

Transylvania Chronicles I

Dark Tides Rising

The background of the poster is a dark, moody illustration. In the center, a werewolf with a pale, skeletal face and a red and black striped fur pattern is howling. It is surrounded by the skeletal remains of other werewolves and a ruined cityscape with skeletal structures and a skeletal moon. The overall color palette is dark with splashes of red, green, and yellow.

A CROSSOVER CHRONICLE FOR VAMPIRE:
THE DARK AGES® AND VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE®

Transylvania Chronicles I

—Dark Tides Rising—

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SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Mike "Moe Green" Tinney, for making his bones while I was still dating cheerleaders.

Brian "This Hurts" Glass, for playing video games until his arm broke.

Ken "Drunk and Slurry" Cliffe, whose voice mail is always there for me when I stumble home at four in the morning.

Andrew "Zig-A-Zig-Ah" Bates, for documenting my inescapable decline.

Dean "Roadhouse" Burnham, for kicking ass and taking numbers at Martinis.

Chris "Backside" McDonough and **Brad "The Littlest Confederate Soldier" Butkovitch**, for baring their... souls... at GenCon '97.

Madonna, just because I love her.

NICKY'S SPECIAL THANKS

Special Thanks to Dan Donnelly, who plays Tremere as they ought to be played; to Tadd McDivitt, who portrays Tremere (brilliantly) as we're all afraid they'll be played; to Jim Crabtree, whose artwork continues to tease and intrigue; and most of all to Justin Achilli and Rob Hatch for their continuing inspiration.



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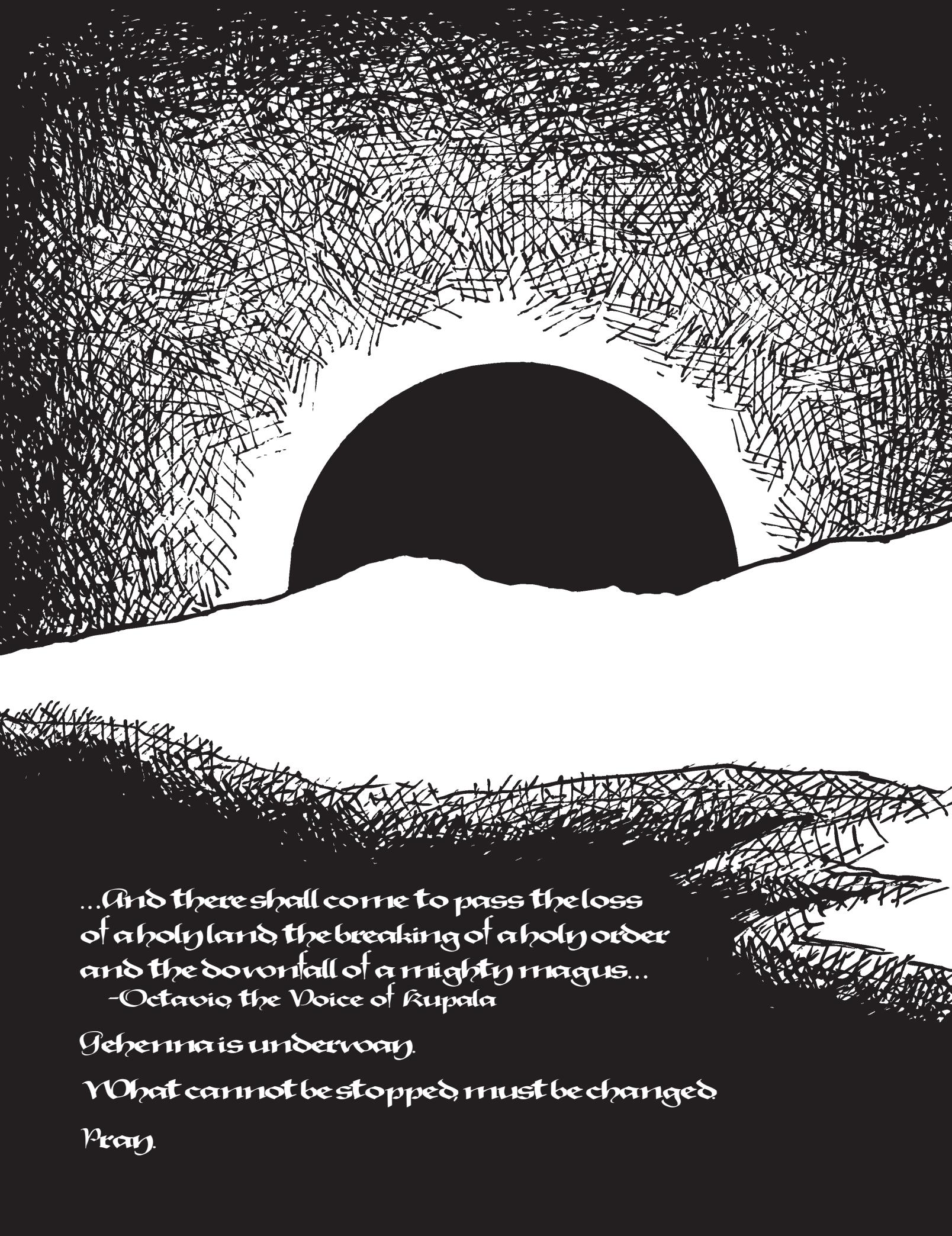
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...And there shall come to pass the loss
of a holy land, the breaking of a holy order
and the downfall of a mighty magus...

-Octavio the Voice of Kupala

Gehenna is underway.

What cannot be stopped must be changed.

Pray.







Introduction

from the lands of the East, the cold winds of the crivas soar through the misty Carpathians. far below, in the voivodate of Transylvania, the wind carries a chilling sense of foreboding. Within the dark forests, the very earth resonates with the taint of evil. Here, the strong have always oppressed the weak. Conflict and conquest have become ways of life.

Among the living, Saxons, Szeklers, Vlachs and Romanians re-enact their hatred with each passing generation. The Cainites' clans echo that racial contempt. This is the realm where the Tremere betrayed Saulot and the Salubri. Here, the Tzimisce devolved from their spiritual past into a race of inhuman predators. Hidden in the night, the Ventre Eastern Lords dreamt of creating an empire that would tame the wilderness.

The legend continues. Over the course of the next few centuries, hordes of Mongols and Turks will threaten Europe, armies of peasants will rise up against their oppressors, and Lambach of Clan Tzimisce and Vladimir Dracul of Wallachia will sire a villain whose bestial ways will become legendary. As the tides of time wear at Transylvania, the Cainites create their legacy of shame.

THE SHADOWS OF EASTERN EUROPE

In the 12th century, the Cainites of Hungary divided the voivodate of Transylvania into seven domains. From the Hungarian Cainites' point of view, the Arpad Ventre were fully entitled to rule over all seven realms. Using mortal history to support their goals, they espoused that the fierce Arpad warriors whose descendants formed the Hungarian nobility were the first race to civilize the Transylvanian lands of eastern Hungary. Noblemen supported Szekler tribesmen as the overlords of the voivodate, and enterprising Ventre secured power on the fringes of Eastern Europe.

Transylvanian Cainites, however, were fiercely aware that the voivodate of Transylvania had always struggled for its freedom. To their way of thinking, the East had to be kept free from the turmoil of Western politics. Mortal rulers who showed reverence for the Catholic Church in Rome had no claim to govern peasants who practiced the Eastern Orthodox religion from Byzantium. According to their history, the original settlers of Roman Dacia were the ancestors of the Transylvanian serfs and peasants. This was their land, and the Vlachs would do anything to keep it.

Nonetheless, the Hungarians encouraged settlers from other nations to colonize Transylvania. Saxons from the Holy Roman Empire and other lands of the West helped build a series of cities in Transylvania. Cainite princes helped these cities grow quickly, and the undead rulers of the seven largest realms formed a coterie known as the Council of Ashes.

Since then, holding on to power in Transylvania has been an arduous task. In 1197, only four of the princes still rule, and three of them scheme against the Ventre of the West. In their bids for power, they also maneuver against each other, echoing the treachery of the Tzimisce who compete with them for control of these dark lands. In the shadows, ambitious Tremere also watch and wait. Anything that breaks the unity of the Fiends affords them an opportunity to destroy their ancient enemies.

This is a dangerous game. Within a few scant decades, hordes of Mongol warriors will arrive from the East. A bestial Gangrel Inconnu traveling in the wake of the Eastern horde will want no less than the destruction of the cities of both the East and West. If eastern Transylvania and western Hungary cannot work together, all that the Cainites have worked to create will be destroyed.

Not far from the city of Bistria—the domain of Count Radu, the Tzimisce prince—Tihuta Pass affords the most promising invasion route for the Mongol horde. Already, Cainites have called for the construction of a castle to help hold off the invaders. They do not realize, however, the role this fortress will play in history.

This is where our story begins.

TRANSYLVANIA CHRONICLES I



THEME

Immortality can be the cruelest curse of all. Younger Cainites may think that the centuries ahead of them offer unlimited opportunity, but the Long Night is often little more than an invitation to surmounting despair. Neonates begin their unlivs with ambitious plans, hoping to change the world for the better, but the decisions they make can plague their childer for generations. Idealistic mistakes become deadly legacies, and allies become bitter enemies. Time changes all things. Behind these eternal intrigues, the prophecy of Gehenna threatens all, slowly advancing like a dark tide rising.

Ancient Cainites realize the curse of time. The centuries slowly change them, gathering the pain of their failed dreams, the remembrance of their lost loves, and the horror of their undying world. Cities become corrupt; childer betray their sires, and the mistakes of youth resonate throughout the centuries. Opportunities for greater wealth and power offer no end to this suffering, for the power to change the world all too often comes with the power to destroy it. In their search for greater power, Cainites abandon humanity and become monstrous. Time destroys all things, too.

MOOD

In the shadow of human history, the Cainites enact an epic tragedy. They believe they hold unlimited power, but all too often, they cause their own destruction. They fervently believe they control human history, but actually, they are little more than its victims. **Dark Tides Rising** is the beginning of a chronicle of ages, a saga where resonance and responsibility are powerful forces.

Within the treacherous societies of the Cainites, the players' fragile coterie must prepare to face the tides of time. By their bidding, cities rise and fall. By their actions, they determine the course of their unlivs. The birth of the Camarilla, the rise of the anarchs, the formation of the Sabbat — all this awaits. If the characters and their childer survive, they may even play a role in the bleak destiny of Gehenna... for better or for worse. A Cainite in the Dark Medieval world must choose her actions carefully, for what she does today may change the world forever.

Choose wisely.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The *Transylvania Chronicles* form an epic saga, one that can either be integrated into an existing campaign or used as the starting point for ongoing chronicle. The prequel, *Transylvania by Night*, is a sourcebook detailing the Dark Medieval history of Eastern Europe, including the fates of the living and the undead. **Dark Tides Rising** concerns the story of Transylvania between 1197 and 1417. With the characters, histories and events detailed herein, a skilled Storyteller should be able to show how the existences of mortals and Cainites evolves over two centuries.

The crux of this book is an adventure for four or five Cainites that can be played out over the course of several weeks or several months. As you may expect, you should feel free to tailor it to whichever faction of the undead your coterie supports. Tzimisce packs, Ventre Eastern Lords, rebellious Brujah and ambitious Tremere all have different agendas as the centuries change. Five major factions and a number of minor factions vie for control at the beginning of this chronicle — the players' coterie must choose which factions to support or oppose.

We have also included advice and guidelines to help you realize the effect Cainites can have on history. Throughout this chronicle,

the coterie may forge an empire in the wilds of Transylvania, sire a legacy of childer, create a vast herd of kine on which to feed, or slowly gather influence that can threaten the princes of the greatest cities. While the story can be told in "snapshots" of time, the saga represents **Vampire** on an epic scale.

Whether you want to tell a story that encompasses a few days or eight centuries, the *Transylvania Chronicles* as a whole present a epic background that reaches from the Dark Medieval era to the modern Gothic-Punk world. The life of a Cainite, after all, is far more than just the struggle of surviving from night to night. History itself can be your greatest enemy, and time can change even the most idealistic of heroes into the basest villain imaginable. Your legacy awaits.

CONTENTS

Chapter One presents the background necessary to begin this epic chronicle. The summaries there will show you "the story so far," including many of the highlights of *Transylvania by Night*.

The middle of the book contains the first three chapters of the *Transylvania Chronicles*. **Chapter Two**, set in 1197, offers the coterie a chance to explore Tihuta Pass and prepare a fortress there to hold back the forces of the night; **Chapter Three**, set in 1314, shows the ambition of Goratrix and the rebirth of the Knights Templar; **Chapter Four** takes place before the infamous Anarch Revolts, and places the coterie in the midst of a betrayal that will never be forgotten.

The last portion of the book gives you tools to personalize your chronicle. **Chapter Five** details the characters portrayed in Chapters Two through Four. It also includes a few Cainites who can help you expand your chronicle in unforeseen directions. **Chapter Six** is for Storytellers looking for more ideas on how to plan and run a saga that spans centuries. Experienced players may gain a few quick tips; novice Storytellers might feel overwhelmed without a few words of sage advice. Finally, the **Appendix** gives advice on running historical adventures, in addition to providing a timeline and "snapshots" of Transylvanian history from this era. The Appendix also looks at the inevitable course of history as it relates to individual vampires in the *Transylvania Chronicles*, to give Storytellers a sense of how Cainites affect and are affected by their world.

INSPIRATIONAL READING

A History of Transylvania by Stephen Pascu (an excellent resource)

History of Transylvania by Lazlo Nikkai et. al.

Transylvania by Titus Podea (for a quick overview)

Transylvania by Karoly Kos (has a wealth of detail on architecture)

Rough Guide to Transylvania

The Late History of the Medieval Balkans, ed. by John V.A. Fine

Vlad Tepes by Stoiescu

And, of course, *Dracula* by Bram Stoker

ADDITIONAL READING

Elysium (for *Vampire: The Masquerade*) by Daniel Greenberg and Teeuwynn

Transylvania by Night by Brian Campbell and Nicky Rea

A Guide to Transylvania (for *Ravenloft*) by Nicky Rea





Chapter One: The Tides of History

The Transylvania Chronicles may be used either to introduce a new coterie, or as a vehicle for ongoing characters (if they fit the parameters suggested below). It is not as suitable for players who are unfamiliar with *Vampire: The Dark Ages* because the story itself is complex, and the subject matter is concerned with the weightiest events in vampire history. Nevertheless, if the Storyteller is willing to brief her players on some of the conventions of the game (diablerie, the prophecies of the Book of Nod, etc.) even those new to roleplaying should be able to follow the story and find enjoyment in playing through it.

The clash between East and West is an ongoing struggle in Transylvania. Western Hungarian nobility, the Roman Catholic Church, Saxon merchants and Szekler overlords are allied on one side. Eastern Hungarian and Transylvanian serfs, Vlach and Slav peasants, staunch pagans and Eastern Orthodox Christians are on the other. Of course, the lines are not always so easily drawn. Individual Saxons and Szeklers often have conflicting goals, just as individual pagans or Christians do. The closer we look at this black-and-white picture, the more we notice many shades of gray.

Add to this the legend of the Cainites. Tremere and Tzimisce vampires fight a deadly war. Tzimisce feudal lords must defend themselves from the sinister armies of neonate packs. Eastern Lords consolidate power; Transylvanian princes watch as their domains fracture; Malkavians contemplate dark prophecies — there's no limit to the sagas of betrayal and treachery hidden in the shadows.

Now slowly fade everything to black. Throughout the next two centuries, the prophecies of Gehenna come to fruition. An ancient evil in the land — often linked to the Slavic god (or demon) Kupala — remains after countless centuries of Tzimisce Metamorphosist ceremonies and *koldun* rites of worship. The order that the Ventrite vainly try to impose on Transylvania degenerates into chaos. The Ravnos stem their rising anger at the treatment of the Gypsies, the Anarch Movement begins, and rebellious vampires perform the *Vinculum* on Kupala's Night, dreaming of their victorious crusade against the established order.

Stand back. Take a deep breath. It's all yours now. Welcome to the *Transylvania Chronicles*.

AN EPIC BACKGROUND FOR AN EPIC GAME

Let's state the obvious: The idea of running a chronicle that spans eight centuries is rather intimidating. Even if you want to run a game that covers *one* century, it's going to take a lot more than the usual approach to *Vampire*. Many of the clichés that Storytellers are already weary of using have to go.

If the characters simply meet at an inn, there's little chance that they'll stick together for most of a millennium. If the story develops night-by-night, you'll no doubt feel like you've also aged a few centuries before you get the foundation of the chronicle up and running. And most importantly, if you don't plan out the structure of the chronicle you want to run, your epic story might fall apart. Your players could get confused, lose interest, and either wind up joining your roommate's *D&D* campaign or investing in trading card games instead. In other words, you'd face a fate worse than death.

Then again, you're not the sort of person to back down from a challenge, are you?

This is one of those books that has Advice, and there's a reason for it. No one to date (who we know) has run an eight-century long *Vampire* chronicle. A lot of the fundamental paradigms of the game work differently when you're running an epic saga, which means that the Storyteller's job is going to be a little different.

Are you tired of having your characters visit the same gothic nightclub ("Undead, undead, undead...") to hear generic plot devices every week? Does the idea of slowly sinking into the overly complex politics of a generic Camarilla city no longer appeal to you? Does the thought of another fang-banging vampiric superhero slugfest make you yawn? If so, then you've the opportunity to play out an alternative — a very different version of this game.

Let's start at the beginning. The prequel to this series, *Transylvania by Night*, introduces most of the background to this adventure. If you're still recovering (or just haven't read it), there's a chance you'll feel a little overwhelmed by the amount of material. This chapter is the first tool you need. It's a summary of the background for our story so far.

Before the game begins, three other concerns bear mentioning. The first concern of any huge chronicle, especially one with an epic background, is where the characters fit into the story. If there's no place for the characters, the Storyteller will ultimately wind up talking to herself. Clan affiliation is the most obvious hook for characters. Fortunately, the first section of this chapter describes Transylvania clan by clan. When your players start to tell you the backgrounds for their vampires and what kinds of characters they'd like to play, that first section will take you through step one.

Next, the Storyteller has to know how the background characters are allied. The rest of Transylvanian Cainite society has also formed their own political alliances. Simply put, many vampires are arranged in powerful and elitist factions. The coterie might work for or against any one of those groups. Learning who to trust and who to avoid shapes the events of your version of the chronicle. Deciding which political or religious factions support your players' coterie is step two.

Finally, step three involves planning a way for everyone to join the same pack or coterie. That's easier said than done. The group definitely needs a "coterie concept" — there has to be a rationale explaining why all the characters trust each other and work for the same goals. If that's not developed before the story begins, it's really easy (and logical) for them to eventually betray each other when things get rough, especially after the first few centuries.

TOO MUCH DAMN BACKGROUND

Memorizing the major characters in our passion play may seem a little overwhelming — so don't attempt it. Once your chronicle is up and running, you'll find where particular characters fit in. Each character has a slightly different perspective of the history of the overall chronicle. If the plot as you see it doesn't require that particular character, then you've one less supporting character to maintain.

You might be gearing up for eight centuries of story lines, but it's best to start small. Use only what you need. One of the biggest problems with a *Vampire* (or any White Wolf) chronicle is the temptation to throw in Too Much Damn Background from the books. ("Sabbat! Cool! Templars! Cool! Cappadocians! Yeah! Now how do I use them all in the same story?")

It's gonna be a long trip, but pack lightly.

This book and its prequel have plenty of extra material to help you form new subplots and suggest new stories as you need them. Use the Golden Rule: Take what you need for now, and leave the rest behind for later. Ditch what you don't like.

Now, let's pick up where *Transylvania by Night* ended. When we last left our heroes....

STORY SYNOPSIS

In the first of three Acts, the characters are summoned to Budapest to meet with a patron and their sires. Encountering (apparently by chance) a madman, the characters hear his prophecies of their involvement in great events that may shape the future of the world. They then meet their patron, who offers them a chance to build a keep in the strategically important Tihuta Pass in Transylvania. Their patron assures them that if they can build the keep and establish their presence in the territory, they will be rewarded with fiefs in Transylvania. The characters experience some difficulties along the road, meet with a famous Cainite builder, and succeed or fail in their task. Both success and failure bring new problems and may estrange them from their sires.

Act II follows the characters as they move back and forth across Transylvania, fulfilling promises made in Act I. The master builder Zelios asks for their help in completing a geomantic ritual designed to bind the demon known as Kupala. They must also decide if they will meet an obligation to Myca Vykos, who requests them to escort a truant Tremere to the dread chantry of Ceoris. On the way, they encounter a group of knights escorting part of the fabled treasure of the Templars to their headquarters in Bran Castle. Goratrix may convince them to take that treasure for their own. Assuming that the characters survive and meet with Tremere, they travel to the castle of Dragomir Basarab. The meeting with Basarab eventually leads the characters to a pivotal event in Cainite history.

Act III takes place in 1413. The characters come together at this time to discuss certain events taking place in the world and how these matters concern them. They receive a visit from Anatole and Lucita who request shelter and, in return, tell the characters of the unrest in Western Europe. Sometime later, the characters' sires' demand that they aid one of the princes of Transylvania in a dispute with an equally contemptible Ravnos. Locating their quarry amidst a Gypsy camp, the characters' pursuit is interrupted by an attack by fanatics representing the Inquisition. The Ravnos escapes, to the displeasure of the characters' sires. A few weeks later, Octavio visits the characters and gives them the latest in his series of prophecies — the "second" of his signs. As if in response to this visit, a Tzimisce known to the characters contacts them and attempts to persuade them to help him discover the resting place of his clan's Antediluvian. The characters are thus present and may attempt to prevent or participate in the diablerie of the Tzimisce Ancient. By the end of this act, the characters will find themselves in the position of having to make a choice to join the Anarch Rebellion (already in progress) or to side with their elders. They cannot afford to remain neutral.

OUR STORY SO FAR...

CLANS AND CHARACTERS IN TRANSYLVANIA

So where do the characters fit into the story? Here's a quick description of the major characters we've detailed from each clan, along with a few hints on how to integrate vampires of various clans into the chronicle.



THE TIDES OF HISTORY

CLAN ASSAMITE

We begin with **Fariq** and **Husayn**, two assassins hidden deep within the societies of Eastern Europe. Fariq has infiltrated the bazaar of Buda-Pest and watches the Hungarian nobility; Husayn has maintained his façade within Sofia, where he waits to strike at the Tzimisce of both Bulgaria and Transylvania. Both wait for Alamut to “activate” them to carry out their chosen tasks. Both have found other agendas in the meantime.

The rulers of Alamut have assigned many assassins to similar positions. Though the masters of the clan once thought assassinating Western nobility would give them an edge in the Crusades, that plan met with disapproval from many of the clan elders. As a result, many of the infiltrators, spies and assassins who moved into the shadows during the Crusades are watching and waiting instead of killing and slaying.

This offers a big opportunity for neonates. The most trusted elders lurk behind conspiracies throughout Eastern Europe. Neonates might choose to gain further support from their clan by attaining similar positions of trust throughout Europe, but it's more likely that they'll want to roam the lands of great opportunity — like Transylvania — to seek their own fortune.

CLAN BRUJAH

The biggest subplot for the Brujah involves **Dominic**, an Inconnu of the clan. He began his career as a mercenary overlord after he fled the flaming ruins of Carthage. Since then, his shadowy support has led to a campaign of revenge against the Ventre. Later, he assisted the mortal Arpads in their “adventure” against Western Europe, thereby taking further revenge by striking at what the Ventre had established since the fall of Rome.

The plot thickens. Dominic intended to make Bulscu, the ghoul leader of the crusading Arpads, his childe. This servant later betrayed him. Bulscu forced Dominic into torpor, accepted the Embrace from the Ventre, and ascended to a powerful position in Buda-Pest. The conflict between Brujah and Ventre is now fiercer than ever.

Dominic has since risen from torpor, railed against the Ventre, and mysteriously disappeared in Transylvania. There, Brujah grow increasingly discontent with the Arpad Ventre and Eastern Lords. At the same time, the peasants are continually exploited by the system of feudalism the Arpads established. Thus, inciting the lower classes to rise up against the nobility is another way to strike at the Ventre. In 1197, only a few peasant communes affirmed their independence. By 1437, peasant rebellions in southern Transylvania break out in violence.

CLAN CAPPADOCIAN

In western Hungary, **Lisette Illuminada** commands great power in Ezstergom and is a threat to the power of Prince Geza of Clan Ventre. In eastern Hungary, the clan is not as strong. That doesn't mean there isn't opportunity, however. The Lasombra **Lucita** knows this quite well. She follows the Malkavian prophet Anatole, and both sense great change.

There's a great deal of knowledge hidden in the Roman ruins left from the days of ancient Dacia. Many of the conflicts in Transylvania in the 12th century stretch back for centuries, and some even reach back to the days of Ancient Rome. The fortress of Aquincum and the Roman necropolis in Alba Iulia are two such repositories of knowledge. If the Storyteller feels particularly ambitious, then the Restless Dead of the Roman Hierarchy can elaborate more thoroughly than any historian....



CLAN GANGREL

Once Gangrel princes ruled much the Old Country by default, traveling in the wake of barbarian hordes. From the shadowed forests, they exacted their primitive justice on all who opposed them. Those days are gone. Any member of this clan in or near Transylvania knows of the schism dividing the Hungarian Gangrel in the late-12th century. The clan must either fight to rebuild the glory of its past or humbly accept its future.

The struggle began with **Arnulf**, a Gangrel Inconnu who has sired and roamed freely throughout the lands of Eastern Europe for centuries. He has an undying hatred for the rapidly growing cities, especially since he, like many ancient Gangrel, remembers the nights when the realm was subjugated by powerful barbarian tribes. Many of his childer have joined him in his campaigns against the cities.

Mitru the Hunter is concerned about the growth of the cities, but thinks that Arnulf has gone too far. He has done much to stir up Gangrel hatred of Arnulf, and defend the established domains. He is particularly ruthless in his defense of Klausenburg.

Though most Animals pride themselves on their independence, there are rare occasions when clan politics can be discussed. The conflict between Mitru and Arnulf often arises. Gangrel of this era must choose whether they oppose the development of the cities or consider them essential to survival.

Surviving the first two adventures also depends on a great deal of travel through the dark wilderness. As you'd expect, Gangrel may prove beneficial in helping their coteries survive those journeys.

CLAN MALKAVIAN

The most influential Malkavian is **Octavio**, an ancient Cainite who remembers what unlif was like long before the construction of Buda-Pest. The only structure in the area was the Roman fortress of Aquincum. He knows of other ancient secrets, such as the power of Kupala, a mythic Slavic god.

Octavio has performed countless sacrifices. Whether this helped or hindered the growing power of Kupala was uncertain, but Octavio believes that the so-called god was actually a demon. Many Malkavians now know Octavio as the Magyar god Havnor, a spiritual force fighting to save the innocent. A cult has risen around him. Octavio (or Havnor) is ready to expose an ancient prophecy: the eight signs that foretell the arising of Kupala.

Anatole has similar enlightenment, but his derangement makes him hallucinate occult symbols signifying the forms of God's presence on Earth. He often contemplates God's plans for Caine's children. He little suspects that he will inherit Octavio's legacy.

In addition to Octavio's cultists, other societies pursuing dark enlightenment — such as the Brotherhood of Kupala — sacrifice innocents to receive the reward of growing madness. Many of these Malkavians prey upon the monasteries of Benedictine and Cistercian monks to further this goal.

In Transylvania, Clan Malkavian has a strong reputation as a catalyst for religious and philosophical change — no matter how dangerous or maddening that change may seem. Debates over religious issues among newcomers to the clan are fierce, and any coterie can benefit from a Malkavian's twisted interpretation of prophecy. Take heed! "Babbling town idiot" or "childish Malk" types are best suited for one thing: to be elaborate sacrifices in honor of the cults of Kupala. Wacky idiocy doesn't sit any better with the Cainites of Eastern Europe than it does with the vampires of the West.

CLAN NOSFERATU

The Leper of Cainite society have found political prestige and even acceptance within the voivodate. Since Transylvania is removed from the high-powered Cainite politics in the largest Western cities, ancient Nosferatu have been able to consolidate power here. Transylvanian Nosferatu have great power, and Nosferatu neonates can speak to some of the most powerful vampires in the realm.

Zelios, the Master Mason, has gained renown for assisting in the construction of castles throughout Eastern Europe. **Marusca**, his childe, commands her legions of wolves to protect the domain of Hermanstadt. **Ruxandra**, Marusca's childe, is a mistress of seduction and disguise; she once used her powers to impersonate and replace the Ventre Nova Arpad (and devious Storytellers may still have this charade in place at the onset of the *Transylvania Chronicles*). **Gutka**, the childe of the infamous and powerful Baba Yaga, maintains control over activities in nearby Prague.

The threat of the Usurpers has resulted in alliances between members of three of the most powerful Transylvanian clans: the Gangrel, Nosferatu and Tzimisce. Even among neonates, it is not uncommon to see the younger members of this unholy trinity working together to oppose the hateful Ventre and Tremere.

CLAN RAVNOS

The Rom Gypsies do not arrive in Hungary or Transylvania until the 15th century. Nonetheless, a few Ravnos act as independent scouts in these lands. **Vassily Taltos** is an idealist who believes that the Rom can find a new homeland in Eastern Europe. Within a few years, he flees from Buda-Pest and becomes a valuable ally of the Tzimisce. **Izydor Torenu**, the Prince of Thieves in Buda-Pest, despises Vassily and everything for which he stands. Over the next few centuries, the Ravnos lay the foundations for their struggle against the masters of Cainite society.

Many elder Ravnos, such as the clan elders in Constantinople, are intrigued by the amount of activity in Eastern Europe. The clan isn't organized enough to have agents as such, but gathering news is a good way to gain prestige. A few talented Ravnos find opportunities acting as scouts and spies for both the Tzimisce feudal lords and the Cainite princes.

In the wilds of Transylvania, the dark taint of the land enhances and distorts the local magic. Mortal Tremere still harvest tainted *vis* (or *weig*) from the forests. Ravnos are attracted to the same spiritual energy. Followers of the Road of Paradox adore the thought of drawing upon that force and unleashing magical chaos in eastern Transylvania.

In the larger cities of western Transylvania, such as Buda-Pest, the competition of thieves is fierce. Thus, more Charlatans take to the wilds. The number of Ravnos is slowly growing throughout the voivodate. When the Gypsies eventually follow their undead protectors, they'll need all the help they can get. The future for the Rom is bleak.

CLAN TOREADOR

Any Artisan who wishes to entertain the idea of entering the courts of the nobility travels in the wake of **Arienne**. She is an expert in courtly love, and hidden in the shadows, she plays the game with a vicious and deadly edge. Her association with the Szantovich revenants has made her even more dangerous.

Stories of her deadly romances are becoming legends. Artisans whisper her name as they speak of her scandals. (In fact, when the Toreador *antitribu* first gather, she'll be the belle of the ball.) Thus, she

is either a dire reputation for the clan to overcome in Eastern Europe or a goal for an ambitious (and treacherous) Toreador to exceed....

CLAN TREMERE

Arguably, the Tremere have the most powerful clan in Transylvania. Any Tremere, anywhere, is going to know the names of the mages at the top of the pyramid, and most of them are found here. The Usurpers protect these high-ranking warlocks in Ceoris, their fortress in the Carpathians.

The Antediluvian **Tremere** lies in torpor; **Etrius** guides the clan in his stead. **Goratrix** maintains Ceoris' defenses; **Malgorzata** carries out her sire's secretive plans by scheming with a faction of conspirators. **Celestyn** has the prestigious title of master librarian in the largest chantry of Tremere in the world, while **Virستانia** is the mistress of gargoyle.

Being summoned to Ceoris is a cause for great fear. Even those who are ambitious enough to enter of their own free will must be exceedingly deferential or risk great peril. In lesser domains of Transylvania, small chantries maintain elaborate defenses, for the dangers presented by nearby Tzimisce lords is great. The surest avenue to survival is finding allies who can play neighboring knezes against each other.

There's a lot more to the Tremere than just the politics of Ceoris. Isolated chantries, gatherings of Conspirator Tremere, and the occasional renegade all offer possible complications. The clan is strongest in southern Transylvania, and anyone traveling through those realms may be caught in the midst of nightly skirmishes between the Usurpers and Fiends. As a result, there's one more big advantage to siding with the Tremere. If your coterie encounters troublesome Tzimisce, they might get assistance... fast.

CLAN TZIMISCE

The Devil can take everyone else. This is the land of the Tzimisce.

That is to say, that's how the Tzimisce see it. Clan Tzimisce cares nothing for the domains of other Transylvanian Cainites. Instead, they control *knežates* and *tîrsas* throughout Transylvania. *Kneži* are the equivalent of princes; *voivodes* of this era control much larger regions. As such, ambitious Fiends can find potential allies (or rivals) almost anywhere in the voivodate.

Tzimisce politics can form a whole series of stories, integrating a number of supporting characters. **Vladimir Rustovitch**, *voivode* of *voivodes*, is concerned with the most far-reaching political concerns of the clan. **Radu of Bistria** maintains a domain similar to those of the other Cainite princes and is skilled at diplomacy with both Western Cainites and Eastern Feudal Tzimisce. **Marelle** is the rival of the humane Nosferatu Marusca. She struggles against that particular Leper for control of the Domain of Hermannstadt.

The most powerful Transylvanian Fiend by far, however, is **Yorak**, one of the chilid of the Tzimisce Antediluvian. His extensive labyrinth, the **Cathedral of Flesh**, harbors innumerable and unspeakable servitors. The very walls are lined with vivisected sacrifices kept in states of unbearable torment.

In addition to the division among the members of this clan, the feudal lords and Metamorphosist mystics have decidedly different goals. One faction swears to protect the land, even as its supporters struggle against each other. The other maintains ancient knowledge about the occult lore of the land. Both are becoming increasingly corrupt, but both must adapt — the power of the neonates grows nightly.

BIG PLOT... LITTLE PLOT...

This story covers a great deal of time (centuries) and touches upon several of the seminal events that concern Kindred in the modern World of Darkness. Aside from the obvious breaks in time in the chronicle itself, the Storyteller would be best served by running shorter stories in and among the ones featured here. This provides a greater sense of continuity for the players and allows them to see their characters advancing. It also lets the Storyteller embroil the characters in ongoing struggles that occur in Eastern Europe that may not be the main focus of the story, but may have an effect on their unlivels.

What you'll see in Chapters Three, Four and Five is the big picture. That saga involves the revelation of the first few signs of the awakening of Kupala (or is it something more sinister?). As such, playing out the whole series of adventures should keep you busy for some time.

The goals will consequently take a long time to fulfill. As you'd expect, if a coterie's goals in a chronicle of ages take centuries to realize, the players may get a little restless. That's why part of maintaining their interest in the overall chronicle relies on balancing Big Plots with Little Plots.

The three story chapters work even better when you build smaller adventures around them. You might call them subplots or clan-oriented plots — you'll notice just from the summaries

that there's a lot of ideas for them. There's a reason for that. While you might have an epic scope for this chronicle, throwing in an one-shot adventure once in a while gives the game some balance.

For instance, if your Toreador player is getting rather tired of hearing about invasion routes through the Tihuta Pass, you might want to run an one-shot based around something more immediate once the coterie is finished with that chapter. As an example, you might tell a short story involving the Toreador Arianne (mentioned earlier) or even flesh out the story sketch about her in the last book.

Over time, the main plot reveals an overall mood or theme (at least, it should), but if the players need a break from that, a Little Plot or one-shot can help you keep the game fresh. By the same example, if your version of the Tihuta Pass adventure is degenerating into a wilderness adventure with lots of combat (what happened?), then you might want to do the same one-shot involving Arianne as a more intellectual, romantic and atmospheric contrast.

Quite simply, throwing in a Little Plot once in a while not only makes a chronicle far more interesting, but helps play off the diversity of the characters in your coterie. That way, everyone stays involved.



CLAN VENTRUE

There's no shortage of Transylvanian Cainites who hate the Ventrule. Any Patricians who travel here will have opportunities to prove themselves to their clan. As they roam farther from Buda-Pest and the domains of the Eastern Lords, however, they'll have to fight harder to hold the discontented locals at bay.

With that in mind, any up-and-coming Ventrule must quickly learn the names of the most powerful Ventrule in Hungary. **Bulscu Arpad**, a once-proud Magyar warrior, has fallen into degeneracy, and will soon succumb to torpor after encouraging the growth of both the mortal and Cainite Arpad families. **Geza Arpad**, a demented occultist, rules from Ezstergom and exploits the church. **Vencel Rikard** is the prince of Buda-Pest and Bulscu's sworn protector.

Nova Arpad was once the ruler of the Council of Ashes, the coterie of Transylvanian princes. Because she was the voice of the Arpad Ventrule in eastern Hungary (that is, Transylvania), she was abducted and replaced by a shadowy conspirator, offering the local princes time to conspire against the Eastern Lord Ventrule and the Hungarian Arpads.

Many leagues away, far more powerful Ventrule established their web of power in the midst of the Holy Roman Empire. **Jurgen von Verden** is an Inconnu who lives far to the north. He serves those ancient Patricians; in turn, many of the Ventrule Eastern Lords who travel into Transylvania and Bulgaria act as his servants. The true extent of his treachery remains to be seen....

OTHER POLITICAL AND CULTURAL FORCES

Cainites are egotistical, so they know more about their own histories than the history of anything else. In fact, they usually consider human history to be a mere extension of vampire history. Here are some other factions, both living and undead, that may also affect your stories.

THE MAGYARS AND ARPADS

In A.D. 948, Magyar tribesmen from the East subjugated the Carpathian Basin. One family ruled the 10 tribes of the Magyars: the Arpads. Later, they formed the basis of the Hungarian nobility. As they gained strength, their light-cavalry tactics allowed them to assault Western Europe with lightning-fast raids. Eventually, the Holy Roman Empire fought them to a standstill, and since then, the political arena of western and eastern Hungary has become their battlefield.

THE ARPAD VENTRUE

Bulscu, the ghould leader of the Arpad's cavalry, was seduced and Embraced by a powerful Methuselah of the Holy Roman Empire. In fact, this hidden master was one of the Ancients whom Dominic of Clan Brujah was trying to destroy. By his bidding, Bulscu helped establish a lineage of Ventrule to compete with the power of the Transylvanian Tzimisce.

While Eastern Lords established their domains along the other borders of Transylvania, Bulscu created his legacy: the Arpad Ventrule. Cautiously, he recruited the members of this line of powerful Cainites from the Hungarian nobility. The last mortal member of the line ends



TRANSYLVANIA CHRONICLES I

his reign in 1301, but the undead descendants of the line continue to exert their influence over Hungarian politics.

THE SAXONS

In 1141, the mortal King Geza II of Hungary encouraged the Saxons of the Holy Roman Empire to settle in the vast, untamed eastern lands of his kingdom. Stereotypically hardworking and dour, these serious Transylvanians have done much to develop the largest cities of the realm. They also have a reputation as outstanding merchants.

THE VLACHS

Many Romanians of the 12th through 14th centuries consider these lands to be theirs. Some even tell tales of when the land was called Dacia and the Romans actually protected the local farmers from the barbarians (unlike the system in the 12th century!). The Hungarians, on the other hand, refuse to believe there is any connection between the peasants and those ancient times. Even if it was true, they wouldn't believe this would grant the Vlachs the same rights as the Saxons and Szeklers.

The Vlachs have a hard life, especially since they don't have the financial resources of the West. Primarily agriculturists, most of them are far-removed from the ranks of the nobility. They do, however, have their own system of justice. The "wise old men" of their villages care for societal problems their overlords cannot understand.

THE SZEKLERS

Originally a Turkic tribe, the Szeklers fought in the vanguard of the Hungarian armies. Later, they became overseers in the feudal system established by Istvan I. While not all of them are cruel and uncaring, they do believe that the system of taxation maintains social stability. They are responsible for the military defense of the lower classes.

BASARAB REVENANTS

The Basarab family can trace its lineage back to the days of ancient Dacia. This noble line later provided outstanding lords for both the mortal nobility and the ranks of the Tzimisce. Long before the coming of Attila, Basarab revenants swore oaths to the Fiends of their domains. By breeding cautiously with the most promising invaders, this line has kept its blood strong. As fierce warriors, charismatic leaders, and cunning diplomats, the seductive and powerful Basarab revenants make for ruthless enemies.

One of the characters in the first story chapter, **Sherazina Basarab**, is the mortal sister of the Tzimisce leader **Dragomir Basarab**, who is contesting for territory near Alba Iulia. No doubt many of her other relations are loyal revenants trapped in service to the masters of the Basarab *knezates*.

DANISLAV REVENANTS

In the case of the Danislavs, Lupine history became a part of Tzimisce history. Once, the Danislavs maintained a dynasty within the Lupine tribes. For four generations, children of these Shadow Lord Kinfolk controlled the Sept of the Night Sky in Wallachia. They little suspected that other members of their family lived in northeastern Transylvania within the domain of Count Florescu. Over a series of generations, the count bred captive Danislavs, creating the line of Danislav revenants.

FACTIONS AND ALLIANCES

When the chronicle begins, five major factions struggle for power in Transylvania. One of these five factions recruits the characters at

the beginning of Act I. Keep these groups in mind when assembling the coterie for this chronicle. Later, you'll have plenty of opportunities to develop more elaborate stories based around the remaining factions. More importantly, your characters should eventually have chances to play the factions against each other and exploit them for their own goals.

As the chronicle advances, whichever factions do not employ the characters will be hiring someone to look after their interests in the region. Such groups may interact with the characters at certain points during the story. Storytellers are encouraged to flesh out these groups and use them to keep characters on their toes or as convenient excuses for how secrets were unmasked. They could become nemeses for the characters with rivalries spanning centuries.

TZIMISCE VOIVODES

The Fiends fight a losing battle trying to hold onto their traditional territory and authority in the region. They are beset by the Tremere and plagued by the Eastern Ventre who seek inroads into Transylvania.

Possible Recruits: The Tzimisce would employ other Tzimisce (younger clan members seeking to prove their worth). Gangrel and Nosferatu sometimes ally loosely with the Tzimisce to oppose Tremere depredations in their hereditary lands. Brujah, Lasombra, Malkavians and Toreador are acceptable to the Fiends, as are the odd impressionable Ravnos.

The *voivodes* might even employ Setites and Assamites, but they want to keep a close watch on their activities, especially since the Fiends assume they are Turkish spies. Cappadocians are ostensibly allied with the Ventre, but could be acceptable agents through swearing an oath to a specific *voivode*. The Tzimisce are very reluctant to employ a Ventre and refuse to deal with a Tremere (except to remove the Usurper's head at the earliest opportunity).

Unity: Tzimisce unity is rare, but possible. By the 14th century, several elder Fiends may need to ally themselves against neonate packs, but the idea is hardly worth considering in the late-12th century. A few small packs of Fiends prowl the voivodate in 1197, but the *voivodes* aren't terribly cohesive until a few centuries later.

Exploiting the Voivodes: With this in mind, the average Tzimisce feudal lord will consider a brief alliance with anyone who can advance his crusade against neighboring *knezates*. The domains of other Cainite princes aren't seen as a threat, but anything that weakens such rivals is welcome. Information on the arrogant Ventre (or even better, the Tremere) is more useful.

Typical Members: Vladimir Rustovitch, Count Radu of Bistria

CONSPIRATOR TREMERE

The Tremere Conspirators: Still in the midst of converting the mortal members of House Tremere into Cainites, the Tremere are under attack from the Tzimisce and their allies. The Tremere hope to dominate the area and hold off their enemies, while exploiting the magical essence of the region.

Possible Recruits: Tremere would almost certainly prefer that one Tremere (at least) be among those they send out for the first mission. Ventre, Toreador, Malkavians, Brujah, Cappadocians, Lasombra and even Ravnos (albeit under close Tremere scrutiny) are acceptable to the Usurper Clan. Setites and Assamites might have to swear oaths (magically sealed, of course) of fealty. As noted before, Brujah and Ventre rarely get along; any combination that includes



THE TIDES OF HISTORY



both has got to have a very good story behind the formation of the group. Gangrel and Nosferatu might be considered if they have no ties to those of Transylvania. Tzimisce candidates would gleefully be put to use as Gargoyle parts.

Unity: Behind the walls of Ceoris, the Tremere's extensive fortress in the Carpathians, the pyramid of power within the clan is strictly defined. Any advancement requires cautious politics and traditional views. Outside of the fortress, Usurpers who desire promotion within their clan (that is to say, most Tremere) seek any opportunity to prove themselves and advance. Some are even willing to engage in conspiracy against members of their own clan to further their own ends.

Within Ceoris, Malgorzata engages in a more elaborate conspiracy. The mages within this stronghold comprise two groups: the living and the undead. Her sire, Goratrix, is eager to Embrace more Tremere, and Malgorzata does much of his dirty work. She and the members of her faction believe in turning as many promising mortals as possible. Moreover, the lesser members of her personal pyramid don't shy away from abusing their power over mortals. They repeatedly raid far-flung villages for fresh blood and encourage the construction of hidden chantries in the wilderness.

Exploiting the Tremere: You'd better start off small. Manipulating a remote chantry is the easiest way to exploit a few Usurpers. Occasionally, whether allied with the Conspirators or not, such mages must work with local Cainites for the sake of survival. If this means negotiating with a nearby prince or *voivode*, so be it. Such activities look suspicious, though, and if such conspiracies threaten the clan as a whole, powerful mages punish those who are too reckless. The very thought of teaching the art of Thaumaturgy to anyone who isn't

a Tremere, for instance, is a clear indication of a Usurper's need for "reconditioning."

Typical Members: Malgorzata, Goratrix, Jervais

EASTERN LORDS

This group of Germanic Ventre wants to extend its influence into the far reaches of Eastern Europe. They seek to break the power of the Tzimisce and therefore support the Tremere in their bid for power.

Possible Recruits: The Eastern Lords might employ Ventre, Malkavian, Nosferatu, Toreador, Lasombra, Cappadocians, Ravnos (if there are any, they are very rare), rogue or upstart Tremere and possibly even Gangrel. Some Gangrel and Nosferatu may resent the Tremere since the Usurper clan has been using their clan members as fodder to make Gargoyles. Of course, it is possible that those from Western Europe are unaware that the Tremere are doing so....

Although highly unlikely, a Brujah might be acceptable to the Eastern Lords so long as she is under the strict guidance of a trusted Ventre. Brujah would probably refuse to work for Ventre, however, possibly nursing hatred toward the Patricians over the destruction of Carthage (whether or not they were actually there...). Neither Setites nor Assamites are trusted, and Tzimisce are never even considered.

Unity: Settled along the borders of Eastern Europe, Ventre Eastern Lords ally themselves out of necessity. Though the Ventre have strong footholds in most of Western Europe, the clan hasn't fared as well in most Eastern locales, especially Transylvania.

Exploiting the Eastern Lords: Any opportunity to expand their power in Eastern Europe is worth investigating to an Eastern Lord. In addition, any information on weaknesses among the Transylvanian princes or the

Tzimisce is extremely valuable. Marginally, the Ventre are willing to ally with Tremere, especially Usurers with powerful connections in the southern Carpathians. Despite this, some traditional Ventre detest this idea, believing it to be tantamount to accepting the clan's diablerie of Saulot. Traditional Patricians are hungry for facts they can use against the Tremere.

