerous weapons and a table in the center which the cage is slightly raised over. Behind the table within the caged room is a surly looking Dwarven woman polishing a blade.

The Thug tells the party they must deposit their weapons with the dwarven woman, Torgga, (use the Veteran stat block) behind the cage in the eastern room. There are no exceptions to this. Players not willing to deposit their weapons will be asked to leave. The room to the south is

where other Thugs rest and attack anyone trying to break into the brothel. Any player who has weapons concealed may attempt an appropriate skill check against the Thugs perception roll. Players who don't want to give up their weapons, but are willing to gamble, may convince the thugs to let them in their game while they wait for their companions to finish up in the brothel. They must pass a DC 12 Persuasion check and ante up 25g to join the game. All of the four Thugs around the table will cheat.

Loot

On the gaming table can be found:

150 gold

300 silver

250 copper

Gold necklace worth 25 gold

Two rubies worth 50 gold each

Playing Card Set

Dice Set

Around the rooms can be found various weapons from the PHB based on the DMs choosing.

Area 3: Parlor

Once the players have deposited their weapons, an ostentatious tiefling will be waiting for them. This is Ana Conda (Spy stat block), the manager of the Sanguine Rose. Ana Conda is a non-binary Tiefling who will tease your players about their smell, lack of nice clothing, and terrible hair (even if they bath and care for themselves regularly). He is not out right insulting, just a flirty and friendly tease. He will lead the players into the parlor where you can read the following boxed text:

As you push back the heavy red velvet curtains, the mood of the room changes dramatically from the stone security area you came from. The crimson tiled floor is divided by carpeted walkways that lead to other locations of the brothel. There are four marble columns adorned by sheer fabrics draped overhead. The center of the room has a slight depression in the floor, where two carpeted steps lead into a den filled with soft pillows and fabrics. Numerous hookahs, bottles of wine, and fruits can be found here. You see many red velvet couches, chairs, and chaises positioned around the parlor,

where various courtesans sit and entertain guests. The room is dimly lit aside from a roaring fire located along the northern wall. Various oil paintings hang across the walls depicting lewd scenes of an erotic nature. Under these paintings in large vases can be seen rose bushes with deep red, crimson roses growing from them. The smell of cooked food is coming from the eastern door.

Ana Conda will see to the player's needs by ensuring they are paired with an available courtesan (use the Spy stats for any of these courtesans) or find Sorina, Jarix, or Armenia if asked for by name, and take their food / drink order. The kitchen contains wines from the Red Dragon Crush and Purple Grape Mash No. 3 variety and has all manner of cooked meats, baked breads, sweets, and delicious fruit (which Ernst procures from the Vistani which they get from outside of Barovia).

If your players came looking for either Jarix or Armenia, they will entertain them a bit in the parlor in an attempt to take them back to one of the rooms (any room except for Sorina's room). If they are charmed, they will telepathically command them to follow to a room. They will attempt to seduce your players and encourage them to indulge in a vice of their choosing. Remember, the more corrupted they are, the better their soul will be once the Incubus / Succubus deliver the final draining kiss.

If your players came looking for Sorina, she will offer to take only one back to her room with her. The player she feels she can trust the most. Sorina's room is the middle room to the north as described later in this chapter.

Along the northern walls are secret eye holes located within the paintings. These are used by Ernst to spy on the customers within the parlor from either his bedroom or hidden chamber. Ernst will want to know as much about your players as possible and Jarix and Armenia will speak to him telepathically as they learn about them. Eventually Ernst will come out to greet his newest customers. Ernst will be as kind as possible and will do whatever it takes to get the players to trust him. Make great use of his high charisma stat by either twisting the truth or outright lying to gain your players trust. Remember his goals after all, find a way to take over the Blue Water Inn and / or reveal Sorina's true nature. If he feels he can trust (or use) your players, any player that has not gone

with Jarix, Armenia, Sorina, or any of the other courtesans, will be invited to his office to discuss a matter of delicate importance. He would prefer the party is split as to gain the upper hand with them so encourage the various courtesans to “have fun” with your players.

Author's note: Charging for courtesan services is up to the DM. Jarix and Armenia will most likely charge very little if anything at all since money is not their goal. Sorina might charge to keep up appearances but will give 50% of the coin back to the player (the other 50% goes to Ernst to maintain her ruse). The other courtesans will charge what you see fit based on the service your player is asking of them. Each courtesan splits 50% of their profit with the house which goes directly to Ernst.

