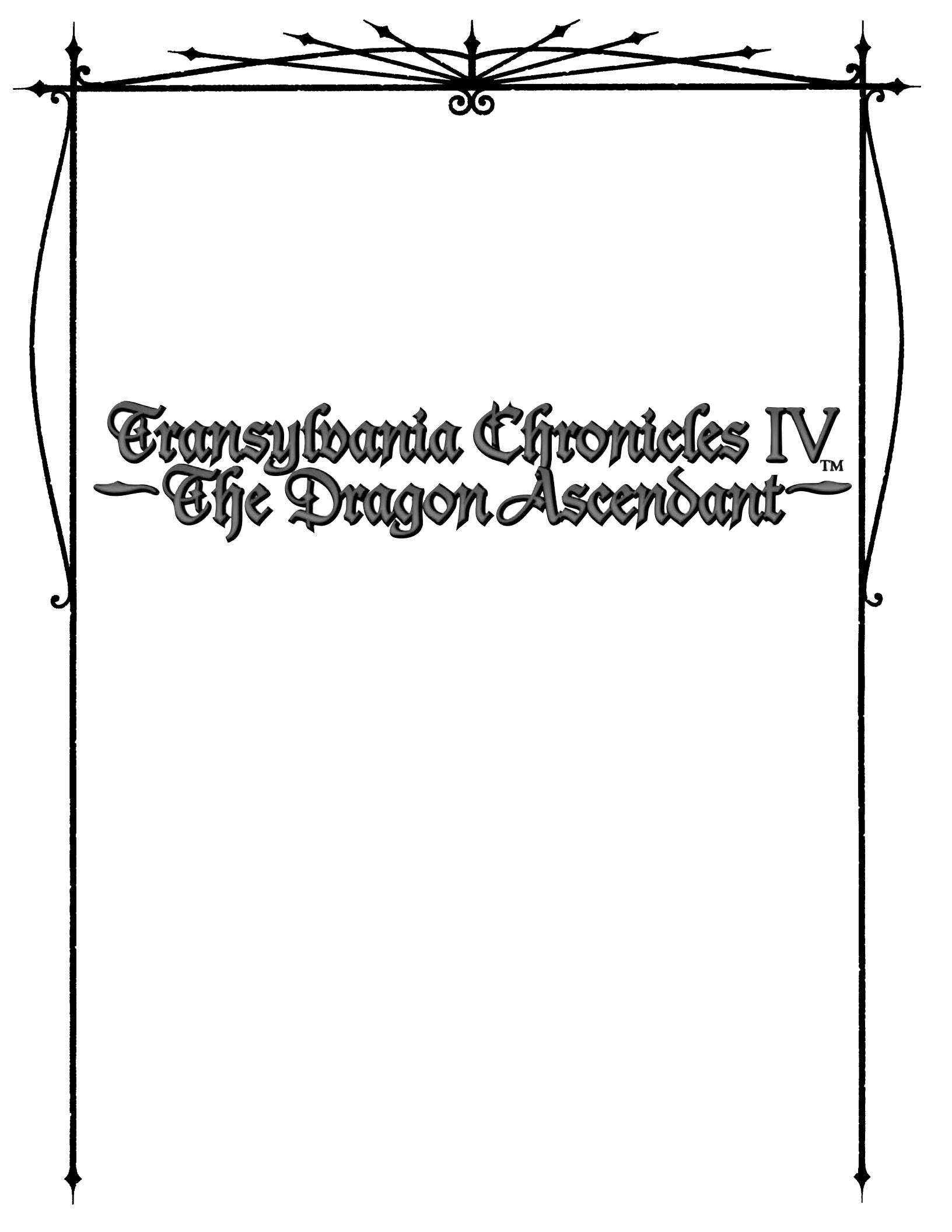


Transylvania Chronicles IV

The Dragon Ascendant

TM

A crossover chronicle for *vampire: the dark ages*®
and *vampire: the masquerade*®



Transylvania Chronicles IVTM
—The Dragon Ascendant—

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The sun had already disappeared, a monstrous black shadow came running from the east, it was as if gigantic bare feet began rumbling on the sand, and the wind sent a cold wave along the backbone.

— Leonid Andreyev, “Lazarus”

All things must come to an end.
Including the world.
These are the Final Nights, the End Times.
Can the Kindred forestall Gehenna itself?





INTRODUCTION

Nay, up from your seat, wheresoever you are brooding in this pause of many days from battle, making the flame of mischief blaze up to heaven! But the insolence of your foes goes abroad without fear in the breezy glens, while all men mock with taunts most grievous; and my sorrow passes not away.

— Sophocles, Ajax

The glaring sun blinded Anatole as he cowered beneath the shadow of one of Vienna's massive churches. As the aged Malkavian watched in fascination, well-heeled men and women, bearing themselves in an aristocratic manner, proceeded up the steps of the church and disappeared behind the towering doors.

This cannot be. Centuries ago I turned my back on the sun and now...

Anatole felt bloody sweat, stained with an acrid fear, pour down his forehead, soaking his face.

The demon's voice sounded in his mind. You stand here now because I will it so. Regard this place and mark it well in your unbeating heart. Soon your warnings to those who seek the secrets within will fall upon unhearing ears — yet you must cry your warning all the same.

Anatole heard a roaring in his ears, as if the ground beneath him groaned in dissonant harmony with the voice of Kupala, demon from the land beyond the forest.

What lies within? Anatole winced as the sun rose higher in the sky, piercing his flesh with arrows of flame. I cannot bear this agony a moment longer!

Another voice answered him. A book, and those who guard it from those most worthy of using its knowledge.

Anatole recognized the presence of Octavio, once the Voice of Kupala and the harbinger of Gehenna, now an inextricable part of Anatole's own damned soul.

Why have you thrust this curse upon me? Anatole shrieked, his voice a despairing wail lost amid the bustle of mortal life around him.

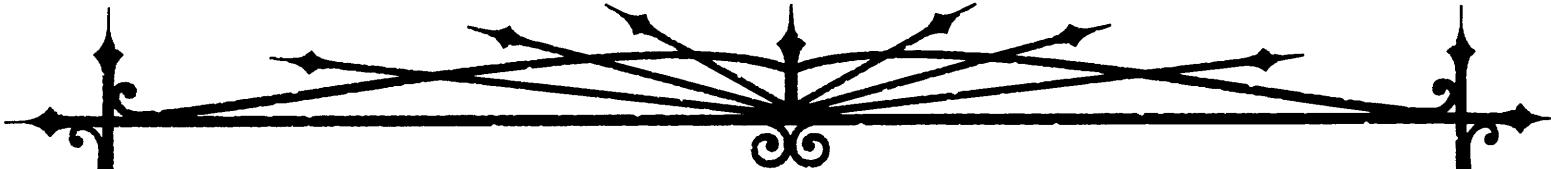
A harsh, deranged laughter bludgeoned his mind. I thought to rid myself of all this prophecy, Octavio's voice resounded within him. Pass the burden on to one more worthy. Let a creature who did not see the fall of so many empires, or experience the futility of being destiny's anointed, shoulder this unwholesome weight. I will rest in sweet oblivion. Again, Octavio's cackles filled Anatole's ears. Instead, I find no rest, for lo, Anatole, I am with you always....

The Malkavian felt the ground beneath his feet opened up, and watched dark, filthy hands reach out and pulled him down into the darkness. As he fell, Anatole heard the demon's soothing whisper. Behold the future, and despair!

"Anatole?" Lucita's voice joined the demon's, but her soft concern seemed to come from without. Anatole opened his eyes to find himself in his familiar resting place — the cellar of an abandoned tannery on the outskirts of Vienna. Blood sweat covered his face. Lucita held a damp cloth, streaked with his blood, to his cheek. "You were dreaming again," she said.

Anatole rose from his musty pallet and clutched Lucita's shoulders. In her centuries of association with her comrade, Lucita had seen this tormented look many times before. Anatole told the Lasombra his tortured vision.

"After I plummeted into the darkness, I found myself in a timeless place. I saw the signs of the coming conflagration. I saw cities aflame



as fire fell from great skyborne beasts of steel, I saw armies blacken the face of the land as smoke from the charnel fires blotted out the sun. I searched for signs that the old ones had awakened from their slumber, yet saw none but man at the helm of this destruction."

"The sun has set, old friend," Lucita said. "You must replenish that which you have shed so profusely in your sleep."

Anatole laughed, hearing the echoes of an earlier laughter in his voice. "Would that I could shed more than blood," he said. "I would slough off these visions and succumb to whatever lies beyond death's veil."

"There are ways to accomplish that goal," she whispered, as she had done so many times in the past.

Anatole shook his head. "They will not allow it. I am the voice of Gehenna and I must be about my work. Two hands of tens remain before the last of the signs comes to pass, and what destruction must precede their coming!"

The prophet donned his filthy coat and waited for Lucita to prepare for their nightly charade. With Lucita on his arm, Anatole took his place among the throngs of Vienna. It was the 1896 Anno Domini. The future awaited.

IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD (AS WE KNOW IT)

The final century of the millennium heralds a new age for the mortal world. Philosophy and science usher in bold concepts that change the perceptions of humans about their place in the world. Prosperity and discovery are the catchwords of the glittering decade before the 20th century.

But two world wars, a global economic depression and ideological stalemates put an end to this sweet hope. Despite the accelerated progress of the 20th century, the end of the millennium brings uncertainty and dread.

For the Kindred, the century before the millennium threatens their complacency as the lords of the night. Technology places greater power in the hands of the kine. Electricity conquers the terrors of the dark. New methods of transportation allow mortals to travel safely and rapidly from place to place. Many Cainites find it difficult to adjust, retreating to Elysium and withdrawing from contact with humanity. Younger Kindred revel in the changes, using their technological edge to secure a place among their elders. The relative power of the Camarilla and the Sabbat seesaws back and forth in the nocturnal struggle for ascendancy as the world undergoes cataclysmic political and social change.

As millennial fever brings the sense that something momentous will soon mark the ticking off of the years, a handful of Kindred prepare. Only a whisper in the halls of the Camarilla, the word "Gehenna" resounds throughout the Sabbat. Scholars of Kindred history on both sides of the Cainite divide recognize the signs of the Final Nights but few dare to voice their observations.

In Eastern Europe, the land once known as Transylvania groans under the weight of a century of conflict and oppression, but even more transpires beneath the surface. A great geomantic web, spun

by Zelios centuries ago, draws power from the earth itself. Within that web, the demon Kupalaстир, sensing that its time of awakening approaches. The final signs portending Gehenna make themselves known to those who watch... and wait... and despair.

These are the end times. These are the Final Nights.

MOOD

The procession of the centuries picks up its pace as mortal civilizations rise and fall. For the centuries-old undead, the world has changed far beyond their capacity to comprehend it. Some things, however, remain changeless, among them the certainty that Cainite history crawls inexorably toward a sinister culmination. Gehenna approaches with a sense of inevitability. Eight signs mark its arrival. Six of the signs have come to pass. Although most of the Kindred remain ignorant of these omens, a few watchful individuals recognize the gathering storm for what it is. Two signs remain before the great upheaval that, once set into motion, will wash over the world in a tide of fire and blood.

A chorus of moods harmonizes in this, the final installment of the **Transylvania Chronicles**. The strains of two centuries waft across the ages, forming a motif against which the story takes place. The end of the 19th century surges with optimism, alive with the possibilities brought about by a seemingly endless parade of scientific advances. Behind the scenes, the Kindred play out their interminable schemes in the Jyhad, orchestrating their moves with the cascade of new sensations that flavor the night. All things seem possible as the 20th century begins.

By the end of the 20th century, the mood has darkened. Little by little, the Kindred find their influence slipping away, co-opted by the sophisticated tools of destruction controlled by mortal institutions. The children of Caine no longer enjoy unquestioned mastery of the night.

The motif of destiny, with the characters preordained to play a role in the unfolding of the Final Nights, injects another element into the mix. While Kindred society scrambles to maintain the delicate balance between the Camarilla and the Sabbat, while Methuselahs pull the strings in the endless Jyhad, a few Cainites possess the true knowledge of Gehenna's signs. The countdown to doomsday has begun, and it seems unstoppable. Hopelessness threatens to overwhelm even the most determined of wills. Yet the absence of hope does not necessarily mean the presence of despair. A feeling of grim determination, of defiance in the face of the inevitable, offers a modicum of hope. Perhaps the characters can stem the destruction that rushes across the face of the Earth.

THEME

The conflict between fate and free will forms the central theme of **The Dragon Ascendant**. The characters possess knowledge that allows them to alter the course of Cainite destiny. Can they change the future, despite the prophecies and the fulfillment of the signs of Gehenna? If they cannot ultimately prevent the fruition of ancient schemes, how far can they go in tempering the destruction that seems imminent?



From their first encounter with the prophecies of Gehenna, the characters' unlivess intertwined with the plots and schemes of the Antediluvians as well as those of the demon Kupala. All too often, they discovered the illusory nature of their choices too late. Still, they held their course, weaving a tortuous path across the centuries, knowing that they hold the key to the future in their hands.

Is this enough? Does knowing what may come allow the individual to affect the course of destiny? Or does this knowledge make the future all the more certain? Are some things written in stone? A dark tide threatens to engulf the world, but a few individuals may choose to confront fate head-on, swimming against the current in the desperate hope that they can make a difference. Who knows? Perhaps they can make the transition from pawn to player and add their own pieces to the gameboard of the Jyhad.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The Dragon Ascendant concludes the **Transylvania Chronicles**, an epic story that began in the 12th century and has played itself out on history's stage. If your characters participated in the events described in **Dark Tides Rising, Son of the Dragon** and **III Omens**, they should have a fairly good grasp of their place in Cainite history. They have existed through centuries of upheaval and change — some of it catastrophic. Whether they resisted that change — as most vampires do — or accepted new concepts, they have carried with them a burden of knowledge that few of their peers possess.

Now the time has come for them to use what they know, to put together the final pieces of a puzzle that has taken centuries to solve.

Transylvania Chronicles III: III Omens left the characters to deal with the aftermath of the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror. **The Dragon Ascendant** jumps ahead to the end of the 19th century and brings them from the turn of one century to the end of another. The information in this book should help Storytellers and players capture the feel of the modern world through the eyes of characters who remember when few mortals dared walk the night.

The three stories of **The Dragon Ascendant** present possibilities, not certainties, for the characters. Use these stories as written or make whatever changes are necessary to integrate them into your chronicle. Depending on the particulars of your coterie, you may need to alter some of the circumstances. A Sabbat pack doesn't approach things in the same way as a group of staunch Camarilla supporters, while independent characters (if such a stance is possible) might take a different course entirely.

CONTENTS

Chapter One: Beyond the Forest bridges the gap between the end of **Transylvania Chronicles III: III Omens** and the beginning of **Transylvania Chronicles IV: The Dragon Ascendant**, providing information on the world at the end of the 19th century as well as a look at how the Camarilla and Sabbat have changed and grown since the end of the 18th century.

STARTING FROM SCRATCH

The material in this book assumes that your troupe has played through the previous installments of the **Transylvania Chronicles**. If you missed the previous books in the series or choose not to use the earlier material in your chronicle, you can use the information presented here as a stand-alone chronicle. This is not, however, a tale for inexperienced or "young" vampire characters. Elders with several centuries under their belts are most appropriate for the three stories presented in this book. If the characters have not yet encountered references to the signs of Gehenna or the geomantic web of Zelios, you may need to provide them some background so that they do not miss out on crucial knowledge. Momentous events take place during the course of these stories; they involve some of Cainite society's most powerful individuals and deal with the unfolding of events prophesied long ago. Make certain that the characters have sufficient resources and abilities to weather the storm.

In **Chapter Two: The Danube by Moonlight**, the characters travel to Vienna in the waning years of the 1800s. In the city known throughout Eastern Europe for its culture and art, they risk their unlivess in pursuit of another piece in the grand design which has become their quest.

Nearly a century elapses before the next two stories. **Chapter Three: The Accounting** takes place in the heart of Sabbat territory, as the characters undertake a diplomatic mission that requires them to journey far from the land beyond the forest. In Mexico City, they become part of a great betrayal, one that may mark them as traitors — or heroes — in the eyes of their compatriots.

In **Chapter Four: Revelations**, the cycle begun so many centuries ago with the building of a castle in Transylvania completes itself. The characters return to the country now known as Romania, where the choices they make either stem the tide of reckoning or herald its beginning in a storm of destruction.

Chapter Five: Dramatis Personae provides descriptions of the individuals the characters may encounter as they take part in the events chronicled in this book. This chapter updates familiar individuals and introduces new participants in the chronicle of the centuries.

Chapter Six: Storytelling the Chronicle of the Ages includes a brief summary of 20th century Cainite and human history as well as ideas for updating the players' characters and determining how (or if) they have come to terms with the rapid change that marks the last hundred years. A system of maturation points reflect the appearance of Abilities unique to the modern world, while story seeds represent suggestions to help Storytellers insert their own adventures into the **Transylvania Chronicles**.

Finally, the **Appendix** gives a timeline of important events and provides a definitive listing of the Eight Signs of Gehenna.





CHAPTER ONE: BEYOND THE FOREST

*Nor public Flame, nor private, dares to shine;
Nor human Spark is left, nor Glimpse divine!
Lo! thy dread Empire, Chaos! is restor'd;
Light dies before thy uncreating word:
Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;
And universal Darkness buries All.*

— Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad*

Darkness descends upon Transylvania. At the end of the 19th century, assaults from the Ottoman Empire have weakened Eastern Europe, leaving it ready for conquest. By day, vast armies struggle for control; by night, ancient vampires seek to influence the outcome. While the sun shines, serfs endure suffering and superstition, praying that the conflict between the Turks and the Russians leaves them unscathed. Once the sun sets, greater horrors prowl the night. Cainites — ancient nightstalkers who have succumbed to centuries of corruption and despair — prowl the “land beyond the forest.”

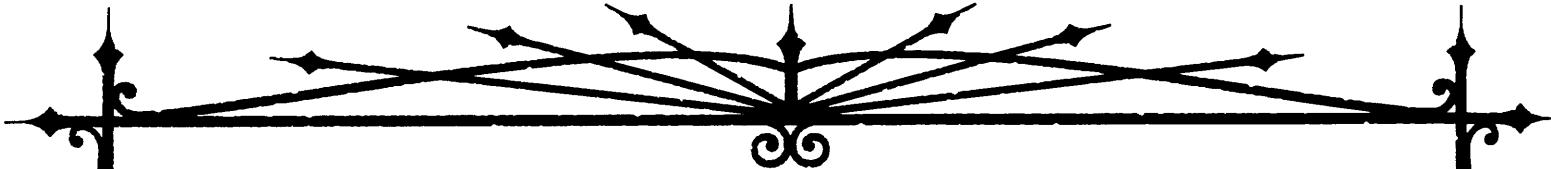
As the struggle in Transylvania continues, so does civilization. Advances in transportation and communication allow vampires to meddle in affairs far beyond the boundaries of their ancestral domains. By the dawn of the Victorian Age, they can peruse nightly reports of events in London and Venice, Moscow and Madrid. The diversions of the major cities have kept the Kindred of our chronicle busy over the last century. Conflicts in Transylvania have been abandoned for the time being... but not forgotten.

This is a chronicle of ages in which the world of Caine’s childer continually changes. Old characters evolve while new ones are baptized into darkness. The century between **III Omens** and **The Dragon Ascendant** has altered the social and political landscape of Europe, even in the most remote regions of Transylvania.

Ancient scholars still contemplate portents of the End Times. The Winnowing, the Reckoning, the Apocalypse, the Time of Thin Blood — call it what you will. The signs of Gehenna slowly manifest throughout the world. The featured vampires of this chronicle — as portrayed by your players — know this well, for they have seen many of these events unfold. The portents lead to one outcome: from the tainted soil of Transylvania, an ancient evil is awakening, ready to devour anything that challenges its ascent to power. Before we proceed to the next three chapters in our continuing drama, let us speak briefly of what has come before. Destiny awaits.

CHRONICLE SUMMARY

The **Transylvania Chronicles** span eight centuries of vampiric history. Our heroes — or villains, as the case may be — have had opportunities to witness some of the most important events in the saga of the Damned. While many vampires are swept away by the tides of time, our protagonists are aware of deeper currents. All that has occurred, and will occur, has been foretold by prophecy. Most vampires know of the coming of Gehenna, when the Antediluvians will rise and devour their childer. Kindred occultists have studied the signs that foretell Gehenna’s approach. Several of the prophecies refer to the resurrection of an ancient entity, the demon Kupala, in the lands of Transylvania.



Eight signs foretell Kupala's return. Much of Cainite history — from the rise of the Usurper Tremere in the 11th century to the dawn of the third millennium after Christ — can be divided into eight ages. Scholars such as Aristotle de Laurent and the Comte Augustine d'Erlette can declaim at great length about the most salient events. Curiously enough, some of the most significant take place in the land beyond the forest, deep within Transylvania.

In the Age of the First Sign, devious Tzimisce warred with ambitious Tremere. From the peaks of the Carpathians to the untamed forests of Eastern Hungary, Transylvania was a land of turmoil. As the Fiends squabbled over control of minor Eastern European *tirsas* and *knezates*, Clan Tremere seized its position as one of the most powerful clans in the world. Tremere himself became infamous for his diablerie of Saulot, one of the 13 Antediluvians. His foul crime fulfilled the First Sign.

In the Age of the Second Sign, a nocturnal alliance of seven Kindred princes known as the Council of Ashes dominated the domains of Transylvania. As the Ventrite of the Holy Roman Empire tried to bring the land under their authority, petty conflicts tore apart the Transylvanian princes who opposed them.

At the height of the Council's power, the Nosferatu Zelios helped its members construct a series of castles and manses throughout Transylvania. Zelios possessed an intuitive knowledge of geomancy, a talent that enhanced his skill as an architect and earned him fame as a master mason. With his geomantic skill, Zelios unknowingly created a vast web of power. The 13 largest castles served as nexus points, and the pattern of ley lines connecting them bound an ancient evil in the land. Few suspect the true significance of Zelios's actions, even in the modern nights. The protagonists of our story helped establish Zelios's pattern of ley lines when they erected the first nexus point: a castle in the Carpathians designed to guard Tihuta Pass. At Zelios's behest, they later placed sigils of power on the Tihuta Pass castle. As a reward for their diligence, a few of them rose to power, claiming positions as Transylvanian princes.

During this time, events in other regions of Europe fulfilled the prophecy of the Second Sign. Scholars refer to the "threefold breaking," when three of the Dark Ages' greatest orders fell. The destruction of the Templars in 1308, the loss of the Holy Lands and the fall of the magus brought the world one step closer to Kupala's return. The legendary magus was Tremere — his undoing can be traced to the Embrace of Goratrix, a treacherous childe who later betrayed his sire by forming a house of Tremere *antitribu*.

In the Age of the Third Sign, a new sect arose to tear apart the political structure of Transylvania. This was the age of rebellious childer, the era of the Anarch Revolt against the elders of Europe. In the land beyond the forest, skulking "sabbats" of bestial vampires held bloody nocturnal revels. They found common ground with Gratiano, the Lasombra

who conspired against the elders of his clan, and with the Fiends who diablerized the Tzimisce Antediluvian. When Hardestadt the Elder, a highly influential Ventrite, almost fell to a similar attempt, his enterprising childe proposed a political solution that eventually came to pass in the Age of the Fifth Sign.

Loremasters refer to the Age of the Fourth Sign as the era when the Son of Dragon joined the ranks of the Transylvanian undead. Many believe the third prophecy was fulfilled by the achievements of Vlad Tepes, the Impaler — a historical figure known as Dracula. During his mortal reign of terror, Vlad the Impaler learned of the strength granted by vampiric blood. He extended his own life with the power of vitae while his mercenary Axes brutally slaughtered thousands of innocent victims. In his rise to power, he forced a Tzimisce to Embrace him and diablerized another to earn his infamy in the annals of Cainite history. Using the same treacherous tactics, he carefully played the Camarilla and Sabbat against each other for centuries. The fourth sign refers to the rising of a Dragon in the East.

In this case, however, the Kindred scholars are wrong. The Dragon of the East is none other than Saulot himself, who has twisted the Usurper Tremere to his own ends since his diablerie. Because prophecy is an imprecise science, few had any inkling that the grandsire of Javaniel, the "Second Bone Dragon" from an apocryphal account of the Salubri's early struggles with the Baali, is truly the Dragon to which this lore refers. Dracula is irrelevant to this prophecy, though he manages to intertwine himself with Fate later. Your troupe should have the opportunity, if they're clever, to enjoy this knowledge — but convincing others may prove difficult.

The foundation of the Camarilla marked the Age of the Fifth Sign. Our protagonists were present at the Covenant of Thorns, an epic event that united seven clans and damned the rest. Hardestadt the Younger, Raphael de Corazon and other "Kindred" gathered in a village near Silchester to unite against the anarchs and forestall the dangers of the mortal Inquisition. At Thorns, Clan Assamite submitted to a blood curse exacted by Clan Tremere. The Camarilla's formation and the subsequent creation of the Sabbat fulfilled the fifth sign.

In the Age of the Sixth Sign, while the seven Camarilla clans prospered, Caine's childer created and destroyed many lesser broods of vampires. Entire clans were annihilated. One of these doomed legacies, the Cappadocians, were hunted by the Venetian necromancers of Clan Giovanni. The protagonists of our chronicle were drawn into this intrigue when they handed over Maria Asunción, the last Cappadocian, to the very claws that would rend her limb from limb. Through her destruction, the sixth sign was fulfilled.

While Caine's childer plotted nightly, Lord Dracula remained distant from the concerns of the Camarilla and Sabbat, retreating to his occult studies beneath Castle Arghes. Through the ancient koldunic sorcery of Transylvania, he made an abortive attempt to seize control of Kupala.



Although he was defeated by a coterie of wily Transylvanian Cainites, he continued to marshal unholy power for decades afterward. Others have tried to master Kupalan spirits by worshiping at the Cathedral of Flesh, a vast underground labyrinth fleshcrafted from centuries of sacrificial victims. Most of the miscreant acolytes of the Cathedral, including a foolish cult of Baali, have failed. The evil spawning in the foul labyrinth has since retreated beneath the earth, watching from another realm.

By the dawn of the Victorian Age, most scholars agree that six of the Prophecies of Kupala have been fulfilled. Two still remain. Unaware of such momentous developments, the rest Kindred society continues to pursue its diversions. The Kindred have capitalized on grand revolutions among the kine, from the cities of the Old World to the colonies of the New. The history of the Children of Caine continues, no matter what occultists and masters of the lore may say. Throughout the world, the slow march toward the end of time proceeds.

STARTING AT THE END

It is entirely possible that you, as the Storyteller, have decided to start reading this chronicle from the last book and work your way *backward* in time. Stranger things have happened. It may be that you are only interested in enacting the two modern stories or have an interest in the Victorian Age. Perhaps you're the sort of person who reads the last page of a mystery novel first. Adapting the first two acts of this book to a stand-alone chronicle may take a little work, but it is not impossible. You do not need to read the last three books in this series to run Act One and Act Two of **The Dragon Ascendant**.

Act Three, however, is intended as the culmination of an epic story. Before proceeding to the final act, you may want to use "flashback adventures" to tell what happened in earlier chapters of the **Transylvania Chronicles**. Keep the finale in reserve for the conclusion of your saga. For more ideas about this type of chronicle, see the Storytelling chapter.

WHEN WE LAST LEFT OUR VILLAINS

Ill Omens, the previous installment of the **Transylvania Chronicles**, began in 1680, when the characters received a plea for succor from Maria Asunción, a youthful-looking (though decidedly *not* young) Cainite. As the last member of the Cappadocian clan, Maria was a prize sought by several factions of vampiric society, including the Giovanni, the Baali, the Sabbat, the Ventrite of Transylvania, the Tremere and the French court of Prince Francois Villon. Although the characters may have protected her for a time, in the end, Maria became the sacrificial lamb on the altar of prophecy — she met her death at the hands of one of the many groups

who desired to exterminate the children of Cappadocius. In all likelihood, the characters made powerful allies and potent enemies as a result of their role in this affair. They also became aware of more information concerning the signs of Gehenna, including the knowledge that Maria's death fulfilled one of the eight signs.

The next brush with fate the characters experience occurred in 1710, when the characters learned of an attempt by an old acquaintance — Vlad Tepes, Count Dracula — to rouse the demon Kupala from its bound slumber beneath Transylvania. Since they participated in the construction of the great geomantic web conceived by Zelios long ago, the characters may have appreciated the poetic justice that drew them into the effort to prevent Dracula's ill-founded scheme from succeeding.

The chaos and disruption of the French Revolution formed the background for the final story told in **Ill Omens**. Caught up in the frenzied struggle to survive persecution and death at the hands of the revolutionaries (or the 18th century version of the Inquisition...), the characters had the opportunity to rescue a political prisoner — a mortal relation of one of their Kindred acquaintances. Their actions lead to the recovery of another fragment of prophecy pertaining to the Final Nights.

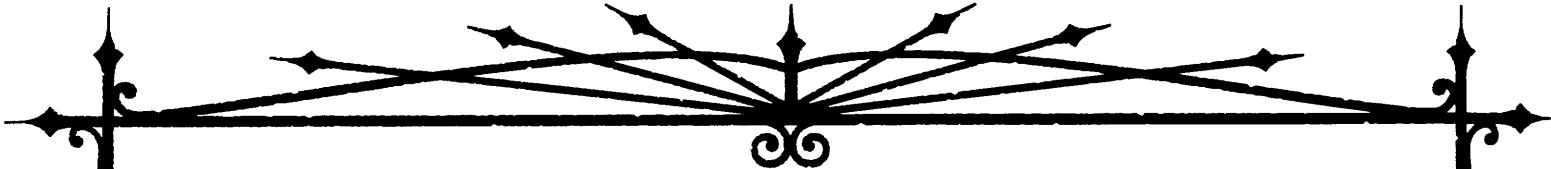
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As the Eight Signs of Kupala are revealed, the Children of Caine continue to pursue sinister conspiracies. Behind the scenes in the **Transylvania Chronicles**, the same cast of characters marches inexorably toward the Final Nights. Many of these Cainites seem peripheral to the plot, but there's a reason they're here. If your characters have survived through most of this chronicle, then you're used to the idea of constructing further interludes to explain what happens in the downtime between adventures. Thus, you may decide to use a few of the ongoing characters in these stories, or at least offer players the chance to interact with them when they describe their characters' downtime between chapters.

Far more takes place in the **Transylvania Chronicles** than the three main stories that appear in each book. We have animated the skeleton of the story that dances from book to book; we leave it to you to put meat on its bones. Don't feel limited to the events of the next three acts alone. Now that we have assembled the skeleton, the cast of ongoing characters and their continuing histories should provide you with plenty of muscle and gristle to fleshcraft as you please... if you like that sort of thing, of course.

ASSAMITES, ASSAMITE ANTITRIBU

At the Convention of Thorns, the Assamites submitted to a debilitating ritual administered by Clan Tremere. The ritual prevented them from diablerizing their victims. When various elements of Assamite society refused to submit to the curse, the clan divided into two factions. Sabbat Assamites continued to do as they pleased, but the Ottoman Assamites



made peace with the Camarilla when the vizier of Alamut submitted to the Treaty of Tyre in 1496. Unfortunately, his clan continued to vie with Eastern Lord Ventre for influence over Eastern Europe for centuries afterward. By the 19th century, they hid many of their activities behind ongoing conflicts between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. In this way, they affected several of the most important events in the history of Eastern Europe.

Stories of individual vampires illustrate the history of the two Assamite factions. **Husayn** sided with the vizier and retreated to a haven in the Ottoman Empire. Obediently, he aided his clan by fulfilling contracts throughout Europe. **Fariq** followed a more treacherous path by ignoring commands from the Eagle's Nest. Instead, he schemed with other Assamite *antitribu* to violate the Tyre Treaty and assassinate key Eastern Lord Ventre. **Karif al-Numair** enjoyed even greater success, earning a position of honor as the first *hulul* of the Angels of Caine. As the eldest of the Assamite *antitribu*, he soon commanded respect as their nominal leader.

BAALI

Since the Convention of Thorns, a handful of Assamite *antitribu* have allied with cults of infernalists. **Ansen**, the Baali who converted several of them, has been destroyed. Still, small Kupala cults have grown stronger in the shadowy corners of Transylvania. Of course, their indiscretions later contribute to the formation of the Sabbat Inquisition to root out the diabolists, but not until the late 19th century.

BRUJAH AND BRUJAH ANTITRIBU

Georghe Craciun of Clan Brujah has been destroyed, but a much older scion of his clan, the Methuselah **Dominic**, has emerged from the shadows. He has returned from an ancient Tzimisce labyrinth known as the Cathedral of Flesh, where his visage and mind were horribly warped by centuries of torture. After executing the miscreant Baali of Deva, he Embraced three powerful childe and released them into the ranks of the Sabbat. With their aid, several Brujah *antitribu* terrorized the nobility of Eastern Europe. Foremost among these soldiers was a Brute named **Septemus**, a tyrant who eventually became the Archbishop of Bistria. After ascending to power, he set his packs against the former archbishop, the declining Radu of Clan Tzimisce.

FOLLOWERS OF SET

Count Jocalo has compiled plenty of detailed information on the Kindred of Transylvania. After trading secrets with the Nosferatu Zelios and employing the talents of the Ventre Roland, he has learned many of the weaknesses of the vampires in the region. His motives, however, remain cryptic. The few who know of his existence speak of the Setite's penchant for "corruption." What end does it ultimately serve? Is he attempting to blackmail powerful vampires? Does he want to sacrifice them to Set's ravenous appetites? Does he destroy others merely for his own amusement? Whatever his agenda, he remains a formidable antagonist.

GANGREL AND GANGREL ANTITRIBU

Mitru of Clan Gangrel has succumbed to his bestial urges and fallen completely under the sway of the Son of the Dragon. After undergoing a koldunic ritual of reburial, he emerged from Transylvania's tainted soil to become the commander of Dracula's Axes. **Tiberiu** has met a more ignominious fate. He was punished for his insolence: his body was cruelly fleshcrafted and his soul is forever twisted. He still serves as a messenger for two Feudalist Tzimisce. The first is Count Radu, a Fiend who skulked in a crumbling fortress in Borgo Pass before he was forced from Transylvania. The second is the infamous Lord Dracula, who eventually retreated to the same castle in the Carpathians.

GIOVANNI

Now that the last Cappadocian has met Final Death, **Augustus Giovanni** and the rest of his clan can focus on other goals. **Don Pietro Giovanni** stays well informed on Transylvania's economy and is ready to exploit untapped business opportunities in the region. Now that the Eastern Lord Ventre have difficulty influencing this Sabbat territory, Don Pietro's biggest competitor has been removed. **Ambrogino Giovanni** is interested in more scholarly pursuits, such as assembling lost fragments of the *Book of Nod*, or investigating curious rumors of the myth of Kupala. In the modern nights, Ambrogino becomes aware of the collapse of the Underworld as it happens, which makes relations with him interesting, to say the least.

LASOMBRA

The Lasombra have little influence in Transylvania. Relegated to their territories in Spain, Scandinavia and the New World, they have little hope (or desire) of finding power in a realm surrounded by the Camarilla and infested by the Tzimisce. Individuals, however, may succeed where clans and conspiracies fail. **Lucita** has rejected the beliefs of the Keepers, ignored the dictates of the Sabbat, and refused overtures from the Camarilla. Instead, she has dedicated herself to the Malkavian prophet Anatole, helping him warn the Kindred of the portents of Gehenna.

MALKAVIANS AND MALKAVIAN ANTITRIBU

Clan Malkavian is slowly changing, falling prey to increasing insanity. **Octavio** was a great prophet who stalked the Earth in the guise of the Magyar god Havnor, but now he has been diablerized by his successor, **Anatole**. The visions Octavio passed on to him became a curse, plaguing Anatole's mind with overwhelming madness. Few heed his words anymore... save, perhaps, the protagonists of this chronicle.

NOSFERATU AND NOSFERATU ANTITRIBU

After surviving the "tutelage" of the Antediluvian Tzimisce Yorak, **Marusca** has become a master of Machiavellian intrigue. Her hatred of Nova Arpad and her other Ventre rivals has driven her to ally with the Sabbat. Her childe,

Ruxandra, has fled Transylvania, fearing a blood hunt unleashed by Nova Arpad. Her talent for disguise has allowed her to infiltrate the European courts of the Camarilla. Under a wide variety of disguises, she trades information throughout Europe. Now she seeks revenge against Nova by assuming a new identity.

