Legends of Barovia A Gurse of Strahd Gampaign

Spider Queen



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Thank you, Pyram King

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VIDEO GUIDE: SPIDER QUEEN

For more information about "Spider Queen," watch the detailed video guides, which provides more context, suggestions, and ideas. This guide uses content showcased in the video guide.

MAPS BY DM ANDY

SPIDER QUEEN

WEB FOREST

Introduction

In the shadowed land of Barovia, a tale of arachnid obsession and dark sorcery unfolds. Over two centuries ago, a witch, whose name has been lost to time, became obsessed with spiders. Her twisted magic birthed a brood of monstrous spiders, including ghost spiders, giant spiders, and phase spiders. These creatures now lurk menacingly within the forests of Barovia.

As her power swelled, so did her paranoia, driving her into a self-imposed exile. Her own coven, allies in the arcane arts, turned against her, fearing her powers. In a clandestine act of treachery, they ended her life, seeking to

bury her dark legacy with her bones.

Yet in the realm of Barovia, secrets do not rest easily in their graves. The tale of the spider-enchanted witch captured the imagination of none other than Strahd von Zarovich. The witches and hags of Barovia, traditionally solitary in their dark pursuits and indifferent to the machinations of Strahd's rule, began to stir. Fearing the repercussions of Strahd's dark and unpredictable whims, a faction among them sought alliance with the formidable Baba Lysaga. This uneasy union between the hags and the ancient crone heralded a foreboding shift in the land's sinister saga.

Compelled by the saga of the spider-obsessed witch, Strahd sought out her remains. In a ritual seeped in forbidden magic, he resurrected her as an undead entity, bestowing upon her formidable powers and dominion over darkness itself. She was to be known as the Spider Queen, a sovereign destined to weave her influence over the witches and hags of Barovia and enforce her dread lord's will upon

them.



history

The Spider Queen, newly reborn, established her domain within the ancient ruins southwest of Argynvostholt and north of Berez.

Her first decree from Strahd was a grim one: extinguish the revenant knights of Argynvost. These revenants, cursed to rise anew with each fall, have been a thorn in the side of Barovia's dark lord for centuries.

The Spider Queen turned her attention to the revenants that wandered too far from the sanctuary of Argynvostholt. As they resurrected far from Argynvostholt, she ensnared these lost souls in silk-cocoons, a fate more binding than death, transforming them into her own twisted minions: the spider revenants. It was a meticulous strategy, one that required patience and cruelty in equal measure.

The siege of Argynvostholt began, a silent war waged in the shadows. The Spider Queen understood the numbers game that played in her favor. Each fallen revenant forced to inhabit a corpse far from the grounds of Argynvostholt was another soldier in her growing legion of the damned. It was a war of attrition, a slow suffocation of an ancient enemy under the unyielding, silent march of the Spider Queen's arachnid horde.

Her web of influence grows ever wider, her power ever more formidable. And all the while, Strahd watches from his castle high above, a dark puppeteer whose true intentions are as enigmatic as the land he rules. The stage is set, the party in place, for a tale of power, betrayal, and dark magic in the accursed land of Barovia.

The Suffering

Sir Fortis is the master-at-arms and sees over the protection of Argynvostholt. A plague of spider revenants has laid siege to the south part of the manor, where it has been destroyed. Fortis has learned a "Spider Queen" in some nearby ruins has been capturing and converting revenants to her cause. Fortis will be forever in the characters' debt should they kill the Spider Queen, return with her head as proof, and end the menace of the spider revenants. (See the "Argynvostholt Guide.")

Adventure

The adventurers begin their journey at the southernmost edge of the map, their ultimate goal being the northern reaches where the lair of the Spider Queen lies hidden.

Web Forest

A veil of mist and shadows envelops you. Bare trees, resembling gaunt, clawing hands, reach out from the earth, their limbs draped in ghostly cobwebs. A chill breeze whispers through the air, sending shivers down your spine. The sensation of unseen eyes upon you is inescapable. Through the dense, lifeless woods, you discern only the faintest outline of a path winding its way northward.

The terrain is fraught with peril, notably in the form of various spider adversaries that will ambush the party from the trees and enter from the sides of the map. Areas with webs are difficult terrain.