Typical Members: Bulscu (from *Transylvania by Night*), Vencel Rikard, Nova Arpad

THE PRINCES OF TRANSYLVANIA

These varied Cainites currently seek to expand their domains in Transylvania, particularly to encourage trade and growth in the region. Though they nominally side with the Hungarian, Bohemian and Germanic forces of civilization, they sometimes cooperate with the Tzimisce (and the Tremere). For the most part, they are more concerned with expanding and improving their territory than with inter-clan squabbles and political boundaries (there are some exceptions to this, however).

Possible Recruits: Any Cainite could find employment with the princes. Assamites and Setites would have to swear an oath of fealty and Tremere might wish to keep their presence circumspect, as one of the princes is a Tzimisce. Further, that particular prince (Radu) is well loved by both the Tzimisce and his fellow princes. He is the patron who decides whether to use the characters or not; their initial task lies at the edges of his territory.

Unity: The princes recognized by the West are fairly unified at the end of the 12th century, and they like the idea of strengthening their unity and increasing control over their domains. Unfortunately, there are only a few left.

Exploiting the Transylvanian Princes: Information on dangerous Tzimisce vampires is useful, but all of the princes already have existing (and fairly trustworthy) methods of gaining such news. Despite this, the princes of the four remaining domains have the typical weakness of letting their personal concerns dominate their political life. Any coterie that can diplomatically propose a solution to one of these concerns greatly increases its chances of finding a powerful ally.

Typical Members: Mitru, Marusca, Count Radu of Bistria

VISIONARY INDEPENDENTS

Octavio (in his guise as Havnor, Magyar god of thunder and lightning) knows that terrible events are in motion in Transylvania. Cursed by his enforced bonding with the Slavic demon Kupala, Octavio foresees eight signs of impending doom. He also has visions of some of the things that might be done to prevent the dire fate awaiting the world. These visions are not so clear. Though Octavio doesn't realize it, some of the signs will not occur for centuries. He therefore acts as if they are about to occur at any moment and time is of the essence.

Possible Cainite Allies: Octavio will act as patron for any Cainites he can get to listen to him, regardless of their clan affiliation (or lack thereof). In accepting even the clanless, he is very much before his time and provides the only opportunity for those with equally advanced outlooks to incorporate both Tremere and Tzimisce characters, or foster cooperation between Ventre and Brujah (or equally unlikely mixes).

If characters can be persuaded to put aside differences to avert Gehenna (which Octavio believes is imminent), the Storyteller should feel free to allow weird match-ups as part of the coterie. Such a strange group will probably run into greater difficulties (and may even have to pay for its tolerance with its members' unlivess) if their affiliations are unmasked at the wrong time.

Another possibility for independent employment is through Vencel Rikard, the Prince of Buda-Pest. He desires peace in the Transylvanian

region and could well convince the characters to help him attain it through any influence they can build in the area.

Unity: Octavio isn't "unified," *per se*. The most likely force that will keep members of this faction together is the threat of Kupala (which is clearer to them than any other group) and the combined opposition of the four other factions.

Exploiting the Independents: Deceiving visionaries is difficult, to say the least. If a coterie helps them prove or prevent the most dangerous visions, the Independents might be grateful, but a faction led by Malkavians is bound to be unpredictable at best.

Typical Members: Octavio, Anatole, Lucita

OTHER TYPES OF FACTIONS

Insurrectionists: Anything that tears down the established order is progress. This might be for the cause of replacing old tyrants with new ones or, as is the case a few centuries later, for the ideal of creating a communal society of the undead. Brujah often speak freely of the injustice exacted against Dominic or the exploitation of the Ventre-supported overlords.

By 1450, the Ravnos are so outraged at the treatment of the Rom Gypsies that they gladly spread chaos to destroy the influence of powerful princes in the region. This faction, as a whole, becomes more and more powerful as the nights of the Anarch Revolt approach.

Typical Members: neonate Brujah, wandering Ravnos, Vassily Taltos, Dragomir Basarab

The Brotherhood of Kupala: The ancient Slavic god of corruption is a legend to some... and a terrifying reality to others. Tales tell of a black heart trapped beneath the earth and the slumbering soul of a powerful demon. Many loremasters are aware of the spirits of corruption who serve Kubala: gibbering, tortured entities collectively known as "the kupala." Torture, sacrifice and abuse increase the proximity of these creatures to the physical world, and as their power grows, they spread madness and disease. An ancient order of Malkavians, the Brotherhood of Kupala, gladly exacts this price in their quest for surmounting madness.

A FINAL NOTE ON PATRONS

Whichever patron the Storyteller chooses will have a great effect on how the story unfolds. That choice determines how each scene is presented and the options that are open to the players. In some cases, the entire story may change depending on which side the characters are on (or nominally supporting). Other effects include: people who meet the characters as potential friends rather than foes, foes who would normally try to destroy the characters but who currently have greater enemies to fight. The characters may even have friends who later find a reason to betray them.

We recommend that players be allowed to choose their clans and general background before the Storyteller decides which patron to use (or even if a combination of patrons might be possible). That way, the Storyteller can be more certain that she is running a chronicle her players will enjoy. While it can be interesting (for a while) to be tricked into helping the enemy, that sort of maneuver is best saved for later in the story. The Storyteller should try to figure out which side the players' characters are most likely to support and choose their patron accordingly.

Each and every permutation cannot be covered in detail and the Storyteller should customize some encounters based on the Storyteller characters' personalities and goals as well as on how the characters behave toward them. It might be possible, however, even for supposed enemies to

reach an accommodation. For example, Radu will be unhappy if anyone else sends the characters to claim and hold a strategic mountain pass near (actually on the edges of) his territory. Rather than attacking the characters outright, however, he might try to convert them to his cause. Failing that, he could send allied troops to roust them out of the area, or he might simply spread rumors that a Tremere chantry is being built in the pass, then sit back and watch the *voivodes* foam at the mouth. The Storyteller should take opportunities such as this to have hidden enemies attack from the back, flank or above (figuratively and literally) rather than launching frontal assaults. There are several suggestions woven into the stories, but Storytellers should not feel constrained to limit themselves only to those in print. Myriad opportunities for subtle manipulations abound.

FORMING THE COTERIE CONCEPT

Strongly allied coteries can exist in Transylvania for centuries; weak ones are torn apart quickly. Once you have a clear idea for whom the players' coterie will work, developing the concept behind the coterie becomes much easier. Before you begin the adventure, make sure each person in the troupe is clear on his or her character's position in the group. There are several techniques you can use at the beginning of your story to help build this "coterie concept."

One direct method is to weave the histories and fates of the characters together during the prelude. If they've worked together before, their chances of survival increase. There might be other motivations, of course: Their sires might be acquainted, they might share a common enemy, or they may share a common goal. You may even want to reinforce this motivation with two other devices. First, ask them to answer this question on the back of their character sheets: "Why is your character a member of the coterie?" Then, in front of all the players, ask them to elaborate as part of their prelude. It's blunt, but it works, and some people need it.

We have found (especially in the playtest of this adventure) that players who take the time to build an overall rationale for their characters' role in the coterie have a better chance of staying in the story. If you're planning on having "everyone meet at an inn," the group will probably tear itself apart within a few weeks. If the undead captain of the guard in Buda-Pest says that "you and you and you have now volunteered to enact the will of the prince," then the coterie really doesn't have much of a rationale for staying around. (In fact, every fool who falls for that old

WE NEED A THIEF..."

It is easy to fall into the rut of pigeonholing characters into certain roles during the creation of a coterie. To that end, we provide this caveat: Don't! The *Transylvania Chronicles* are not dungeon crawls or monster bash-fests — there is no "optimum" mix of characters by which the "best" results may be achieved. If your coterie is composed entirely of Tzimisce under the banner of a local *voivode*, so be it. If your coterie is exclusively Tremere, more power to you. If your coterie is a rogue's gallery of every clan and bloodline in creation, good for you. Remember, the goal is to have a fun, rich storytelling experience, not to force players into taking arbitrarily determined roles. Encourage players to create characters that are interesting first and functional second — you have at least 800 years ahead of you, and that's a long time to be stuck with a rotten character.

saw deserves to be backstabbed by his former companions quickly and violently within a few weeks.)

The Storyteller can also reinforce the unity of the coterie by circumstance. In the first adventure, all of the characters learn of the need to erect a fortress in Tihuta Pass. It's a goal that all of the characters have in common, and once they've all worked to achieve it, they'll probably trust each other a little more. In an epic, monstrous, mind-crunching, time-defying chronicle, trust between the members of the coterie is essential.

Sometimes, the Storyteller should recognize that she's too clever for her own good. You've probably run an adventure where every character kept a secret from everyone else. You've no doubt gone through a scenario where one character is secretly scheming to destroy the rest of the group. You may even have used the insidious technique of passing secret notes to encourage mistrust.

This is not that type of chronicle. It can't be. It might be a few centuries later after the characters have all worked together for four or five stories (and you'd only do it to test the loyalty between them), but the *Transylvania Chronicles* shouldn't be an exercise in intra-coterie paranoia. Don't induce mistrust until the foundation of the chronicle has been laid in concrete and at least the first few stories of your personal Tower of Babel have been constructed. Otherwise, this eight-century monstrosity will topple and fall.

OTHER BACKGROUND CONCERNs

When running this chronicle, the Storyteller should keep a few things in mind:

LANGUAGES AND LANGUAGE GROUPS

As you can see from the descriptions in this chapter, there is a rather broad range of languages in Transylvania. Serfs speaking Vlach, peasants speaking Slav, Magyar-speaking Hungarians and German-speaking Saxons can offer many complications to a chronicle if the characters cannot converse freely with them.

Some Storytellers may choose to downplay this aspect of the game. After all, the number of Cainites and ghouls in the story ensures that if a few characters can't hear what a local Transylvanian is saying, someone can translate for everyone else. Storytellers who prefer a dark fantasy feel to the game may prefer this "Hollywood" approach to foreign languages. Players who stress realism, however, may find that this idea stretches credulity. Thus, a few optional rules should help represent the role of languages in the campaign. Customize them as you see fit.

Each dot in Linguistics represents one language a character speaks (but doesn't necessarily write — this is the Dark Medieval world, after all), and a character is considered to be absolutely fluent in his native tongue (which is declared during character creation). As such, the Storyteller should make sure that everyone in the coterie has a method of speaking fluently with everyone else. (In one of the playtests, for example, the members of the coterie only shared one language in common: Arabic. This was suspicious, to say the least, but gave the coterie a big edge over other Cainites.)

The Storyteller may instead assume that a character fluent in an European language may be somewhat familiar with other tongues in that language group. For the purposes of this chronicle, there are five main groups of Eastern European languages. (We apologize for this gross simplification, but it is much easier than making each language a separate Knowledge specialization.) The languages are:

- **Slavonic:** Actually a collection of dialects, Slavonic is well on its way toward becoming the vernacular of Eastern Europe. West Slavonic is spoken in the regions of Bohemia and Poland. East Slavonic is spoken in the wastes of Kievan Rus. South Slavonic is spoken in Bulgaria and Macedonia. A Slavonic-speaking character must select a specific dialect with which she is familiar, though each dialect may be understood by anyone familiar with any of the other Slavonic dialects on an Intelligence + Linguistics roll at a difficulty of 6. This inter-dialect translation is considered automatic if the character in question has an Intelligence + Linguistics Dice Pool of 6 or greater, naturally.
- **Hungarian:** Hungarian, unsurprisingly, is spoken in Hungary, as it is the native tongue of the Magyar people.
- **Romanian:** The language of what will one night become Romania, this tongue is currently spoken by inhabitants of eastern Hungary (specifically, those who live in the province of Pannonia).
- **Baltic:** Like Slavonic, Baltic is actually an “umbrella” term for the polyglot tongues spoken in the regions of Lithuania and along the Baltic Sea. Several dialects exist, but for game purposes, it is easiest to treat them as a common language. An Intelligence + Linguistics roll (difficulty 5-7) may be required to comprehend spoken communication with someone from a different region than where the character learned Baltic.
- **German:** Actually a Western language, German is spoken by the increasing influx of settlers, merchants and drifters from the Holy Roman Empire. As it is spoken more widely than the other tongues of the region (and even outside the region!), German makes an excellent *lingua franca* for the *Transylvania Chronicles*.

Under this system (which Storytellers of Western European chronicles may choose to overrule), French, Italian and Spanish all default to each

other at a difficulty of 7. Likewise, Turk and Finn default to each other at a difficulty of 7. The language referred to as “Arabic” defaults to Kurdish, Armenian and Persian at difficulty of 7. Greek and Latin default to each other at a 7 difficulty. Oddly enough, Slavonic and Romanian default to each other at a difficulty of 8, even though they have different origins. In addition, most of the Tzimisce in this story share a variant of Romanian, referred to as “Vlach.” This is considered to be a somewhat archaic form of Romanian; any simple peasant fluent in Romanian overhearing it is at a difficulty 7 to understand it.

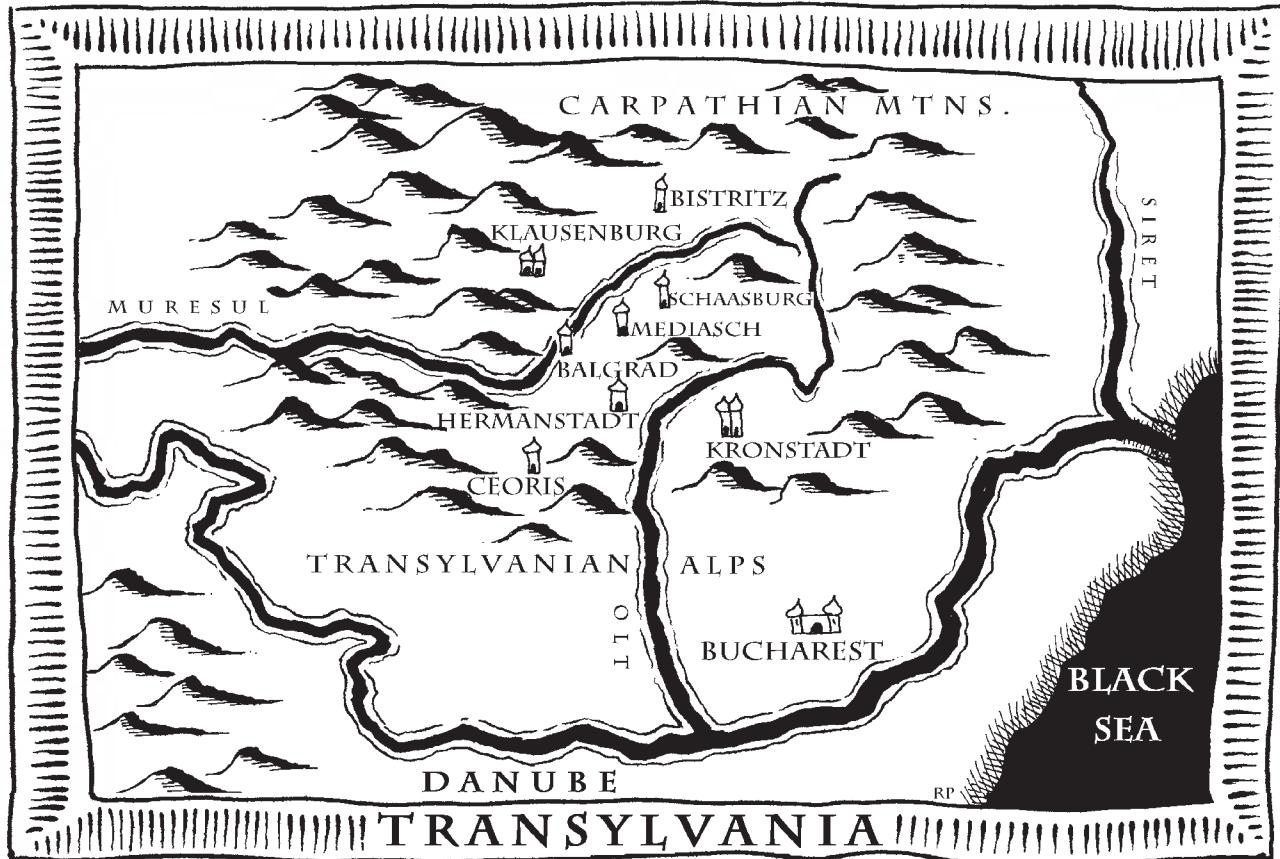
If this system seems overly complex, go Hollywood: Simply supply the coterie with several ghouled translators and assume everyone can understand everyone else (for everyone’s sake, though, don’t kill them off), or assume that some sort of common pidgin exists. If, on the other hand, you do choose to adapt these rules, there are a number of interesting story ideas that can result from miscommunication and false translation in the *Transylvania Chronicles*.

IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES

Although it is possible to play any *Dark Ages* characters in this Chronicle, the group of characters must be compatible. Books later in the series will offer opportunities for characters to join different sects (Camarilla, Sabbat, Anarchs), and the bonds the characters form must be strong enough to hold them together even if some choose differently. Characters should have a compelling reason for traveling together, and even more compelling reasons to stay together. One reason (the threat made by their sires) is given in the story, but characters designed from the beginning to get along with and support one another will have a much easier time in the chronicle.



THE TIDES OF HISTORY



Characters may be native to the Transylvanian or Eastern European area or recent arrivals from Western Europe. While recent arrivals may have more to discover, even natives may not know much about the mysterious region of their birth. Whether coming from East or West, however, the character's background should make sense and be consistent with the history of her birth region. The story begins in Buda-Pest in any case.

Certain combinations of characters simply won't work, however, and should be disallowed (having said that so forcefully, see below for exceptions). Mixing Tremere and Tzimisce in the same coterie, for example, makes it almost impossible for those characters to be involved with this story (aside from the fact that Tremere and Tzimisce would almost never willingly cooperate with one another during this time period). The characters must be allied closely enough so that the Storyteller can decide which "side" they might be on when the story begins and customize the chronicle to reflect this. Naturally, very clever players may be able to suggest reasons why their characters might adventure together despite clan hostilities (including hiding what clan they actually represent from the other players' characters). The Storyteller should judge such anomalies on a case-by-case basis, while remembering it is the characters' sires who involve them (i.e. the sire's clan would have to be a secret as well).

TIES THAT BIND

Because the characters are contacted by a patron who knows their sires (or mentors), it is important that each character knows his or her sire (or mentor). The presumption of the scenario is that the characters' sires are either allied with, owe a boon to or at least know of the patron. The sires have suggested that their childer are suitable for the mission the patron has in mind. Deciding who each character's sire is and playing through the Embrace is highly recommended if possible.

Characters' relationships with their sires may be of some import later in the story. Characters whose sires are deceased may still have mentors or good friends whose good will they should want to retain.

Characters who hail from Transylvanian areas might be the childer of some of the known princes (Mitru, Marusca, Nova or Radu), a noted Tzimisce *voivode* or one of the Tremere of Ceoris. Those from Hungary might have been sired by Vencel Rikard, Izidor Torenu, Roland or even Octavio. Not all the characters need have sires who have been detailed in *Transylvania By Night* or *Dark Tides Rising*.

FORBIDDEN FRUIT

Certain Merits available to player characters can be damaging to the flow of the story line. Iron Will and Unbondable are the two greatest culprits and the Storyteller is encouraged to disallow them. Either of these Merits carry serious repercussions further in the story if a player is allowed to have them. Similarly, too many dots in Resources as a background may make the character less "hungry" for the possible rewards in the story.

THE CITIES OF TRANSYLVANIA

If you've read *Transylvania by Night*, you know the details of this next section. If you haven't, then here's some quick information on the cities in this region. Suffice it to say that the growth of cities in Dark Medieval Transylvania is somewhat more rapid than the expansion of Hungarian cities in our world. This is easily attributed to the influence of Cainites: Larger cities mean larger herds, more trade, greater wealth and so on.

A typical small village in Transylvania may have no more than 200 people. A dirt road, a stone church, and a number of unimpressive wooden buildings suffice. After the year 1400, the homes of many Vlachs, Slavs and other oppressed

peoples share a notable architectural trait: Their windows do not face the main street. Szekler lords, of course, have the most ostentatious houses.

Larger cities, such as the seven major cities, typically have a population ranging from 3,000 to 6,000. After about 1300, a common practice is to keep the town hall in the center of town. The locals then build streets radiating from that central point (like spokes in a wheel) and connect those streets with concentric circles of other streets. Saxons are stereotypically known for their hard work and thriftiness, and their houses are easily distinguished. Peasants are farther removed, and after about 1400, they aren't welcome in many of the largest cities.

As another indicator of the cultural diversity (and its malefic influence) in Transylvania, many of the major cities are known by different names among the members of different ethnic groups. Which name you use for a city can be very telling. We have simplified this bit of background somewhat, and the following table shows the conventions used in the adventures.

12th c. German (Saxon) name

Bistritz
Kronstadt
Klausenburg
Mediasch
Muhlbach
Hermanstadt
Schaasburg
Balgrad

12th c. Romanian name

Bistria
Brasov
Napoca
Medias
Sebes
Sibiu
Sighisoara
Alba Iulia







Chapter Two: Dark Tides Rising

Blessed is he that readeth and they
that hear the words of this prophecy,
and keep those things which are writ-
ten therein: for the time is at hand.

- Revelation 13

PART ONE: THE MAKING OF PRINCES

STORY BACKGROUND

The *Book of Nod*, sometimes thought of as the vampiric Bible, tells the story of Cain and his childer. It contains prophecies of an apocalyptic future known as Gehenna in which the Antediluvians awake from their long slumber to consume the blood of lesser Cainites and rule over a dread and horrid world. The prophecies are commonly thought to be the visions of Saulot, most beloved of Cainites, reputed first recipient of Golconda and apparently willing sacrifice to the diablerie of Tremere. Yet the *Book of Nod* is not the only ancient Cainite text, nor do all of its versions agree on the signs foretelling the coming of Gehenna.

Some Cainites claim that the signs of Gehenna change with the unfolding of time, that human and supernatural interference may prevent or accelerate the occurrence of some of the signs. A few even whisper that the actions taken by those few who are destined to stand at the crux may twist what is to come, not preventing it, but perhaps... changing it.

None can question Saulot, for he fell to Tremere's bloodlust, surrendering his essence to the magically created Cainite. Tremere thereby became the equivalent of an Antediluvian, giving his new clan legitimacy even as his diablerie horrified many Cainites and made them the sworn enemies of the Usurpers. Among those enemies are the Tzimisce, overlords of Eastern Europe and one of the most powerful clans. The Tremere encroached upon the Tzimisce even while mortal, for they were mages, attracted to Transylvania by the powerful magical emanations of the land. Capturing and torturing a Tzimisce voivode, members of House Tremere learned how to transform themselves into Cainites, damning themselves and becoming immortal. To battle the ghoulded servitors of the Tzimisce (as well as the Fiends themselves), the Tremere then created Gargoyles, bastard vampire monstrosities made from captured Tzimisce, Nosferatu and Gangrel.

The region of Transylvania is beset by other problems as well. It serves not only as the Tremere-Tzimisce battleground, but as a contested land where locals try to maintain their holdings while the "civilizing" forces of the West attempt to wrest control from the native populace and bring the land under their dominion. Further, this small land lies in the path of invaders from both the East and the South intent on reaching Western Europe. While strong defenders are needed to hold invaders at bay, ancient feuds and jealousies tear the region apart, preventing many strong alliances among its inhabitants.

Underlying much of the chaos and warfare that haunts the area is the presence of the Slavic demon Kupala. His influence has corrupted the land and those who reside there. Some who know of the demon seek to remove or lessen his influence on the land. To that end, those in the know want to perform a great binding spell.

The characters are thrown into this volatile background. They are promised great rewards if they succeed in building a fortress—and grave punishment should they fail. While they may believe they are merely striving to build fiefdoms for themselves, they have become embroiled (indeed, they are now key players) in the events that lie at the center of Cainite history and that lead to Gehenna.

TRANSYLVANIA CHRONICLES I

SIGNS AND PORTENTS

Prophecy is an inexact Art, rarely understood even by the one granted visions of the future. Signs and portents may be symbolic rather than literal and interpretations often vary widely. Even when the signs seem clear-cut, they may be misleading or missed altogether. Like earthquakes, which are preceded by tremors and followed by aftershocks, the signs of Gehenna rest amid other events that can screen their presence—or be mistaken for the actual signs. Thus, the *Book of Nod* speaks of darkened, sunless skies and a moon of blood, but these are not the portents themselves. Rather, they are events that unfold around the actual omens. These unnatural, strange occurrences serve to call attention to what is really going on.

The signs of Gehenna do not await some nebulous future time when they will begin to take form; they have already started. Though Octavio believes in eight signs, there are actually nine. Since the dawn of time, the stage has been set, props laid in place and players assigned their parts. An inexorable dark tide rises from the earliest nights of vampiric existence. Sweeping forward throughout the ages, this fated confrontation eddies throughout Cainite history, building momentum and cresting just before Gehenna. The first sign, never mentioned among the prophecies, has already been fulfilled: The final countdown to Gehenna began with the diablerie of Saulot.

ACT I: THE SUMMONING (SPRING, 1198)

Wherever the characters currently reside, they are each contacted by one of their sires' servants. Each servant gives each character a letter from his sire and an invitation summoning him to Buda-Pest. The letters also introduce these servants, who are to accompany the characters. Their sires make it abundantly clear that they expect compliance from their childer. The letters are written on parchment and sealed with designs or crests that each character recognizes as his or her sire's personal seal or symbol. There should be no question that the letters are genuine. The letters' text is given below.

My Childe,

It is my wish that you join me at the market square close by the stocks in the Castle District of Buda-Pest on the tenth hour of the evening of the fifteenth day of April, the Year of Our Lord 1198. There, you shall be introduced to an ally of mine who wishes to become your patron. Your future might be assured should you agree to this patron's offer. Further, it would please me greatly for you to accept as I have already accepted for you, pending your agreement. Do not fail me, but come at once. The bearer of this letter is a trusted servant and will arrange transportation for you.

Your Sire

An invitation accompanies the letter. It is a gilt-edged parchment rolled into scroll form and bound with red ribbons appended to the document with red sealing wax. The design of a partial crest is pressed into the wax. (Feel free to describe a design appropriate to the patron — perhaps a spread-winged eagle for the Eastern Lords or a griffin framed against an open tome for the Tremere).

Though I am unacquainted with you, I feel that we share a bond through your sires, who are my allies. As you are the dutiful childe of your sires, I request that you meet with me at the market square near the stocks in the Castle District of Buda-Pest on the fifteenth day of April of this year at the tenth hour of the night. I would like to put before you a proposition that may lead to great gains for each of you and closer alliances among us. If you wish to hear more, attend me on the date specified.

*I Hope to Become.
Your Patron*

Should a character choose to disobey the summons, he is visited by several acquaintances of his sire, who try to persuade him to comply. If that fails, tell the player to create a new character — one who *will* cooperate. Perhaps his old character (having severely displeased his sire) can wait out the chronicle staked and in torpor....

Note that if one of the characters is Vencel Rikard's childe and if Vencel is to be their patron (i.e. if the characters are to work for the independent faction), that character receives no invitation, and is brought the following note instead of the letter detailed above:

*My Childe,
Please join me at the market square near the stocks in the Castle District in Buda-Pest on the fifteenth day of April. There you shall meet with others like yourself whom I wish to offer employment. Your future shall be assured forward to seeing you at the tenth hour of the night.*

Vencel Rikard

Characters who comply are taken to Buda-Pest in an enclosed wagon where they are kept safe from the sun during the day. Each wagon pulls into the shade of a copse of trees and awaits sundown. When darkness falls and the characters awaken, the servants explain that they are just outside the gates of Pest. It is the night of April 15. Each character is introduced to the other characters his servant, who knows the other servants and who they were sent to fetch. The servants also explain that wagons entering Pest are searched so that their contents can be assessed for taxation, as it is assumed that all goods will be sold in Pest's or Buda's market. They could not, therefore, risk taking the characters inside while they were sleeping.

They must walk through Pest, cross the river and make their way to the Castle District of Buda and to the market square. Characters who already reside in Buda-Pest do not arrive via wagon, but join the others once the newcomers reach the market square.

Allow the players a few minutes to describe their characters to one another and conspire briefly before beginning Scene I.

SCENE I: ARRIVAL

It is early spring, 1198, just past the seventh hour of the night. Buda-Pest itself is coming alive again after the quiet of winter. Daring traders arrive from the East and West, having braved late-winter storms and treacherous crossings through newly cleared mountain passes. After a tiring and uncomfortable journey, the characters arrive outside the main gate of Pest. Clouds cover the sky and the ground underfoot is soggy with chilly rain. The walls of Pest rise before the characters. The smells of livestock, lime and smoke hang in the air.

The town guards are beginning to close the gates for the night. One guard motions with his lantern and says, "If you wish to enter the city tonight, you had best hurry. The gates are closing." Should the characters not hurry inside, he shrugs, closes and locks the gates. Characters will then have to find a place where they can scale the wall unseen or walk around the entirety of Pest until they reach the river. There, they can take the ferry across.

Those who enter the gates pass through the cattle market, where young boys and older servants watch lines of livestock. If they are careful, enterprising characters can feed from some of the cattle, horses or goats that are found here. The main road through Pest leads westward through the city into the central market and then to the river.

THE SLAVE

Just before passing through the central market, the characters hear the sound of a small crowd ahead. In the center of the market, a slave auction is in progress. The characters can see a paunchy man standing atop a platform. He holds a chain linked to a collar attached to a roughly clad, miserable looking captive, who is forced to kneel before him, hands bound behind her back. A line of other captives is chained to a large stake driven into the ground nearby. Two men stand guard over them. Several people stand before the platform; a few call out bids. Torches illuminate the stage, but leave most of the crowd and nearby streets in shadow.

Some members of the crowd appear to be little more than brigands, bearded, heavily armed men drawn from the nearby taverns to watch the entertainment. A few look as though they might be merchants in search of slaves to help in the workplace. One man stands out from the crowd. Obviously a nobleman, as evidenced by his fine clothes and jewelry, he seems bored by the current offering, yet is clearly agitated. Perhaps he is waiting for something better to be offered.

Should a character use the Auspex power of Soulsight (difficulty 8), she can tell that the man's aura is pale. More successes allow her (in succession) to ascertain that he is somewhat bored, impatient, uneasy and slightly angry. This is Roland, a Ventrule lackey who provides Bulscu (see *Transylvania By Night*) with many of his "playthings." Sent forth to find his master "something new and interesting," Roland attends the evening slave market in hopes of finding a slave Bulscu might consider worthy of his attention. Roland



AR

knows he must return with something, but is worried that none of those offered for sale will be good enough to please his master.

As the characters pass by (or stop, they may want to make a purchase, either to feast upon or for some other purpose), the first slave is sold and dragged off the platform by her new master. The auctioneer's assistants hand up another woman. Though disheveled and dirty, she is obviously of much better quality than the first girl. Even though her hair is snarled, it falls in ebony waves down her back. Her eyes look dark and haunted. Her torn dress is well made and was once of fine materials. As he lifts her to the top of the platform, the auctioneer calls out, "What am I bid for this woman? Virgin and untouched, obedient and beddable." As he turns to survey the crowd, the woman snakes out her foot and trips him. She leaps off the platform on the side nearest the characters. To the laughter of the crowd, the auctioneer lands heavily. The woman streaks toward an alley, frantically moving her arms behind her as she attempts to free herself of her bonds.

It takes the guards a moment to come after her and the crowd seems amused enough by her escape that they are not giving chase. The characters may run her down if they choose to do so. If they do, she tells them her name (Sherazhina) and begs them for sanctuary, telling them that her family will pay them well for her rescue. She speaks Romanian and some Hungarian. They may choose to free her, claim her, ignore her, feed from her, or return her to the auction block. She can be nothing more than a quick diversion, an easy meal, or maybe a ghoul for one of the characters.

If the characters choose to take her with them, Sherazhina might be used later to seal an alliance with her family (if the char-

acters are not at odds with the Tzimisce) or kept as a hostage to demand their good behavior and neutrality (if the characters and the Tzimisce are foes). Though it is not necessary for the characters to claim Sherazhina, it might ultimately be to their benefit to do so. Aside from her value to her brother (a Tzimisce voivode the characters meet in Act II), she can tell them about the library that lies buried beneath the ruins atop which they are to build their new fortress. The ruins are the remains of an ancestral family keep of the Basarabs. Constructed mainly of wood, the tower burned, leaving only the foundations and cellars intact. Should they kill her, return her to the slavemaster or give her to Roland, they may never learn this information. She offers it only when she discovers where they are going (in Act I, Scene III or later).

MEETING ROLAND

Roland is also interested in Sherazhina, having noted her quality before she jumped from the platform. If the characters pursued Sherazhina, Roland attempts to persuade them to hand the woman over to him. He offers them a fair price for her and expects them to accept the generous offer; after all, she doesn't legally belong to them. Roland becomes angry if they refuse to sell her. He looks at them with Soulsight, noting that they are Cainites. Roland makes one more offer, saying that he is the seneschal of the prince of Budapest (a lie) and implying that the prince will be very angry if they refuse to surrender a mortal to his agent.

If the characters give him the girl, he leaves happily, promising to put in a good word for them with the prince (which he won't do). Should they offer to accompany him to meet the prince and

gift him with the girl, Roland tries to dissuade them, saying the prince dislikes being disturbed by strangers. Finally, he admits that he's not exactly working for the prince, but for someone else even more important. If threatened, even verbally, Roland leaves, but uses Obfuscate to follow the characters wherever they go after that. Roland attempts to find out what the characters are up to and tries to learn any secrets that might prove useful to him. He tails them until one of them unmasks him with Auspex or until he is spotted by one of their elders in the meeting place.

SCENE II: CONVERSATIONS WITH A MADMAN

Whether the characters have Sherazhina with them or not, they cross the river via a ferry and start the climb up Castle Hill. About halfway up the hill, in a dark area where the houses are shuttered and few lanterns light the street, a tall, well-muscled figure dressed in a tunic and breastplate confronts them. His hair and beard are long and wild (though the color cannot be seen in the darkness), and he carries a spear.

"Stand, O children, whose shoulders bear the burden of redemption!" he calls to them in the Magyar tongue. If none of them understand him, he tries Latin. If they still do not understand, he switches to Greek, then attempts a halting pidgin German, followed by a laughable attempt at Romanian. When (and if) any of them can understand him, he continues in that tongue.

"Long have my eyes sought beyond to that which has been and will be. He rises and all must be ready! Soon you shall meet with

one whose plans lead you into the heart of terror and exultation. Rejoice, for you shall witness all. You play a grand part in what comes. Ah! The sweet heart's blood, let it wash away the sin. Eight signs of the coming nights shine within my vision. I see you within each. Though nothing is ever prevented, yet it might be transformed by the actions of a few. Go now, my children, and remember my words when the patterning is asked of you. Zolot lies; flee his visions! Prosper and we shall meet again."

This is the Malkavian known as Octavio. He believes that his visions portend the rising of the Slavic demon known as Kupala. Though Octavio believes Kupala to be irredeemably evil, in actuality, the demon seeks to preserve itself and its chosen lands from a far greater threat — destruction when Gehenna comes. To this end, the demon has gifted Octavio with prophetic visions, granting him knowledge of eight signs that foretell the coming of that cataclysmic time.

What the characters make of Octavio is up to them. They may not even stop to listen to him or they may press him for answers. If they ignore him, he follows them until he has said his peace. He tells them he has no more to say if they ask for clarifications. In either case, within a minute of their meeting, a crowd of people carrying lit torches appears from a nearby alleyway and moves toward Octavio, saying "My Lord Havnor, Holy One, we are here. What is your will?"

Octavio seems lost in thought for a moment, then points toward the characters. In Latin (which none of his devotees understand), he begins to intone the Prayer for the Dead. The characters should realize he is preparing to set the mob on them and that the torches



DARK TIDES RISING

make these mortals quite dangerous to Cainites. They would be best served by moving onward quickly. Any character with Hearth Wisdom or Occult may attempt, (difficulty 8, 6 if the character is from a Magyar background) to identify the name Havnor. A single success allows the character to recall that Havnor is the name of the ancient Magyar god of thunder and lightning. Two successes allow her to remember that the god is also the patron of prophecy.

Should the characters choose to remain, Octavio proclaims them "agents of evil" and looses the mob on them. The characters have one turn to flee. The mob does not follow if they believe they have driven the characters off. If the characters do not flee, assume that they are surrounded and that each turn they remain in the area, one torch gets through to damage a single character, chosen randomly. (The mob isn't well versed in battle tactics, but they are enthusiastic.) To offset the damage, characters must succeed in a soak roll (difficulty 5). Those characters who have no Fortitude cannot soak fire damage, which causes aggravated wounds. Torches cause one wound each. Since several torch-wielding mortals crowd around the characters, the Storyteller might want to have the characters roll for Rotschreck (difficulty 6).

Though they outnumber the characters, the mob is nothing so much as peasant rabble. A few judiciously applied Disciplines or propensities for violence dispels the crowd, which flees amid a scattering of dropped torches.

AFTER THE MOB

The characters may continue on to the Castle District where they are allowed through the gate with no trouble so long as at least one of them is dressed well enough to be either a rich merchant or a noble. Those in clerical garb are allowed in without question as well. Should all the characters be dressed in workingman's or peasant's garb, they will have to bribe or Dominate the guard to let them in. Once in the Castle District, they find the market square on the main street.

If Roland has followed them to the square (and thence to the real meeting place), their sires (paranoid as they are, they survey every new arrival and spot Roland immediately) are very annoyed that the characters failed to note him. They have taken great pains to keep their meeting place secret and have no wish for their underground room to be discovered by outsiders. The meeting begins on a sour note as their sires apologize to their would-be patron, asking that he forgive the stupidity of their childe and give them a chance to prove themselves. Roland is summarily captured and staked unless he quickly identifies himself as Bulscu's servant (whichever you prefer, as Storyteller). If Vencel Rikard is present (as a sire or patron), the prince speaks for Roland, saying he is a toady of his court. Rikard then orders Roland to withdraw from the room and wait for him outside. He plans to rearrange Roland's memories later.

SCENE III: THE PATRON'S REQUEST

When the characters arrive at the market square, they can locate the stocks. After the characters wait for a few minutes, a man carrying a lantern approaches them from a nearby alleyway. This is Hadel (servant to one of the characters' sires), who has been told to expect them. Those who reside in Buda-Pest may join the other characters at this point. (It is assumed that they have also just ar-

rived.) Hadel bows to the characters, says he is to escort them to meet their sires, and leads them into the alleyway. Cautious characters may suspect an ambush, but Hadel merely stops at a door, opens it and steps inside, holding it wide for the characters to follow.

Once inside, he locks the door, then leads the coterie down a series of stone stairways that twist about on themselves. The steps are old and crumbling in places. Characters who do not have the Protean power Witness of Darkness or the Heightened Senses offered by Auspex are hard-pressed to see where they are going since Hadel has the only torch. At the bottom, he leads them through a maze of tunnels (characters must have the Eidetic Memory Merit to even attempt to memorize the path). The tunnels seem tighter and smaller the further they travel. The torch flickers uncertainly as though it's about to go out at any moment. Finally, arriving at another door, Hadel knocks twice, then opens it, revealing a small room filled with people and stands back to allow the characters to enter. Once they have entered, Hadel closes the door and leaves. Should the characters want to escape, they find it difficult due to their lack of light, and their lack of knowledge of the tunnels.

The room contains a few heavy, dark chairs. A stone sarcophagus occupies one corner. Three torches illuminate the room, and the firelight plays on the pallid faces of the room's occupants. The characters' sires are all present, seated in the few chairs. If the slave girl is with the characters, one of the Cainites in the room uses Dominate to put her to sleep. One of the sires asks why the characters thought it prudent to bring a mortal with them.

THE PATRON

The gentleman who is to become their patron is one of the following, depending on which faction the Storyteller wishes them to ally with initially:

- **Tzimisce faction:** Mircea Dzardescu, Lord Protector of Dzardrev Castle. Tall and commanding, with cropped gray hair and deep-brown eyes under heavy brows, Lord Mircea is accustomed to unquestioning compliance in his underlings. Absolutely without pity or remorse, Mircea likes to appear jovial — until he is crossed or thwarted. Tonight, he is at his most charming. The characters' sires all owe him favors. He has decided to collect on all of them by having their childe build a stronghold for him. The keep in Tihuta Pass will allow him to control one of the most important gateways from the East and expand his holdings into territory held by Radu (a fierce rival). Once the fortress is completed, he plans to either choose one of the characters to act as his seneschal there (whenever he is not in residence) or to gift his childe with it.

- **Tremere faction:** Jervais, Vis Master of Ceoris. The childe of Malgorzata, Jervais is thoroughly loyal to his sire and her Conspirator cause. He is of medium height with a fringe of brown hair, a neat beard, a square-jawed face and myopic-looking brown eyes. Despite his apparent affability, an air of menace lurks beneath his good humor. When he speaks, any notion that he might be a harmless scholar dissipates before his commanding tones; Jervais is a master magus and knows it. The characters' sires do not owe Jervais anything, but do have to repay a boon Malgorzata did for them in the past. The Tremere have discovered that the Tihuta Pass lies atop a powerful magical node. Malgorzata wants a permanent keep built on the spot so that the *vis* (raw magic) found there may be harvested for Tremere use. Further, she intends for the fortress to act as a bolthole (or base from which to strike at their enemies) for Tremere who must travel to that section of Transylvania. She does



not want others to know that the site is controlled by the Usurers (especially her faction) and has therefore sent Jervais to arrange for others to act as front men.

• **Transylvanian Princes faction:** This Cainite patron may wear civilized clothing in this encounter, but he is clearly a rustic. His long legs shift restlessly as though he'd rather be moving than sitting, and his dark hair hangs in disarray down his back. At first it appears as though his eyes reflect the flame of the torches; then it becomes clear that his eyes are naturally red-stained. He is Tiberiu, Gangrel messenger of Radu, here to make the characters an offer on the prince's behalf.

Radu, Prince of Bistritz, realizes that the Tihuta Pass, which lies just in the easternmost section of his holdings, is an open invitation to invasion. He would like to fortify the pass and have a buffer between his city of Bistritz and any force seeking to enter Transylvania. His fellow princes agree that a fortress in the pass would be of great use. Since it is part of his holdings, Radu would also like to use the keep to collect tolls from traveling merchants for using the pass. He allows Tiberiu to offer the characters a small percentage of the profits thus garnered. Further, Radu would like to see the princedoms of the other *Siebenburgen* (the seven cities) filled by those he regards as allies. Should the characters succeed in erecting a fortress in the pass, he will try to convince the other princes that these young Cainites are strong enough (but also biddable enough) to assume control over the empty fiefs in Transylvania. He hopes that Tiberiu makes it clear that they will owe their positions to Radu.

• **Eastern Lords faction:** Lucretia of Hardtz is an agent of Jurgen von Verden. Strongly built, with black hair and eyes, Lucretia is obviously a warrior. Acting as an emissary for von Verden, Lucretia explains that the eastern border must be secured from invasion. More importantly, however, the Eastern Lords want the pass in the hands of those who might rise to become princes in the region. As such, the characters will be both agents and allies of the powerful Ventre Lords. Their main goal is to break the power of the Tzimisce voivodes in the area by assimilating their lands. Secondarily, the characters might find themselves in a position to aid the Tremere in their war against the hated Fiends. Though initially pleasant, Lucretia soon makes it clear she expects the characters' agreement to von Verden's plans. She becomes bellicose if they demur.

• **Independents faction:** Vencel Rikard, prince of Buda-Pest, is of medium stature, but projects an air of greater height and power. He has light-brown hair, worn shoulder-length, and pale-blue eyes. Rikard usually disdains jewelry other than a ring given him by his sire, but he wears a gold chain this evening as an unstated reminder of his power in the region. Though he is both pleasant and unfailingly polite, Vencel can freeze even other Cainites with the coldness of his stare if he is given cause. He does not suffer fools gladly. He wants the characters to build a keep and hold the outermost area of the Transylvanian border to establish Hungary's right to the territory. Further, he hopes to use the influence the characters will gain thereby to minimize the effect of the region's warfare. In effect, they are there to stabilize trade routes and spread his influence into Transylvania in an attempt to bring an end to the conflict.

REFRESHMENTS

As soon as the door is closed, their "host" invites the characters to refresh themselves. He indicates the sarcophagus. When they investigate, the characters find that three young girls, servants by their clothes, wait within the large stone hollow. They seem to be under compulsion to remain calm. He motions for the characters to help them out of the sarcophagus, then commands the children to kneel before the characters.

"Please enjoy yourselves. I shall tell you of my request while you dine," says the host while raising an eyebrow. This is a small test for the characters. The patron really wants to see if they will follow instructions, an indication of their morality and if they are comfortable letting others see them feed. There is no correct response. Those who do not care to feed may decline, but their refusal must be graceful and tactful or the patron will have little regard for their diplomatic skills. Those who choose to feed are expected to do so discreetly, without undue struggle or lack of manners. Rude behavior betrays lack of breeding. Failing to feed delicately enough (in other words, taking so much that the vessel dies from blood loss) tells their host that they lack subtlety and good sense. Whenever the characters have all fed or declined, he continues.

THE REQUEST

"My name is (fill in whichever patron's name is appropriate). I have asked that you join me here in order to offer you a great opportunity. Your sires have assured me you will be happy to assist me and thereby secure for yourselves a comfortable future. I wish for you to travel to the eastern border of Hungary, to the region known as Transylvania. High in the Carpathian Mountains beyond the city of Bistritz lies a natural mountain gateway called the Tihuta Pass. As the main access to Transylvania from the East, it holds strategic importance. My request to you is this: Travel to the Tihuta Pass and erect a fortress there to guard this important trade route."

At this point, the characters may ask questions or the patron may explain to them one of the reasons for wanting the fortress in the pass (i.e. staking a claim to the territory, collecting tolls, acting as peace-keepers or whatever else the faction desires). The patron may or may not reveal *all* the reasons to the characters. The host continues:

"I am willing to advance you certain sums of money to cover the cost of hiring guards and skilled workmen, but my allies (with a quick gesture toward the sires) assure me that you have enough resourcefulness to complete the work yourselves. Since you will be taking charge of the lands and nearby villages, you may tax the peasantry and use their labor in your building as well. Luckily, the foundation is already there, as an old wooden tower once stood on the spot. You should be able to utilize the stone foundation and build upward from there. I shall expect you to have the first floor, at least, completed by winter."

The characters may wish to ask questions, or ask for clarifications. Give them time to speak briefly, then interrupt them with the following:

"There is one other small favor you can do for me, a matter of little import to anyone but me (or to Radu, if the patron is Tiberiu speaking on Radu's behalf). It has been rumored that among the ruins of the tower, there might be some old writings — documents or tablets in forgotten languages. Should you locate them, I desire them for my collection. Frivolous, I know, but such pastimes often

alleviate the occasional tedium of our existence. Please advise me if you find these writings and I shall send an agent to collect them from you. Should you hear of other such writings and learn who has them, I would also offer my gratitude for that information as well.

"Succeed in these tasks, and I and your sires shall be most pleased to offer you as candidates to rule several fiefdoms in Transylvania. Four of the seven cities known as the Siebenburgen currently lack princes. Young Cainites who prove their loyalty, intelligence and ability to rule shall find that we are not miserly in our rewards to you."