Of course, we must also mention Zelios, the master mason who has constructed castles throughout Europe, traveled to the Middle East to seek occult knowledge and unwittingly tapped powerful ley lines in Transylvania. He has left for the New World, using his fame among the Kindred in a bid for political power. As an advisor to both primogen councils and Nosferatu councilors, he is destined to shape the future of Clan Nosferatu.

RAVNOS

Vassily Taltos was once a diplomat seeking a homeland for his people. Now he is a bitter monster seeking only revenge. In his rage, he sired a childe named Vladislav, an uncontrollable Deceiver who schemes to destroy prominent Ventre throughout Eastern Europe. This demented Cainite is at the center of several elaborate plans to tear apart the European Camarilla. One such plan concerns Victorian Vienna.

As the Sabbat strengthens its forces in Transylvania, Ravnos *antitribu* drive out Deceivers who do not swear to uphold the Sword of Caine. Izidor Torenu and his childe, Delizbieta, were once among the most respected Ravnos in the land beyond the forest. After Izidor chose to accept the Final Death rather than face another night, Delizbieta has become homeless again, seeking another home. Vienna looks quite promising....

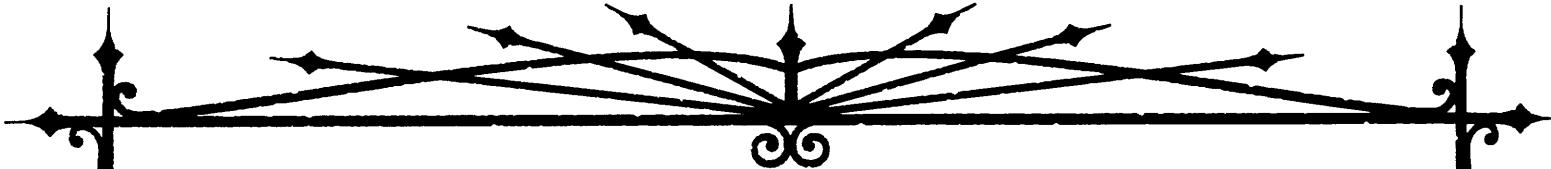
TOREADOR AND TOREADOR ANTITRIBU

Although a few Toreador *antitribu* have entered Transylvania to learn the arts of pain from ancient Tzimisce, the clan lacks a strong presence there. The last Transylvanian elder of their society, Arianne, has left for London to twist the heartstrings of a new city. Camarilla Toreador are generally more interested in the affairs of cultured cities like Paris than rural backwaters like Transylvania, particularly those present for the events of the French Revolution in *III Omens*. Noel de Artois still endures shame in the courts of Paris, Audric St. Thierry continues his political machinations and Francois Villon maintains a hidden authority as prince of Paris. If any Toreador in your chronicle has watched Paris evolve, they may be intrigued by similar events in Vienna.

TREMERE

By the dawn of the Victorian age, the eldest Tremere have become legendary. Etrius has erected elaborate defenses to guard the torpid body of Tremere, the clan's founder. Since 1520, Etrius has summoned members of his clan to his haven in the Inner Stadt of Vienna. Over 300 years later, he financed the construction of a more ostentatious chantry in Vienna's Ringstrasse: *Fortschritt*, a temple of knowledge containing the largest occult library in the





Western world. This building later became the infamous Vienna Chantry, a monument that Warlocks throughout the world describe with reverence.

Celestyn, the master librarian of the chantry at Ceoris, spent centuries compiling thousands of tomes for the Tremere's storehouse of knowledge. Moving the chantry's library from Ceoris to Vienna took 10 years — an arduous task that left him horribly demoralized. Celestyn is now researching the mysterious lands of the Kuei-jin, leaving his childe, an aristocratic French scholar named **Augustine d'Erlette**, to rebuild the clan's library.

Warlocks travel from around the world to kneel before Etrius, consult Augustine's extensive library, and demonstrate their loyalty to Clan Tremere. Those who are interested in more local concerns consult **Ardan of Golden Lane**, the Tremere Primogen of Vienna. He is now known simply as **Ardan Lane**. With his political influence, he often gathers visiting Tremere to discuss current events at salons and séances.

TZIMISCE

Sascha Vykos rejoices that the Tremere have largely lost the war in Transylvania, considering it the penultimate victory over the Usurper clan. After altering "her" identity, it continues to play the leaders of the Tremere and Tremere *antitribu* against each other for her own amusement. **Marelle** has risen to a position of authority in the Sabbat, fiercely protecting the Archbishopric of Deva. Still infamous as the Sculptor of Wolves, she has forged a vague truce with the corrupt Lupines who now inhabit the former Cathedral of Flesh.

As for **Count Radu Bistri**, he has been driven from the Borgo Pass Castle and deposed as the Archbishop of Bistria. Fleeing to protect his very soul, he had no choice but to call upon the hospitality of other Old World Fiends. In the process, he gathered enough political influence to become the first Cardinal of the Land Beyond the Forest. No one else dares play the dangerous game of speaking for the Transylvanian Tzimisce, the most fractious group of Cainites on Earth. By the end of the 18th century, he is rewarded with a archbishopric in the New World, but intrigues in Transylvania repeatedly draw him back to the Old Country.

VENTRUE

Nova Arpad, the last remnant of the Arpad dynasty, has continued her efforts to forge alliances between Habsburg Venttrue and Eastern European Tremere. Her centuries of scheming have paid off, for she now acts as an intermediary between the two clans as the Venttrue Primogen of Vienna. She has also maintained contact with other members of the former Council of Ashes, including Cardinal Radu. Her blood hunt against the Nosferatu Ruxandra has continued into the Victorian Era.

Bulscu, the warrior who led the Magyars in a crusade against the Holy Roman Empire in his breathing days, has

risen from torpor. The Man of Blood's mortal descendants, the nobles of the Arpad Dynasty, have died out, and many of his Kindred descendants have fallen to the Angels of Caine. Although Bulscu's former lackey, **Vencel Rikard**, is still Prince of Budapest, the Man of Blood has become an outsider among the Venttrue. Since he is unable to overthrow the Venttrue Methuselahs who Embraced him, Bulscu has established a haven in Russia where he seeks revenge against other enemies. His greatest concern is uniting the Venttrue of Eastern Europe against the schemes of the vizier of Alamut and his Ottoman Assamites.

Prince Vencel's servant, **Roland**, has fallen under the sinister influence of Count Jocalo. By the Victorian Age, Roland has secured a profitable slave trade in London, under the nose of **Mithras**, the prince of the city. Prince Mithras is also remembered for a very intriguing audience with the Son of the Dragon. In the early 1880's, the Transylvanian count attempted to establish a haven in the heart of Victorian London. This scheme failed utterly, forcing Vlad back to his castle in the Borgo Pass. Exacting revenge, Vlad hired a struggling Irish writer to shatter the Masquerade by writing of his tragic defeat. His chosen pawn reworked the Impaler's saga into a most remarkable novel: *Dracula*.

THE ART OF WAR

Prophecies once again call our heroes to battle against Fate. Let us arm them for war. Between the last chapter of **III Omens** and the first story of **The Dragon Ascendant**, the art of war has changed considerably. Among the undead, only ancient vampires rely on weapons like swords and bows. Modern Kindred have learned the usefulness of concealed firearms. Young vampires consider them an important edge over Disciplines and supernatural abilities. Elder vampires, of course, consider them little more than an affectation of the age, a poor substitute for powers granted by the Blood. Either way, a few Traits for typical Victorian firearms may help your troupe's characters survive the next act of our story. If the characters don't use them, their adversaries certainly will.

VICTORIAN WEAPONRY

Melee Weapons: In the Victorian Age, discreet weapons for hand-to-hand combat include the billy, a club commonly employed by the British police, and the sword cane, a slender blade concealed in a walking stick. Also in this category is the singlestick, a dueling cudgel used capably by fictional heroes like Sherlock Holmes.

Light Pistols: The most concealable handgun is the Derringer. One-shot, two-shot and four-shot varieties are all available. However, the mechanism is crude enough that the firing pin must be moved each time before the chamber is reloaded; only one shot per turn is possible.

Heavy Pistols: Most handguns of the period are revolvers. Bulky revolvers are available in .38, .41, .44 and .45 caliber.

VICTORIAN WEAPONS TABLE

Weapon	Damage	Range	Rate	Conceal
Remington Derringer	4	10	1	P
Adams & Webley .44 pistol	5	25	2	J
Remington single-action pistol	5	25	1/2	T
Mauser 7.65 mm pistol	5	25	3	J
Colt "Peacemaker" .45 pistol	5	30	1/2	J
Starr Army double-action pistol	4	25	2	J
Enfield bolt-action rifle	7	140	1/2	T
Winchester repeating-action rifle	8	175	1	N
"Elephant gun"	10	200+	1	N
Double-barrel 12-gauge shotgun	8	5-18	2	T or N
Single-barrel 12-gauge shotgun	8	10	1	T or N
Sap or Blackjack	Strength	n/a	n/a	J
Billy or Singlestick	Strength + 1	n/a	n/a	T
Sword cane	Strength + 1	n/a	n/a	*

* Um... it's hidden in a walking stick, actually. Surprise!

Damage: Indicates the damage dice pool. Versus mortals, firearms are considered lethal damage. Versus vampires, firearms are considered bashing damage unless the head is targeted, in which case the damage is considered lethal.

Range: This is the practical shot range in yards. Weapons may be fired at twice this distance, but such attacks are considered long range (difficulty 8).

Rate: The maximum number of shots a weapon may take in a turn. Note that single action pistols, marked with a "1/2" rate, require the hammer to be manually drawn back before the trigger may be pulled and another bullet fired. Drawing back the hammer takes one action, which means that unless the shooter wants to suffer a dice-pool penalty, he may fire only once every other turn.

Concealment: P = Can be carried in a pocket or vest; J = Can be hidden in a jacket or cape; T = Can be hidden in a trenchcoat or beneath a cloak; N = Cannot be hidden on a person.

The Traits of the Adams & Webley can represent various British revolvers; Americans variants are represented by the Colt Peacemaker. By the start of Act One, the British navy has accepted the Colt as the standard service revolver. During the Victorian Era, inventors also developed the predecessors of the modern semi-automatic pistol. The first self-loading firearm was manufactured in 1893. By 1897, when our story resumes, one of the finest examples of this technology is the Mauser 7.65 mm, colloquially known as a "broomhandle."

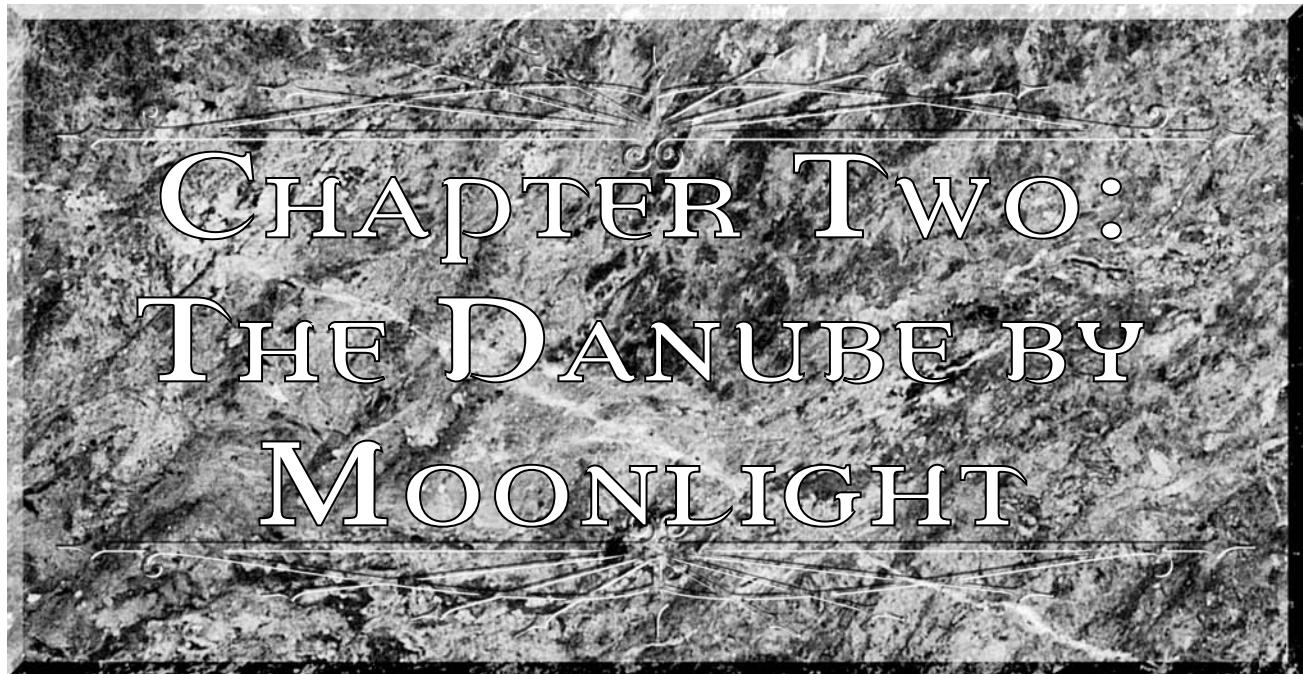
Rifles: Long guns in the Victorian age are typically repeaters. Lever-action rifles with tubular-magazines and bolt-action rifles with box magazines are both common. Lever-action rifles, such as the famous American Winchester, are typically faster. In England, the British army still uses bolt-action rifles; they have just switched from the Lee-Metford to the Lee Enfield. Of course, huge hunting rifles are also available, but they are typically one-shot or two-shot weapons. One type of heavy elephant gun is included as an example just for comparison, though someone in your players' coterie may still want one.

Shotguns: In this era, pump shotguns are rare, prone to malfunctions and expensive. However, double-barreled or single-barreled single-shot shotguns are commonly available in 12 gauge and 20 gauge. We won't bother including Traits for the freakish 10-, 8- or 4-gauge bores, which probably cause death without all that awkward dice rolling.

Machine Guns: Finally, for the sake of completeness, we should say that while machine guns are technically available during Act One, they're not really practical for the next story in this book. Victorian "machine guns" are hand-cranked weapons that must be hand-fed with box or barrel magazines. Hiram Maxim developed the first true machine gun in 1884; it was adapted for use by the British army by 1891. However, Gatling guns are typically used by British colonial soldiers in places like South Africa. Storming into a city with a tripod-mounted machine gun is like carrying polearms into a medieval city eight centuries ago. Using such a weapon in a major city like Vienna is as indiscreet as breaking the Masquerade. Thus, Storytellers are encouraged to ignore or restrict their use in Act One.



Lock '99



CHAPTER TWO: THE DANUBE BY MOONLIGHT

“Lifeless, soulless, hated and feared... Hear me! I am the monster whom breathing men would kill. I am Dracula.”

— Gary Oldman as Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1997)

For many Camarilla vampires, the Victorian era is a golden age. Through careful cultivation of their resources, the Kindred have created domains where art thrives in museums and theaters, aristocratic nobles preserve centuries of tradition, salons host intellectual debate and universities spread enlightenment. Vampires who wish to maintain their humanity often cultivate their influence in the mortal world for centuries after their Embrace. Nearly half a millennium after the Convention of Thorns, the Camarilla has not only allowed civilized Kindred to remain hidden behind human society, but also encouraged their cities to flourish.

Victorian Vienna is no exception. The city is the model for what the Camarilla can accomplish if the Kindred within it set aside their differences. The domain prospers because of the famous “Triple Alliance” of the sect: the Toreador, Tremere and Ventre. Toreador are attracted by the artistic and social world, for Vienna is arguably the “musical capital of Europe.” Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, Mahler, Schubert and Strauss thrived in this inspirational city. Ventre hover around the court of Emperor Franz Joseph I, a Habsburg monarch the Blue Bloods praise as a paragon of aristocracy. Tremere are summoned from around the world to the depths of Fortschritt, Vienna’s newest and most extensive chantry. For these three clans, Victorian Vienna is a brief and shining moment in the history of Caine’s childe.

Yet hidden behind the beauty of Vienna, tragedy awaits. Consider what happens in the century that follows. Within a year, Emperor Franz Joseph’s wife is stabbed to death on the street by an anarchist. After Franz Joseph’s nephew, Archduke Ferdinand, is assassinated in Sarajevo, the Great War forever alters the political landscape of Eastern Europe. The madness of the 20th century discards the antiquated ideals of gentility. Democratic and communist revolutions transform entire nations. Technological revolutions change every aspect of worldwide culture. When the Victorian Era ends, the decades that follow begin an age of frustration, particularly for centuries-old vampires who resist the changes of an ever-evolving world.

Within decades, the institutions of the Victorian Age are torn down to make way for a new century, but not just yet. Before your troupe’s characters are overwhelmed by the iniquities of the modern age, let us offer them one last chance to enjoy the Victorian ideals that Vienna has to offer. It can’t last, of course — already, factions conspire against the Kindred of Vienna. From the bestial new generation of Sabbat to anarchistic rebels of the Ravnos clan, packs and *kumpanias* are gathering to tear apart this Camarilla city. Until then, we may enjoy a brief stroll along the Danube by moonlight.

ACT ONE: A MASSIVE BETRAYAL

Act One centers on a tome rumored to contain revelations concerning Kupala. In 1498, a coven of occultists assembled what fragments they could find concerning this malevolent demon. The result was a voluminous handwritten manuscript called the *Incunabulum Kupalam*. Although most of it is in academic Latin, portions are encrypted in metaphors, ciphers, diagrams, quatrains, Enochian revelations and, of course, prophecy. A team of scholars could spend a century unraveling the layers of meaning within its text, and each would arrive at a different version of the truth behind the myth of Kupala.

After the coven compiled the manuscript, they financed the printing of hundreds of copies. By the middle of the 16th century, they were ready to disseminate once obscure knowledge throughout the circles, covens, sabbats and chantries of Europe. Before the first printing was complete, however, clerics of the Inquisition unmasked the conspiracy, smashed the presses, hunted the conspirators and burned as many copies as they could find. Allegedly, a handful of surviving manuscripts found their way through the flames to Arcanum chapterhouses, the cellars of the Vatican and other repositories of knowledge. Within the occult history of mankind, the tome became legendary, almost mythical.

Now the legend flashes forward to 1897, when the revelations of Kupala are known to a slightly larger circle. Vassily Taltos, a Ravnos, was exploited after trying to find a home for his clan in Eastern Europe. In his rage, Vassily raised his childe Vladislav on lies, false history and raving paranoia. Vassily believed that a conspiracy among Balkan princes prevented the Ravnos from ever finding permanent domains. Thus, the deranged Vladislav has sworn vengeance against the princes of Eastern Europe.

Vladislav has devised an elaborate scheme. It begins with the theft of the *Incunabulum Kupalam* from an Arcanum chapterhouse in London. He doesn't care how dangerous this knowledge is, but he knows that several vampiric factions are willing to do almost anything to obtain it. Some occultists claim the rituals within its pages were intended to bind Kupala. Others insist that the tome can be used to summon and control him instead. Either way, many elders crave such knowledge.

With the help of his *kumpania* of Gypsies and ghouls, Vladislav dispatches messengers to the interested parties. Foremost is Etrius of Clan Tremere. The ancient Warlock loyally guards his torpid master in a Viennese chantry, while nearby, visitors to his domain consult the most extensive library of occult knowledge in the West. Etrius immediately makes an offer, one so generous that Vladislav almost reconsiders trading the book directly to him. He sets out for Vienna just in case.

In a labyrinth beneath the crumbling ruins of a castle in Wallachia, a master of the koldunic arts also learns of the tome. In previous installments, we referred to him as Vlad Tepes, the Son of the Dragon. In the Victorian Age, he attempts to shatter the Masquerade by hiring Stoker to chronicle his saga. He is now a shadow of the legend he has created: a powerful Carpathian vampire known throughout Europe as Dracula. Vlad is not quite the Romantic figure he makes himself out to be, but he is known for many achievements. He has significantly advanced the art of koldunic sorcery, a mystical practice of commanding the spirits of Transylvania. While others might use the tome to contain Kupala, Dracula wants to control the ancient demon. He dispatches his Axes — an assemblage of rogues, Gypsies, Ravnos and violent Gangrel — to make an offer on his behalf.

Within a week, a Cardinal of the Sabbat also receives a messenger in his antechamber. Hours of torture reveal that Vladislav actually has the book and has already set out for Vienna. Eager to prevent Clan Tremere from learning more about Kupala, the cardinal dispatches Black Hand removers to recover the tome. Failure means succumbing to the same fate as the flayed messenger, who has by now been "reinvented" by fledgling Tzimisce fleshcrafters.

Three factions seek the *Incunabulum Kupalam*. Upon hearing this news, the Deceiver rejoices: Once the Viennese Tremere, Dracula's Axes and the Black Hand encounter each other in Vienna, the prince and primogen will be overwhelmed! Some of the Ventre who rejected his sire still walk the night in Vienna — Vladislav is eager to give them what some Ravnos call "the Treatment." Throwing caution to the winds, Vladislav rushes toward the Austrian capital.

In his haste, the Deceiver falls into the hands of the Arcanum investigators who originally guarded the book. Unbeknownst to the Kindred of Vienna, Vladislav has been captured by skillful hunters and the tome recovered. His Rroma allies are still at large. Eager for knowledge, Arcanum agents scour the Deceiver's mind to learn more about his vampiric allies. Vladislav offers little resistance, telling them about an elaborate undead conspiracy in the city of Vienna.

And why not? Once the three factions descending on Vienna encounter each other, they fight for the book. In the tumult, as the defenders of the Vienna Camarilla are distracted, the hunters can strike at Vladislav's enemies!

A cabal of Arcanum hunters sets out for Vienna to learn more. To aid their investigation, they foolishly bring the tome with them. Unfortunately, Vladislav didn't tell them that the three factions are also descending on one of the most renowned Camarilla cities in Europe, looking for a Ravnos who's not there and a tome that's already in the wrong hands.

A CONSPIRACY ASSEMBLES

One last complication: the unsuspecting characters of your troupe are contacted by Cardinal Radu Bistri, the former Archbishop of Bistritz. While visiting ancient Fiends in Transylvania,



he learned of new developments in Kupala's saga. Sabbat informers told him of the *Incunabulum* and its possibilities for advancing koldunic sorcery. From his former messenger, Tiberiu, Radu learned that Dracula has dispatched his Axes to find the tome.

As a result, the cardinal sends Tiberiu to contact an old acquaintance of his, a former Transylvanian prince who is now the Ventre primogen of Vienna. Nova Arpad and Cardinal Radu share a common interest: preventing Dracula from obtaining the tome. Within a matter of nights, they gather an entourage of vampires who have a personal interest in the myth of Kupala. They, too, want to consult this tome, or at least be present when Vienna is overwhelmed by Kindred vying for the same illustrious prize. Vladislav doesn't need to arrive in Vienna to give local Kindred "the Treatment"; by the start of Scene One, he has already succeeded. This story details the consequences.

SCENE ONE: A SUMMONS TO VIENNA (SUMMER, 1897)

Time changes all things. Elders who remember the Dark Ages tell themselves that they still sway the world, but they have actually been cast adrift by the tides of history. Some were swept up in the crusades of the Sabbat, others recruited to support the Camarilla's Masquerade, and a few remain distant, pursuing the politics of more independent factions. Nonetheless, elder Cainites remember, and sometimes maintain, alliances that defy the boundaries of sect, clan or domain. Hopefully, your characters are still civil enough to continue searching together for the portents of Kupala's return.

If you've played the *Transylvania Chronicles* from the start, you no doubt already know the techniques for gathering together vampires with vastly different political affiliations. The most obvious relies upon a rather diplomatic Cainite who is aware of activities in both the Camarilla and Sabbat. Radu Bistri is now a Sabbat cardinal, but he still maintains contact with Cainites old enough to remember the nights before Sabbat Cainites and Camarilla Kindred. The approach of Gehenna overshadows their trivial political concerns.

COTERIES AND CONSPIRACIES

If the characters are all members of the Camarilla, we can call them a coterie; if they're all Sabbat, they're probably a pack. However, this story assumes that by now, your player's characters have drifted all over the political map, as individual vampires are prone to do over centuries. Since they've managed to set aside their differences, at least long enough to find the *Incunabulum Kupalam*, we will refer to them as a "conspiracy" of vampires for the rest of the act.

STARTING THE CHRONICLE WITH THE DRAGON ASCENDANT

If this is your first foray into the *Transylvania Chronicles*, you don't need to overwhelm your players with the events

of the last seven centuries. Instead, your troupe's characters should have common ties to sires, mentors or elders who have already participated in earlier chapters of the story, and know the prophecies of Kupala because they have watched them unfold firsthand. If you like, you may later decide to "flash back" and recreate these vignettes.

If you prefer this approach, we also suggest forming a coterie concept for the characters' sires. First, all of them should have been Embraced before 1500. This ensures that the characters' sires, at least, already have ties that defy boundaries of sect or clan. One childe may have sided with the Sabbat, while another may have been converted to the Camarilla's point of view, but if the sires' coterie predates such conflicts, it's easier to form a rationale for their childer to work together. On behalf of the elders who Embraced them, the characters must set aside their political differences to acquire this valuable tome. They are the next generation of a conspiracy that has existed for centuries.

Next, the characters and their sires should all have a common enemy — Lord Dracula. This simplifies the plot considerably, since new characters can focus on one adversary instead of four. For beginning players, you might also reduce the number of confrontations with competing factions. Having several conspiracies present increases the tension for ancient and powerful characters — by the end of this story, the blood flows freely — but neonates don't need to face the same challenge. Finally, we've included a few scenes where they may learn the significance of the prophecies of Kupala and the importance of finding the book. Beginning characters don't need to know about everything from the start, but they should have the opportunity to learn. Augustine of Clan Tremere can answer their questions.

GETTING THE CHARACTERS INVOLVED

Cardinal Radu dispatches his messenger to gather a vampiric conspiracy that's intimately familiar with the threat of Kupala. Tiberiu, Radu's twisted Gangrel slave, has become absolutely loyal to the cardinal. Yet at his behest, Tiberiu has remained behind in the Old Country to serve and ultimately betray Vlad Dracula. Through subterfuge, Cardinal Radu has learned that the Son of the Dragon has already dispatched his minions to retrieve the tome. If your characters survived Act Two of *Ill Omens*, they've no doubt developed a fierce rivalry with Dracula. If they haven't, he's still a perfect adversary for Cainites new to the chronicle.

Tailor Radu's invitations to the various characters. Players have different preferences, after all. You might enact a brief interlude with each character before the game, pass out withered pieces of parchment, simulate an interview with Tiberiu, or just summarize what each character learned before meeting everyone else. By now, you already know what motivates each character, and each player.

If the characters are Sabbat, Radu's invitation is cloaked as an imperative from a cardinal loyal to the Sword of Caine. Older and experienced characters who can read between the



lines know that Radu's bold letter isn't really a command but a marvelous opportunity. The chance to uncover the true nature of Kupala should be enough to motivate the characters to investigate further. Radu has no trouble finding support for his activities. Although the Sabbat Inquisition hasn't begun yet, the sect still worries about demon worshippers within their ranks. The rumors of an ancient evil slumbering beneath the Transylvanian Tzimisce force the sect into immediate action.

If the characters are in the Camarilla, then Radu's missive (or Tiberiu's speech) mentions that Cardinal Bistri has gained the support of the Viennese Ventre in stopping Lord Dracula. This is possible because of his familiarity with Nova Arpad, an elder Blue Blood who has spent centuries expanding her influence in the region. Since Nova has spent centuries as an intermediary between Eastern European Ventre and Tremere, she has risen to a position of esteem as the Ventre primogen of Vienna. Radu has arranged a meeting between the characters and Nova to discuss their common threat.

If the characters are independent (as is the case with Ravnos, Giovanni, Assamites, Setites, most bloodlines and unaligned Kindred of any stripe), Tiberiu contacts them on Radu's behalf, stressing the threat of Lord Dracula. He also states that the Ravnos who invited him to Vienna infamously defies the Traditions throughout the Camarilla cities of Europe; Vladislav continues to destroy what fragments of respectability the Ravnos still have. If their conspiracy gathers enough information on the current crisis, they may earn the gratitude of the Habsburg Ventre, prestation from the Viennese Kindred or even assistance from the highest echelons of the Tremere. For outsiders to Camarilla society, such an opportunity is hard to refuse.

Regardless of who is involved, Radu's message mentions a place to meet. The conspiracy is to assemble on Friday night at the Cafe Elan, a Viennese coffeehouse. A date and time are set. If any character arrives late, Nova waits for them each evening at the proscribed time until the conspiracy has assembled. If the characters are not members of the Camarilla, Nova has obtained letters from the prince announcing them as accepted guests within the city. Each letter is signed by Prince Leopold and marked with his wax seal. Because of traditions preserved since the Dark Ages, these guests should immediately appear before the prince to thank him for his hospitality. This implies an obligation to respect the prince's domain, at least until the tome is found and Dracula is stopped. Of course, a character may forego this arbitrary etiquette and become Autarkis....

Vienna has many Cainite visitors, but few remain in the city for long. Because the local mortal population is barely sufficient to support the Kindred who claim domains in the city, Prince Leopold has strict demands regarding feeding in Vienna. Visitors are allowed to hunt in the villages surrounding the city, but they cannot feed in the heart of Vienna without the prince's permission. They may bring their own ghouls,

herds or even pets to sate their thirst, but Vienna lacks the kine to support the dozens of vampires who visit each year. Most visiting Kindred only stay for a few nights and leave. Thus, Radu recommends that the characters act quickly. With so many factions descending on the city, hunting should become extremely difficult.

SCENE TWO: THE CONSPIRACY GATHERS

Picture a Viennese cafe in the early evening. The city is home to hundreds of such establishments. Inside, gas lamps wanly illuminate the cracked plaster walls. The aroma of coffee hangs in the air, and the susurru of the patrons carries the latest news from the world of the kine. Nearby, intellectuals discuss the city's many political parties. The next election is only a few months away. A few tables over, an *artiste* critiques one of Grillparzer's plays, *King Ottokar's Rise and Fall*. Apparently, a wealthy patron has paid to have it rewritten as an opera, and the adaptation debuts tonight. By an open window, two elderly gentleman play a game of chess. They occasionally mutter about how much the city has changed since they were young.

Relaxed mortals discuss the events and issues of the day. Newspapers in French, English, and German (the local language), rest on sofas, settees and chairs, providing the most recent updates on events in other parts of the world. With true Victorian etiquette, the patrons are civil and kind. As the tables fill, many of the mortals here sip their coffee or leave it untouched as they are drawn into animated discussions. A cup of coffee is expensive here, but well worth the price. Visitors pay handsomely for the cafe's ambiance of social progress, intellectual debate and artistic appreciation. Cafe Elan is an ideal place for Kindred to watch the unfolding drama of the living world.

The cafe is located in the Ringstrasse, an area of town that has prospered since the ascension of Emperor Franz Joseph. Nova Arpad can be found watching the procession of mortals from the shadows, occasionally using Auspex to overhear a choice piece of gossip. As promised, she sits behind an array of high tea regalia in a remote corner of the room, awaiting the characters' arrival. She is dressed in the height of Victorian fashion. Her jet-black hair cascades down the back of her lavender dress. With a look both regal and predatory, she watches the room over a teacup. The warm vapors bring a slight tinge of color to her cheeks. Beside her, a handsome young ghoul sips Maraschino liqueur; the cafe's owner has just received a fresh shipment from Dalmatia.

The ghoul seems slightly nervous as he watches the crowd. Nova merely smiles when the first conspirator arrives. Sabbat vampires may feel slightly uncomfortable; after all, the Vienna Camarilla anticipates the arrival of the Black Hand. Nonetheless, Nova introduces herself respectfully to each character, regarding them much as she would a Tzimisce

THE RINGSTRASSE

Many of the locations of this act can be found either in the *Inner Stadt*, the oldest section of the city, or the *Ringstrasse*, an area of relatively recent construction. Prior to the Revolution of 1848, Vienna was surrounded by massive city walls. In 1857, those barriers were demolished, and the many small towns just outside the city became part of Vienna proper. Twenty years of extensive architectural reconstruction followed—where the walls once were, the *Ringstrasse* is now. It forms a semicircle around the inner city. In the 1890's, visitors can ride in a horse-drawn hackney along its circumference, observing Gothic, Mediterranean, Renaissance and Classical architecture within a few blocks of each other.

or fellow Ventrite during the Long Night, before divisions of sect and clan tore the Childe of Caine further apart.

The characters may have met somewhere else beforehand or make their entrances one by one; it makes no difference. Give the characters a chance to react to nearby conversations while they're waiting. Soon the conspiracy is assembled at a table in the back of the room. Nova offers to escort them to a private room where they can talk undisturbed. Her muscular ghoul stands outside as she offers hospitality to her guests. Although there may have been much unpleasantness between the characters and Nova earlier in the chronicle (particularly in Act Two of *Dark Tides Rising*), she is uncharacteristically relaxed. A perceptive or romantic vampire might even suspect she is in love.

Nova is quick to downplay the struggle between the Camarilla and the Sabbat, stating that some dangers transcend such desultory boundaries. After dropping Cardinal Radu's name, she summarizes what she knows about Vladislav, "an infamous Deceiver who is coming to Vienna to offer up an ancient tome to the highest bidder." The Ravnos sent messengers to representatives of three different factions. Each received a handwritten copy of the book's first page to verify its authenticity. The Viennese Tremere are thrilled at the prospect of obtaining the *Incunabulum*, already knowing its worth. However, as an affront to the Camarilla, Vladislav has also extended the offer to a second faction, a Sabbat conspiracy known as the Black Hand. And, of course, Radu has already mentioned the third faction: Dracula's Axes, sinister minions of the Son of the Dragon.

Nova has heard numerous rumors of what the book contains. Since she is a far more skilled politician than occultist, she's unsure which stories are the most accurate. Allegedly, the book can be identified by an elaborate sigil on its cover: a "star" with 13 points. Some speculate that the pages within contain the secrets of koldunice sorcery, possibly through insights into natural spirits. Others insist that the tome may actually be used to control Kupala, granting its owner a servant of ungodly power.

Because of these rumors, Nova's primary concern is that Vlad Dracula should not gain possession of the book. He has tried to summon Kupala before. He must not be allowed to do so again. Recently, Dracula attempted to shatter the Masquerade; he is too unpredictable to ever be entrusted with such power. Because she knows of the reputation of the characters (or their sires), Nova hopes that the conspiracy finds the tome, or at least ensures that Dracula does not.

NOVA ARPÁD

7th generation, childe of Gregor

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Celebrant

Apparent Age: early 30s

Embrace: 1050

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 6, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Expression 3, Grace 4, Intuition 2, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Crafts 2, Etiquette 3, Performance 2, Ride 2, Stealth 1

Knowledges: Academics 3, Investigation 2, Law 3, Linguistics (French, German, Magyar, Romanian) 3, Medicine 2, Occult 1, Politics 5

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 3, Celerity 2, Dominate 6, Fortitude 4, Obfuscate 3, Potence 1, Presence 5

Backgrounds: Herd 3, Influence 3, Resources 5, Status 4

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

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 6

THE KINDRED OF VIENNA

To aid the conspiracy in its task, Nova recommends a few Kindred its members may wish to consult. The first step toward evaluating the problem is piecing together what the various clans already know. Since Nova labors under the delusion that primogen are the most qualified to speak for the clans, she recommends talking with them first. Also, Nova casually mentions that one of the more knowledgeable Kindred in Vienna is her whip, Gustavus. She can also summarize the current political situation in the city.

Three Toreador have domains in Vienna. Foremost among them is **Prince Leopold**. The Viennese Toreador endure the same problem as their counterparts in Paris: because of the city's reputation as an artistic haven, the prince is besieged with Degenerates who want to prove they are worthy of establishing a domain here. Leopold tires of this. Contrary to the stereotype, he is not an artist, a fop or a dandy. He is a politician and diplomat, one of the few who can keep peace between the incredibly influential Habsburg Ventrite and the magi of Clan Tremere.