Players should be wary of engaging in every battle; indiscriminate combat will deplete their precious resources and spell slots, resources better conserved for the climactic confrontation with the Spider Queen. This encounter is a test of endurance and strategy, intended to gradually erode the party's strength. Astute players might recognize this and opt for evasion or minimal engagement, focusing on navigating toward the northern exit.

Combat Tactics

The creatures should provide a challenging yet manageable fight and will enter from the east and west sides of the map. Adjust the encounter accordingly to best fit the party's strength.

Here's a recommended distribution:

<u>Giant Spiders</u> (Two or Three): These serve as the frontline bruisers. Their webs can restrain and hamper the movement of characters, making them vulnerable to attacks from other spiders.

Phase Spiders (One or Two): These creatures add an element of unpredictability and can disrupt the party's tactics with their Ethereal Jaunt ability. As hit-and-run attackers, they can phase in and out, creating moments of tension and requiring the party to be ready to switch targets or protect vulnerable party members.

Spider Swarms (Three or Four): Swarms can overwhelm and distract the party. They are not very durable but can deal consistent damage if not dealt with. The party may need to use area attacks or risk being overrun by the sheer number of foes.

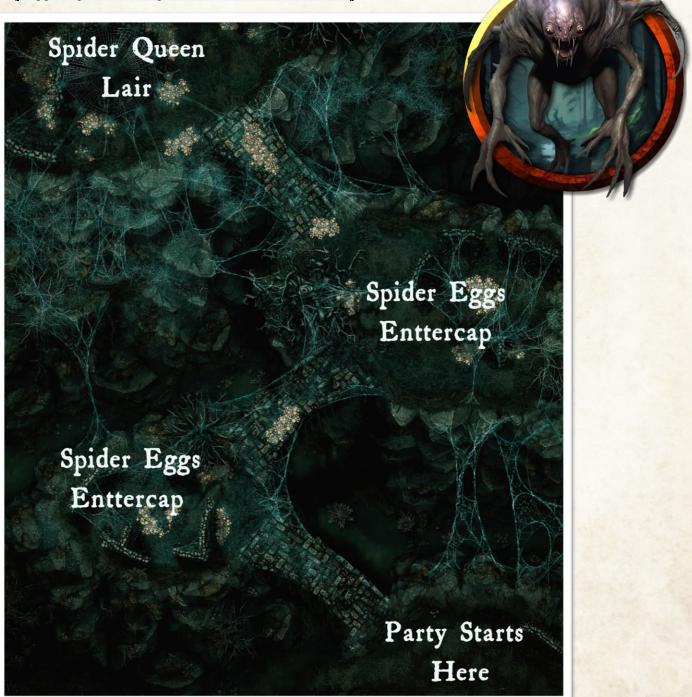
Ghost Spiders (One): This unique foe can use its abilities to sow confusion and fear among the party members. Its abilities make it an elite hit-and-run attacker that can harass and weaken the party before the final showdown.



Spider Queen Lair

The earth beneath your feet grows soggy, signaling your arrival at the fringe of a murky swamp. Ahead, ancient steps hewn into a cliff lead to a duo of hillocks, standing defiantly amid the marshland. At their summit, the faint outlines of crumbling walls emerge, remnants of what seem to be ancient watchtowers. Stone bridges, relics of a bygone era, arch across the divide, linking the fragmented ruins. The air hangs heavy and damp around you, the fog growing denser, cloaking the world in a hushed, eerie silence.

In the initial hilltop ruins, the party encounters spider eggs guarded by ettercaps (one per hilltop). These guardians aggressively attack anyone approaching the eggs. Disturbing the eggs triggers the release of 1d4 spiderswarms, which surprise the party due to their abrupt appearance.



Spider Queen Encounter

At the journey's zenith, the Spider Queen lies in wait, keenly aware of the adventurers' approach through her web-enshrouded domain. She bides her time, meticulously plotting her ambush. Her intention is not to slay the party outright but to subdue and transform them into her spider revenants. This grim fate hangs over the encounter as the ultimate threat.

During the encounter, the Spider Queen engages in a psychological battle, taunting and unsettling the adventurers with chilling words:

- † "Ah, tender mortals. How long it's been since I've savored such a delicacy?"
- † "Strahd's words painted a clear picture: yet another doomed troupe of heroes."
- † "You shall serve excellently as my spider minions, bound to the will of your queen."
- † "Surrender to the sweet slumber, my dears. The change is not as painful as you might think. Breathe in your end. Accept your destiny."
- † "Welcome the void, for in this realm, light dares not tread."