Area 4: Kitchen

The kitchen is well stocked with cooked meats, baked bread, sweets, and various fruits not native to Barovia. Ernst acquires shipments from the Vistani through his network and buys rare and exotic foods to entice customers. This is a tactic he uses to feed players food from their homelands if possible. After all, being reminded of a better time will help him gain their trust. There are three large barrels full of wine toward the back along with various emptied barrels that need to be switched out (they have been waiting for quite a while for a new shipment of wine). There is always a cook (Thug) here who would be annoyed at anyone but Ana Conda or Ernst stepping into their kitchen.

Loot

Cook's Utensils

8 bottles of Red Dragon Crush

4 bottles of Purple Grape Mash No. 3

Area 5: Bathroom

As part of the courtesans process, they prefer to clean and / or bath with their customers first before heading off to their rooms. As your players enter here read the following boxed Text:

As the wooden door opens, you are immediately hit with warm

steam permeating in the air. The smell of sweet rose petals fills this timbered room where three large wooden tubs full of bubbling soapy liquid dominate most of the space. As you enter you see various soft towels, oils, tonics, soaps, perfumes, and other various items to help with bathing and cleaning. Each tub is separated by a tall partition for privacy. Along the southern wall near the door is a large furnace where buckets of water are being heated to be poured into the large tubs.

Loot

6 bottles of perfume worth 10 gold each

Area 6: Southern Courtesan Rooms

As your players head through the southern curtain, read this box text:

You enter a long dark hallway with walls of stone and black marble floors. The floor is littered with rose petals giving off a sweet aroma. More erotic paintings adorn the walls but are hardly visible in the dim torch light which reflect along the marbled floors. Along the northern wall are three doors, each leading to one of the rooms used by the courtesans of the Rose. At the end of the hallway is a mirror with a table full of wine and wine glasses.

There are three courtesan rooms here which they can take your players to. You can use any of these rooms for Jarix or Aremania as well. Each room contains a large bed in the center along with wardrobes, clothes, vanities, and plenty to eat and drink as the courtesans entertain. You can use any of these rooms as you see fit. Players can also pay a premium to spend the night with their courtesan (Jarix and Armenia would certainly encourage this so they can be closer to their prey) and this might pose an alternative (though more expensive) option than the rustic lodging at the Blue Water Inn.

Area 7: Northern Courtesan Rooms

Much like the southern passage, to the north lies another set

of curtains leading from the parlor to a long black marble hallway. The painting along the western wall has fake eyes which can be slid open from area 10 and used to spy on anyone in this hallway by Ernst. The rooms to the east and west are free rooms you can use by any courtesan (or Jarix and Armenia) but the central room (area 8) is Sorina's room.

Area 8: Sorina's Room

As Sorina leads your player to her room, read the following boxed text:

As you enter, you immediately notice the large amount of white fur blankets and pillows about this room, giving a stark contrast to the deep crimson red flooring. A sweet smell of lavender comes from a combination of a pot of lavender flowers from the southeast corner and lavender oils which are used to scent the room. Laid out on a red silk bench is a set of white lingerie and a black garter and the ceilings have white sheer drapes hanging down. The bed has a large white fur sheet adorned with black raven feathers.

This is where Sorina operates and will invite your trusted player to her room. She will use her charm and flirt with your player to learn more about them, but should they prove trustworthy, she will ask the player for help. Sorina has been keeping an eye on Ernst and has a feeling he is in league with Strahd. Or at the very least allied with Lady Fiona who she believes is up to no good. She has no idea about Ernst's fiendish nature nor does she know about the true nature of Jarix and Armenia. She will ask if the player is willing to help her out, but will not reveal her true identity as a wereraven or a member of the Keeper's of the Feather unless the Martikovs vouch for the player. If asked about the raven feathers, she says they are good luck and help ward off evil. She wants some proof that Ernst is up to no good so she can bring it back to the Keeper's and convince them to help. So far the Keeper's have not assisted her as they fear her mission is reckless and too close to the front lines. But if given sufficient evidence which implicates Ernst, Danika and Urwin would be willing to petition the Baron to arrest Ernst.

As a reward (or a show of good faith, it is up to the DM) Sorina can offer information about Vallaki or Barovia as you see fit. She works for a spy network afterall and would be

willing to share any knowledge she might know that could help your players (Anywhere other than Castle Ravenloft or Berez where the Keepers avoid). She can also convince Danika and Urwin Martikov to give your players free room and board while they are helping the Keepers. If your players do a great job in ousting Ernst and protecting Sorina, you may even consider revealing the true nature of the Keeper's of the Feather. This is entirely up to the DM.