At this point, the patron will ask for their commitment to the endeavor. Depending on the patron, this may be voiced as, "And so, do you agree?" Other patrons may assume the coterie's compliance with, "And so, it is agreed." If the characters have seemed particularly inept (through leading Roland to the meeting or bringing the slave girl with them), one might even say somewhat contemptuously, "Surely you agree!"

If the characters acquiesce, the host is expansive and affable. The patron and the characters' sires gift them with the servants sent to fetch them (it is up to the Storyteller to flesh out these people), three enclosed wagons (similar to the caravan wagons the Gypsies will later make famous) which allows them to travel during the day-time, and a contingent of six ghoul guardsmen. Further, they receive enough Librum to pay the initial costs of hiring stone masons and carpenters. Should their patron not be a Tremere, he tells them to stop in Radu's city of Bistritz to see his castle. It could serve as a fine model for the design of the fortress they are to build. If the patron is Radu himself, he will invite them to his castle to see it.

If the characters do not want the opportunity, their patron storms from the room after harshly demanding of their sires that they "discipline their unruly childer." In this case, the sires turn on their ungrateful progeny and upbraid them for their presumption. They order the characters to serve the patron and succeed.

SIRE'S FINAL WORD

In either case, once the patron is satisfied that the characters will act as directed, he leaves the room, claiming fatigue. At that point, the characters' sires tell them that success in this venture is very important, both to their own futures and to repay their sires' debt. Should they fail, the consequences will be quite severe. Certainly, they can never expect their sires' favor or to be advanced to a fiefdom again if they cannot even erect one simple tower.

Once the interview is over, a discreet knock at the door announces the return of Hadel. He leads them back through the tunnels and up the stairs to the alley. He then gives them a key to a house off the western edge of the market square and tells them they may stay in the cellar of that house for two nights. After that time, they are expected to be on the way to their task. They may spend the rest of the night planning and giving orders to their new servants and rest in the rooms the next day. Though they have acquired servants, guards and riches to help them in their endeavor, smart characters may realize that those assigned to them are under Blood Oath to (and therefore loyal to) their sires.

SCENE IV: ON THE ROAD

If they travel as fast as their horses and wagons can move, the characters reach the eastern border of Transylvania in about three weeks. Moving any faster would defeat their purpose in any case,



for the higher passes among the Carpathians would still be blocked by snow any earlier in the year. Aside from a few difficulties finding sufficient vessels from which to feed (leaving them a little hungry and edgy, with no blood to waste frivolously), most of the journey is tedious and uncomfortable, but hardly threatening. Once they cross into Transylvania, the local peasants act uniformly abject and terrified of the "great lords who travel the winds of the night." While some Hungarian nobles and Saxon shopkeepers may be fooled by the characters, the peasants know exactly what they are dealing with and avoid them if at all possible.

Aside from small villages scattered throughout the Carpathian Plain, this fertile farmland holds few towns. Klausenburg, also called Cluj or Napoca by the natives, is the only large city on their way to Bistritz. The nominal prince of Klausenburg is a feral Gangrel named Mitru, childe of Arnulf, who despises cities and Western encroachment on his territories. Though the characters do not yet know it, minions of Mitru the Hunter monitor their movements through Transylvania. Mitru has prepared a surprise for these interlopers, one meant to at least deprive them of their civilized trappings, if not their very unives.

KLAUSENBURG

After their servants have endured a long, weary, wet day on the road, the characters awaken outside Klausenburg just after dark. Their ghouls are tired and hungry; their horses slow as they sense that they will soon be able to rest for the night. The "city" is little more than a few muddy streets scattered between wooden houses and straw and daub hovels. A few small shops line the main street,

which has a dilapidated church at one end. Strangely, the whole town is surrounded by a stout stone wall anchored by a centrally placed stone keep. Two guardsmen hail the travelers rudely, asking their business in Klausenburg. Vampiric Disciplines may force the guards to be civil or the characters may simply answer that their men are tired and need to rest. In either case, the guards let them through after a cursory scrutiny. Despite its pitiful condition, Klausenburg has ambitions. The city's one inn, called the Sign of the Travelers, caters to merchants who are encouraged to set up shop (even temporarily) in the town. No one actually lives in the keep. The mayor dwells in the nicest house in town.

No one in Klausenburg tells the characters (assuming they take a break here to look for fresh blood) that a Cainite prowls the forests, though the characters may hear stories of the great hunter who protects Klausenburg from nocturnal threats. When they leave the city, the characters (and their men-at-arms) find themselves under attack. Mitru is unhappy that westerners (or those he perceives to be westerners — nobody consulted Mitru concerning strangers taking up residence in Transylvania) are moving into the territory. He'd like to dissuade them.

Acting under orders from Mitru (who has been expecting the characters' arrival), the innkeeper in Klausenburg (one of Mitru's ghouls) tells the characters that he has no rooms (clearly a lie) and that his stable is full. He cannot offer them fodder for their horses or a place to stay for the night. He suggests they travel on to the next village that lies just beyond the forest. Several rough-looking men back him up, if necessary; many of them carry bows and some have torches. While the characters can force the innkeeper to allow them



to stay (through Dominate or Presence, for example), they might decide that staying somewhere they are not wanted with the threat of violence if they let down their guard might not be pleasant. The coterie's ghouls are upset not to be allowed to rest, but also are wary of trusting themselves to the townspeople's goodwill. Most likely, the group will elect to travel on. If they don't, nothing happens during the night and they are allowed to leave in the morning.

THE AMBUSH

Should the characters elect to travel onward by night, grim opponents await them. As they ride in their wagons (or sit astride horses, should they choose to travel more freely), the characters follow the road toward Bistritz into a vast woodland area. A combined force of Cainites and ghouls under the command of Mitru attacks their cavalcade. Characters who state that they are watching for trouble may make Perception + Alertness (difficulty 7) rolls opposed by Mitru's Dexterity + Stealth (a total of 7 dice; difficulty 6) to notice the ambush just before it occurs. If no character makes it clear she is "on guard," none of them have a chance to react until Mitru's forces have had a free surprise turn. Note that with his Celerity of 3, Mitru can aim and loose two arrows in the first turn (at a skill of 8 dice). Should he choose to split his actions, he gets 4 dice with which to hit targets who cannot dodge (they're surprised) and can fire four times.

Characters cannot respond to the surprise attack in the first turn, but both sides roll for initiative for their next actions as normal. If any character has the Danger Sense Merit, the Storyteller may make a secret roll on that character's Perception + Alertness (difficulty 8) to see if she has a feeling of foreboding prior to the assault.

Otherwise, the first inkling the characters have of trouble is when a volley of arrows streaks outward from the trees. Half their guards go down under the first flight. (Make a "luck roll" for each guard. Any who roll a 1 are dead, the others merely incapacitated for now.) There are eight archers total and four of them shoot at any characters who are outside the wagons. The drivers may try to whip the horses up to get the wagons out of the area, but movement in the dark on the narrow path is treacherous at best. Mitru's forces have also rolled a huge log across the trail just beyond the ambush site. Should the driver attempt to escape with the wagon, he crashes into the log, crippling the horses (who valiantly try to jump over the obstruction) and smashing the front of the wagon into flinders.

Whether they are surprised or not, the characters will have to suffer Mitru's first onslaught before they can respond. Since Mitru is up in a tree (and very well concealed), they cannot get to him immediately. Missiles fired at him have a good chance of tangling in branches before hitting him, making it a difficulty of 9 to do so. In the second turn of combat, Mitru again uses his speed and skill as an archer, but gives up his first action to set fire to three prepared arrows. He opens his firepot (with a smoldering coal inside) and touches it to the arrows he has smeared with pitch, firing each into a wagon (or character, if one is getting too close) as soon as it is lit. Two of his ghouls race forward on the least defended side with small, clay jars of pitch (held in heavy leather gloves) and throw them at the wagons. One of the characters' remaining guards is splashed by the pitch, then hit by a flaming arrow. He spins and screams as he goes up like a torch. Any character nearby might have to dodge this flailing unfortunate or be run into and possibly set afire by him as he dies.

If they can resist Rötschreck, the characters have a chance to win. Two other archers lurk in trees across the road from Mitru; his other forces are on the ground. Regardless of what else happens, all the characters' wagons are set alight, leaving them very little with which to build their fortress (not to mention a lack of transport for the daylight hours).

THE ATTACKERS

There are eight attackers; each is armed with a bow and cudgel. Six of them are ghouls and there is a second Cainite besides Mitru. Assume that the second Cainite (Wulfar by name) uses Mitru's Traits, but has his Physical Attributes lowered by one point each and has one point fewer in each Discipline. The ghouls are normal humans with Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2. Their Wits are 3 and they have Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Archery 3, Melee 3, Stealth 2. Each has a point in Fortitude and Potence.

MYCA VYKOS

Just as the battle seems lost (or the characters are finally winning), a troop of soldiers comes into view, followed by another enclosed wagon. Seeing the "brigands" besetting other travelers, one of them moves to the wagon, where he has a brief conversation. The men-at-arms then charge forward to help the characters. Now severely outnumbered, Mitru calls for retreat and flees. If the characters were just about to win, don't take away their glory by making it seem that

the newcomers turned the tide; all they did was shorten the battle. When Mitru's forces have fled or have been captured, a slender figure wearing fine robes steps forward and introduces himself as Myca Vykos, a noble of the region. He orders his men to see to the wounded and salvage what they can from the wagons (nothing).

Perceptive members of the group undoubtedly notice Myca's unearthly beauty (a product of his Vicissitude Discipline). Additionally, all the characters should have the feeling that they are speaking with someone of great intellect and learning.

Myca never passes up an opportunity to place others in his debt. Noting that the group contains several Cainites (and dismissing the servants and guards as essentially unimportant), Myca offers to take the characters wherever they would like to go (within reason). He is headed toward Radu's city of Bistritz where he hopes to conclude a diplomatic arrangement with his fellow Tzimisce. He attempts to get the characters to tell him what they are doing in Transylvania, but won't press them if they seem disinclined to speak about it. He offers to provide them with new garb and with funds that allow them to continue onward. If there is a Tremere character in the troupe whose clan affiliation he can discern, Myca acts noticeably colder toward him than any of the others, but helps the group anyway, reasoning that one minor Tremere indebted to him should eventually prove more satisfying than killing one insignificant Usurper pawn. The Storyteller should try to play Myca as sympathetically as possible so that the characters like and trust him; later in the story, he again

RUNNING THE BATTLE BY DAY

The ambush scenario assumes the characters are traveling at night. If they wait until morning, no Cainites will be among the attackers. Simply replace them with ghouls and remember that the characters must make Perception + Auspex rolls (difficulty 8) to wake up. Further, though they are screened from direct sunlight while in the forest, enough comes through that they must soak damage or be harmed. It is impossible for characters to sleep in armor (unless they want to take a severe penalty to their Dexterity when they awaken the next night); they are most likely wearing normal clothing. Should they be touched by the sun's rays (and they will be if they open the shutters on the wagon), they take three aggravated wounds that can only be soaked by making successful Fortitude + Stamina rolls (only if the character in question has Fortitude; difficulty 7). Actually emerging from the wagon increases the difficulty to soak to a 9.

Each character who must face the sunlight checks for Rötschreck. The character must roll her Courage (difficulty 7) or frenzy and lose all control. A botch on the roll not only causes Rötschreck, but gives the character a Derangement (either an obvious one such as the fear of being burned or a more subtle one such as fear of forests or of being trapped in small, vulnerable places). Frenzied characters may spend a Willpower point to take a single action that their fear frenzy would otherwise make impossible. If the character is actually burned by the sunlight, the difficulty to avoid Rötschreck rises to 8.

However, should they choose to travel the forest by day, the real horror has just begun for the characters. Once their

men-at-arms, servants and drivers have been eliminated, Mitru's ghouls come forward and heap stockpiled brush that has been kept out of the rain around and atop the wagons, pour pitch on it, then set fire to it. The attackers trust that the woods surrounding them won't catch fire as it has been raining for two days. The characters now face the choice of death by fire or sunlight. If they have already frenzied, it is likely that characters have fled deeper into the forest, where they attempt to cover themselves with dirt and leaves.

Those who have not fled now have a chance to escape the burning wagons. They must make Courage rolls (difficulty 6) to leap from the wagon through the flames and into the sunlight. Then they must soak two turns of sunlight (as described above) before they can escape into the forest. The ghouls do not follow them, being content with driving them away. Aside from any jewelry, wealth or weapons the characters had on them (or scooped up) at the time of the attack, the group has lost everything: servants, wagons, men-at-arms and funds.

A kind Storyteller would allow them to go to ground in the forest for the rest of the day and regroup once night falls. They should be wet, muddy, miserable and demoralized (and conceivably angry and spoiling for revenge as well). When the characters regroup, they realize that they know no way out of the forest except via the road. Any of them can find their way back to it by retracing the broken bushes crushed in their hurried flight. Once on the road, they soon encounter a rescue. Myca Vykos and his servants are traveling to Bistritz along the road. Myca offers to help stranded Cainites (as detailed above).

offers to help them. Should they accept, the characters must repay the boon in Act II.

Wise characters accept Myca's help. They have no transportation to Bistritz, no other friends nearby and no money with which to build their fortress unless they accept Myca's gift. Should they not take his help, they must somehow get themselves as far as Bistritz and acquire money by whatever means they can. If they fail to build the fortress, their dreams of fiefdoms are forfeited and they must live out the rest of their existences hunted by their sires and their patron's minions.

With Myca's help, they can get clean clothes in a village along the way (though not as good as what they are probably used to wearing) and arrive in Bistritz within a few days. Any of their wounded servants or guards can be left with the village herbalist. Myca leaves a generous payment to cover the cost of their care.

SCENE V: MEETING WITH RADU

If the characters are working for Radu, they may not want him to see them in their humbled state. Though he wants to appear kindly, Myca won't tolerate long delays. He has business to discuss with the prince (a tentative alliance and agreement to exchange information on Tremere in the area).

Though Radu seems disappointed in their performance so far, he does know Mitru and is actually surprised that the characters survived the

Gangrel's attack. While he claims they must somehow find funds themselves (as he already provided much for them, which they carelessly lost), he will arrange for a noted architect to design the keep for them. He promises to send them Master Zelios as soon as the Nosferatu can be located.

If the characters are working for someone other than Radu, he wants to know what they are doing in this part of Transylvania. Since he is the prince of Bistritz, tradition dictates that the characters must answer his questions. If they lie and claim they are merely traveling through, he accepts it for the moment, but will later arrange myriad troubles for them when he discovers them building in "his" pass.

Should they explain to him truthfully, he considers the matter and decides he would rather have them as allies than enemies. No matter who they ostensibly work for, Radu offers to lend them enough money to hire the workmen they will need, saying only that he hopes they will remember his generosity in times to come. Further, Radu says he will arrange for a noted architect to assist them in their endeavor, explaining that Zelios designed his own castle. As an enticement, Radu shows the characters (and Myca) his castle, a fabulous, aesthetically pleasing manse as strong as it is beautiful.

Radu is highly civilized. Even though he may despise the characters, he will never let them know. He greets Myca as a lost kinsman and the two excuse themselves to confer after making certain the characters are comfortable. Regardless of his civility, however, it is clear that Radu and Myca intend to speak in private once the "children" have been distracted. Radu promises to send workmen up after them and provides the characters with another enclosed wagon in which they may rest by day. He has only one





wagon and the characters must make themselves as comfortable as they can each day in such crowded conditions until they can build shelter for themselves atop the mountain.

SCENE VI: THE RUINS

Within two days, the characters can be on the road to the Tihuta Pass again. The horses labor to pull the heavy wagon over the rough road, hugging the mountainside, twisting around switchbacks and almost plunging over cliffs several times where the road inexplicably narrows. The dizzying heights are horrible in the daytime when panoramas of the valleys far below are visible. In the dark, the sense that just beyond the door of the wagon is a 100-foot fall into nothingness is just as terrifying. It takes the characters a full day to reach the summit, where the jagged remains of a burnt wooden tower reach upward like headstones from a graveyard.

Even that much would not be visible in the darkness were a pair of sputtering torches not set into the soil next to the foundation ring. The sounds of digging and a man's voice singing an off-key hymn disturb the quiet night.

When the characters investigate, they find a man with filthy, matted blonde hair wearing a dirty, blood-stained tabard over piecemeal armor inside the foundation ring. He uses a piece of wood to dig out rocks that have fallen to block a stairway that leads downward. This is Anatole, a French Malkavian. His Derangement manifests as hallucinations that "reveal God's presence." He often interprets these invisible signs as messages from God himself. Anatole has been led to this ruin by visions that told him he must find

an ancient gospel and speak with God's chosen agents, who would make themselves known to him. Lucita, his Lasombra traveling companion, is currently hidden in a deep shadow near the curve of the foundation. If the characters try to harm Anatole, she has the advantage of attacking them by surprise. If they seem inclined to speak with the Malkavian reasonably, she reveals her presence when the time seems most appropriate.

As soon as Anatole is made aware of the characters, he lays down his digging implement (which could serve as a stake in a pinch), wipes his hands and exclaims, "Blessed art those who come in glory to the place of revelations. Welcome, fellows; I am Anatole, seeker after that which was lost and which will come again into the hands of the chosen agents of God. Your coming is the sign that I have long awaited. The field is fallow, awaiting those who will search for the seed of wisdom buried deep within its hidden places. We must make all speed, for the time is coming when all will have need of words of counsel. Together we shall mark the signposts for the road to salvation."

The characters may attack (remembering the last prophet they encountered), try to converse with him, or ask him what he means. If they don't seem as though they are preparing to attack, Lucita reveals herself. Though Lucita is hesitant and asks who the characters are and what they are doing here, Anatole cheerfully confesses that he and Lucita followed his visions to this place, where he expects to unearth some sort of ancient writings that God has told him are important.

If Sherazhina (whose family once occupied the old tower) is with the characters, she now tells them about the hidden library that used



to be beside the cellar of the tower if she had not before. She believes that many old scrolls and such may still be there, but that some have undoubtedly rotted over time. She can guess (from having heard stories about it) where a cunningly hidden door is set into the underground stone foundation wall (just beyond the blockage on the stairs).

Assuming the characters agree to work with them, Anatole and Lucita say that they are content with copying whatever works are found. As the characters are the “owners” of the site (not to mention their status as Anatole’s “chosen agents of God”), they should keep the originals. Lucita even offers to make the characters a copy as well, in case the original documents are too fragile for normal use. She makes it clear that neither she nor Anatole has any designs on claiming the tower; they are merely passing through. The characters should realize that if they want a copy of these documents called “unimportant” by their patron, Lucita’s offer is the means whereby they can discover whatever secrets are in them, yet still turn the originals over to their patron as agreed.

Anatole believes the characters are God’s agents, while Lucita is reluctant to start trouble with several other Cainites when Anatole seems disinclined to help her.

If the characters are unwilling to share their territory (for even the length of time it takes to copy a document or two), or if they feel threatened or angry that other Cainites are at the tower, they may try to drive Lucita and Anatole away (or capture or kill them). If attacked, the two fight to defend themselves long enough to escape. If the characters are this unreasonable, Lucita occludes the area with darkness while she and Anatole flee into the forest

where they left their horses. Should this occur, the two Cainites do not approach the characters in Act III and the characters lose out on any information they might have gotten from the pair.

If the characters all work together, the stones can be moved and the hidden door revealed soon after midnight. When opened, the door leads into a small room where several shelves hold scrolls and clay tablets. Although it is probably not the characters’ first concern, the room is large enough for all the Cainites to sleep in during the day, offering them a little more protection than they have in the wagon.

Most of the scrolls are so brittle that they crack apart when unrolled. The clay tablets (13 of them in all) have some sort of ancient cuneiform symbols pressed into them. These symbols are the written form of a lost language (one of the first spoken tongues in the world). Few besides the Antediluvians would recognize it. While the characters may certainly copy it, they can not even begin to translate it, except for the presence of a solid-gold plate covered with similar symbols that rests beneath the clay tablets. The plate translates the symbols into Latin.

When translated, the tablets (though not a complete entry) reveal the following words:

Thus, I set down my true visions that I may remember and keep to the Path I have chosen. Only I of us all shall know the truth and this shall be my shield and my spear. Most exalted shall I be in the time of the Final Days. Even the Father shall quail before my might.

Let the lesser ones war one upon the other, each hearkening to the omens that I have foreseen. Fools, all! By my guile, they know not the actual signs, but merely shadows of those things that shall be.

Let the world tremble when I come in my might and majesty, for I shall rule above our Father, above the Mother who gave succor to our Father, above the children of Seth, yea, even above God himself. Let the reign of blood commence.

The author is not identified. Lucita and Anatole want to copy the translation key as well as the tablets. The characters may agree or may not as they see fit. Whether they realize it or not, the characters' discovery is of vital importance in the Jyhad. This is what their patron sent them to acquire. Smart characters dutifully pack up the clay tablets and send them on to their patron while "forgetting" to also send the golden disk. Even if they turn the disk over to their patron, they should make a copy of the translation key so they have it at need.

If asked, Anatole and Lucita believe that this knowledge should not be made generally known (Lucita because she's naturally cautious and suspicious, Anatole because he thinks God meant it only for this group) and try to persuade the characters not to give the translation key to their patron. The final decision is up to the characters. If the coterie works at it the rest of the night and the next night, two copies of the cuneiform writing and the translation key can be finished.

Any servants (whether drivers, servants or men-at-arms) agree to transport the tablets to their patron. Smart characters send as many guards along as they can (or may even want to make the trip themselves). The Storyteller may have to remind the characters that they are supposed to be rebuilding this tower, and having it finished by winter will be difficult enough without leaving the job for three weeks or so. If allowed to make a copy, Anatole and Lucita agree to accompany whomever the characters send to make certain they reach their destination. Since they already have what they want (the translated copy), they have no reason to break their word. If the characters agree, the two wandering Cainites fulfill their duty and the characters' agent returns and reports his successful delivery to the patron. In this case, when Anatole and Lucita show up in Act III, the characters should be inclined to welcome them.

SCENE VII: NIGHT VISITOR

During the week following their arrival, one of the characters' servants visits the villages that now nominally belong to the them. He returns with several dozen laborers — a stonemason, a carpenter and various unskilled workers. A few women also follow, ostensibly to cook for the workmen and do laundry or other tasks as needed. Work begins on leveling off the remains of the foundation.

For the characters, this also provides them with enough people to act as vessels — barely. If the characters are not discreet, the peasants and workmen soon know what they are, but are too cowed to protest. So long as no one is killed, the terrified workmen remain and perform their duties. They fear that if they flee, the "devil vampyr" will come after their families and villages directly. Characters can supplement their feeding with wildlife in the area and make an occasional foray into nearby villages as well.

A few days after the workmen arrive, the characters receive a nocturnal visitor. One of the characters suddenly becomes aware of an ashen gray, angular-looking man standing in the shadows nearby. As soon as someone notices him, Zelios, the master builder, comes forward and introduces himself, saying he was sent by Prince Radu to oversee the construction of the castle.

If allowed, he looks over the tower and consults with the mason and carpenter (while using his Obfuscate to look more like a normal man). Zelios tells the characters he can design a strong and aesthetically pleasing tower for them, complete with hidden escape tunnel and concealed rooms for their daytime use and asks them what they have to offer him in return. Although Zelios wants to build this castle, feeling that he is somehow completing a pattern by doing so, he never works for free.

The characters have very little money to offer him, nor anything else he is really interested in. Even the offer of a copy of the tablets they found does not appeal to him. Instead, he settles for a nominal fee and their promise of future aid to him should he require it. Somehow, Zelios intuits that he may need them at some later date. He draws up plans for the workmen and instructs them on several points, but leaves after a week of intensive work, promising to return and view the completed fortress.

With Zelios' design, the castle rapidly takes shape.

Though Zelios is as yet unaware of it, the castles he helps construct in Transylvania form a pattern along various ley lines. In Act II, Zelios returns to ask the characters for help, having discovered (so he believes) the reason why he has been building keeps at specific sites and to exacting designs.

INTERLUDE

The characters must decide how to raise money for building the fortress. They have five small villages under their control, three of which lie on the other side of the pass (technically Russian territory). The peasants can work no more than two days a week at the castle and still get their crops planted and survive. A rotation of peasant workmen is most effective. Some of the workmen are not farmers and can work full time. Note that the characters can tax part of the amber and spice trade that comes through the pass and gain money that way. Some of that money belongs to their patron, however.

Whatever they do to gain money, it should never be enough. The workmen must be paid or they slip away from the site, taking tools and materials with them whenever they can. Winter is fast approaching and the castle's first floor is not yet complete. Though the workmen expect to be paid the next evening, there is nothing in the characters' treasury with which to pay them. If they do not acquire money somehow, the fortress will not be built and their unlives are unlikely to be pleasant when their sires are disappointed. They might even be slain for their failure.

The Storyteller may want to design more events to occupy the time during which the castle is being built. Caravans passing through, attacks by Lupines, a visit from a priest mendicant, traveling down to villages to squeeze the peasants for more money and even visits from their patron or sires to see how the building is progressing might all be appropriate.

As they debate their dilemma, they hear the jingle of harnesses, and several horses and a covered wagon come into view on one of the switchbacks leading up to the top of the pass. When they meet their visitors, they are greeted by Myca Vykos, who is making a stopover on his way back to Constantinople.

After brief greetings, Myca informs the characters that he has heard about their troubles. Myca has actually paid a spy (the apprentice mason) to work for them and has received regular reports. Though he doesn't yet know what use the characters (or intimate knowledge of the castle being built here) might be, Myca likes to

hedge his bets and acquire information that may be useful in the future. He explains that he is interested in having the friendship of Cainites in this area. To this end, he offers to advance them the funds they need — without the need to pay him back. In exchange, he asks them to accept one half of a ring. He will keep the other half. If at any time, Myca needs their help, he has only to bring his half of the ring or to send an agent with it, and they must make a solemn promise to aid him, no matter what he asks, so long as it is within their power to do so.

Granted this is a lot to ask, but the money he gives them may save their unlivess (certainly their fortunes). In essence, he is asking them to swear one major boon in exchange for all their unlivess. The characters may accept or reject Myca's proposal. The ring is a twisted gold band set with a carved ruby on each half. It is a very elaborate, Byzantine design that would be hard to duplicate. Should they agree, Myca gives them their half of the ring, tours the construction area and leaves for Constantinople the next evening.

If they do not choose to accept, it soon becomes clear to their sires and patron that they will not finish the building in time. These worthies arrive in force to punish the characters for their failure. Since one of the patron's real intentions in sending them to the fortress was to acquire the tablets, if they sent them on to him, he'll be inclined toward leniency. The characters' sires are enraged, however, for their childers' failure means they have not repaid the boon they owe to the patron. He can now ask something else of them instead.

Kind Storytellers may allow the characters to survive their sires' wrath, but only on one condition: The sires and the patron combine their blood in a cup and force each one of the characters to drink of it. In effect, this brings each character two-thirds of the way under a Blood Oath to her own sire and one-third of the way to being bound to all the rest. Though unusual, this is not unheard of, especially in Transylvania: The Tzimisce have been combining blood in rituals on Kupala's Night for centuries.

SCENE VIII: MOMENT OF TRUTH

If they accept Myca's proposal, the characters receive the money and pay their workmen. Almost like a miracle, the work slowdown ends (Myca's spy, having achieved what Myca planned in delaying the construction, now encourages the workers to go back to full speed) and the first level of the fortress is completed. They have succeeded. Soon after the castle's first level is finished, they see a cavalcade approaching from the Bistritz area. It is their patron accompanied by their sires.

The travelers expect to be greeted and entertained. After feeding and looking over the fortress, each sire asks his or her childe to meet alone. In that meeting, the sire informs the character that he is due a reward for his endeavors. She tells him he is to be given a fief and names one of the cities he will rule over.



THE TRANSYLVANIAN FIEFS

The following cities are available as fiefs for the characters. Either let them choose which city they would like or allow them to decide on a way to settle disputes. Though the princes already in residence in other cities of the Siebenburgen may not particularly welcome the characters as fellow monarchs, they feel it is better to have the cities occupied by some Cainite who can control the cities growth rather than leaving it to chance or control by Lupines.

- **Balgrad** — Balgrad has a fortress designed by Zelios. A medium-sized city, it is centrally located and fairly near to Mediasch and Kronstadt. The former occupant of Balgrad has left behind an impressive library, including many old writings on Dacia and Transylvania. Among these is a volume known as the *Libram Terram* (Book of the Land), which the characters will need in Act III. Storytellers should feel free to invent other volumes and scrolls included in the library so this particular volume does not stand out.

- **Schaasburg** — Located on the Mures River in eastern Transylvania, in 1431 Schaasburg will be the birthplace of the notorious Vlad Tepes, known to most as Dracula.

Then she asks him to drink a draught of her blood, saying that this will allow them to renew the ties that bind them together as sire and childe. If the character agrees, his sire is very pleased and promises to provide him with generous funds so that he may build his fiefdom and make it strong.

If the character refuses to drink his sire's blood, his elder is very angry. She rails at him, exclaiming that she gave him the immortal kiss, gifting him with eternity, yet he will not even grant her his loyalty? Why does he think his sire provided this marvelous opportunity for him to prove his worth and win a fief, she asks scathingly. She now sees that she fostered a serpent, that by gaining him a place and offering to stand at his back whenever he needs an ally, she has been a fool. No more! She tells him that he may rot before she sees him made overlord of any city and that further, she washes her hands of him. He is cast out of his clan and may never more look to her or any other member for aid or succor. With that, she wheels away from him, returns to the others and demands to leave, saying she no longer has a childe.

- **Kronstadt** — Located just north of the Bran Pass, chief trade route to the south, Kronstadt is a thriving trade center guarded by Bran Castle, stronghold of the Teutonic Knights.

Aside from these three cities of the Siebenburgen, there are other choices. Timisoara, Deva, Tirgo Mures and Oradea may all be had as fiefdoms, though they are not as large as the others, nor do they bring in as much profit.

The other Siebenburgen are ruled by the following princes:

- Klausenburg, ruled by Mitru of Clan Gangrel
- Hermanstadt, under the rule of Marusca of Clan Nosferatu
- Mediasch, ruled by Nova Arpad of Clan Ventrue
- Bistritz, overseen by Radu of Clan Tzimisce

It should prove to be almost an impossible task for the characters to unseat these princes from their fiefdoms. But should the characters do so, more power to them! It's your chronicle — make it as epic as you like.

The character may not stop to think that his sire does not have the power to cast him out of the clan. She personally may sever their relationship, but being made clanless takes much more than displeasing one's sire. He may not, however, assume the princedom of a city. Later, the patron offers to let any character who refused and lost out on a fief remain and build the rest of the fortress. If the patron is pleased at the end result, the character(s) may claim it for their own.

EPILOGUE

The characters have survived and prospered to some extent. They have met many potential friends and allies and sworn debts to other Cainites. Further, they have uncovered secrets that may lead them into the heart of the Jyhad. Many challenges remain to them, including the Mongol Invasion and other forces that shape the history of the land. Should the Storyteller wish, a good history of the region could provide numerous ideas for adventures leading up to the events of Act II. Aside from scholarly works, *Transylvania by Night*, the prequel to the *Transylvania Chronicles*, holds a wealth of information on the region and its inhabitants.





Chapter Three: Dark Tides Cresting

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils: Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron...

— Timothy 1:1-2

PART TWO: THE TRIALS OF PRINCES

ACT II: THE BINDING (1314)

STORY BACKGROUND

Among those who followed the call to take up arms for Christ, the most famous (or infamous) Crusaders were those who joined the *Pauperes Committones Christi Templique Solomonis*, the Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon — more commonly known as the Knights Templar, or simply, Templars. Started by a group of French noblemen, these warrior-monks fought in The Levant (also called Outremer) and were given half the king of Jerusalem's palace as their chief holding. Consisting of that part of the Temple Mount (from which they took their name) known as Solomon's Stables, this vast underground area was rumored to be the resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. The Templars gained great success and attracted noblemen from several European countries to their ranks. They were awarded the red cross as their blazon. The Pope was so taken with the order that he declared it should have no authority over it but his own. In effect, the Templars were answerable to no one but the Pope himself, setting them above any other Church authority or even that of kings.

Over time, the Templars amassed enormous wealth and holdings, both through gifts to the order and through their ability to act as bankers. Those who wished to send wealth great distances (whether for trade or other purposes) no longer had to worry that it might be stolen along the way; they took their funds to the nearest Templar preceptory. The Templars issued them a document for the amount they had paid (less a small charge), payable by the Templar preceptory nearest their intended destination. Aside from acting as the Christian world's first bankers, the Templars also made staggering loans to Christian monarchs in need of funds. Thus, they became a political force as well.

Their generosity and ambitions finally backfired. Philip the Fair, King of France, coveted the order's lands and treasure and hoped to avoid having to repay his debts to them. Using his influence over Pope Clement, whom he had helped to the papal throne, Philip attacked and arrested all the Templars in France on Friday, October 13, 1307. Though he sought the famed Templar treasure (rumored to contain the Ark of the Covenant, the Shroud of Turin and the Holy Grail), it was never found. Popular wisdom says the treasure was smuggled out of the Paris stronghold and sent by ship to Scotland. The order was suppressed a few years later, and many Templars confessed to using bizarre and heretical practices (though such confessions were obtained using the most severe tortures). Those who admitted their crimes, but professed innocence concerning devil-worship were often allowed to join other orders as "penance." Thus, some Templars disappeared into the ranks of the Knights of St. John and the Teutonic Knights. The

"last" grand master of the Templars, Jacques de Molay, was burned at the stake in 1314, when he recanted his confession, ashamed that he had betrayed his order. He died cursing the king and the Pope, challenging them to meet him before the throne of God within the year. Both died soon thereafter and speculation and rumor ran rampant, some claiming the Templars were innocent, others that they were agents of the Devil and sorcerers. Thus runs mortal history.

THE HAND UPON THE THREADS

As is often the case, a thread of Cainite history intersects and weaves about this tragic story. Indeed, the hand of a Cainite helped pluck the threads, setting some of those events in motion. His doing so fulfilled the Second Sign of Gehenna, though Octavio believes it to be the first. Though the characters can do nothing to prevent this sign (it has already happened when they become involved in the story), they find themselves a part of the tapestry woven from these threads of the Jihad.

It is likely the characters do not initially know most of this story (and may never know all of it), but the Storyteller needs this information to understand the real background to the events surrounding the characters and the motivations of the players of the Jihad involved in the Templar affair.

The story begins with a covenant of mortal sorcerers known as House Tremere. Among those living and working in a mighty chantry located in the Transylvanian Alps were two rival wizards named Goratrix and Myca Vykos. Vykos, a Transylvanian noble, had used his influence to allow House Tremere to set up chantries in Transylvania, while Goratrix was a favorite of the House founder, the mighty magus Tremere himself.

The Tremere utilized Goratrix's ritual knowledge and magic to become Cainites through ingesting Tzimisce blood. By this time, Myca Vykos had already been painfully Embraced by marauding Tzimisce and fled to Byzantium. He was livid to discover that his old nemesis Goratrix had become a Cainite through destroying one of his clanmates. Vykos swore to avenge himself on his hated rival and all members of the Usurper Clan.

When Tremere diablerized Saulot in 1133, he soon fell into torpor, rousing only occasionally. To govern the clan in his place, he made his seven original Cainite followers into a ruling council. They divided the known world among them to minimize conflicts within the clan. Though most believed Meerlinda, a consummate diplomat, should have monitored France, Tremere demanded that the post go to Goratrix. Despite all arguments, Tremere insisted on sending Goratrix. Later, he seemed surprised when he was told that he had made Goratrix his choice. Only much later would Tremere realize he had somehow been duped into making this decision.

Whatever the reason, Goratrix assumed responsibility for overseeing clan affairs in France, a move that would eventually lead to his downfall. Reacting to the Inquisition's crusade against the Cathars of Languedoc, Goratrix grew angry with the Church's interference in his domain. In response, he subtly involved himself with the Church. He hoped to eventually use the Inquisition to root out his enemies.

Meanwhile, the Templars had among them several magically talented members. Because of these members, the order as a whole became associated with the Cabal of Pure Thought, a secretive group of mages who wanted to unify all of humanity under one dogma. These mages, as well as some from the group who would later be known as the Celestial Chorus, had long been at odds with the mages of House Tremere. Goratrix believed

they would also be the enemies of Clan Tremere. He decided to undermine the Templars, hoping to also profit from their corruption.

Surprisingly, few Templars fell to Goratrix's power and persuasion. But enough did fall, however, to lend credence to the stories circulated by other jealous knighthoods and indebted nobles. Many churchmen (now under Goratrix's sway as well) questioned the wisdom of allowing an order of monks so much autonomy (and so many riches). Goratrix himself coveted two treasures the Templars supposedly possessed: the Ark of the Covenant and the Holy Grail. The Ark was rumored to be a potent weapon; when carried before an army, it made them invincible.

The Grail is the cup used at the Last Supper and that caught Christ's blood as he died on the cross. Some stories told that the cup was forever filled with that potent blood; others proclaimed that a draught of water from the cup could raise the dead and bestow eternal life. Goratrix could gain immense power if the first rumor concerning the Grail was true. If the second was correct, he reasoned that he could throw off the curse of his vampiric nature, yet remain immortal. He might even regain his old magical powers. In either case, he would become the head of a newly renamed House Goratrix rather than a bound servant to Tremere.

Whether due to the wizards within the Templars or because he could not overcome their True Faith, Goratrix failed in his attempt to corrupt or infiltrate the order. Enraged at his defeat, Goratrix turned his attention to Philip, King of France, who had long resented his indebtedness to the knights. Studying Philip's grievances and subtly increasing the king's natural greed, Goratrix convinced the king to seize the Templars' Paris treasure house. Goratrix promised to supply

men to help the king, asking only that he be allowed to choose two items of treasure from among the vast array as his reward. He was unprepared for Philip's response; rather than taking the treasure, Philip arrested all the Templars he could find in France.

Despite great secrecy, someone had warned the Templars — their treasure had vanished. Both Philip and Goratrix were livid at being cheated. Though the Templars were supposedly tortured to obtain confessions of heresy, in actuality, many of the excesses practiced upon the unfortunate monks were devoted to eliciting the location of the fabled treasure.

Smuggled out of Paris, most of the hoard was taken to La Rochelle and then to Scotland, where the Order of Templars was never banned. Some, however, were sent east and into the keeping of the Teutonic Knights.

Awakening from torpor, Tremere immediately knew Goratrix had just fulfilled certain conditions that brought forth one of the signposts on the road to Gehenna. Worse, Tremere had been played like a fool, manipulated (by whom, he didn't know) into sending Goratrix to the one place the rash mage could cause such devastation. That was intolerable. Wizards discard flawed tools, knowing that to use them again is to court disaster. Tremere summoned Goratrix to Ceoris to face the censure of the full council.

The year is 1314. Jacques de Molay, last Grand Master of the Templars has been burned at the stake. Goratrix travels toward Transylvania, compelled to visit the dread fortress of Ceoris against his will. Part of the fabulous Templar treasure, having remained hidden for some time in Bohemia, finally makes its way slowly to Kronstadt. The inexorable tides crest higher as the Jihad continues unabated. Enter the characters.



DARK TIDES CRESTING

SCENE I: THE HEART OF THE LAND

Over a century has passed since the events that brought the characters to Transylvania transpired. In 1241, they weathered the invasion of the Mongol hordes, who swept across the land, obliterating all in their path. Although the Mongols retreated within the year, the Hungarian king, Bela IV, lost much of his hold on these wild Eastern reaches. In the time since Act I, each of the characters has become a prince of a growing city or a commander of the fortress that guards the Tibuta approach, now called the Birkau Pass (commonly known as the Borgo Pass due to misspelling and mispronunciation). Angry recriminations from their sires (if any exist) have long since mellowed into sour acceptance of their childer's growing status. Some of the characters may control mortal nobles, giving them voices in the ruling legislature of Transylvania.

Those characters who rule over the Birkau Pass, Balgrad (now known as Alba Iulia), Schaabsburg (Sighisoara) and Kronstadt (Brasov) received visits from Zelios during the early years, as he stopped by to check the fortifications of their castles and to make measurements of the curtain walls. They have not seen the Master Mason in some time, though. On occasion, Anatole and Lucita have passed through the area as well, stopping by for a night or a fortnight to exchange news. Recently, however, rumor has hinted that the strange Malkavian has undertaken a campaign of diablerie, claiming God has commanded him to do so. Since hearing that rumor, none of the characters has seen Anatole and his Lasombra companion. Myca Vykos has written once or twice from Constantinople, inquiring after the characters' fortunes and wishing them well.

In the past two years, terrible weather patterns have devastated much of the land. Blizzards, wind storms, floods, droughts, landslides and avalanches have all served to make farming and husbandry risky propositions at best. With the scouring of the land, more peasants flock to the cities hoping to find even the meanest work to save their families from starvation.

After a dreadful winter, spring has finally returned. With the clearing of the roads, the characters have gathered together (choose one character's stronghold where they are all to meet) to discuss a book one of them has recently acquired. The last time Zelios visited, he spoke of a Slavic demon named Kupala, whose influence on Transylvania has plunged the land into centuries of conflict and chaos. When one of the characters' agents uncovered a book that mentions the demon, that character arranged for the book's purchase and had it brought to his stronghold. Notifying his coterie, he has invited them to come explore the books' secrets with him. The characters have arrived and the host has just received the book from his agent.

Allow the characters some time to visit, exchange news, feed and do whatever sundry things they wish before they turn their attention to the book.

The tome itself is of heavy, stiffened brown leather. The pages are vellum, sewn into the binding with heavy cord. Apparently a Church treatise on various pagan religions, the book speaks of the ancient gods of the Slavs and Vlachs. In places, rot has crept in, making the pages moldy; in others, water smeared the ink, obliterating whole passages. Enough remains to make out quite a bit of information on Kupala. The legible portions are given on the next page:



TRANSYLVANIA CHRONICLES I

...Svarog, Byelobog and chief among them, the demon-god Kupala, whose offspring infuse the very soil with madness. His dark heart ripped asunder, the demon is said to rest beneath the Carpathians, haunting the lands and spreading his corruption to all who touch upon his dread demesne. It is whispered that the demon sleeps, gaining strength to rise in terrible wrath when at last he awakens. His burning malice is seen in the creation of a legendary blood-red bloom known as the sacred fire-flower of Kupala. With it, sorcerers may bind or loose demons.

The cult dedicated to this abhorrent spirit gifts the demon with sacrifices, slaying babes for their pure and innocent blood, which the demon consumes. Thus fortified, Kupala's corruption spreads ever farther, trailing lunacy in its wake. The quaking of the earth, the foul rains and lightnings that destroy crops and homes, great windstorms that tear the fields and forests asunder, all these speak with the demon's voice. May God grant that we discover...

At this point the section on Kupala becomes illegible. The characters may put things together and realize the strange weather that has afflicted the lands may be the result of Kupala's stirring. As soon as they begin seriously discussing such a thing, a servant enters hurriedly, announcing a visitor.

On his heels, not waiting to be admitted in the proper manner, stalks a tall, well-muscled man with an unkempt, bushy red beard and wild, uncombed red hair. His blue eyes seem to glow with power. He wears a brown tunic and old-style cross-gartered leggings. Over the tunic rests a poorly fitting Roman breastplate. In his left hand, he carries a spear. The servant looks distressed, stammering, "Your pardon, lord (or lady), I could not keep him out!"

Any character who makes a successful Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 7) remembers that they have seen this person once before — spouting prophecies at them in the streets of Buda-Pest over 100 years ago. The character may also remember (if it happened) that after speaking with them, the crazed prophet tried to set a mob on them.

From his white face and bared fangs, it is obvious the visitor is a Cainite. Regardless of what the characters do, he speaks (in the language they understood last time he spoke with them) as soon as he sees them. Grounding his spear on the floor, he points a filthy finger at them and says,

"Hear me! Though I long ago warned you, thou hast done nothing to quell the demon's awakening! The first of the signs has seen fulfillment and yet you wait! Will you remain idle while the land's heart is ripped from its bleeding chest? Do you not see that eternal night is almost upon us? He stirs and with him, the ancient ones groan upon their stony beds, their hunger shrieking for our vitae. The loss of a holy land, the breaking of a holy order, and the downfall of a mighty magus. The sign has come, the first of those that lead to ever-blackness and death eternal. You stand within the whirlwind. Seven more remain; what cannot be stopped must be transformed. On you rests our redemption or destruction. Do not fail me again!"

With this, he falls writhing to the floor, bloody foam bubbling from his mouth as he jerks in spasms that would break a mortal's spine. After a moment, he ceases to move, then sits up and looks

around, confused as to where he is. He doesn't seem to recognize the characters and has no idea what he just told them.

If they talk with him and treat him kindly, the Malkavian prophet introduces himself as Octavio and tells them he comes from Obuda, which was called Aquincum in his youth. Characters who have an interest in history may recall, via an Intelligence + Academics roll (difficulty 7), that Aquincum was an outpost of the Roman Empire, serving as the capital of one of its provinces from the first through the fifth centuries. Obviously, Octavio is quite old and probably very powerful. The Malkavian discusses whatever the characters like, but says nothing more about Kupala except that he is somehow bound to the demon, who grants him visions of the future.

If asked, he relates the nature of the signs he has foreseen. Though he knows there are more, he says that some come so vaguely that he cannot make out what they mean yet. The signs as he knows them are:

- "And there shall come to pass the loss of a holy land (presumably the Levant, known as the Holy Land to generations of crusaders, lost to Christian Europe in 1291), the breaking of a holy order (he has had a vision of Knights Templar in the hands of the Inquisitors and being burned at the stake) and the downfall of a mighty magus (in this one, he cannot clearly make out the face of the magus)."

When they become involved in the rest of the story, the characters may come to believe it is Goratrix whom Octavio means, but in actuality, it is Tremere, experiencing grave difficulties since his diablerie of the Antediluvian Saulot.

- "The passing of years and the fires of the righteous shall bring upon us a parting of kin, one from the other. The children shall revile their parents, slaying them in their beds, and brother shall smite brother."

Octavio cannot see more than this, but his vision grows more clear by the time this omen comes to pass. It refers, of course, to the Anarch Revolt and the slaying of the Lasombra and Tzimisce Antediluvians. He does not know that the attempt on the Tzimisce founder will fail.

Though willing to stay for awhile (especially if it seems possible for him to recruit the characters to his campaign against Kupala), within a day or so, Octavio departs, claiming he must commune with the trees and rocks before returning to Buda-Pest.

Should the characters attack him rather than listening, Octavio instinctively utilizes a refinement of the Dementation Discipline: Haunt the Soul. Rather than causing barely seen peripheral visions, it causes all the characters to see Octavio's own mad visions for a few moments. Twisted, malformed horrors (the characters) inhabit a warped landscape (the floor and walls, which undulate and tilt, making the characters unstable and dizzy). They gibber nonsense to one another and flail helplessly. Behind them rises a dark, menacing form, half-made of shadow, half of the night itself. It raises a gleaming sickle to reap its harvest (the characters' heads). Malicious laughter drowns out all other sound. This seems very real to the characters. Even spending Willpower only allows them to stand without moving while they try to get a grip on their sanity. Octavio uses the distraction to escape, disappearing as soon as he leaves the room. Even those with high levels of Auspex cannot locate him once he leaves — Kupala's control of the tainted earth hides Octavio from their sight, making him "one" with the land even as he moves through it.

