

EZMERELDA D'AVENIR

Mists (Queen of Spades)

Ezmerelda d'Avenir is a proud and accomplished vampire hunter that possesses a complicated history with Rudolph van Richten. Her family captured his son, Erasmus, and sold him to a vampire. Consequently, van Richten tracked them down but spared their lives, which greatly impressed Ezmerelda.

Not long after, Ezmerelda became a vampire hunter after van Richten's example and sought him out. She became his apprentice and studied and trained with him. Eventually, she struck out on her own, disappointed by his inability to fully trust a Vistana. She is now looking for her old mentor again, having heard about his plan to take on Strahd. She currently resides in the village of Krezk (chapter 8, area SI9), but the party might also encounter her anywhere else in Barovia; maybe even multiple times before allying with her.

EZMERELDA'S MOTIVATION

Ezmerelda has two simple priorities in Barovia: first, find her long-lost mentor and, second, eliminate Strahd von Zarovich. Anyone who shares her latter goal is automatically an ally to her. Anyone who supports her first goal may even become a friend.

EARNING HER TRUST

Ezmerelda is extremely capable and will not simply follow any band of adventurers that comes running up to her. She isn't going to tie herself down to babysit a group that she

doesn't view as an asset. She keeps tabs on what is going on in Barovia, however, and might have heard about the group's exploits. To join forces with any party, she needs to see them in action against the forces of darkness. If the characters have any information on van Richten and offer to help her meet him, that goes a long way to persuade her.

WEALS AND WOES

There are several advantages to having Ezmerelda in the party:

- Ezmerelda is among the most effective allies the characters could hope to make in Barovia. She is experienced in fighting creatures of the night, has her wits about her, has an incredible list of skill proficiencies and expertises to make any rogue blush, can cast up to 4th-level spells and has a great selection of utility and combat options prepared. To top things off, she has a brutal Vistani curse up her sleeve for difficult combat encounters.
- Ezmerelda came to Barovia well-prepared for her intended task. She has indestructible magic armor, magic weapons to circumvent damage resistances or immunities, a silvered sword to fight werewolves, and stakes and holy water to take on vampires. She even has two potions of greater healing, a treasure notoriously difficult to come by in Barovia.

- Under the tutelage of van Richten, Ezmerelda has amassed vast knowledge of all sorts of monsters. She likely recalls at least some pertinent information about the abilities of any creature the party could encounter in Barovia. This can make many encounters much easier.
- Ezmerelda is quick-witted and can operate effectively on her own. She is used to going into dangerous situations without backup and instinctively finds the tactically most advantageous option, in and out of combat. Play her smart, always!

Just as Ezmerelda's presence can aid the party, she might be trouble in some situations:

- Ezmerelda makes no secret of being a Vistana. Her dress, speech, and confident behavior easily betray her heritage. This could make interactions with native Barovians difficult. Most towns might not even admit her. If someone comments derogatorily on her heritage, she is very likely to respond in kind and show them why it would be wiser not to insult a Vistana.
- Ezmerelda may get carried away in her zeal to slay vampires and other creatures of the night. She knows that not every battle can be won, but she remains supremely self-assured of her abilities—which can sometimes lead to overconfidence.

“Why so glum, giorgio? We got ourselves a vampire to kill! Come on, he's not going to stake himself.”

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ROLEPLAYING EZMERELDA

Ezmerelda is bold, cocksure, and dauntless in the face of evil. She can be pushy in pursuit of her priorities, but would never force her opinions down someone's throat—if someone disagrees with her, that's their call and, usually, their loss. She values freedom—that of others just as much as her own.

Never forget that Ezmerelda, unlike the characters, is in Barovia by choice! Her upbeat outlook on life and ferociously eager approach to the hunt for the creatures of the night make her an ideal travel companion, one who can really lift the spirits of a party depressed by the bleakness of the land. Ezmerelda never loses hope—she didn't give in when a werewolf ripped off her leg, and she certainly won't give in to any puffed-up vampire lord and his undead minions. Speaking of her prosthetic: that's a point of pride to her, even a source of bravado. She shows off the prosthetic as evidence of her battle experience and the story of how she bested the werewolf that night is one of her favorites. She never strays into the territory of vaingloriousness about it, however.

Ezmerelda is used to operating alone, and to relying on her own experience and wits. She is certain to voice her opinion on any significant matter, and if a disagreement arises, she argues her points strenuously and with passion. Her debating style is academically precise and always supported by facts and figures—something she picked up in endless discussions with van Richten.

Ezmerelda has internalized that nobody will be able to look past her being a Vistana. If her closest friend and ally—Rudolph van Richten—couldn't do it, who can? She is protective of her secrets and does not share personal information idly. Sometimes, this can make her appear unnecessarily cagey. She usually makes up for it with her generally friendly and optimistic attitude, however.

PERSONALITY

I'm justly proud of my skills, and I know my worth well. Monster hunting can be tragic and difficult work on the best of days—might as well have some fun while doing it!

Ideal. Evil that feeds on the innocent is the worst of all evils and must be destroyed.

Bond. My mentor and teacher, Dr. Rudolph van Richten, is like a father to me.

Flaw. I go where angels fear to tread.