If your player agrees, Sorina suggests they try to break in during the day when Ernst is often out in Vallaki or with Fiona and snoop around in his office. There is only one known way into the Sanguine Rose and she warns of the lookout in the balcony that watches over the entry door during the day.

She suggests the players try and convince the thugs in the security room that they are new mercenaries hired by Ernst as additional security in light of the growing tensions in Vallaki. This mission will involve a great deal of subtlety and stealth as the security guards are very suspicious. Ana Conda is mostly always present, and Jarix and Armenia prowl around the Sanguine Rose, only leaving during the dusk hours. Hints of how the players can accomplish this is up to the DM but some tips include:

Heading to the Rose during the day when they know Ernst is not there. They might have to stake out the location for him to leave.

Taking care of the sentry that watches over the door and breaking in without making too much noise.

Finding an official signature from Ernst and forging a mercenary contract to show the guards or Ana Conda (this can be done if the players invite Ernst to his office and they make a high perception check to look at his open ledge for his signature. Then use a forgery kit to attempt to copy it from memory).

Creating a distraction with the guards in the front and disabling them (sleep spell, hypnotic spells, etc).

Distracting Ana Conda with an emergency (maybe one of the bathtubs burst open spilling water all over the place or there is a fire in the kitchen)

Getting past Jarix and Armenia. The most common method would be to go into a room with them and keep them occupied.

Have a druid shapeshift and stealth into Ernst's office.

Encourage your players to be clever and use tactics other than brute force. If a fight does break out, Jarix and Armenia will try and charm their victims to not engage and instead, help get them out of the Rose and protect them. They will act scared and helpless, commanding your charmed players to risk their lives to keep them safe so they can escape. All of the thugs in the security room will attack along with Torgga, the weapons check woman. Hearing the fighting breakout, Sorina will attempt to escape by turning into a raven and flying out, leaving the players to their own (and will be angry they botched the mission).

If this happens, Ernst will attempt to have the players arrested for disrupting his business, causing damage, and / or murdering any of his staff. Sorina will have to hide or be pursued by Ernst and his minions. Ernst will also encourage Jarix and Armenia to speed up their efforts to corrupt and kill their chosen victims.

Area 9: Ernst's Office

As the players walk into Ernst's office, read the following box text out loud:

You are greeted by a dark room with crimson red furniture and a black and red tiled floor. Elaborate carpets can be found under a well crafted table and desk. A roaring fireplace crackles from the north end of the room, casting deep shadows which twist and dance around. Along the south wall is a massive stone carved statue, which dominates the entire wall, of many men and woman twisting and reaching for one another in lewd and erotic positions. Their faces denote intense pleasure (or pain) and their mouths slightly agape uttering silent moans. Their limbs seem to be reaching for you and their eyes seem to follow you as you move about the room.

When Ernst is not there, the door is locked with an elaborate lock (the best money can buy) and requires a DC20 skill check to pick.

The statue in the back is rigged with a Glyph of Warding spell to trigger anytime anyone walks in front of the statue without Ernst present. When triggered, it will cast the Clairvoyance spell on the statue. While Ernst does not know these spells, he spends a great deal of money buying spell scrolls to cast them as protection. Ernst will know as soon as

this trap is triggered, unless your player is able to detect the trap and disarm it. If the trap is set, Ernst will watch the player but will not reveal he knows they are snooping. If he knows that the player who tripped the trap visited, or had their companions visit Sorina, he will direct Jarix and Armenia to “deal” with her. The siblings would use their charmed victim to inflict harm on Sorina or even outright kill her as a mental command. The office has little evidence that can be used against Ernst but does offer up some clues: His ledger seems legit, but a DC17 Investigation check will reveal a gap in dates a few months back and some missing pages.

He has a letter from Fiona Wachter addressed to Ernst which reads: *Ernst, You would do well to ensure my boys do not spend time at your...establishment. Nikolai keeps prattling on about a woman that works for you and he can't seem to understand the nature of your employees and the difference between a paid service and "love". I will not see another of my children's minds poisoned. Enclosed with this letter is a payment which would be triple the amount my boys could ever muster. I assume this is an appropriate amount so we can come to a mutual agreement. Lady Fiona Wachter*

On his desks are a few books detailing Inn and Tavern Ownership and farming guides about growing vineyards. His desk is locked and requires a DC20 check to open. Ernst carries all the keys for his office, desk, lockbox, and bedroom at all times.