SCENE II: CHALLENGES

Before the characters depart to their own fiefs, they receive another visitor. Zelios arrives along with a mortal messenger, whom he claims he met along the road. The messenger was carrying a letter for the characters, and Zelios directed the man to the castle he himself was about to visit. Zelios makes it clear he is content to wait while the characters deal first with the messenger (of course, he wouldn't mind hearing the message... he is a Nosferatu, after all, and thrives on information).

The messenger is a small man dressed in leathers and carrying a sealed pouch. He hands the pouch to a character only after inquiring the character's name. If the character lies for some reason, the messenger will not surrender the message to him. The courier has been instructed only to turn it over to one of the characters, having been told all their names and given descriptions of each. Once the man is sure that at least one of the characters is among those he seeks, the messenger hands over the pouch, saying:

"I bring you greetings from my master, who bade me deliver this to you. He trusts that you shall act upon his wishes. I am to await your answer and return with it."

Inside the pouch is a letter, also sealed. Something is wrapped in the parchment. When opened, half a twisted gold ring set with a carved ruby falls out. The letter reads:

*Greetings to you all,
You will remember this token, which you agreed to honor. I
now request that you aid me as I once assisted you. It is my fervent
hope that the duty I ask of you shall not prove too onerous.*

*It has been made known to me that an old acquaintance
of mine, by the name of Goratrix, travels to Transylvania. He
has been summoned to the Tremere chantry known as Ceoris,
a fortress that rests among the Transylvanian Alps. He is
alone in this hostile land, where so many of my own clanmates
would wish to do him ill.*

*Thus, I make my request of you. Go to Timisoara, to the
crypt beneath the Chapel of the Holy Sepulcher, where my
own agents shall make certain he awaits your coming. Though
clever, they lack a Cainite's powers and stamina. Guard him
through these dangerous lands and escort him to the chantry.
He knows the way to Ceoris and has been commanded to ap-
pear there. I would not like to see him fall before my Tzimisce
kin: That would be far too lenient a punishment for one such
as he. No, with your help, he shall not escape attending upon
his Usurper brethren.*

*It is my great hope that you understand me clearly. I offer
you my thanks. Should you accept, your debt to me is paid.*

*With fondness,
Myca Vykos*

Though the characters may not realize it, if they escort Goratrix to Ceoris itself, the Tremere will be highly displeased that several Cainites know the way to their most important chantry. As one who used to be among the Tremere mages, Myca knows this quite well. Nonetheless, his malice toward Goratrix is such that he wants to make certain his old nemesis cannot escape the Tremere's retribution for his mistakes. Thus, he is willing to sacrifice all the characters merely to ensure Goratrix's arrival at Ceoris. Characters who heretofore have seen the "nice" side of Myca may suddenly attain a whole new insight into him....

With the entire Council of Seven at Ceoris and Tremere himself in attendance, the characters are unlikely to survive a confrontation. Goratrix (when they take charge of him) points this out to the characters if they don't surmise it themselves.

If Zelios is allowed to hear the letter, he exclaims, "Perfect! This is a wonderful opportunity for you to help me as well. Ceoris, of course! This will lay the demon to rest!"

He quickly explains that he has discovered the reason behind his apparent patterning of building castles throughout Transylvania and surrounding lands:

"Although not aware of it at the time I designed and built my dear castles, I was constructing a geomantic web. My recent sojourn in Egypt has taught me much. Most of the fortresses lie atop ley lines, carrying within them tremendous powers of the Earth. When linked together via certain runes, they shall form a web of power capable of binding Kupala, the terrible demon who inhabits and corrupts these lands. This is why I came here tonight. I intend to carve the runes into the walls of this castle and the others I designed. Once I have finished with the fortresses of the Siebenburgen, only Vintila Basarab's stronghold (and one I knew had to exist because it balanced his in the pattern) remain to mark. That must be Ceoris.

"You should agree to this request, if for no other reason than it will allow you to carve the runes into Ceoris. I shall teach them to you. This is great good fortune! My pattern shall be completed and the demon's black heart bound and stilled. We shall have no more of these terrible storms! Truth be told, I always suspected that my creations served as anchors in a sea of chaos."

If he is not privy to the message, Zelios tells them of his recent trip to Egypt to study architecture, and the need to mark the castles. He says he will mark all of them, but he has come to the characters in hopes of persuading them to go to the Transylvanian Alps and search for a castle he is certain lies there. (He can give them its approximate location, as it balances Vintila's castle.) Once they discover it, he asks that they mark it with the runes he will teach them and explains the necessity mentioned before. The characters can probably figure out that he's speaking of Ceoris, even though he doesn't know it.

Zelios sets to work carving a series of symbols into one wall of the castle. The symbols greatly resemble the cuneiform writing on the clay tablets the characters discovered in the Birkau Pass ruins. If they kept the translation disk (or made copies), they can ascertain that the runes correspond to symbols for protection, binding and raising the power of the land itself. One further rune pattern seems to act as an anchor point for receiving corresponding power from a distance.

After teaching the characters the patterns of the runes (or letting them copy what he has done), Zelios departs the next night.



The messenger waits for the characters to reply to Myca, then leaves. If the characters refuse the mission, the messenger retrieves the ring before leaving. Should they refuse, the Storyteller is encouraged to send them a letter from the Tremere Etrius requesting safe passage for Goratrix through Transylvanian lands. Etrius asks that the characters go to Timisoara to meet Goratrix and bring him to the village of Alceditz, which lies nestled in the foothills near the Alps. The Swedish magus states that the Tremere will willingly grant the characters a request in return if it is within their power and will not endanger the clan.

If characters still refuse, skip this part of the story. Myca is quite annoyed with them, however, and visits from Assamites (or a *vozhd* or two, now that the characters have their own castles) might make the characters' unives interesting for a while. Further, the Tremere count them as active enemies from now on. Many subtle punishments might be inflicted on the characters or they might find themselves the target of hordes of Gargoyles the next time they step outside. Any who survive the punishment you contrive can go on to Scene VI at Dragomir's castle.

Note that if the characters were originally working for Malgorzata's Tremere Conspirator faction and if they have kept in contact, accepting this mission places a severe strain on their relationship with her. Should she learn that they are bringing Goratrix to Ceoris, she might demand that they devise some way to free him from Tremere's summoning and "lose" him somewhere along the way.

SCENE III: THE PRISONER

If they are not already in Timisoara, the characters should travel there (presumably with wagon drivers, men-at-arms and servants) to

meet their charge. Whether the Cainites suffer or not, their servants are thoroughly miserable throughout the journey. Day after night, teeming rain pours down, drowning the roads and miring wagons in mud. Lightning cuts jagged streaks across the sky. The wind howls incessantly, its chill penetrating even the warmest cloaks. After days of this and too little blood, the characters arrive in Timisoara, where they can quickly locate the Chapel of the Holy Sepulcher.

Near the church is an inn called the Golden Swan where their retainers may wait for them. The characters should realize that their retainers and ghouls must rest during the journey to Ceoris. They push onward by day (with the Cainites asleep in their caravan wagons) and count on being able to stay somewhere at night and sleep while the characters are awake. Additionally, the characters must find sustenance somewhere, and an inn draws those on whom they can feed. Thus, even though they will spend their days sleeping, at night, their servants always try to find an inn or other accommodations for them.

Myca's "agents" are in evidence when the characters arrive at the church. Several men-at-arms dressed in a fashion associated with Constantinople guard the approach, some of them sitting just inside the door of the inn, others strategically placed around the church. The gate that usually restricts entry into the crypts has been left ajar and the characters can enter easily. The characters experience no difficulty entering this supposedly holy ground. A single torch (unable to be seen from outside) illuminates the room. In a dark corner near the back of the first chamber in the crypt, partially screened by shadows, sit two dark-skinned men dressed in the Turkish fashion, curved knives displayed in their sashes. A successful check using Soulsight reveals that both have pale auras. These two are Assamites, hired by Myca to make certain Goratrix is captured

and waiting for the characters. The Assamites would not accept a mission in which they had to go to Ceoris itself, thus Myca hit upon the idea of using the characters.

Goratrix himself lies in a crudely made box in a nearby chamber. He is staked at the moment. When the characters enter, one of the dark-skinned men rises and approaches them, bows from the waist and says, "Welcome. I am Husayn al-Fatin. If you wish refreshment, the worthy innkeeper next door can serve you. They are conversant here with our special needs. After you have rested from your journey, me and my apprentice shall conduct you to the room in which your charge awaits you."

Husayn is happy to converse with the characters. Though he never identifies himself as an Assamite, it should be clear to the characters. When they are ready to meet Goratrix, Husayn goes to another room, emerging with a young woman bound with ropes and gagged. Husayn and his apprentice escort the characters and the young woman to the room where Goratrix is being held.

"Regrettably, I must release him," explains Husayn, "as I have been commanded to do so in my contract. I hope that his need for blood will occupy him long enough for you to explain why you are here. It would be most regrettable should he injure you before learning of your mission."

If allowed to do so, Husayn opens the box. Goratrix lies inside, staked through the heart. Should the characters wish to examine him before he is allowed to recover, they may do so. Goratrix is above medium height and of apparently normal weight. He is clean-shaven, with dark-brown hair and hazel eyes. His nose is strong and broad, his mouth generous. Some might consider him handsome. Dressed like a noble of the French court, he looks both formidable and scholarly. Something in the lines of his face indicates a cruel and uncompromising nature. His eyes stare with fixed hatred at anyone who leans over to look at him.

Husayn speaks to Goratrix, saying, "Here are those who guarantee your safe passage through the lands ahead. My contract is now satisfied. Go in peace." So saying, he pulls the stake from Goratrix's heart and thrusts the girl toward the ravenous Cainite. Should the characters attempt to prevent Husayn from pulling out the stake, he apparently acquiesces, bowing and withdrawing from the room. He returns later to put matters to rights as he was instructed to do. Should he succeed at that point, Goratrix arises in a state of frenzy with no convenient vessel nearby to slake his thirst.

Once he has discharged his duty, Husayn bids the characters farewell. He and his apprentice leave the chapel and the characters see no more of them. The men-at-arms make it clear that their job is over as well. They intend to return to Constantinople as quickly as possible. It is up to the characters and their retainers to guard Goratrix from now on until they turn him over to the Tremere.

If Goratrix is allowed to feed in peace, he drains the girl completely. If prevented from doing so, he demands more blood, claiming that he has important matters to discuss with the characters — matters he cannot speak of if he falls into torpor from lack of vitae. The characters can obtain other vessels for him, or even offer him some of their own blood. As he is under Blood Oath to Tremere, it matters little to him how many times he drinks their blood. He fights to prevent being staked again, calling forth his most potent Thaumaturgical powers to retain his freedom.

Using the Rego Vitae power Blood of Potency, Goratrix first lowers his generation. Following that, he uses Cauldron of Blood on whichever character seems most threatening. Should the characters persist, he calls upon the Demonic Horde power from the Prey On the Soul's Fear path. With this, he may be able to hold several characters at bay, to freeze them in panic or even cause characters to lose consciousness. Utilizing the Body of Light power from the Way of the Levinbolt, he can inflict up to six dice

of damage on anyone coming into contact with him. Though Goratrix is willing to seriously harm or even kill the characters, his primary motivation is to remain unstaked and escape. Should he flee and the characters not pursue, the Tremere eventually capture him (with results for the characters as detailed before). If the characters attempt to recapture him, they can find him on the road to Ceoris, unable to break Tremere's summons. So long as they leave him unstaked, he goes with them.

If the characters allow him to remain unstaked, he speaks to them about his plight, explaining that he only sought to govern his area effectively. The Storyteller should use this opportunity to fill the characters in on the backstory — from Goratrix's point of view, of course. He tries to get the characters to help him break Tremere's summons and escape, promising them vast riches and rewards in return, as well as his eternal gratitude.

The characters probably will not agree. If they do agree, let the players come up with a plausible way to offset Tremere's summons. Whatever they do, however, if they fail to take Goratrix to the Transylvanian Alps, the Tremere eventually capture him and bring him before the council. The characters will have earned the Tremere's enmity, though Malgorzata will applaud them and secretly offer them a reward for trying to save her sire.

If they insist on taking him to the Usurpers, Goratrix tells them that knowing the way to Ceoris is a deadly burden. The Tremere do not allow Cainites from other clans to know the secret approaches to their stronghold. If they still intend to escort him there, Goratrix grudgingly accepts his fate and agrees to lead them to Ceoris. His only satisfaction lies in knowing that they will accompany him in death.

SCENE IV: ON THE ROAD

The weather turns even worse as the characters and their charge head for the Transylvanian Alps. Each day is a battle to force the wagons onward over roads eradicated by constant rain; each night a struggle to locate a shelter in which to huddle. Inns and villages are few and far between. All the Cainites are hungry. If he remains unstaked, Goratrix continues to offer the characters various enticements to let him go (such as offering to teach them Thaumaturgy, or to reveal a cache of gems and jewelry he stashed away in Buda-Pest, or to swear major boons to each of them).

The Storyteller should feel free to insert a battle or two against desperate brigands, werewolves or even Tzimisce and their ghouls who have discovered that one of the seven most powerful of the Tremere is traveling through the land. A less combat-oriented coterie may be plagued by Tzimisce szlachta spies or freebooting Ravnos vampires in the local voivode's service. Any coterie may encounter a humble forest cottager — use whatever you wish to highlight the journey. If the players seem unexcited by such, simply move on to the scene at the inn.

One evening as they reach the small village of Alceditz, the weather has turned so foul that one of their horses collapses. An inn is close by, with a sign depicting a leaping stag. Inside the inn, which is cozy with the warmth of a roaring fire, sit several figures in tabards emblazoned with the symbol of the Teutonic Order. Though nothing seems threatening, they appear nervous and watchful. When the characters and their entourage enter, the knights watch every move they make, but decline attempts to talk, answering any attempts at conversation in monosyllabic replies.

Every few minutes, one or another of them gets up and goes down a hall to a room on the right-hand side, emerging a few minutes later. Occasionally, one goes to the room and a different man comes back. Characters may figure out that there are 16 men total in the group (assuming there aren't any that have failed to make an appearance).

Clever characters may deduce that they are guarding something of value and that they keep checking on it.

Goratrix grows very excited after watching them for an hour or so. He asks one of the characters (the one who has seemed most sympathetic to him or the most greedy) to accompany him to one of their rooms (rented by the servants when they first entered). Once there (whether only one character goes or all of them), he tells them the following:

"I know what those men are guarding and it is worth all our lives to attain it. You have surely heard tales of the fabulous treasure of the Knights Templar. It disappeared from their Paris preceptory when they were recently arrested in France. Some of the Templars escaped, however, and these must be they. Help me to get this treasure and we may gain the greatest power ever seen in this world!"

"What is it worth to you to remain immortal, yet able to walk in sunlight again without fear of annihilation? How would you like the power to command nations and lay waste to your enemies? Help me, I beg of you. You will not regret it."

If he must, Goratrix reveals that the Templar treasure contains the Holy Grail. He doesn't mention the Ark of the Covenant. He believes this is his last chance to avoid Tremere's wrath. If he has the Ark, he can destroy Ceoris and most of the Tremere while still miles away (or so he hopes). The characters may wonder how Goratrix plans to handle these holy items without bursting into righteous flame, but he assures them he knows rituals that allow him to control the artifacts. Let them decide whether to attempt to steal the items, battle the knights outright or stay completely away from the reputed relics. There are several choices they might make:

PILFERING

Stealing the treasure requires one or more characters to sneak into the room where the trunk that holds the items lies, make off with it and hide it from a room-by-room search when the knights realize it is gone (which they will do within 10 minutes or so). Two knights take turns sleeping in the room for an hour at a time.

BATTLE

Fighting the knights means the characters must slay all of them, unless they can manage to overcome the knights without killing them. The knights battle to the death, if given a choice. Should they dispatch all the knights, the characters and Goratrix see the innkeeper and other patrons fleeing for their lives. Allowing any of them to escape means that a few minutes later a bell will ring loudly, warning the other townspeople. Because the Tremere own this village and have lost so many of their holdings to Tzimisce raids, the Usurpers have placed a dweomer on the warning bells in their villages so that they also sound in Ceoris.

Alerted by the bell, two-dozen Tremere and their men-at-arms arrive soon thereafter (using a transportation ritual). If the Tremere are summoned, the characters may find themselves battling for their own survival: The Tremere have no way of knowing the characters aren't Tzimisce toadies. Simply make the Tremere strong enough to overcome the characters without a long, drawn-out battle. Kind Storytellers will capture the characters and plan an interrogation session (during which it becomes clear why they are in the village). The Council of Seven is then summoned to deal with Goratrix. If



DARK TIDES CRESTING



the story goes this way, Tremere can still arrive to take Goratrix into custody, but he should be far less lenient with the characters, who have caused grave disturbance in his domain.

IGNORING THE TREASURE

Leaving the treasure alone may be the smartest choice (though they then miss acquiring what's inside the chest). If they do so, the knights pack up and get on the road just before dawn.

THE TEMPLARS' TREASURE

Inside the chest is a slightly smaller, footed box carved and sheathed in gold. Winged figures decorate the top. This is not the real Ark of the Covenant, but a chest carved to resemble it. Inside rest several ivory tablets carved with cuneiform writing. While they resemble those already seen by the characters, there are subtle differences and the translation makes no sense, if tried. The characters will be unable to make sense of these writings at this time. Goratrix is terribly angry. There is no Grail, no jewels and no other treasure evident.

The knights were not told what they were transporting, merely that it came from the Knights Templar's treasury. The "treasure" they were asked to guard is of no value to anyone but Cainites and then only to those who can translate the cryptic writing. Still, should the characters keep the ivory tablets, they may discover what will happen in the times to come (see the second book in the *Transylvania Chronicles, Son of the Dragon* for more about these tablets).

Assuming the characters have not run afoul of the Tremere, continue the story just before the dawn.

The day is so foul and the horses so weary that the characters' servants beg the characters to stay in the inn for one more day. They promise to faithfully guard the characters and make certain they are protected and undisturbed. If they disagree, the Storyteller should make it clear that their horses cannot go on. After sealing their masters in the wagons for the day, the characters' retainers cannot force the horses to pull them. The servants take up guard positions around the wagons, but when the characters awaken, they are still at the inn.

SCENE V: THE TREMERE

Having learned that Goratrix is within reach through spies and scrying, the Tremere have sent several ghouls down to the village (which owes them fealty) to make certain he stays there. When the characters awaken, their retainers tell them that several men await them in the inn. The men claim to represent Clan Tremere.

The characters most likely go to the tavern room to see who is there. Presumably, they take Goratrix with them. At this point, in a last-ditch effort, Goratrix attempts to make a break for it (either just outside the stable where the wagons were or as the characters approach the inn's front door).

As Goratrix attempts to flee, a dark, looming figure materializes before him, as if from thin air, blocking his path. No more than a quadriplegic torso and head, the figure bears a mouthless face, craning its neck to look around the room like a consummate predator seeking prey. Dark-browed and with piercing dark eyes, the pallid face reveals an inhuman nature. Though his features appear composed, almost disinterested, the monster's eyes burn with intensity. A palpable nimbus of barely suppressed power

crackles in the air around the dark Cainite. Several robed figures step from the shadows and mass behind the first. The monster glares at Goratrix, who stumbles back and freezes in place. Panicked fear in his eyes, Goratrix whispers, "Tremere..."

Mortals (including ghouls in the characters' service) drop to their knees, then fall unconscious as the dark magus surveys them. Finally, he looks at the characters, and his eyes burn into them. The characters feel as if their insides have been seared with acid. They can feel their blood heating toward the boiling point. Each character must make a Courage roll (difficulty 8) or flee the scene. Those characters who run feel their skin melting and dripping off their bones, which shatter even as they try to escape. This pain accompanies the bursting of their ears (and consequent deafening) due to a build-up of pressure and the liquefaction of their eyes (causing blindness). They vomit forth any blood they have in their systems and feel themselves pinned under the weight of mortality as they sink, dying, to the ground.

Characters who withstand their initial fear undergo the same experience as their fleeing counterparts, but also feel their heads split apart as their thoughts, memories and deepest secrets are ripped from their minds in a tangled mass. Just before they expire in indescribable agony, each character feels the Antediluvian's white-hot contempt for their feeble existences.

When the characters open their eyes, surfacing lethargically to consciousness once again, they realize that they have not moved. Tremere is merely looking at them. All the characters can feel a lingering pain in their heads, an ache as though their thoughts have been examined, found wanting and shuffled back into place.

Tremere gestures to Goratrix, saying, "Follow!" Goratrix looks pleadingly at the characters, then lurches forward, compelled to obedience. The master Usurper turns, looking back once more toward the characters, then speaks to one of his companions, a smaller man with sandy hair.

"Ask their price, Etrius. Pay them." The smaller man bows slightly as his superior strides out the door and into the night. His departure removes the aura of fear overlaying the area.

The characters have just met Tremere. They should have a sense of his enormous power and the fear that accompanies that realization. Had he chosen, Tremere could have slain them all. The Storyteller must emphasize Tremere's absolute majesty and command. Do not trivialize this encounter. Should one of the characters act rudely or try to stop what Tremere is doing, simply have the magus stare at her. She is immediately thrown into torpor and cannot recover until the full time elapses for her awakening (as governed by her Road score) or destroyed, depending on your munificence and the character's behav-

MAKING IT REAL

Many players will react with shock that the Storyteller has so arbitrarily (and without giving them the chance to do anything) killed all the characters. It is vital that the Storyteller make the scene as compelling and frightening as possible. Terrify your players; describe the gory details. Allow them to try to escape, then reel them back into the scene and finish them off, using gruesome individual deaths if impersonal mass destruction isn't your style. Give your players a few moments to protest or to disbelieve that the scene was real. Remind them that they were facing an Antediluvian, after all. Then continue the scene as below:

ior. Tremere will not be so careful of their unives should any others challenge him. If they are that foolish, Tremere leaves the inn — and everyone in it — in flames as he departs.

Etrius remains behind with a few ghouls. He is willing to pay the characters for bringing Goratrix to the Tremere if the characters act in a respectful manner. Though he also has great power, Etrius does not engender the same magnitude of fear that the leader of his clan does, though he is tangibly potent nonetheless. He asks the characters their price for delivering Goratrix and agrees to it if it is at all reasonable. He is empowered to grant them a favor from the Tremere, money or goods, training in any Discipline except Thaumaturgy and other such requests. If asked if the characters can carve the runes on Ceoris for Zelios, Etrius refuses, saying that to know the way to the chantry is to certify their own deaths. Should the characters be persuasive enough, Etrius agrees to learn the runes from them. He promises to carve the runes on Ceoris' wall himself — provided their magic offers no danger to his chantry and doesn't interfere with the protections already in place.

Anyone successfully checking Etrius' aura with Soulsight can tell that he is speaking the truth. Etrius fully intends to keep this bargain if it truly has no adverse effect on the Tremere. He reasons that the runes might even offer more protections for the chantry. Certainly, learning the runes allows him the chance to study them before applying them to the walls; he might even be able to customize them for other purposes.

Once they have agreed to terms, Etrius (and the ghouls who stayed behind with him) leave the inn. After traveling a few feet, they vanish into a shadow and cannot be found thereafter.

SCENE VI: THE SETTING OF THE WEB

When the characters return from their trip to the Alps, they find a letter awaiting them. It is from Zelios. The letter reads,

Greetings to you.

I hope that you have successfully concluded your business. Though I know you look forward to resting after your journey. I have a boon I must ask of you. You will have noticed that the weather has become more foul each day. The ground quakes and I fear that our mountains shall tumble down if this does not soon cease.

I believe these phenomena are caused by the thrashings of Kupala as he seeks to thwart our plans to bind him. One castle yet remains which must be marked: that of the Tzimisce voivode Vintila Basarab. Although I hesitate to ask you yet again to undertake an arduous journey, I must do so. The voivode's castle lies in the Bihor Mountains some miles north of Alba Iulia. Any of the locals can tell you how to find it.

Though I would go and do the deed myself, I find that I must travel with all haste to Western Europe. I must ask you to complete our geomantic ward in my stead.

Go to the voivode's castle and convince him to let you carve the runes upon it. You shall know you have succeeded when the rains stop.

I ask you for the good of us all.

Zelios. Masterbuilder.



If Sherazhina (the Basarab revenant slave girl the characters met in Act I) still serves the characters (she will have to have been fed Cainite vitae as any other ghoul in the century between her liberation at the characters' hands and now), and if they consult her about the letter, she can tell them that Vintila Basarab was her great, great grandfather and that he Embraced her elder brother Dragomir. Should the characters wish to go to the castle, she would like to go with them and see her brother and grandfather once again.

Assuming the characters agree to go, they once again brave the ever-worsening roads, this time to Alba Iulia. Asking directions to Basarab's Castle of anyone in Alba Iulia or following Sherazhina's navigation leads them to a rough track up the mountains, where they come upon a many-turreted fortress with a single candlelit window. The other windows are darkened. Should they approach openly to interact with the castle's occupant, they are admitted (after knocking and waiting for a short time) by a twisted ghoul. He carries a candle and leads them to the room where they saw the candlelit window as they approached the castle. Seated in the room is a young man, apparently a noble from his clothing. He has pale, wheat-blond hair and green eyes.

He looks up from reading a scroll as the ghoul leads the characters in.

"Welcome to my home," he says, standing and coming forward. "I am unaccustomed to receiving visitors. I hope that your reception has not disappointed you. You are...?" He lets the question hang in the air, obviously expecting the characters to introduce themselves. Once they have done so, he asks, "And what brings you to my castle?"

If the characters show him the letter, he sighs, seeming depressed. "Alas," he says, "my sire Vintila is no more. I am master here now. So regrettable, but his vitae was of the best. I have not tasted its like since that time. Tonight's Cainites have so little breeding, so little... taste."

The characters may realize that he is speaking quite openly about diablerizing his sire. That knowledge may make them uneasy. Dragomir offers no immediate threat to them, however.

Should they state their case rather than show him the letter, he merely nods and says they may make their marks. He cares little for anything now that his sire, Vintila is no more. Eventually, he introduces himself as Dragomir Basarab.

If Sherazhina is with the characters, she greets her brother, calling him by name. He seems to hardly recognize her, finally responding weakly to her attempts to kiss him. Holding her at arm's length he says, "Poor grandsire, I consumed him. His blood was of the purest, but he was weak, so weak."

Apparently throwing off his melancholy, Dragomir calls his ghoul forward, telling the characters he will perform a pantomime for their benefit. Enthusiastically, he sees that they are seated and has the ghoul light several more candles. The ghoul motions to the characters while Dragomir's back is turned for a moment, signaling them to just go along with it. The ghoul then lies down on a nearby table as though asleep. Dragomir turns to face the characters and says, "Now you must judge the truth you are to witness. Be kind, we so rarely have visitors...."

Dragomir approaches the ghoul, leaning over him and tenderly stroking his hair. "Grandfather," he calls softly, "It is the dinner hour and I hunger." The ghoul doesn't move. Dragomir looks imploringly at the characters, then turns back to his ghoul. "Grandfather!" he calls more urgently. The ghoul remains still. "I must feed!" the tortured Tzimisce almost screams. With that he leaps upon the ghoul, ripping at his throat.

The characters may intervene if they wish. Should they pull him off, the ghoul survives. If they prefer, the characters may simply watch without attempting to save the ghoul, but some might need to make a Conscience or Conviction roll, depending on which Road they follow (difficulty 8) to remain unaffected. Failure in this roll costs the character a point from her Road.

Whether they stop him or allow him to kill his ghoul, Dragomir breaks into wild laughter and thence into sobs, moaning, "Grandfather, grandfather..." After a few moments, he seems to recover, turns to the characters and says, "Now, give me your honest opinions. Was there truth in this act?" Regardless of what the characters answer, he nods and accepts their judgment.

Unless the characters attack Dragomir, he then gives permission for them to carve the runes on his castle. He watches as they do so amid torrential rains and hellish lightning. Half the hillside sloughs off in a gigantic mudslide as they attempt to retain their footing while carving. With the carving of the last rune, the rain lessens, then stops. Slowly, the clouds break apart and the full moon shines down on them. The wind drops to a whisper and the air noticeably warms.

Equally miraculous is the change in Dragomir. Where he seemed distracted, then barely sane, now he straightens and looks around him. He invites the characters to come back inside and sends his ghoul to find fresh, dry clothing for them (if the ghoul still lives, otherwise, he

fetches the clothing himself). After the characters change clothes, he seems genuinely interested in speaking with them and proves to be well versed in scholarship. Dragomir is both witty and solicitous of their comfort, telling his ghoul (again, only if the man survived) to open several internal rooms and change the bedding so that his guests may rest in comfort during the day.

Whether they accept his hospitality or not, Dragomir is most polite to them. They may stay as long as they wish. He shamefully confesses his diablerie to the characters, telling them he felt as though his will were overcome by someone else's. He felt as if a shade or spirit were controlling his actions. The Storyteller should make Dragomir as pleasant and appealing as possible once the runes have been placed on his castle. The players will probably assume he was somehow under Kupala's spell, which was broken by the runic web. The characters will meet this young man again in the future, when he is among those who seek to diablerize the Tzimisce Antediluvian. If the characters kill Dragomir, the story picks up later using an ally of his instead.

EPILOGUE

For now, the characters have apparently succeeded in binding the demon. Zelios' geomancy appears to be working. In actuality, they have done far more than they realize, for Zelios does not know the real reason he has been compelled to construct this powerful web. It will be many, many years (centuries in fact) before any of them discover the true purpose of this binding.

If the Storyteller wishes, the characters may go on from here to other stories before continuing with the Transylvania Chronicles. Act III picks up a century from now, in the year 1413.





Chapter Four: Dark Tides Falling

Watch your own childe: on
the lips of all is the honey-taste
of diablerie.

-The Book of Nod Proverbs

PART TWO: THE DEATH OF PRINCES

BACKGROUND TO THE STORY

The events of this act play out against a background of bloody war in Eastern Europe and growing civil unrest in Western Europe. The revolt of English peasants led by Wat Tyler in 1381, though ultimately doomed, signaled the beginning of sweeping changes that would rock the solid hold the nobility had over the lower classes. In Transylvania, although the *voivodes* still exercised their iron grip over the peasants, other forces moved to threaten their power. The Turks, having effectively put an end to the Crusades through the capture of Jerusalem, set their eyes on the fertile lands of their invaders and sent their armies westward. Sofia fell to the Turks in AD 1382; 11 years later, under Bajazet's leadership, they subdued Bulgaria, therefore placing them uncomfortably close to the borders of Hungary and Transylvania.

In Spain, the fires of the Inquisition sparked a wave of fear in Cainite circles. Elder vampires sought shelter from their righteous persecutors, often ordering their childer to hold off the armies of the Church while they themselves fled to safety. Many Cainites sought to hide the proof of their existence, conceiving a complicated "Masquerade" to camouflage their traces; others spoke of forming a vampiric union to govern all Cainites. This union, or Camarilla, would preserve the rigid hierarchy of power through generation. Young Cainites saw little to their advantage in the new proposal.

The Brujah Patricia Bollingroke, inspired by the actions of her mortal lover, Wat Tyler, now ensconced in Spain, led her own rebellion in 1395. Her followers, who would become known as "anarchs," decried the use of younger Cainites as sacrificial lambs and sought to refuse the demands of their terrified and self-serving sires.

Finally, in 1405, anarchs among the Lasombra succeeded in diablerizing their founder of their of the clan, thus freeing themselves from the tyranny (as they saw it) of generations. Now, nearly a decade later, in the stronghold of the Tzimisce *voivodes*, the younger members of the Fiends whisper among themselves that perhaps the actions of the Lasombra merit imitation.

One last occurrence marks this period of history in ways significant to both Cainites and mortals. Migrating from their homeland far to the southeast, tribes of Gypsies make their first large-scale appearance in Eastern Europe. In Transylvania, the nobles quickly assimilate these talented, mystical folk into their peasant class, often enslaving them because of their landless status. Other Gypsies remain travelers, spending their time in an endless migration from village to village, never staying long enough to fall into the clutches of the *voivodes*. Arriving with some of these folk are members of the Ravnos clan, trailing mischief and chaos in their wake.

ACT III: THE RELEASE (1413)

The year is 1413, roughly 100 years after the events of Act II. Presumably, at least some of the characters have risen to prominent positions, either as princes of new cities in Transylvania, holders of local fiefdoms in the region, or as trusted agents for their sires.

SCENE I: RUMORS OF THINGS TO COME

The Storyteller may prepare for this scene by giving each character a tidbit of information that she feels is worth sharing with her erstwhile companions. Rumors of unrest among the peasants, curiosity about the influx of Gypsies in the region near their holdings, anxiety about the possibility of a Turkish invasion from Bulgaria, or speculation about the arrival of Inquisitors from Western Europe might serve as enticements to bring the characters together. If any of the characters possesses Disciplines, Abilities or Merits that incline them toward mysticism or prophetic visions, the Storyteller might inform them that they have had particularly puzzling or disturbing dreams or visions that indicate they should gather together with their companions.

For whatever reason, the characters meet with one another in one of their strongholds. This should be the first time in years that the characters have seen each other — take the chance to do some extensive roleplaying. The Storyteller should allow enough time for them to renew old bonds of friendship (or rivalry) before continuing with the scene.

In the middle of their reunion, a retainer of the host character discreetly interrupts the group to announce the arrival of visitors who claim to know the characters.

Almost before anyone can react, Anatole and Lucita burst into the room. Both Cainites appear distraught, exhausted and disheveled from their travels. Anatole prostrates himself at the feet of the nearest character, while Lucita hovers near the door, edgy and nervous, yet determined not to lose her composure. Looking up through his matted blond hair at the characters, Anatole beseeches them:

"Sanctuary for the persecuted and driven! Blessed be they who shower forth their mercy upon the uprooted and the defenseless. Salvation surely comes for those who seek to save those who are lost. Turn not your backs on those whom God favors and man despises!"

Since they have previously met both the visionary Malkavian and his Lasombra companion, the characters should recognize Anatole's oblique manner of speech and realize that, in his own way, Anatole is requesting their aid. Nevertheless, they may wait for Lucita's translation of her friend's request before they respond. Ever the diplomat, Lucita is quick to add her own words to those of Anatole:

"My friends — at least I hope I can address you as such — Anatole and I have need of shelter and sustenance. Much



transpires in the lands to the west, and little of it bodes good for any of our kind. We would be obligated to you if you would grant us your hospitality for even a few nights, that we may recuperate and refresh ourselves after spending long weeks in flight. Anatole's visions have led us to you. It is my hope that you will not turn us away in our time of need."

Depending on the outcome of their last meeting with the characters, Anatole and Lucita may either owe a boon to the characters or be owed one by them. If the latter, the characters can discharge their favor by granting hospitality to the pair. If the two Cainites are already in the characters' debt, they may wish to increase the pair's indebtedness in hope for a larger return in the future. Of course, rumors that Anatole has been engaging in diablerie may disturb some of the characters, and they may need some assurance that these two plan to cause no trouble while with the characters.

Lucita offers to share her knowledge of events transpiring in Western Europe with the characters. Since they have probably heard some rumors, they may consider Lucita's arrival as a chance to deny or confirm the information they have gleaned. They may even consider her report on recent happenings to be sufficient payment for sheltering her and Anatole.

The characters may continue to converse with Lucita and Anatole until they retire for the day, and continue their discourse the following evening, should they so desire. As hosts, however, they need to make provisions for Anatole and Lucita to feed, before the two are able to go on.

When the characters continue their conversation with their guests, Lucita responds to the characters' inquiries for news. She

relays the information listed by topic below. If no one is forthcoming with inquiries, the Storyteller may have to remind the players that news from afar is difficult to come by in Transylvania and what occurs elsewhere may have some effect on their own unives. If the characters still seem reticent, Lucita simply relates the following information to her hosts — partly as an offering to pay for their lodgings, partly to clear her own troubled mind concerning the murder of the Lasombra clan founder.

- **On the Inquisition:** "Inquisitors from the Church have made Cainites' existence difficult throughout Europe. In Spain, it is almost impossible for vampires to escape notice without exercising the utmost care. France is nearly as bad, and Italy, too, has its share of witch-hunters. I fear that some may believe your lands are fertile grounds for heresy and demon-worship. (Characters who know of the legends of Kupala may realize that the Inquisition's suspicions are not unfounded.) Do not be surprised if the black-robed torturers begin appearing in your towns. Beware of them."

- **On Peasant Unrest:** "Beginning in England some years ago, the peasants have become belligerent toward their lords. Wat Tyler's rebellion forced the nobility to grant the peasantry some concessions, but not without great cost to the rebels and their families. Nevertheless, once an idea takes root, it grows wherever it finds the means for sustenance. Other countries suffer similar troubles from their serfs and peasants. These troubles, too, may soon find their way to your lands."

- **On Gypsies:** Lucita has almost no information on the traveling folk. In fact, she may look to the characters to enlighten her if they can.

• **On the Anarch Rebellion:** “In the West, many Cainites are rising up against their sires, claiming the same unfair treatment from them as the peasants charge against their lords. I have heard stories of childe ordered to face the armies of the Inquisition so that their sires might escape, thus giving their own unlivs for those of their elders. These anarchs, as they call themselves, claim their sires have grown complacent and seek only their own safety with little regard for the welfare of their progeny. The old values that once held Cainite society together, the bonds between sire and childe and the hierarchy of generations are fraying like threads in a tapestry. I believe that this rebellion may spread even here, particularly if the Inquisition threatens the safety of your elders and yourselves.”

• **On the Lasombra Antediluvian:** “Perhaps the gravest news I bear concerns my own clan, the Lasombra. Only a few years ago, some of our own anarchs conspired to commit the ultimate horror, assaulting and committing Amaranth upon the founder of our clan, even as he tried to defend himself from their concerted attack. As of that time, I have struggled to reconcile myself with my clanmates. I do not condone their actions, yet I cannot deny what I am. As a result, I have tried to distance myself from the conspirators, seeking refuge through travel. I fear that I am marked by them as a traitor, since they have joined the Anarch conspiracy. (If there are any Lasombra among the characters, Lucita will address her next comment to that individual.) I know that you cannot have had any connection with those who have committed this vile deed, and so I prevail upon your honor to allow me safe passage while I remain as your guest. (Once more she addresses the group as a whole.) However it may be justified in the hearts of those who have undertaken this vile action, I fear it may bode ill for other clans besides the Lasombra.”

If the Storyteller wishes to embellish Lucita's account of the diablerie of the Lasombra Antediluvian, *Children of the Inquisition* and *Clanbook: Lasombra* provide more information on the event.

Should the characters confront Lucita with Anatole's rumored practice of diablerie and ask why she travels with him if she feels so strongly about what her clanmates did, she tells them that the Lasombra sought only their own power and a shocking means of declaring themselves as anarchs. Anatole (so Lucita believes) acts according to God's dictates. Besides, he preys upon the evil and the vile who are so corrupt they have no chance for redemption. Anatole sees it as cleansing their souls (as if he is consuming their sins along with their blood) so his victims travel without blemish into the sight of God. (Note that this idea is actually prevalent during the time; The Inquisition tortures suspected witches and heretics to obtain confessions since confession of sins is necessary to obtain salvation. Many confessed heretics enter lives of penitence. Those who refuse to confess were burned on the theory that the body is unimportant, but the soul is cleansed by the fire and readied to meet God. Better the agony of a mortal fire than the never-ending fires of Hell!)

Anatole has been silent through most of Lucita's narrative, but he has one more contribution to make to the discussion. When Lucita has imparted all her information, Anatole stiffens suddenly, as if in the throes of one of his visions. His body begins to glow softly with an unearthly light that may disturb any characters who have not witnessed one of Anatole's “moments.”

“God has not forgotten you. He has placed the mark of destiny upon you. Prepare your souls, for the time of testing and tribulation is at hand.”



TRANSYLVANIA CHRONICLES I

After this, Anatole falls silent and does not speak unless directly addressed, and then only briefly.

Unless the characters insist on sending them on their way immediately after speaking with them, Lucita and Anatole remain with the characters for another evening before once again taking to the road, drawn to their next destination by Anatole's spiritual urgings. The characters may continue to mull over what they have learned or disperse once more to their havens.

INTERLUDE

Several nights pass between Scenes I and II. It is up to the Storyteller to decide on the precise number of days, though the interval between the two scenes should not be longer than two weeks.

In the intervening time, however, each character has an encounter with her sire. Though the particulars differ from individual to individual, the essence of the meeting will be the same. The sire meets with her childe and either praises her dutifulness or reproaches her for her lack thereof. The interview ends with the sire's demand that her childe drink her blood. The following guidelines should cover most relationships between sires and childer.

If the character's relationship to her sire is relatively good, her sire warns her of rumors of ungrateful progeny, emphasizing that she does not consider the character to be one of those "wretched anarchs." She then requests that her childe confirm her loyalty by drinking her blood.

If the character's relationship to her sire is awkward or even hostile, her sire insists that the character drink her blood to provide a reason for her continued existence.

If the character's relationship to her sire is lukewarm (though not overtly antagonistic), her sire advises the character to drink her blood in order to strengthen the ties between them and develop a better rapport with one another.

Depending on whether or not they have already taken the second step toward a Blood Oath in the previous story, some characters may be extremely reluctant to comply with their sires' wishes. If drinking from her sire will result in the formation of a Blood Oath and the character refuses to do so, her sire does not immediately take punitive action against the character. Instead, she demands that the character agree to undertake a task on her behalf (see Scene II) in lieu of drinking her blood. If a character decides to accept the constraints of the Blood Oath, her sire is delighted with her faithful childe. In this case, she requests that the character assist her in a small matter.

SCENE II: CONFIRMATION

This scene begins after all the characters have had a chance to meet with their sires and respond in one way or another to the request that the childe drink from them.

Each character receives a letter from her sire, instructing her to meet with Nova Arpad, the Ventrue Prince of Mediasch, one of the Siebenburgen, at Nova's mansion near the outskirts of the town. The missive states that the character is to render assistance to Nova Arpad as the sire's way of discharging a minor debt. Depending on the results of the character's previous interview with her sire, the wording of the letter reflects either a polite request, a strong advisement or an outright order.

When the characters arrive at the Arpad mansion, they interrupt a one-sided confrontation between a group of soldiers and a peasant.

The peasant, a young man whose dress and manner suggests that he has somehow acquired learning beyond his station, stands before the mansion, declaiming to any passersby. He attempts to fend off the soldiers, who intend to bludgeon him into submission. Characters may make an Intelligence + Heraldry roll (difficulty 7) to recognize the crest worn by the soldiers as that of the Arpad family (or they may simply assume that they are Nova's guards since they are defending her home). As he dodges his attackers and tries to bolt for the door of an inn further down the street (now probably blocked by the characters as they arrive, presumably on horseback or in coaches), the peasant continues to proclaim his defiance.

"This mockery of justice and rulership has gone on for far too long. The lords of these lands must cease their depredations. We break our backs and give our lifeblood for their pleasure. Our wives, sisters and daughters sacrifice their virtue on the altar of their insatiable and unholy lusts. It is time for us to stand together—"

Unless the characters intervene, the soldiers corner the peasant before he can finish his diatribe and pummel him into unconsciousness, dragging him toward the mansion's door.

The characters have several options in this situation. They can ignore the disturbance, figuring it is none of their business. They can assist the soldiers indirectly by blocking the peasant's escape route (the door to the inn) or, conversely, help the peasant inconspicuously by moving so as to let him escape (into the inn or down the street and around a corner) and impeding the soldiers' pursuit. They can actively aid the peasant, commanding the soldiers to cease their attack (though they actually have no right to do so in someone else's domain). Imperious characters may roll Charisma + Leadership (difficulty 5) to impress the soldiers through force of personality. Finally, they might simply attack the peasant, capturing him and handing him over, or attack the soldiers, whom they can easily defeat. Whatever they decide, anyone else on the street moves out of the area as quickly as possible.

If one of the characters states that she is placing the peasant under her protection, the soldiers immediately leave off their assault, but insist that such a character explain the matter to their mistress, whom the peasant has grievously offended.

Unless the characters are dressed as rough commoners, the soldiers are unlikely to attack them first. (They will defend themselves from the characters' attack, however).

Any character who succeeds in a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 8), will notice Nova Arpad sitting quietly, half-hidden in the shadows, observing the spectacle from a downstairs window. Nova does not involve herself in the affair, but she watches the characters carefully, using the incident to gauge their attitudes in the light of what she expects them to do.

In the event that the characters do assume responsibility for the peasant, the leader of the soldiers looks anxiously toward Nova, seeking instructions. She simply nods her head, acknowledging the characters' decision and allowing her soldiers to stand down.

Once the incident with the peasant is resolved, a tall, skeletally thin older man dressed in Arpad livery (obviously one of Nova's ghouls) approaches the characters and bows respectfully. He informs them that his mistress has arranged a private meeting room for them. He notes that they may be tired from their journey and states that appropriate sustenance awaits them if they have a desire to feed. He leads the characters to a small, comfortable room to one side of the mansion's entry hall and tells them that his mistress plans to join them shortly.

If the characters indicate that they are in need of vitae, the ghoul brings them several cowed peasants upon which they may slake their thirst. Note that the firebrand, should he accompany the characters at this point for whatever reason, reacts poorly to the coterie's disposable morality if they feed on the peasants. Nova waits until after they have fed before she joins them.

Nova Arpad is an attractive woman with long, black hair and cold, blue eyes. Her proud features and expensive but tasteful clothing attest to her noble birth. Her attitude and bearing indicate without a doubt that she is in charge of the meeting as she greets the characters.

"Thank you for coming, as your sires assured me you would. Know that you will be serving your elders in assisting me in the small endeavor I have in mind. A treasured piece of jewelry has been stolen from me and I wish to have it returned and the thief brought to me for retribution. Recently, a tribe of Egyptites — or Gypsies as the common folk name them — passed through my lands. I have reason to believe that one of their number gained access to my treasury and absconded with several valuable items. I have prepared a list of the missing jewels, but I expect that some of them may have been sold or traded by now. One piece in particular concerns me, for it is an ancient relic and I am loath to see it disappear from my possession.

"The item is a gold pectoral, formed from linked tablets inscribed with intricate symbols. It was a gift to me from my sire who had it in turn from his. I have no idea as to its origin, but its antiquity is undeniable.

"My charge to you is this: Travel to the camp of the Torenū tribe of Egyptites, retrieve any of my missing jewelry — especially the gold pectoral — and return my property and the thief to me. I will reward you handsomely for your success and will consider your sires' favors suitably discharged."

She adds that the Gypsies left the area several days ago, but she does not think they will be difficult to find. She believes the tribe was headed toward Kronstadt and the characters should be able to intercept them due to the tendency of the traveling folk to stop and camp for several days at a time.

If the characters assisted the peasant earlier, she adds the following:

"I hope that your foolish indulgence of the troublemaker earlier this evening does not betoken a softness in your attitude toward seeing justice done."

On the other hand, if the characters did not interfere with Arpad's soldiers, Nova compliments their wisdom:

"I could see by your approval of my disciplinary actions concerning upstarts and rebels that you have a proper sense of justice and know that you will do all you can to assist me."