With these ominous taunts, she aims to unnerve and demoralize the party, setting the stage for a climactic and harrowing showdown.

Spider Revenants

There are eight cocoons around the Spider Queen lair, each a future spider revenant. From the second round onward, roll a 1d20 each turn. On a 17–20, a spider revenant emerges from a cocoon, joining the fray against the party. Adjust the number of cocoons and the emergence probability based on the desired challenge level.



Spider Queen Tactics

The Spider Queen employs a tactical approach, favoring distance and manipulation over a direct melee confrontation. Should she find herself overwhelmed, she casts *expeditious retreat* or *misty step* to swiftly reposition. Shadow Stealth can help her hide and prepare her next assault.

To disorient and ensnare her foes, she strategically deploys an array of spells, tailored to her enemies' formation, proximity, and tactics. Her intellect drives her choices, all converging toward her ultimate goal: to immobilize her victims within her webs and subsequently induce a deep slumber.

Prior to the party's arrival, she casts hallucinatory terrain near her lair, creating an illusory safe haven. This illusion serves to entrap adventurers lured by fear or suggestion, to unwittingly stumble into concealed webs.





Captured Party Scenario

Should the party fall into the Spider Queen's clutches, she initiates the grim transformation process, aiming to turn them into her spider revenants.

Transformation Process

The Spider Queen entombs each unconscious player within a web cocoon, then administers a lethal toxin. Over six rounds, the poison gradually saps their life and strength, transforming them into spider revenants.

Each round, the captured characters face escalating challenges. At the start of their turn, they must succeed on a Constitution save or suffer poison damage according to the chart below and a temporary -1 Strength penalty. If the character fails future saves, the Strength penalty stacks. The Strength penalty disappears after a long rest.

A character who succeeds in the Constitution check awakes with 1 hit point and can escape the cocoon with a successful DC 18 Strength check. They continue to make Constitution checks unless they escape the cocoon.

A character out of a cocoon can attempt to liberate a comrade from their cocoon by succeeding on a DC 13 Strength check.

POISON ESCALATION

Round	Constitution DC	Fail Poison Damage	Fail -1 Strength
1	10	1d4	-1
2	12	1d6	-1
3	14	1d8	-1
4	16	1d10	-1
5	18	1d12	-1
6	20	1d20	-1

After the sixth round concludes, the poison's effect ceases. Any character still encased in the cocoon at this time undergoes transformation, emerging as a **spider revenant**.

Spider Queen's Vigilance

While the party struggles, the Spider Queen is in a meditative state, regenerating her magical and physical strength. If a character escapes, she makes a Wisdom (Perception) check. The DC equals the escaping character's Dexterity score.

If she detects the escape, she awakens at the start of the next round. She will not have recovered any magical properties or hit points and will attempt to recapture the character.



Appendix

Spider Queen

Medium Undead, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor) Hit Points 120 (15d8 + 50) Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	СНА
16 (+3)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Con +7, Cha +8

Skills Deception +8, Insight +6, Perception +6, Stealth +8

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

Damage Resistances cold, psychic

Damage Immunities poison

 ${\color{red}\textbf{Condition Immunities}}\ charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned$

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Abyssal, Common

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Web Walker. The Spider Queen ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Web Senese. While in contact with a web, the Spider Queen knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Light Sensitivity. While in bright light, the Spider Queen has disadvantage on attack rolls and Wisdom (perception) checks that rely on sight.

Magic Resistance. The Spider Queen has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spider Climb. The Spider Queen can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Spider Queen makes two attacks with her claws or a claw and bite.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Bite (Recharge 5-6) Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 14 (4d6) poison damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Spellcasting. The Spider Queen may cast the following spells. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (Spell Save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks. The Spider Queen has the following spells prepared.

Cantrips (at will): poison spray, spider infestation

3/day each: expeditious retreat, fog cloud, sleep, misty step

2/day each: web, blindness, suggestion, hold person, fear, mirror image

1 day each: greater invisibility, confusion, hallucinatory terrain

BONUS ACTIONS

Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, the Spider Queen can take the Hide action.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Spider Queen can take 3 Legendary Actions, choosing from the options below. Only one Legendary Action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Spider Queen regains spent Legendary Actions at the start of her turn.