If the players are invited here by Ernst, he will try and discern why they are in Barovia. If he feels he can gain their trust or use them, he will offer to help them with whatever it is they need. Ernst knows a great deal of information about Vallaki and Barovia and can help the players with their challenges. Here are some examples:

The true nature and information about the Night Hags of Old Bonegrinder

The Barons son is using magic and thinks he had something to do with Fiona's daughter, Stella, being in the condition she is in

Izek's arm is not a natural gift and feels he may have been touched by a demon

He's heard Bluto has kidnapped a Vistani girl and plans to toss her in the lake

He knows Fiona's daughter is not right in the head along with the corpse of her dead husband she keeps in her bed. Feel free to add any other secrets that would be of great interest to your players. If your players agree to help Ernst, he will ask them to investigate the Blue Water Inn. He tells the players he feels the Martikovs are not what they seem and is worried they might be using the location as a front to spy on Vallaki and harm the people within. He will paint them to be shady villains and is convinced they are up to no good. Afterall, who needs that many ravens in their loft? He will appeal to your players sense of humanity to help keep Vallaki protected at all costs and he would agree to speak with the Baron if they could provide proof. He does not tell them he plans on buying the Inn once the Martikovs are convicted. If the players can prove the Martikovs are Keeper's of the Feather, or hiding the fact that the winery is no longer producing wine, Ernst can use both of these to convince the Baron the Martikovs are keeping secrets and conspiring against him. He will use this information to drive them out of town and once the Inn has no owner, will swoop in with his wealth and buy it, renaming it to the Sanguine Inn. Additionally, Ernst will ask for any information about Sorina as he suspects her to be a spy. Remember, Ernst will have learned as much as he could about your players by spying on them and will use everything he can to get them to trust him. He will reserve his Suggestion and Charm abilities until cornered as Ernst will not want to give up his hand quite yet. Ernst will always have his Nystul's Magic Aura up to conceal his true nature. If the players have used Divine Sense or any other ability to detect the true nature of Jarix and Armenia and confront Ernst, he will tell them he took them under his wing because they had no other place to go. He tells them a story about their mother being pregnant with them but being attacked by a demon. Their father died defending his wife, but not before his wife was in contact with the demon's corruption, some of which seeped into her blood and corrupted her babies. This is a lie he shares with both Jarix and Aremania who will burst into tears (faking) if this is brought up to them. He will appeal to any criminal background or neutral or less aligned character by asking "Afterall, shouldn't you reserve judgement for someone's actions and not their background?"

Loot

Inside the locked desk (DC20 check), there is a strongbox containing 500g, 250s, four rubies, 3 emeralds, and 2 tiny diamonds. The strongbox is made of lead and takes a DC25 check to unlock.

There are bottles of Wizard of Wines in a cabinet in the northeast corner. There are four bottles of Red Dragon Crush and 2 bottles of Purple Grapemash No. 3

The globe in the northwest corner opens up to reveal two bottles of the rare Champagne du le Stomp.

Area 9: Ernst's bedroom

The doors to the bedroom are locked and require a DC 20 skill check to pick. Ernst carries the keys with him at all times to these doors. Once inside, read the following boxed Text:

A large bed with crimson red sheets and skulls dominates the center of this room. At the head of the bed, inlaid within the wall is a large portrait of an erotic scene with many intertwined bodies in a sea of pleasure. At the base of the painting are flames rising from an ashen ground and in the center is a man with long flowing black hair, nude, and large red demonic leathery wings sprouting from his back. His hands outstretched with nude men and women at his feet looking up at him in a longing and yearning way. This portrait is flanked by two heavy silk curtains which adjourn either side of the large wall-sized painting. The walls are made of stone and there is a small bookshelf and wardrobe to the north and a cabinet to the south. Sitting on an end table by the bed is a leather bound Book.

This is where Ernst rests, normally in the early hours of the morning. He will use this space to seduce victims should the need arise, but he leaves most of those activities to Jarix and Armenia. He will spy on the parlor from a fake set of eyes painted into the portrait along the southern wall. There is a small loose panel along the wall which can be pulled out to reveal his viewing area. The bookshelf contains books about business. The wardrobe and cabinet are filled with fine clothing and musk oils and there is a hidden dagger along the top of the wardrobe. The skulls around the bed are carved out of wood and painted. They are decorative only and not real as one might confuse them to be at first. The book on the

end table details various erotic positions, some of which seem extremely dangerous.

There is a secret door along the north eastern wall which leads into area 10. This door can be found with a DC 18 perception check and the wall can be pushed open.

Loot

In the cabinet are two bottles of musk oil which can be sold for 5 gold each. Additionally there are four scrolls.

Two of Glyph of Warding and the other two are Clairvoyance.