Nova ends the discourse by giving the characters a list of her missing jewelry and informing them that they may spend the day safely in special rooms below the her manor where her servants (along with any retainers brought by the characters) can guard them. If the rebellious peasant was taken into custody by the soldiers, Arpad invites the characters to view his painful execution (by dismemberment) in the courtyard of the inn as an example for the locals. She chides them for their lack of mettle if they demur; she seems pleased if they agree to watch her administration of justice.

Some (or all) of the characters may be Nova's fellow princes. If so, while she acknowledges them as princes of their own domains, she makes it clear that she was established as a prince in Transylvania —

and one of the major proponents of the Siebenburgen — long before they arrived on the scene. They would not even have domains to rule without Nova's early guidance. Further, they have yet to truly prove themselves. Though not plainly stated as such, it should be clear that Nova regards the characters as little more than glorified fortune hunters, while she herself is a royal princess by birth.

If the rebel is under the protection of one of the characters, no one harms him so long as he remains in the company of the group's retainers. The young man's name is Robi Bertok. Born in Mediasch, he has acquired an education from scholars at the local collegia and, with his knowledge, a growing dissatisfaction at the lot of the peasantry. Rumors of uprisings in Western Europe have reached his ears and he wishes to improve the condition of his own people in a similar fashion. Although he is innately resentful of authority, he is also enough of a realist to acknowledge that he owes his life to the characters' intervention. If they make him a ghoul, he serves them loyally, of course.

All of the missing items are gold. They are:

- A gold pectoral, formed from linked tablets and inscribed with symbols;
- Two heavy gold bracelets etched with leaf designs;
- A pair of earrings, triangular in shape inset with gemstones and with gold scrollwork;
- An oval brooch set with a large, polished amber.

SCENE III: AN EVENING WITH THE TRAVELING FOLK

The characters may spend the day at Nova's manor house, and set out the following evening in pursuit of the Torenū Gypsies. The road from Mediasch to Kronstadt passes through a river valley before it winds through the foothills leading to the Transylvanian Alps. The city of Kronstadt guards one of the passes through the mountains.

Clear signs of the passage of several wagons and many horses indicate that the characters are, in fact, going in the right direction. If the characters have an enclosed carriage, they may safely travel during the day; otherwise, they must confine their travel time to the evening hours and make provisions to take shelter before each sunrise.

After several days of travel, the Gypsy campsite comes into view on the outskirts of Kronstadt. The camp consists of many enclosed wagons arranged in a rough circle around a central bonfire. Smaller campfires near the individual wagons serve as focal points for the various family units that make up the tribe. A series of ropes strung between trees provides a pen for the horses; goats, dogs and chickens wander freely within the circle of the wagons, not straying from the protection of the firelight.

If the characters time their arrival to take place just after sunset in order to take advantage of as much of the evening as possible, they find the camp bustling with activity. The smell of rich stew permeates the air, along with the odor of its human and animal inhabitants. Near the fire, a group of musicians play raucous yet oddly evocative melodies for their own entertainment. About 30 adults and half as many children make up the Torenū tribe.

The characters may decide to send retainers to scout the camp in the daytime before approaching themselves. From their ghouls and servants, they learn that the Gypsies arrived two days ago and have already attracted visitors from nearby Kronstadt. Citizens visit the Torenu camp to bargain for horses, visit the tinsmiths, and distract themselves from the tedium of their normal routine by gawking at the exotic, colorfully clad strangers. Several Gypsy musicians have accepted commissions to perform for various wealthy townsfolk in the next few days. The camp also boasts a fortune-teller of some skill, a woman named Delizbieta, who plies her trade only in the evenings. The characters must investigate the camp themselves to acquire any more information concerning the Arpad jewels, although (assuming the characters describe the missing items to their servants) one of the characters' retainers believes he spotted a heavy gold bracelet matching one of the items in Nova's list in the possession of one of the men of the camp.

If the characters are well dressed (as befits princes), their arrival in the camp causes an immediate stir, since they are obviously nobles. Anasztaz, concealed in the shadows near his wagon (it has a false bottom that serves as his daytime resting place), notices them immediately and recognizes them as Cainites. He assumes—correctly—that he is the reason for their presence. If they are dressed like local townsfolk or ordinary travelers, they are initially accorded only that notice given to any of the folks the Gypsies might entertain (or rob). However they are clad, Anasztaz eventually notices them and passes the word to Delizbieta (unless the characters make a beeline for her fortune-telling area when they first enter the camp, in which case, she'll know about them before Anasztaz does).

Delizbieta is occupied with telling fortunes for a number of city folk who have braved the night in order to avail themselves of her skill. As soon as she can, she approaches the characters to discover, either through conversing with them or through telling their fortunes, why they have sought out the Gypsies.

"Greetings, strangers. Welcome to the hospitality of our camp, the warmth of our fires and the talents of our people. Few are those who walk beneath the stars. You must have great need of us to risk the dangers of travel at night." She gestures toward her clients, now making their way in a group from the camp. "These good folk have sought my services to pierce the veil that conceals the future. Do you desire the same?" As she speaks, she studies each one of the characters carefully (noting their pale auras through her use of Auspex).

Characters may make a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 8) to perceive that beneath her shawl Delizbieta wears a heavy gold necklace (perhaps a pectoral?). Three successes indicates that this is, indeed, Nova Arpad's prize relic, while five successes reveals that the markings on the pieces of the necklace bear a striking similarity to the cuneiform characters on the clay tablets found in Act I.

Although they may now realize that their chief prize is (literally) within their grasp, the characters still have no clue concerning the whereabouts of the other pieces. They may assume that the rest of the jewelry is either in Delizbieta's wagon or else scattered throughout the camp.

Delizbieta does her best to entice the characters to allow her to tell their fortunes. Although she prefers to do so on a one-to-one basis, she consents to a group fortune if the characters seem reluctant to separate.



DARK TIDES FALLING

BEHIND THE SCENES

The individual who stole the Arpad jewels does, in fact, travel with the Torenus — the Ravnos once known as Izydor Torenus. He was responsible for the near destruction of most of his tribe by leading them into Transylvania in the mid-14th century, where many of them were enslaved. Faking his death through his mastery of Chimerstry, he wandered the area by himself for several years until he conned his way into the good graces of one of the Tzimisce *voivodes* (no mean feat for a Ravnos!). Persuading his patron to alter his facial features through Vicissitude, Izydor assumed a new identity.

Izydor has recently rejoined the remnants of the Torenus tribe, catching up with them as they arrived in Mediasch and seeking out Delizbieta, once his closest companion. Before his “death,” Izydor Embraced Delizbieta, destroying her innate magical ability in the process. Ever the con man, Izydor managed to convince Delizbieta that he is one of her distant cousins. She does not recognize him as her sire, but believes him to be Anaszta Torenus.

Before the Torenus family left Mediasch, “Anaszta” paid a clandestine visit to the home of the city’s prince, Nova Arpad, and absconded with a goodly portion of her jewels, including a strange gold pectoral with odd markings that appealed to him. He has since presented the heavy necklace to Delizbieta, who wears it proudly over her blouse (though it is usually hidden under her shawl).

Although she no longer possesses any magical ability, Delizbieta still retains her fortune-telling acuity. She is so attuned to the tools of her trade (a deck of Tarot cards) that she is able to intuit true readings without any supernatural assistance.

If the characters attempt some ruse such as passing themselves off as jewel merchants (thus hoping either to buy back Nova’s jewels or at least ascertain which pieces are still in the Gypsies’ possession), Delizbieta insists on telling their fortunes. She claims that she cannot allow her people to do business with unlucky merchants. If they continue to refuse, she simply states, “These people are under my protection. You deal with me and me alone.”

By this time, the implication should be clear that she realizes that she is dealing with Cainites. If the characters attempt to Dominate her, she expends Willpower to resist them long enough to summon Anaszta to her aid. If circumstances develop along these lines, Anaszta and the other men of the tribe approach and surround the characters, clearly ready to defend their camp if necessary. (If it seems that a fight is imminent, go directly to Scene IV.)

Assuming that the characters consent (even if just out of idle curiosity) to having their fortunes told, Delizbieta — now on familiar ground — escorts them to her wagon, where she has a small table surrounded by freestanding panels of curtains set outside the back of the wagon. She seats herself behind the table and asks the characters to agree upon and formulate a question while she shuffles a deck of large, elaborately decorated cards.

Anytime that the characters are in close physical proximity to Delizbieta (i.e., for the remainder of this scene), they have the opportunity to perceive more details about the pectoral she wears (or to notice it for the first time if their previous attempt failed).

Characters may or may not be familiar with the Tarot, since the cards are only making their first appearance in Europe and do not, in fact, achieve widespread use for some time yet. If they have never seen Tarot cards, Delizbieta explains that the cards focus the currents of past, present and future to reveal an individual’s (or a group’s) life pattern to an enlightened reader. She asks each member of the group who wishes to be included in the reading to touch the cards.

Ideally, Delizbieta’s reading should reflect the events still to come in the story — i.e., the growing strength of the Anarch movement and possible estrangement between the characters and their sires, patrons and other elders who control their actions. Conflict, turmoil, tribulation and difficult decisions should be foreshadowed for the characters. Storytellers can either simply describe the fortune or fortunes without going into great detail or may avail themselves of the sample reading(s) provided in the sidebar.

After Delizbieta has finished telling the characters’ fortunes, she looks at them. A look of awe and respect appears on her face.

“This has been a powerful experience for me. I can sense great forces gathering around you and the cards confirm my feelings.”

Before she can explain herself further and before the characters have the opportunity to inquire about Nova’s jewels, the Gypsy camp erupts into violence as the Inquisition arrives abruptly on the scene.

SCENE IV: INTERRUPTION BY FIRE

The night explodes with the sound of hoofbeats and the screams of terrified Gypsies as a small army of 20 mounted soldiers led by a figure in priestly robes rides into the camp.

Cries of “Heretics! Heathens! Witches! Diabolists! Prepare your souls to meet the fires of Hell!” spew from the attackers as they swing their swords at anyone within reach. One or two of the soldiers toss their torches at or into the wagons, hoping to set fire to the wooden structures. Others keep hold of their torches to provide them with enough light to fight.

Delizbieta turns to the characters, with a look of abject panic on her face.

“Help us and whatever you want is yours. I swear it!” She then runs to join the battle to protect her mortal kin.

BACKGROUND TO THE ATTACK

A small keep just outside Kronstadt serves as the headquarters for Father Giacomo Renzo, a self-styled missionary from the Inquisition who has come to Eastern Europe to spread the fires of purification and salvation to the heretics and pagans of the area. Along with a loyal army of knights dedicated to the eradication of evil, Father Giacomo keeps a vigilant watch over suspicious elements of the population — particularly transients such as Gypsies.

The arrival of the Torenus family in the region drew many citizens of Kronstadt to the campsite. Some of these reported back to Father Giacomo. The tale of the alluring nocturnal fortune-teller Delizbieta aroused his curiosity and he called together a group of religious knights for an attack on the Gypsy camp. His intention is to kill or capture as many Gypsies as possible (or at least drive them away from Kronstadt) and to secure evidence of supernatural or demonic elements associated with the Gypsies.

DELIZBIETA'S FORTUNES

Storytellers conversant with Tarot may wish to roleplay the reading for their players, thus providing all participants with a chance for improvisational storytelling. If a Storyteller does not feel comfortable doing so or simply wants to ensure that Delizbieta's readings move the story along, she may either use the following descriptions to simulate Delizbieta's actions or utilize a pre-stacked deck set up with the pattern detailed below.

If simulating a reading, Delizbieta selects an appropriate card from the deck before shuffling to represent the Querent (the person or group whose fortune is being told). One of the face cards of the suits would be the most appropriate for the characters; Major Arcana should not be used for selecting Querents.

Delizbieta proceeds to shuffle the cards, then asks the characters to cut the cards while concentrating on the question they wish the cards to address. If the Storyteller pre-stacks the cards, she should use the cards described below, laying them out as Delizbieta gives the spiel concerning their meanings. In this case, the characters should be allowed to touch, but not cut, the cards before she begins.

Delizbieta takes the cards back from the characters and lays the top card so that it completely covers the Querent card.

"The Moon represents powerful forces and passions outside your control. You stand in the midst of these forces. This covers you."

Again choosing the top card, she lays this one across the first card, forming a cross with the two cards.

"The Three of Swords denotes great sorrow. Your heart is pierced by the conflict that surrounds you, threatening that which means most to you. This crosses you."

She places the next card (again from the top of the deck) just below the cross.

"The Eight of Cups indicates abandonment in your past. Those who supported you have already begun to withdraw their approval, perhaps seeing in you a threat to their own authority. This is the basis or foundation of your present dilemma."

Delizbieta places the fourth card just above the cross, in a vertical line with the card below the cross.

"The Hierophant or High Priest stands for tradition and faith. It is this force that holds the power to unlock and translate the secrets of the future. This crowns you, for it lies immediately ahead of you."

She draws the next card and places it to the right of the cross (her right).

"Death. Do not be alarmed, for we all know that death is but the beginning of new life. It is a renewal, and it lies in your immediate past. You are newly come from this renewal — no, for I can see that this is not so — you have recently experienced a transformation that will greatly affect your future actions. This lies just behind you."

She places the sixth card to the left of the cross, in a line with the preceding card.

"The Two of Pentacles or Coins. This card stands for balance. Its position indicates to me that your actions in the coming times will sway the delicate arrangement of forces in the world around you. What you do will affect more lives than your own. This determines your extended future."

Delizbieta positions the seventh card to the right (her right) and a little below the cross formed by the first six cards. This is the first of a stack of four cards that completes the reading.

"The World represents fulfillment. It occupies the position of your innermost concerns. You have lived through difficult times, yet you long for your existence to have meaning and you fear that you will remain forever a pawn of someone greater than yourself."

She places the eighth card just above the previous card.

"The Seven of Cups symbolizes temptation. Its place in your fortune represents the forces outside you who wish you to enact their will and who lure you with promises. Weigh carefully the value of their words against the reality of their actions. You face a time of great trials and tribulations." (Note: Delizbieta's wording in this passage should remind characters of Anatole's prophecy in Scene I.)

She places the ninth card above the eighth one.

"The Ten of Cups represents satiation. This is your goal, to satisfy your desires and fulfill your ambitions in whatever way you can. It is a deceptive card in this position, for you may achieve one thing only to find that you really desire something else."

She places the tenth and final card above the last three.

"The Wheel of Fortune is the card of Destiny. This is the culmination of what has gone before. Just as the wheel turns, everything repeats itself in an unending cycle of activity. But here, in this time, you stand as the turners of that wheel. You are part of fate but in some sense, you are your own destiny."

THE BATTLE RAGES

In most battles that pit Cainites against mortal warriors, victory inevitably falls to the Cainites, whose exceptional prowess, speed and resistance to normal damage prevail over human limitations. Not so, in this case.

The soldiers attack in four groups of five. Skilled in mounted combat, they are capable of using both hands to wield weapons (or hold a torch in one hand and swing a sword with the other) while using their knees to control their steeds.

The knights spread out to assault the Gypsy camp, thus minimizing the chance that a single character can use Disciplines such as Presence to affect more than a small group. In addition, the leader of each group of five possesses True Faith. One entire group is composed of warriors who are "neutrals" (mortals who are immune to certain vampiric Disciplines) thus rendering them immune to Disciplines such as Dominate and Presence.

Leading the army is Father Giacomo, whose own True Faith makes him a formidable opponent in and of himself.

While it would be unfortunate for the continuation of the story if all the characters were to meet Final Death or be captured by the Inquisitor, the Storyteller should not pull any punches in presenting her troupe with as tough a challenge as possible. Up until now, the story has been relatively light on combat (barring foolish character decisions). With this scene, the false sense of civility disappears, revealing that, for Cainites, the struggle to survive is too often bloody and violent.

The men of the Toren Gypsies are capable fighters, but they lack the discipline and the superior weaponry of the knights. The members of the camp attempt to get their women and children to safety in the forests, abandoning their wagons and livestock. Some try to reach their horses to aid in their flight. A few actually sacrifice themselves, staying behind to fight (and, in all likelihood, die) to give their kin time to escape.

Delizbieta and Anaszta employ their Chimerstry to befuddle and disorient the attackers. Delizbieta uses her powers to buy time for the Gypsies to flee; Anaszta escapes by means of his illusions.

For obvious reasons (Game Over!), the Storyteller should avoid having the characters meet Final Death if at all possible. While Giacomo's knights are content to simply exterminate Gypsy vermin, they are also comfortable with taking captives. Captured Gypsies who show signs of being redeemable (particularly children) are sold as slaves to Christian masters for their own salvation. If the characters display evidence of supernatural powers, the knights are especially eager to capture these flesh-bound demons so that their leader may examine them and extort information from them before consigning their bodies to the flames.

SUGGESTED TACTICS

The attackers may use any or all of the following courses of action during the course of the battle:

- **Group Attacks:** Each group of five concentrates on a single target (i.e., one of the characters). Surrounding their quarry, three of them use their mounts to confine her range of movement while the other two flank her, attacking her from both sides. (Characters in this predicament suffer a one die penalty to their Dexterity due to the limited space.)

- **Holy Water:** Father Giacomo and the group leaders are all armed with three vials of holy water apiece. When splashed upon a character, each vial does two levels of aggravated damage. The attacker rolls Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 7). Aggravated damage may only be soaked with Fortitude.

- **Crossbow Bolts:** At least one soldier in every group is skilled with the crossbow and will attempt to fire at the characters before their comrades engage in melee. Since crossbows take four turns to reload, they will only be effective in the early part of the battle.

- **Fire:** Although the soldiers carry torches to enable them to see in the dark, they are not averse to waving them in the faces of their enemies. Cainites so beset must roll for Rötschreck or else enter a fear frenzy. Characters hit by thrown torches suffer damage according to the rules presented in *Vampire: The Dark Ages*. Aggravated damage from fire may only be soaked using Fortitude.

- **Special Powers:** Some of the soldiers are immune to the mental or social attacks from Disciplines such as Dominate and Presence. These soldiers automatically resist attempts to force them to flee or surrender and do not succumb to Awe or Entrancement.



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AFTERMATH

While it is entirely possible that the characters may emerge victorious over the attackers or use various Disciplines to escape from them, in all likelihood at least some of the characters may end up as prisoners of the Inquisition.

The knights take these unfortunates to their keep, imprisoning them in the dungeon where Father Giacomo questions them in true Inquisitorial fashion. (Tzimisce characters receiving Father Giacomo's ministrations may experience an ironic appreciation of his skills and talents in extracting information through the use of torture.)

ESCAPE FROM THE INQUISITION

The characters who escape Father Giacomo may need to rescue captured companions before they proceed any further. If Delizbieta is captured, the Cainites must rescue her in order to obtain the pectoral; since they probably assume that she stole Nova's jewelry, they might wish to return her to Nova as well.

The characters have several advantages that should help them stage a rescue. Their Disciplines should help them gain access to Giacomo's church and they will not be hampered by the element of surprise or the presence of mounted opponents as they were in the Gypsy camp. Of course, the ground surrounding the chapel and the chapel itself are imbued with the power of faith....

Any knights who were wounded in the battle require time to heal; Cainites can recover from damage much more quickly.

In the event that one of the characters happens to be prince of Kronstadt (a possibility from Act I), she may use her own influence to rouse the city's guards or her personal army — if she has one — for an assault on the church. If Robi (from Scene II) has joined the characters' retinue, he proves adept at infiltrating the church and makes it clear (if asked) that he would enjoy the opportunity to strike back at this symbol of authoritarian rule.

In addition, the characters may decide to augment their numbers by creating childe for the express purpose of assaulting the church. (Some problems require desperate solutions.) The consequences of doing so may occupy the characters for some time after the events of the story reach their conclusion....

Aside from noting the direction taken by the priest and his knights as they left the camp, characters might use any number of ways to locate the Inquisitor's stronghold. A character with Auspex might use her Heightened Senses ability to discern the tracks of several horses and follow the tracks to the edifice. Some of the Gypsies who were not actually fighting may have noticed which way the band of knights went. Several people in Kronstadt know where the church is and might be persuaded to tell the characters.

The Storyteller should allow characters a reasonable chance to succeed in the rescue; if they fail to make the attempt, the imprisoned characters should have an opportunity (though severely limited by their situation) to effect their own escape. If Delizbieta is the only Cainite captured and the characters choose not to rescue her, Anaszta comes to her aid eventually, but the characters then have no chance to recover the pectoral. If this is the case, go to Scene V and treat the situation as an utter failure. Should the characters communicate their desire to acquire the pectoral to Anaszta, he might promise to give it to them in exchange for the characters' help in rescuing Delizbieta. (The characters would be wise to spit in their palms and shake hands on the deal, since Anaszta feels no overwhelming necessity to keep an oath given to non-Gypsies unless they make him follow ancient customs to assure his truthfulness.)

WHY THE CHARACTERS CAN'T WIN

Whatever happens, the characters cannot achieve total success here. They may return with the pectoral, they might recover two other pieces of jewelry, but everything else has disappeared with the fleeing Gypsies, who have (for a time) scattered to the four winds. Further, unless they are prepared to overcome Anaszta and Delizbieta and drag them back to Nova, they have no thief to present to the vengeful prince of Mediasch. Both Gypsy Cainites fight to prevent being taken. While Delizbieta is reluctant to harm the characters (at least initially), her first loyalty is to a fellow Gypsy; she will kill to protect Anaszta if she must. Anaszta has no reservations about playing tough if either he or Delizbieta are threatened, but he prefers to utilize his Disciplines to confuse things enough to allow the two to escape, if possible.

Should the Storyteller want the characters to achieve complete success, she is free to do so, but that has a profound effect on the rest of the story. In essence, by setting the characters up to fail (at least partially), they are shown how little their elders actually think of them. Should they lose their princedom over a few pieces of jewelry, the essential unfairness of rule by generations is brought home to them personally. Further, it shakes them up and makes the characters want to prove their competence, regain their losses and burn for revenge — all great starting points for more stories.

Anaszta must escape the battle. It is possible that the characters did not meet him before the attack and discover that he is the thief they seek. If the characters succeed in rescuing Delizbieta or if she perceives that they helped defend the Gypsies, she repays them, giving them the pectoral if they request it from her. She denies having stolen it and, although she now realizes where Anaszta acquired it, she does not betray him to the characters. The rest of Nova's jewelry remains in the ruins of the Gypsy camp or on the persons of the survivors of the attack. (Those who got away are nowhere to be found.) The characters may be able to recover a few pieces (one bracelet and the brooch) if they search the site. Unless they make a thorough search, they only retrieve the pectoral.

With only a partial success (at best) to their credit, the characters should now arrange to meet with Nova Arpad and report on their mission. Needless to say, she is not entirely pleased with the result. If they recovered the pectoral, she is somewhat satisfied, but does not enjoy being cheated of exacting her revenge on the thief. Nova makes her displeasure known to the characters as well as to their sires.

THE PECTORAL

During their return trip, the characters may wish to examine the pectoral. If they noticed the strange marks engraved upon it and wish to do so, they may make a wax impression or other copy of those marks before they return the item to Nova. If they have retained a copy of the key used to translate the clay tablets in Act I, they will be able to decipher the message contained in the engravings.

The message reads:

I have found the key to power. It lies in surrender. Thus shall my name be forgotten or revered by my brethren. From within my own destruction, I shall fasten my gaze upon those who would seek my exalted destiny for themselves. Lo, let them be wary, for I have seen the unfolding of fate. I shall come again when my time is nigh.

DARK TIDES FALLING

FATHER GIACOMO RENZO, INQUISITOR

A member of the Dominicans, Father Giacomo eagerly joined the Inquisition and became one of its fiercest agents. Seeing the infighting that characterized much of Church (and Inquisitorial) politics as a distraction to the real mission of the Inquisition, he requested and received permission from his superiors to travel to Eastern Europe. Thus, he has become one of the first Inquisitors to establish himself in the region. He does not intend to be the last.

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Judge

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Intimidate (Interrogation) 4

Skills: Etiquette 2, Herbalism 1, Melee 1, Ride 3

Knowledges: Academics (Theology) 4, Law 1, Linguistics (Latin, Hungarian) 2, Occult 1

Numina: Faith 2

Backgrounds: Allies (knights) 5, Influence (Kronstadt) 2, Resources 2

Virtues: Conscience 4, Self-Control 4, Courage 5

Road (Via Humanitatis): 9

Willpower: 9

Image: Father Giacomo stands just under six feet tall. His stark features and gaunt figure testify to a life of self-denial. He wears the robes of his Dominican order over chain mail in battle. He has thinning, brown hair and intense dark-brown eyes. Father Giacomo moves constantly, pacing when he speaks and gesticulating with his hands to emphasize his words. He is in his mid-30s.

Roleplaying Hints: You have found your true calling here in the wilderness of Transylvania. While your brothers in Italy, Spain and France rest secure amid familiar surroundings, you deliberately seek to place yourself on the front lines of the war against evil. The stench of demons surrounds you and your few, trusted knights. Only your faith allows you to prevail.

GIACOMO'S KNIGHTS

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Leadership 1

Skills: Archery 2, Etiquette 1, Melee 3, Ride 3

Knowledges: Academics 1, Linguistics 2, Occult 1, Seneschal 1

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

Road (Via Humanitatis): 8 (9 for those with True Faith 1)

Willpower: 7

Image: Strong and fierce to a man, these knights wear good chain mail and tabards with crosses and flames embroidered on the front. They wear their hair cut short for comfort under helmets and most of them are bearded.

Roleplaying Hints: Born and bred to fight heresy and evil, you throw yourselves wholeheartedly into battle. You fight hard; you fight well; you fight for God.

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SCENE V: UNWELCOME RECEPTIONS

The characters meet again with Nova Arpad, this time in one of her other houses in Mediasch (not her primary haven). She greets them expectantly, barely going through the motions of polite conversation before demanding to know the outcome of their mission for her.

PARTIAL SUCCESS

If the characters recover the pectoral and some of the other pieces of jewelry, Nova quickly takes possession of the items with a perfunctory nod of thanks.

"I see, however, that you failed to recover the scoundrel who took these from me. I am disappointed both in you and in your sires' assurances of your capability. It is obvious to me that our trust in you is sorely misplaced. My servants have the payment you deserve for the little you have done. You may collect it from them as you leave. Go, now, before I forget that you are my guests and (sneeringly) fellow princes."

The characters may collect one Librum in silver each on their way out. Though the equivalent of a fortune to peasants (who rarely see coins and use barter instead), to offer such a sum to the characters is highly insulting — especially if any of them are nobles.

If the characters produce someone to blame (and for Nova to torture), she feels much more generous, though still annoyed that not everything was recovered. Though she acts more cordial toward the characters and offers them five Librum each (not a fortune, but not pauper's wages, either), she makes it clear to them that she does not consider the debt their sires owe paid — after all, they didn't bring back *all* the jewelry. She complains much more loudly to their sires, who likely take it out on the characters at the next available opportunity....

UTTER FAILURE

If the characters fail to recover even the pectoral, Nova betrays the rage she has so long held in check. (See *Transylvania by Night* for more information on the personality and motivations of Nova Arpad.) Although she does not succumb to frenzy, she screams vituperations at the characters for their total incompetence.

"You wretched fools! What sort of spineless whelps did your sires spawn and how could they ever have conceived that you were worthy of the immortal gift you received from them? Leave my presence immediately and count yourselves fortunate that you *can* leave with your unlivs!" (Needless to say, there will be no recompense for the characters for evoking this reaction from their patron.)

The characters are now free to return to their homes to lick their wounds (both physical and emotional) or to remain together to compare notes on what they have just been through. They may speculate on the larger implications of the events taking place all around them. Certainly, the presence of Robi should make them aware that the peasant uprisings addressed by Lucita are beginning to find resonance closer to home.

The characters may also attempt to make sense of the various cryptic prophecies, omens and fortunes that have plagued them since their first encounters with Anatole and his companion.

Characters will not have long to ponder these issues, however, for a few weeks after their audience with Nova Arpad, each character is summoned to her sire. Without exception, the sires are angry at their progeny for failing to satisfy the prince of Mediasch. The characters' sires' debts to her are still unpaid and they have only their childe to blame.

Good relations between sire and childe fray; bad ones worsen. The Storyteller should handle each scene between the characters and their sires individually, tailoring the responses to the particulars of the relationship between sire and child in each case. Once again, the characters may be ordered to drink the blood of their sires and suffer severe consequences (such as the loss of fiefs, status or even — horrors! — physical punishment) if they refuse.

The Storyteller should discern what is most important to each character (or what the character fears most) and use that to adjust the punishments meted out by the characters' sires. Some possibilities include:

- Physical torture for a short time accompanied by the threat that her sire may simply choose (as a whim) to annihilate the character. If the character grovels enough or agrees to a Blood Oath, she is released. Failing that, allies may rescue her.
- Loss of the character's princedom. Some of their former fiefs may be left open, without any prince, others may be claimed by their sires' more favored childe or by other Cainites eager to make a name for themselves.

- Enforced Blood Oath accompanied by the enforced acceptance of a "seneschal" appointed by the character's sire to "oversee" the character's fief.

- Repudiation of the character. The sire refuses to acknowledge any longer that the character is his childe and takes steps to have her declared unfit for the clan. She might then be branded as Caitiff and shunned by fellow clan members. This loss could deprive the character of the chance to learn new levels of Disciplines, destroy trade agreements or ruin the character financially. Certainly, it will adversely affect her social standing.

- Demands for service. The sires may make ridiculous demands on the characters, sending them scurrying through a series of tasks with the understanding that failing at any of them results in immediate banishment, punishment or death. This incidentally gives the Storyteller all the excuses she needs to send the characters on many more stories.

Whatever inventive penalty the sires use should seem excessively cruel and far out of proportion to the characters' failure. The remainder of the story works best if the characters entertain feelings of anger and resentment toward their sires (and against Nova as well). Some may even dally with thoughts of vengeance. They should, at least, be willing to listen to the anarchs they encounter in Scene VII.

SCENE VI: THE PROPHET SPEAKS AGAIN

This scene takes place a few weeks after the characters have met with their sires. The Storyteller should emphasize to the play-



DARK TIDES FALLING



ers that the characters' fortunes seem to have taken a decided downward turn. Some of them have undoubtedly been stripped of their princedoms; others may have suffered physical torments at the hands of their sires before finally being released. Now they are (for the moment, at least) veritable outcasts in Cainite society; their elders treat them as inconsequential failures; many of their peers have nothing to do with them.

The characters may decide to remain near one another to weather the storm of reproof and lend one another moral support. Anatole's prophecies concerning trials and tribulations and Delizbietra's foretelling of a great testing should give them pause.

When the characters are all gathered together in one place, they receive a visit from Octavio. This time, however, Octavio has come not to berate but to warn. He hails them with an outstretched arm in the Roman fashion, saluting them as if they were his commanding officers.

"Ave, militates! Hear now these words, for on them rests the balance of times to come. Lo, I beheld a great upheaval among the sons of the first born of Adam. Beneath their feet opened a great chasm. Upon its lip they stood, poised to fall. Opposite them stood the generations, angry and resentful.

Thus, it is given to me to speak this warning unto you, O keepers of the balance and bearers of the signs of the last days! And the childer shall be divided, brother against brother, hands raised against one another, even as Caine himself once slew his kin. The lesser shall become greater and the great shall fall in a whirlwind of blood. One of the eldest has gone down into the pit, never to return. Another awaits doom from the kiss of his ungrateful childer.

"Arise now, and go forth, all ye who hear my words."

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Octavio is, of course, foreseeing the coming Anarch Revolt and the diablerie of the Tzimisce Antediluvian, although he cannot put those exact words to his prophesy.

When he finishes his speech, Octavio grows silent, as if in deep thought. If the characters wish to question him further to learn more details of his prophesy, he tells them the following:

"The Lord of Fiends stands upon the edge of destruction. Whether or not he meets that end lies within your province. You possess the knowledge, hidden among your stores, of his resting place. One will come in supplication to you asking for what you have. Be wary of how you respond to his pleas for help. Be wise in your choices."

As abruptly as he arrived, Octavio takes his leave.

SCENE VII: A VISITOR AND A PROPOSAL

Within a few days of Octavio's appearance, the characters receive yet another visitor. This is Dragomir Basarab, the Tzimisce they encountered in Act II.

Dragomir engages in desultory conversation with the characters as he attempts to feel them out with regard to their attitudes toward their sires, elders in general and the rigid hierarchy of rule by generation. Once again, the Tzimisce has diablerie on his mind, but this time his target is no less than the founder of his clan.

If the characters have had enough by now and seem likely candidates for the nascent Anarch uprising, he couches his request as follows:

"I represent a group of Cainites who, like you, grow weary of bearing the humiliating yoke of our sire's capricious and intolerable

tyranny. I sympathize with your current difficulties and would like to offer you the opportunity to increase your own power and restore your losses. But I need your help in order to do so. I hear that one of you has in your possession a book that purports to reveal the resting place of the Ancient Tzimisce whose blood flows in all the members of my clan. I believe this tome is called the *Book of the Land*. If you would be so kind as to search out this book and the information it contains, you may accompany me and my... friends... to that place. There we can partake of the vitae of one of the Antediluvians and strike a decisive blow against those who have for so long moved us like pieces on a gameboard."

If, on the other hand, he suspects that the characters would oppose such a scheme despite everything they have been through, he takes a different approach:

"I have had much time to reconsider my unfortunate action that led to the death of my sire, as you know. I have tortured myself nightly since that time, wishing I could undo that shameful deed. But I cannot. There is, however, one thing I can do. I have heard rumors that certain ungrateful Cainites — anarchs, they call themselves — search for the resting place of the Ancient founder of my clan. When they find it, and I have reason to believe that they will succeed in their search, they will not hesitate to do unto him even as I did to the one who created me. I would like to prevent that; I am willing to give my own unlife, if necessary to protect the Ancient."

"Unfortunately, I do not have the means of locating his resting place. I have heard that one of you has in your possession a book that purports to reveal the resting place of the Tzimisce Antediluvian. I believe this tome is called the *Book of the Land*. If you could retrieve from the book the knowledge of his resting place, we could travel there and make preparations to prevent such a grave crime from taking place."

Although the characters may not realize it, one of them (whoever acquired the library along with her princedom in Act I) does, in fact, possess a book entitled *Librum Terram*. Within its pages lies information pointing to an old church in the Carpathians, near a fortress now abandoned and gone to ruin. A cryptic passage refers to the "great beast who lies in slumber beneath the unholy altar surrounded by his native soil."

The Storyteller should make it possible (though it might be difficult if the book lies in a library now inaccessible to the character due to her loss of her fief or city) for the characters to retrieve the volume. It does, in fact, describe the church and its location well enough for characters familiar with the region to find it with minimal difficulty.

The characters should realize that this is what Octavio alluded to in his most recent prophecy and that both Anatole and Delizbieta foresaw the characters' involvement in the attempt to locate the head of the Tzimisce clan. How they choose to involve themselves remains in the hands of the characters. They have the opportunity to attempt either to protect the sleeping founder or to join those who wish to diablerize him.

If they believe Dragomir (whichever story he tells them), he accompanies them on their journey to the church. If, however, they lie to him and either direct him wrongly or else state that they cannot find the book, he pretends to leave and then follows them as they unwittingly lead him (and his friends) to their rendezvous with destiny.

Should the characters destroy the book or refuse to go, they are not involved in this event. Some time later, the characters hear that radical Cainites of Clan Tzimisce slew the founder of their clan. The characters will know they might have prevented this or benefited by it, but chose inaction instead. For them, this portion of the story is over. The Storyteller should feel free to reduce the experience gained by the characters to reflect their lack of initiative. If the system in Chapter Two is used for between-centuries advancement, the Storyteller might also assign penalties that simulate this.

The rest of this story assumes the characters do accompany Dragomir and involve themselves in these events.

SCENE VIII: THE BETRAYAL

In this scene, the characters have the opportunity to participate in one of the pivotal events of Cainite history: the (apparent) diablerie of the Tzimisce Antediluvian and the beginnings of the movement that eventually lead to the Anarch Revolt and the formation of both the Camarilla and the Sabbat.

Storytellers might wish to become familiar with the account of this event as described in Lambach's entry in *Children of the Inquisition*. In brief, from that account, it is clear that the actual Antediluvian did not suffer the same fate as his Lasombra counterpart, but used his powers to convince his upstart childer that they succeeded in destroying him. Regardless of their part in this attempt — either as eager participants or as failed defenders — the characters should believe that the diablerie was successful.

Since it is likely that players are privy to the real information, Storytellers may want to remind them of the difference between player knowledge and character knowledge. All you cheaters who are reading this and still intend to play it need to bear that in mind as well.

THE JOURNEY

Traveling from their current location to the church where the Tzimisce Antediluvian sleeps should take several nights, if not several weeks. The Storyteller should describe an arduous trek high into the Carpathian Mountains. If Dragomir accompanies the characters, he attempts to keep their spirits up and continues to probe them as to their suitability to join his Anarch allies.

If he is following them without their knowledge, he remains undetected until he is certain that he knows where they are going. Then he pushes himself to arrive there ahead of the characters.

DESTINATION

The Book of the Land mentions the monastery of Sernog and the "waiting beast entombed within its ruined halls," which lie far above the town of Sernog, between two spurs of the eastern Carpathians. Maps of the area show the town, but not the monastery. Still, it is possible to travel to Sernog, have the way to the monastery pointed out by locals and climb the 1,236 broken, winding steps up to Sernog Monastery. The structure lies high atop a ridge above the tree line. An abandoned fortress looms menacingly, its blackened walls forming a dark skeleton against the sky, a shell of a building open to the stars. Attached to the fortress is an ancient cathedral, ostensibly in better condition but no less sinister than its companion building. Long ago desecrated, the land around the monastery cathedral no longer qualifies as

holy ground; Cainites may tread upon the premises with impunity. (The Storyteller may require characters to make Willpower rolls anyway simply to gather up the courage to attempt to set foot inside the building.)

The cathedral's interior reflects an atmosphere of dark foreboding. It is obvious that Zelios had nothing to do with this edifice, for its architecture seems carved from the fevered imagination of some mad designer. Grotesque carvings of beings that might be angels but resemble devils glare down upon those who pass through the archway at the entry to the former sanctuary. The air inside the cathedral has a musty, cloying odor, as if something eternally dying has embedded itself within the stones and now oozes forth its essence in a miasma of perpetual decay. Eerie moaning sounds fill the cavernous central chamber, echoing off the high vaulted beams and reverberating in a cacophony of shrill screams that mimic the cries of victims undergoing the agonies of prolonged and exquisite torture.

The characters should eventually find the trapdoor hidden beneath the altar of the church. Cut into the wooden planking of the floor, the door opens by pulling up on its iron ring. A narrow, dark stairway leads down into the crypt of the cathedral.

THE FINAL CONFLICT

If the characters intend to protect the Tzimisce Antediluvian, Dragomir will have already alerted his co-conspirators who have prepared a decoy force of "anarchs" — ghouls and a few volunteer Cainites — to delay the characters long enough for them to complete

their deed. Dragomir pretends to join in the battle but deserts at the first opportunity and seeks out his comrades.

If the characters wish, instead, to participate in the overthrow and diablerie of the Ancient, they encounter the creatures who serve as guardians of the eldest Tzimisce's resting place.

Some characters may meet their Final Deaths in this brutal combat, regardless of their reasons for coming to the cathedral. The Cainites should be aware of the dangers they face and the real risk that they may not survive the battle. To do otherwise would be foolhardy and (given what they have already experienced throughout the course of their unlivings) ludicrous. If the Storyteller thinks her players are mature enough (and that it won't ruin the chronicle), she might plan a particularly appropriate death for one or more of the characters during this battle. Character death can impart a sense of loss that enhances the chronicle for everyone if handled well. Conversely, an arbitrary death with no real meaning or caused through unlucky dice rolls upsets players who feel their actions have been futile, so great care should be taken in running the following scene.

Regardless of which battle they fight (see below for descriptions of appropriate opponents), the characters may well witness the actual diablerie (or its immediate aftermath).

If they have come to participate and fight the Tzimisce guardians of the Ancient's resting place, they arrive upon the scene just as Lugoj, the leader of the Tzimisce anarchs, leans over the opened sarcophagus and begins drinking the occupant's blood. Should the characters try to interrupt him or supplant him, the other anarchs forcibly restrain them. Afterward, they are told, they will get the



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chance to drink from Lugoj, sampling — should they wish to do so — some of the power and acquiring a brief taste of its potency. (They are under no compulsion to do so, however.)

If they have come to protect the Antediluvian and encounter the decoy “guardians,” they arrive too late to prevent Lugoj’s Amaranth. All that remains is the broken sarcophagus, in which lie the swiftly decomposing remains of the greatest of the Fiends. The actual perpetrators (including Dragomir), have already departed hastily. Once again, they may believe they have failed.

As the characters leave in dejection, however, they hear a soft chuckle from somewhere within the dark, gloomy and seemingly deserted chamber. A voice that seems to come from everywhere and nowhere at once whispers:

“Fools, these childer. I have seen your actions in this, and you will receive your just reward in the proper time.” The characters can make of this what they will.

THE DECOYS

This group consists of a trio of Tzimisce anarchs who have offered to stay behind and delay the characters whose directions enabled the rebels to discover the Ancient’s lair. In addition, several ghouls have been conscripted into the battle, having no choice but to give their lives in the service of their Cainite masters.

NINTH-GENERATION ANARCHS

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2

Skills: Melee 3, Stealth 4, Survival 2

Knowledges: Linguistics 1, Occult 3

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 3, Vicissitude 4

Virtues: Callousness/Conscience 3, Instincts/Self-Control 4, Morale/Courage 4

Road (various): 5

Willpower: 7

Roleplaying Notes: Your cause is greater than you. You play your part because you believe that this is the only way you and your brethren can prevail.

Special Notes: The doubled virtues as well as the Road rating reflect the variations among individuals, who may follow different viae and therefore possess the Virtues appropriate for those paths.

GOHOLS

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 2

Skills: Melee 3, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Occult 1

Disciplines: Vicissitude 1, Potence 1

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 3.

Willpower: 6

Blood Pool: 2 (each use of a Discipline [except Potence] expends one Blood Point, which cannot be replenished)

THE GUARDIANS

The Tzimisce elder is guarded by a small army of servitor ghouls, including several lobotomized warriors called *szlachta*. The Storyteller should adjust numbers to present a strenuous challenge for the characters, yet allow a reasonable chance for the majority of them to survive to finish the story.

SZLACHTA

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 1, Brawl 4, Dodge 2

Skills: Melee 1, Stealth 3, Tracking 2

Disciplines: Fortitude 1, Potence 1

Willpower: 4

More information on these horrors can be found in *Libellus Sanguinis I: Masters of the State* and *Ghouls: Fatal Addiction*.

Depending on the characters’ actions, they may be poised on the brink of joining the Anarch Movement or become entrenched in a more traditional stance. There is the distinct possibility that some characters may join one side and some the other. Such leanings should be encouraged, as it creates further opportunities for advanced roleplaying and interactions among the characters during the rest of the chronicle. If any characters participated in the diablerie, they may now wish to go after their own sires, who have, after all, been rather cruel and unreasonable to them. Should the players conceive reasonable plans for diablerizing their sires, they should have a chance to do so. Notable exceptions to this are Vencel Rikard (who cannot fall to diablerie as he survives long past this date) and any other Cainites detailed in *Transylvania by Night* whose specific destinies preclude their dying in this fashion.

Of course, the Storyteller may choose to change whatever he likes....

EPilogue

Within the next few years, the candles lit from the sparks of rebellion burst into a conflagration that changes Cainite society forever. When next the characters continue in the *Transylvania Chronicles*, they must make choices which may govern the direction their unives take in the coming centuries. There remain yet six undisclosed signs pointing to the ultimate conflict that threatens to engulf the world. It remains to be seen if the characters’ actions can transform Gehenna into anything less than total annihilation.

Ite, missa est (Go now, for the Mass has ended).

— The Ordinary of the Mass

Finis





Chapter Five: Characters

The three acts of *Dark Tides Rising* portray many of the characters from *Transylvania by Night*; if you require more information on a character not presented here (ie, your characters want to kill someone for whom there are no Traits in this book) refer to *Transylvania*. The following summaries describe the major players in the beginning chapters of the chronicle.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

GANGREL

MITRU THE HUNTER, PRINCE OF KLAUSENBURG

Background: Mitru began his unlif as an arrogant and over-confident “defender of the innocent.” He once believed that the only weapons he needed to defend the village where he was born were his bow and a few hand-crafted arrows. Even now, he trusts his instincts as a hunter more than his slowly developing skill at politics. Rage has won over reason.

Mitru was chosen for the Embrace because of his fierce hatred for the overlords of Transylvania. Through his early life, his family struggled, and the taxes imposed by a servant of Nova Arpad eventually drove them into poverty. As Vlach serfs, two-thirds of the goods they produced were sent to the estate of the Szekler overlord. By day, his family was bled dry. The local peasants spread monstrous stories detailing the fates of the Arpad’s servants.

At night, the commoners of Transylvania barred their doors and windows. Horrific sounds of battle by moonlight disturbed their sleep and fed their nightmares. Undaunted, Mitru began to explore the dark forests surrounding Napoca. When at last he came upon Nova’s household, he discovered the truth behind the rumors. He unmasked her true nature: The undead *vampyr* enjoyed great wealth while exploiting the serfs of her domain.

Thus, he stalked the beast that had preyed upon his people. He crafted 13 arrows to slay the *vampyr* Nova; three arrows in Nova’s chest forced her into torpor. When Arnulf heard of this legendary accomplishment, Mitru received an unholy reward: his baptism into darkness.

Now, as the prince of Napoca, Mitru is fanatic about guarding his domain from other supernatural threats. He trusts in himself, but he is already growing suspicious of the beliefs of the other members of his clan. Mitru has become especially wary of his sire’s ideas of culling the populace of the cities.

The prince of Napoca often hunts prey in the woods outside the city, but occasionally, he finds a mortal who seems worthy of becoming a ghoul. Silently, Mitru will harry the prospective servant through his lands to test the mortal’s abilities. Those who fight with great puissance are Embraced; those who run are destroyed. In the same manner, he tests those who pass through his domain with fire and clothyard shafts. With the instincts of a predator, he maintains order in his violent domain.

Image: Mitru’s needs are simple, and his logic is straightforward. He usually wears a long dark, woolen coat, a faded shirt and breeches... although he is seldom seen when he is stalking his prey. His thick boots carry earth from lands throughout Transylvania. The growing legend of his campaign against Nova is making him somewhat arrogant, but without this self-confidence, he would perish.

Roleplaying Hints: This land is yours, and you will exact vengeance in your domain as you see fit. In addition to the rights



granted to you by the Six Traditions, you know that this realm has always belonged to you and your people. Since the nights of peaceful Dacia and the Roman Empire, the Gangrel have roamed this domain as they pleased. You fought the oppressors of Transylvania in life, and the Embrace has given you the drive and idealism to redouble your efforts.

Haven: Any patch of the mystical Earth — you care more for the land as a whole than any single location.

Secrets: Mitru is impressive in battle, but he is too naive in the ways of politics. The treachery of diplomacy holds little pleasure for him. In fact, he is too honest and trusting of some of his allies, especially the Fiend with whom he has begun a tentative alliance. Count Florescu, the *knez* of a nearby domain, has already begun to manipulate him against exaggerated threats.