As for tonight, the Viennese Toreador are preoccupied with a fête they are holding at the Imperial Opera House. The prince attends, but no doubt is besieged by fawning harpies who wish to fully experience what many Toreador call the “musical capital of the world.” Camarilla characters may steal enough time from him to observe the Fifth Tradition and introduce themselves. Non-Camarilla characters may enjoy the scandal of obeying the same tradition and ensuring the prince they can be discreet.

The Tremere are offended if the characters don’t rush to consult them at once. The conspiracy may want to visit Fortschritt, the newest Vienna chantry. There, they can probably obtain an audience with the chantry’s master librarian, **Comte Augustine d’Erlette**. Although the chantry already has a reputation among the breathing as an extensive private library, reconstruction in the Ringstrasse allowed the Warlocks to add a series of underground chambers to house their most valuable tomes. Etrius also has a haven in the Inner Stadt. However, he is loath to receive visitors, reserving his home for his personal observances and frequent periods of torpor.

Although Etrius is still at the top of the Warlock’s pyramid of power, the current Tremere primogen is **Ardan Lane**. Tread lightly — like the Toreador, the Tremere receive many visitors “just passing through town.” Many are eager to prove their loyalty to their elders. Although only four Tremere claim extensive domain in the city (and one is in torpor), it is widely known that Ardan is organizing a cabal of foreign magi to search the city for Vladislav and the tome.

As for the Ventrite, the characters may either find **Nova Arpad** at the Cafe Elan or Schönbrunn Palace, Emperor Franz Joseph’s summer estate. The Emperor usually retires early to his home in the Inner Stadt and rises promptly at dawn. This gives the three Viennese Ventrite and their frequent visitors an opportunity to meet in Kabinetkanzlei, the emperor’s private office. Nova offers to have her ghoul wait for the conspiracy in one corner of the court park should they require an audience with her.

No Brujah have permanent domains in Vienna, but there is one Gangrel. His name is **León**, and he faithfully serves as Keeper of Elysium. Because of the high number of Camarilla “tourists,” Vienna has several areas of permanent Elysium, including Schönbrunn Palace, the Belvedere, the Hofburg Estate (and its Winter Riding School), the Imperial Opera House and several others. Most of these places are surrounded by vast public parks. León is frightfully busy, since most of his nights are spent patrolling as many areas of Elysium as he can.

Nova has a low opinion of Malkavians in general, but she is pleased to hear that **Lord Adolph Nonesuch** is in town. Despite his strange name, he is the sanest and most insightful Lunatic she has ever met. As a renowned scholar and alienist, he can often be found visiting #19 Bergestrasse, the office of Doctor Freud. Nonesuch has also studied under the esteemed Kindred archaeologist, Aristotle de Laurent, and is well-schooled in prophecy and lore.

Finally, two Nosferatu maintain permanent domains in Vienna. **Alexander**, a rather resourceful Sewer Rat, brokers information in Vienna’s storm tunnels and sewer systems. Don’t spend too much time looking for him; it is said that if you really need his services, he finds you. If the conspiracy is indiscreet, Nova cautions, they may also encounter the second Nosferatu. **Vaclav Petalengro**, Vienna’s sheriff and scourge, performs his duties swiftly and silently. Fledglings and neonates who have no business in town have a habit of disappearing. Not surprisingly, Vaclav isn’t seen much either.

There is one last fact Nova cannot reveal, for none of the Vienna Kindred suspect it: Sheriff Vaclav has been silenced forever. He has already met Final Death at the hands of Arkanum hunters. Blood has been shed, and Vienna’s tranquil peace is about to be shattered.

ELDERS AND INDIVIDUALS

Nova has suggested characters consult with the city’s primogen, the individuals she believes are best informed about current events in Vienna. Before they do so, one caveat is necessary. Though each of these elders believes he speaks for his clan as a whole, clans are collections of individuals. Primogen pretend that clans are unified political affiliations to prop up their own power. Elders like to believe that within any given city, each clan is of one mind, but this is rarely the case.

Clan Ventrite takes credit for the achievements of the Habsburg dynasty, as Clan Tremere does for the Golden Dawn, but in the end, historical movements are often the results of individuals, or at least the machinations of individual vampires. This act is easiest to finish if you only portray the Vienna’s elders, but you can add depth by having additional Kindred contradict the opinions of the primogen. Members of the same clan don’t dress or act the same; there’s no reason to have them think the same.

SCENE THREE: RECEIVING RECOGNITION

Previous Austrian monarchs settled for the construction of austere and functional buildings, but Emperor Franz Joseph has made rejuvenating the city and its art a priority, particularly in the Ringstrasse. Since the emperor’s coronation — and the rise of Prince Leopold — the Austrian government has sponsored great works of architecture in Vienna. The Imperial Opera House, or Staatsoper, was the first of the Ringstrasse’s grand buildings to reach completion. The first opera performed there was Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* in 1869.

Opera is not an obscure art form in Vienna. Citizens from all strata of mortal society enjoy the lavish performances. While the wealthy can afford theater boxes or balcony seats, the common folk swarm into areas so packed that only standing room is available. Those who arrive early tie bandannas

along the railings to mark prime spots as theirs. Those who arrive late probably bought a discounted ticket at the last moment and deserve what they get.

Safely ensconced within a modest theater box in the rear of the theater hall, Prince Leopold marvels at what his clan has achieved (or at least taken credit for). Tonight, to earn his favor, a Toreador dramaturge has financed an adaptation of one of the most esteemed works of Austrian literature, *The Rise and Fall of King Ottokar*. The spectacle is grand enough to completely distract Leopold from mutterings about Sabbat spies and skulking Ravnos. Even a few Venttrue turn out. After all, it was Rudolf IV's victory over the Ottoman King Ottokar in 1278 that first established the Habsburg dynasty in Vienna. A few Blue Bloods here remember that era fondly.

The Habsburg Venttrue are enchanted with Leopold's claim to princedom. He does not "control" Vienna as many Kindred princes proclaim elsewhere. Instead, he is a diplomat who soothes tensions between the most powerful Kindred of the city. The scene the characters witness here is a testimony to his patience. Because he skillfully manages political disputes, visiting Toreador are free to indulge in purely artistic pursuits. Each month, visiting Degenerates fill the hallways outside the prince's theater box, all eager to impress the prince, increase their status and remain in Vienna. The characters must endure the bickering, jealousies and social acrobatics of Vienna's eminent Kindred if they want to earn an audi-

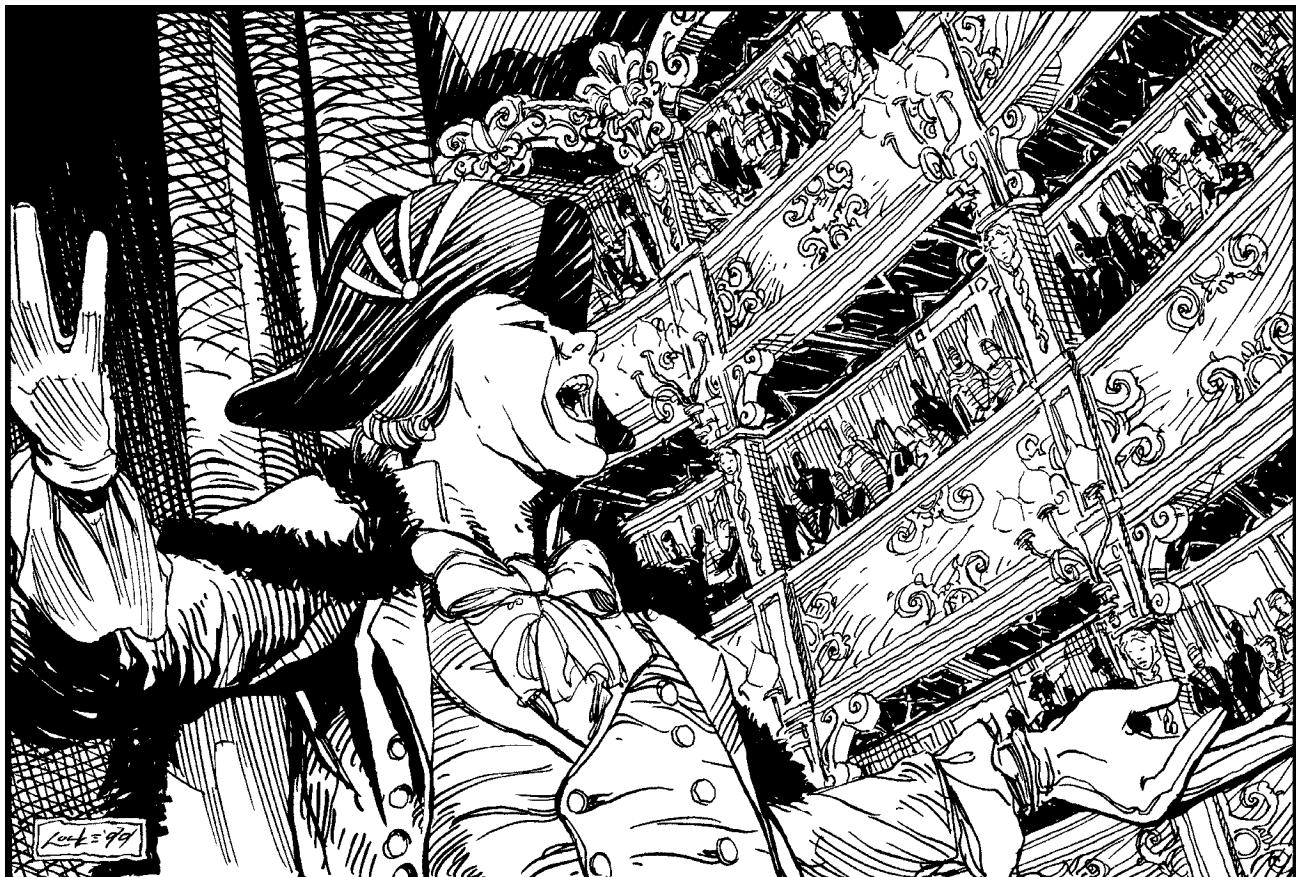
SKIPPING THE OPERA

Your players may decide to just skip the opera, figuring it may be easier to find the prince later in the weekend. This has two complications. First, the prince's social calendar is full. He has many such affairs all weekend. If the characters don't show up, they may prefer to meet the prince at an equestrian demonstration of fine Austrian stallions in the Winter Riding School, an exhibit of Gustav Klimt's new paintings in one of Vienna's museums or some similar affair. Unfortunately, the Toreador's Degenerate guests stay for the whole weekend, allowing the Storyteller a chance to run this same scene later at a different location.

The second complication is more vicious. Nova has already told the prince about her guests. If they don't show up, Prince Leopold makes an offhand remark to the Tremere primogen later that night. Who are these egotistical Kindred? Why didn't they show up? What are they really doing in Vienna? Scene Six details some possible consequences for skipping this gala.

ence with the prince of Vienna. Here's a chance for the more socially skilled characters to come to the fore.

While Prince Leopold masterfully handles diplomacy, the other three Viennese Toreador are some of the most vicious





harpies in Europe. The first is an accomplished musician who has witnessed performances by countless Viennese luminaries, including Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms. How can Kindred compete with such talented mortals? The second is a rebellious neonate amused by the Secessionists. He closely observes the early career of Gustav Klimt and the burgeoning of *art nouveau*; Kindred *poseurs* invoke his wrath. The third Degenerate is the patron of tonight's opera — any who find fault with it should prepare for devastating social retribution.

While the emperor's entourage gathers for tea a few rooms away, ambitious Toreador flock in the hallways. Those who gather here are observant and savvy Kindred eager for scandal. All are as adept at Auspex as they are at humiliating those who do not belong. Regardless of whatever scraps of paper the characters obtained from Nova and Tiberiu, a passionate Kindred offended by boorish behavior doesn't stop to read them. Rudeness of any kind may inspire a nearby gentleman duelist to challenge the lout faster than you can say "breach of the Masquerade."

Prince Leopold is so swarmed with sycophants that he hasn't had a chance to enjoy the performance. His patience runs short. Characters who force their way in to see him must pass several ghouls who sort out who has the prince's favor and who does not. Anyone here to introduce themselves should be made to wait to show how esteemed Leopold really is.

If the characters insist on being recognized but you do not wish to roleplay the situation, one member of the conspiracy must succeed on a Manipulation + Etiquette roll (difficulty 7) to approach the situation correctly. If she fails, the characters must petition someone else who is entering. This is almost invariably met by the same question: "Who are you, and why should I know you?" Subterfuge or Expression rolls may be necessary to explain why they are more than just another coterie of social climbers wanting to make their havens in Vienna.

If any characters are thrown out of the performance, scandal results. Consulting the city's primogen is more difficult once the harpies spread the news. Although no one told the characters, the opera house is Elysium tonight. Anyone caught using Obfuscate to sneak inside (in an opera house attended by numerous Toreador, this is not easily done) causes an even greater outrage.

Between acts of the opera, the characters are escorted to the prince. In our world, Ottokar was so innovative that it was booed on its opening night — the audience didn't "get it." In the World of Darkness, Ventrite patricians have poured money into the production. The spectacle on stage speaks of the ornate, elaborate and decadent artistic tastes of the Toreador. Dull rumors about demons and the Black Hand cannot compete. The mortal audience, unaware of the Kindred influence, is awed by the grandiose performance.

As the characters approach Prince Leopold, they see he is a wealthy Victorian aristocrat wearing immaculate and outrageous fashions. If Lord Byron seduced Oscar Wilde's sister, their union would produce the same ostentatious peacock. Leopold tells the characters to introduce

themselves quickly. He's done this so many times before that he is not surprised by anything. The prince has been overwhelmed with too many stories of every possible detail of undead life in Vienna. He's incredibly jaded. "Yes, yes, demon book... Sabbat spies... Transylvanian Tzimisce count. Very good." At the beginning of the *Transylvania Chronicles*, the thought of so many elder vampires in the same city was astounding. By now, the prince considers it commonplace. Leopold is confident that the local Kindred can sort out the current problem.

Camarilla characters are rushed through their lineage; the prince does not dwell on them for long. Vampires who announce themselves as members of the Sabbat actually amuse him, since Nova risks her reputation by speaking up for her old acquaintances (or even worse, the childer of her old acquaintances). He briefly states that his primogen are open-minded, but the city's neonates may not understand why followers of the Sword of Caine are in their city.

After a perfunctory remark about being discreet ("I know you will observe the Masquerade, for if you don't, I shall leave you to the amusement of the scourge."), he shushes them and resumes watching the play. Relaying every detail of the current dilemma to the prince is pointless. There is, however, one opportunity to triumph here. Any of the characters who score five successes on an appropriate Social roll (Charisma + Etiquette, Manipulation + Politics, Appearance + Seduction or the like) impresses Prince Leopold so much that he grants the characters the right to feed inside the city.

PRINCE LEOPOLD

8th generation, childe of Jean Florent

Nature: Conniver

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Apparent Age: early 30s

Embrace: 1800

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Expression 3, Grace 3, Leadership 3, Style 5, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Crafts 2, Etiquette (Camarilla) 5, Melee (rapier) 4, Performance 1, Ride 4

Knowledges: Academics 3, Law 3, Linguistics (French, Arabic) 2, Politics 4

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 2, Fortitude 3, Presence 5

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 4, Herd 4, Influence 5, Resources 4, Status 4

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

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 7

SCENE FOUR: THE TREMERE CHANTRY

Prior to the Ringstrasse Era and the restoration of the city, the population of Vienna was relatively small. By 1850, Etrius, Augustine, a Toreador prince and a Habsburg Ventrue held the only stable domains among a population of about 400,000 kine. Although the population occasionally surged with visiting Kindred, the walls of the city had kept Vienna's boundaries contained since the Dark Ages. In such modest times, the Tremere lacked a massive Viennesse chantry to intimidate neonates. Tremere summoned to Vienna were often simply called before Etrius in his haven.

Over the last century, the city's mortal population has almost tripled, and the Viennesse Tremere have responded accordingly. Etrius has always held an ungodly amount of influence here, especially since Prince Leopold refuses to force his will upon the local Tremere. When Etrius demanded the construction of a more suitable monument for his clan, the prince did not oppose the decision. Fortschritt is an elaborate library within the walls of a former church. Behind this façade, the Warlocks have built a temple to occult knowledge.

Tremere throughout the world know that when a Warlock is "called to Vienna," he may return forever changed by whatever happens in the chthonic depths of Fortschritt. The Tremere do not tread lightly up the marble steps of this Gothic fortress. Allegedly, an Antediluvian slumbers in the *sanctum sanctorum* of this edifice. The security around it is commensurate with this task. No one enters or leaves without the permission of Clan Tremere.

THE VIENNA CHANTRY

In 1853, a deranged tailor attempted to assassinate Emperor Franz Joseph in the area of town called the Mölker-Bastei. The city took up a collection to build a massive church opposite that fateful site. In our world, architect Heinrich von Ferstel used those funds to build the Votivkirche, a church containing many chapels in honor of Austria's military heroes. In the World of Darkness, however, attempts to gather donations fell short. Workers began construction on that spot in 1856, but the church was never finished. Instead, a secretive patron purchased the building and completed its construction for a rather ostentatious private library. Since then, scholars throughout the world have arrived to pursue their esoteric studies among the stacks of Fortschritt.

A GOTHIC FORTRESS

Two stone gargoyles wait faithfully at the bottom of the chantry's marble stairs. When the moon is right, their eyes seem to glare at passers-by. If a vampire is foolhardy enough to grasp the iron ring bolted in the building's massive oak doors, his presence is eventually acknowledged. Knocking isn't necessary; through their command of Auspex, Tremere in the vestibule

know when they have visitors. Just as the iron ring on the door is raised, a narrow slit opens, revealing lifeless eyes peering from within. Once the conspiracy can prove their business by showing Leopold's letter, the doors swing wide.

Supplicants are admitted to the outer chambers of the chantry. The coterie feels a cold chill as every magus waiting in the lobby turns slowly and scrutinizes them. Vampires who have introduced themselves as supporters of the Sabbat should feel even worse as they hear the oaken doors creaking shut behind them. Should extra security be needed (say, in the presence of one of Goratrix's house), three massive Gargoyle vampires surround the characters like faithful hounds, awaiting orders to rend and slay.

The waiting Warlocks part like the Red Sea as Augustine enters the antechamber. Long black robes that trail behind her augment her aristocratic bearing as she glides across the floor. Her cold blue eyes gaze off into infinity as she approaches. Like the subjects she studies, she is not wholly of this world. She appears about forty and is unusually thin. Deferentially, the Tremere around her nod and appear to exchange greetings without uttering a sound. Save for footfalls, any sounds made by the character are met with icy stares.

"You are expected," says Augustine. "Enter our temple of knowledge. I will escort you to the vestry." She does not give her name, nor does she speak again until she reaches the altar. Passing through velvet curtains, Augustine leads the characters into the nave of the church. A massive room where services were once held has been converted to the first room of the library. No one is allowed beyond this point without an invitation, promoting the mystique of an eccentric private collection. Since Vienna houses so many museums and libraries, this hardly seems unusual. Scholars are odd folk, particularly in the Victorian Era.

Visitors allowed inside marvel at a library compiled over eight centuries. Ghoul librarians scurry through the stacks, making sure that private conversations remain discreet and that no one speaks above a whisper. Despite the expensive leather upholstery and exquisite furnishings, privileged visitors may already suspect that this is merely the façade of the real collection. Layers of Thaumaturgical wards preserve the illusion and prevent scrying of any kind into the lower levels, magical or otherwise.

The buttressed ceilings, massive paintings and great open spaces rising toward heaven were once meant to make one seem small next to the might of God. The same architecture now reverently speaks of the majesty of Clan Tremere. This is a temple erected to the glory of occult knowledge. Where there were once pews now stand shelves full of heavy tomes. Where candles once burned to illuminate hymnals, they now light the way for the undead to uncover the mysteries of the cosmos... and exploit them. Throughout the first floor, one sees small conclaves seated in circles of massive chairs. Magi gaze at each other in the depths of silent communion, never speaking.



Augustine leads her guests toward the pulpit of the temple. Along the walls, visitors see huge steel shutters thrown wide. During the day, they protect titanic stained glass windows. At night, the windows reveal glorious historical scenes illuminated by the nacreous light of the moon. A shaft of moonlight falls on the altar, where an open tome, circles of black candles and "religious" relics await rituals guests dare not ask about.

On either side of the altar, circular stairways lead down into shadowy corridors beneath the Earth. Baleful statues stand beside each entrance, looking ready to crush any unwelcome guest. Warding, powerful Thaumaturgy and vigilant ghouls prevent interlopers in the lower levels from making it far. Any foolish Cainites who get close to the legendary *sanctum sanctorum* where Tremere slumbers may forfeit their very souls. A powerful force repels anyone who approaches the stairway, regardless of generation, magical strength or intent. Shadows dance along the corridor of the stairway, hinting at the horrors behind the veneer of civility on the first floor.

Instead of making the dreadful journey below, the conspiracy's host escorts them to a vestry on the first floor. "I am Augustine, *filius* of Celestyn, guardian of the Outer Circle. I honor you with the chance to visit our humble temple so that you may see what we treasure. We have risen to power by learning the deepest of the world's mysteries. We wish to guard the threatening secrets contained within the tome you seek. The *Incunabulum* could unleash great danger should it fall into the wrong hands. Thus, I offer my services as a consultant to prevent Lord Dracula and the odious Black Hand from gaining influence over a force they cannot control. In this, we are united." Polite inquires then yield a torrent of information.

THE SIGNS OF KUPALA

Whether the characters have survived every chapter of the **Transylvania Chronicles** or merely want a glimpse of Victorian Vienna, they may be wise enough to inquire about the signs of Kupala's awakening. Augustine firmly believes that the demon's return threatens more than the realms of the living and the undead. *She is certain that the awakening of the Antediluvians follows Kupala's return.* The demon's stirring heralds the earliest nights of Gehenna.

If the characters are new to the saga, Augustine is cryptic, stating that six signs of some terrible prophecy have been fulfilled and two remain. After all, your players may want to uncover the earlier signs on their own in a series of flashbacks later. If your troupe has played through the chronicle, August discusses the six signs and their significance to put events into perspective. The chronicle summary in Chapter One details the signs witnessed so far and how they came to pass. The appendix also details the prophecies. Augustine is eager to clarify her opinions regarding the Eight Ages theory. She is certain that the *Incunabulum* contains the information her clan needs to prevent the coming of the End Times.

AUGUSTINE

7th generation, childe of Celestyn

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Conformist

Apparent Age: early 40s

Embrace: 1513

Physical: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 1

Social: Charisma (fey) 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence (scholarly) 5, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Leadership 2

Skills: Etiquette 2, Crafts (printing) 4, Security 3, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Academics 5, Clan Knowledge (Tremere) 3, Enigmas 2, Investigation 4, Linguistics 3, Occult (Thaumaturgy) 4, Politics 2, Research 4, Science 2

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 3, Thaumaturgy 5

Thaumaturgical Paths: Path of Blood 5, any others the Storyteller feels are appropriate to the situation

Backgrounds: Clan Prestige 4, Contacts (Tremere) 5, Herd 1, Influence 3, Resources 3, Status 1

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

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 7

Augustine has an unusual interpretation of the Fourth Sign, which concerns the Dragon in the East. According to Augustine, Vlad Dracula of Wallachia is clearly the dragon. Anything that aids Dracula's ascent to power, such as the *Incunabulum*, heralds the coming of the Final Nights. This is why she must aid anyone who can prevent Vlad from obtaining the book.

DEEPER SECRETS

A resourceful conspiracy may try to call upon other Tremere they have met, especially if they have previously performed services for the Warlocks. While some of Vienna's Kindred are distracted by other concerns, the Tremere are fanatically interested in any information about the tome and its whereabouts. Their primogen, Ardan Lane, is unavailable, but if the characters ask to consult a member of higher rank, you might grant them a brief audience with Etrius himself.

Etrius does not allow visitors to arrive at his haven in the Inner Stadt unannounced—several Warlock neonates have been reduced to ash for such presumption—but he may schedule an appointment with the conspiracy at Fortschritt. He insists that his clan *must* have this tome and spares no effort to get it. Any petition for aid is met with stronger demands from Etrius. If the characters owe him any huge favors by the end of this story, he most certainly collects them in the next chapter.

SCENE FIVE: EXPLORATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

Once the characters consult Nova and Augustine, the drama can take several paths. For the time being, the conspiracy can choose which Kindred to consult in their search for Vladislav and the *Incunabulum*. The characters' interviews with local Kindred, explorations of the city and encounters with their rivals can be run in any order; the events in Scenes Five and Six are nonlinear. Regardless of the approach they choose, all paths eventually lead to the same destination: the cemetery in Scene Seven.

The conspiracy must act quickly, for within a matter of nights, the hunters Vladislav led to the city slaughter more Kindred. Vladislav has already given them the information they need to kill the sheriff. After disabling the lone defender with a mystic assault and dispatching him swiftly, the investigators have greater freedom to search the city. Once blood is spilled and all discretion lost, the violence steadily escalates. By the time a faction learns where the tome is hidden, a very old rival assaults the conspiracy. Until then, let the more social and intellectual characters enjoy the early stages of the investigation.

WHISPERED RUMORS

Regardless of whom the conspiracy consults, vicious stories circulate among the Viennese Kindred. Alexander of Clan Nosferatu is the only Kindred who gathers all these stories, but each primogen knows at least one or two. In any encounter with one of Vienna's vampiric elite, you might let a character cajole a fellow Kindred, using Manipulation + Subterfuge, Charisma + Politics, Appearance + Etiquette or some other Social roll to wheedle out the rumor. Here are a few of the salient facts:

— The Inquisition burned hundreds of copies of the *Incunabulum*. If Vladislav has one, he may be burned as well. Because the tome contains a wealth of occult knowledge, the Arcanum must also be interested.

— Vaclav, the Nosferatu sheriff, is a little *too* efficient. He is already a formidable warrior. His command of Obscure makes him lethal. He does his job as a scourge so well that Prince Leopold has become somewhat liberal with the Third Tradition, allowing too many Kindred to visit his city.

— The sheriff confronted a pack of Ravnos in the Wurstelprater several months ago. Since then, Gypsies and other disreputable types have been running scams there. Some have set up a tent city in a nearby section of the public park. As long as they work at the nearby carnivals, the police don't harass them much.

— Alexander heard a rumor that Vladislav never actually arrived in Vienna, but may have already been caught by the Inquisition. This rumor is incorrect, for the Arcanum is actually responsible. Alexander withholds this information until he can find the right price for it.

Once all of these rumors are revealed, there is one last scandal for the characters to investigate. This information leads straight to Scene Seven.

— Something strange has been happening at one of the local cemeteries. A mortal spotted a deranged madman leaping over the walls of the necropolis and screaming of a need for blood. Fortunately, the sheriff tracked him down and destroyed him. Damn efficient, that Vaclav!

THE WHIP AT THE RATHAUS

The conspiracy may decide the visit Nova's whip, Gustavus. Her protégé is an ambitious young vampire exhibiting many of the traits Nova did centuries ago. She has taught him the ways of mortal politics. He can usually be found in either the Parliament house or the town hall nearby. Despite his talent, he also embodies Ventre arrogance at its worst. His beliefs are extremely conservative, even for a hegemonic domain like Vienna.

The Parliament building resembles a Corinthian temple. The interior is rich with statuary. The town hall is a Gothic building with open arcades and immense windows. Gustavus has instructed his ghoul to wait in the lobby of the Parliament house to keep an eye out for the conspiracy. Although the characters have not met him, he has received a description of them from Nova. After the characters state their business, the ghoul leads them to a room filled with ledgers where Gustavus sorts through minutiae.

How Gustavus reacts depends on who is present. Although the Camarilla has extended an invitation of membership to all of Caine's chilid, Nova's whip looks down on so-called "independent" vampires as fools who have rejected the Camarilla's generous offers. If the conspiracy raises any questions about the Ravnos in particular, he rages. He considers them all anarchists with little to do but make unlif hell for powerful Ventre. "Ugh! Dirty Gypsies, to the last!"

If the characters sympathize with his attitudes, or at least maintain their composure, they learn part of the reason for his hatred. Several months ago, a pack of Deceivers arrived in town and tried to set up tents in the Wurstelprater, a part of town known for its carnivals and festivals. The Habsburg Ventre have little tolerance for that sort of thing. Gustavus immediately did the proper Ventre thing — he dispatched the sheriff.

"Damned rapscallions!" he exclaims. "We taught them a lesson. We won't see their kind here again!" Stick your nose in the air; he's a haughty bastard. He brags that if there are any Ravnos in town, the Vienna Camarilla has methods of dealing with them. The Gangrel Keeper of Elysium should set up a patrol to drive them out like the curs they are, and the Nosferatu sheriff should swiftly eliminate them thereafter. "No doubt they will be triumphant!" he boasts. If the characters have already learned that the sheriff has met his Final Death, Gustavus is shocked to hear of it. Within moments, he becomes petulant, insisting that he must return to his work.

If the characters are rude, or flaunt the fact that they are Sabbat, Gustavus turns hostile. He throws in a remark about posting extra sentries near the city's graveyards to prevent the Sword of Caine from spawning any more their kind. He entertains the false belief that all Sabbat vampires have the same creation rites. According to Camarilla legends, a priest ritually buries them, they claw their way to the surface and the poor bastards get bashed in the head with a shovel. What a brutish custom! Gustavus speaks to any professed Sabbat with contempt, and after a few brief remarks, insults them by expressing his wish "that your visit should be a brief one. And you will stay clear of our cemeteries, won't you?"

By Saturday or Sunday — within a night or two of the death of the sheriff — Ventre begin to die. Gustavus is the first to disappear. He is staked by Arcanum hunters or tortured by the Black Hand. Hopefully, he isn't killed by the characters first.

GUSTAVUS

8th generation, childe of Nova Arpad

Nature: Director

Demeanor: Conformist

Apparent Age: mid 20s

Embrace: 1806

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 1, Brawl 1, Dodge 3, Expression 4, Grace 2, Intimidation 2, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Crafts 1, Etiquette 3, Firearms 3, Security 2, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Academics 3, Finance 3, Investigation 2, Law 3, Linguistics (English, Italian) 2, Politics (local) 4

Disciplines: Dominate 3, Fortitude 4, Presence 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Herd 2, Resources 4, Status 2

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

Morality: Humanity 5

Willpower: 7

HABSBURG VENTRE AT THE SCHÖNBRUNN

Emperor Joseph is a meticulous man. His schedule is rigorously documented and maintained. During the day, he conducts business at Schönbrunn palace. At night, he retires to the State Apartments in the Hofburg Quarter of the Inner Stadt. Knowing exactly where the emperor is at all times benefits the Blue Bloods of Vienna immensely.

Nova is preparing for an upcoming assembly of the legislature. After her evening "teatime," she can usually be found at Schönbrunn Palace conferring with other Ventre long into the night. While she pores over stacks of books in one of the estate's many libraries, her ghoul waits in the Roman Ruins, a pretentious garden on the edge

of the estate. Because she's eager for a distraction, Nova listens to everything the characters have to say and offers advice, since it ultimately allows the characters to figure out what to do next. Once their rivals increase the tension in Vienna during Scene Six, this privilege is revoked.

If you enjoy historical research for your chronicles, Nova can also tell anecdotes about the Emperor's strange habits, his current political status or his love for his enchanting wife. The more the characters indulge her in this, the more she trusts them. Although her stories seem trivial, they are valuable in some circles. A few of the Ravnos in town gladly trade information if they can find out more about the emperor or the Ventrule. The Deceivers love to give the Vienna Blue Bloods "the Treatment," especially within the sanctum of the Habsburg Ventrule.

MALKAVIANS AND DOCTOR FREUD

Although it is dangerous to make generalizations regarding any assemblage of madmen, we may safely say that the Malkavians are evolving from a clan of visionaries plagued with mystical curses to a psychological and intellectual society. Nowhere is this more true than in Vienna. Medieval ideas concerning insanity are being replaced by the innovative theories of one of Vienna's most prominent citizens: Sigmund Freud.

In 1897, Doctor Freud works at #19 Bergestrasse. Only last year he was in a deep depression over the death of his father, but he has now found new vigor working on a treatise

concerning female hysteria. He keeps appointments during the day. He also works later for his more unusual clients. Currently, he receives great deals of money to confer with an eccentric scholar for a few hours each evening. Doctor Freud has even offered his colleague the use of his study, though he cannot exactly remember why he granted this request.

If one of your players enjoys Malkavian plots, he may be referred to Doctor Freud's associate. Lord Adolph Nonesuch has become fascinated with Freud's theories and thrilled by the prospects of psychology. As a wealthy scholar, he's compiling a series of essays concerning the phenomenon of "zoöphagy": a mania for the consumption of animal blood. Several breaches of the Masquerade have been covered up by his thorough investigations. He is eager to speak about his work, especially his prize specimen — a madman currently residing in a London Asylum. He has extensively studied the curious case of Renfield, Dracula's favorite ghoul.

Lord Adolph seems incredibly composed, doing his best to appear sane. At any moment, one expects a furious madness to manifest, but his only apparent psychosis is an intuition of psychological problems. He speaks with an unusually soft voice and enters every conversation with rapt fascination. Lord Adolph is familiar with theories regarding the six ages of Cainite history that have come to pass by the Victorian Era (see Chapter One's "Chronicle Summary"). He can reveal more of his interpretations if approached correctly.





Adolph Nonesuch can maintain his composure for hours at a time, but he has a weakness: a strange fascination with fire. Luckily, Doctor Freud's office is lit by electric lamps, as are many of the wealthier homes. If the characters ask the Malkavian for advice, he says that he must meditate on the problem. "Never fear! The answers to all problems," he states, "are trapped within the depths of our own subconscious minds." He walks toward a nearby candle, lights it and stares into the flame. With concentrated effort, he temporarily transforms himself into what he calls a "monster raving erm... id." His Victorian manners fall by the wayside as he begins babbling about where the characters should look next.

Consulting this Malkavian in the midst of this trance is the ultimate technique for developing nonlinear subplots. Lord Adolph may provide clues as to who to consult and who to ignore, but can only do so with baffling analogies and cryptic insights. One night, he may be certain the solution lies in talking to a blind beggar in the Wurstelprater, while another, he thinks that the only the dead know the truth — he advises digging up a few skulls in the cemetery for the answers. Lord Adolph's trances never last more than 10 minutes. Once it ends (probably when the Storyteller is exhausted), he awakens from his hypnotic state, reverts to the model of Victorian decorum and bids his visitors good night.

LORD ADOLPH NONESUCH

9th generation, childe of Baldric the Dogsbody

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Perfectionist

Apparent Age: early 40s

Embrace: 1872

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 1, Empathy (alienist) 4

Skills: Etiquette 2, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Academics 3, Investigation 1, Medicine (pharmacology) 4, Occult (mesmerism) 4, Research 3, Science (psychology) 4

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Fame 1, Mentor 2, Influence 2, Resources 4, Status 1

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 5, Courage 2

Morality: Humanity 7

Willpower: 7

particularly useful clue. If the characters are crazy enough to go trudging through the storm tunnels in their desperation, one of Alexander's ghouls finds them.

In the World of Darkness, the underground tunnels beneath Vienna are a Victorian wonder. Just as Zelios assisted the construction of magnificent castles above ground, several brilliant Sewer Rats designed this labyrinth beneath the earth. Massive tubes in Stygian darkness are tall enough for a single man to stand upright. The tunnels are far more extensive than they need to be, and the most remote sections are only accessible to workers with the correct keys, passwords or Protean powers for shifting into the form of a rat, bat or mist. Zelios himself once visited this labyrinth; he gained many unusual ideas for designs in the New World. If H.G. Wells, H.R. Giger and Jules Verne developed a sewage system, it would look like this.

Not long after the conspiracy begins searching the storm tunnels, they are surrounded by a mist that wafts out of a broken pipe along the wall. Within moments, a short, grubby man regards the characters with a curious air. He wears an elaborate tailored suit stained with muck. Tiny spectacles perch on his monstrously hooked nose. Although Alexander is eager to trade information, he doesn't give it out for free. If the characters can update him on current events in Vienna — or any other city — he can offer up some rumors as trade.

If you want another interlude in Vienna before proceeding to the next chapter, this encounter can set off a rather vicious subplot. The Nosferatu primogen is not who he appears to be. Alexander is rather well traveled; he has changed his appearance while travelling from city to city, gathering the most useful commodity a Sewer Rat can acquire: information. He still evades a blood hunt placed upon him by the former Prince of Mediasch, Nova Arpad.