Web Reformation: The Spider Queen magically reforms sections of her destroyed webs within her lair.

Poisonous Retaliation (Costs 2 Actions): The Spider Queen can use her Claw or Bite action (if available).

Summon Spiders (Costs 3 Actions): The Spider Queen summons 1d4 ghost spiders to the battlefield. They arrive at the start of the next round.

LAIR ACTIONS

When fighting inside her lair, the Spider Queen can invoke its ambient magic to take lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the Spider Queen can take one lair action to cause one of the following effects.

Venomous Mist: The Spider Queen releases a poisonous mist in a 20-foot-radius area within her lair. The area becomes heavily obscured, and creatures that start their turn in the mist or enter it for the first time on their turn must make a Constitution saving throw or become poisoned until the end of their next turn.

Obscuring Webbing: The Spider Queen can cause the webs in her lair to thicken and obscure vision. Until the next initiative count 20, attack rolls made against targets that are within the webbing suffer disadvantage due to the web's obscuring properties.

Spider Revenant

Medium Undead, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 14 Hit Points 100 (10d10 + 40) Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	СНА
14 (+2)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +2

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +5, Stealth +7

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

Damage Resistances necrotic, psychic, thunder

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages understands Abyssal

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Web Walker. The spider revenant ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Regeneration. The spider revenant regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

Turn Resistance. The spider revenant has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

Spider Climb. The spider revenant can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

ACTIONS

 $\label{eq:multiattack.} \textit{Multiattack.} \text{ The spider revenant makes two attacks.}$

Claw Attack. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (3d6 + 2) slashing damage. Instead of dealing damage, the revenant can grapple the target (escape DC 16) provided the target is Large or smaller.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage. The creature must succeed a DC 16 Constitution Save or suffer Hit: 8 (1d10 + 2) poison damage.

Web (Recharges 5–6). Ranged Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one Large or smaller creature. Hit: The creature is restrained by the webbing. As an action, the restrained creature can make a DC 16 Strength check, escaping from the webbing on a success. The effect ends if the webbing is destroyed. The webbing has AC 10 and 5 hit points, is vulnerable to fire damage, and is immune to bludgeoning damage.

Ghost Spider

Large Monstrosity, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor) Hit Points 32 (5d10 + 5) Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	СНА
15 (+2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Saving Throws Dex +4

Skills Stealth +6

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

Damage Resistances necrotic, psychic, thunder

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10 Languages -

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Spider Climb. The ghost spider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Incorporeal Movement. The ghost spider can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

ACTIONS

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with chill, gaining disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks until the end of their next turn.

Spectral Web (1/day). The ghost spider can cast a spectral web (20 ft. cone) once per day. This web is invisible and intangible on the Material Plane but traps and holds as a normal web would when creatures move through it.

Phase (Recharge 5-6) The ghost spider magically shifts between the material and ethereal planes. While in the ethereal plane, the ghost spider is invisible, intangible, and can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object. The ghost spider can shift back to the material plane as part of its move on its next turn.

Fade Away (1/day) When the ghost spider takes damage, it can use its reaction to become invisible until the end of its next turn. It can't use this ability while in direct sunlight.

BONUS ACTIONS

Ethereal Ambush. If the ghost spider starts its turn on the Ethereal Plane and moves to the Material Plane, it can make a Bite attack as a bonus action.

PYRAM KING

A son of foreign exchange teachers, Pyram King became a world traveler by the age of ten. His travels have taken him to the jungles and remote villages of Southeast Asia and on the Trans-Siberian Railway when China was ruled by Mao and the Soviet Union was a superpower. He's experienced a coup and unrest in Central America, explored remote islands in the Pacific, climbed Kilimanjaro, and spent turbulent years in the Persian Gulf. This love of travel as well as his literary inspirations (Burton, Lawrence, Hemingway, and Hesse) are defining features of his life that have infused in him a profound interest in the histories and cultures of the places he has visited.

Pyram is the author of the Destiny's War historical fiction series, a content creator for D&D and other RPGs, and a developer of tabletop RPGs.

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