Influence: No one questions Mitru’s authority. In fact, he has been increasingly eager to harry, hunt and harass Cainites passing through his realm. Outside these lands, he has a staunch alliance with Marusca and Radu, two of the other Transylvanian princes.

Destiny: The desperate often become what they despise most. Arnulf was bestial and violent. By faltering on the Road of the Beast, Mitru eventually succumbs to the same desires. In place of a barbarian king, he sets himself in a position of absolute power, driven by the urges of the Beast within him. He dreams of echoing the era of the epic Gangrel princes who roamed the dark lands beyond the forest centuries ago. In the process, however, he forms bonds of blood to help him further this goal. By the mid-fifteenth century, the pack he gathers around him may be the only precaution that saves him from becoming an uncaring tyrant.

Clan: Gangrel
Sire: Arnulf
Nature: Fanatic
Demeanor: Defender
Generation: 7th
Embrace: 1190
Apparent Age: early 20s
Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4
Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
Talents: Acting 3, Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 2, Dodge 4
Skills: Animal Ken 2, Archery 4, Melee 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3
Knowledges: Investigation 2, Occult 2
Disciplines: Animalism 3, Celerity 3, Fortitude 3, Protean 3
Backgrounds: Herd 3, Influence 1, Mentor 4, Retainers 1, Status 2
Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 3, Courage 5
Road: Humanity 4
Willpower: 8

TIBERIU, RADU'S MESSENGER

10th generation, sire unknown

Nature: Survivor
Demeanor: Loner
Embrace: 1050 A.D.
Apparent Age: 23

After the violent death of his sire, Tiberiu chose to serve Arnulf, the Gangrel Inconnu who sired Mitru and dozens of other Gangrel throughout Eastern Europe. Once, Transylvania was an uncivilized land constantly overrun by invading barbarian tribes. This is the way most Gangrel remember the voivodate — brutal and violent.

By the end of the 12th century, Arnulf and his most trusted childer were ashamed, for the cities of Transylvania were encroaching upon the wilderness. For the humans, survival depended on overbreeding and farming, not the glorious achievements of feral creatures. Arnulf's childer spread throughout the land, waiting for the day when the cities of the East would be laid low and the barbarians returned.

Tiberiu was first employed as part of a campaign against the mortal city of Hermanstadt. With typical Gangrel fury, Arnulf's newest prodigy was eager to command the packs of wolves in the forest and assault a nearby castle built on a hill overlooking the town. He was so skilled at commanding these packs that the Cainites residing in the fortress overlooking the city (Zelios the Master Mason and Marusca, his newly created childe) never discovered the tactician behind these assaults.

Tiberiu was fearful of retribution from Zelios. When the Master Mason's childe, Marusca, eventually killed the Eastern lord who was to inhabit the castle, Tiberiu's fear increased. Radu offered Tiberiu sanctuary as he plotted his next scheme. When news of the Council of Ashes at last reached the two

Cainites, Radu decided to petition to join the council. In doing so, he would keep his staunchest ally close and his enemies closer. Thus, he would learn far more than if he simply waged war against them.

Through Radu's politicking, Tiberiu became the messenger between the seven domains. As the other princes never suspected Tiberiu's past, the Gangrel was able to make sure they never found out. Of course, the other princes never suspected that Tiberiu had since declared a Blood Oath to Radu. They were unaware that the messages carried across the dark forests were often relayed to Radu later. Their conspiracy continues, and Tiberiu is still informed of many of the most important decisions of the Cainite princes.

WULFAR

8th generation, childe of Mitru

Nature: Traditionalist
Demeanor: Conformist
Embrace: 1179
Apparent Age: 17

Wulfar was born and raised in Klausenburg. Son of a woodsman, Wulfar learned early on that dangerous creatures lurked in the forest at night. One evening as he bundled up a last load of wood, Wulfar realized that night had fallen. Hoisting his load, he quickly moved toward the forest's edge, but found his way blocked by a snarling wolf with glowing red eyes. He dropped the wood and reached for his dagger, his only weapon, just as the wolf leapt for him, jaws agape. He slashed at the creature's belly, opening jagged wounds. Somehow, the wolf failed to close its mouth on his throat and he threw the beast aside. To his astonishment and horror, the wolf seemed to be laughing at him. As he watched, the wolf's wound sealed shut and it advanced on him again.

Wulfar fled. Sporadically throughout the night, the wolf chased him, never quite closing in on him, always herding him away from civilization and safety. Just before dawn, when Wulfar collapsed from exhaustion, the wolf shimmered and a man stood before him. Telling Wulfar he had done well and was a worthy son, Mitru the Hunter, Gangrel Prince of Klausenburg Embraced the young woodsman.

Wulfar learned what he was and how to survive on his own. When he had mastered the basics, Mitru returned and claimed him as his childe. Now Wulfar hunts by his sire's side and tries to prevent the further encroachment of Western civilization on Eastern wilderness.

Taller than average, with the musculature of an axeman, Wulfar has blond hair (which is usually matted with dirt or stained green by grass and leaves) and pale-green eyes. His fingernails are permanently extended into claws and he has sprouted long, blond hair all over his body. He looks more like most people's conceptions of a werewolf than a vampire. Wulfar wears brown homespuns and leather, and carries an axe, a dagger, and a bow and arrows.

Wulfar's Traits, as they relate to *Dark Tides Rising*, may be found in Chapter Three.

LASOMBRA

LUCITA

Background: The daughter of Alfonse I of Aragon, Lucita grew up privileged but chafed under her responsibility to her father and family. She thought of patricide many times and often ran away, only to be caught by the Aragonese guards and returned to her father's custody. Rather than bother with disciplining the girl himself (as king, he had better things to do), Alfonse shuffled her off to confession each time, trusting that God and Church would engender penitence in his daughter. The fact that her confessor was Ambrosio Luis Monçada made this hope a vain one.

Monçada recognized an indomitable will in young Lucita — and a fierce independence. These traits — combined with his unholy lust for her — convinced the bishop that her Embrace was warranted. After talking with others of his clan, Monçada decided that the Lasombra would greatly benefit from this individual of high birth.

After her Embrace, though, Lucita's relationship with her clan was hardly idyllic. She struggled with Monçada just as she had struggled with her mortal father, craving autonomy and freedom. Although she serves Monçada dutifully as a diplomat and a noble (she is rumored to be the power behind the throne of the current king of Aragon, Peter II), she is more at home on the road with her traveling companion Anatole, who inspires in Lucita more faith in God than the degenerate Monçada ever could.

Lucita has recently undertaken a new training regimen through which she hopes to gain skill in the noble art of war. Her speed and natural grace aid her in this endeavor, and she can masterfully whittle down stronger foes before they manage to land a single blow upon her. When she combines her martial prowess with her trademark Lasombra control of darkness, she becomes a terrible enemy indeed.

Image: Lucita is tall and lithe and has a dusky, classical tone to her skin. She has black hair like many people of Spanish descent, but there is no Moorish influence in her features. She typically wears the garb of a noblewoman rather than that of a warrior (surprise is her preferred MO), but these clothes are often dark and somber affairs that favor ease of movement rather than stuffy presentability.

Roleplaying Hints: Your patrician birth and upbringing have given you a natural nobility and carriage. As a diplomat and king-maker, you serve Monçada, but you also serve yourself. Though you are learning warfare, you most often succeed through tact and negotiation. Your thirst for freedom is best satisfied by traveling to distant lands. Let no one tie you down or force you into anything you don't want to do.

Haven: Wherever is convenient along the road.

Secrets: Lucita knows many secrets pertaining to the court of Aragon. She also hears rumors from others of her clan. She is ostensibly in Eastern Europe to enact Monçada's will; in actuality, she is aiding Anatole in one of his endeavors.

Influence: Lucita's influence encompasses the court of Aragon and, by extension, the other Christian courts of Iberia.



Destiny: Lucita becomes the consummate shadow warrior, rivaling the Eastern Assamites in ferocity and reputation. As the Anarch Revolt ensues and the Sabbat forms from its ashes, Lucita abstains from both sects, becoming one of the most feared Lasombra *antitribu* active in the modern World of Darkness.

Clan: Lasombra

Sire: Ambrosio Luis Monçada

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Defender

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1190

Apparent Age: 17

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Leadership 1, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Archery 2, Etiquette 3, Melee 3, Ride 2, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Hearth Wisdom 1, Investigation 1, Linguistics (French) 1, Occult 2, Politics 3, Seneschal 1

Disciplines: Celerity 1, Dominate 2, Obtenebration 2, Potence 3

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Contacts 3, Influence 3, Resources 2

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 2, Courage 4

Road: Humanity 6

MALKAVIAN

OCTAVIO, THE VOICE OF KUPALA

Background: This Malkavian was born in the lands now called Hungary when Rome's legions built Aquincum. As a mortal, he was a shaman who somehow touched upon Kupala's dark heart and became suffused with madness. He wandered the streets of Aquincum for years, attempting to warn the Romans of the demon whose heart was poisoning the land. The legions were kind enough to feed and clothe the lunatic, but paid him little heed. After he learned to speak Latin, they finally understood what he was saying, but they dismissed it as mad ravings. He took the name Octavio since he firmly believes that eight portents will herald the awakening of Kupala and the demon's ascendancy over the world.

Embraced by a Roman Malkavian, Octavio subsisted quite well on the soldiers and townsfolk. Still, his ties to the dark soil forced him to commit several vile acts, culminating in the staking and diablerie of his sire. Time passed and Octavio found himself slipping into torpor when the legions were recalled to Rome.

Octavio awakened when Obuda began developing around him. Shocked that so much time had passed, he quickly began to learn the barbaric new language of the Magyars. He has moved about the city unseen, observing Vencel and the other Cainites. Driven even more insane by the centuries spent within the tainted earth of his homeland, he captures mortals (and any Cainites he can) and plays elaborate games with them. Then he sacrifices them to Kupala (whether to aid the demon or bind him, even Octavio doesn't know). Watching the Cainites of Buda-Pest, Octavio sometimes clandestinely aids in their schemes, but often opposes them.

Octavio has recently hatched a plot toward obtaining apotheosis. In this manner, he hopes to gain sufficient power to oppose Kupala directly. He has sought mortal adulation, creating a cult around himself. Those who worship Octavio call him Havnor, believing he is an ancient Magyar god. He cares little for the titles of respect they give him, as long as they share their blood and make obeisance. Soon, he plans to make his move against Prince Vencel — or perhaps for him. He can so rarely remember exactly what his plans are these nights, when his head is afire with prophecy.

Image: Octavio is tall and well muscled. Red hair, wild and uncombed, falls below his shoulders, and his bushy beard reaches the center of his chest. He wears a tunic and trousers with cross gartering (in the old style) and a selection of armor. His breastplate is Roman, but his helmet and arm guards are pure Magyar. His blue eyes smolder with fanaticism and often have an otherworldly shine. He certainly looks the part of an ancient god of thunder and lightning.

Roleplaying Hints: You hear the voice of the demon inside your head. You know he will arise someday to claim dominion over the Earth. Eight great signs foretell Kupala's awakening. Tell others what those signs are. Meanwhile, you have decided to become a god so you can fight him. Convince others through holy miracles that you are indeed divine.

Haven: Beneath the Round House and Arena in Obuda.

Secrets: Octavio knows all secrets of anyone in Buda-Pest. Unfortunately, he can rarely remember any of them, or anything else beyond his mission to defeat (or is that exalt?) Kupala.

Influence: He is gaining greater influence nightly, especially among those in Buda-Pest who desire a return to the old pagan ways. Those who follow him develop strange insanities based on the visions he shows them.

Destiny: Octavio will spend the next centuries warning others of the coming of the signs. He will finally sink into a fit of despair, convinced that he has failed to have any effect on Kupala whatsoever. Octavio will then allow Anatole to diablerize him, making Anatole keeper of the mysteries and the harbinger of Gehenna.

Clan: Malkavian

Sire: Marcus

Nature: Prophet

Demeanor: Prophet

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 134

Apparent Age: 30s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Herbalism 2, Melee 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Torture 3

Knowledges: Hearth Wisdom 4, Linguistics (Latin, Hungarian) 2, Occult 4, Philosophy 2, Politics 1



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Disciplines: Auspex 6, Dementation 6, Fortitude 3, Obfuscate 2, Potence 3, Presence 5

Backgrounds: Herd 3, Influence 3, Retainers 1

Virtues: Conviction 3, Instinct 2, Courage 5

Road: Devil 8

Willpower: 7

ANATOLE

Background: Born to the wife of a captain of the guard in Paris, Anatole spent his childhood watching soldiers and guardsmen. It is of little wonder that he became a guardsman with the city watch. But the Lord works in mysterious ways, and this is particularly true concerning Anatole. He was born under a blue moon (the second full moon in a month's time), and the tidal pull of that moon has always seemed to call to the blood within him. While still young, Anatole became fascinated with the Church. Although he was destined for the life of a guardsman, his devout nature had great influence on his soul — and his Embrace.

Pierre l'Imbecile, also a devout soul, chose Anatole for his ability to see the movements of God on Earth. Pierre Embraced the young man and explained that Anatole's role was to prove that Cainites serve God's purposes. Pierre then abandoned his childe, leaving him to become God's agent. Anatole spends much of his time in contemplation of the Cainite's place in God's world as a result. His Derangement, a tendency for random hallucinations, often causes him to see symbols, people and objects that do not exist, though to Anatole these visions are quite real and reveal God's presence. The exact powers this Malkavian neonate possesses are unknown, but he has been known to repel Cainites by calling out to angels whom he sees in his fractured mind.

The young Cainite has also picked up appreciable skill with a sword and shield, which makes him quite physically adept when combined with his impressive array of Disciplines. Cainite elders who observe his actions are concerned that a disproportionate number of his Disciplines do not fall within the province of the Malkavian clan. As to where he learns them, Anatole isn't telling.

Anatole typically keeps the company of the Lasombra Lucita, acting as a strong right arm to her as they move through Dark Medieval Europe. He has also been seen with an entourage of monk-like pilgrims, whom most observers believe to be either his ghouls or his herd.

Image: Anatole has long blond hair, but it is tangled and filthy to the point of forming accidental dreadlocks. He has fine French features and an average build. He looks somewhat like a vagrant mercenary; he wears piecemeal armor and a squalid tabard scavenged from someone he killed. He carries a rusty, blood-encrusted sword and frequently has dried blood on his mouth, in his hair and on his clothing.

Roleplaying Hints: You have a keen understanding of the glory of God. He has granted you divine visions and speaks to you through even the most mundane items. Though others sometimes tell you that the things you see aren't real, you understand that only those blessed by God can see them. These things explain to you what you must do or where you need to go. Believe them. Trust in the angels who hover over you; they lend their aid when you are troubled or beset by foes.



Haven: Wherever he can find shelter for Lucita and himself along the roads of Dark Medieval Europe.

Secrets: Anatole has special powers granted by God. The Lord teaches him to perform certain miracles that resemble Cainite Disciplines. He has commanded Anatole to diablerize other Cainites so they might enter God's kingdom cleansed of their vileness.

Influence: The Malkavian neonate has little influence beyond his immediate followers.

Destiny: Anatole undergoes a period of religious fervor, during which he believes God directs him to find and diablerize vampires. He entertains this behavior for almost a century, which disturbs many European princes. Thus, he makes numerous foes among them. By the end of the 18th century, Anatole gets involved with the French Revolution and the lay mysticism it engenders. He changes the focus of his zealotry from Christianity to the Jihad. After meeting with Octavio, who is despondent over his lack of progress in fighting Kupala, Anatole becomes the recipient of the elder Malkavian's visions when Octavio asks his clanmate to diablerize him. With his new powers and spiritual motivation, Anatole finds himself in the New World, where he spreads the word of Gehenna's approach, eventually becoming known as the harbinger of Gehenna.

Clan: Malkavian

Sire: Pierre l'Imbecile

Nature: Defender

Demeanor: Penitent

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1193

Apparent Age: 20

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Archery 2, Melee 3, Ride 1, Stealth 3, Survival 1

Knowledges: Academics 1, Investigation 1, Law 1, Linguistics (Spanish) 1, Occult 1, Theology 2

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 1, Fortitude 1, Obfuscate 2, Potence 2

Backgrounds: Herd 3, Mentor 2, Retainers 4

Virtues: Conscience 4, Self-Control 2, Courage 5

Road: Heaven 6

Willpower: 6

True Faith: 1

NOSFERATU

ZELIOS, THE MASTER MASON

Background: Zelios has gained great renown throughout Eastern Europe for his career as a master craftsman and architect. For over a century after his Embrace in 1020, he traveled throughout Europe studying the finest castles built by man and the most ingenious architectural wonders devised by the undead. With an eternity seemingly set before him, his unlife's greatest goal has been the mastery of his craft. Hired by wealthy members of almost all of the clans of Transylvania, he is welcome in the courts of Cainite nobility throughout both the East and the West.

There is a reason his work is so preternaturally brilliant. He has an intuitive understanding of geomantic and occult principles. Many sites he ostensibly chooses for their easily defended surroundings actually lie on the path of major ley lines. Many of the minor "improvements" he suggests to existing designs actually focus unseen geomantic energies.

Zelios also has an encyclopedic knowledge of secret passages and rooms in the castles he has studied and engineered. All too often, both the living and the undead inhabit the same fortresses. Hidden rooms, sometimes only accessible to those possessing certain arcane Disciplines, allow the undead to infiltrate the fortresses of the breathing world. As a humane *artiste* consumed by a passion for his craft, he has never used this knowledge to his advantage. Admittedly, though, the temptation has been strong at times. Throughout the 12th century, he maintains a respected reputation, not only as an architectural genius, but also as a trustworthy and dependable consultant.

Image: Zelios's skin has become extremely pallid; in fact, it is gray enough to match the color of a stone wall. His features are exceedingly angular, almost unnaturally so. There is no softness to his face, and his eyes are a dull gray. When deep in thought, his visage is a stony mask of contemplation. When inspired, his features animate, surprising many who watch the transformation. Relaxation does not interest him much. Hard work is the fulfillment of his passion.

Roleplaying Hints: Outwardly, you are stoic; inwardly, your passion consumes you. Your voice is soft, and your words are chosen carefully. Be patient in realizing your vision. Let your revelations inspire you. A few key insights can elevate a competent design to architectural genius. You are willing to spend years watching a castle take shape, and you must wait centuries to attain the greatest achievements of your career. Along the way, each stone must be set with care.

Haven: As an artist of renown and a perpetual wanderer, Zelios has no shortage of castles to visit. He is welcome in the homes of many noble Cainites throughout Western and Eastern Europe. Many princes are anxious to hear his critiques of their fortresses' defenses.

Secrets: Over the last few decades, Zelios' personal projects have become much more elaborate. Though no one has noticed, there is a pattern to the locations of seven of the castles on which he has "consulted." The spatial relationships between these castles correspond to a series of ley lines. By joining these ley lines and diverting their energies, they form a complex pattern not unlike that of a pattern of warding. Five of these castles within Transylvania form the points of a pentagram. Zelios is unaware of this greater significance, although his insight is always growing.

Influence: With his reputation, the Master Mason can gather influence very quickly in any domain. He chooses to be methodical, however. Just as a wall must be built stone by stone, mortal agents must be chosen one by one. Carefully, he selects his tools. Once his bulwark of mortals has been assembled, he leaves them in place before moving on to the next project.

Destiny: In the 13th century, his journeys to the Middle East revealed to him visions required to realize the greater significance of his work. A century later, a voyage to the Far East teaches him the art



CHARACTERS

off *feng shui* and several other mysteries of the Cathayan vampires. An ancient Cathayan vampire mentors him in various curious legends of the Eastern undead.

By the 15th century, Zelios is destined to play a major role in the shadow crusades of the secret societies of Europe. Orders dedicated to Enlightenment will maneuver for power, and Zelios holds wisdom that will be vital to that great game. Despite this, like many of the powerful Nosferatu who tried to seize such occult powers in the 14th and 15th centuries, he does not realize the force of his scholarly rivals.

Clan: Nosferatu

Sire: Hannibal

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Innovator

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1020

Apparent Age: early 30s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Dodge 2, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Crafts (Architecture) 6, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Academics 3, Occult (Ley Lines and Geomancy, Intuitive) 4, Science (Engineering) 4

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Auspex 3, Dominate 4, Obfuscate 3, Potence 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 3, Resources 3, Status (Fame) 4

Road: Humanity 6

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 5, Courage 3

Willpower: 6

RAVNOS ANASZTAZ TORENU, THE PHOENIX

7th generation, childe of Irendo

Nature: Rogue

Demeanor: Jester

Embrace: 1172

Apparent Age: 20

Once known as the King of Thieves (to himself, at any rate), Izydor Torenu led his *kumpania* to Eastern Europe in search of a new home for his people. After pulling a clever ruse on a rival clan, Izydor met his “uncle,” a legendary Gypsy, who Embraced the young thief into the Ravnos clan. Izydor immediately made ghouls of all his *kumpania*.

Together, he and his ghouls traveled throughout much of Eastern Europe. Wherever the group stopped, its members plied their trades as tinsmiths, horse traders and fortune-tellers. Izydor specialized in robbing folks, then having Delizbieta “miraculously” locate the item with her fortune-telling skills.

When they entered Transylvania, Izydor believed they had found the perfect place for the Gypsies. When that proved untrue, he Embraced Delizbieta (having never understood that her magical abilities were real) and faked his own death. He made an arrangement with a Tzimisce who changed Izydor’s features using Vicissitude. Later, Izydor rejoined his clan, now calling himself Anasztaz. He sometimes refers to himself as “the Phoenix,” a reference to his rebirth from the fire in which he supposedly killed himself. None of the other Gypsies (including Delizbieta) know he is really Izydor.

Where Izydor was small and slender with flashing dark eyes, white teeth, dark skin and shoulder-length curly black hair, Anasztaz is taller, more muscular and has a long mustache. He keeps his hair tied back. His eyes still twinkle, his skin is still dark, and he still prefers colorful clothing. Even as Anasztaz, his greatest weapons are his charm, cleverness and sense of humor. Though usually cheerful, Anasztaz can become deadly when Delizbieta or his people are threatened.

DELIZBIETA OF THE DARK EYES

8th generation, childe of Izydor Torenu

Nature: Defender

Demeanor: Defender

Embrace: 1302

Apparent Age: 20

This lovely Gypsy woman of the Torenu clan accompanied her *kumpania* to Eastern Europe in the late-12th century. Izydor Torenu, a Ravnos, traveled with them and led the group. Delizbieta was his ghoul. She was also gifted with true magic, having Awakened to her prophetic powers. She acted as a fortune-teller for the group. After spending some time in

Constantinople and Buda-Pest, the *kumpania* scouted out the territory of Transylvania, searching for a new home for their people. What appeared to be a paradise turned out to be a nightmare as they moved into the area and were quickly enslaved. Despite Delizbieta’s pleas not to blame himself, despair over his role in bringing his people to such straits made Izydor seek to end his own unluck.

Before leaping into a Samhain fire, Izydor Embraced Delizbieta, making her a Ravnos and destroying her Avatar. He charged her with watching over the Torenu clan, then leapt to his death. Despondent over Izydor’s death, Delizbieta resolved to be the best guardian she could be. With her help, many of the Gypsies who had been enslaved broke away and became traveling folk once again. Delizbieta now travels throughout Transylvania with most of her family. She continues to perform fortune telling at night.

Delizbieta is small boned and tiny. Her heart-shaped face is framed by a riot of black curls, and her eyes are such a dark brown, that they appear to have no pupils. She wears several colorful skirts, a peasant-type blouse, a laced vest and a fringed shawl along with several bangles and other pieces of jewelry.

Recently, a long-lost cousin to the Torenu has rejoined the clan. Anasztaz Torenu is also a Ravnos. Delizbieta welcomes him as another potential guardian for the family.

TREMERE

JERVAIS, VIS MASTER OF CEORIS

7th generation, childe of Malgorzata

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Tyrant

Embrace: 1102

Apparent Age: mid-30s

Of medium height and build, Jervais has a fringe of brown hair, a trim beard, a square-jawed face, and myopic-looking brown eyes. Though apparently affable, he speaks in the commanding tone of a master, and projects an air of menace, as though he holds great power barely leashed. Though his father was merely a scribe for a minor noble, Jervais' future promised greater things due to his magical abilities. Apprenticed to Malgorzata of House Tremere, he quickly mastered the sorcerous arts. His talent for locating and harvesting *vis* led to his appointment as *vis* master at Ceoris. Soon after Malgorzata was Embraced, she bestowed immortality upon him. He is loyal to the Conspirator cause, believing (as does his sire) that the Tremere clan's success depends upon Embracing all the mages of the house as quickly as possible. Like her, he sees little profit in coddling humans or denying his own desire for more power. He becomes the characters' patron (acting as an agent for Malgorzata) if they are working for the Tremere Conspirator faction. If they are working for someone else, Jervais might plague them at some point while searching for *vis* near the tower.

ETRIUS, MASTER OF CEORIS

4th generation, nominal childe of Tremere

Nature: Unknown

Demeanor: Conformist

Embrace: 1022

Apparent Age: early 30s

This Swedish Cainite was among the original seven who, along with Tremere, changed themselves from mages into Cainites through a magical ritual using Tzimisce blood. A fierce rival to Goratrix (and some say a rival for Tremere's affections), Etrius leads the Conservative faction, those who question the ethics of Embracing mages against their will. Nonetheless, Etrius is totally loyal to Tremere and was responsible for much of the scholarship that discovered the resting place of Saulot. While he appears less powerful and dangerous than either Tremere or Goratrix, his quiet manner and reasonable demeanor cloak a frighteningly keen intellect and iron determination. As Etrius is a 4th generation Cainite and the second most powerful of the Usurpers, it would be a grave mistake for other Cainites to underestimate him.

Standing 5' 6" tall and of average weight, Etrius has long, tawny blond hair and blue eyes. His face is slightly rounded. He prefers to wear the robes of a mage and never removes a golden chain with a blood-red stone set into a medallion given to him by Tremere when he first became a master magus.

No stats are given for Etrius. Should the characters attempt to go toe-to-toe with him, they deserve the painful, lingering deaths they receive. Feel free to give Etrius any Thaumaturgical powers and rituals (save those only available to Tremere himself) he may need. His basic attributes are all 4 or better and he possesses Iron Will.

GORATRIX, THE BETRAYER

4th generation, nominal childe of Tremere

Nature: Unknown

Demeanor: Rebel

Embrace: 1022

Apparent Age: mid-30s

Once the master of Ceoris, Goratrix was one of the original seven chosen by Tremere to receive immortality. In fact, Goratrix created the ritual. As Tremere's one-time apprentice (along with Etrius, Goratrix's greatest rival), Goratrix was granted the lucrative and important Kingdom of France to oversee. Once there, he misused his powers and helped influence the king to destroy the Templars. For that crime (which fulfilled one of the signs leading to Gehenna), Goratrix has been recalled to Ceoris to stand trial before his peers.

Goratrix is above medium height and of normal weight. Clean-shaven, he has dark-brown hair and hazel eyes. His nose is strong and broad, his mouth generous. Some might consider him handsome. Dressed like a noble of the French court, he looks both formidable and scholarly. Something in the lines of his face indicates a cruel and uncompromising nature.

Even in captivity, Goratrix exudes a feeling of danger. He never lets anyone forget that he is a master magus and that he is used to commanding others. The characters would be wise not to antagonize him unduly, as he is also very inventive (as can be witnessed in his creation of both the ritual of change and the Tremere servitors known as gargoyles). Again, should he be totally free to combat them, Goratrix might destroy the characters at whim.

TREMERE

3rd generation

Nature: Unknown

Demeanor: Varies

Embrace: 1022

Apparent Age: Inconsistent

Once one of the greatest mages ever to live, Tremere, along with 7 of his followers became Cainites through a magical ritual designed to grant him immortality. Noting that other Cainites gave his fledgling clan little respect, he resolved to put them on an equal footing by becoming the equal of the other clan founders. Thus, he diablerized Saulot, the enigmatic progenitor of the Salubri and became 3rd generation, the equivalent of the Antediluvians. Though he has slipped in and out of torpor since that time, Tremere provided for his clan's leadership by appointing his seven first followers to rule as a council and divide the world among them.

The monumental magic coursing through his body has wreaked havoc upon Tremere's physical body, leaving him, for the moment,

quadriplegic and without a mouth. His countenance remains striking, however; dark browed and with piercing dark eyes; Tremere's pallid face reveals his vampiric nature. Though his features appear composed, almost disinterested, his eyes burn with intensity. A palpable aura of barely suppressed power crackles in the air around him whenever he walks around. At this point, Tremere usually wears dark, hooded wraps designed to hide his twisted torso.

As an Antediluvian, Tremere can do pretty much whatever he wants. A brief glance from him can kill another Cainite, while his magical abilities make him one of the most formidable creatures on Earth. If characters are foolish enough to challenge him (thinking they can overcome him by sheer numbers), the smoking piles of ash that remain of their allies should convince them otherwise.

So potent is Tremere's aura of power that mortals (including ghouls) and even some younger Cainites often feel compelled to drop to their knees in his presence.

TZIMISCE COUNT RADU, PRINCE OF BISTRIA

7th generation, childe of Visya

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Gallant

Embrace: 1125

Apparent Age: mid-30s

Since the days of ancient Dacia, Radu's family has faithfully served the Tzimisce clan. In the year 1110, he clawed his way out of his mother's womb as a revenant. Through insight and talent, he continued the effort.

After gaining the favor of a feudal lord, Radu was chosen as an ambassador to the West. His master believed the brilliant young diplomat would efficiently supply him with information. When the revenant learned that the Ventre wanted to establish seven domains in Transylvania and a coterie of Cainites to rule it, his master gave him the Embrace so that he could infiltrate the council. Radu skillfully played potential princes against each other, ensuring himself a position among the rulers of the Council of Ashes.

Regularly conversing with the rulers of the other six domains, he quickly gained a reputation for diplomacy. Through Radu, several Tzimisce *knezi* were able to maintain diplomatic relations with the rest of Europe. Radu's authority is now recognized by both the *knezi* and *voivodes* of his clan and the Cainites of Transylvania. Secure in this position, his success could ensure the growth of his lands for centuries to come; through misfortune, he could be destroyed by the epic hatreds of the lords of the night.

MYCA VYKOS, ENIGMA

7th generation, childe of Symeon

Nature: Monster

Demeanor: Architect

Embrace: 1002

Apparent Age: mid-20s

Scion of the Vykos family, Carpathian royalty, Myca grew up assuming he would inherit his father's lands and title. Soon after he entered puberty, however, he fell prey to strange dreams and fits. An old herbalist, defeated in her attempts to cure him, suggested that the family take Myca to see a wizard who lived nearby. There the boy discovered that he was a magus and joined the organization of wizards known as House Tremere of the Order of Hermes. Taken to a local chantry, he quickly mastered apprentice-level magic and became a journeyman magus. As part of the Vykos family, Myca was able to smooth the way for the Tremere mages to set up chantries in Transylvania. His importance to the house led to jealousy, however, and a brilliant magus named Goratrix soon became his rival. Myca could make no move without the other wizard challenging him, nor could he perform any magic without Goratrix seeing it as competition.

One night, as Myca traveled on business for the house, he was set upon by the Tzimisce, Cainites who hated House Tremere and saw the wizards as threats. Unknown to Myca, Goratrix had deliberately let slip where the house's agents would be, hoping the Tzimisce would slay Myca. Instead, noting that he was Transylvanian royalty, they "reclaimed" him by Embracing him into the Tzimisce clan. Some time thereafter, the Tremere wizards — utilizing a ritual designed by Goratrix — became Cainites. Once again, Myca was bested by his rival. Hating his clan, himself and the Tremere, Myca fled to Constantinople where he became a historian and researcher to escape his own past.

Myca would dearly love to learn the Thaumaturgy Discipline, hoping someday to best Goratrix at the Tremere's own game. He corresponds with two Transylvanian Fiends, Lugoj and Velya, who share his scholarly interests. (These are the same Tzimisce who are involved in the Amaranth of the Tzimisce clan founder in the 1400s.) Further, he hopes to establish cordial relationships with many other Tzimisce in Transylvania, seeing this as a key to his eventual return and takeover of Clan Tremere from Goratrix.

DRAGOMIR BASARAB, TREACHEROUS CHILDE

Background: Born into the Basarab revenant family, Dragomir was always a touch unstable. An overly sensitive child, he seemed shaken by every rockslide and each cutting of nearby trees. As he was quite intelligent and looked upon his grandfather with great affection, his small aberration was overlooked as a natural connection of a ruler to his ancestral lands. In actuality, Dragomir was experiencing a call from Kupala to enter the demon's service.

Educated as a knight and a *voivode*, Dragomir served his grandfather (an elder Tzimisce named Vintila Basarab) as a personal aide for several years. Finally, Vintila Embraced Dragomir and taught him several Tzimisce Disciplines. Once Embraced, however, Dragomir became ever more strange. His connection to the land led him down dark pathways toward madness. His mental illness became even more pronounced on Kupala's Night. In an attempt to cure him, Vintila tried to perform a special ritual one Kupala's Night. It failed, leaving the elder Tzimisce exhausted and at the mercy of his crazed childe. Dragomir diablerized his sire, gaining in generation while his sire's essence combined with his own to send him over the edge into full-blown madness.



Dragomir has existed since that time alone except for one ghoul, shut away from the world. Kupala has attempted to influence the young Cainite to travel and spread the demon's influence, but Dragomir's guilt over his sire's death prevents him from doing so. Once the protective runes are placed on Dragomir's castle, he is able to throw off Kupala's influence — even when away from that refuge — and once again meet with other Tzimisce. From those meetings, he gains a great hatred for the elders of his clan, a hatred that leads him into the plot to commit diablerie on the Tzimisce clan founder.

Image: Dragomir appears very washed out, almost like an albino. His hair is white wheat-blond and his eyelashes are nearly invisible they are so pale. His green eyes almost flash; they are so startling in his pallid face. Dragomir often wears either pure white or solid black clothes, either makes him appear ever more ghostly. He prefers jewelry set with diamonds and pearls.

Roleplaying Hints: You suffer raging mania one moment and brutal melancholia the next. Your moods are as capricious as... well, as the demon who poisons your mind.

After Kupala sets your mind free, you are clever, witty and affable — until your elders are mentioned. You suffered too long at the hands of Kupala, and your hatred for your own actions drives you to acts of secret depravity — including the forbidden Amaranth.

Haven: Dragomir has never left the shelter of his sire's castle outside Balgrad.

Secrets: Dragomir hides a plethora of degenerate vices, all of which he may freely indulge in his secluded castle. His greatest shame is, of course, the diablerie of his sire, but the self-destructive

spark smoldering inside Dragomir leads him to confide this secret in strangers, one of whom must surely be able to discipline him for his inexcusable behavior....

Influence: Dragomir's influence is fairly centralized to his ancestral lands and the town of Alba Iulia (or Balgrad).

Destiny: Dragomir grows more and more deranged during the early nights of the Sabbat and the reckless indulgence therein. Rather than let him compromise their plans (he develops an odious habit of shouting at the top of his lungs when speaking would suffice), several fellow Tzimisce throw Dragomir to the Inquisition.

Clan: Tzimisce

Sire: Vintila

Nature: Tyrant

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1215

Apparent Age: 20

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Archery 2, Etiquette 2, Herbalism 1, Melee 3, Music 2, Ride 4, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Academics 2, Investigation 1, Law 2, Linguistics (Greek, Hungarian) 2, Occult 1, Politics 1

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Auspex 4, Dominate 3, Obfuscate 2, Vicissitude 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Herd 2, Resources 4, Retainers 1, Status 1

Virtues: Conviction 2, Instincts 1, Courage 3

Road: Devil 7

Willpower: 4

MIRCEA DZARDESCU, LORD PROTECTOR OF DZARDREV CASTLE

8th generation, childe of Gerlo

Nature: Tyrant

Demeanor: Celebrant

Embrace: 1113

Apparent Age: late 30s

Tall and commanding, with cropped gray hair, a hawk-like nose and deep-brown eyes under heavy brows, Mircea looks like he could have stepped straight from the old Dacian-Roman empire into the Dark Medieval world. He prefers to wear dark, jewel-toned colors offset by several rings and a golden-chain necklace. Lord Mircea embodies both Tzimisce civility and cruelty. A hereditary Romanian *voivode* who is used to absolute, trembling obedience from his subjects, he nevertheless remains a rigid proponent of impeccably polite, good manners. Absolutely without pity or remorse, Mircea likes to appear jovial — until he is crossed or thwarted. A fierce rival of Prince Radu of Bistritz, Mircea hopes to unseat his enemy and

claim Radu's lands. As a student of history and a Cainite of great intelligence, he tries to avoid placing his own life in danger. Rather, his preferred method of overcoming Radu is to send expendable pawns to encroach on Radu's territory — reasoning that the pawns will fight Mircea's battles for him, if the need arises. Though he can be generous to those who serve him well, he has no tolerance for mistakes or ineptitude. Mircea becomes the characters' patron if they are working for the Tzimisce *voivodes*. If the characters are not employed by him, he might still hire them as cat's paws in one of his schemes, or attempt to take the newly constructed tower in the pass from their control.

VENTRUE

NOVA ARPÁD, PRINCE OF MEDIASCH

Background: Nova Arpad was originally recruited by the Arpad Ventrue of Hungary to exploit the rapid social and political changes in Transylvania in the 12th century. In mortal history, the Hungarians encouraged settlers from other nations to develop settlements in the lands beyond the forest. One of their staunchest allies was the Szeklers, a Turkic tribe living in northeastern Transylvania. The Szeklers were eventually propped up by the Hungarians to act as the nobility — or more accurately, the overlords — of the Transylvanian serfs and peasants.

Typical Cainite arrogance demands a different version of that story. By their thinking, the Szeklers were enlisted because the Hungarian Ventrue, along with their Ventrue Eastern Lord allies, wanted to control the domains of Transylvania. Nova Arpad, from her estate in Mediasch, was to help oversee this domination, and in true Cainite style, took credit where the system succeeded.

By the end of the 12th century, however, Nova had been captured by a conspiracy of Transylvanian princes. Ruxandra, a Nosferatu skilled in maintaining her Mask of a Thousand Faces, replaced the Ventrue prince. As Nova was made captive, she was tortured in a labyrinth beneath a black-stone church. The ruse allowed the conspirators to quickly seize power, but it was only a matter of time until the western Hungarians uncovered the depths of the Easterners' treachery.

Nova was rescued by an audacious coterie of Cainites who decided to align their fate with the destiny of the Eastern Lords. While the coterie asked for overly elaborate rewards for their actions, Nova later betrayed them. She continues to have a very haughty attitude toward younger, weaker Cainites, and she underestimates them. This may be her undoing.

Arrogantly, she continues to assert her control over what remains of the Council of Ashes, but the patience of several other factions within the voivodate wears thin. Even the Ventrue begin to tire of her failure, though Nova is too audacious to notice this. Thus, she has renewed her efforts to achieve her goal and advance her destiny.

Image: Nothing can destroy Nova's pride. Jet-black hair cascades down her back, and cold eyes regard her lessers with disdain. She holds the regal bearing of a true Ventrue. Her wealthy upbringing is very evident, as is the cruelty she learned as she ascended into power.

Roleplaying Hints: When you were rescued at the end of the 12th century, your rage was limitless. Nothing could dissuade you from exacting vengeance upon your captors, the so-called "Council of Ashes." As time passes, however, you are realizing that you are in as much danger as they are. Bravado achieves little, and storming the audience chambers of the powerful meets with their displeasure. Cautiously choose your words around those more powerful than you. Do not forget, however, to let those beneath you know of your power and authority. A show of weakness would destroy you.

Haven: In 1197, Nova's household was an estate near Mediasch. With the assistance of her Szantovich lover, she once ecstatically forced her human servants into elaborate acts of submission. After 1310, a Saxon seneschal inhabits the estate, though Nova eventually dispatches him. By 1450, she no longer enjoys such displays of dominance, for when she approaches the Tremere fortress of Ceoris, she puts her fate in the hands of the Usurpers. There, she must submit in more unusual ways....

Secrets: Nova dreams of the Szantovich lover she lost so long ago. She was seduced by her own need for pleasure, but now, there is no release for it. The Beast within her remembers the exotic orgies of blood they once enjoyed, but soon, it may be her blood that is spilled for the enjoyment of others.

Influence: Like the remaining princes of the voivodate, Nova's influence will proceed from vast and encompassing to obsolete and dangerous. Desperation can make fast alliances, however.

Destiny: Her determination is fierce enough to slow the gradual reduction of her power. Through will alone, she survives. Desperately, she fights for supremacy for centuries, but her Patrician arrogance



becomes her undoing. Goethe once remarked that every man must be "hammer or anvil." Nova's pride will be tested, for the Tremere are going to "hammer" her....

Clan: Ventrue

Sire: Gregor

Generation: 7th

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Celebrant

Apparent Age: early 30s

Embrace: 1050

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Larceny 2, Subterfuge 3, Leadership 4

Skills: Etiquette 3, Music 2, Ride 2

Knowledges: Academics 2, Investigation 2, Law 3, Linguistics 3, Medicine 2, Politics 4, Seneschal 5

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Fortitude 2, Dominate 5, Presence 3

Backgrounds: Influence 5 (now 0), Resources 5 (now 0)

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 2, Courage 4

Road: Humanity 3

Willpower: 9

ROLAND, MASTER OF SLAVES

10th generation, childe of Otto

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Gallant

Embrace: 1103

Apparent Age: late 20s

Roland was once content to live a life of pleasure. Handsome and commanding, he took what he pleased and never feared the consequences. His mentor, a Parisian Toreador known for his sybaritic ways, seduced him and offered to reveal new horizons of pleasure and pain. At first, ingesting his mentor's blood was an amusing perversion, but later, the older man began babbling about the occult significance of the act. Curiously enough, the regular ingestion of sanguineous humors kept Roland young, healthy and vital.

The old man also pursued more shocking diversions, and desperately needed compliant slaves; the thrill of the hunt no longer amused him. The old man thus employed his ghoul in the enterprise of finding mortals for his entertainment. Roland learned all the practices of slavery and exploitation, from the gentle elegance of seducing bored nobles at social gatherings to the baser practices of the slave trade.

Once Roland was fully versed in the criminal necessities of this occupation, the Toreador presented him as a gift to a Ven-

true Inconnu of the Holy Roman Empire. Roland's skills were a valuable aid to sating Patrician bloodlust. The young ghoul could offer Ventrue variety in their diet while satisfying their rarefied and exotic tastes. Moreover, he could even skillfully dispose of the bodies afterwards. The degenerate undead rewarded his devotion with the Embrace, making him a lackey of the clan. The Ventrue Inconnu ensured his loyalty by subjecting him to a Blood Oath.

The Patricians of the Holy Roman Empire considered the rulers of western Hungary their playthings as well. In particular, Roland's master realized the promise of the newly created Bulscu and his Arpad childer. To watch over these interests, the sinister Inconnu offered the neonate to Bulscu. Roland was instructed to keep Bulscu well fed, watch his activities, and report regularly.

Roland performs these tasks out of loyalty, but he now finds his duties troublesome. He has had to travel further to obtain the variety his master requires. As Bulscu's sybaritic and degenerate ways became more extreme, his employer's slaves are increasingly destroyed. Discreetly disposing of so many bodies has become more difficult.

He would very much like to leave Buda-Pest before he is caught in his criminal activities, but the Ventrue of the Holy Roman Empire have other plans. For the time being, they are leaving their pawn in place. Roland has responded by beginning to test his chains. After entrapping others for centuries, he now realizes his need to strain against his bonds of blood.

LUCRETIA OF HARDTZ, RETAINER TO LORD JURGEN

9th generation, childe of Kuritz

Nature: Conformist

Demeanor: Defender

Embrace: 1098

Apparent Age: early 30s

A German knight in the service of Jurgen von Verden, Lucretia earned her Embrace through strict compliance with her overlord's wishes and the ruthless suppression of anyone speaking against her lord. Built like a man, with short, bowl-cut black hair and black eyes, Lucretia exudes Ventrue arrogance. As von Verden's agent, Lucretia becomes the characters' patron if they are working for the Eastern Lords. Though generally well spoken and pleasant, Lucretia quickly becomes a bully if she doesn't receive swift agreement with her plans. As a military officer, Lucretia has a warrior's disdain for those who don't follow a leader's commands. Though not unimaginative, she is more concerned with obedience and maintaining status than with listening to ideas postulated by those she considers "young pups." Should the characters be working for some other faction, Lucretia might be sent against them in command of several troops to take the Tihuta Pass from their guardianship.





Chapter Six: Storytelling the Chronicle of Ages

Not planning the structure thoroughly enough beforehand is the most common problem Storytellers encounter when devising a chronicle. Historical chronicles, especially – and this one in particular – have their own peculiar pitfalls. Examining the basic structure of an epic chronicle can help you use this book (and the three books after it). This is better than just jumping in and trying to keep your head above the Dark Tides Rising.

First, let's examine the idea of "snapshot chronicles." This will help you sketch out your stories, especially if you're trying to build a specific mood or theme throughout each one. Next, a few systems to negotiate the downtime between those chapters can be just as helpful. If you were planning to run a traditional "night-to-night" chronicle, you wouldn't need them, but if you want your coterie to carry on from 1197 to 1497 and beyond, downtime systems are worth their weight in gold (or paper, at the very least). At last, when you've had a chance to look through that, you'll be ready to prepare for Act I.

RUNNING AN EPIC CHRONICLE

SNAPSHOTS OF TIME

One of the most popular story structures in *Vampire* is the chronicle that summarizes night-to-night events of game time. For instance, Thursday, our valiant coterie might try to rescue Lars, their Brujah companion, from a Tremere chantry in northern Transylvania. Friday, Lars the Brujah set fire to a nearby church to set up a diversion for the Tremere pursuing him. On Saturday, the characters visit the Tzimisce lord of the domain and tell him why they think those damn mages set fire to his church, and so on.

This type of story is great for beginning Storytellers, but by now, you probably don't consider yourself a beginner, do you? Of course not. There isn't a chance in hell that you'd start out a story like this anymore:

"It's Monday. Last night, you escaped from the war ghouls of the Tzimisce lord and took over a monastery. The next evening, you're sitting around the scriptorium doodling in the manuscripts. So, what do you want to do?"

If you use this approach to start your story every session, you will eventually get bored. Your players will get bored. Most importantly, Lars the Brujah will get bored, and probably wind up setting fire to another church. The chronicle's downward spiral thus begins....

By contrast, suppose you decide to set aside six months of real time to tell a chronicle that begins in 1197 and ends during the French Revolution. It's an ambitious goal, but a promising one. Aside from the quality (and quantity) of the research you'd feel obligated to do, the chronicle would live or die depending on the structure you plan for it.

The first step in establishing the basics of your chronicle involves considering where you want to take the "snapshots of time" that form the chronicle. This book, for example, has three stories — "snapshots" — in three different eras. The first is in 1197; the second is in 1310; the third shows how far the voivodate has deteriorated by 1413. Of course, you might have an interest in portraying another historical event, such as the Turkish assault on Transylvania in 1420, or the peasant uprising in 1437. By using stories to illustrate each time period, you create a larger epic.