Because Obfuscate can be countered by particularly perceptive Kindred, he has instead fleshcrafted every aspect of his appearance. This is an extremely painful habit for a Nosferatu to adapt, since a Sewer Rat's appearance cannot be permanently altered by Vicissitude. Because his old deformities eventually return, he must nightly resculpt his tortured visage. Only his skills as a consummate actor and master fleshcrafter allow him to hide his true identity. He is actually quite skilled at deception: "he" is actually a "she." Ruxandra of Clan Nosferatu prefers to remain in a position to watch Nova Arpad very closely.

RAVNO'S AT THE WURSTELPRATER

Gustavus spoke of Ravnos gathering in the "Prater." Several primogen have heard of Gypsies finding work there. Characters who travel to this section of town are hardly surprised at its connection with the Ravnos. The Wurstelprater is a series of long avenues where entertainers offer a wide variety of amusements. Hundreds of booths compete for attention. Organ music echoes through narrow alleys. Barkers announce chances to see legless ladies, preserved mermaids and African pygmies.

ALEXANDER IN THE STORM TUNNELS

As a last resort, if your players are stumped, have a flunkie of the Nosferatu approach them. He's your fail-safe in case your players near the end of the story and have missed some

"ALEXANDER"

9th generation, childe of Marusca

Nature: Celebrant

Demeanor: Autocrat

Apparent Age: 17, when not altered

Embrace: 1175

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Larceny 3, Subterfuge (espionage) 5

Skills: Body Crafts (impersonation) 4, Herbalism 2, Melee (knife) 3, Performance 5, Stealth 4, Survival 2

Knowledges: Academics 1, Investigation 3, Linguistics (German, Hungarian) 2, Occult 3, Politics 4

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 3, Obscure 5, Protean 5, Vicissitude 5

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Herd 2, Influence 4, Resources 5, Status 4

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

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 5

During the day, children delight at the sight of Punch-and-Judy puppet shows. In the evening, frustrated husbands and workers vent their anger at *Watschenmenn*: punching-bag dolls with swollen cheeks. The most remarkable landmark is a titanic Ferris wheel completed only last year. Instead of carrying fairgoers in cramped seats, the wheel has 18 small rooms attached along its periphery; each holds several people comfortably.

CINEMATIC GEOGRAPHY

The Ferris wheel in the Wurstelprater and the sewers of Vienna are shown in *The Third Man*, a postwar espionage thriller with Orson Welles. Some Storytellers like to leave a movie running on the VCR while their players assemble. On the evenings when you anticipate scenes set at either of these locations, this film is an excellent choice.

Clever characters may track down one of the local Gypsies, or even a Deceiver or two. Diplomatic characters might even get some information out of them. Because of their wandering ways, any Ravnos who have appeared in the chronicle centuries ago may turn up here. Once the Romanian Gypsies arrive, someone may recognize the childe of Izidor Torenu, Delizbelta, a Ravnos who may be extensively familiar with the conspiracy from earlier in the *Transylvania Chronicles*.

Of course, the connection between Ravnos and Gypsies has always been exaggerated. The conspiracy may wind up



THE DANUBE BY MOONLIGHT



SCENE SIX: COMPLICATIONS

harassing Rroma who know nothing about the Taltos Ravnos. Some may instead scam the characters if they are insistent in their demands. If the conspiracy can actually corner a Ravnos, she might bargain what she knows. Malkavians are challenged to games of chance, Ventre asked to part with large sums of money. Gangrel might trade valuable information from other parts of Europe or even promise to help the Deceivers travel to the next city. The Ravnos and the Gypsies might know a few particularly important facts:

— Generally, the Ravnos have a fierce hatred of the Rogues, the Ravnos *antitribu*. The Deceivers are happy to betray their presence to the Camarilla if they know of one.

— Many Ravnos have heard the full story of Vassily Taltos's betrayal (described in earlier installments of this chronicle). Vladislav has reasons for doing what he does. He doesn't act merely out of a tendency toward chaos, as some Camarilla flunkies believe.

— Vassily's childe, Vladislav, is loved by some Deceivers but loathed by others. He is a hero because of his epic schemes against Ventre princes. He is a villain among the Deceivers because many Ravnos get blamed for things he has done.

— Because Vladislav is infamous among the Ravnos, they take great delight in hearing of his victories and defeats. If the characters can offer *anything* to the Ravnos (especially anything Nova told them about the Habsburg Ventre or Emperor Franz Joseph), they reveal a rumor that Vassily has been detained by hunters.

— If the characters offer to misinform the prince and primogen about the number of Ravnos that are in town, they offer their assistance in return. They watch for anything unusual and even have their Gypsy relations watch during the day. If they learn that the characters have ties to Transylvania, they say that a *kumpania* fleeing Romania is in town.

— If any of the characters spent centuries stalking the forests of Transylvania, they have no problem spotting the traditional dress of a small family of Romanian Gypsies in the nearby tent city. If this happens, the conspiracy may recognize one of them in Scene Seven.

Once the characters accumulate this information, there's one last rumor to disclose. If the characters spend a fair amount of time speaking to Rroma and Ravnos in the 'Prater, two Gypsies who secretly serve Dracula's Axes lead the characters astray near the end of this scene with a dangerous revelation.

— "The stories about the Sabbat are true! Someone's probably found the tome by now, because we heard the Sword of Caine plans a crusade against Vienna to retrieve it. They mean to take it by force. One of our brothers saw vampires performing Sabbat rituals in a local cemetery. The city is doomed! It is time for the Rroma to move on. If you value your souls, do the same."

While the conspiracy gathers information, they may encounter one of the other groups in town searching for the tome. Of the three, Dracula's Axes have the most success. The Black Hand and the Tremere are less successful; they are included in the story to worry Camarilla or Sabbat characters. You do not need to stage confrontations with all three factions. Instead, the number of complications you throw into the plot establish the difficulty of the search. Experienced characters should face plenty of opposition, but neonates should survive most of Scene Six relatively unscathed.

Of course, a fourth faction, the Arcanum, has already arrived unannounced during the day. To the mortals of Vienna, the hunters appear as cultured and wealthy tourists. Just as the Kindred of Vienna must be discreet, the investigators have carefully concealed their sword canes, derringers, stakes and shotguns. An alliance of refined gentlemen has come to Austria, and the most important event in Scene Six concerns their activities.

THE HUNTERS REVEALED

Nova has already disclosed that Vaclav has not been seen for a few nights. This is hardly surprising, since there are enough visitors in town to keep him busy. On Saturday, the second night of the drama, events take a darker turn. The Keeper of Elysium discovers that the sheriff has been destroyed on the grounds of the Hofburg Estate. León uses Auspex to track down the site of the murder and, more importantly, the stake that was driven through Vaclav's heart. Prince Leopold himself then uses Spirit's Touch to confirm the identity of the killer. A mortal hunter is responsible.

Any of the primogen can give the conspiracy all of the details. Regardless of who it is, she blames Vladislav Taltos for this turn of events. It seems unlikely that the presence of such skilled killers is a coincidence. The primogen has a theory: the tome is little more than bait. Vladislav Taltos wanted to draw the Black Hand and Dracula's Axes to the same city as the Viennese Tremere, playing them against one another. Then, once the three factions begin competing for the book, the hunters exploit the confusion. Although the characters may be convinced of this theory, the other three factions searching for the tome are not and continue to scheme against each other.

Simplifying the Plot: If you want to run a shorter version of this act, the discovery made by the Keeper of Elysium can set up a shortcut through the story. After the third night, have the characters encounter one of the Arcanum hunters at work. If he is not destroyed outright, he can be... persuaded... to give the name of the location where his allies have sought sanctuary: St. Stephen's Cathedral. This leads directly to the events of Scene Eight, the final scene of this act.

ARCANUM AGENTS

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

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

Skills: Firearms 4, Security 2, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Investigation 3, Occult 2

Disciplines: Storytellers may want to give the hunters mystical abilities from other books, such as *Halls of the Arcanum*, *Ascension's Right Hand*, *Hunters Hunted*, or *Hunter: The Reckoning*. The *Vampire* rulebook also has suggestions for simulating such powers with vampiric Disciplines.

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

Morality: Humanity 7

Willpower: 7

THE BLACK HAND

The Black Hand is the most violent of the three factions. While some of its members are quite subtle in their schemes, these brutish Sabbat are not. Confrontations with them are perfectly suited to belligerent characters, vampires who just don't obey the Six Traditions or players who like lots of combat. The Black Hand warriors have no chance of being recognized by the prince and cannot politely question anyone for leads. They have three strategies: Find a primogen and torture her for information, shadow the other factions to see what they've found, or create expendable fledgling vampires to keep the Camarilla busy. Which option you employ depends on the type of story your troupe enjoys.

Shadowing: If the story slows down, secretly roll dice when any of the characters travel alone through the streets. A highly perceptive vampire (using Auspex, Perception + Alertness or a similar roll) may notice a shadowy figure following him. The spy leaps from rooftop to rooftop or perhaps a pair of red eyes watch the character from an alleyway. If the players want a brawl, they may decide to lay an ambush for one of these spies. Torturing a captured Sabbat scout reveals that his allies are performing mass Creation Rites in a cemetery, preparing to assault the city and take the tome by force from whomever finds it first.

If the players are interested in something besides social scenes, Camarilla characters are also fair game for a chase through the streets. A member of the conspiracy may even be captured and interrogated to see what he's learned, giving the Sabbat a chance to complicate the investigation. In the New World, the Purchase Pact theoretically forbids Sabbat packs from attacking each other, but here in the Old World, the Black Hand has no such restriction. If there is any duplicity or deception involved, he continues to shadow the character to see if he's telling the truth.

Torture: After the characters proceed through one of the first few interviews, one of the primogen they've

consulted disappears. Gustavus is an excellent first choice. If you like, let the conspiracy find the flayed body of one of their contacts floating down the Danube. Staked through the heart, the body has slowly shriveled from lack of blood. The characters may actually decide to save a primogen who might be useful, or the conspiracy may set up a useless one for an ambush to buy themselves more time. Once this happens, Nova spends more of her evenings at the Habsburg estate surrounded by bodyguards, and distrusts any known members of the Sabbat even more.

Mass Embrace: The Sabbat has many ways to conduct Creation Rites, but when they need to muster shock troops, the most common method is the mass Embrace. Several members of the Black Hand perform abductions to create shock troops. Innocent mortals are given a quick-and-dirty Embrace, buried immediately and given the chance to dig their way to freedom. Those who succeed are forced into the Vaulderie. If the Hand needs to take the tome by force, they lead a brief crusade to get it.

Within a night or two of the characters' arrival, mortals witness starving fledglings leaping the walls of the graveyard in search of blood. Once this happens, any known members of the Sabbat are treated with disdain by the primogen, even if they are protected by Nova or the prince. The mortal authorities also get involved, requiring characters to act with even greater discretion. If the characters search the graveyards, proceed directly to Scene Seven. Once they arrive, an old rival slays the Black Hand warriors performing the rite and sets a trap for the characters, attempting to destroy both rivals at once. This leads to a rather grisly climax for our story.

BLACK HAND SOLDIERS

Generation: 12th

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

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

Skills: Security 3, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Investigation 3

Disciplines: Celerity 2, Protean 3, Obfuscate 3

Virtues: Conviction 3, Instinct 3, Courage 3

Morality: Path of Caine 3

Willpower: 5

ARDAN LANE'S COTERIE

Warlocks summoned to Victorian Vienna are not allowed to feed within the prince's domain and thus keep their stays relatively brief. Only a few Tremere have permanent domains in the city, but Vienna has many visitors. In times of danger, Ardan Lane may ask visiting Tremere to perform some tasks to keep Vienna secure. After the first night of the chronicle, the Tremere primogen leads a small cabal

of visiting Warlocks through the city to pursue a separate investigation.

If the characters give up on being recognized by the prince in Scene Three, Leopold asks Ardan Lane's coterie to watch the characters more closely. Ardan also acts on behalf of the chantry if the characters fail to consult with Augustine, refuse to give the Tremere the tome or are simply indiscreet in their inquiries. If any character reveals that they are Sabbat, Ardan sends a ghoul to shadow them for a few hours each night.

The Tremere primogen doesn't have to trust the characters, and if he is confronted by the conspiracy on the streets of Vienna, his rivals are fair game for Thaumaturgical harrying. This doesn't require a toe-to-toe slugfest — magi are more subtle than that. Fog might roll past a horse pulling a carriage, causing a crash. Lightning strikes near a character's temporary haven. Mortals who have offered to help them the conspiracy suddenly forget they ever met them. Use bizarre applications of the various Thaumaturgical paths to make the characters' unlives difficult, but keep the Warlocks in the shadows. This option adds paranoia and mystery without adding mindless fights in the streets.

VIENNESE TREMERE INVESTIGATORS

Generation: 11th

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

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

Skills: Security 2, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Investigation 3, Occult 4

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Thaumaturgy 4 (whatever paths the Storyteller chooses)

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

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 7

DRACULA'S AXES

This faction is the most effective. While a few Gangrel and Ravnos wait outside Vienna by night, the Axes dispatch several mortals and ghouls to enter the city by day. As was the case in the 15th century, many of Dracula's minions are Gypsies. In fact, 10 years ago, a *kumpania* helped Dracula flee from London to Varna on his way back to the Borgo Pass.

On Friday, the first night, the Axes go directly to the Wurstelprater. Immediately, they learn that Vladislav never arrived in Vienna; he was captured by hunters. Some of Taltos's Gypsy allies fled straight for Vienna when he disappeared, but within a few nights, they gathered together enough of their band to leave. Dracula's Axes later uncover a rumor about the Arcanum arriving in town. A night or two after that, a member of the *kumpania* learns that the Arcanum agents have sought sanctuary in St. Stephen's Cathedral.

By the time the Arcanum hunters are found, the Gypsies report back to the Axes' leader, who decides to set a trap for their rivals before assaulting St. Stephen's Cathedral. Of course, the characters probably survive the ambush, forcing one of the Gangrel to flee directly to where the tome is kept. This eventually leads straight to Scene Seven, in which the characters have a chance to get revenge against a very old rival: Mitru the Hunter.

SCENE SEVEN: THE FEAST OF FEAR

Dracula's Axes are formidable adversaries, particularly because of the bestial Cainite who leads them. Several elders have hinted at events transpiring in the graveyard. By now, the mortal authorities may also be aware of sinister activities there. If the characters dispatch someone to survey the grounds, or leave a ghoul or mortal to watch, they learn of unspeakable rites performed by a coven of vampires in one of Vienna's cemeteries.

Victorian cemeteries are more than final resting places for loved ones. In this era, funereal splendor is the vogue. Some Viennese justify lifetimes of achievements by saving money for ostentatious, expensive and epic funerals at the end of it all. Masterful undertakers indulge these desires. They are also trusted to employ preventative measures to ensure that a loved one isn't buried alive. One local funeral parlor offers to attach a rope from the coffin to a brass bell hanging near the tombstone. If the doctor has made a terrible mistake, the departed may summon help at once.

Memorials are Victorian monuments to sentimentality and excess. Nineteenth-century Vienna fully indulges this vanity. The local cemeteries are swarmed on Sundays with devoted survivors leaving large bouquets for the deceased. Extensive displays of Gothic mourning follow. The most famous residents of Viennese necropoli receive visits from cults of admirers. One can judge the fame of a deceased artist by the heap of flowers left on his grave. The conspiracy also has an opportunity to pay their respects to the dead, not by leaving flowers, but by destroying their bodies to grant them final peace. Black Hand vampires have been creating enraged and starving childe and burying them deep beneath the moldering soil.

The conspiracy may devise several clever strategies to find these fledgling vampires. With Auspex, they may use Spirit's Touch on the entryway, the walls, or the grounds themselves to seek out the undead. With Animalism, they may speak to the creatures that inhabit the cemetery. With Stealth or Security, they may examine the soil or look for unusual tracks. With Necromancy, they may even choose to speak with spirits of the deceased. All such investigations lead to the same conclusion: bestial creatures are gathering in the graveyard, and if there are any fledgling vampires nearby, they are still underground.



The cemetery is huge and imposing. A scent of danger hangs in the air. Tombstones glow in the hideous moonlight. As the conspiracy skulks among the graves, the shadows whisper of peril nearby. The boughs of an oak tree creak over a neglected pauper's grave. A faint wind stirs leaves across the grass. The chains of a nearby mausoleum rattle softly with the breeze. The statue of an angel gazes down upon the Damned. The characters may notice a shovel propped irreverently against a tombstone or the decomposing bodies of slain vampires in the shadows. The same cruel wind that stirs the grass disturbs a pile of ashes.

Scattered in the darkness, the smoking body parts of deceased Cainites dissipate nearby. One of the savaged bodies twitches, decomposing to ash. The victim's body was mutilated. Four crude arrows protrude from his ribcage, just below his heart. His flesh withers away. His clothes are torn, and a tattoo identifying him as a member of the Black Hand is clearly visible. His rotting fingers are wrapped around the wooden handle of a shovel. If the conspiracy has been chased through the city before, they recognize this poor bastard. The corpse's head slowly turns... and gazes straight at the bestial figure that killed him.

The most perceptive vampire in the conspiracy sees the dim outline of a feral vampire nearby — his red eyes blaze malevolently in the night. The animal laughs a harsh throaty laugh and lumbers away. As the foul creature turns, the weapon strapped across his back looks oddly out of place. No one has relied on a yew bow for defense since the Dark Ages. If the conspiracy rushes to catch this creature, he leaps into the shadows with a surprising burst of Celerity. The dark soil of the graveyard trembles in anticipation. The ritual the Black Hand was performing isn't finished yet....

The magnitude of the conspiracy's peril is soon apparent. The earth shakes. One of the characters may notice that the graves surrounding them have been unearthed recently. The soil above them is loose, and something buried is trying to claw its way to the surface. Hours after the Black Hand pack performed its ceremony of reburial, dozens of undead bodies are rising from moldering soil of the cemetery. A clawed hand emerges from the moist earth, desperately clutching at anything nearby. Give the conspiracy an instant to react. Then surround them with undead neonates clawing their way from the grave. Frenzy roll! Difficulty 8!

Before the conspiracy can fight or flee, rotting flesh erupts from the earth. Bodies driven by a desperate hunger for blood climb from their graves. Two thoughts consume the tortured minds of these vampiric corpses as they fight their way to the surface. They must find blood as quickly as possible, and they must kill anything that gets in their way. In their fury, the victims of this mass Embrace assault the first source of vitae they can find — the members of our trapped conspiracy.

FLEDGLING GANGREL ANTITRIBU

Generation: 12th

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

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

Skills: Security 2, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Investigation 1

Disciplines: None.

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 1, Courage 1

Morality: Humanity 2

Willpower: 4

Swarm each character with three fledglings thirsting for blood. None has Disciplines. Their strength lies in numbers and the fury bestowed by frenzy. Howling for blood, they sink their teeth into the nearest character available. A fledgling who succeeds in a bite attack may drain three blood points each turn. Rejoicing at his triumph, the bestial assassin watching nearby Earth Melds into a nearby grave. A highly perceptive character (Perception + Alertness, difficulty 8) may remember the exact spot. Curiously enough, the grave has a brass bell mounted on its tombstone.

Once the conspiracy shrugs off this macabre assault, turning the tide of battle against their foes, the brass bell peals dramatically. The monster beneath the Earth is giving a signal for reinforcements. In response, a pack of Gangrel warriors, the sinister minions of Dracula's Axes, rise out of Earth Meld. The second wave of attacks begin. The pack's assault is as inevitable as death itself.

DRACULA'S GANGREL MINIONS

Generation: 10th

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

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

Skills: Security 3, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Investigation 3

Disciplines: Celerity 2, Protean 3, Obfuscate 3

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

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 5

You must carefully judge how many Gangrel reinforcements are needed for this scene. A neonate coterie should probably face one or two attackers, but if the conspiracy is experienced, feel free to conduct an epic battle in the graveyard (assuming your players enjoy combat). Either way, the Gangrel who orchestrated this macabre melee cannot resist returning to the

surface to observe it from afar. As the undead dance in the moonlight, the animal readies an arrow for his yew bow.

If the characters were present in the very first chapter of this chronicle, the monstrous Gangrel who lurks in the shadows already knows who they are. He almost destroyed them centuries ago in the dark forests of Transylvania. In Act One of *Dark Tides Rising*, he assaulted them for entering the domain of Cluj-Napoca. Now he's had seven centuries to grow stronger. From the shadows of the graveyard, a hail of arrows streaks toward the weakest characters in the conspiracy. The vengeance of Mitru the Hunter is at hand.

MITRU THE HUNTER

Clan: Gangrel

Sire: Arnulf

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1190

Apparent Age: 21

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 6, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Acting 3, Alertness 5, Athletics 5, Brawl 4, Dodge 5

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Archery 5, Melee 4, Stealth 4, Survival 4

Knowledges: Investigation 3, Occult 2

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Celerity 7, Fortitude 5, Obfuscate 5, Protean 5

Virtues: Conscience 1, Courage 5, Self-Control 2

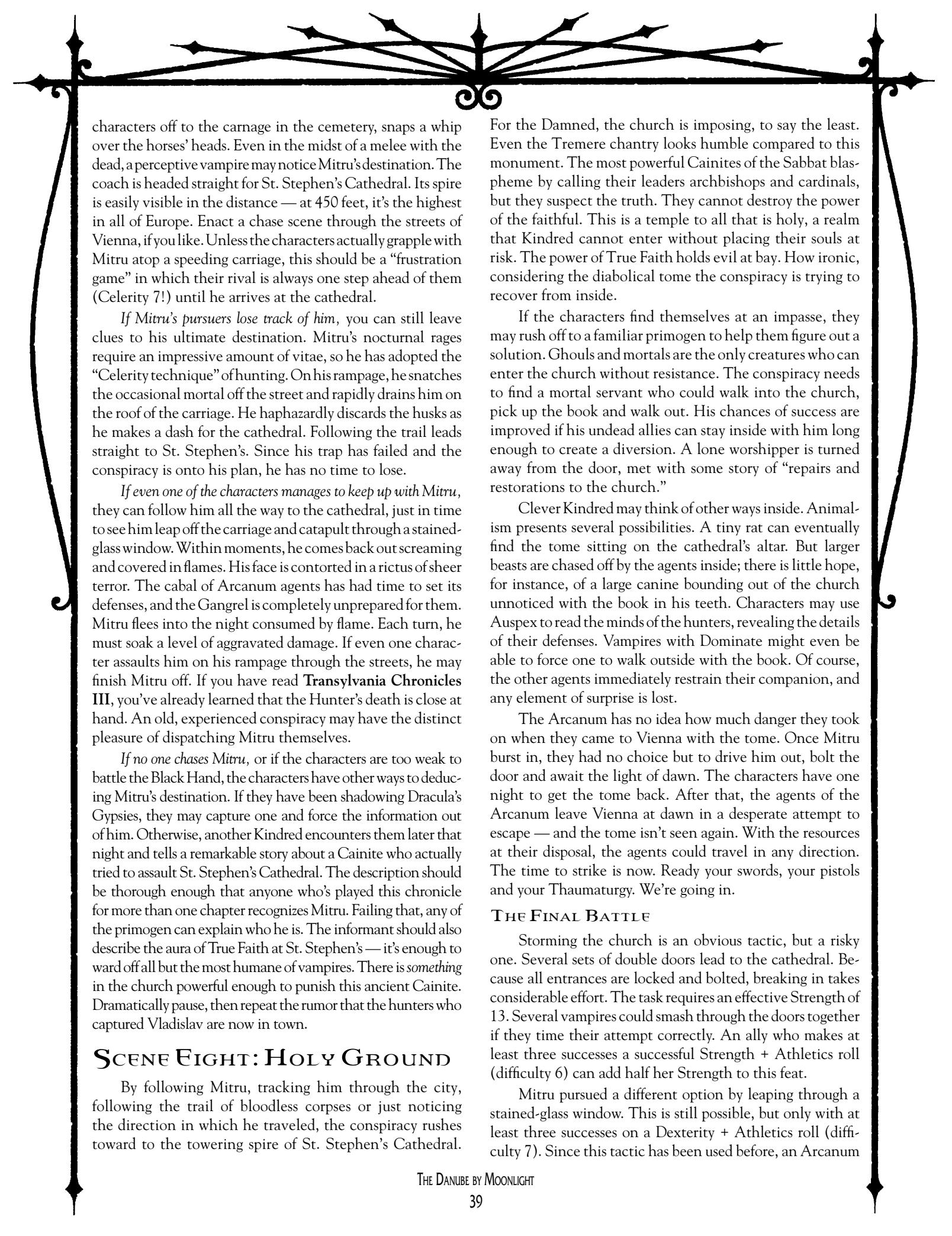
Morality: Path of the Beast 2

Willpower: 5

A bowstring sings in the night. Mitru the Hunter lurks on the periphery of the skirmish, using his command of Obfuscate to stay hidden until the time to strike. If he needs to heal, he Obfuscates again to recover before leaping back into the fray. He can also cover incredible distances between turns of combat. If the conspiracy is old and powerful, he may fire several arrows at them each round. His goal is to weaken his victims enough for the other Gangrel to finish them off.

Once he is certain of his rivals' demise, Mitru the Hunter rushes from the graveyard to rampage through the city. Most likely, he is certain that he can retrieve the tome unopposed. He has smashed the Black Hand and doomed the conspiracy. If the characters withstand his assault, on the other hand, the Hunter realizes that he cannot defeat his rivals so easily and must obtain the book now before they get any further. Either way, his task is done here. He flees into the night.

After the first few turns of combat, Mitru leaps over the wall of the cemetery, runs to a waiting carriage and speeds away. A Transylvanian Gypsy, perhaps the very one who tipped the



characters off to the carnage in the cemetery, snaps a whip over the horses' heads. Even in the midst of a melee with the dead, a perceptive vampire may notice Mitru's destination. The coach is headed straight for St. Stephen's Cathedral. Its spire is easily visible in the distance — at 450 feet, it's the highest in all of Europe. Enact a chase scene through the streets of Vienna, if you like. Unless the characters actually grapple with Mitru atop a speeding carriage, this should be a "frustration game" in which their rival is always one step ahead of them (Celerity 7!) until he arrives at the cathedral.

If Mitru's pursuers lose track of him, you can still leave clues to his ultimate destination. Mitru's nocturnal rages require an impressive amount of vitae, so he has adopted the "Celerity technique" of hunting. On his rampage, he snatches the occasional mortal off the street and rapidly drains him on the roof of the carriage. He haphazardly discards the husks as he makes a dash for the cathedral. Following the trail leads straight to St. Stephen's. Since his trap has failed and the conspiracy is onto his plan, he has no time to lose.

*If even one of the characters manages to keep up with Mitru, they can follow him all the way to the cathedral, just in time to see him leap off the carriage and catapult through a stained-glass window. Within moments, he comes back out screaming and covered in flames. His face is contorted in a rictus of sheer terror. The cabal of Arcanum agents has had time to set its defenses, and the Gangrel is completely unprepared for them. Mitru flees into the night consumed by flame. Each turn, he must soak a level of aggravated damage. If even one character assaults him on his rampage through the streets, he may finish Mitru off. If you have read **Transylvania Chronicles III**, you've already learned that the Hunter's death is close at hand. An old, experienced conspiracy may have the distinct pleasure of dispatching Mitru themselves.*

If no one chases Mitru, or if the characters are too weak to battle the Black Hand, the characters have other ways to deducing Mitru's destination. If they have been shadowing Dracula's Gypsies, they may capture one and force the information out of him. Otherwise, another Kindred encounters them later that night and tells a remarkable story about a Cainite who actually tried to assault St. Stephen's Cathedral. The description should be thorough enough that anyone who's played this chronicle for more than one chapter recognizes Mitru. Failing that, any of the primogen can explain who he is. The informant should also describe the aura of True Faith at St. Stephen's — it's enough to ward off all but the most humane of vampires. There is something in the church powerful enough to punish this ancient Cainite. Dramatically pause, then repeat the rumor that the hunters who captured Vladislav are now in town.

SCENE EIGHT: HOLY GROUND

By following Mitru, tracking him through the city, following the trail of bloodless corpses or just noticing the direction in which he traveled, the conspiracy rushes toward the towering spire of St. Stephen's Cathedral.

For the Damned, the church is imposing, to say the least. Even the Tremere chantry looks humble compared to this monument. The most powerful Cainites of the Sabbat blaspheme by calling their leaders archbishops and cardinals, but they suspect the truth. They cannot destroy the power of the faithful. This is a temple to all that is holy, a realm that Kindred cannot enter without placing their souls at risk. The power of True Faith holds evil at bay. How ironic, considering the diabolical tome the conspiracy is trying to recover from inside.

If the characters find themselves at an impasse, they may rush off to a familiar primogen to help them figure out a solution. Ghouls and mortals are the only creatures who can enter the church without resistance. The conspiracy needs to find a mortal servant who could walk into the church, pick up the book and walk out. His chances of success are improved if his undead allies can stay inside with him long enough to create a diversion. A lone worshipper is turned away from the door, met with some story of "repairs and restorations to the church."

Clever Kindred may think of other ways inside. Animalism presents several possibilities. A tiny rat can eventually find the tome sitting on the cathedral's altar. But larger beasts are chased off by the agents inside; there is little hope, for instance, of a large canine bounding out of the church unnoticed with the book in his teeth. Characters may use Auspex to read the minds of the hunters, revealing the details of their defenses. Vampires with Dominate might even be able to force one to walk outside with the book. Of course, the other agents immediately restrain their companion, and any element of surprise is lost.

The Arcanum has no idea how much danger they took on when they came to Vienna with the tome. Once Mitru burst in, they had no choice but to drive him out, bolt the door and await the light of dawn. The characters have one night to get the tome back. After that, the agents of the Arcanum leave Vienna at dawn in a desperate attempt to escape — and the tome isn't seen again. With the resources at their disposal, the agents could travel in any direction. The time to strike is now. Ready your swords, your pistols and your Thaumaturgy. We're going in.

THE FINAL BATTLE

Storming the church is an obvious tactic, but a risky one. Several sets of double doors lead to the cathedral. Because all entrances are locked and bolted, breaking in takes considerable effort. The task requires an effective Strength of 13. Several vampires could smash through the doors together if they time their attempt correctly. An ally who makes at least three successes on a successful Strength + Athletics roll (difficulty 6) can add half her Strength to this feat.

Mitru pursued a different option by leaping through a stained-glass window. This is still possible, but only with at least three successes on a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 7). Since this tactic has been used before, an Arcanum



gentleman watches the windows over the barrel of a rifle. If he obtains more successes on his Wits + Alertness roll (difficulty 6) than the leaping vampire scored on his jump, the bullets fly.

Nearby, priests pray that their sanctuary remains safe. Although none of them have True Faith, the holy ground of St. Stephen's Cathedral has seen centuries of reverent worship. Treat the entire area as though the grounds of the church itself have True Faith 1. Vampires who have Humanity 7 or greater may enter the church, but less humane vampires (or Cainites who have rejected Humanity entirely) must make Willpower rolls at difficulty 9 to walk inside. Unless a vampire scores at least one success on this roll, he cannot advance toward the altar. Instead, he is overcome with pain and his skin begins to smoke as though smote by the hand of God.

Further violence invokes further retribution: Fangs and claws are answered with pistols and swords. If a vampire frenzies on holy ground, his skin begins to burn and blacken. For each turn a rampaging vampire remains inside the church, he takes one level of aggravated damage as smoke rises from his flesh. If a vampire meets this fate, have her player roll for Rötschreck. Mitru was inhuman enough to actually burst into flames — feel free to be suitably dramatic. To those who espouse the way of the Lord, the characters are creatures of evil and must suffer accordingly!

If vampires try to sneak inside the church, Obscure, Chimerstry, Obtenebration and Quietus are obvious Disciplines to use. Don't forget that the Arcanum has recruited agents with formidable mystical abilities to aid them on their quests. Storytellers may want to add in a few of these powers to spice up the scene. Trained occultists should at least be able to make Perception + Occult rolls to spot such deception (difficulty 3 + the level of the Discipline used).

Once inside, a vampire needs 10 turns to reach the altar, and 10 to return to the door. Even Mitru, with Celerity 7, could not get there and back fast enough to evade the hunters inside. If a character picks up this book and makes it to the door without perishing, the tome is hers. If she fails, the Arcanum agents wait until dawn then flee the city, never to be seen again. If this happens, the only comfort comes from the fact that Dracula's Axes and the Black Hand failed to recover the tome as well.

SCENE NINE: MYSTERIES REVEALED

As the smoke clears, possibly from the smoldering flesh of the characters, the conspiracy finally has the tome. It is a thick, ponderous volume of yellowing parchment. Just as Nova mentioned, the cover is marked with a sigil of a star with 13 points. Each page is covered in typeset lines of academic Latin, mysterious diagrams and disturbing woodcut illustrations. The book cannot be deciphered quickly — a scholar could spend years perusing it and only gain mere hints of its real contents. Even Augustine or Aristotle de Laurent would



be overwhelmed at first. The characters have three immediate option: they may keep the book and study it themselves, ally with a scholar who can decipher it for them, or offer it as a gift to a vampire they trust. Each option has different ramifications on the chronicle.

Keeping the Tome: Everyone wants this damned book. If the conspiracy chooses to study it on its own, its members are harassed by various Kindred during the downtime between the remaining chapters of this chronicle, particularly by the Tremere and Tzimisce. If you roleplay interludes between the acts of this book, playing out a session where other vampires try to steal the *Incunabulum* is highly recommended.

Nonetheless, such tribulations have their rewards. The most important information hidden in this book involves the sigil on the cover. Further study allows an occultist to recreate a diagram correlating the lines of the sigil to a series of ley lines in Transylvania. Zelios of Clan Nosferatu has unwittingly used the castles he erected in the region to act as focal points for this energy, resulting in a pattern that can either bind Kupala or summon him. If the knowledge is put to good use, the pattern continues to bind Kupala beneath the earth until the Eighth Sign of the prophecy of Kupala is fulfilled. If this knowledge is perverted, however, an occultist can transform the pattern to one of summoning and gain control over the demon.

In previous chapters, the characters (or their sires) have reinforced this pattern by inscribing various sigils on the castles. If they can actually hold on to the book, they may deduce the significance of these wards before the final act begins. As a result, the events of the last act do not need to be explained by an outside agent, but may instead be prompted by a revelation one of the characters has while reading the book. No one passage reveals the solution to the mystery of Kupala. A scholar should expect to spend several decades in isolation studying the book to become an expert on the myth of Kupala. Just brushing up on vulgar Latin, occult mysteries and elementary Enochian to decipher it takes years. The revelation comes right before Act Three. As a side bonus, you may also justify an increase in the character's Occult or Academics Trait.

Contacting a Scholar: If the characters forged an alliance with Augustine, Aristotle or some other learned master of lore, that character begins her translation of the *Incunabulum*. Perhaps the Vienna library suffers a little, or Aristotle's latest treatise gets delayed, but the scholar reveals

all the background the characters need for Act Three. Of course, if the scholar is Tremere or Tzimisce, she might share the same information with others of her kind.

A Gift: The characters score a significant boon by offering this book to the Tremere. A century of study of the book reveals to the Warlocks the significance of the odd diagram of Eastern European ley lines. By the next act, the Tremere realize the correlation to the castles Zelios constructed throughout Transylvania. By Act Three, they decide whether they want the pattern of warding that contains Kupala to be active or broken. Do they summon the demon in an attempt to destroy the Transylvanian Tzimisce once and for all, or is the chance of advancing the Final Nights too big a price to pay?

Loyal Sabbat may choose one of the factions of the Tzimisce. Count Radu may even advance an offer for the tome on behalf of a noteworthy Transylvanian Fiend. If the Tzimisce have the tome by the end of the chronicle, they decipher the significance of the diagram after a century of study and do everything they can to reinforce the sigils of warding as best they can. If this happens, consider all the sigils on the nexus points of the pattern to be active by the beginning of Act Three.

MATURATION

One century passes between Act One and Act Two. In addition to the experience points gained from this extensive act, each character also receives as many as 15 Maturation points to reflect one hundred years of downtime. The rules and charts for this system are included in Chapter Six.