In the wardrobe are fine clothes and along the top of the wardrobe is a finely crafted dagger with a skull and winged inlaid into the handle. Due to it's extremely fine craftsmanship, this is a +1 dagger

Area 10: Secret Chamber

As the hidden door from area 9 opens, read the following boxed text:

As the door opens to a dimly lit stone room, you are assaulted by the strong scent of blood in the air and a faint smell of rotted meat. In the center of the room is a demonic symbol painted in blood with five skulls, each one with a lit candle atop. The light from the lit candles reveals the floor is caked in blood, some fresh, some old. The light from each skull causes the skull's shadow to dance across the walls, as if they were cackling widely. In the center of the demonic circle is a dagger and bowl full of soggy, bloody meat. In the back corner are the remains of two skeletons.

This is where Ernst is comfortable being his true Cambion form and when the need arises, to kill any victim that stands in his way (lured to his bedchamber by way of Suggestion and / or charm). He will perform demonic rituals as a way to earn favor with any of the gods of the Nine Hells while he awaits a release from Barovia.

The meat in the center of the bowl is animal, obtained by a local butcher, however the skulls around the symbol and skeletons are quite real. Both skeletons contain signet rings still on their boney fingers and hidden under their bones are

pages from his ledger. Two names stand out as customers that have visited his brothel and are political allies of the Baron. Ernst killed them to earn favor with Lady Fiona (and also to be able to blackmail her at some point should the need arise). There is a missing brick in the southern and eastern walls which is used to view through the false eyes painted on the pictures looking out toward the parlor (area 3) and the hallway toward area 7.

If taken, the signet rings and bones are enough evidence to prove Ernst guilty of murder and will allow Sorina to convince the Martkovs to present the evidence to the Baron to arrest Ernst.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

If the players are able to find enough evidence to convict Ernst the Baron will send Izek and four guards to arrest Ernst. Sorina and / or the Martikovs will ask the players if they would accompany the guards to make the arrest. Sorina has been itching to see Ernst arrested and will offer to accompany the players. Ernst will use his Fiendish Charm and Suggestion abilities to convince Izek that he was under the influence of two demons who are the ones who should be dealt with. He will sell out Jarix and Armenia to save himself if he has to. If he convinces the players and / or the Baron, they will attempt to arrest Jarix and Armenia but not before the siblings reveal their true form, hiss at their arrestors, and enter the Ethereal Plane to make their escape, hell bent on getting revenge. If Ernst fails to convince Izek, he will reveal his true form and attempt to kill Izek, the guards, and the party, calling to his aid Jarix, Aremania, Ana Conda and the thugs from the security area.

If the players help Ernst uncover information revealing the true nature of the Martikovs (or Sorina) and / or the fact that the Martikov family business has run dry of wine and can prove it, the Baron will exile the Martkovs from Vallaki, believing them to be dark creatures and / or lying to the Baron about the winery's issues. They will flee toward either the winery or to Krezk to attempt to settle there. Ernst will buy the deed to the Blue Water Inn and rename it the Sanguine Inn. Here he will expand his spies, information network, and recruitment of new business to the Sanguine Inn. He will honor his deal with the players and give them the

information they seek, but will leave out key details that could cause the players great harm (such as leaving out the fact that the hags are more powerful when they are together). His evil nature will want to tie up any loose ends after all.

Stat Blocks

Ernst Larnak

Medium fiend (shapechanger), Lawful Evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 82 (11d8 + 33)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR DEX CON INT WIS CHA

14 (+2) 18 (+4) 14 (+2) 12 (+1) 14 (+2) 18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +5, Wis +5, Cha +7

Skills Deception +7, Intimidation +7, Perception +5, Insight +5

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Abyssal, Infernal, Thieves Cant.

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. Ernst spellcasting ability is

Charisma (spell save DC 15). Ernst can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day: suggestion, command, detect magic

1/day: nystul's magic aura

Shapechanger. Ernst can use his action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid, or back into his true form. Without wings, he loses his flying speed. Other than his size and speed, his statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment he is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. He reverts to his true form if he dies.

Actions

Multiattack. Ernst can make two melee attacks or uses his Fire Ray twice.

Slashing Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage, plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.

Fire Ray. Ranged Spell Attack: +7 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. Hit 10 (3d6) fire damage.

Fiendish Charm. One humanoid Ernst can see within 30 feet of it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed for 1 day. The charmed target obeys Ernst's spoken commands. If the target suffers any harm from Ernst or another creature or receives a suicidal command from Ernst, the target can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful, or if the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to Ernst's Fiendish Charm for the next 24 hours.

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