Another big advantage of snapshots is that you can resolve each chapter with its own particular denouement. This makes it easier for your players to commit to one story at a time instead of agreeing to an eight-century chronicle from the very start. ("Sure, pencil me in for every Saturday for the next 11 months. I'll be there.") Each story is self-contained instead of stretching into infinity.

The flexibility makes it easier to plan a long-term chronicle. For instance, one of your players might only be able to make it for the first chapter of your story. You could start out by designing a four-week tale that resolves when that player drops out. Once that's done, it's easy to run a story for the rest of the troupe in the second chapter, set over a century later. Then you could decide whether to write the one character back in or write him out before you start Chapter Three. An epic story doesn't have to be an epic commitment for your players. Characters can drop in and out of various chapters, as Cainites are apt to do.

If you want to take the idea of a snapshot chronicle further, ask yourself a few more questions: How many sessions do you want to set aside for each "chapter?" Do you need more than one chapter for each period of time? How many time periods does this epic chronicle you're developing really require? Planning the structure of the chronicle beforehand, at least for the first few months, greatly increases plot cohesiveness.

WHAT TIME IS IT

Several allusions to time turn up in this chapter. Here's what each reference means.

Game Time

Game time is the time that passes in the context of the game while the troupe is playing. If the coterie attacks Ceoris during one of your game sessions, it's all happening in game time.

Downtime

Downtime is the time between storytelling sessions, when it is assumed the characters are doing something. Bluebooking, below, is an excellent example of affairs occurring during downtime — the player is not actually portraying his character at the table, but the character is nonetheless "active," and will have accomplished something before the next session.

Real Time

Real time is the player's time spent away from the storytelling session. Real time is when that whole "life" thing is addressed.

THEME

The next concern is deciding on a theme or mood for the chronicle. Admittedly, this increases the level of difficulty for the Storyteller, but to be honest, you really can't build an epic adventure by having characters drift from one time period to the next with no motivation other than survival. By now, you know the basics about building consistent concepts and themes throughout your story. If you can apply these ideas to a long-term chronicle, the story will have a consistent feel throughout, preventing the game from degenerating to a series of stories about "What We Did Last Century."

If you really want to expand your approach to *Vampire*, consider some of the themes of vampiric unlife that you've read about but perhaps never fully demonstrated in a chronicle. We all know that vampires are romantic, sensual, treacherous, monstrous, bestial and tragic. In a chronicle of ages, you have the opportunity to demonstrate through your story why those themes aren't just elements of bad vampire poetry. As matter of fact, you can use those

themes to show why your vampires are believable characters — not just pumped-up sets of stats and Disciplines.

You might have already shown in an adventure how the themes of vampiric existence relate to nightly unlife in a particular century. Add the next factor: How do these aspects of Caine's curse change over time? Why do Methuselahs become so inhuman? What makes a vampire betray the Camarilla and go Sabbat? How does the relationship between a sire and childe change over eight hundred years? Tragic angst is a nice affectation, but showing the tragedy of a character struggling because of the curse of Caine can be a *tour-de-force* of Storytelling skill.

Examining how characters evolve over time can be an excellent way to develop these themes, and they make for great adventure ideas. Designing a chronicle with thematic consistency is more difficult than a night-to-night adventure, but it's damn-well worth it. If your enthusiasm for the game is starting to wane (gods forbid!), then it's time to change the fundamental paradigms of *Vampire*. Your chronicle of ages awaits.

INTERLUDES

So it appears that there's more to running this game than showing the events of one vampire-dominated city from week to week. There's a whole continent to explore, centuries of time for character development, and epic themes that you can always develop further. After you've thought out which snapshots of time you want to focus on, you'll need a way to explain what happened to the characters between those time periods.

When we last left Lars the Brujah and our typical chronicle, it was a Sunday, and he was blaming the Tremere for setting fire to the last church he torched. In the next session, after he avoids wasting time in the scriptorium, Lars insists that the coterie hire an oxcart and visit Brasov to call upon his Toreador lover. It'll take a month, so the characters must make a few stops along the way to feed off peasants, Dominate the driver, make sure their coffins (or whatever) are secure and prevent Lars from raising hell along the way. If a few weeks of game time pass in the middle of this type of chronicle, it's usually pretty easy to summarize the events that occur before the next adventure.

Now suppose we're telling an epic chronicle that spans centuries instead of weeks. In an epic historical adventure, where stories might be set hundreds of years apart, filling in the gaps between stories in different eras becomes somewhat more challenging. If Lars the Brujah runs screaming through the burning streets of Constantinople in 1204, and you planned the next adventure during the Los Angeles riots of 1995, filling in the details of the intervening eight centuries could be an overwhelming task. Describing an oxcart journey pales in comparison.

We're all accustomed to using preludes to summarize the events before adventures. Interludes describe events between adventures, especially if a long period of downtime transpires between them. There are several ways to handle these, so we've included some ideas that may help you do them better.

Blue-booking is a simple way to flesh out the downtime events of an epic interlude. Its best attribute is that it adds detail to your characters without taking up too much of the troupe's time in real life. *Capture scenes* are a more direct way of stopping time between sessions, one that can either become a wonderful tool for the Story-



STORYTELLING THE CHRONICLE OF AGES

teller (if they're done well) or a demoralizing experience for a player (if they aren't).

After that, you'll find details on a few more mechanical systems for negotiating how all these events effect your coteries or packs. How does all that time affect a vampire's Traits? We've included a simplified version of *Maturation*, the supplemental experience rules from *Elysium*. (See that particular tome if you need more details.) We have also detailed Fortune Paths, a mechanical system showing how a character changes over time.

All set? Let's defy time.

BLUE-BOOKING AND ITS VARIANTS

Blue-booking is one of the easiest ways to summarize an interlude. Aaron Allston coined the term after using it as a technique in his *Champions* group. (More discussion of blue-booking can be found in the *Mage* supplements *Hidden Lore* and *The Book of Mirrors*.) All this method requires is an inexpensive notebook for each player — similar to the 10-cent blue-bound leaflets used for taking college exams.

Between sessions, each player should feel free to write up suggestions for what his character might have attempted in the interlude between sessions. During her own downtime, the Storyteller quickly reads what each character wants to do. If she chooses, the Storyteller can then resolve these events individually with each player. By the next time the group gets together, the personal concerns of their respective characters have been resolved and the story can continue.

For example:

Lars is horrified at the Szeklers' treatment of the peasants, so he's going to make his home in a mill outside Hermanstadt around the early 13th century. As the city grows, he searches the houses of the nearby peasants each night looking for promising mortals to recruit. Of course, eventually the prince of Hermanstadt is going to find out, and when she does...

...and so on. By another application, the events of an interlude may also help form the prelude for the next chapter in a chronicle.

Blue-booking breaks down when one of two things happens:

First, if a character wants to do something really ambitious, the Storyteller might be forced to spend a little more time on that particular subplot than she first intended. ("During the next week, I want to sneak into the chambers of the Patriarch of Constantinople and assassinate him.") For this reason, blue-booking works best when it covers simple events. **Important:** The blue-booked vignette is an *attempt*, not a *success*. The Storyteller, as always, is the adjudicator of the game, and no amount of classic-quality prose changes that. Some scenes should be roleplayed; when the Storyteller says "no," she means it.

The second limitation is when the downtime covers *too much* time. In the case of Lars, the Brujah in Constantinople, the poor player who's describing him might feel forced to go off and write an epic novel before he can play in the adventure set in modern L.A. ("In Chapter Three, I describe how Lars raises an army of religious cultists in the Holy Land to destroy the fortress at Acre. What do I roll?") Of course, he doesn't really need to compose a *magnum opus* — a quick summary is all that's needed.



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Also remember that history is a one-way trip. If a player wants to develop any further details later, it'll have to be in a flashback. You might want to run a "parallel" story with a different (or related) group of characters, but this can get complicated, especially if the events in the second story-line interfere with the first. For instance, two characters may create children in 1197 and leave them to a separate **Dark Ages** game, even though the two sires are intended for a chapter set a century later. If you choose this option, tread carefully.

It might also seem tempting to blue-book over e-mail. Just keep in mind that e-mail blue-booking can be really addictive. Few Storytellers want to check their e-mail every day for updates on blue-booked backgrounds. Some do, but consider the commitment before you agree to it.

Some players get so caught up in writing blue-books that they continue working on them during game sessions (strange, but true!). How you deal with this is your concern. If this really gets out of control, you might want to schedule a session where everyone just works on blue-booking, handles bookkeeping, discusses research and roleplays interludes.

If your troupe prefers this group-based approach, then *round-robin blue-booking* is another method that helps flesh out an interlude. It's a way for a smaller group of players to summarize events. If one or two members of the coterie want to spend every waking moment together for the next century, this variation makes sense. Pass the book around, or treat it like a continued story.

Another example of round-robin blue-booking would be if two of the players wanted to describe a romantic liaison between their characters. If that's the case, it might be best for all concerned if they roleplayed it off-line (in a manner of their choosing) and wrote up the effect it should have on the chronicle before the next session. They might even pass the notebook between each other as they're writing up the details. Anything else is a detail the Storyteller probably doesn't need (or want) to know about. ("Hey! Get a room!")

If you've got another mechanism for detailing the events between sessions, blue-booking works well as a complementary technique. For instance, the Fortune Paths below do a capable job of summarizing the effect of time on a character, even though they leave some details to chance. Ingenious players can use methods like blue-booking to interpret the results of this method and turn the odds to their advantage. Time is on your side, after all, and blue-booking is one way to better manage it between sessions.

CAPTURE SCENES

If you really don't want to go to the trouble of figuring out what happened in the interlude, a capture scene is a particularly direct way of solving the problem. A character might go into torpor, get staked, fall into an ensorcelled pentagram in Ceoris, or remain bound and gagged for a period of time of your choosing. If done well, this can greatly simplify interludes. If done poorly, it can be one of the most demoralizing experiences imaginable for a player who likes the idea of free will.

Capture scenes work best when the player and Storyteller agree to them before the scene is roleplayed as part of a gaming session. For instance, if a player is going to take a vacation in Peru for a few weeks in the middle of your elaborately planned **Dark Ages** chronicle, you might agree on a reason his character has been taken

out of the story for a while. If you act it out as a capture scene before he leaves, it'll blend seamlessly into the ongoing story. Of course, you might find it more plausible to hand him a blue-book and write for a bit while he's gone, but as always, Real Life has been known to prevent such simple solutions.

If, on the other hand, the "trap" is sprung without the player's knowledge, it can make the player feel helpless. Situations that can't be solved by good roleplaying typically hurt morale. Even worse, the remaining players might realize the artifice of the game and worry about the same fate occurring to them.

If the player and Storyteller discuss the details of a capture scene before the session, the rest of the troupe won't be as shocked. If they're taken aback too much, you and your co-conspirator may have to explain that the scene was done with the player's full consent. In short, with capture scenes, when all else fails, get the player's consent first.

FORTUNE PATHS

You no doubt have more ideas about how to run interludes, but one big question remains: How does that much downtime affect a character's Traits? If a particularly active story can boost a character's wealth or status over a few months, what effect would a whole century have? Obviously, in a chronicle that spans hundreds of years, experience has to be handled differently than it would in a chronicle that advances from night to night.

These optional systems flesh out the events that take place between the chapters of your chronicle, focusing on how they affect various Traits on a character sheet. Their ultimate purpose is to give you more ideas for interludes. If you prefer your games to be mechanically simple, blue-booking alone suffices, but if you want to take the time to be a bit more rigorous, these systems will help. All of these systems are optional, so adapt or adopt them however you choose.

MATURATION AND EXPERIENCE

Some Storytellers like to give out a modicum of additional experience for surviving through a century or more. The system for Maturation reflects this "subsistence experience." Elders find that buying higher levels of statistics by simply surviving is progressively more expensive, but they can still "buy up" their stats. The following set of rules are a simplified version of the Maturation system.

Maturation points are awarded for every period of extended downtime thus:

Years of Downtime	Maturation Points
10-100	1-15
101-250	16-25
251-500	26-40

For example, Geoffrey the Malkavian survives another century despite the rampages of his companion, Lars the Brujah. The Storyteller gives Geoffrey's player 15 Maturation points to spend.

Once the Storyteller gives a player Maturation points, the player can use them to raise her vampire's Traits. When using the Maturation system, a Trait cannot be raised by more than 1 point for each century that passes. (This would not, however, prevent a player

from also raising Traits using the regular experience rules. Maturation points are spent separately from regular experience points.)

Storytellers may also choose to make increasing Traits through Maturation more expensive as a character grows older. Vampires are static creatures, and learning becomes increasingly difficult as the Cainite withstands the passage of time. For a more complex treatment of the Maturation system, see *Elysium*.

The cost for raising Traits through Maturation looks like this:

Trait	Cost of Raising Trait...
New Ability	3
New Discipline	10
New Thaumaturgy Path	7
Attribute	CRx4
Ability	CRx2
Clan Discipline	CRx5
Other Discipline	CRx7
Thaumaturgy Path	CRx4
Virtue	CRx2
Road	CRx1

For example, our Malkavian friend Geoffrey just spent a century of downtime away from that rascallion, Lars. Geoffrey's player spends 10 points to raise Geoffrey's Auspex from 1 to 2. He also allocates 5 points to raise Geoffrey's Road of Humanity rating from 4 to 5. (Geoffrey has been less than noble in his exploits.)

Maturation points unspent during an interlude are lost.

You may notice that the Background Trait isn't listed on this table. Backgrounds are handled in the next section — players can't increase Background Traits through Maturation.

FORTUNE PATHS

Background dots are relatively cheap. This is because those advantages don't necessarily last long. For instance, Lars, our errant Brujah, might control a large family of retainers in 1197, but by 1450, there's no guarantee the descendants of those servants will still be under his control. In a short-term chronicle, princes rise and fall and fortunes are easily destroyed.

In an epic chronicle, on the other hand, the struggle to make a long-term change in the world — like building a city of kine to use as your personal herd or gaining absolute control over a domain — is somewhat more difficult. More specifically, a character's Backgrounds become vitally important.

Here's the way the first part of this system works: For each 50 years that pass, a player may choose one Background Path to focus on and roll on that table. For an investment of three experience (not Maturation) points, he can roll on a second table; for six points, he can roll on three. Furthermore, before making any die roll, he can spend up to three points of experience to get a die modifier of +1 to +3. (That is, for each point he spends, he gets a die modifier of +1, up to a maximum of 3.)

By way of example, Geoffrey the Malkavian wants some new friends. This is a really important goal to Geoffrey's player, so he decides to spend two experience points to get a +2 modifier to this roll. He rolls a 5, adds the +2, and finds that Geoffrey has successfully raised his Allies Background Trait by 1. The player begins writing about the details in his blue book.

You may notice that there is no guarantee that a character's fortunes will improve if he uses this method — after all, that's what

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happens when a Cainite leaves his fate to chance! Characters who play a more active role in trying to improve their fate usually take more elaborate measures; this is reflected by the fact that if a vampire really was working overtime to improve his lot in unlife, it would merit a whole story, not just a few die rolls.

Each Background table is further divided into three headings: rationale, result and disaster. Before a player can make a roll on one of these tables, he must first give a rationale for why the character's fortunes may improve. For instance, if a Ventre wants to increase his Influence and Resources Backgrounds, the player might declare that his character is trying to expand his domain so that he controls a nearby Transylvanian mining camp.

Once the die has been cast, the Storyteller and the player should then give a reason why the Background has or has not changed. For instance, if the same Ventre failed to expand the territories of his domain, it might be because two Tzimisce vampires engaged in a fervent Trial by War near his territory. The listings of results can give you ideas for these details. Describing those details by blue-booking or another kind of interlude may be the next step.

On that note, Storytellers should know that the rationales, results and disasters printed here are only suggestions — feel free to make up whatever best suits your chronicle.

There is, of course, no guarantee that an ambitious Cainite will attain all the temporal goals he desires, even if he has a century to pursue them. While the Storyteller and players are aware of the course of history between any span of centuries, the characters are cast adrift on the tides of fate. Of course, if any of the results of this "throw of the dice" severely contradicts your story or defies common sense, the Storyteller is perfectly within her rights to adjust them however necessary.

THE HUNT

You may have noticed that Generation doesn't have a table here. The reasons for this are rather obvious — generation is so important to the game that you shouldn't be able to diablerize someone by rolling a 10-sided correctly. Nonetheless, Assamites before 1498 and other insidious types may want to spend their downtime hunting victims and pursuing "the race to Caine."

If a player pursues this goal, the Storyteller should run a type of interlude known as The Hunt. This technique works best when it's either roleplayed off-line or used as a brief one-shot adventure. The Storyteller devices a short interlude where the vampire has a chance to hunt down and diablerize another Cainite. A Hunt may be attempted only once each century (largely as a matter of game balance). Of course, the higher up the food chain the character gets, the more difficult this task becomes.

Some Assamites may prefer to just spend a larger portion of their interlude making *preparations* to diablerize someone. After all, you can get a vast amount of information in a century. Before the next chapter begins, the character, replete with advantages gained from experience and Maturation, can then play out the Hunt in a one-shot and see what fate has in store. Of course, after the Convention of Thorns, Assamites cannot lower their generation this way unless they forsake their independence for Sabbat allegiance.



FIVE OR TEN POINTS

The Storyteller should also make an additional ruling regarding Backgrounds before using this table. In many **Vampire** chronicles, Background Traits never go above 5. Elder characters, on the other hand, are known to have scores as high as 10 (especially in the case of Inconnu and Methuselahs). Before consulting these tables, the Storyteller should decide which is the accepted maximum for the characters. For more information on Background scores above 5, see **Elysium**.

*The rationales, results and disasters of these tables pertain to the period between 1197 and 1450. Chronicles that continue past these years should modify their natures to reflect the changing times. More information for bringing the Fortune Paths up to date will appear in **Transylvania Chronicles 2: Son of the Dragon**.*

ALLIES

1-2: Disaster. Lose one Ally.

3-5: No change.

6-9: Gain one Ally.

10: Gain two Allies.

Possible Rationales

- Forging a treaty with a nearby domain;
- Defeating a common enemy, creating a childe;
- Siding with one powerful character against another;
- Manipulation by a Methuselah in the great Jyhad.

Possible Results

- A Brujah agitator takes up your cause;
- You are caught in the midst of a Tzimisce feudal struggle;
- You help a Tremere in a remote chantry gain revenge;

- One of the Salubri thinks you are worthy of salvation;
- Shadow Lord werewolves tell a legend about you;
- You enlist the aid of a popular hero;
- Defeating a minor tyrant gains you the trust of others.

Possible Disasters

- You seduce a mortal an ally desires;
- Your ally swears the Blood Oath to someone more powerful than you;
- Your Tremere ally is promoted in the pyramid and no longer needs you;
- The force of the Infernal is at work;
- Your demonstration of trust becomes an invitation to betrayal.

CONTACTS

1-2: Disaster. Lose one Contact.

3-4: No change.

5-8: Gain one Contact.

9-10: Gain two Contacts.

Possible Rationales

- You focus on espionage;
- You drift through major social events;
- Controlling a promising mortal offers leads to other opportunities;
- You become skilled at blackmail or bribery;
- You promise a mortal great power.

Possible Results

- Knowing someone in the (Hungarian, Byzantine, etc.) bureaucracy becomes a big help;



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- A former mortal enemy is willing to give you information on a common enemy (the Turks, the Hungarians);

- Someone with power receives the Kiss from you... and he'll do anything to receive it again.

Possible Disasters

- Setites or Baali lead your contact astray;
- Your contact has started working for someone else and begins by selling *your* secrets;
- You communicate a disease to your contact and she dies;
- When your contact finds out your true nature, he's horrified;
- Hey, you aren't the only one secretly holding blood-stained orgies for the local count!

HERD

- 1-2: Disaster. Lose one point of Herd.

- 3-4: No change.

- 5-7: Gain one point of Herd.

- 8-10: Gain two points of Herd.

Possible Rationales

- Growth of a powerful guild;
- Cure for a disease that threatened a (human or animal) flock;
- Secret patronage of a monastery or convent;
- Tending to the sick or insane;
- Regularly avenging the dispossessed;
- Zelios has created a secret room for you in a noble's castle.

Possible Results

- You are well acquainted with dispossessed or downtrodden people (lepers, madmen, Gypsies, beggars);
- You are popular among people threatened by bigotry (Jews, Moors);
- You quietly visit holy men (monks, nuns, missionaries, wanderers);
- You are intimately acquainted with the merchant's quarter;
- You silently feed on the same family of serfs and peasants from one generation to the next;
- You are able to pass unseen among the nobility, giving you access to very rarefied blood.

Possible Disasters

- Racial vengeance results in the slaughter of innocents. Your herd suffers accordingly;

- A noble line is in decline;
- There is a legend that the monastery you frequent has been corrupted (by you, of course);

- Plague or disease sweeps through your city;
- A powerful Cainite strikes at you through your herd;
- Clan hatred results in action against your herd;
- Mortals in your herd realize that you are preying on them;
- Saxons write about you in cheap sensationalist tracts;
- Die, Chocula, Die! When you abduct too many beautiful young women (for ceremonies in your dark castle), a mysterious traveler (who hears about it in the inn) decides to hunt you and eventually send you into torpor in a bizarre way (that inconveniences you until the next Hammer film).

RESOURCES

1-2: Financial Disaster. Lose two points of Resources.

3-4: Disaster. Lose one point of Resources.

5-6: No change.

7-8: Gain one point of Resources.

9-10: Gain two points of Resources.

Rationales

- Investing in Transylvanian mining;
- Developing a career in blackmail;
- Earning the tribute of (Bulgarians, Byzantines, Hungarians, Transylvanians);
- Efficient farming techniques improve crop yields;
- You support an artisan who is renown for his brilliance;
- You're siphoning money from a convent or monastery.

Possible Results

- A mortal ruler learns of your power and pays you handsomely to spare him;
- The discovery of a vein of precious metal elevates your fortune;
- A peaceful century allows farmers the chance to produce more;
- Mercenary raids allow you to steal the wealth of your enemies;
- You exploit a technological innovation;

Possible Disasters

- Technology makes your accomplishment obsolete;
- Brujah stir up enraged peasants against you;
- Barbarians raid;
- Merchant trade routes are disrupted by war.

STATUS

A word on status: Using this table in conjunction with other systems may be confusing. If a character is rewarded with a political title during a game, for instance, he does not have to roll on this table every 50 years to bring his Status up to the commensurate level; instead, the Storyteller should simply raise the Trait to the appropriate level.

1-2: Disaster. Lose two points of Status.

3-4: Disaster. Lose one point of Status.

5-6: No change.

7-10: Gain one point of Status.

Rationales

- You are support a prince who is ready to move on and leave everything to his favorite ally;

- You assassinate a powerful ruler and take his place;
- You become the shadowy power behind a mortal throne;
- You achieve a great task and improve your renown;
- Careful politicking elicits trust;
- You're the only Cainite who can deal with the local (Tzimisce, Malkavians, Unseelie, etc.).

Possible Results

- You're the chosen heir to a Cainite prince;
- Your mortal thrall moves into a position of power;
- You are known for your keen grasp of political issues;
- The prince is in torpor, and you put him there;
- The court of a major city has more token titles;
- No one cares who the Ventre say rules the city; you've got the true power.

Possible Disasters

- Looks like you picked the wrong side in a power struggle;
- An assassination attempt fails;
- Scandal drives a mortal ruler from power;
- That promising nobody you supported decides to screw you over on the way up... or just remains a nobody;
- That inconsequential nobody you exploited gets revenge after you take a fall.
- Promised compensation is withdrawn, and you're blamed for the mistakes of others;
- Your former allies don't need you anymore;
- Hey, that prince isn't dead!
- A political alliance becomes a romantic tryst... and then becomes a ride through hell.

VARIATIONS

These tables show one type of Fortune Path. The goal here is to demonstrate how Backgrounds can change over time, generate ideas for stories based around that change, and give characters larger goals throughout an epic chronicle. Subsequent books in the Transylvania Chronicles will have other varieties of Fortune Paths.

For instance, some players love tables that randomly generate all the different events that might transpire during the years of an interlude. ("During the next 10 years, you get caught in a dispute between two Tzimisce and... [rolls dice]... gain another five head of cattle!") Other players can't stand them. Mix and match these systems however you like; just remember that the reason they're there is to give you story ideas, not to gratuitously force you through another bothersome system.





Appendix

The Role of History

Whether you want to tell the stories of your Transylvanian chronicle in the late-12th century, the mid-15th century or anywhere in between, the mortal history of the region provides complex and evocative ideas for adventures. The following timeline offers a quick summary, and an essay on mortal history during this era places the details in context.

THE TRANSYLVANIAN TIMELINE

Many of the most important events in Cainite history originate during this time. You may, as always, alter or amend this timeline as your version of the World of Darkness and the actions of your characters allow.

Several specific Cainite events are listed in italics and marked with two dots (••).

PRELUDE

• 271: Emperor Aurelian withdraws Roman troops from Dacia.

• 896: Magyar tribes conquer the Carpathian Basin. The *gyula*'s tribe occupies the area that will one day be Transylvania. Soon, the territory becomes part of a system to defend against threats from the east. The Pechenegs are the most immediate threat.

• 997-1038: Istvan I rules as the king of Hungary. Transylvania is recognized as part of Hungary. With the support of the Roman Catholic Church, he helps spread Western feudalism and imposes Christianity on the inhabitants of Hungary.

•• 1022: Goratrix of house Tremere discovers a method of inducing immortality through ingesting vampiric blood. Tremere and seven followers become Cainites.

• 1128: The Order of the Templars is recognized by the Pope.

•• Mid-12th Century: Tremere begin changing select mages of House Tremere into vampyrs; the Tremere create the first Gargoyles.

•• 1133: Tremere diablerizes Saulot; Tremere begins falling in and out of torpor. His seven personally chosen councilors, all bound to him by Blood Oath, spread throughout the known world.

• 1141: Geza II encourages Saxons to colonize Transylvania. The term "Saxon" is a generic name for German settlers, including peoples from Flanders, Luxemborg and Moselle. Their first colonies are in the Sibiu basin and Olt and Hirtbalu valleys. Later, they colonize Bistria.

•• 1150: Arpad Ventrue create the Council of Ashes and formally recognize seven domains in Transylvania with seven princes to rule them.

• The Kingdom of Hungary grants Saxon peasants hereditary titles in exchange for financial obligations. In many areas, the political leader of a village is given the title of Count and gets a larger plot of land.

• The Szeklers, an ethnically mixed Turkic race, fight in the vanguard of Hungarian armies entering Transylvania. Later, they become the nobility in the feudal system of eastern Hungary.

• 1190: The Order of German Hospitalers, an offshoot of the Templars, is founded. In 1198, the society is transformed into the Teutonic Order

•• 1197: Nova Arpad is captured; Ruxandra of Clan Nosferatu takes her place. Within a year, however, Nova is freed by an opportunistic coterie.

DARK TIDES RISING

•• Several Cainites are summoned to Buda-Pest by their sires, and instructed to scout out the territory surrounding Tihuta Pass. By winter, a fortress is erected there.

• 1204: Fall of Constantinople

• 1205: Pope Innocent III instigates the Fourth Crusade, rooting out heretic Cathars in the Languedoc. It turns into a full-blown Inquisition.

•• Goratrix, responsible for France, is angered by Church intrusions. He begins infiltrating the Church.

• 1206-1227: Genghis Khan becomes chief prince of the Mongols.

• 1211: Teutonic Knights are brought by Andreas II to defend the southern borders of Hungary from the Cumans. They help expand the Christian feudal system and continue to spread into Transylvania.

•• Teutonic Knights inhabit and develop Bran Castle. A cabal of knights inhabit a tower in the Tihuta Pass with a slightly different agenda.

• 1223: Mongols invade Russia and begin their forays into Eastern Europe.

• 1225: Teutonic Knights are expelled from the Transylvanian region when they attempt to establish a state within a state. By then, the construction of Bran Castle is finished.

• 1241: Mongols invade Transylvania using the Tihuta Pass as their primary invasion route. Hungary regains control of these territories within a year, but by this time King Bela IV loses control over much of his land.

•• The Tihuta Pass Castle is overrun by the Mongol horde.

• 1247-91: Szeklers repopulate the Aranyos area; Saxons repopulate the area around Mediasch.

• 1252: Inquisition begins using torture.

• 1260: Constantinople recovered from the Normans.

• 1283: Teutonic Order completes subjection of Prussia.

• 1284-1285: Mongols invade Transylvania again.

• 1288: Transylvanian nobles form their own legislature (or diet) in Cluj-Napoca. Note that before this time, much of Transylvanian justice had been maintained by the "wise old men" of the villages. Many serfs and peasants continue to think their own laws are more valid than the rulings of the diet....

• By this time, the formation of guilds has a strong effect on the Transylvanian economy. Guilds allow merchants to set consistent prices, communicate trade secrets, and raise quality standards. Money, another gradual development, becomes a more common substitute for barter.

• After the formation of the Diet of Transylvanian nobles, feudal lords demand increased crop yields from the local serfs. When these quotas aren't met, many Szekler lords seize the debtors' lands and redistribute them. Some impoverished serfs either flee the country or become outlaws.

• 1291: Mamelukes conquer Acre. End of the Crusades. The Holy Land is lost.

• 1291: At a meeting in Alba Iulia, Andrew III allows Vlachs to attend. Hungarian nobles, Saxons and Szeklers are also present. Many peasants consider this promising.

• 1301: Andrew III, the last king of the Arpad line, dies.

• In early 14th-century Transylvania, landowning boyars begin renting their lands to peasants.

• Friday, Oct. 13, 1307: Templars of France are arrested on the order of Philip the Fair, King of France. Within the next few years, Templars are tortured and tried for heresy.

•• According to some legends, 33 Templars escape. Their famed treasure is smuggled out of France, most of it going to Scotland; some is taken east.

- 1312: Templar Order banned and dissolved.
- Two ships (also unaccounted for) containing vast wealth set sail, presumably with survivors or agents of the Templars seeking refuge in other lands. Numerous splinter groups are formed, explaining why the Ventre, Nosferatu, and other unseen masters all control the Templars at the same time.
- 1314: Jacques de Molay, supposed last grand master of the Templars, is burned at the stake in Paris for alleged heresy; King Philip IV of France and Pope Clement die within the year.
- 1330: Prince Bassarab defeats the Hungarians and establishes Wallachia. It becomes a land of refuge for the Vlachs.
- 1348-1349: Plague sweeps through Transylvania and the Hungarian Kingdom.
- 1349: Bogdan establishes a new state along the Moldova River. Within a decade, it becomes the sovereign state of Moldavia. The princes of the nation are meant to be elected by a council of boyars and clergy. Fierce struggles for such positions eventually make the area vulnerable to invasion.
- 1349: *The Eastern Lord Ventre vainly try to set up a number of Saxon princes as part of another council. Many are killed; some are eaten; all are abused.*
- Noriz, the Corrupter of Legions' childers use the political struggles in Moldavia as an opportunity to maneuver for position in their Reclamationist struggles.
- 1366: Louis I begins an effort to convert the Romanian Vlachs to Roman Catholicism.
- 1381: Peasants revolt in England under Wat Tyler.
- Wat Tyler's lover, Patricia, is Embraced and takes the name Tyler in his honor.

- 1382: Turks capture Sofia.
- 1385: Tirgoviste becomes the capital of Wallachia.
- 1387: Turks conquer Serbs at the Battle of Kosovo. This is a major turning point in the Ottoman Empire's invasion of the Balkans.
- 1391: The Turks cross the Danube into Wallachia. Mircea the Old allies with the king of Hungary to repel the invaders.
- 1393: Bajazet (emir of Turks) subdues Bulgaria.
- 1394: Pre-Camarilla, first inter-clan meeting to deal with Anarchs.
- 1395: Tyler's attack against Hardestadt of Clan Ventre begins the Anarch Revolt.
- 1405: Lasombra dies at the hands of his childe.
- 1412: Joan of Arc born.
- 1417: Mircea signs a peace treaty with the Turks, allowing for Wallachian independence. Eastern Orthodoxy is formally accepted as the state religion. The ruler must pay a tribute of money and goods each year to the Ottoman Sultan.
- 1418: Mircea the Old, grandfather of Vlad Tepes, dies after a 32-year rule. He is historically noted for having adding the duchies of Amlas and Faragas, building up fortifications along the Carpathian foothills, and calling for the construction of the fortress of Guigiu on the Danube border to repel the Turks.
- Two noble lines struggle for control of Wallachia. The Danesti line — that is, the descendants of Dan II — has the support of Sigismund I, the Holy Roman Empire. The Draculesti line — that is, the descendants of Vlad II — is its fiercest rival. Vlad II has two illegitimate sons, Radu and Vlad (who will later be known as Vlad the Impaler).





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• 1420: Anarch movement gains ground. The Vinculum comes into common use.

• 1420: Ottoman Turks successfully attack Transylvania.

• 1431: Vlad II is living in Nürnberg. The Hungarian king chooses him to take the throne of Wallachia. He is summarily "elected" by anti-Danesti boyars (*with the covert help of Traditionalist Tzimisce*) and invested as a Draconist in the Order of the Dragon.

• 1431: Joan of Arc burned at the stake at Rouen; Vlad II's son, Vlad Dracula, is born.

• 1435: Founding of Camarilla.

• 1437: Antal Nagy leads a major peasant revolt in Babolna. These revolts lead to the formation of the Union of Three Nations. Magyars, Szeklers and Saxons then crush the rebellion (with one swift stroke). The Union declares that these three races are the only ones with recognizable privileges.

• After the rebellions of 1437, the overlords demand serfs to work one day a week for their feudal lord without compensation. If tools or animals are required for this work, the lower classes have to use their own. At harvest time, the serfs are forced into six days of uncompensated work a week.

• In the wake of the rebellion, Romanians are barred from holding public service, holding public office, or living in Saxon or Magyar towns.

THE REST OF THE CENTURY

• 1441: Janos Hunyadi assumes the title of *voivode* of Transylvania. He then goes on to defeat the Turks at Alba Iulia and Hermanstadt.

• 1443: Janos Hunyadi, Hungarian national hero, defeats Turks at Nish.

• 1446: Hunyadi elected regent of Hungary.

• 1448: Vlad Dracula, a member of the Basarab dynasty, occupies Tirgoviste and occupies the throne of Wallachia.

• 1453: Turks capture Constantinople.

• 1453: *In a very different society, several powerful mages meet at the ruins of the Covenant of Mistridge in Southern France. The Nine Traditions are established.*

• 1456: Janos Hunyadi dies after repelling Turks at Belgrade.

• 1458: Matthias Corvinus, son of Hunyadi, becomes king of Hungary.

• The *Malleus Maleficarum* is distributed and the Inquisition reinvigorated.

• 1486: First global convocation of the Camarilla meets.

• Oct. 23, 1493: The Convention of Thorns ends the Anarch Revolt; a Tremere ritual prevents Assamites from continuing to diablerize Cainites.

• The Cainites attending the Council of Thorns refer to themselves as the *Kindred* for the first time.

SNAPSHOTS OF HISTORY

Some of these events, admittedly, are more important to the events of the *Transylvania Chronicles* than others. A few are detailed below, organized in chronological order. For more details, consult the bibliography.

THE ORIGINS OF THE PEASANT REBELLIONS

When Istvan I became king of Hungary in the year A.D. 1000, Transylvania was officially recognized as part of the Kingdom of Hungary. In actuality, Hungary's influence didn't overwhelm the voivodate of Transylvania overnight. Despite the idealism of the king, who ruled from western Hungary, eastern Hungary was still largely under the control of communal villages. Throughout the next 200 years, Saxons and Szeklers began to lay claim to unsettled regions of Transylvania. Many of the most remote regions were unaffected. In the latter part of the 12th century and the early part of the 13th, Transylvania was formally recognized as part of Hungary, but enforcing that claim took far more effort.

For the residents who already lived in the lands beyond the forest, the regions closest to Hungary (such as the Banat) were threatened the most by foreign acquisition. When the kingdom granted vast tracts of land to churches and monasteries, that land was often seized from the peasants who lived there. What was once owned communally became the property of foreign lords and clergy. In addition, the lords usually tithed these peasants, demanding a tenth of their pigs, cattle, grain, hay, salt and other commodities.

Since the ownership of land was at stake, some village communes in the early 13th century resisted the encroaching feudal system. A patchwork of large communes stretched from one side of the voivodate to the other. For instance, the Banat (in western Transylvania) still had 30 free communes in 1220. In Tara Hategului (in the southwest), five districts still chose representatives for their own government until the 14th century, as did many of the districts in Tara Maramuilesui in the northeast.

Three issues were of vital importance throughout the many *tîrsas* and *knezates* of Transylvania after 1200: What race formed the dominant population of the land, who ruled the people of the land and who owned the land. Generally speaking, in communal lands, the local government existed for the sake of the people who lived there. In lands claimed by the Church or state, the government collected wealth for the sake of the people in power. They may have claimed to do this in the interest of the lower classes, but a long tradition of communal governments in the smaller villages proved this "assistance" was not needed.

Most Transylvanians felt the impact of the feudal system, since most of them lived in villages populated by a few hundred people. The rapidly growing cities of Transylvania held the densest population, but far more Transylvanians lived in agrarian communes. It didn't matter whether the centers of these territories were known as villages, manors or settlements, many aspects of the local rule remained the same. A judge, mayor or *knez* oversaw a communal village; a *burgrave* or count oversaw a Saxon village; a judge or mayor ruled over a Hungarian- or Szekler-dominated town. In many Saxon villages, the judge was assisted by a group of jurors.

If a feudal lord owned the land, he could also preside over the court of justice, collect taxes, gather the income from mills and taverns, dictate how the crops were rotated, and oversee the *robota* or so-called "voluntary" labor. (The word "voluntary" is highly misleading; the increasing amount of socage and *robota* demanded by the nobles sparked many peasant rebellions.) On the other hand, if the land was owned by the people, the elected ruler would have to answer to the peasants, and he could easily be replaced.

The concept of justice similarly differed between these two types of communities. If a village was free, a judge was chosen by the community. If it wasn't, then the rules were imposed from above. The Romanian tradition involved a meeting every Sunday. The "wise old men" of the village would mediate disputes, usually under a "leafy green tree," or in a judgment

house if the weather was inclement. If a feudal lord owned the land, these customs were abandoned in favor of Saxon or Szekler justice.

As one would expect, the size of the dominant population didn't always decide whether a village was ruled by a Vlach commune, Szekler lord or Saxon burgrave. Many areas predominantly Romanian, were ruled by a minority of Szeklers, Hungarians or Saxons. Throughout the voivodate, local Vlachs far outnumbered the other three races. Before the invasion of 1241, among the approximately 550,000 inhabitants of the voivodate, 65% were Romanian, while Hungarians, Saxons, Szeklers and other races composed less than 35%.

Admittedly, some regions of Transylvania were originally settled by Saxons or Szeklers, and as such, the land was historically "theirs" to some extent. Members of an ethnic group could increase their chances of ruling and taxing their own land by taming unsettled territories and overcoming the greater hardships found there. As such, only a small percentage of Szeklers could be called "overseers" or "overlords." Yet all too often, when nobles found that they wanted to seize lands that had been maintained and developed by Vlachs for generations, they took what they wanted and justified it however they could.

ALTERNATE ORIGINS OF THE SZEKLERS AND VLACHS

Many historians are far more forgiving of the Szeklers, especially when they espouse a Hungarian point of view. Admittedly, many Szeklers also treated their land as communal. Under their system, every Szekly was free. Their agrarian efforts also succeeded admirably, especially in the art of stockbreeding and horsebreeding.

Each man had one major obligation to the state: In their feudal-military society, every man of age had to serve in the military. Considering this societal obligation and their excellent horsebreeding techniques, it's no wonder that the vanguards of the Szeklers' light-cavalry units were almost legendary. Despite this, many of the serfs they protected would have been more impressed with their prowess had they succeeded in repelling the Mongol invasions of 1241.

By the same token, there is a common argument among many Hungarian historians that the Vlachs may not have been present in Transylvania through most of the medieval era. For the sake of argument, this view is worth pursuing. By one account, the Vlachs may have been in Dacia as early as 271, but were later forced to the south by the influence of the Slavs. As a largely migratory tribe, they may indeed have been absent from Transylvania for centuries.

After being dispersed in turn by the Bulgars in the 10th century, they might have then migrated throughout much of Eastern Europe. A large force of Vlachs supposedly fought with the Byzantines during the invasion of Transylvania in 1166. If this is true, then the Magyars would have colonized the Carpathian Basin first, although by this interpretation, the Vlachs would still be the descendants of the original tribes in Dacia.

It should be noted that some of these invading tribes referred to themselves as the Rumin, which is taken by some to be the origin of the word "Romanian." Some chroniclers still give opposing views of the origins of the Vlachs. In the Dark Medieval world, however, settlements of Vlachs were present from the days of Dacia to the time of the Arpad conquest and beyond.

THE TEUTONIC KNIGHTS

Another independent society, the Teutonic Knights, played an intriguing role in the history of 13th-century Transylvania. In 1211, Teutonic Knights expelled from the Holy Land settled in the area around Barcasag, where the

Hungarian king granted them complete autonomy. For a while, they were free of the tithes and taxes imposed on the peasants and serfs. The Hungarian king was generous with the privileges he granted them—for instance, they were allowed to erect wooden castles for their own defense.

Over the next 10 years, however, the Teutonic Knights demanded further rights. These declarations became progressively bolder until at last they declared that they would follow no authority save that of the Pope. This was far too extreme for the Hungarian nobility, and King Andrew II expelled them in 1225. Saxon settlers later repopulated the areas the Teutonic Knights abandoned.

OTHER TYPES OF VILLAGES

While the 13th century saw the growth of many large economic towns in Transylvania, including Brasov, Sibiu, Sighisoara, Mediasch and Sebes, it should be noted that there were other types of growing cities in the area. Settlers knew Cluj, Satu Mare and Timisora largely for the royal castles they maintained. Major mining towns in Baia Mare, Rodna, Dej and Torda filled the coffers of the Hungarian king. The seven cities of the Siebenburgen were significant, but other types of cities and villages were just as influential during this period.

THE MONGOL INVASION

The invasion of the Mongols in 1241 was by far the greatest disaster in Transylvania during the 13th century. Batu Khan, acting on behalf of Genghis Khan, conquered and held the Carpathian Basin for over a year. One portion of the barbarian horde laid waste to Moldavia, entered Transylvania through the Tihuta Pass, and later decimated Rodna, Bistria, Dej, Cluj and Oradea. After slaughtering countless Hungarians, this horde advanced as far as Koloszvar. Forces from the southeast, which entered through the Oiutz pass, fought against the armies of Bela IV and destroyed them. Mongol dominance in the region was at last assured.

The death of the Khan, along with the difficulties involved in controlling such a large area and the distraction of battles with the Russian *knezates* on their other front, forced the Mongols to withdraw in 1242. Aside from the body count, which drastically reduced the population of the voivodate, concerns over the defense of the region and massive land grabs by the nobility continued to wreak havoc long after the Mongols left Transylvania.

BELA IV AND THE ANARCHY OF HIS REIGN

In the wake of this invasion, Bela IV tried to keep control over a shocked and frightened populace. Despite his best efforts, anarchy reigned in many far-flung portions of the voivodate. While the king called for more settlers from other nations to help repopulate the region, many of the nobles who had previously held poorly defended terrain seized land where they could, fearing both competition and further invasions.

Many relocated near more easily defended woods and river valleys. If peasants already lived there, the ownership of their lands changed hands quickly. Nobles also adopted the habit of rapidly taking over many of the existing fortresses and quickly rebuilding their own. The masses were left to the whims of noble landlords, and the nobility victimized the rural communes further as more independent

communes fell. During this period, the number of serfs also grew rapidly, worsening the condition of existing serfs and peasants.

With the burden of rebuilding at hand, the overseers of foreign-dominated villages increased the serfs' obligations. While the nobles took advantage of their own freedom of movement, they drastically limited the movement of the lower-classes. To ensure greater income, they also demanded that families of peasants till the same plots of land from one generation to the next. The few peasants who were allowed to leave lands seized by an ambitious noble were forced to pay a special tax called the *terrarium*, increasing their chances of being both dispossessed and impoverished.

Thus, even as early as the 13th century, the spirit of rebellion grew. The audacious claims of the Westerners had done nothing to protect the peasants from the Mongols. The taxes collected in the name of defense did little more than line the pockets of the wealthy. When the barbarians finally massed for an all-out attack, the result was slaughter. Furthermore, goods generated by the villages were gathered for the benefit of outsiders who claimed to possess the skills to manage them. In actuality, many of the commoners were quite experienced at running their own communes.

In isolated portions of the voivodate, the reigning anarchy encouraged peasants to rise up against their oppressors. Many forms of rebellion were available, and the lower classes used them all: They could revolt, refuse to pay taxes, leave noble estates, resettle in less-desirable areas or even become brigands or outlaws. Nonetheless, these options were, of course, only available to those who could afford them. Many, after being slowly bled dry by the feudal lords, remained in poverty.

INDEPENDENT TRANSYLVANIA

By 1257, Bela IV's discontent with the situation in eastern Hungary led him to appoint his son, Stephan, as the new ruler of Transylvania. Stephan had repeatedly implored his father for the position, and Bela had initially thought that Stephan would be ruling in his stead. He was wrong.

For 13 years, Stephan ruled Transylvania much as he would a sovereign nation. But when it became clear that he had no intention of remaining under Bela's fatherly rule, the Hungarian king tried to end Stephan's reign. His son resisted by force, demonstrating his skill at mustering troops for the defense of the voivodate. After King Stephan V defeated the armies of Hungary on several occasions, Bela had no choice but to capitulate and recognize Transylvania's independence. Bela and Stephan continued to struggle against each other until Bela's death in 1270. Stephan V only ruled for two more years before his mysterious and sudden death.

Magyar kings continued to try to bring the voivodate back under Hungarian rule. During the anarchy of the reign of the Hungarian King Ladislaus IV (from 1272-1290), the two countries separated further. The king found it increasingly difficult to contain the ambition of the Transylvanian nobility. As the *voivodes* seized more power, so did the nobles. After the withdrawal of the Mongol horde, seizing land from the Vlach serfs was easier than ever before.

The situation grew worse over time until, under Ladislaus' reign, nobles treated their domains as autonomous princedoms, freely seizing land where they pleased and even mobilizing troops to hold down the threat of peasant revolts. Local *knez* and the Transylvanian *voivode* echoed this greed. The independent *voivode* Roland Borsa strengthened the independence of his lands, preparing for the day when he would rule all.



Indeed, Roland Borsa did indeed eventually become *voivode* of all Transylvania. Despite his success, though, he could do little to stop the growing power of land-owning nobles. Each of these *aristos* ostensibly maintained their lands to serve the king... until King Ladislaus was finally assassinated in 1290. The façade was dropped.

The next Hungarian king, Andrew III, ambitiously hoped that his regal tour of Transylvania — his “royal progress” — would somehow quell the rising frequency of insubordination. Though feigning servitude, the Transylvanian nobility took power wherever it could. Andrew’s well-intentioned plan had disastrous results. His prolonged absence from the Hungarian capital led to a lack of centralized power in the kingdom. A host of foreign pretenders to the crown soon presented competition at home, and Andrew meekly returned to his own lands.