DENOUEMENT

Regardless of what the characters decide, they have certainly attracted the attention of the highest-ranking Warlocks of Clan Tremere. Faced with opposition from several factions of powerful Cainties, they have proven their ingenuity. For this reason, and others, they are contacted by Etrius himself a century later to help resolve another monumental dilemma. That, however, is another story—the next chapter of our chronicle.





CHAPTER THREE: THE ACCOUNTING

On the dark night of counting all the years,
On the dark night when months and years are numbered...
O let my name be given back to me!

— The Egyptian Book of the Dead, “He Holdeth Fast to the Memory of His Identity”

The roots of this portion of the *Transylvania Chronicles* reach far back in Cainite history. They represent much of what Clan Tremere knows concerning their transformation from mages into vampires.

At the end of the first millennium after Christ, great instability rocks the world, reweaving the very fabric of reality. Where once magic flourished, it begins to die. With its death, sorcerers dependent on magic to sustain themselves know their immortality is lost. In 1022, the wizards of House Tremere of the Order of Hermes discover what they believe is a new way to sustain themselves. The mages capture an elder Tzimisce. Under torture and with Tremere's promise that he goes free if he cooperates, the vampire tells all he knows of vampiric existence and Embraces two apprentices who failed to live up to expectations. Once the vampire does this, Tremere reneges on his promise and slays him. Goratrix, acting under Tremere's orders, experiments upon and finally slays the apprentices, creating an elixir from their vampiric blood. Tremere, Goratrix and six of Tremere's most

loyal followers partake of the elixir during a powerful ritual, intending to restore their lost immortality. Instead, they become vampires. None can say if Tremere knew what would happen or if he too was taken by surprise.

The new “clan” quickly discovers that other vampires hate them for their usurpation of the curse of Caine. The changed ones Embrace other Tremere mages, building their ranks while battling against the Tzimisce whose lands they inhabit. War between the two clans follows. The Tremere create Gargoyles from captured Tzimisce, Gangrel and Nosferatu and surround their great chantry of Ceoris with magical and mundane deathtraps to hinder their enemies. Although they secretly forge alliances with certain Blue Bloods, who see the Tremere as a tool to distract the Tzimisce and open Eastern Europe to Ventre control, the Usurpers fight most of their battles alone.

Believing that the other clans hold them in contempt because they have no Antediluvian founder, Tremere discovers that by slaying one of these potent Ancients and drinking

its blood and essence, he can inherit the creature's power. Although Etrius, rival of Goratrix, is against such a plan, he assists Tremere in locating the resting place of one of the near-mythical Antediluvians. Tremere chooses to diablerize Saulot, founder of the Salubri.

In 1133, Tremere and his seven lieutenants travel to Saulot's lightly guarded resting place and Tremere feasts upon the sleeping Antediluvian. The deed is suspiciously easy. As Tremere completes the task, Saulot's third eye in the center of his forehead opens and serenely gazes at his slayer. Though somewhat shaken, as are his lieutenants, Tremere returns to Ceoris high in the Transylvanian Mountains and continues his studies to restore the magical knowledge the Usurpers lost upon becoming vampires. Bickering between the rash Goratrix and the cautious Etrius breaks into magical warfare as Goratrix torments the other Cainite with mental assaults. Etrius barely survives. Members of the clan choose sides.

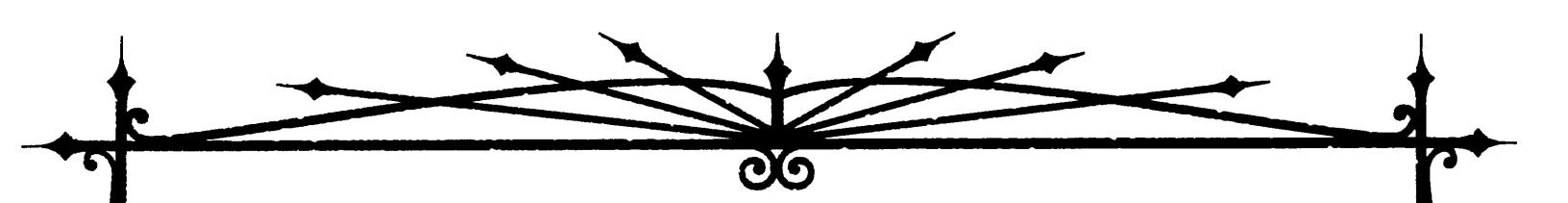
Tremere summons his lieutenants and makes plans to bring different areas of the world under the influence of the seven, incidentally separating them. Against his better instincts, Tremere sends Goratrix to France, then the most prestigious and powerful territory available. Etrius stays in Ceoris, where he becomes Tremere's guardian as the Antediluvian falls into torpor from which he rarely arises.

In 1205, Pope Innocent III calls for the Fourth Crusade to destroy the Cathars, called heretics by the Church. Angered by the Church's intrusion in France, Goratrix's agents infiltrate the Church and create dogmatic schisms inside it. His lack of subtlety leads to a full-scale Inquisition investigating mages and other supernaturals. In 1314 Goratrix goes too far, influencing Philip the Fair, King of France, to attack and all but destroy the Knights Templar in a greedy bid for treasure and power. The fall of the Templars fulfills one of the signs of Gehenna. Tremere recalls Goratrix to Ceoris to stand trial. The characters may have been among those who escorted Goratrix to that meeting. The Tremere council censures Goratrix and revokes his authority. Fearing assassination, Goratrix flees, disappearing into the eastern mountains.

Concerned for Tremere's safety, Etrius improves an older chantry in Vienna and moves the resting Antediluvian there. Rumors circulate that Tremere is changing into a white worm. Etrius denies the rumors and strengthens the wards around Tremere. Etrius works in concert with Meerlinda to help form the Camarilla. Several younger Tremere disappear in Transylvania; some time later, Etrius realizes they were not victims of the Tzimisce.

In the wake of the Anarch Revolt and the Council of Thorns, Tremere rouses from torpor long enough to assist in the ritual that curses the Assamites. He also magically brands those Tremere who do not follow the clan's dictates with a telltale sigil that only true Tremere can see. The Sabbat profit from the mystical abilities of Tremere *antitribu*. Rumors abound that the rogue Goratrix leads these "anti-Tremere."





In the 18th century, evidence comes to light proving that Goratrix has joined the Sabbat, is creating children and binding other Tremere *antitribu* to himself through Thaumaturgical oaths. Word spreads that the disgraced Tremere is creating his own faction known as House Goratrix. Most Tremere *antitribu* become a part of the house, forming a private mystical brotherhood within the Sabbat. Despite scattering into different packs, the Tremere *antitribu* seem closer to one another than any of their packmates. The Tzimisce make certain that the Tremere *antitribu* gain no real power within the Sabbat, citing their secretive ways and untrustworthiness.

Clan Tremere spreads throughout Europe and North America and attempts to gain power in Africa and Asia as well — attempts that are less than successful. Staunch supporters of the Camarilla, the Tremere maintain a web of chantries linked through various officials to the ruling Council of Seven and the main chantry in Vienna. Though the membership of the council changes over time, they remain the most powerful vampires in the clan. Due to its infrastructure, Clan Tremere becomes one of the greatest, if not the greatest, clan of the modern nights.

The millennium approaches. The signs of Gehenna are fulfilled as all that was believed is broken down and twisted into new shapes. The End Times have arrived. Tremere awakens.

THE REAL STORY

The rank-and-file Tremere (and most of the Council of Seven) are not privy to the true story behind Tremere's diablerie of Saulot and his subsequent torpor. Etrius is the only councilor to know that Tremere is two beings in one — himself and the being he intended to destroy. When Tremere first learned of diablerie and its benefits, Saulot's agents planted that knowledge for the magus to discover. When he learned of the resting place of the Antediluvian and chose to diablerize Saulot, he did so by Saulot's will. That his own death through diablerie fulfilled the first true sign of Gehenna merely added spice to the evil one's plans.

While Tremere gained power commensurate with the other Antediluvians, he had no way of knowing that the Ancient was not destroyed in the process, but moved his consciousness into the vessel of Tremere's flesh. By opening himself to the power and knowledge of Saulot, Tremere also opened himself to possession by one of the most subtle and fiendish masters of the Jihad.

Although he remained quiescent at first, Saulot insidiously worked his way into Tremere's flesh and took control of certain portions of the wizard's thoughts. Once he held the reins, Saulot exerted his will onto Tremere's actions and decisions. As Saulot has foreseen the signs of Gehenna, he has been able to orchestrate their fulfillment while remaining hidden from those who might thwart his aims. The other Antediluvians believe Saulot to be dead, slain by Tremere. Instead, Saulot found the perfect hiding place.

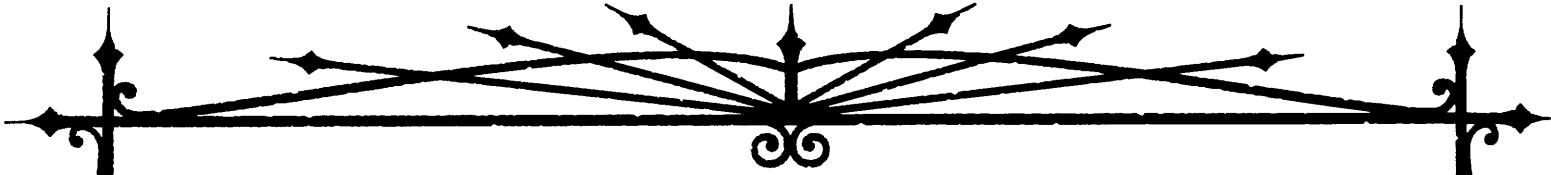
But he did not count on one factor. Saulot conceived of his plan to use Tremere, then expected to force the weaker vampire's consciousness out and take over for himself. He never expected the strength of will and purpose he found in Tremere. Rather than destroying a novice vampire, Saulot faced a centuries-old, disciplined and intelligent wizard. Tremere might be a newborn in Kindred circles, but he possessed the experience and wisdom born from long years as a powerful mage. Saulot could not overpower Tremere. Instead, he found himself bound by Tremere's will as certainly as he himself bound Tremere. For centuries they have remained locked in combat, vying for full possession of Tremere's body. One or the other has temporarily achieved dominance, but could never entirely throw off the other's influence — until now.

Using every moment when he controls his own body, Tremere has created a ritual to free himself while keeping Saulot trapped inside his body. Working with Etrius, Tremere has also discovered a way to recreate Saulot's feat and move his consciousness into Etrius. Knowing the dangers of sharing a body, he and Etrius conceived a plan to find another body capable of supporting Tremere's essence while not severely lessening the sorcerous Cainite's abilities. This means inhabiting one of his original seven councilors. Tremere has no intention of sacrificing either Etrius or Meerlinda, the only two of the original council remaining. Only one other still exists, and it is he whose body Tremere plans to take — the outcast Goratrix.

One problem: Goratrix has cast his lot with the Sabbat. He has long since overcome Tremere's influence over him. Further, part of the difficulty between Goratrix and Etrius so long ago arose from the jealousy each held for the other. Both vied for Tremere's attention and cold love. In the end, Goratrix's rashness caused his downfall. Etrius has had Tremere to himself for centuries, but now he must find Goratrix and convince his old rival to meet with him so that Tremere can make the transferal. To draw him out requires finesse, boldness, planning — and a group of trustworthy Kindred to act as go-betweens.

ACT TWO: SINS OF THE FATHERS

The scenes that introduce and conclude this act may be used as cut-scenes to add drama to your game. Cut-scenes are scenes in which the players' characters are not present and do not know what happened. They cannot use information from the cut-scenes in the game. Nevertheless, describing the scene, particularly to creepy or stirring music sets the mood for the whole game.



SCENE ONE: EXCLUSIVE INVITATION

Act Two takes place in 1998. This story assumes that the characters have experienced the events of the other three **Transylvania Chronicles**. By now, with several centuries experience, the characters are elders and possibly important movers and shakers in vampire society. They may have left Transylvania for almost anywhere in the world. Individuals might have allied with the Sabbat, the Camarilla, the anarchs or the Inconnu, or instead opted for true independence. Whether they maintained ties with one another or not doesn't matter, nor do they even need to be on friendly terms. If the players choose to portray different characters, the Storyteller may have to adjust the invitations and reasons for involvement to reflect that. Otherwise, each character receives the same invitation asking her to assist Etrius in a vitally important matter, though no details are revealed in the letter.

The characters are chosen because of their prior association with both Etrius and Goratrix. If they are loyal to the Camarilla, the characters are told they represent an official delegation for the Camarilla entrusted with this delicate encounter. If they are members of the Sabbat, they have the honor of escorting Etrius to a meeting by request of their superiors. If they are independents, a distinct possibility in the 20th century, Etrius selected them primarily because they do not espouse ties to either the Sabbat or the Camarilla. If the group consists of mixed elements, they also have been chosen because they know one another and represent different interests. Even Tzimisce characters receive the invitation despite the centuries-long feud between the two clans.

The following letters are individually addressed to each character. Choose the letter that best fits each one's political affiliations.

LETTER TO CAMARILLA CHARACTERS

Greetings,

You may remember our meeting some time in the past. At that time, your assistance proved of great benefit. Although we have not met in many years, I again ask your help. I need escorts for a journey and wish to have those with me with proven abilities. While I understand that your standing among Kindred would usually preclude accepting such a task as beneath you, this journey is of vital importance to both Clan Tremere and the Camarilla. Further, your reputation is the very reason I am contacting you with an invitation to act as one of my chosen companions for this mission. The undertaking is quite dangerous; therefore the rewards of assisting me are equally generous. Please find enclosed an itinerary and all documentation necessary for you to travel to Vienna, where I shall meet with you and discuss further terms. Transportation is via private jet and the accommodations I have arranged for you in Vienna should provide for both your safety and comfort. Should you refuse the journey after I explain more about it, you will be returned to your haven with the understand-

ing that you reveal nothing of what I have told you for one week. After that, you are free to speak with whomever you please. In any case, I shall owe you a boon merely for meeting with me and listening. Clan Tremere and the Camarilla will amply reward further assistance.

My thanks,
Etrius of Clan Tremere

LETTER TO SABBAT CHARACTERS

Greetings,

You may remember our meeting some time in the past. At that time, your assistance proved of great benefit. Although we have not met in many years and while our paths have diverged, I again ask your help. I need escorts for a journey and wish to have those with me with proven abilities. While I understand that your standing in the Sabbat would usually preclude accepting such a task, my contact with the Sabbat's upper echelon has assured me that they support both my journey and your participation. I am not currently at liberty to name the principles whose permission I sought, though that will subsequently be made clear. Further, your reputation is the very reason I am contacting you with an invitation to act as one of my chosen companions for this mission. The undertaking is quite dangerous for all of us; therefore the rewards of assisting me are equally generous. Please find enclosed an itinerary and all documentation necessary for you to travel to Vienna, where I shall meet with you and discuss further terms. Transportation is via private jet and the accommodations I have arranged for you in Vienna should provide for both your safety and comfort. Should you refuse the journey after I explain more about it, you will be returned to your haven with the understanding that you reveal nothing of what I have told you for one week. After that, you are free to speak with whomever you please. In any case, I shall owe you a boon merely for meeting with me and listening. Further assistance will be amply rewarded. I hope that you may find it within you to trust me at least far enough to speak with me.

My thanks,
Etrius of Clan Tremere

LETTER TO INDEPENDENT CHARACTERS

Use this letter for anarchs, Autarks, unaffiliated Kindred and members of independent clans and bloodlines.

Greetings,

You may remember our meeting some time in the past. At that time, your assistance proved of great benefit. Although we have not met in many years and while our paths have diverged, I again ask your help. I need escorts for a journey and wish to have those with me with proven abilities. While I understand that your status and your standing with regard to the warring sects of the Sabbat and the Camarilla would usually preclude accepting such a task, I hope that the reward I offer will entice you to meet with me. Further, your reputation is the very reason I am contacting you with an invitation to act as one of my chosen companions for this mission. The undertaking is quite dangerous for all of us; therefore the rewards of assisting me are equally generous. Please



find enclosed an itinerary and all documentation necessary for you to travel to Vienna, where I shall meet with you and discuss further terms. Transportation is via private jet and the accommodations I have arranged for you in Vienna should provide for both your safety and comfort. Should you refuse the journey after I explain more about it, you will be returned to your haven with the understanding that you reveal nothing of what I have told you for one week. After that, you are free to speak with whomever you please. In any case, I shall owe you a boon merely for meeting with me and listening. Further assistance will be amply rewarded. I hope that you may find it within you to trust me at least far enough to speak with me.

My thanks,
Etrius of Clan Tremere

ACCEPTANCE

Assuming the characters accept Etrius's invitation, travel via the jet and stay at the intended accommodations, they have no problems with customs or any other part of their entry into Austria (except dealing with the weather — see below).

Etrius plays this part straight with them. Sending private jets to fly them to Vienna, he makes certain that they fly at night and arrive before sunrise. He sends a car to take them to the accommodations he has arranged in St. Catherine Appartement-Pension, a first rate and very exclusive pension, the Viennese equivalent of a bed and breakfast. All eight rooms are permanently "rented" by the Tremere to accommodate visitors to the city and have been made proof against the sun. The staff — Dieter Einhard, his wife Mitzi, his cousin Conrad and Mitzi's sister Tilda — are all Tremere ghouls trained to overlook any irregularities in behavior unless visitors engage in activities the ghouls think the Tremere ought to know about. Etrius arranges for each character to be given one of the rooms and have sustenance waiting. He keeps a room for himself as well, though none of the staff ever enter his room due to the ward versus ghouls that surrounds the chamber.

Due to a rising storm, there is little else the characters may wish to do before sunrise except stay in their rooms or talk. They may wish to catch up on news or lay to rest any difficulties they have with one another. The characters may sleep through the day fully protected by the ghouls and meet with Etrius the following night. When they arise, Conrad, the head clerk tells the characters that a private car is coming to collect them for a meeting in approximately half an hour.

COMPLICATIONS

Naturally, nothing is as simple as it seems. While Etrius needs their guardianship during the journey, he has no intentions of telling the characters his true reason for his impending trip to America. The characters have to discover that for themselves. Further, should any character refuse to participate after learning more, Etrius does indeed allow her to leave. Although he regrets the necessity, he also puts Fortschritt to work on a ritual designed to prevent the character from

revealing what she knows. Still, even more complications arise. There's more going on than Etrius's smoke screen.

Refusing the Mission

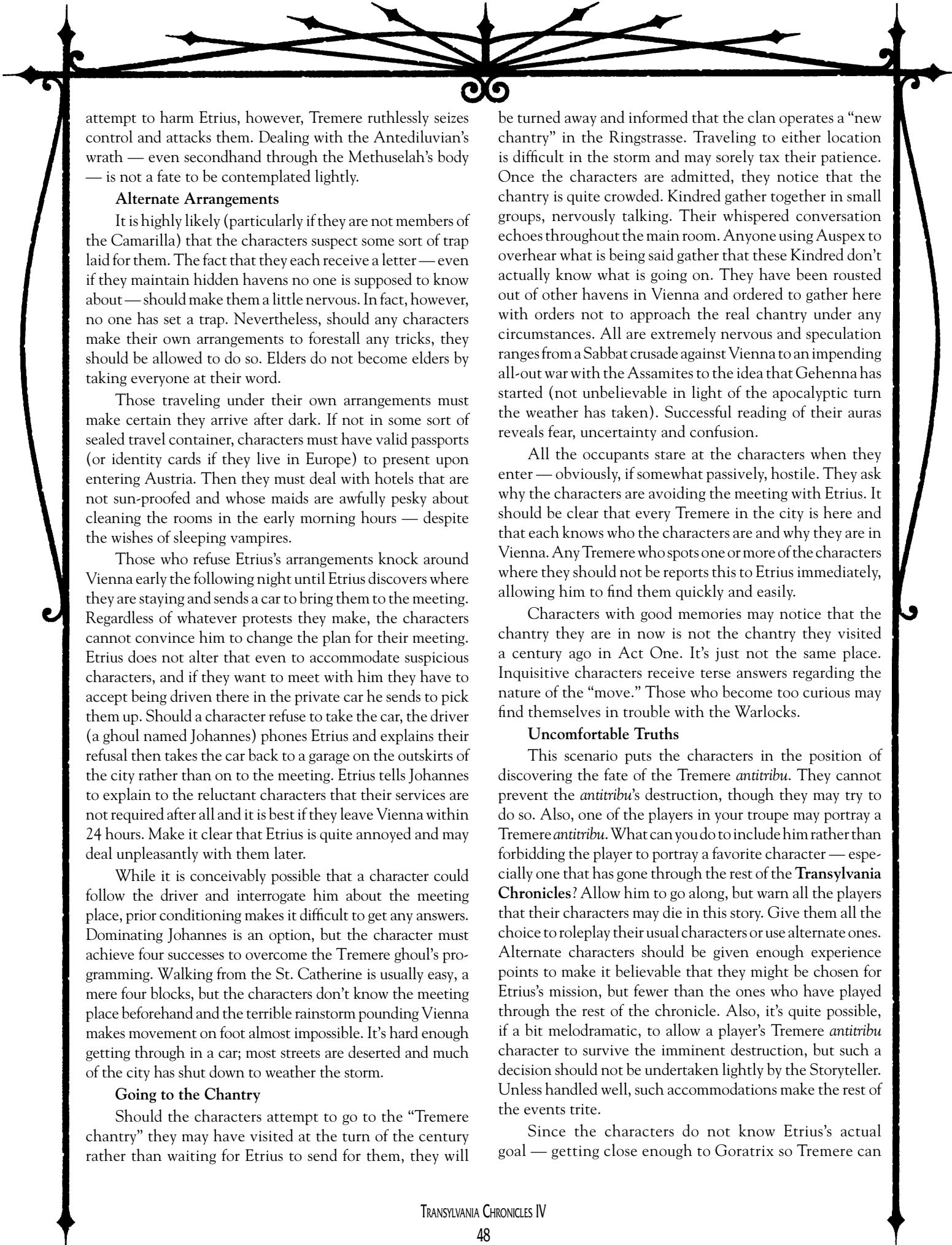
If any character refuses the invitation outright from the beginning, explain that there is no second chance to join the expedition. Refusal means the character is out of this part of the story. No one outside the conspiracy can locate Etrius and the others once they meet. Further, Etrius has plenty of ghouls and lesser Tremere to make certain his movements remain untraceable. The participants themselves are later magically prohibited from contacting anyone or betraying Etrius. Therefore, following the conspiracy to take action later is nigh impossible. Should a character manage to track Etrius for a while, the Storyteller might arrange for her to eventually make a mistake and be taken captive by those whose job it is to see that Etrius isn't followed.

Weather Difficulties

A minor complication comes in the form of a powerful storm. Although the characters' flight is uneventful, they notice gray clouds as they approach Vienna. By the time the plane arrives over the city it is raining heavily and the plane is delayed due to unmanageable runways. Sunrise looms and the characters may become nervous as they realize they might be trapped on the plane. After what seems an eternity of waiting, the plane lands — slipping and veering down the runway. The shaken characters may then disembark. The temperature is dropping precipitously and a cold wind screams around the buildings. The characters should be glad to pile into a warm car sent to take them to their lodgings. The driver stands just inside the gate for private planes at the airport. He holds a sign with each character's name on it. Baggage and customs matters are handled in a matter of moments and the conspiracy can be on its way in a luxurious, if a little old-fashioned, limousine. The storm is just the beginning, however. Everywhere they go after their arrival in Mexico later in the story, storms of one sort or another plague the characters, mirroring the terrible upheavals of nature throughout the world. Eventually, the characters may discover what these storms have to do with them — and with Gehenna.

The Etrius/Tremere Problem

The greatest complication lies within Etrius. Although the head of the Tremere council prepared himself to become the vessel for the Antediluvian's consciousness, the strain shows. Occasionally, Tremere overrides Etrius's control, shoving his devoted assistant aside and taking over. The conflicting personalities make Etrius mentally and emotionally unstable and prone to abrupt fugue states in which he freezes up until he can regain control. Further, Tremere has been a victim of uncontrollable Vicissitude for centuries and has battled the changes Saulot inflicted on his body to drive him out. Etrius is now subject to the same bodily changes that are both debilitating and excruciating. As the mission proceeds, the characters can count on Etrius less and less. Should they



attempt to harm Etrius, however, Tremere ruthlessly seizes control and attacks them. Dealing with the Antediluvian's wrath — even secondhand through the Methuselah's body — is not a fate to be contemplated lightly.

Alternate Arrangements

It is highly likely (particularly if they are not members of the Camarilla) that the characters suspect some sort of trap laid for them. The fact that they each receive a letter — even if they maintain hidden havens no one is supposed to know about — should make them a little nervous. In fact, however, no one has set a trap. Nevertheless, should any characters make their own arrangements to forestall any tricks, they should be allowed to do so. Elders do not become elders by taking everyone at their word.

Those traveling under their own arrangements must make certain they arrive after dark. If not in some sort of sealed travel container, characters must have valid passports (or identity cards if they live in Europe) to present upon entering Austria. Then they must deal with hotels that are not sun-proofed and whose maids are awfully pesky about cleaning the rooms in the early morning hours — despite the wishes of sleeping vampires.

Those who refuse Etrius's arrangements knock around Vienna early the following night until Etrius discovers where they are staying and sends a car to bring them to the meeting. Regardless of whatever protests they make, the characters cannot convince him to change the plan for their meeting. Etrius does not alter that even to accommodate suspicious characters, and if they want to meet with him they have to accept being driven there in the private car he sends to pick them up. Should a character refuse to take the car, the driver (a ghoul named Johannes) phones Etrius and explains their refusal then takes the car back to a garage on the outskirts of the city rather than on to the meeting. Etrius tells Johannes to explain to the reluctant characters that their services are not required after all and it is best if they leave Vienna within 24 hours. Make it clear that Etrius is quite annoyed and may deal unpleasantly with them later.

While it is conceivably possible that a character could follow the driver and interrogate him about the meeting place, prior conditioning makes it difficult to get any answers. Dominating Johannes is an option, but the character must achieve four successes to overcome the Tremere ghoul's programming. Walking from the St. Catherine is usually easy, a mere four blocks, but the characters don't know the meeting place beforehand and the terrible rainstorm pounding Vienna makes movement on foot almost impossible. It's hard enough getting through in a car; most streets are deserted and much of the city has shut down to weather the storm.

Going to the Chantry

Should the characters attempt to go to the "Tremere chantry" they may have visited at the turn of the century rather than waiting for Etrius to send for them, they will

be turned away and informed that the clan operates a "new chantry" in the Ringstrasse. Traveling to either location is difficult in the storm and may sorely tax their patience. Once the characters are admitted, they notice that the chantry is quite crowded. Kindred gather together in small groups, nervously talking. Their whispered conversation echoes throughout the main room. Anyone using Auspex to overhear what is being said gather that these Kindred don't actually know what is going on. They have been rousted out of other havens in Vienna and ordered to gather here with orders not to approach the real chantry under any circumstances. All are extremely nervous and speculation ranges from a Sabbat crusade against Vienna to an impending all-out war with the Assamites to the idea that Gehenna has started (not unbelievable in light of the apocalyptic turn the weather has taken). Successful reading of their auras reveals fear, uncertainty and confusion.

All the occupants stare at the characters when they enter — obviously, if somewhat passively, hostile. They ask why the characters are avoiding the meeting with Etrius. It should be clear that every Tremere in the city is here and that each knows who the characters are and why they are in Vienna. Any Tremere who spots one or more of the characters where they should not be reports this to Etrius immediately, allowing him to find them quickly and easily.

Characters with good memories may notice that the chantry they are in now is not the chantry they visited a century ago in Act One. It's just not the same place. Inquisitive characters receive terse answers regarding the nature of the "move." Those who become too curious may find themselves in trouble with the Warlocks.

Uncomfortable Truths

This scenario puts the characters in the position of discovering the fate of the Tremere *antitribu*. They cannot prevent the *antitribu*'s destruction, though they may try to do so. Also, one of the players in your troupe may portray a Tremere *antitribu*. What can you do to include him rather than forbidding the player to portray a favorite character — especially one that has gone through the rest of the *Transylvania Chronicles*? Allow him to go along, but warn all the players that their characters may die in this story. Give them all the choice to roleplay their usual characters or use alternate ones. Alternate characters should be given enough experience points to make it believable that they might be chosen for Etrius's mission, but fewer than the ones who have played through the rest of the chronicle. Also, it's quite possible, if a bit melodramatic, to allow a player's Tremere *antitribu* character to survive the imminent destruction, but such a decision should not be undertaken lightly by the Storyteller. Unless handled well, such accommodations make the rest of the events trite.

Since the characters do not know Etrius's actual goal — getting close enough to Goratrix so Tremere can

take possession of his body — it doesn't matter who accompanies him. If a player chooses to risk her Tremere *antitribu* character, the story has more significance, of course, and good play should be rewarded with a great death scene. You may have Tremere or Etrius extend one chance for the character to survive in exchange for good service — by joining the clan and agreeing to a blood bond to ensure continued cooperation. Allowing Tremere *antitribu* characters to escape the fate of their fellows without converting and becoming Camarilla Tremere is not recommended unless you relish the idea of storytelling the "last Tremere *antitribu*" — all two thousand or so of them played by every other *antitribu* fan....

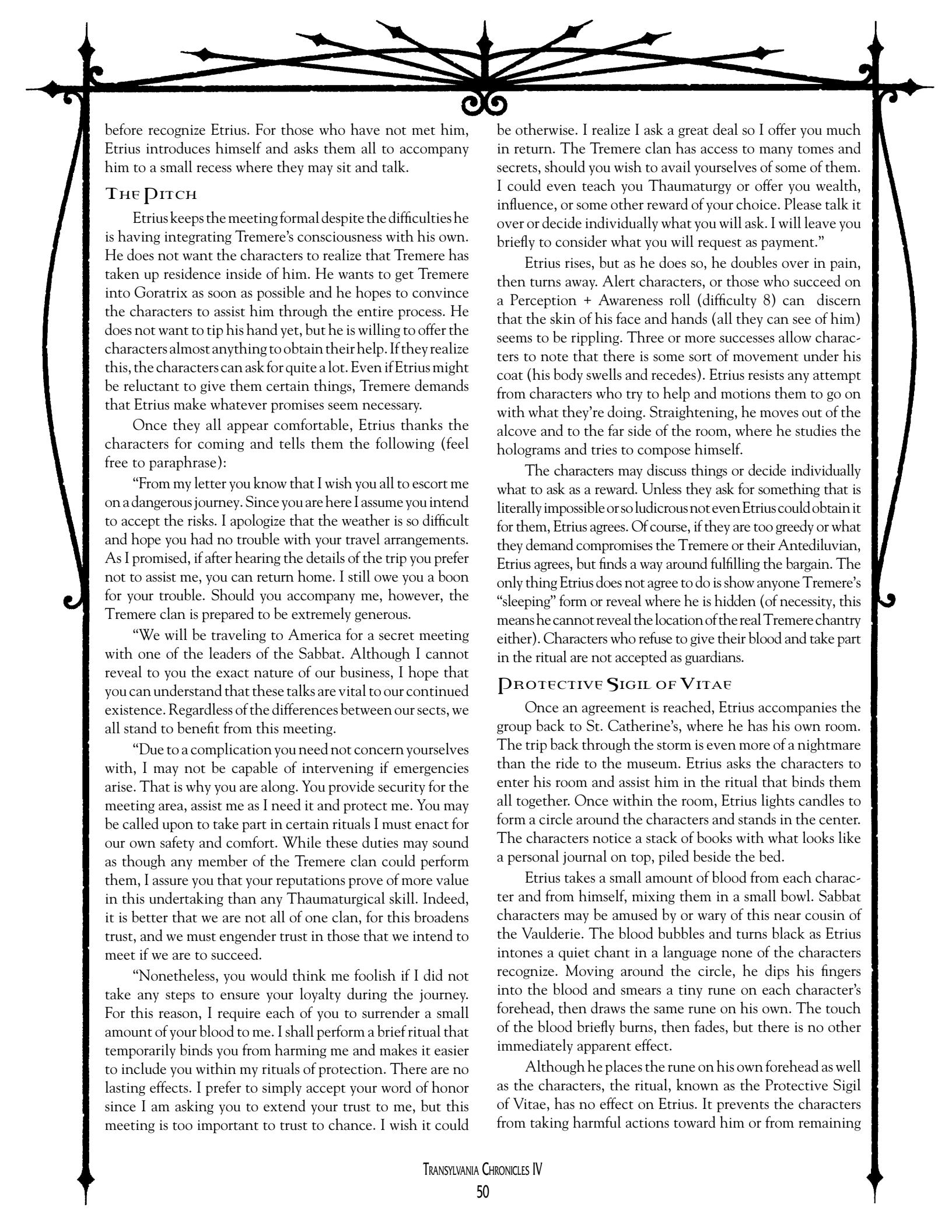
In the end, however, it's your game and your choice. Future supplements, however, assume that the Tremere *antitribu* were wiped out. You can let your troupe discover the plot, kill Etrius and Tremere and keep the *antitribu* from being destroyed — assuming they're capable of defeating an Antediluvian. (What kind of game are you *playing*?) Just make it a memorable struggle and remember that if someone diablerizes Etrius, he probably finds himself overwhelmed by Tremere, meaning the whole thing was for nothing since he's now under the Antediluvian's complete control until Tremere is allowed to take Goratrix's body. Nobody ever said dealing with Antediluvians was easy.

SCENE TWO: MEETING IN VIENNA

Assuming the characters accept the invitation and allow Johannes to drive them to the meeting, they travel four blocks to the Judisches Museum (the Jewish Museum). Even those few blocks are difficult to traverse. There are no other cars on the streets. The car slips and slides along the route, at times almost blown into buildings as it makes its way. The museum is closed, but Johannes parks the car and leads the characters inside. The characters pass through the covered courtyard on the ground floor. A huge glass cabinet etched with quotations from the Torah dominates the area. Arriving on the second floor, the characters enter a room that seems almost empty at first glance. On the wall are written the following words, a quote from Walter Benjamin, a Marxist Jew: "The past can only be seized as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again."

As they look around, the characters notice several free-standing glass panels. When viewed from the correct angle, holograms become visible, moving on the panels, showing images ranging from views of the Holocaust to pictures of modern Jewish life in the city. From among the ghostly images steps a tawny-haired man dressed in dark clothing, a long woolen coat and square-toed shoes. Those who have met him





before recognize Etrius. For those who have not met him, Etrius introduces himself and asks them all to accompany him to a small recess where they may sit and talk.

THE PITCH

Etrius keeps the meeting formal despite the difficulties he is having integrating Tremere's consciousness with his own. He does not want the characters to realize that Tremere has taken up residence inside of him. He wants to get Tremere into Goratrix as soon as possible and he hopes to convince the characters to assist him through the entire process. He does not want to tip his hand yet, but he is willing to offer the characters almost anything to obtain their help. If they realize this, the characters can ask for quite a lot. Even if Etrius might be reluctant to give them certain things, Tremere demands that Etrius make whatever promises seem necessary.

Once they all appear comfortable, Etrius thanks the characters for coming and tells them the following (feel free to paraphrase):

"From my letter you know that I wish you all to escort me on a dangerous journey. Since you are here I assume you intend to accept the risks. I apologize that the weather is so difficult and hope you had no trouble with your travel arrangements. As I promised, if after hearing the details of the trip you prefer not to assist me, you can return home. I still owe you a boon for your trouble. Should you accompany me, however, the Tremere clan is prepared to be extremely generous.

"We will be traveling to America for a secret meeting with one of the leaders of the Sabbat. Although I cannot reveal to you the exact nature of our business, I hope that you can understand that these talks are vital to our continued existence. Regardless of the differences between our sects, we all stand to benefit from this meeting.

"Due to a complication you need not concern yourselves with, I may not be capable of intervening if emergencies arise. That is why you are along. You provide security for the meeting area, assist me as I need it and protect me. You may be called upon to take part in certain rituals I must enact for our own safety and comfort. While these duties may sound as though any member of the Tremere clan could perform them, I assure you that your reputations prove of more value in this undertaking than any Thaumaturgical skill. Indeed, it is better that we are not all of one clan, for this broadens trust, and we must engender trust in those that we intend to meet if we are to succeed.

"Nonetheless, you would think me foolish if I did not take any steps to ensure your loyalty during the journey. For this reason, I require each of you to surrender a small amount of your blood to me. I shall perform a brief ritual that temporarily binds you from harming me and makes it easier to include you within my rituals of protection. There are no lasting effects. I prefer to simply accept your word of honor since I am asking you to extend your trust to me, but this meeting is too important to trust to chance. I wish it could

be otherwise. I realize I ask a great deal so I offer you much in return. The Tremere clan has access to many tomes and secrets, should you wish to avail yourselves of some of them. I could even teach you Thaumaturgy or offer you wealth, influence, or some other reward of your choice. Please talk it over or decide individually what you will ask. I will leave you briefly to consider what you will request as payment."

Etrius rises, but as he does so, he doubles over in pain, then turns away. Alert characters, or those who succeed on a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 8) can discern that the skin of his face and hands (all they can see of him) seems to be rippling. Three or more successes allow characters to note that there is some sort of movement under his coat (his body swells and recedes). Etrius resists any attempt from characters who try to help and motions them to go on with what they're doing. Straightening, he moves out of the alcove and to the far side of the room, where he studies the holograms and tries to compose himself.

The characters may discuss things or decide individually what to ask as a reward. Unless they ask for something that is literally impossible or so ludicrous not even Etrius could obtain it for them, Etrius agrees. Of course, if they are too greedy or what they demand compromises the Tremere or their Antediluvian, Etrius agrees, but finds a way around fulfilling the bargain. The only thing Etrius does not agree to do is show anyone Tremere's "sleeping" form or reveal where he is hidden (of necessity, this means he cannot reveal the location of the real Tremere chantry either). Characters who refuse to give their blood and take part in the ritual are not accepted as guardians.

PROTECTIVE SIGIL OF VITAE

Once an agreement is reached, Etrius accompanies the group back to St. Catherine's, where he has his own room. The trip back through the storm is even more of a nightmare than the ride to the museum. Etrius asks the characters to enter his room and assist him in the ritual that binds them all together. Once within the room, Etrius lights candles to form a circle around the characters and stands in the center. The characters notice a stack of books with what looks like a personal journal on top, piled beside the bed.

Etrius takes a small amount of blood from each character and from himself, mixing them in a small bowl. Sabbat characters may be amused by or wary of this near cousin of the Vaulderie. The blood bubbles and turns black as Etrius intones a quiet chant in a language none of the characters recognize. Moving around the circle, he dips his fingers into the blood and smears a tiny rune on each character's forehead, then draws the same rune on his own. The touch of the blood briefly burns, then fades, but there is no other immediately apparent effect.

Although he places the rune on his own forehead as well as the characters, the ritual, known as the Protective Sigil of Vitae, has no effect on Etrius. It prevents the characters from taking harmful actions toward him or from remaining

passive while anything or anyone else threatens him. In essence, the ritual affects the characters like a blood bond without the fawning adulation or false love. While they may not sacrifice themselves to save him, the characters should feel responsible for keeping him safe. The effects wear off in a few weeks (see below for information on breaking this effect if the characters wish to do so). After the ritual, Etrius explains that the flight to America leaves as early as possible the next evening. From this point on, the characters assume responsibility for guarding Etrius and making certain that the meeting proceeds as smoothly as possible.

SCENE THREE: SUBVERSION

Whatever the characters decide to do after the ritual, one or more of them encounters Tilda, the maid at St. Catherine's. Tilda has fallen to Saulot's subversion. Using his powers when in control of Tremere's body, Saulot reached out to Tilda, slipped into her mind and made her his puppet. Though Etrius and Tremere have curtailed much of Saulot's activity through their ritual binding, he is still able to exercise his dominance of Tilda. Saulot originally intended to have the maid slay Etrius while he slept. Now, he's more interested in discovering what Etrius has written in his private notes (and he knows Etrius well enough to understand that the Swedish Kindred *always* writes everything down). Saulot needs to make certain nothing he doesn't want known is revealed. To that end, he has instructed Tilda to find Etrius's journal in his room at St. Catherine's. The problem? She can't get in his room since it's warded against ghouls. Since she knows the characters were inside his room earlier, Saulot knows also.

At Saulot's behest, Tilda approaches the characters on behalf of her unnamed "master" asking them to enter Etrius's room and steal his journal. In return, she tells them that her "patron" promises them a significant reward — be it in knowledge, riches, influence or whatever else they desire — even guaranteed protection from the Antediluvians when they arise from torpor. She believes that her master is Tremere and that she is following his orders. Masquerading as Tremere, Saulot has told her that he wants the journals taken away from Etrius and returned to him. He has also assured her that Etrius currently lies in a deep sleep akin to torpor. Since she believes this, attempts to discover if she is lying show that she is telling the truth.

Although the room is locked, Etrius, in his exhaustion from dealing with Tremere, did not place any other wards on it. The characters can easily gain entry and grab the journal they saw during the ritual. Etrius doesn't awaken. In fact, he doesn't wake even if the characters make a concerted effort to rouse him. Their choices decide where the story goes from here. Deliberate attempts to overcome the ritual with Willpower (difficulty 9, three successes required in an extended roll) may allow them to throw off the constraints placed on them and act against Etrius. Or they might decide that protecting Etrius is in their best interest.

A NIGHT ON THE TOWN

Etrius expects the characters to remain quietly in their rooms or gather in the parlor downstairs. He claims fatigue and locks himself in his own room. What Etrius expects may not be what the characters decide to do, however. Some characters may brave the downpour to discover more of what lies behind Etrius's decision to meet with the Sabbat. If they have been to the false chantry, they have undoubtedly noticed that the Tremere appear nervous. If they have not visited that location, they may have noticed one or more watchers stationed along the route from the museum to St. Catherine's — Kindred retained to inconspicuously guard Etrius's meeting with the characters.

Should the characters decide to investigate further, they can find a younger Tremere named Annaliese. She is either in the chantry or leaving her post as a watcher since Etrius is now back in the safe house. Annaliese tells them what she knows in exchange for a promise to protect her — from *what* she isn't sure. What she *does* know is that all Tremere in Vienna have been ordered into the "showcase" chantry (she does not call it that, however, instead referring to it as the Ringstrasse chantry) and told to avoid "a certain part of town." The real chantry, Fortschritt, occupies that area. Annaliese can be induced to admit this much by apparently sympathetic characters, though she warns them that even the Tremere Council no longer goes there. She refuses to willingly guide the characters there or to accompany them, fearing what they might encounter.

If the characters insist on investigating the chantry they visited in the last act, Fortschritt, the Storyteller should confront them with wards against Kindred and every conceivable magical and mundane means of discouraging entry. The Tremere are truly serious about keeping anyone out of the chantry whom Saulot might influence or Dominate. Most intruders should die or go into torpor from massive damage just trying.

If the characters somehow make it through and reach the chamber that contains Saulot, they may fall under the ancient warlord's control. The characters must achieve three successes on a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) to avoid the overwhelming mental suggestion. If they fall under his sway, Saulot allows them to accompany Etrius in order to monitor his movements. It is up to the Storyteller whether Saulot has them interfere in Tremere's plans (thus tipping Saulot's hand). Once they are far enough from Saulot, his control slips a little more each night. If they can resist returning to Vienna for two months, the control breaks completely (after all, the warlord is not at his full power).

Although the journal holds copious notes on everything from the nightly running of the chantry to cryptic entries

on Thaumaturgy, the following excerpts should prove the most interesting:

What I have long feared is true. Tremere does not rest alone. The essence of Saulot, which I believed long extinguished, vies for supremacy within his flesh. My foreboding of so long ago seems borne out by this revelation. I dare not even think about this without some sign from Tremere that he controls his own flesh. Too often have blindly followed orders detrimental to our goals under the delusion that they came from him. The others must not know until I can determine the truth of the matter.

* * *

Kindred throughout the world will shudder in the aftermath of an Ancient's rise and demise. We have known for some time that the awakening of the Antediluvians is imminent. Even now we seek to call the clan to arms for the coming battle. We cannot assume the other Antediluvians will welcome Tremere among them. From all I have heard said, the others loved Saulot as the best among them. Although Saulot undoubtedly misled them, they are unlikely to offer quarter to the one they believe slew their brother.

Tremere—or perhaps it was Saulot—knew of the Ancient's impending fall before our astrologers told him. Is there some connection among the brood of Caine's children that one feels what another experiences? And what does it mean that so many disparate forces unite to slay the One Who Rises? Although we wield many pawns and claim many allies, if fear that we may lack enough to stand against our many enemies. Without Tremere whole and sane, we have no hope at all.

* * *

I must question whether the Ancient mentioned in the prophecy can be truly destroyed. All evidence indicates that other Ancients have met Final Death and yet know better than any other that death need not end the existence of such powerful Kindred. If Saulot could transfer his consciousness to Tremere when the master committed the Amaranth upon him, there is no reason to suppose that other Antediluvians could not—and have not—done the same. Does this mean that Lasombra and Tzimisce are not gone, but hide inside those who sought their power? If so, the Sabbat is in for a terrible surprise.

Beyond this question looms an even larger one. If, as rumor and scholarship imply, the clan founders diablerized their sires, who is to say those unbelievably powerful children of Caine did not also survive through the strategy of hiding within those who slew them? I fear that all the Gehenna scholars are wrong.

The Book of Nod tells us "And you will know these last times by the Time of Thin Blood, which will mark vampires that cannot Beget, you will know them by the Clanless, who will come to rule...."

Heretofore, everyone has assumed that the two parts of this section refer to the same populace. We know the thin-blooded exist. We have even heard some of their vaunted prophecy. But what if it is not the Caitiff who are the Clanless, but Caine's earlier children, those who existed before the clans were founded? If we fear the might of the Antediluvians, how much more powerful might their sires be? How do we fight what we cannot comprehend?

* * *

We have begun. My long guardianship gives me insight into Tremere. I can discern when he controls his own mind and body. Saulot has much to answer for. Nightly he torments Tremere, twisting his flesh into ever more horrible forms, trying to break him. Yet the master prevails. We work to free him from this intolerable torture and to trap Saulot so that his private Juhad goes no farther than the sarcophagus beneath the chantry. I draw the sigils and the ritual circles while the warlord slumbers. I prepare to perform the ritual at Tremere's command. His freedom lies within our reach, yet the risk is great to both of us.

* * *

I feel Saulot within my mind, even from so far below and through all the wards I can devise. I fought such assaults once before, when Goratrix sought to slay me. Somehow, I must continue despite the barrage. I have prepared all as Tremere commands, yet I fear what is to come. What can I expect when I accept his essence? Will he subsume me? Will there still be an Etrius?

* * *

I have made the initial contact and Myca Vukos has agreed to meet with me. He — or perhaps I should call him "it" now — can do little else in light of the imprecise nature of the prophecy and the potential gains for the Sabbat in my offer.

* * *

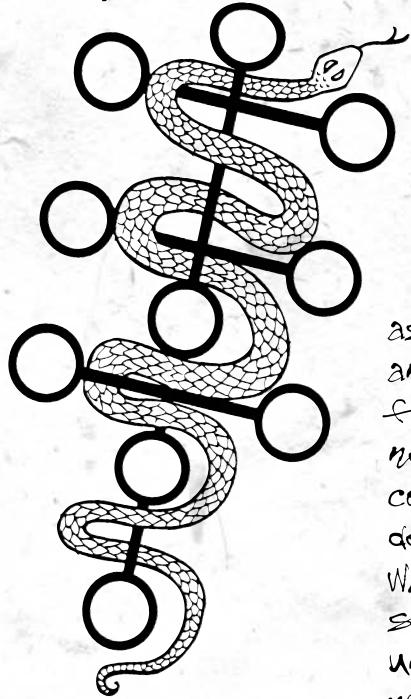
It is done. Tremere rests within me and Saulot remains within Tremere's body. I... we entwine ourselves, each struggling to allow the other a separateness I can barely maintain. His mind burns through me, overpowering, impossible to contain. Yet I must...



* * *

I have ordered all our clan to avoid the chantry and to gather at the Ringstrasse. No one must enter the chantry again until we are certain that Saulot cannot take their minds and use them to free himself. We cannot slay him, for he may transfer his essence yet again and we dare not let him escape our vigilance. I wish I could trust one of us to guard him while I am away, for I fear to leave him without watchers.

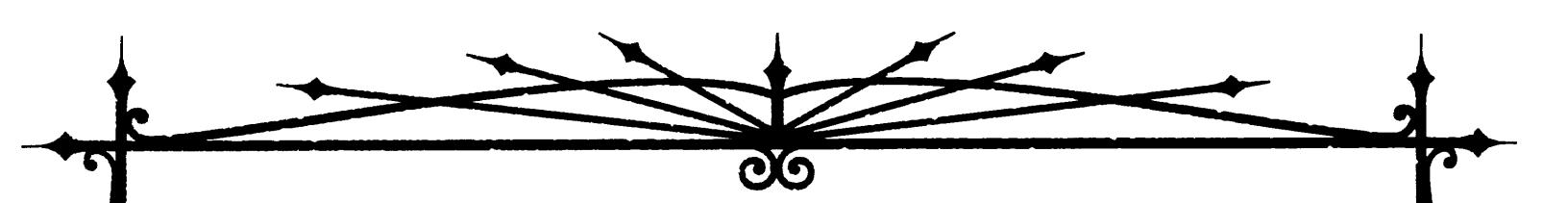
* * *



I have called upon several kindred to assist me in my cause. I know all of them, and I hope that I may trust them to aid me. I fear that they must do the preliminary negotiations for I am unable to retain control for long. I find myself slipping into deep, dream-filled sleep with little warning. When I am conscious, the pain Tremere's essence inflicts upon me is almost unbearable. I must conserve my strength or we shall not survive until the meeting, much less be able to speak and act when it comes.

Even should they prove false, I must content myself with the thought that we know far too much of value for them to kill us outright. They cannot trust that the Amaranth would provide them with the answers we have either. If they take us prisoner, no matter the bonds upon us, we can eventually escape.

All my hopes rest with the meetings that lie ahead. No matter the demands made, they must be met. Tremere's continued existence — and my own — depend on it.



The characters may read the journals or not as they choose. They need not give them to Tilda and she has no way to compel them to do so, though she implies otherwise. She doesn't have the nerve to take them while the characters sleep, nor does she pose the characters any *real* threat.

DREAMS AND REALITY

The following scenes may be used as transition vignettes to quickly move through scenes that might happen. The nightmare scene can be used at any time throughout the game, but if your troupe prefers snapshots or cut-scenes to playing through such scenes, simply ignore these and move on to Scene Four.

Nightmares

Throughout the day, the characters sleep fitfully, disturbed by the sound of screams and premonitions that the house is collapsing around them. Upon awakening, however, nothing seems wrong. Heavy raindrops continue to fall and the city remains preternaturally quiet. Characters who have the Nightmares Flaw should receive a horrific vision that incorporates imagery and allegory from Etrius's journal, giving them a sense of doom — perhaps a dizzying picture of a never-ending descent into the depths eerily lit only by candlelight or a view of a blood-soaked, bloated body along with a feeling that they themselves are trapped inside that putrid flesh and a flash of Etrius chanting and driving the stake into the character's wormlike flesh just might disturb their sleep.

Night Flight

Assuming the characters still plan to go along with the journey as presented and assuming they replaced the journal if they took it, Etrius awakes just after sunset and groggily accompanies the characters as they are driven to the airport by Johannes. The rain has stopped and though the streets are still slick, more cars are on the road and a few people move from place to place. The private jet takes off on time and there are no problems with the flight. The plane touches down hours later in Atlanta, Georgia. The flight from Vienna to the East Coast takes nine hours. As Vienna is roughly six hours ahead of the East Coast, the characters leave Vienna at approximately 10 p.m., travel for nine hours, arriving in Atlanta at 7 a.m. Vienna time, but only 1 a.m. in Atlanta.

Debarking, the characters quickly pass through a cursory customs inspection. The Storyteller should make customs difficult for any character who looks like trouble. Hartsfield Airport is notorious for its scrutiny of inbound travels from foreign countries.

A car awaits the conspiracy, this one with a young woman who identifies herself as Sonya. She welcomes them to Atlanta and explains that Etrius has set aside a house for their use while they are in town. She advises them to feed as they please — the Sabbat are present and Prince Benison has more to worry about than a few Kindred visiting for one

night. She mentions that they may feed at the airport if they are discreet. If they check, Sonya's aura seems much like a normal human with a light tinge that indicates a ghoul. She seems sincere, nervous and eager to please.

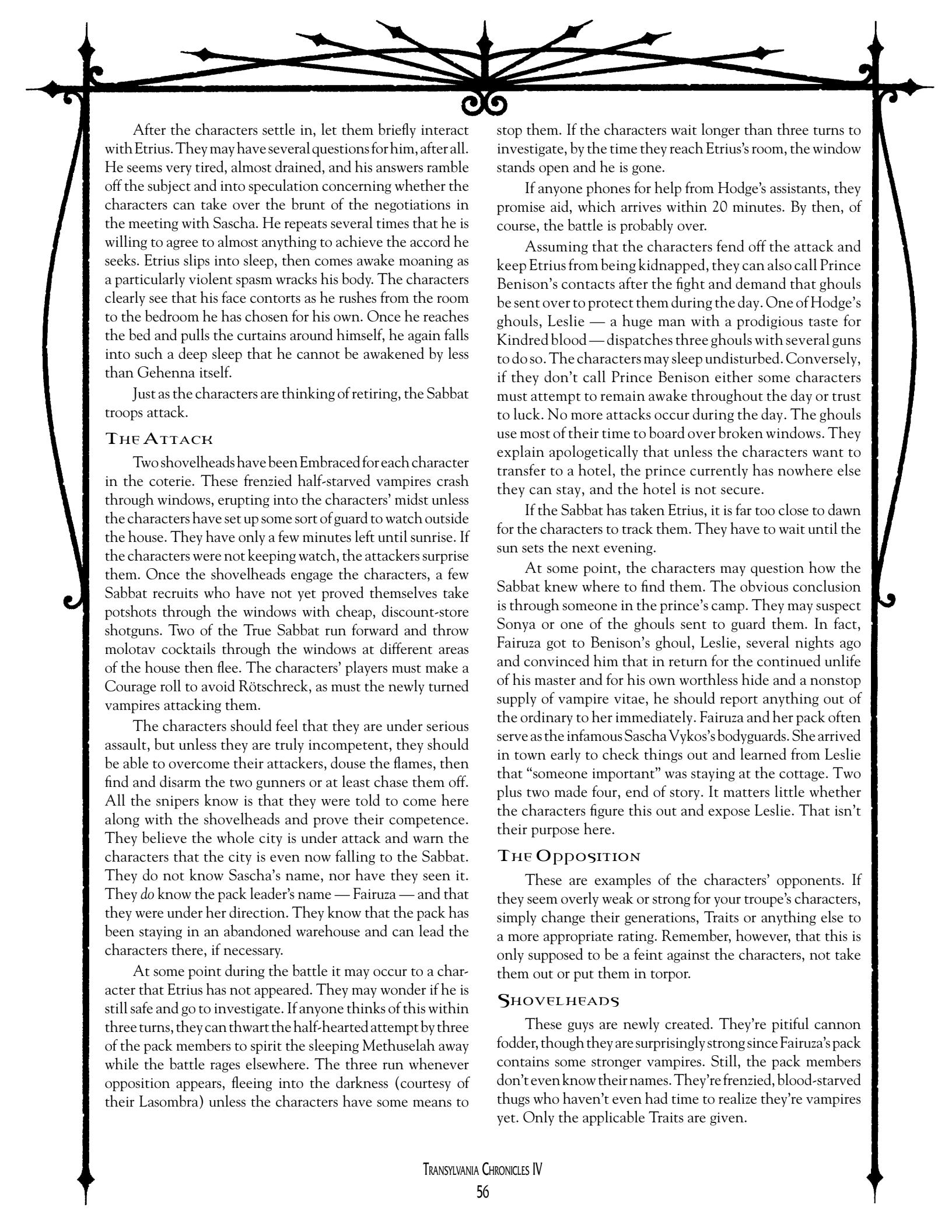
J. Benison Hodge, the Prince of Atlanta, has no idea what Etrius is doing in the city and hopes he can persuade the powerful Tremere to confide in him when they meet the following evening. The prince feels flattered that Etrius chose his city, believing that it was due to his reputation as a staunch supporter of the Camarilla.

Sonya explains that she will return tomorrow to chauffeur them in the early evening hours. Just before leaving, she hands one of the characters (the best-looking male) a cell phone and a number where Prince Benison's assistants may be reached in an emergency. It should be obvious that the prince knows who Etrius is and is taking pains to make the Tremere and his guests feel welcome. After all, a boon extended to such powerful Kindred certainly reaps benefits in the future.

SCENE FOUR: WARM WELCOME

Etrius chose to meet Sascha Vykos in Atlanta because the city boasts an international airport and is situated on the East Coast, yet it doesn't seem an obvious destination for a Tremere councilor. Unknown to Etrius, however, the city has recently become contested ground between the Camarilla and Sabbat. Wanting to know how tough Etrius's guards are so that the Sabbat keeps the upper hand, Sascha and his own bodyguards use the tense situation to stage a little test. Under cover of the tension that grips the city and using several shovelheads (newly Embraced shock troops) as cannon fodder, they attack the house to see what sort of fight the characters can muster. They don't intend for their ill-trained and weak recruits to actually win; they just want what they might face if the negotiations turn sour. Then again, if the shovelheads can overpower Etrius and his guards and take Etrius prisoner, Sascha gains the upper hand in the meeting. The enigmatic Tzimisce already feels nervous being in an ostensibly Camarilla held city and meeting Etrius again for the first time in a long while.

The house Prince Benison arranged for the characters is a small, unassuming Victorian-style cottage set behind a stone wall and a meandering garden near the edge of town. The area is large and isolated enough that odd things happening around the house attract no notice from the neighbors, yet it remains within the city and is therefore a less likely target for Lupines. It has a cozy living room, kitchen and pantry, two baths, several bedrooms and a few small rooms including one with a billiards table. There is also a basement with a concrete floor and a crawl space in the attic. Although there are several windows, each is equipped with thick, overlapping curtains and the beds all feature canopies with curtains that can be drawn around them.



After the characters settle in, let them briefly interact with Etrius. They may have several questions for him, after all. He seems very tired, almost drained, and his answers ramble off the subject and into speculation concerning whether the characters can take over the brunt of the negotiations in the meeting with Sascha. He repeats several times that he is willing to agree to almost anything to achieve the accord he seeks. Etrius slips into sleep, then comes awake moaning as a particularly violent spasm wracks his body. The characters clearly see that his face contorts as he rushes from the room to the bedroom he has chosen for his own. Once he reaches the bed and pulls the curtains around himself, he again falls into such a deep sleep that he cannot be awakened by less than Gehenna itself.

Just as the characters are thinking of retiring, the Sabbat troops attack.

THE ATTACK

Two shovelheads have been Embraced for each character in the coterie. These frenzied half-starved vampires crash through windows, erupting into the characters' midst unless the characters have set up some sort of guard to watch outside the house. They have only a few minutes left until sunrise. If the characters were not keeping watch, the attackers surprise them. Once the shovelheads engage the characters, a few Sabbat recruits who have not yet proved themselves take potshots through the windows with cheap, discount-store shotguns. Two of the True Sabbat run forward and throw molotov cocktails through the windows at different areas of the house then flee. The characters' players must make a Courage roll to avoid Rötschreck, as must the newly turned vampires attacking them.

The characters should feel that they are under serious assault, but unless they are truly incompetent, they should be able to overcome their attackers, douse the flames, then find and disarm the two gunners or at least chase them off. All the snipers know is that they were told to come here along with the shovelheads and prove their competence. They believe the whole city is under attack and warn the characters that the city is even now falling to the Sabbat. They do not know Sascha's name, nor have they seen it. They do know the pack leader's name — Fairuza — and that they were under her direction. They know that the pack has been staying in an abandoned warehouse and can lead the characters there, if necessary.

At some point during the battle it may occur to a character that Etrius has not appeared. They may wonder if he is still safe and go to investigate. If anyone thinks of this within three turns, they can thwart the half-hearted attempt by three of the pack members to spirit the sleeping Methuselah away while the battle rages elsewhere. The three run whenever opposition appears, fleeing into the darkness (courtesy of their Lasombra) unless the characters have some means to

stop them. If the characters wait longer than three turns to investigate, by the time they reach Etrius's room, the window stands open and he is gone.

If anyone phones for help from Hodge's assistants, they promise aid, which arrives within 20 minutes. By then, of course, the battle is probably over.

Assuming that the characters fend off the attack and keep Etrius from being kidnapped, they can also call Prince Benison's contacts after the fight and demand that ghouls be sent over to protect them during the day. One of Hodge's ghouls, Leslie — a huge man with a prodigious taste for Kindred blood — dispatches three ghouls with several guns to do so. The characters may sleep undisturbed. Conversely, if they don't call Prince Benison either some characters must attempt to remain awake throughout the day or trust to luck. No more attacks occur during the day. The ghouls use most of their time to board over broken windows. They explain apologetically that unless the characters want to transfer to a hotel, the prince currently has nowhere else they can stay, and the hotel is not secure.

If the Sabbat has taken Etrius, it is far too close to dawn for the characters to track them. They have to wait until the sun sets the next evening.

At some point, the characters may question how the Sabbat knew where to find them. The obvious conclusion is through someone in the prince's camp. They may suspect Sonya or one of the ghouls sent to guard them. In fact, Fairuza got to Benison's ghoul, Leslie, several nights ago and convinced him that in return for the continued unlife of his master and for his own worthless hide and a nonstop supply of vampire vitae, he should report anything out of the ordinary to her immediately. Fairuza and her pack often serve as the infamous Sascha Vykos's bodyguards. She arrived in town early to check things out and learned from Leslie that "someone important" was staying at the cottage. Two plus two made four, end of story. It matters little whether the characters figure this out and expose Leslie. That isn't their purpose here.

THE OPPPOSITION

These are examples of the characters' opponents. If they seem overly weak or strong for your troupe's characters, simply change their generations, Traits or anything else to a more appropriate rating. Remember, however, that this is only supposed to be a feint against the characters, not take them out or put them in torpor.

SHOVELHEADS

These guys are newly created. They're pitiful cannon fodder, though they are surprisingly strong since Fairuza's pack contains some stronger vampires. Still, the pack members don't even know their names. They're frenzied, blood-starved thugs who haven't even had time to realize they're vampires yet. Only the applicable Traits are given.



Clan: varies
Nature: varies
Demeanor: Bravo
Generation: 11 or 12
Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2
Talents: Alertness 1, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2
Skills: Firearms 1, Melee 2, Security 1, Stealth 2
Knowledges: Computer 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 1
Disciplines: Celerity 1, Potence 1, Fortitude 1
Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 4
Morality: Humanity 3
Willpower: 4

TWO RECRUITS

These are new members of the pack who were recently created. They call themselves Rowdy and Razor. They have begun learning about the Sabbat and now work to earn themselves a place within it. They hope to become True Sabbat by proving themselves in this battle. Only the applicable Traits are given. Other pack members should be fleshed out and named by the Storyteller.

Clan: Brujah *antitribu*
Nature: varies
Demeanor: Bravo
Generation: 9th
Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2
Talents: Alertness 1, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1
Skills: Drive 1, Firearms 3, Melee 3, Security 2, Stealth 2
Knowledges: Computer 1, Investigation 2, Law 1, Medicine 1
Disciplines: Celerity 1, Potence 1, Presence 1
Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 4
Morality: Humanity 5
Willpower: 6

THREE TRUE SABBAT

These three are proven members of Fairuza's pack. Guggenheim is a 9th generation Toreador *antitribu*, Dinaro is a 10th generation Lasombra and Flayer is a 10th generation Tzimisce. They ignore everything else going on during the attack. Their job is to kidnap Etrius. Neither Fairuza nor Sascha expects this to actually work; it's just a feint to see if Etrius recognizes that he shouldn't try to kill those that he supposedly wants to join. These three are the most surprised of the pack if they actually succeed in capturing the Methuselah. The pertinent Traits are given. Slashes indicate the different Traits for each pack member.

Clan: Toreador *antitribu*/Lasombra/Tzimisce
Nature: varies
Demeanor: varies
Generation: 9th/10th/10th
Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 3/3/2 Manipulation 2/3/2, Appearance 3/3/4
Mental: Perception 3/2/3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2/3/3
Talents: Alertness 2/1/1, Athletics 2/2/3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2/3/1
Skills: Drive 1, Firearms 3, Melee 3, Security 2, Stealth 2
Knowledges: Computer 1, Investigation 2, Law 1, Medicine 1
Disciplines: (Guggenheim) Auspex 1, Celerity 2, Presence 2 — (Dinaro) Dominate 2, Obtenebration 2 — (Flayer) Animalism 1, Auspex 1, Vicissitude 2
Virtues: Conviction 2, Instinct 2, Courage 4
Morality: Humanity 4
Willpower: 6

SCENE FIVE: PERILOUS DUTIES

If the characters stopped the attack and foiled the kidnapping, they may briefly meet with Prince Benison the following evening. The prince is apologetic about the attack and seems particularly solicitous of Etrius. For his part, Etrius seems distant, answering in monosyllables and clearly wanting to discharge this duty and get away. He declines an invitation to the theater, claiming pressing business elsewhere.

Once back at the house, Etrius dismisses the ghouls and tells the characters that they must attempt to bargain with Sascha on his behalf. If the characters tell Etrius that they know Tremere's spirit is inside him, he explains that he must conserve his strength for the next meeting — the one that this meeting precedes. He explains that it is absolutely essential for everyone's safety that no one else discover that he harbors Tremere's spirit within him. Otherwise, he simply tells them he always intended for them to assume this role since they are acting as his guards and assistants.

Etrius asks the characters to achieve every concession they can imagine so that they are all as protected as possible. At the least they must insist that they all act as his guards and make certain the Sabbat do not have more guards at the meeting than Etrius does. He adds, however, that if there are points that are obviously non-negotiable that they must give in and request some other concession to offset them. It is more important that the meeting take place than that they remain entirely safe or gain all the concessions they want.

Finally, he explains that Sascha is acting as a go-between to arrange a meeting between Etrius and Goratrix. If the characters were among those who escorted Goratrix to Ceoris long ago, they probably have memories of him — good or bad depending on their interactions with him at that time. Goratrix undoubtedly remembers *them*, which gives them a far more personal stake in the mission than they might have believed.

Near midnight, a van pulls into the driveway of the cottage. Several figures emerge and make their way toward the house. This is Fairuza's pack. There should be one member for each character. If the conspiracy captured any of the pack the night before and accuse Fairuza of breaking the truce during the meeting by attacking them, she coolly replies that the meeting wasn't until tonight. She takes any prisoners they want to return but remains unconcerned if they've been killed or handed over to Hodge. Most weren't True Sabbat and every war pack knows the consequences of capture. She dismisses further talk about it and says she has brought Sascha to meet with Etrius. If they don't want to meet, she and her pack have better things to do.

Once Fairuza is convinced the site is secure, she makes a call on her cell phone and a SUV pulls up. Sascha Vykos emerges from the vehicle and walks to the cottage.

Even if the characters have met Sascha before, if they have not seen it in a while they may not recognize the disturbingly fleshcrafted Tzimisce priscus. Its weird alien beauty is both compelling and repulsive at the same time. Keeping their minds on the negotiations rather than simply staring in fascination at Sascha may prove difficult for the characters — particularly if any are Toreador (a Willpower roll versus difficulty 7, 8 for Toreador, requiring two successes).

Sascha expects Etrius to speak with it. Etrius manages to remain in the room and nod approval of the characters' negotiations, but says little himself. Their meeting is somewhat strained. Sascha was once a promising magus of House Tremere in the Order of Hermes. Since its Embrace into the Tzimisce clan (a result of a betrayal by Goratrix, who was jealous of the young man), Sascha has considered the Tremere its enemies — mostly because of Goratrix. Now it finds itself in the ironic position of negotiating with Etrius. It mostly liked him long ago, but is now his enemy by both clan and sect. It negotiates on behalf of her old foe Goratrix who is nominally its ally since they're both Sabbat.

On the other hand, Etrius led Sascha to believe that he is here to negotiate the defection of a conspiratorial Tremere faction from the Camarilla to the Sabbat, motivated by the recent events that have caused "schisms within the house of mystery." He implied that such a move cannot be made until he meets with Goratrix to work out their centuries-long feud. Sascha dares not cause that to fall through because of personal feelings. It means too much to the Sabbat and

might fatally weaken the Camarilla, especially since the Gangrel, according to the whispers of some *antitribu*, seem perilously ready to abandon the sect as well. Etrius lied, but could think of no other bait compelling enough to force a meeting with Goratrix. He's in no shape to try anything more covert.

Etrius remains almost impossible to read through Auspex both because he maintains Thaumaturgical wards against it. Besides, he is such a master of the Discipline that he knows how to defend against such intrusions. He isn't the second most powerful Tremere in the world for nothing.

Sascha tries to bargain in such a way that it places Etrius's group at a disadvantage when they meet Goratrix. Obviously, the characters should try to counter this ploy. Whatever other concessions or agreements are reached, there are three points on which Sascha has no authority to bend. He will not agree to the meeting on Goratrix's behalf unless all three are accepted:

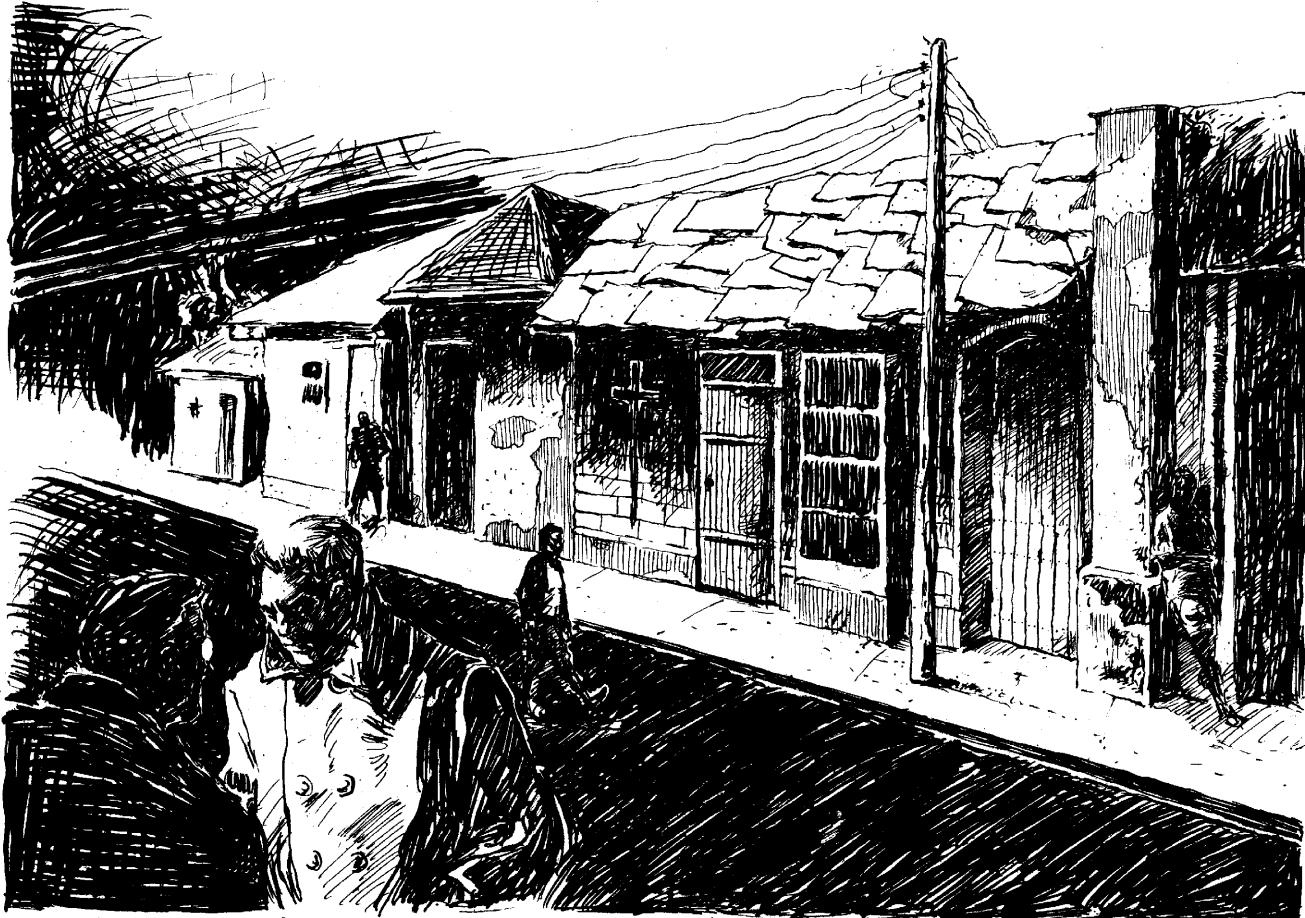
- Goratrix insists that the meeting occur in Mexico City. Sascha has already shown the good faith of the Sabbat by coming to a nominally Camarilla city to meet with Etrius. Goratrix cannot trust that this is not some sort of trap laid by the Tremere to capture him. With the meeting on his home ground, he feels more secure.