Roland Borsa succeeded Roland Borsa, and he served as the autonomous *voivode* of the region after 1290. He ruled Transylvania from Deva, complete with his own court of judges, squires and notaries. This *voivode* assumed more privileges than any previous one, claiming the authority to oversee fortresses, towns, royal domains, mines and bishoprics, in addition to rewarding nobles with special favors. As he grew more audacious, he not only launched an attack on the bishopric of Varad, but also waged war against the king’s troops.

In 1297, Lazlo Kan resumed where Lorand had taken off, and, in the same spirit, seized more power at the expense of the state. After appropriating the wealth generated by the Transylvanian mining towns — once the property of the Hungarian king — he sired many children to carry on his legacy. These children would become infamous in the Hungarian version of Transylvanian history. They fervently resisted any who denied their power-plays.

Romanians were getting bolder, however. Transylvania’s growing autonomy and stronger political affiliations during this time are easily explained. The growth of Romanian societies in Transylvania far outpaced the spread of the Western nobility. Similarly, Moldavia and Tara Romaneasca (or Wallachia) were also predominantly Romanian. As the nobles seized more power, the masses watched and waited for their opportunity to strike back.

THE DIETS

Transylvania at last had the strength and the will to appeal to other nations on its behalf. *Voivode* Ladislaus, for instance, was able to make pacts with other nations to ensure compensation from Hungary. In 1288, the *voivode* called a diet of the Transylvanian nobility. He presided over this much as the Hungarian king would oversee his own diet. Similar diets were called in 1291 and 1355, and, in fact, Romanians were actually present during these last two assemblies.

Once again, the Hungarian and Romanian interpretations of this event’s significance differ. From the Western point of view, Ladislaus was desperately trying to seize even more power in a fractured voivodate. From the Eastern point of view, the tradition of a Romanian legislature was a success and continued until 1541, when it was at last threatened by the rising power of the Habsburgs.

THE END OF THE ARPAD DYNASTY

When King Andrew died in 1301, the event signaled the end of the Arpad dynasty. In the West, loyal subjects mourned; in the East, over a dozen great landowning families took this as an opportunity to seize more power. Transylvania strengthened its independence even further while several Western nobles maneuvered for position to assume the throne of Hungary.



Two nobles led the pack of possible successors. Wenceslas of Bohemia was the first strong candidate, although the Pope supported Charles Robert of the House of Anjou. A third candidate, Otto of Bavaria, had a strong chance at first, but this was short-lived. László, the infamous successor to Ladislaus, seemingly preferred Otto. He lured Otto to Transylvania with the promise of offering the potential king his daughter's hand in marriage. When Otto at last arrived, László captured, tortured and killed him. László made his opinion abundantly clear.

Transylvania was so strong during this period that László was then needed to arbitrate the succession of the king of Hungary. In return for this, the Hungarian king, Charles Robert of Anjou offered various forms of compensation for Voivode László's support. Of course, this sense of debt did not last for long, and Charles immediately reneged on many of the promises he had made. Later, László refused to attend Charles' first diet, and he only turned over the coronation regalia to him after the Pope threatened excommunication.

Bitterly, Voivode László's descendants made themselves a collective thorn in the Hungarians' ponderous backside. To begin with, the family refused to allow royal garrisons within the voivodate. This gave them the opportunity to rebuild their fortresses and bolster their defenses. After László's death in 1316, the agents of the king spent the next five years trying to oust László's sons from positions of power. This led to further rebellion.

SAXON VIOLENCE AND TURMOIL

Tamas Szecsenyi was the next appointed voivode, chosen to bring order to the region. Tamas ruled with an iron fist, and he forced nobles to accept his authority. He later turned his attention to the Saxons. Securing greater power, he tied the title of Saxon *ispán* to the rule of the voivode, making the nation of Saxons subservient to him.

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Saxons were outraged. German settlers took the matter into their own hands and fomented a rebellion against the voivode, amassing armies in Saxon lands. The message became clear when they at last devastated the town of Gyulafelhervárvár in 1308. These rebellions continued until 1324, when the voivode brought in armies of Cumans to subjugate the unruly populace. His pressure to force the Saxons into submission resulted in hidden anger... and great patience.

ASPIRING NOBILITY

The rising tide of discontent became increasingly troublesome to the rulers of Transylvania. Saxons, Széklers and Hungarians all had hopes of making their noble estate an aristocratic kingdom on a par with many in the West. The constant turmoil of the last century undermined this idealistic effort. If these so-called "nobles" could not keep their own peasants under control, they had no business pretending to be the equal of Western lords.

Among the nobles, many were eager to prove their worth by seizing more power. The so-called "great families" during this time attempted to build aristocratic reputations by claiming lineage from the original "conquering families." Royal breeding was no substitute for business sense, however, and countless would-be aristos lost their lands during this time. Some even joined with the rebellions to regain their power; these nobles were instructed by the voivode to leave their lands. The king later pardoned many of these families, increasing animosity between the two kingdoms.

Countless nobles sold their lands as their influence slowly waned. Some even worked their own land when times were difficult. Nonetheless, the real sense of burden held by the nobility is somewhat questionable. Some accounts reflect that certain families were so inconvenienced by debt that they could only own five or 10

villages. Only the luckiest could own 20 or 30 towns. Assuredly, this must have been a great disappointment.

The nobles faced other, more serious problems. Increasingly, they were forced to pay their taxes to the *voivode* instead of the king. Though the Diet of 1291 resulted in a declaration that nobles were exempt from taxes and military duty, that decision did not hold for long. By the beginning of the 14th century, even the nobles cried out for "emancipation."

In 1324, the king granted it, circumventing the authority of the *voivode*. He granted "freedom" to the nobility, releasing them from their alleged hardship. By 1342, they won the right to enact and enforce jurisdiction within their domains. Transylvanian serfs also had to pay greater taxes to their lords, even while many Romanians also paid a "fiftieth" of their income to the king. Before long, the Transylvanian nobles gained the right to assemble on their own in the city of Torda, and they took this opportunity to organize against the *voivode*.

Soon this dispute was overwhelmed by a far deadlier concern....

1348: PLAGUE

In 1348, the population of Transylvania suffered drastically under another catastrophe: the Black Plague. Fortunately, the effect of this event on the lands beyond the forest was not as severe as its impact on Western territories. A much lower population density curtailed the spread of this disease. Many Western towns lost 20-25% of their population; some lost as much as 50%; Transylvania lost significantly less. While most of Europe needed over a century to repopulate, Transylvania recovered in less than 50 years.

THE CHANGING MERCHANT CLASS

As the nobility changed, so did the populace. Even as early as the 13th century, not all of a village's trade relied upon agriculture. Throughout this century, local craftsmen worked for the benefit of their communes. The changing economic landscape of Transylvania, however, encouraged skilled laborers to relocate to major towns and cities. By the turn of the century, several large cities (including the seven that act as the focus for this book) became major economic centers for the voivodate. Agriculturists and craftsmen lived in different areas of the voivodate.

One large encouragement was the promise of independence from feudal lords, for as the saying goes, "Town air makes one free." Someone living in a town long enough could be freed from feudal dependence. The growth of guilds also made life easier for craftsmen and skilled laborers, increasing their profits and advancing their skills. The few remaining communal villages suffered as a result of losing their skilled labor.

CHANGING GEOGRAPHY

By the latter half of the 14th century, the most populous and important towns in Transylvania were Brasov, Sighisoara, Arad and Timisoara. Several 13th-century settlements, however, grew large enough to be considered cities as well: Rodna (a mining town in the northeast), Sibiu (a manufacturing center in the southeast), Alba Iulia (a centrally located bishopric), and Bistritz (known for its manufacturing and commerce).

As major cities rose in prominence, the living conditions there increased. Streets became well-worn dirt tracks, and many

were eventually surfaced with wooden planks. Wooden houses were surrounded by edifices of stone and brick. Craftsmen erected walls around many of the larger cities, and in the South, even churches were protected with walls. In times of danger, it was not uncommon for frightened villagers to find refuge in a walled church. Transylvania seemed a little safer... for the time being.

RACIAL MIGRATION

During the latter part of the 14th century, the bulk of the Transylvanian nobility was considered more of a military body than a legislative one — the words "noble" and "soldier" became somewhat synonymous. In regions where Szeklers, Saxons and Romanians ruled, those best-suited to defend their lands gained prominence. Of course, the Szeklers had a considerable edge in this regard.

In Western Europe, the use of heavy-armored cavalry was important in warfare. But in Eastern Europe, the Szekler's light-cavalry tactics were still effective, especially against the remnants of the barbarian tribes. The Szekler nation was also gaining strength in the southern part of Transylvania, especially in the Szek estate granted to the Miko and Kalnoki families in 1252.

Though many preferred to stay in these homelands, some Szeklers saw the opportunity to serve the king in other regions as a way to gain favor. Increasingly, loyal Szeklers who had proved their devotion to the crown were granted the right to resettle disintegrating communities. Of course, if disenfranchised Romanians occupied that land already, it became easier for the new overlords to assume the jurisdiction and taxation of that land.

In other areas, just as the Szeklers gained power, the Saxons lost it. Those who chose to settle outside the defined Saxon communities often lost their privileges, joining the increasing number of Saxon serfs in the process.

In 1330, an opportunity for the Vlachs encouraged many dispossessed farmers to flee southward. The narrow strip of land once known as Cumania became Wallachia. Under the governance of Basarab, the *voivode* of Wallachia became a haven for refugees. In the same fashion, the Szeklers cleared Moldavia of the last remnants of the Mongols in 1352, allowing Bogdan I to establish another sovereign state.

Thus, as these four races continued to migrate, the geography of Transylvania became a patchwork quilt of lands administered by a few communes of Vlachs, a respectable number of Saxons and armies of Szeklers. The ratio of Vlachs to other Transylvanians also grew, and the number of peasants slowly rose.

THE OTTOMAN HOST

By the end of the 14th century, in less than 50 years, the Ottoman Empire had conquered most of the Balkans. As early as 1375, they began assaulting the Kingdom of Hungary. Mircea, the *voivode* of Wallachia, did his best to ward off Turkish assaults, but he eventually fled to Transylvania. Desperately, he petitioned King Sigismund for assistance. Sigismund united both Western and Balkan warriors against the advancing host, but was eventually defeated in 1396.

Romanian pretenders made the situation worse, as they were often willing to ally with Turkish troops. Once Hungarian troops withdrew from newly conquered territories, these ambitious Romanians eagerly took their place. With the help of these treacherous *voivodes*, the Turks were able to stage further assaults on Transylvania.

The kingdom desperately needed to bolster its defenses. To muster soldiers, King Sigismund declared in 1419 that every third

nobleman and every tenth serf would take up arms to help defend Szekler and Saxon territories on the southern border. The need for this program was demonstrated in 1420, when Hunyad county was devastated by a typical Turkish attack. By 1423, the Szeklyfold suffered grievous damage from the joint attacks of pretender *voivodes* and Turkish armies.

THE SPIRIT OF REBELLION BUILDS

This situation had a disastrous effect upon the lives of the Transylvanian serfs. An increasing number of Romanians had settled throughout Transylvania during the early 15th century. Correspondingly, the number of Romanian serfs and independent Romanian villages increased. The ranks of the lower classes swelled. Greater taxes were then levied on the serfs after the Ottoman assault.

Many Romanians who followed the Greek Orthodox Church did not typically pay tithes, but the migration of races in Transylvania and threat of Turkish attack changed that. When Hungarians and Saxons left southern towns, more Romanians settled in their abandoned tracts of lands. The king, in turn, proclaimed that serfs who had settled in these "Christian lands" should pay taxes for their defense.

Landowners also used this opportunity as an excuse to increase taxation. In 1351, the "tenth" (or tithe) was supplemented by a "ninth" — that is, tithing was doubled in many lands. By raising rent, levying greater taxes and restricting the movement of serfs to increase revenue, the nobility put more of the burden of paying for Transylvania's defense on the lower classes.

In addition, the lower classes had not been mustered for military duty for centuries. Lacking the resources of the Szeklers, they were ill-prepared to go to war, and many Romanians in adjacent lands grew concerned about whether they would be conscripted as well.

Some refused to pay their Church tithes outright in protest. One bishop responded by excommunicating entire villages who refused to pay these onerous taxes. He did, however, offer them an opportunity for redress. They could pay for their Church taxes with newly issued currency — the value of this script was 10 times that of the old currency. This exploitative maneuver was a grievous mistake, and this final spark ignited a conflagration of rebellion.

PEASANTS REVOLT IN SOUTHERN TRANSYLVANIA

In the spring of 1437, Antal Budai Nagy led the Transylvanian serfs in a revolt against the upper classes. The rebels referred to themselves as "men of free status" and gathered their forces on Mount Babolno in Doboka county. Voivode Lazslo Csaky responded to this bold act by sending four legates to negotiate.

Envoy representing the peasants made their demands to the legates, insisting that the clergy and feudal lords should stop the abuses of tithes, lift the sentences of excommunication, and acknowledge the serfs' rights to free movement. Their demands were answered swiftly and decisively. The representatives of the *voivode* captured the envoy, mutilated them and then killed them. The legates' troops attacked soon thereafter, but were quickly defeated by the enraged peasants. Several months of skirmishes followed.

After centuries of mistreatment, the rebellious peasants fought with renewed vengeance. At the Convent of Kolozsmonostor in July of 1437, their grievances were finally redressed. The local bishop agreed to reduce the tithes by half and allowed the peasants easier methods

of repaying the final balance. The landowners also drastically reduced their rent, lowering the average payment from one-and-a-half gold florins to 10 denaria. Additional reparation included limiting the *robot* to one day of socage and abandoning the levying of the "ninth." Finally, the peasants were granted the right to move freely.

Of course, the peasants wanted additional assurances that these hard-won gains could be enforced. They demanded one additional provision: the freedom to call an annual armed assembly on Mount Babolna to redress further abuses of the landowners' authority. If necessary, the new envoys stated, the peasants could then punish the landlords if there was proof of misdoing.

This final demand was an unprecedented affront to the self-esteem and self-interests of the nobility, who had already begun mustering troops to aid further "renegotiation." The flames of rebellion had died down, but this issue stoked the fire again quickly. The nobles rejected this last request utterly. In response, peasants ran through the streets of the largest cities, torching manor house after manor house. The battle was rejoined, neither side showed mercy, and the fighting continued for another six months.

THE RISE OF ESTATES

Throughout Europe during the early 15th century, feudalism underwent a far more subtle change. Governments that once entirely supported sovereign rulers were being replaced by cooperative governments called estates. In Hungary, this meant that instead of the absolute rule of a sovereign, a set of prelates would rule with the assistance of aristocrats and nobility, usually through a national diet.

Though different accounts list different reasons for this change, it is clear that the Diet of 1437 in Cluj was the first of its kind in Transylvania. The Hungarians, Szeklers and Saxons called an "Assembly of the Province" to meet in a general forum. Though they couldn't institute full laws (only the Hungarian Diet could do that), they could still establish statutes for situations specific to Transylvania.

By this time, in many parts of Europe, the word "nation" generally referred to a body of nobility. As one would expect, only individuals who owned land outright were considered part of the nobility, so only privileged races could form a nation. (Owning land communally was not sufficient.) Admittedly, there were a number of Romanians present at the meeting of the assembly, but despite this nod to Vlach representation, there was not a Romanian nation *per se*.

Instead, the Diet of 1437 only recognized three estates of nations: those of the Hungarians, Saxons and Szeklers. The diet could also maintain and even extend the privileges of these estates, but at this time, they couldn't truly undertake joint political action. The rising tide of rebellion would soon force them to do so.

THE BATTLE RENEWED

Rebellion continued in Southern Transylvania. The flames spread. The vice-*voivode* of Transylvania responded to the growing anarchy in Doboka by assembling the leaders of the Three Nations, acting without the approval of the *voivode*. They agreed to a "brotherly union" against internal and external threats to the province (save for the king, of course) and did what the diet couldn't: take joint action.

Thus, on Oct. 6th, the two sides agreed to meet in a village in Doboka county to ask for arbitration from the king. The king, unfortunately, died a little over a month later. His successor, Prince Albert of Habsburg, had not yet arrived, and the royal decision was

delayed. Had this not occurred, the future of Transylvania might have been very different.

In the meantime, the peasants had won the support of the citizens of nearby Kolosvar, securing a military fortress in the process. By December, however, the nobility won a major victory near Kolozsmonostor. The battle was led by the newly appointed *voivode*, and his greatest victory was the death of Antal Nagy.

In early 1438, the final stronghold in Kolosvar fell. The Three Nations met in February of that year and settled their affairs with the peasants. More precisely, the leaders of the rebellion were captured, tortured and executed, and the rest of the captives were blinded and mutilated. Kolosvar lost many of its liberties over the next few years, and the negotiation with the serfs came to an end. Order was restored at the expense of freedom.

CAINITE HISTORIES AND DESTINIES

History is not made by clans; legacies are forged by individuals. Set against the backdrop of mortal history, Cainites create the unseen sagas of their race. In the shadows, passion plays compel the events of vampiric history. Through the fates of these individuals, we may witness the bleak destiny of the children of Caine.

This section shows the undead history of Transylvania over two-and-a-half centuries, from the personal perspective of five Cainites. Players may also decide when blue-booking interludes that their

characters have continued to interact with many of the *dramatis personae* of this book. The fates of several of the major players in this chronicle are thus detailed below in alphabetical order.

MITRU

VENGEFUL PACK LEADER

By the end of the 12th century, the Prince of Napoca had struck an alliance with Count Florescu, a Tzimisce *knez* of a nearby domain. Count Florescu was always delighted to entertain Mitru, especially since the Gangrel did not suspect the Fiend's infamy in other *knezates* of Transylvania. The Fiend had been bold enough to establish the ill-fated line of Danislav revenants, a generation of Shadow Lord Kinfolk conditioned to serve the Tzimisce lords as revenant thralls.

As the alliance between these two rulers grew, Count Florescu's "tributes" to Mitru became more elaborate. The count knew of the Gangrel prince's taste for sport. Mitru was becoming legendary for his favorite recreation: hunting skilled mortals in the woods of his domain. A human who survived this deadly game was worthy of developing as a ghoul or, in some cases, receiving the Embrace. Little did Mitru suspect that while he hunted these sacrifices, the count was studying Mitru's stratagems and testing his prowess.

THE HUNTER HUNTED

Mitru believed he was a master huntsman, but cautiously, the count stalked Mitru as his quarry. Count Florescu's favorite sport was pursued not in the woods of his domain, but in the parlor of



THE ROLE OF HISTORY



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his estate. By cautiously laying verbal traps and mastering the intellectual terrain of any debate, he stalked Mitru through passionate political discussions. These would often result with Mitru impetuously agreeing to Count Florescu's plans. The Gangrel prince was usually all too eager to declare that he could dispatch a political rival quickly, if need be. As the Tzimisce expounded upon the alleged threats of neighboring rulers, both living and undead, the Gangrel sharpened his talons and thought of his opportunities to inflict his own brand of savage justice.

At last, on Kupala's Night over 50 years later, Mitru was offered a truly worthy adversary. A pack of werewolves had allegedly invaded Florescu's *knezate*, and the count relayed the need to send a message of reprisal. In truth, the pack of Garou sought honor and renown. One of their most pressing goals was trying to rescue their Kinfolk from servitude to the count. Oddly enough, it wasn't their only goal. Mitru harried these bitter heroes through the dark forests of his lands, and an epic conflict ensued.

As Mitru's rivalry with the Lords increased, he began to notice patterns in the werewolves assaults upon his domain. All too often, the pack's activities were aimed at valuable areas of his largest villages. Millhouses, armories, churches — it was as if their agenda was the annihilation of the cities themselves. Only rarely did they make brief forays against the Danislav estate.

BETRAYAL OF BLOOD

Were the Shadow Lords truly acting of their own volition, or was their campaign against the Danislav revenants merely part of a larger plan? Mitru began to suspect that this conflict was little more than a machination orchestrated by someone else. The most likely candidate was his sire, Arnulf. Many Gangrel knew that this Inconnu had always been contemptuous of the growth of human cities. Mitru kept his suspicions to himself, but he also sent messengers to his Gangrel allies. If the attack on the Danislav estate was merely a feint, his clan should prepare for the worst.

Gangrel and Ravnos spies soon reported that Mitru's sire was making a sinister alliance in the East. As an ancient Gangrel, Arnulf spoke eloquently of the days when the might of barbarians ruled his dark territories. The growth of feudalism, the establishment of cities and the proliferation of farms throughout the dark forests disgusted Arnulf. No doubt, the thought of the Mongols sweeping across once barbaric lands was far more appealing. To live as a true beast, running in the wake of a herd that slaughtered everything in its path was no doubt quite attractive — far more so than skulking like a hungry wolf through the villages of timid farmers.

Thus, Mitru, the childe, turned against Arnulf, his sire. This divided the already fiercely independent members of Clan Gangrel even further. The civilized Animals prowled outside the cities, often warily allying with Tzimisce to defend their domains. The most treacherous Gangrel gathered information about these patrols and passed it on to their Inconnu master. A clan war would soon be at hand.

EPIC DESTRUCTION

In 1240, the Mongols did indeed decimate much of what the Transylvanians had created. Mitru was wroth, and he blamed much of the failure of his campaign on the Tzimisce feudal lords, who had refused to trust his designs fully. While the Venttrue responded to the Mongol invasions with cunning plans: the growth of the cities, the colonization of the Saxons, and the strengthening of

the Siebenburgen — the Gangrel fractured. Disgusted with the thought of further alliance with their consanguineous brethren, many were content to roam with small packs of allies, forsaking contact with the rest of their clan.

Many Gangrel punished Mitru for his failure to hold off the Mongol invasion by openly showing their disdain for him. Displays of blood and bone were left as terrible warnings in Mitru's realm. Count Florescu, who was once his staunch ally, chose to no longer associate himself with such a failure. Arnulf, Mitru's Inconnu sire, became an intractable and irreconcilable enemy. The only allies Mitru could find were the roaming and discontented Cainites who aspired to seize power from the feudal lords. For some, though, their goal was not to destroy the feudal system, but to exploit it further.

Exacting his anger on the innocent he had once chosen to protect, Mitru became a predator motivated only by self-interest. As he had abandoned hope, he forsook any pretense of humanity. Trust had failed him. When he at last found a pack to hunt with him, he rejoiced in living like a feral beast in the night. As he lost himself in the thrill of the hunt night after night, he learned not to trust politics or allegiance, but instead, to follow the path of his own instinct. At last, the urges that had called to him during the hunt could run unchecked. The Beast within him no longer had to hide behind the pretense of primitive justice. His soul was unmasked.

Yet even as he slowly lost his humanity, he still maintained some vestige of pride. In 1397, Mitru abandoned his domain. After roaming the forests of Transylvania, he led his brethren back to the domain of Count Florescu. Allying with a pack of Shadow Lords who knew nothing of Mitru's infamy from years past, they at last burned the estate of the Danislav revenants to the ground. A few revenants survived, so Mitru once again reveled in hunting them for sport through the dark lands of the Transylvanian forests.

Destroying his treacherous enemy renewed his sense of esteem and roused him from the bestial urges that had consumed him. Mitru's pack allowed him the honor of diablerizing Count Florescu, and Mitru found the taste of the immortal soul much to his liking. As black veins of corruption spread through Mitru's aura, he lusted for a greater soul — that of his sire.

Mitru chose a path of vengeance that night, both for himself and for his clan. Arnulf did not understand the need to cultivate the herds of the cities, and so, Mitru reasoned, Arnulf had to die. Mitru swore that night to take his place, once more ascending to a position of power within his clan. The Beast would revel in the thrill of the hunt once again.

NOVA VENTRUE FALLEN IDEALIST

Giving up all hope of maintaining the Council of Ashes, Nova declared that the conspirators who imprisoned her — Mitru, Ruxandra and Marusca — were to be hunted through the forests of Transylvania. Any who could capture them and destroy them would be rewarded with the privilege of diablerizing their souls and assuming their power. Of course, few Transylvanian Cainites acknowledged the authority of the Venttrue Eastern Lords. The Tzimisce, who generally believed that deposed lords should be diablerized anyway, cared little for Nova's declaration, and a few were bold enough to respond by stalking her instead.

POLITICAL MANIPULATION

Renewing her efforts, she later took the initiative and used direct influence in the Diet of Cluj. This legislature had been formed in 1288 to advance the goals of Transylvania's rulers. In a grandiose display, she attempted to sway the other Cainites in the city with bravado and bluster. After her humiliating failure had become legendary, most vampires knew that the real power in the diet was held by the rapidly rising Marusca of Clan Nosferatu.

By 1315, even the Eastern Lords were less than impressed with Nova's accomplishments. The trust she received from her masters was decreasing. As they gained power, they encouraged other ambitious Venttrue to exceed her modest success. A seneschal was appointed to oversee her domain of Mediasch, since Nova had problems with such elemental concepts as maintaining the security of her estate. Though her wealth remained, her power was waning.

Over the next 30 years, the Venttrue of the Holy Roman Empire attempted to place other Saxon lackeys in positions of power. In 1349, Prince Marusca of Hermanstadt was stripped of her authority and replaced with a Saxon puppet named Otto the Just. Despite the audacity of this Patrician and others like him, his reign was mercifully short. As he "assumed the purple," his typically verbose declarations of nobility and justice were little more than stereotypical Venttrue propaganda.

The embittered Cainites of Transylvania, after watching stronger clans fail such attempts, assaulted their new overlords with brutality and intrigue. The most fortunate victims met with Final Death. The most arrogant were tortured, diablerized or simply eaten. Surprisingly, Otto survived. It was rumored, however, that he was little more than a puppet (of one kind or another) for the original Transylvanian princes.

A SHIFT IN POWER

As the Venttrue egotistically played out their games of power-politics, the mortal system of feudalism was established further. In fact, many Tzimisce found the Szeklers just as promising as the Venttrue did. It was all too easy to manipulate, brainwash and exploit such convenient centers of power. Why leave the Szeklers to the machinations of the Venttrue — didn't they want to be Transylvanian? Tzimisce Fiends inculcated them by manipulating them even more thoroughly than the Venttrue did. The Tzimisce were rapidly gaining power to oppose the Eastern Lords by exploiting the system that the Hungarians had established with Nova's help.

Shadowy rulers intensified the subjugation of Transylvanian peasants over the next two centuries. Mortal lords, often in deference to their hidden masters, made more demands upon the serfs and farmers of the land, including increased crop yields and additional duties to maintain their land. Unable to control this changing political climate, Nova decided to use this to her advantage as well. She reported to the Venttrue Eastern Lords that the system was thriving, though she was often berated for being unable to steal power back from the Tzimisce. Her sphere of influence rapidly diminished, and even her hold over the Domain of Mediasch became tenuous at best.

After 1420, the vampires of the Anarch Rebellion sought to victimize her further. The outdated concept of the Council of Ashes was a grave affront to neonates seeking to purge Transylvania of its corruption and establish a communal society. Nova fled Hermanstadt, and packs of anarchs rejoiced in the streets.

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The harsh dictates of the feudal lords also encouraged a reprisal from the mortal populace. At last, in 1437, revolution broke out. The peasant uprising was quickly suppressed, and Nova took credit again. At the Diet of Cluj, Szeklers, Saxons and Hungarians were declared to be the only recognized nobility of Transylvania.

The spirit of rebellion was growing. Serfs and peasants still cursed their lords, neonates warred against elders, and packs of anarchs overthrew feudal lords. The anarchs continued their war on the established Cainite societies. Nova could see that she held little sway over the decisions of the Eastern Lords, and though iconoclastic, she could see that her battle was long since lost. Clearly her opportunities over the next century would not rely on the fate of the Eastern Lords. She carefully contemplated her next course of action.

CONSUMED IN FLAME

By 1440, the Domain of Mediasch was overrun by packs of neonates. Nova Arpad, as a symbol of the oppression of the elders, was still hunted by packs of neonates across the wilds of Transylvania. This was no Blood Hunt called by elders, however, but a Wild Hunt used for the sport of the young. Fleeing into the Holy Roman Empire would have been futile, for she knew that the “punishment” she would receive from the eldest Venttrue would be even more severe. Escaping into Wallachia meant bowing before the traditionalist Tzimisce who made their refuge there, and traveling towards Bulgaria meant dealing with the Turkish host.

Nova was forced to make a desperate alliance, as the enemy of one's enemies make for opportune allies. Faced with no easy escape, she decided that she could be an excellent ally for the Tremere. Her extensive knowledge of Eastern Lord and Arpad Venttrue politics would make her a useful consultant, though she obviously could not appear too desperate. Cautiously, she would make her move. Regrettably, she began her journey toward Ceoris.

By the mid-fifteenth century, when the upstart Tremere were preparing to reconcile and ally with the elitist Venttrue, Nova would be essential to their negotiations. Though held in disfavor by her own clan, she would assist the Usurpers in becoming accepted members of Cainite society. This would destroy her reputation more than ever before.

RADU

TZIMISCE ANACHRONISM

In the early 13th century, Radu was wise to encourage the further development of a fortress in the Tihuta Pass. A cabal of Teutonic Knights, fearful of the growing threat of barbarians to the east, later took over the fortress as part of their alliance with the Hungarian king. As the cabalists labored to fortify the castle further, other members of their order constructed Bran Castle to the south, near Brasov. When both groups at last fell out of favor with the king of Hungary, they retreated from Transylvania. The fortress remained. Radu instructed his most skilled *szlachta* to begin the construction of a minor labyrinth beneath the Tihuta Pass castle. This decision would forestall his destruction over 200 years later.

Clan Tzimisce changed considerably over the next century. While a privileged few held positions of power, all too often, their childer were unable to find such opportunity. Feudal lords who had been able to defend their domains for centuries easily defeated

Tzimisce neonates, forcing most of them to seek their fortunes in other lands.

Nonetheless, roaming packs of younger Tzimisce discovered a weapon that would assist them in overthrowing their elders — the force of unity. On Kupala's Night, packs of Fiends, along with their Gangrel and Nosferatu conspirators, learned to desecrate the holy rites of their clan and use them as declarations of allegiance. Exploiting the paranoia and fear of the beleaguered feudal lords, fanatic packs found the edge they needed to rebel against their elders. In far-flung lands of the voivodate, Fiendish packs assaulted feudal domains.

MISFORTUNE

A few feudal lords were able to organize against this movement, but they were far too concerned with their individual pride to collectively oppose a few packs of impetuous neonates. Count Radu maintained his allegiance with a few nearby Tzimisce *knezi*, although some Fiends cynically remarked that he only did so to create a buffer zone between his domain and the advancing packs of neonates. Despite the arrogance of the Tzimisce Feudalists, half a dozen feudal domains had fallen by the end of the 13th century. Even the princes of the largest cities began to fear the neonate Tzimisce, especially when they began to swear vengeance against their own clans.

As the struggle between neonates and elders intensified, Radu's position as a spokesman, diplomat and interpreter for his clan became more tenuous. Since neonate Tzimisce were slowly becoming the biggest threat to the stability of Cainite society, Radu was called upon to mediate or negotiate with roving Tzimisce packs. It was clear, however, that the Transylvanian Tzimisce system of feudalism was in a state of decay.

There was no reasoning with the rebellious vampires, and the Venttrue's call to exile Clan Tzimisce as a whole from “civilized” Cainite politics was a grave affront to Count Radu. Even staunch traditionalists like the count could see that their clan truly needed a leader who could show the power of Tzimisce unity. A true tyrant could rally the clan against a common enemy, healing the rift between neonates and elders.

THE TURKISH ASSAULT AND WALLACHIAN DEFENSE

The need was even more pressing because the Turkish host was advancing toward Wallachia. The Hungarians withdrew their support from the defenders of the East. The wisest of the Tzimisce could see that both young and old would lose their lands to the hordes of infidels if they could not work together. While the Transylvanian Tzimisce were beset by enemies within and without, events in mortal history helped save the clan in nearby Wallachia.

Upon reflection over 600 years later, the Fiends, out of true vampiric arrogance, would insist that their skillful politics resulted in Wallachia's stand of independence in 1330. As with many such “points of view,” this belief was exaggerated. Mortal politicians forged the sovereign state of Wallachia, and many elder Tzimisce and ambitious Shadow Lords fled to that land to escape the mounting madness in the lands beyond the forest.

As more Tzimisce packs gained strength within his domain, Radu moved his haven to the castle in Tihuta Pass. He descended back into his labyrinth beneath the castle. Fervently, his allies prepared armies of *vohzd* to defend the northern regions; secretly,

he lent his financial assistance to clan activities in Wallachia. When the state was formed in 1330, Radu rejoiced. Further opportunities were at hand.

GREAT PROMISE

Traditionally, a Cainite *voivode*'s surest route to power has always been infiltrating a mortal court and becoming the shadowy power behind a promising member of the nobility. By the end of the 14th century, in the realm of mortal politics, two lines of Wallachian nobility were struggling for control of the southern domains. Tiberiu, Radu's personal messenger, was instructed to spend more time in the South gathering clan information about this development.

The Danesti line — that is, the descendants of Dan III — held the clearest claim to power. Several older Fiendish lords cautiously pledged their support to the conservative Danesti rulers. Radu was impressed, however, with what he had heard of the line of the Draculesti, a noble house infamous for its brutal efficiency. Among the supporters of these factions, the word "Dracul" was taken as a reference to the Romanian word for "dragon." In fact, one of their strongest leaders, Vladimir, was a hero of the Order of the Dragon, although certainly a ruthless and vicious one. To his enemies, the word "Dracul" meant "demon." Machiavellian in their treachery, the line of Draculesti believed in rule through absolute power.

The Hungarians found relations easier with the Danesti line; In return, this sealed many Tzimisce vampires' alliances with the Draculesti. Danislav advisors hovered around the court of the cruel Vladimir. He was quick to express his outrage at the audacity of the Turks, for he had not only been forced to pay tribute to them, but also to surrender two of his sons to the Turks as hostages. One of them, the infamous Vlad the Impaler, would learn far more from this experience than his father realized....

As Radu fought epic battles against neonate packs in Bistria, the tales of the clans' success in Wallachia encouraged him to persevere. In the latter half of the 14th century, packs of neonates defeated two of his neighboring lords, but to the south, the unity of the clan was a sharp contrast. By lending his support, Radu hoped that the Draculesti line would assist his clan in holding off the Turkish host... at least long enough to help it prepare to oppose the Hungarian's plans.

WALKING THROUGH FIRE

Events in Western Europe upset the balance of power in fiefdoms throughout the East. The Anarch Movement provided aid and reinforcements to the rebellious Transylvanian neonates. After 1420, skirmishes spread across the voivodate like wildfire. The simmering hatred between elders and their childer ignited a fiery conflagration; many elder Feudalists were consumed in the flames. Displaying their alliance against the corrupt leaders of Transylvania, neonates performed the *Vinculum*, a *ritae* that bound them in communal Blood Oaths. As elders of the clan watched in horror from the stone towers of their castles, fanatic packs crusaded against the *knezi*.

Within 50 years, Radu's hold over Bistria was broken. Reclusive in the extreme, Radu received news from his Gangrel servant Tiberiu of the carnage wreaked on the fringe of his domain. When packs finally ran free through the streets of his city, Radu listened to the faraway screams from the parapets of Tihuta Castle. If an alliance of Tzimisce led by the supporters of Vlad Dracul could not turn the tide of battle, Radu would be hunted and diablerized by the childer of his own clan. Of



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course, the Fiends weren't the only elders who feared the rebellious childer — even the strongest Cainite lords had reason to fear the self-proclaimed *antitribu*. The world was in flames. Because of this, Radu was learning to walk through fire.

VASSILY TALTOS

RAVNOS DIPLOMAT AND SPYMASTER

There was a time when Vassily Taltos of Clan Ravnos was actually willing to work with the Ventrue. As a cunning diplomat, he had been able to work on both sides of many major conflicts in Eastern Europe for almost a century. Hovering around the courts of the Bulgarian emperor and the Hungarian king, he gained a talent for telling both sides of a dispute the lies they wanted to hear. He called this skill diplomacy.

His ultimate hope was that his political position could help him negotiate on behalf of his people, the Rom Gypsies. Already, some of the wandering folk were beginning to travel west to Constantinople, and he entertained the idea of his mortal descendants eventually finding a home in Eastern Europe. By 1200, several of the Taltos *kumpanias* were already encamped in the shadow of Constantinople. This altruism kept him sane throughout the 12th century, and the Road of Humanity saved him from despair.

At this time, Vassily was facing his greatest challenge: negotiating peace between the Hungarian Ventrue and the Transylvanian Tzimisce. His opportunity for his greatest triumph, however, turned into his greatest failure. Captured by Yorak, an insidious Tzimisce Methuselah, he was forced to quickly bargain for his life. The sight of endless corridors of vivisected captives impressed upon him the need for complicity. Reluctantly, he realized the true role he was meant to play in this negotiation — he was a pawn to be sacrificed for the benefit of one side or the other.

DARK ALLIANCE

Fortunately, the Ventrue little suspected the wealth Vassily had at his disposal. In their midst, he had developed a network of spies. Over the last 10 years, he had slowly learned the secrets of the Eastern Lords and Arpad Ventrue. Vassily knew his betrayers too well, and he was more eager to volunteer his knowledge willingly than have it ripped from his mind by torture. Once again, skillful diplomacy ensured his survival. After telling his secrets, he forged his alliance with Clan Tzimisce.

Rapidly, he learned that the Transylvanian Fiends could present him with a far greater opportunity than the Arpad Ventrue. Tzimisce feudal lords were a fractious lot, after all, and a skilled spy could earn a great deal of privilege by selling inside information to both sides in any given conflict.

MASTERS AND SERVANTS

Over the next century, Vassily learned the intricacies of Tzimisce culture. As a master of diplomatic espionage, he soon forged a network of mortals to aid him in his task. While the feudal lords of the Tzimisce fiefdoms held no alliance to each other, Vassily was certain that the unity of the Gypsy people would endure as they settled peacefully in the lands of Transylvania. His messengers carried reports southward to Vassily's sire, a powerful Ravnos in Constantinople.

As Vassily had expected, the Rom slowly migrated past Byzantium as they continued their quest for a homeland. By 1320, the

Gypsies had migrated into Bulgaria, and within a century, they would become a common sight in Hungary. Vassily took pride in the adaptability of his people. By his account, he had played an instrumental role in improving their lives. His pride, however, soon turned to shame.

Vassily was not the only Ravnos who had spoken to his elders about the opportunities in Eastern Europe, but he was still horrified to witness what occurred there. The lands of the East were no sanctuary, for the Turkish host also knew the wealth of Eastern Europe. By 1350, they too began their advance into Bulgaria. Gypsies fled from the newly captured territories of the Ottoman Empire, and many were captured and killed.

Those who escaped and survived divided into two groups. The "members of the horde," or *laiesi*, kept their freedom, for what it was worth. Despite this, an increasing number of them became *vatarsi*, serving as slaves. The *kumpanias* who settled in one region for too long increased their chances of being impressed into servitude. Those who encamped too close to the strongholds of Ventre or Tzimisce, of course, faced more severe pressure. The well-established nobles and overlords of Eastern Europe considered the Gypsies expendable. Despite their unity, the Rom were too weak to avoid their dire fate. Behind this societal fiasco, the Turks continued to encroach on the lands the Gypsies abandoned. Vassily's disgrace turned to horror.

THE TURKISH HOST

The threat of the Turks increased, and the Kingdom of Hungary prepared to defend its western lands. The Battle of Kosovo destroyed their hope. Vassily's family, the Taltos, was barely surviving in Kosovo when the Turkish host descended on the homes of the innocents who lived there. When one of Vassily's Ravnos agents told him of the carnage, he hurried southward to see their fate. Kosovo had been ravaged, and several members of the Taltos family had been butchered. Even worse, numerous children, including children of his own descendants, had been abducted to be trained as Jannissary warriors.

Fury consumed him. The enraged Ravnos desperately needed to know more about the king's plans. He set his mind to the task — he must use whatever influence he could to aid the defense of Hungary. Though he knew he could not return to Buda-Pest, he demanded that his spies redouble their efforts. He absolutely had to find out more about the mortals' plans to counter the Turkish threat. Otherwise, he could not help.

This also met with failure. The spies' fervor increased their chances of discovery, and soon thereafter, the Ventre uncovered the nest of informers. Vassily's mortal retainers in Buda-Pest were destroyed. A few fled the city... and became informers to the Turks. This enraged Vassily even more.

Nonetheless, he had learned the intent of the Hungarian Ventre. The fact that they had concealed it was hardly surprising. In petitioning the leaders of the West, they were amassing great wealth, ostensibly for the purpose of hiring mercenaries. This was little more than a ruse to exploit Transylvanian suffering.

Why should they undertake an enterprise as costly as war? Transylvania and Wallachia were closer to the Turkish front, after all, and if the easterners exhausted their resources holding the front, the Hungarians would have more time to prepare for defense. Once the Transylvanian and Wallachian people were exhausted from their war against the Turks, the cautious Hungarians would then find

it easier to subjugate them. It was a dangerous strategy, but a useful one for a nation of oppressors.

The standard of living in Transylvania was steadily declining. Peasants were ready to rebel against the masters that exploited them, and the schism between rich and poor was growing. The Gypsies, as impoverished settlers in the lands beyond the forest, were also suffering greatly. Vassily's dream of a homeland for his people had been shattered. Once again mistreated and reviled, the Taltos *kumpanias* lived in poverty in the shadow of a terrible war.

SHATTERED IDEALS

Betrayed by the Arpad Ventre, abandoned by the Hungarian Cainites, and reviled as a defender of an impoverished race, Vassily Taltos had lost all vestiges of idealism. His efforts at infiltrating the courts of the powerful had been wasted. Kings cared not a whit for the fates of commoners. The wealthy wanted the poor to die fighting their brutal foes. The Ventre were willing to let the Ravnos and their people starve.

Vassily could easily see the place the world held for the Ravnos. There was no reasoning with the rich and powerful, for they held their own self-interest above all else. The tumultuous life he had led convinced him that survivors either acted as agents of chaos or victims of fate. Vassily Taltos had abandoned the Road of Humanity. By the time of the first gathering of the Camarilla, he had fully embraced the Path of Paradox. Chaos would become his greatest ally.

ZELIOS

VISIONARY NOSFERATU MASON

Within a scant 60 years of his Embrace, Zelios' reputation had become legendary. Because of his sage advice, fortresses across Western and Eastern Europe were stronger. Even the Tremere had drawn upon his skill as a consultant, for in 1196, Goratrix had hired the Master Mason to improve the defenses of Ceoris. He was at the height of his fame, yet he still suspected that somewhere along the way, he had made a crucial mistake in his designs.

REVELATION

Several years after the construction of a seemingly inconsequential castle in Transylvania's Tihuta Pass, Zelios left Eastern Europe and roamed the Middle East for over a century. While this added an aura of mystique to his legend, he used this turn of events as an opportunity to continue his study of constructions in Ancient Egypt. His knowledge was growing quickly, and as he traveled, he carefully reflected on the mysteriously aspected locations he had chosen for his greatest works of art.

On a night when the stars were in alignment, a pattern formed in his mind. As the starlight reflected on the cold waters of the Nile, Zelios realized in horror the significance of what he had done. He recalled designs he had noticed upon the stones of Ceoris. The order of lines in the seemingly inconsequential sigils used by the Tremere were analogous to the order in which he had built many of his castles. Ley lines did indeed complete the design. The fortresses, as a whole, were aligned as part of an occulted design.

Had he come by this knowledge by insight, he wondered, or had some more powerful force guided his hand? By the time he had arrived

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at the Pyramids of Giza, his intuitive knowledge became conscious awareness. Revelations of geomancy burned in his brain as he stood in the shadows of the pyramids' mathematical symmetries.

As he continued his travels, he began to sketch many of the insignia and sigils he had witnessed in a papyrus journal. On the night when he entered the Temple of Solomon, he had an awakening akin to a religious experience. As he noticed a hidden pattern in the mathematical purity of its design, he realized he was not the only sentient with this esoteric knowledge.

The temple was proof of the ancient nature of his knowledge.

Just as the Cainites had their hidden cults, it was evident that many mortals possessed the insights of geomancy and ley lines. As he used his Spirit's Touch upon the walls of the temple, he witnessed the long-forgotten rites of an ancient secret society. As the echoes of the priests' incantations resonated through his mind, he realized that just as Cainites had hidden from humans, societies of mortals had hidden from the undead. Vampires were not the most powerful force upon the Earth.

For the first time in 200 years, the Ancient laughed. In the Temple of Solomon on the eve of the winter solstice, Zelios went mad.

TRIBULATION

The legend of Zelios continued to spread in the East. In the shadows, agents of the Setites lusted after Zelios' power. With the knowledge this Ancient possessed, they would be able to infiltrate any noble's castle. One rumor told that he was questing in the ancient lands of Egypt, and a sighting of him entering a temple in Alexandria confirmed it. This knowledge was passed to the elder Setites, and the Sand-Snakes' hunt for Zelios began.

Zelios realized that despite his caution, much of his work had been flawed. In 1305, he returned to Transylvania to attempt to repair the damage he had done. If the major points of the pentagram could be marked with further sigils, he reasoned, the summoning could perhaps be forestalled. Eagerly, he used what influence he could to repair the damage. In some instances, he called upon boons and favors to enlist others to aid him in these tasks.

As he traveled through Transylvania, however, the Setites made his unlife increasingly troublesome. On several occasions, he was almost captured by packs of the Sand-Snakes, and he feared for his life. Rebuking himself, he realized that his efforts to correct his grievous error had been in haste. Had he repaired the damage, or merely complicated the problem? Did his allies follow his instructions correctly? Once more fearful for his safety, he fled again, this time to the Far East.

ASCENDANCE

Zelios had heard rumors that the Cathayan vampires of the Far East knew more about the knowledge he sought. He had heard tales of the practice of *feng shui*, the application of geomantic principles in architecture and design. The knowledge corresponded with what he had learned in the depths of the Egyptian tombs. Amazingly,

there was a connection between the art of feng shui he learned from the Cathayans and the geomantic science he had seen used in Egypt. Unseen, Zelios returned to Europe. Abandoning his reputation in Eastern Europe, he began to study locations of occult significance to find the secret societies of the mortal world.

Through his insight, he continued to travel, and study more of the occult geometries of ancient architects, this time in Western Europe. The 666 tiles of the refectory of Albains fascinated him. Through diligence and potent

strength, he unearthed the entrance to an ancient Templar vault in Rennes-la-Chateau, one with a curious connection to a forgotten faerie trod. The ruins of Mistridge, the inscriptions on the foundation of the White Tower of Languedoc, the Alexandrian scrolls detailing the construction of Atlantis — over the next 200 years, all these repositories of occult wisdom led him inexorably to the conclusion that a hidden society of mortals had concealed a vast knowledge well beyond the avarice of unknowing Cainites.

In 1466, he at last confronted the august society that hid the knowledge of the ancients. That, however, is another story....



Transylvania Chronicles I

Dark Tides Rising

BORN OF DARKNESS

Saulot has fallen, and to what end? The demon Kupala rages in his ancestral home at whose behest? Beneath the dead soil of Transylvania pulses an undying heart, but for how long? The prophecies of Gehenna are coming to fruition in the Dark Medieval world. Only those who would defy destiny itself can stem the dark tide of the final nights.

BEARERS OF UNHOLY LIGHT

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DARK TIDES RISING INCLUDES:

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