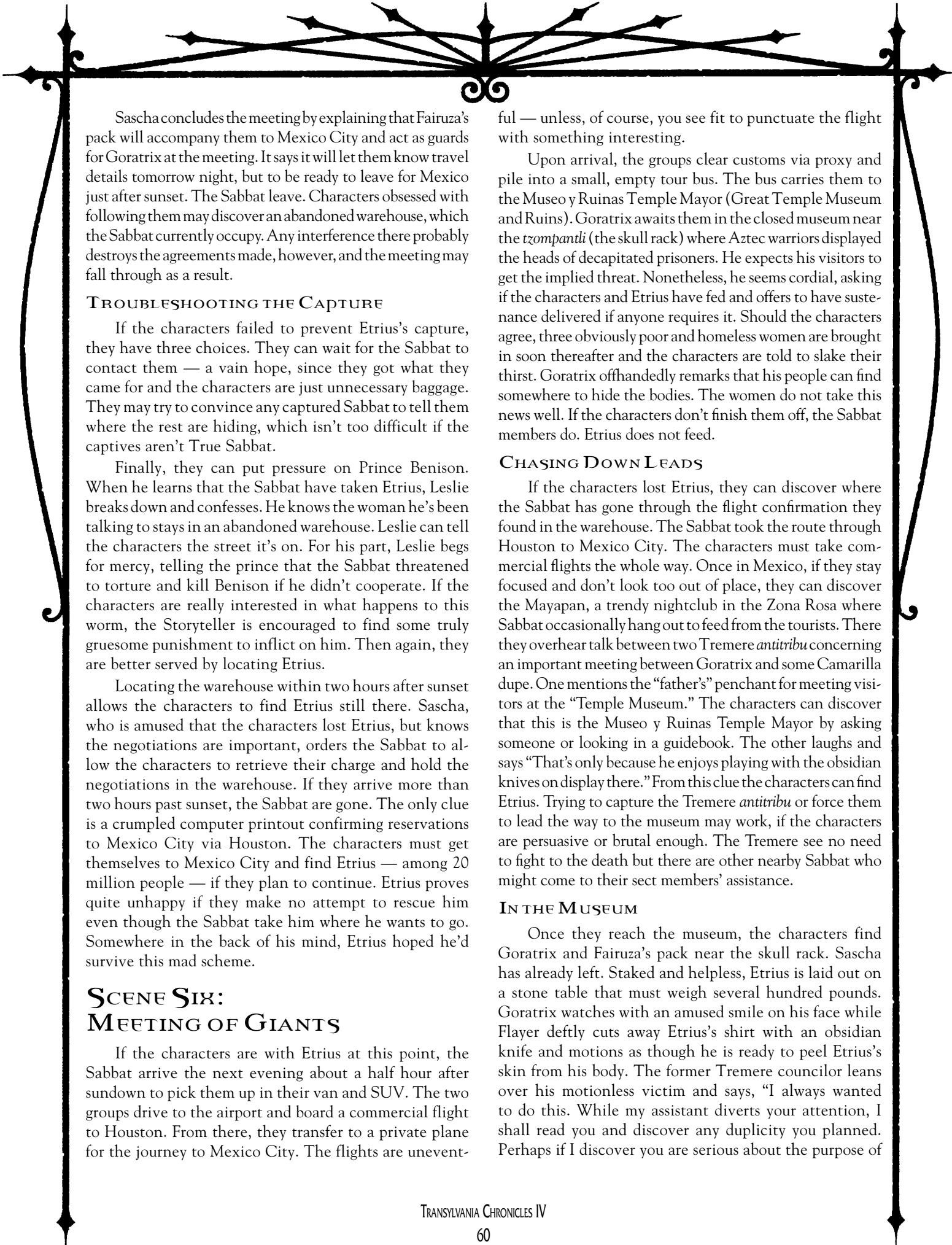
The characters can make suggestions of other sites, plead for neutral ground or whatever else they like, but Sascha doesn't budge. Eventually, if the talks bog down, Etrius agrees to this condition.

- Goratrix cannot be certain that Etrius doesn't have some sort of trick in mind. Therefore, Etrius himself must be physically restrained until the time of the meeting. He must either be bound and escorted to the meeting by the Black Hand or staked and transported.

There's some room for maneuvering here. The characters can get Sascha to agree to bind Etrius with manacles or other restraints, or they can convince Sascha to let Fairuz's pack escort him and go along themselves as guards to make certain the Sabbat doesn't harm Etrius on the way. If they get at least this much of a concession — no staking and no Black Hand — Etrius agrees.

- The characters must accompany Etrius to the meeting. Since they represent interests other than the Tremere faction, Sascha requires them to put their unives on the line deep in Sabbat territory. If any of the characters are Sabbat, they probably don't have a problem with this. Others may wonder if they were chosen *because* the thought of their demise does not greatly distress the Tremere. Funny how even elders sometimes feel expendable. Obviously, Etrius agrees to this. Now, the characters just have to do so too.





Sascha concludes the meeting by explaining that Fairuza's pack will accompany them to Mexico City and act as guards for Goratrix at the meeting. It says it will let them know travel details tomorrow night, but to be ready to leave for Mexico just after sunset. The Sabbat leave. Characters obsessed with following them may discover an abandoned warehouse, which the Sabbat currently occupy. Any interference there probably destroys the agreements made, however, and the meeting may fall through as a result.

TROUBLESHOOTING THE CAPTURE

If the characters failed to prevent Etrius's capture, they have three choices. They can wait for the Sabbat to contact them — a vain hope, since they got what they came for and the characters are just unnecessary baggage. They may try to convince any captured Sabbat to tell them where the rest are hiding, which isn't too difficult if the captives aren't True Sabbat.

Finally, they can put pressure on Prince Benison. When he learns that the Sabbat have taken Etrius, Leslie breaks down and confesses. He knows the woman he's been talking to stays in an abandoned warehouse. Leslie can tell the characters the street it's on. For his part, Leslie begs for mercy, telling the prince that the Sabbat threatened to torture and kill Benison if he didn't cooperate. If the characters are really interested in what happens to this worm, the Storyteller is encouraged to find some truly gruesome punishment to inflict on him. Then again, they are better served by locating Etrius.

Locating the warehouse within two hours after sunset allows the characters to find Etrius still there. Sascha, who is amused that the characters lost Etrius, but knows the negotiations are important, orders the Sabbat to allow the characters to retrieve their charge and hold the negotiations in the warehouse. If they arrive more than two hours past sunset, the Sabbat are gone. The only clue is a crumpled computer printout confirming reservations to Mexico City via Houston. The characters must get themselves to Mexico City and find Etrius — among 20 million people — if they plan to continue. Etrius proves quite unhappy if they make no attempt to rescue him even though the Sabbat take him where he wants to go. Somewhere in the back of his mind, Etrius hoped he'd survive this mad scheme.

SCENE SIX: MEETING OF GIANTS

If the characters are with Etrius at this point, the Sabbat arrive the next evening about a half hour after sundown to pick them up in their van and SUV. The two groups drive to the airport and board a commercial flight to Houston. From there, they transfer to a private plane for the journey to Mexico City. The flights are unevent-

ful — unless, of course, you see fit to punctuate the flight with something interesting.

Upon arrival, the groups clear customs via proxy and pile into a small, empty tour bus. The bus carries them to the Museo y Ruinas Temple Mayor (Great Temple Museum and Ruins). Goratrix awaits them in the closed museum near the *tzompantli* (the skull rack) where Aztec warriors displayed the heads of decapitated prisoners. He expects his visitors to get the implied threat. Nonetheless, he seems cordial, asking if the characters and Etrius have fed and offers to have sustenance delivered if anyone requires it. Should the characters agree, three obviously poor and homeless women are brought in soon thereafter and the characters are told to slake their thirst. Goratrix offhandedly remarks that his people can find somewhere to hide the bodies. The women do not take this news well. If the characters don't finish them off, the Sabbat members do. Etrius does not feed.

CHASING DOWN LEADS

If the characters lost Etrius, they can discover where the Sabbat has gone through the flight confirmation they found in the warehouse. The Sabbat took the route through Houston to Mexico City. The characters must take commercial flights the whole way. Once in Mexico, if they stay focused and don't look too out of place, they can discover the Mayapan, a trendy nightclub in the Zona Rosa where Sabbat occasionally hang out to feed from the tourists. There they overhear talk between two Tremere *antitribu* concerning an important meeting between Goratrix and some Camarilla dupe. One mentions the "father's" penchant for meeting visitors at the "Temple Museum." The characters can discover that this is the Museo y Ruinas Temple Mayor by asking someone or looking in a guidebook. The other laughs and says "That's only because he enjoys playing with the obsidian knives on display there." From this clue the characters can find Etrius. Trying to capture the Tremere *antitribu* or force them to lead the way to the museum may work, if the characters are persuasive or brutal enough. The Tremere see no need to fight to the death but there are other nearby Sabbat who might come to their sect members' assistance.

IN THE MUSEUM

Once they reach the museum, the characters find Goratrix and Fairuza's pack near the skull rack. Sascha has already left. Staked and helpless, Etrius is laid out on a stone table that must weigh several hundred pounds. Goratrix watches with an amused smile on his face while Flayer deftly cuts away Etrius's shirt with an obsidian knife and motions as though he is ready to peel Etrius's skin from his body. The former Tremere councilor leans over his motionless victim and says, "I always wanted to do this. While my assistant diverts your attention, I shall read you and discover any duplicity you planned. Perhaps if I discover you are serious about the purpose of



this meeting, and if you survive the night, we may even let you pathetic weaklings join the Sabbat. But you will become my slave to pay for your arrogance, in any case. I only wish I could hear your screams as Flayer works. He is such an artist."

The characters may intervene by attacking the Sabbat, who certainly aren't expecting them, or by demanding that Goratrix stop and threaten to inform his superiors in the Sabbat that he's throwing away a deal that enhances the Sabbat's power. If the characters insist that the Sabbat allow them to act as Etrius's advocates, Goratrix finds it amusing and allows them to do so. He unstakes Etrius and agrees to a private talk — within shouting distance of their guards, of course. Goratrix has always been arrogant. He doesn't believe that Etrius can offer him serious competition, especially when the Methuselah seems so weak and shaken.

PRIVATE CONSULTATION

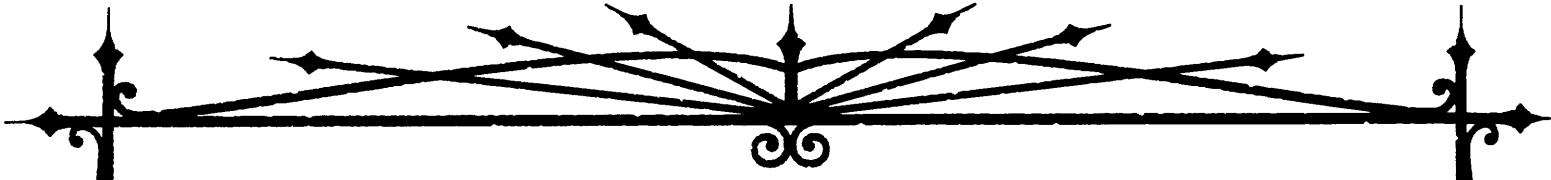
Whether they reach this point through accompanying Etrius or finding him after he's been taken by the Sabbat, the characters are now observers and guards to offset the Sabbat present. Goratrix and Etrius move away from the group — just out of the line of sight — leaving the characters to glare at Fairuza's pack or to talk with them as they see fit.

They can just hear Goratrix say, "I cannot trust you unless you freely open your mind to me and allow me to read you." Etrius says quietly, "I came prepared to do just that." They can hear the two walking off into an alcove, then silence. Several minutes later, everyone hears a hoarse scream that abruptly cuts off. Presumably, the characters and the pack both investigate.

In the room, they see Etrius on the floor, holding his head, and Goratrix standing over him, just straightening up. Blood tears bathe both their faces. Goratrix seems to shudder as if his body were racked by a powerful electrical shock. Then he turns to the group, impassive and somehow more intimidating than he was just moments before.

"He speaks the truth," Goratrix says. "We must allow him free passage from Mexico so that he may return and prepare. We have won a great victory! These others," he says pointing to the characters, "must stay here to assist me in the preparations I must make." He speaks to Fairuza, telling her and her pack to escort Etrius to the airport and let him go. Fairuza tries to argue, saying that the characters cannot be trusted. He stops her and orders her to comply. She does so, still protesting.

It's likely the characters also protest. Goratrix assures them he means no harm and that they can quite soon. If necessary, he Dominates them. If this happens, the characters do not feel just the usual compulsion, but experience something hellishly akin to their minds being wrapped in flames. Whether they like it or not, they're staying.



WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED

All the time that Tremere has been inside Etrius, they have been preparing and performing the preliminary steps to a Level 10 ritual that allows Tremere to take Goratrix's body. The final key to unlocking the ritual's power was to penetrate the *antitribu*'s mind. When Goratrix demanded that Etrius open his mind to him and opened his own so that he could access Etrius's thoughts, he opened a conduit. Tremere used that to slip inside Goratrix's body, take over after a brief struggle and expel Goratrix.

THE EXPLANATION

Once the Sabbat have left, "Goratrix" turns to the characters and thanks them for their efforts on his behalf. If they read Etrius's journal, Tremere doesn't bother with pretenses. He assumes they know that he's taken Goratrix's body and expelled the other vampire's essence. If they have not read the journal, Tremere tells them what just happened. He explains about Saulot and tells them that Goratrix and most of the Tremere *antitribu* have fallen too far out of line with the original House Tremere's purpose to be of any use to him. He asks for the characters' help in wiping them out. If there are Sabbat among the characters he appeals to them with the argument that they are slaying selfish, rogue elements who corrupt the Sabbat for their own whims. He gives Tremere *antitribu* in the conspiracy one chance to survive. They must swear allegiance to Tremere and agree to a blood bond. Tremere immediately slays those who do not agree to help him. This is far too dangerous to trust another Kindred to keep her silence. If they help him kill the *antitribu*, however, they implicate themselves and become subject to the penalty the Sabbat inflicts on anyone who murders their members.

Characters may pretend to agree and secretly intend to slip away. Tremere sees through their stratagems as if looking through clear glass. They either assist him or die. Smart characters recognize the futility of refusing and hope that events transpire to free them. Then again, some characters probably jump at the chance to off the Tremere *antitribu*.

For now, Tremere wants the characters to accompany him to a place he knows of from ripping the knowledge from Goratrix's mind. He explains that it is a college of magic where Tremere *antitribu* are taught thaumaturgy. The characters help him prepare the area for the great ritual in which he slays the *antitribu*.

CONCERNING GORATRIX

Tremere doesn't think that Goratrix could possibly know how to move to another body. After all, only an Antediluvian could perform such a powerful (Level 10) ritual. He assumes his rebellious one-time apprentice is now dead. Truly evil Storytellers might consider whether there could be any Giovanni nearby who might capture his disembodied spirit and use it against Tremere later....

SCENE SEVEN: SUMMONS IN MEXICO

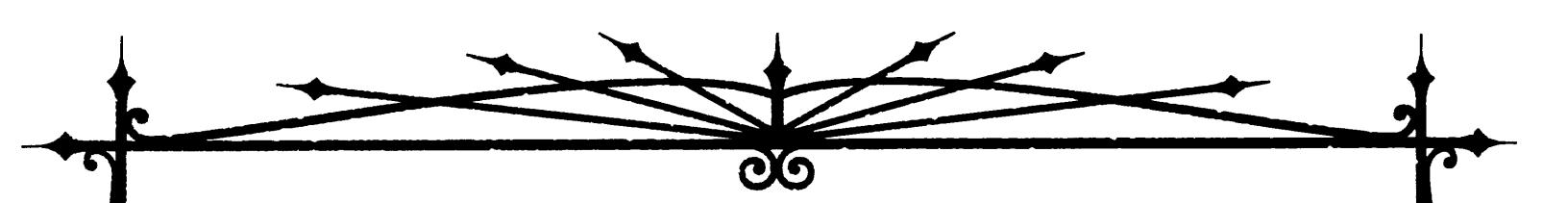
The Universidad del Tercer Círculo del Serpiente Dorado lies buried a quarter mile below the ground on the outskirts of Mexico City. Within a ruined access tunnel of the sewer lies the hidden entryway. Warded against intrusion, the entry leads to a long series of stairs and ledges beneath the streets of the city, leading ever downward. With the correct Thaumaturgical ritual, the Tremere *antitribu* need no external light source. Tremere knows all the passwords, gestures of negation and all the rituals Goratrix knew.

Beyond the stairs lies a vestibule where a great white alligator makes her nest. The *antitribu* and any with them pass unmolested. Behind a gilded doorway lies the chantry, several rooms with ancient tomes and magical paraphernalia, small areas obviously used by individuals as sanctums, and a large room with a vaulted ceiling hosts a conclave of the Tremere *antitribu*.

Over the next few weeks Tremere (as Goratrix) forbids any other *antitribu* from coming to the chantry, explaining that he is preparing an important ritual to give all the *antitribu* the power to withstand the terrible wrath of the Antediluvians. If your troupe enjoys night-to-night detailed play, they may busy themselves during these weeks: buying up a great deal of the purest silver they can find, helping to forge rings from it, assisting in inscribing small sigils into the rings and aiding Tremere in drawing an enormous circle of power in the conclave room. They also sprinkle some sort of powder over the few volumes that Tremere does not pull off the shelves to keep. They may also feed with reckless abandon — Mexico City teems with the largest population of any city on Earth.

At some point, Tremere leaves them for several hours and returns later looking more vigorous than he has since taking Goratrix's body. If the characters have cultivated any informants in Mexico City, they can learn that Fairuza's pack has disappeared. (Tremere had to find sustenance somewhere and the pack was becoming annoying trying to learn what "Goratrix" was up to). Should any of the characters take this opportunity to escape, wards and traps may dissuade her. If she flees outside the chantry with escape on her mind, she begins to feel excessively warm. The feeling intensifies over the next minute or so, until she feels as though she is about to burst into flame. If she does not turn back, she spontaneously combusts and is immolated in seconds.

Tremere arranges for the ritual to take place on the same night as a huge Sabbat rally where the reactionary vampire band Solange and Sabotage is playing. He reasons that every Sabbat in the city is otherwise occupied, leaving him free to perform the ritual undisturbed.



The characters and Tremere himself dress in deeply cowled robes. Each of the characters holds an unsheathed, blunted sword. As the Tremere *antitribu* enter, each is handed a silver ring and told to don it when instructed during the ritual. Once all are in the vaulted room, "Goratrix" directs them to stand in a circle. He asks the characters to take up positions surrounding them with their swords pointed outward to guard them from intrusion.

Tremere begins a chant, taken up by all the participants. Individual characters receive instructions to do the following: lay down their swords, light incense in several burners along the walls, anoint each *antitribu* with scented oil on her forehead (approximately where Saulot's third eye would be), then step behind each participant and murmur a specific mystical syllable. All the while Tremere remains at the center of the circle. About an hour into the proceedings, he commands the *antitribu* to don their rings. Each does so and becomes rooted to the spot as if staked and paralyzed. The characters see the panic in the participants' eyes. A palpable aura of terror arises as some enormous power spreads throughout the room and outward to the other chambers in the chantry. To continue with the ritual, some characters may have to succeed on a Conscience/Conviction roll or lose one point from their Humanity or Path rating for callously assisting the *antitribu*'s destruction.

Tremere commands the characters again take up their swords and step into the center of the circle with him. He instructs them to point the blades outward. Once they are in position, he screams out several words in a guttural language so harsh it doesn't even sound like a human tongue. The air seems to vibrate. Starting from the outermost chamber, the chantry explodes into white-hot flame. The conflagration rushes inward to the circle of paralyzed *antitribu*, instantly consuming them, leaving only columns of gray and white ash in human shape behind. If any are touched, the column crumbles into ash, leaving a charred silver circle to fall to the floor with a tiny ringing sound.

During the firestorm, the characters must succeed on a Courage roll (difficulty 9) to avoid Rötschreck. If a character drops her sword and runs out of the circle, she takes aggravated damage equal to direct sunlight for eight turns while she attempts to escape. By remaining in the circle, she is subject to only three turns of damage. If she remains within the circle and continues holding the sword, the fire leaves her unharmed. Characters who succeed in their Courage rolls may assist those who don't and attempt to keep them within the circle's protection.

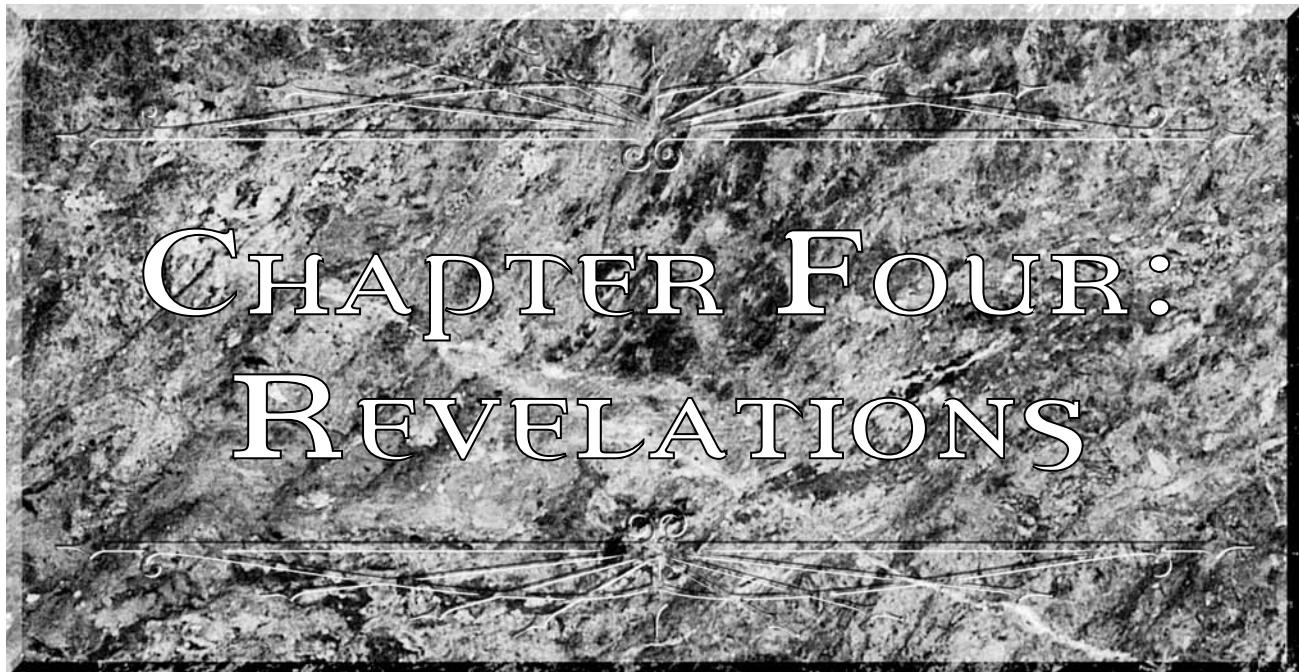
EPilogue

After the firestorm, Tremere releases the characters after warning them that he has a long reach and any betrayal of what they know may cause him to rethink his leniency in setting them free. Etrius arranges for their transportation out of Mexico to anywhere they wish to go. Before they leave, Tremere tells them to contact Etrius to claim whatever reward they were promised. Any characters who acted in Tremere's interests throughout the journey may be recognized as allies of the Tremere with the right to call upon the clan for minor boons in addition to their other rewards. Then again, being an ally goes both ways....

AFTERMATH

Tall and dark, unburdened of another's consciousness for the first time in centuries, he opened the three locks on the lower chamber's door. Waving his hand in a complex pattern, Tremere swept aside the wards barring him entry and stepped into the chamber. He could feel it even before entering. The air of the tomb eddied around him, swirling dust about his feet as he stared at the sarcophagus in which he'd spent much of his unlife. Empty. The great ebony stake lay snapped in half, its silvery runes twisted and blackened. As if from a great distance, he heard the warlord laughing.





CHAPTER FOUR: REVELATIONS

*Behold, he cometh with clouds;
and every eye shall see him,
and they also which pierced him:
and all kindreds of the earth shall
wail because of him.*

— Revelation 1:7

The scenes that introduce and conclude this scenario may be used as cut-scenes to add drama to your game. Cut-scenes are described in Chapter Three. Should the Storyteller wish to do so, these scenes add a note of familiarity later in the game when the characters meet Ying Lei.

PRELIMINARY CUT-SCENE: THE APPRENTICE

Ying Lei kneels at the side of the dais, head respectfully bowed. Having finished his part of the ritual, he listens to his master Lun Meng's sonorous chant, following the gestures in his mind without having to see them. As the Honorable Master rises to place a jade stone in its intended receptacle, the temple bells erupt in sudden clamor. Overpoweringly loud, discordant and startling, the great bells howl, though no hands beat upon them. Lun Meng, momentarily unnerved, drops the small oblong jade. In the sudden silence, it clacks across the dais and falls next to the equally surprised apprentice.

“Master?”

As if emerging from a long dream, Lun Meng looks down at his favorite pupil. “He is free,” the ancient geomancer whispers, “Our waiting is at an end.”

Turning to the elaborately carved cabinets behind him, Lun Meng produces a small key. He unlocks one cabinet and reaches inside. He takes out a small silken bundle and a letter. He presents them to Ying Lei.

“I cannot go. You must serve in my place. We have long sought the source poisoning our Dragon Lines. From this letter that the Western sorcerer sent for you, we now know. Take this jade amulet. Go to the sorcerer and help him destroy this web he speaks of. Remember that you have few allies outside the Middle Kingdom. You must make new ones to serve our purposes if you can. The amulet can be used to shield you — though for a few moments only — from the sun. Once used, its power is gone, so do not waste it.

“When you have destroyed the corruption threatening us, you must search for the great betrayer. From the bells, we know he has risen and no longer hides himself within another. Find him, but do not confront him for his power is great. Mark his passing and return to us. Even now our brethren bring our vision to the barbarian westerners. Soon, we shall be mighty enough to challenge them and cleanse the earth of their kind. Go, with my blessings.”

Taking the amulet and the letter, Ying Lei bows and leaves, eyes shining with the lure of the hunt.



DRAWING THE THREADS TOGETHER

Many plot lines converge here in the final act of the **Transylvania Chronicles**, weaving together the tapestry of the many events that shaped the characters' unives. The story is not intended to tie up every loose end or answer every question. Instead, it ends some stories while beginning new ones. The world the characters once knew is gone, even in Transylvania. What was once a backward, superstitious place now sports an ugly modernism ushered in by deposed dictator Nicolai Ceaușescu.

Ceaușescu insisted on having his own nuclear power station for his renovated capital. In Romania, though, things never go quite as intended. From the first, the workmanship proved unbelievably shoddy. The station had to be almost totally rebuilt between 1989 and 1996, when one reactor finally went on-line. Since then, cost cuts and the breakup of the Soviet Union have precluded the country from continuing adequate maintenance measures on the facility, leaving it vulnerable to accidents like the one at Chernobyl.

Another's hand moved alongside Ceaușescu's in the building of the power station, constructing something far more sinister. The characters may learn this the hard way. Despite its modern flavor, Romania still has cause to fear — not the monsters of old but the new ones that stalk the night beneath its nuclear-powered streetlights.

Kindred capable of surviving the modern nights must be both resourceful and strong. In their hundreds of years, the characters have proven themselves. Now Gehenna is here, and the final signs of Kupala are not far away. Some scholars of the Final Nights claim that the signs speak only of difficulties for the Kindred of Transylvania. Others say these are the true signs of Gehenna, that those given in the *Book of Nod* are lies propagated by Saulot to disguise his part in the Jyhad. A few — like Lucita, and perhaps the characters — believe that all the prophecies have some significance.

STORY BACKGROUNDS

Although separated by centuries, the events of the following stories converge, meeting in the forgotten corner of the world known as Transylvania. The players have not known it until now, but the part they played in building the geomantic web marks them as a part of the Ancient Nosferatu's story. The first of these tales may be presented to players as a cut-scene, bringing greater insight into their experience of the **Transylvania Chronicles**.

A TALE OF LOVE AND LOSS

In an epoch before there existed a need for time, two lovers were drawn together by one another's beauty. One



thing marred their love — his obsession with being the most beautiful creature on Earth. His face was marred by only the tiniest flaw, a hardly noticeable scratch. To him, this infinitesimal mark barred him from the perfection he sought. His sire had caused it when she Embraced him. His lover found him entrancing despite the minute flaw, but he could not rest easily. He plotted revenge against his sire, achieving it when he fooled his grandfather into traveling away from home. While he was gone, the beautiful one convinced his brethren — including his beloved — to kill their sires. Thus did he punish his sire for maiming him.

When his grandfather returned and learned what his vain grandson had done, he called him forth and cursed him, blasting his grandchild's face and shape to monstrous ugliness. The most beautiful became the most hideous. As he harbored in his heart only vanity and bestial hatred, so he must wear his feelings upon his outer form. Wailing for his lost beauty, the one called Nosferatu fled from Caine.

As he ran, he encountered his love. She recoiled from him in horror as he tried to profess his love for her. He cursed her name then, vowing to destroy her as he had been destroyed by Caine's curse. From that night onward, Nosferatu has worked in secret, hiding his face and his intentions, resting beneath the unforgiving earth — awaiting the time when he can call down a rain of fire and destruction on his lost love, Toreador.

REMEMBRANCES OF THINGS PAST

Not so long ago, yet long enough that the characters may have forgotten many details, they were sent to rebuild a fortress in Tihuta Pass. There they found the first of several ancient writings that called into question Saulot's reputation as a gentle scholar and healer. Those who knew of Saulot believe him long extinguished, slain and diablerized by Tremere. The characters now know the truth of the matter. Further, they may have spread news of this to others, though most prove reluctant to listen or believe. The characters may even have become part of or founded a Gehenna cult using the writings as a basis for their investigations.

The characters also met a crazed prophet named Octavio, who told them about his visions of a great Slavic demon called Kupala. Octavio's pronouncements of the signs of the demon's rising have followed the characters throughout most of their unives. Octavio surrendered his existence — and his visions — to Anatole. The portents seen by both Octavio and Anatole reflect turning points in Kindred history, events in which the characters have taken part. The conspiracy then met Anatole and Lucita at the site of the fortress and first heard that mad Malkavian's prophecies regarding the part they would play in the unfolding of the signs. Their association with Anatole and Lucita has benefited the characters time and again.

Two other unives became entwined with the characters because of the building of the fortress: Myca (now Sascha) Vykos and the enigmatic master builder Zelios. Their association with Sascha repeatedly brought them into contact with the Tremere. On one such occasion, they may have acquired a set of ivory tablets they were unable to translate. Since this was a time in which few people were literate, much less capable of translating foreign tongues, the characters had no way to know the tablets were written in proto-Chinese characters. They have never been translated and the characters may have lost track of them long since. Several times during their unives, the characters interacted with the Tremere, but depending on the circumstances arising from their latest venture, they may believe their association with that clan has ended — or that the Tremere owe them a boon.

Working with Zelios, the group traveled to several locations around Transylvania, helping to incise sigils and runes into castle walls and foundations. These serve as anchor points for a geomantic web, a mystical containment Zelios believed was meant to keep the demon Kupala from rising. Zelios has by the beginning of Act Three met Final Death, and Vlad Dracula has weakened the web, but it still remains.

Now that web grows ever larger and focuses its power on a tiny area of Romania. The web has grown so strained that it is about to snap, releasing Kupala and fulfilling a sign of Gehenna. The characters must once again try to avert the worst effects of the End Times.

Naturally, nothing is ever as it seems. A new player, or rather, an old one, whose undead hand remained unseen until now, enters the game. The web's true master, the Nosferatu Antediluvian who inspired Zelios to construct the geomantic structure hundreds of years ago, finally seeks to use it to destroy the Toreador Antediluvian. He attempts to use the web's power to launch a battery of nuclear missiles against New York City. These not only carry nuclear warheads but are equipped with special burst capsules designed to fire off toward separate destinations before the missiles hit. They carry biological weapons. This plague, intended to wipe out any survivors of the blast and to spread sickness far beyond the radius reached by the bomb, is carried in the blood and infects vampires as well.

In these strange modern times, however, even the plans of Antediluvians go awry. If Nosferatu succeeds in loosing the missiles, it doesn't harm his Toreador counterpart. She doesn't reside in New York. Ironically, as the web originates in Transylvania, homeland of the Tzimisce clan, Nosferatu's destructive ire falls on Tzimisce himself, who supposedly lies beneath the sewers of Manhattan.

Further, an even more powerful force plays with Nosferatu, redirecting some of the missiles toward Beijing. Saulot hopes to provoke war between East and West, wiping out most of his competitors and annihilating the Kuei-jin who might know enough to destroy him. Thus, even the Antediluvians find themselves used as pawns in others' games.

NUCLEAR MISSILES! BIOLOGICAL WARFARE! ANTEDILUVIANS!

Relax.

The **Transylvania Chronicles** have grown in scope, as have the characters within them. What started off as a minor series of personal vendettas has become a sweeping, global affair.

Such is the Jyhad. Eight centuries ago, who among the characters could have realized that by simply building the castle in Tihuta Pass, they actually set in motion one of the boldest moves the Jyhad has ever seen? This is a moment for the Storyteller to smile fiendishly and let the irony of their characters' actions overtake the players.

If the outcomes of this ploy in the Jyhad seem a bit too severe or epic, bear in mind that they're not intended to happen. In the nights when Nosferatu conceived the ruse, magic still had a place in the world. Over the intervening centuries, the world has become much more secular and largely refuses to accept the presence of ancient geomantic webs and vampires.

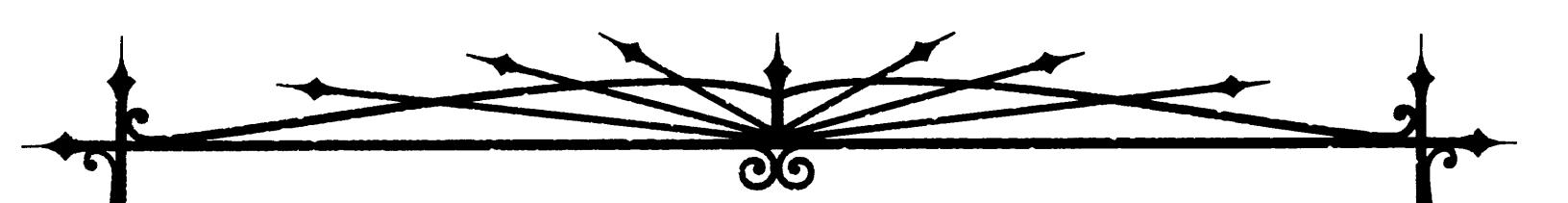
Still, such things exist in the World of Darkness. Until the night of Gehenna itself, fire doesn't rain from the heavens nor do tides of blood drown cities. The ancient magic still works, but it works within the parameters of the modern world. Instead of a mystic conflagration, science has given us nuclear weapons. Plagues are not caused by vengeful sorcerers but germs carried by vectors. Prophecy comes to life in the terms that make the most sense to the modern world. The Antediluvian's curse takes the form of our modern millennial fears and plays upon the *fin de siècle* that grips the World of Darkness at the end of the second millennium.

We have no intention of putting nuclear weapons at the disposal of the characters. We do not desire to turn **Vampire** into a game of bloodsucking post-holocaust mutant cyborgs. Instead, through these events, we allow the characters to become a potent force standing *against* the coming Gehenna, perhaps offering them redemption in the process. Don't look at the — granted, very potent — array of enemies and catastrophe as a giant cinematic sellout designed to send your chronicle along the path of four-color, high-action superhero comics. See it as the culmination of the Final Nights — the bomb ticking away that your players' characters hopefully manage to defuse with two seconds left. These are the End Times, nights of apocalypse and the end of the world. Use that tension. Feed it to your players and put them on the edges of their seats.

Remember that this whole ploy — the entirety of the **Transylvania Chronicles** — is just a single move in the Great Jyhad.

You have more stories to tell.





The Antediluvians stir. Hidden warlords exploit even the most powerful. Western vampires finally discover that everything they know may be wrong. Gehenna is here. The first blows have already been struck and the world as the Kindred see it awaits salvation or destruction.

Rather than the machinations of ultra powerful Cainites, however, it is the characters' actions that determine whether Nosferatu succeeds in using the web or not. In the end, the choice is theirs. They may let the missiles go, destroying Manhattan and Beijing and keeping Kupala imprisoned or stop the missiles by breaking the web and freeing the demon to wreak havoc on Eastern Europe. Such choices have confronted them throughout their unives and probably continue to do so as long as they exist.

ACT THREE: END OF THE AGE

One of the characters receives a call soon after rising for the evening. Lucita identifies herself, then tells the character that she needs to see the conspiracy immediately. She explains that Anatole has foreseen something and needs to speak with all of them. If the character has kept in contact with the others, Lucita asks that he inform the others and request a meeting in two night's time at any place the character wishes. If the character doesn't know where the others are, Lucita calls each individually and asks them to meet at the place suggested by the first one she calls.

Later scenes depend on the group having possession of a set of ivory tablets they might have acquired in *Dark Tides Rising*. If the characters do not have them (for whatever reason), Lucita has them and brings them with her. She explains that she has been trying to find someone to translate them — unsuccessfully, though one source thought they might be some form of Chinese. She gives the tablets to the characters, saying that Anatole's vision implies that they should keep them and find the person who can tell them what the tablets say. If a character is still in possession of the tablets, Lucita tells her to bring them along.

SCENE ONE: VISITATION

Wherever the group decides to meet, Lucita and Anatole arrive once all of them are there. If the characters don't have the tablets, Lucita hands them over and explains as above. Anatole comes in with his eyes closed, moving as though he can see anyway. Those who haven't seen Anatole in recent years hardly recognize him. Where he was once unkempt and manic, he now exudes the haunted seriousness he acquired upon diablerizing Octavio. He opens striking blue eyes and looks at each character, then begins to speak, his words almost falling over themselves in his rush to impart his vision.

"I see the tales in ivory laid bare before you, a friend who is not a friend speaking their secrets into your ears. Spread overhead

and pressing against the sky rises a knotted, pulsing web. Mirroring it below, a labyrinth runs, flowing with the earth's power. You struggle within that tangle. I see it broken; I see it whole. All around lies devastation. Plague-blackened corpses rot in piles, death smiles echoed by the blowing ashes of our kind that darken the very skies. The earth heaves, vomiting forth its rage to hide the Ancients' thunderous rise. The dragon moves over the land, opening his brother's veins to let flow his violent blood as silver birds with tongues of flame descend from the heavens to bring down the ruinous moon upon the sleeping city. He who cloaks his deeds in air seeks retribution, yet brings only blood tears and ashes in his wake. World without end, ends. Amen."

Leave the players to decide what this means. As always, Anatole himself doesn't know what he said. He never remembers the words when he leaves the trance. The characters are certain to understand at least part of his vision and may speculate concerning the rest. Don't prevent them from doing so, but don't give anything away either.

WHAT THE VISION MEANS

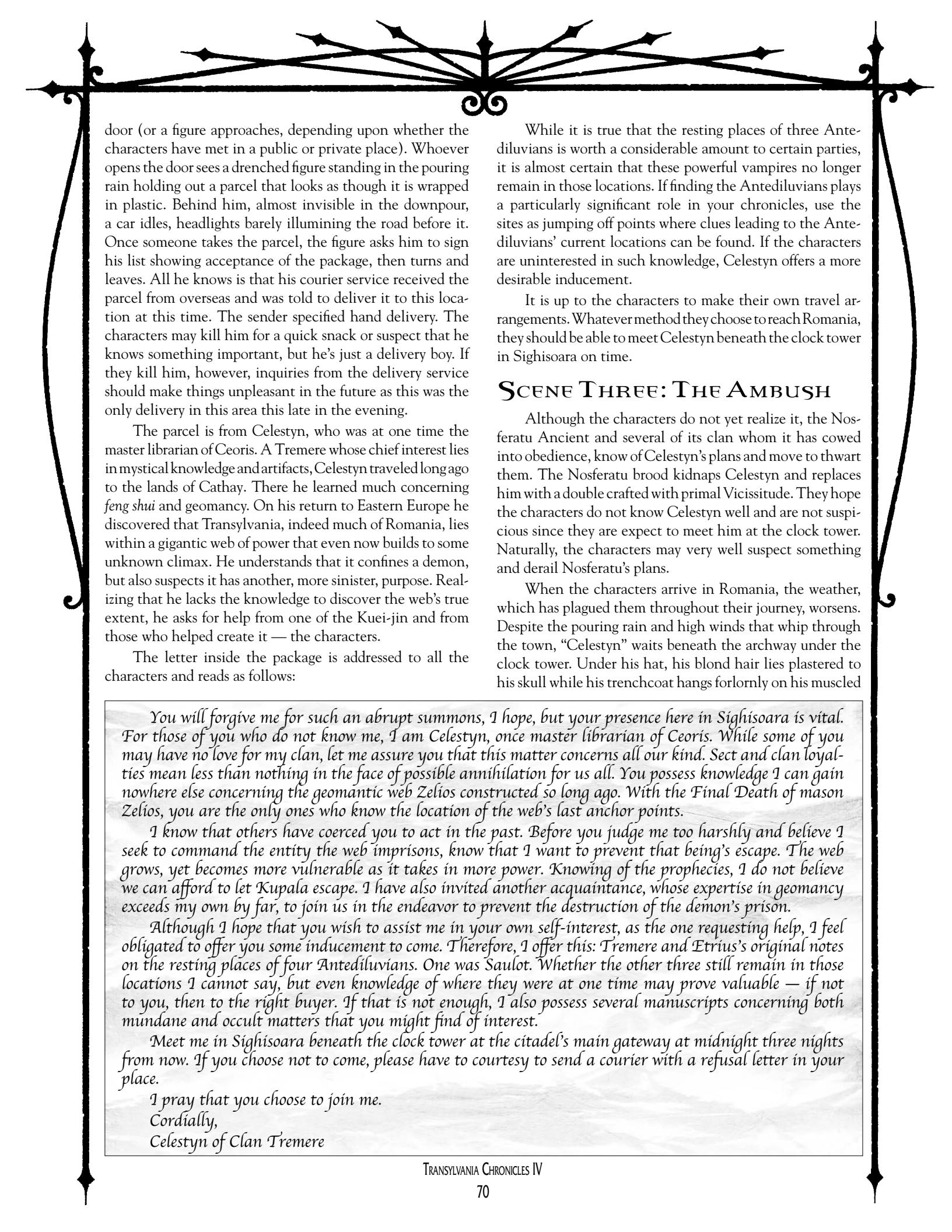
Eventually, as they learn more throughout the story, the characters may put together most of the clues in Anatole's vision, but the Storyteller shouldn't be kept wondering. The tales in ivory are what the ivory tablets impart concerning Saulot (or Zao-Lat as he is named in the writings). The inscriptions on them are written in an ancient form of Chinese. They can be easily translated by Ying Lei, but takes just about anyone else the characters could locate at least two years or more to wade through.

The web and labyrinth are the geomantic web and the ley lines (known to Eastern Kindred as "dragon lines"). The corpses and ashes are the results if the characters don't stop the missiles. Ying Lei can cleanse the dragon lines if the web is broken. The silver birds are the missiles themselves and he who cloaks his deeds in air refers to Nosferatu, whose powers of obfuscation make things seem to disappear into thin air.

As soon as he has spoken his prophecy, Anatole turns to Lucita and says, "I've told all. May I die now?" Naturally, she says "no," and signals the other characters to express their regard for her Malkavian companion. Whatever the characters do, after a few minutes, Lucita gently tells Anatole that it's time to leave. He turns back at the door, smiles and says, "He made me the harbinger of Gehenna, but you hold all the keys. Is that ironic or funny?"

SCENE TWO: SUMMONS TO TRANSYLVANIA

Almost as if summoned by Anatole's vision, a torrential storm breaks overhead a few minutes after Anatole and Lucita leave. Thunder crashes, lightning flashes and rain floods the streets. In the midst of the deluge, there's a knock on the



door (or a figure approaches, depending upon whether the characters have met in a public or private place). Whoever opens the door sees a drenched figure standing in the pouring rain holding out a parcel that looks as though it is wrapped in plastic. Behind him, almost invisible in the downpour, a car idles, headlights barely illuminating the road before it. Once someone takes the parcel, the figure asks him to sign his list showing acceptance of the package, then turns and leaves. All he knows is that his courier service received the parcel from overseas and was told to deliver it to this location at this time. The sender specified hand delivery. The characters may kill him for a quick snack or suspect that he knows something important, but he's just a delivery boy. If they kill him, however, inquiries from the delivery service should make things unpleasant in the future as this was the only delivery in this area this late in the evening.

The parcel is from Celestyn, who was at one time the master librarian of Ceoris. A Tremere whose chief interest lies in mystical knowledge and artifacts, Celestyn traveled long ago to the lands of Cathay. There he learned much concerning *feng shui* and geomancy. On his return to Eastern Europe he discovered that Transylvania, indeed much of Romania, lies within a gigantic web of power that even now builds to some unknown climax. He understands that it confines a demon, but also suspects it has another, more sinister, purpose. Realizing that he lacks the knowledge to discover the web's true extent, he asks for help from one of the Kuei-jin and from those who helped create it — the characters.

The letter inside the package is addressed to all the characters and reads as follows:

You will forgive me for such an abrupt summons, I hope, but your presence here in Sighisoara is vital. For those of you who do not know me, I am Celestyn, once master librarian of Ceoris. While some of you may have no love for my clan, let me assure you that this matter concerns all our kind. Sect and clan loyalties mean less than nothing in the face of possible annihilation for us all. You possess knowledge I can gain nowhere else concerning the geomantic web Zelios constructed so long ago. With the Final Death of mason Zelios, you are the only ones who know the location of the web's last anchor points.

I know that others have coerced you to act in the past. Before you judge me too harshly and believe I seek to command the entity the web imprisons, know that I want to prevent that being's escape. The web grows, yet becomes more vulnerable as it takes in more power. Knowing of the prophecies, I do not believe we can afford to let Kupala escape. I have also invited another acquaintance, whose expertise in geomancy exceeds my own by far, to join us in the endeavor to prevent the destruction of the demon's prison.

Although I hope that you wish to assist me in your own self-interest, as the one requesting help, I feel obligated to offer you some inducement to come. Therefore, I offer this: Tremere and Etarius's original notes on the resting places of four Antediluvians. One was Saulot. Whether the other three still remain in those locations I cannot say, but even knowledge of where they were at one time may prove valuable — if not to you, then to the right buyer. If that is not enough, I also possess several manuscripts concerning both mundane and occult matters that you might find of interest.

Meet me in Sighisoara beneath the clock tower at the citadel's main gateway at midnight three nights from now. If you choose not to come, please have to courtesy to send a courier with a refusal letter in your place.

*I pray that you choose to join me.
Cordially,
Celestyn of Clan Tremere*

While it is true that the resting places of three Antediluvians is worth a considerable amount to certain parties, it is almost certain that these powerful vampires no longer remain in those locations. If finding the Antediluvians plays a particularly significant role in your chronicles, use the sites as jumping off points where clues leading to the Antediluvians' current locations can be found. If the characters are uninterested in such knowledge, Celestyn offers a more desirable inducement.

It is up to the characters to make their own travel arrangements. Whatever method they choose to reach Romania, they should be able to meet Celestyn beneath the clock tower in Sighisoara on time.

SCENE THREE: THE AMBUSH

Although the characters do not yet realize it, the Nosferatu Ancient and several of its clan whom it has cowed into obedience, know of Celestyn's plans and move to thwart them. The Nosferatu brood kidnaps Celestyn and replaces him with a double crafted with primal Vicissitude. They hope the characters do not know Celestyn well and are not suspicious since they are expect to meet him at the clock tower. Naturally, the characters may very well suspect something and derail Nosferatu's plans.

When the characters arrive in Romania, the weather, which has plagued them throughout their journey, worsens. Despite the pouring rain and high winds that whip through the town, "Celestyn" waits beneath the archway under the clock tower. Under his hat, his blond hair lies plastered to his skull while his trenchcoat hangs forlornly on his muscled

body. He greets the characters in Romanian, switching to English if they seem rusty in their use of the other language. He tells them that he has a house nearby where they can all talk more comfortably.

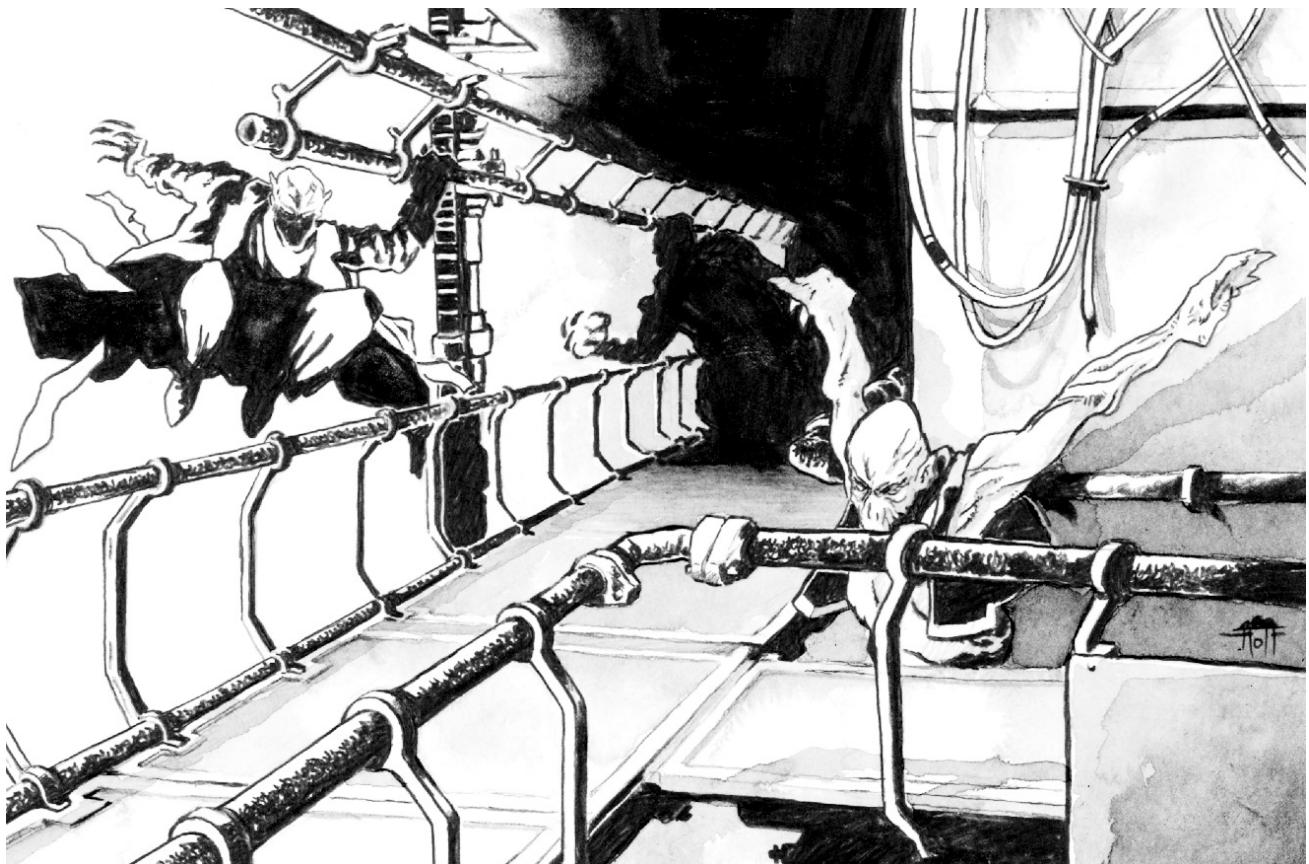
Successful Auspex rolls determine that the false Celestyn's aura is pale, nervous, excited, cautious and determined. It does not show any evidence of magical ability, as it would if he knew Thaumaturgy. Alert characters might pick up on this and conclude that the vampire is not Tremere and therefore not Celestyn. He is actually Mihail of Sinaia, leader of a Gehenna cult of Nosferatu. It takes concerted effort to elicit answers from the false Celestyn since he fears "the father" far more than the characters. Enough pressure forces him to confess that he and several others captured Celestyn and hoped to find out what he and the characters know. He tries to persuade the characters to go to the house anyway, explaining that that is where he is holding Celestyn. Further persuasion is needed before he tells the characters of the planned ambush since he hopes to turn the tables on them. If the characters unmask Mihail and he doesn't escape during a subsequent ambush, Storytellers may adapt Scene Four so that they meet only Ying Lei; He does not have a captured Mihail with him.

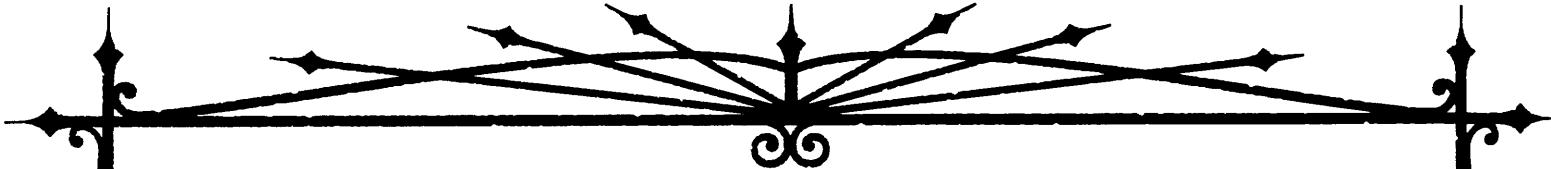
Unless the characters suspect "Celestyn," they probably follow him to a small house at the end of a narrow alley where his clanmates lie in wait to ambush the group. He unlocks

the door and steps inside, beckoning them to follow. The ambushers wait, Obfuscated inside the house, hiding behind furnishings. They attack as soon as the last character enters and closes the door. Should the characters win the battle, they may question any survivors and discover the real Celestyn staked in the root cellar.

However the characters reach the house, the attackers hope to capture at least one of the conspiracy rather than kill them all. They are content to take them as prisoners to question them, since they have no particular dislike for the conspiracy and act under duress. If the characters seem to be winning, the Nosferatu switch tactics and melt into the darkness, hoping to stage another ambush another night.

If the characters lose, the Nosferatu capture them, placing them in the cellar to be interrogated. While fire and sunlight are always effective tools in the hands of inquisitors of any stripe, the Storyteller is encouraged to find more creative and evocative means of persuading the characters to talk. A captor who knows some Vicissitude could threaten a vain character with permanent disfigurement, for example, and who better than a Nosferatu to get really creative with truly horrid deformities? Capture and interrogation (rather than killing them outright) allow the characters a chance to rescue Celestyn and make their escape. Eventually, some of the Nosferatu leave to report what they've learned and the others' attention lapses. Clever characters can take advantage of this.





Alternatively, if the characters dominate the confrontation they may question their assailants. The one who masqueraded as Celestyn is nowhere to be found, however. The Nosferatu tell them that “the father” forced them to capture Celestyn and attack the characters to learn what they know concerning the geomantic web. They know their Antediluvian plans to use or subvert the web somehow, but have no details. None of them mention that “the father” is the Nosferatu Antediluvian, just that he is very old and very powerful and they had no choice but to obey him. They don’t know where he is, just that he watches them and they cannot find him unless he wants to be found.

THE NOSFERATU ATTACKERS

While it’s preferable to make every vampire unique, lack of space compels us to provide a partial template for the characters’ attackers rather than detailing each one separately. Storytellers are strongly advised to change things here and there to customize them — these are just numbers, and there’s no such thing as a “generic” vampire. If the Traits of the foes don’t meet your game’s needs, feel free to change them.

Clan: Nosferatu

Generation: 9th

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

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

Skills: Etiquette 1, Firearms 2, Performance 2, Security 2, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 2, Camarilla Lore 2, Computer 1, Investigation 2, Linguistics (Romanian, English) 2, Politics 1, Sabbat Lore 2

Disciplines: Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 3, Potence 2

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

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 6

Whenever the characters rescue Celestyn, either after defeating the Nosferatu or escape from them, he tells them he will explain all he knows concerning the web and the damage Dracula inflicted on it (see below under the section on Celestyn’s Revelations) when everyone is together. He also wants to move somewhere smaller so no one can be in the room without their knowing it. He mentions that a knowledgeable geomancer is also on the way to assist them in understanding and repairing the web. He requested that the geomancer meet him beneath the clock tower as well and asks if the characters saw anyone else.

For the moment, Celestyn does not mention that the person he is expecting is Asian. In truth, he’s not entirely

certain that one or more Nosferatu aren’t still somehow listening. Celestyn prefers to keep Ying Lei’s identity secret until he has a chance to meet with the geomancer. He asks the characters to accompany him to the arch under the clock tower to see if his contact might be there now. Celestyn whispers to one character that the person they are seeking is named “Lee.”

SCENE FOUR: THE EASTERN CONNECTION

If anything, the weather has gotten worse since the characters first visited the clock tower. Lightning blazes across the sky. One bolt hits a nearby church steeple as the characters pass beneath it. Fire erupts from the roof as the falling tiles shower the group with flaming debris. The rain almost immediately douses the fire (don’t worry about Rötschreck; this is atmosphere, not a plot device), but the church groans as part of the roof caves in.

Two figures emerge from a sheltered side door, one shoved roughly in front of the other. In the fitful light from a nearby street lamp, the characters see that the second figure holds the first by the scruff of his neck and carries some long, thin object with a metallic sheen. They can smell Kindred blood. The one held looks like a young man in his twenties (via Obfuscate, learn using Auspex), but observant characters notice he is dressed as “Celestyn” was when he met them beneath the arch. The other figure appears to be Asian, with black hair shaved in front and held in a knot at the nape. He wears loose trousers and tunic under a long coat. The long object he carries is a sword.

Mihail has several cuts on his face and is missing three fingers on his left hand, though he isn’t bleeding, of course.

Ying Lei saw the characters leave with him earlier and realized he was not Celestyn. He then captured Mihail as he fled Celestyn’s house and has been questioning him concerning Celestyn’s whereabouts, making efficient use of his sword to emphasize his point.

Mihail attempts to fool the characters into helping him, screaming out, “Look out! He’ll kill us all! Help me, I’m the Tremere’s ally!” He jerks forward, trying to escape Ying Lei’s grasp as he does so.

Remind the characters, if necessary, that rain pours down and flaming debris and embers fall from the roof. The situation breeds confusion and the characters might well mistakenly trust Mihail and attack Ying Lei. If they do so, he attempts to hang onto Mihail while defending himself with the flat of his sword. Ying Lei also tells them — in accented but fluent English — that his prisoner is disguised and earlier led them to a house and then fled, changing his appearance as he left. He introduces himself as Ying Lei, an acquaintance of Celestyn’s. Ying Lei suggests that they return to Celestyn’s house and take his captive along for

questioning. If the characters try to kill Mihail, Ying Lei argues against it, saying he might have information they need. If they kill the hapless Nosferatu, they have to find alternative means of discovering what the Nosferatu cult is up to. This scenario assumes Mihail survives long enough to tell what he knows.

When the characters return to Celestyn's haven, Mihail reluctantly tells them what he knows if they persuade him that they plan to kill him otherwise or promise to get him out of Europe. Anything less, and he simply says, "Nothing you can do to me can come close to what it can do."

Since it's imperative that the characters receive the information Mihail has, allow the characters to persuade him somehow or have him volunteer the information in return for releasing him. Once the characters get him to talk, he tells them the following (feel free to paraphrase):

"We didn't have a choice. It called us together and told us to kidnap *him* (pointing to Celestyn) and lure you into an ambush. It wanted to make sure you couldn't stop it. We couldn't refuse. It has plans to infest the nuclear power station at Cernavoda. For some reason, it thought you were here to stop him and wanted you all dead. It has something to do with a web he had built for him and the power it raises. I think he's trying to even the score with an old enemy."

The details Mihail knows are:

- The "it" referred to is the Nosferatu Antediluvian—or at least he says it is. From the power it's shown so far, Mihail has no reason to dispute his claim.
- The nuclear power station is at Cernavoda, which is situated on the Danube.
- "It" said the power station now rests at the center of its "web." It claims that someone built the web under his direction long ago.
- It's already been testing this web's power, stretching it and drawing off small amounts of its energy.
- It may not be the truth, but Mihail heard a rumor some years ago that when Ceausescu had the power station built, he also built a hidden missile silo there. Maybe it's the missile "it" wants, not the power station itself.
- But if it were to do something to the station, it could poison the Danube and surrounding region, which might make feeding in the area a real problem. (At this, Celestyn shakes his head at the captive's selfishness — "feeding problem"? Try "environmental disaster.")
- He isn't sure what "the father's" timetable is, but thinks the Ancient plans to invoke the web soon, perhaps within the next night or so.
- Mihail has no idea who the enemy is, but "the father" has been muttering about obliterating Manhattan.

It is up to the characters whether they kill Mihail, stake him or simply let him go. If he is released, Nosferatu summons him again and forces him to battle the characters later at the power station.

MIHAIL OF SINAI

Chief among the rabble called together by the Antediluvian, Mihail has long led the other Nosferatu of this part of Transylvania. Once part of a Tzimisce lord's retinue, Mihail now owes allegiance to his cult. When Nosferatu summoned them, Mihail feared he would kill them all. He had always heard that the clan founder had no love for his children. Since they were not immediately slain, Mihail tried to please "the father," figuring as long as he remained useful, he would survive. Now he just wants to get as far away from Nosferatu as he possibly can. He doesn't expect to last long, for he knows the clan founder can summon him from anywhere on earth, but he values his existence enough to hope to prolong the time before his inevitable demise. This is why he has nominally created the cult from the brood the Ancient has assembled — to flatter the hideous monster, however disingenuously.

Clan: Nosferatu

Generation: 7th

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 2, Firearms 3, Melee 3, Performance 4, Security 3, Stealth 3, Survival 2

Knowledges: Academics 3, Bureaucracy 2, Camarilla Lore 2, Computer 2, Investigation 2, Linguistics (Romanian, Hungarian, English, German) 3, Politics 3, Sabbat Lore 2

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 2, Celerity 2, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 4, Potence 2, Vicissitude 3

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

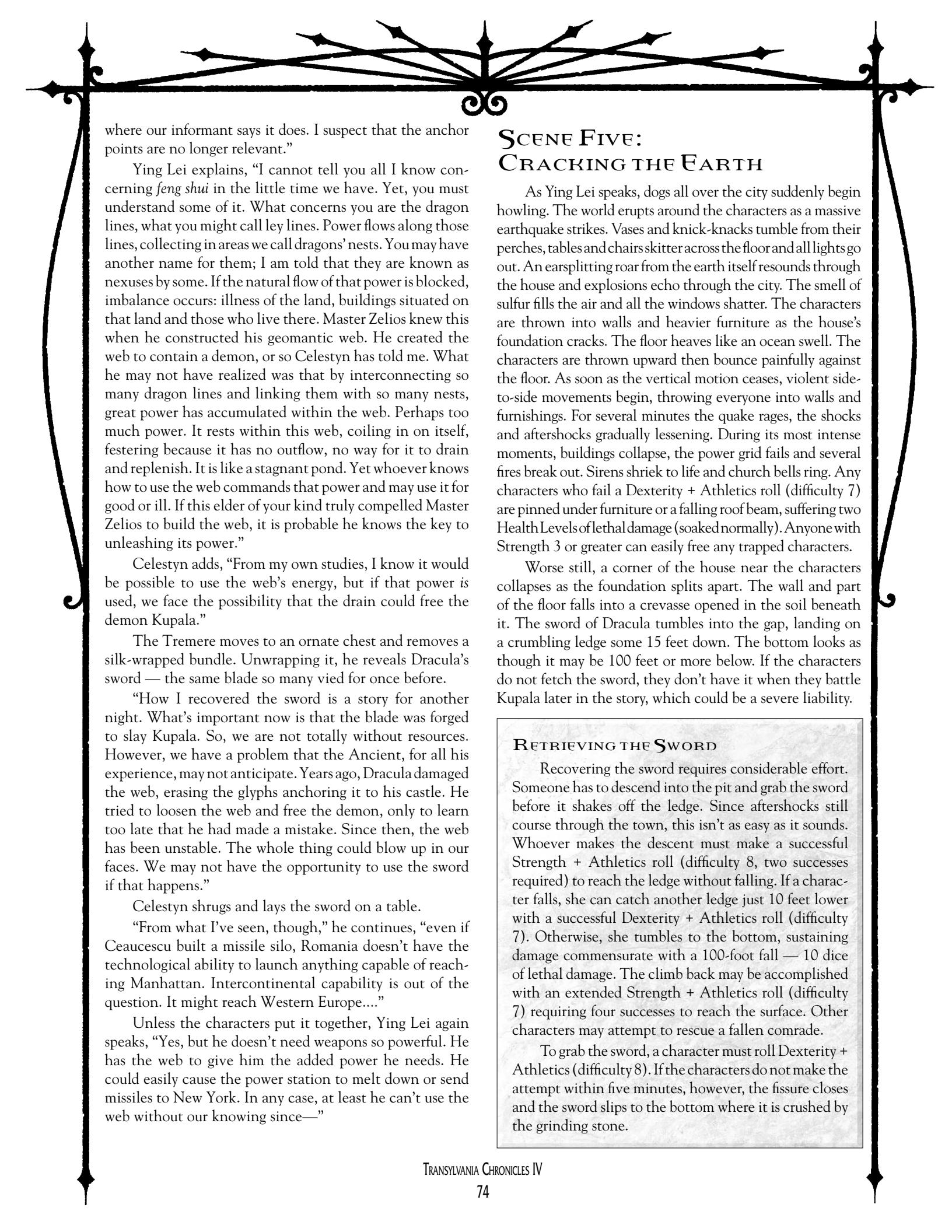
Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 7

REVELATIONS FROM CELESTYN AND YING LEI

Encourage the players to let the characters make their own speculations. Celestyn and Ying Lei tell the characters the following (feel free to paraphrase and use their dialogue as answers to questions rather than simply spouting it out):

Celestyn opens the conversation: "I originally called you here to help me repair the geomantic web Zelios constructed centuries ago. You know the final anchor points that Zelios never recorded in his writings. I asked Ying Lei here because of his expertise in geomancy. I traveled in the East long enough to know that Zelios based many of his final designs on the precepts of *feng shui*. Ying Lei can tell you more about that. For now, I can tell you that the web has expanded and it is quite possible it now centers exactly



where our informant says it does. I suspect that the anchor points are no longer relevant."

Ying Lei explains, "I cannot tell you all I know concerning *feng shui* in the little time we have. Yet, you must understand some of it. What concerns you are the dragon lines, what you might call ley lines. Power flows along those lines, collecting in areas we call dragons' nests. You may have another name for them; I am told that they are known as nexuses by some. If the natural flow of that power is blocked, imbalance occurs: illness of the land, buildings situated on that land and those who live there. Master Zelios knew this when he constructed his geomantic web. He created the web to contain a demon, or so Celestyn has told me. What he may not have realized was that by interconnecting so many dragon lines and linking them with so many nests, great power has accumulated within the web. Perhaps too much power. It rests within this web, coiling in on itself, festering because it has no outflow, no way for it to drain and replenish. It is like a stagnant pond. Yet whoever knows how to use the web commands that power and may use it for good or ill. If this elder of your kind truly compelled Master Zelios to build the web, it is probable he knows the key to unleashing its power."

Celestyn adds, "From my own studies, I know it would be possible to use the web's energy, but if that power is used, we face the possibility that the drain could free the demon Kupala."

The Tremere moves to an ornate chest and removes a silk-wrapped bundle. Unwrapping it, he reveals Dracula's sword — the same blade so many vied for once before.

"How I recovered the sword is a story for another night. What's important now is that the blade was forged to slay Kupala. So, we are not totally without resources. However, we have a problem that the Ancient, for all his experience, may not anticipate. Years ago, Dracula damaged the web, erasing the glyphs anchoring it to his castle. He tried to loosen the web and free the demon, only to learn too late that he had made a mistake. Since then, the web has been unstable. The whole thing could blow up in our faces. We may not have the opportunity to use the sword if that happens."

Celestyn shrugs and lays the sword on a table.

"From what I've seen, though," he continues, "even if Ceausescu built a missile silo, Romania doesn't have the technological ability to launch anything capable of reaching Manhattan. Intercontinental capability is out of the question. It might reach Western Europe...."

Unless the characters put it together, Ying Lei again speaks, "Yes, but he doesn't need weapons so powerful. He has the web to give him the added power he needs. He could easily cause the power station to melt down or send missiles to New York. In any case, at least he can't use the web without our knowing since—"

SCENE FIVE: CRACKING THE EARTH

As Ying Lei speaks, dogs all over the city suddenly begin howling. The world erupts around the characters as a massive earthquake strikes. Vases and knick-knacks tumble from their perches, tables and chairs skitter across the floor and all lights go out. An earsplitting roar from the earth itself resounds through the house and explosions echo through the city. The smell of sulfur fills the air and all the windows shatter. The characters are thrown into walls and heavier furniture as the house's foundation cracks. The floor heaves like an ocean swell. The characters are thrown upward then bounce painfully against the floor. As soon as the vertical motion ceases, violent side-to-side movements begin, throwing everyone into walls and furnishings. For several minutes the quake rages, the shocks and aftershocks gradually lessening. During its most intense moments, buildings collapse, the power grid fails and several fires break out. Sirens shriek to life and church bells ring. Any characters who fail a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 7) are pinned under furniture or a falling roof beam, suffering two Health Levels of lethal damage (soaked normally). Anyone with Strength 3 or greater can easily free any trapped characters.

Worse still, a corner of the house near the characters collapses as the foundation splits apart. The wall and part of the floor falls into a crevasse opened in the soil beneath it. The sword of Dracula tumbles into the gap, landing on a crumbling ledge some 15 feet down. The bottom looks as though it may be 100 feet or more below. If the characters do not fetch the sword, they don't have it when they battle Kupala later in the story, which could be a severe liability.

RETRIEVING THE SWORD

Recovering the sword requires considerable effort. Someone has to descend into the pit and grab the sword before it shakes off the ledge. Since aftershocks still course through the town, this isn't as easy as it sounds. Whoever makes the descent must make a successful Strength + Athletics roll (difficulty 8, two successes required) to reach the ledge without falling. If a character falls, she can catch another ledge just 10 feet lower with a successful Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 7). Otherwise, she tumbles to the bottom, sustaining damage commensurate with a 100-foot fall — 10 dice of lethal damage. The climb back may be accomplished with an extended Strength + Athletics roll (difficulty 7) requiring four successes to reach the surface. Other characters may attempt to rescue a fallen comrade.

To grab the sword, a character must roll Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 8). If the characters do not make the attempt within five minutes, however, the fissure closes and the sword slips to the bottom where it is crushed by the grinding stone.

THE DESTRUCTION CONTINUES

At some point during the quake, Ying Lei yells out, "It is the turning of the wheel. I am too late!" Presumably, the characters remember this later. If they don't, Celestyn brings it up.

Outside, the storm continues and lightning flashes, illuminating fallen trees, cracks in the street and terrified people rushing from their homes. Children scream and cry. A car rests nose down, its horn blaring continuously, in a ditch carved by the quake into the cracked stones of the street. Police try to restore order. The remains of Celestyn's house are sturdy enough that the characters' need not fear its immediate collapse, or so Celestyn says.

On the other hand, the stairs leading down into the cellar are cracked, as is the ceiling. The chimney has collapsed entirely, bringing down part of the roof. The underground room isn't proof against sunlight anymore, though with crowding, the characters, Ying Lei and Celestyn can all fit in a corner that's still covered. Of course, someone may think about aftershocks and point out that the whole house may shift and either bury them or expose them to daylight while they rest. Not a comfortable thought. Worse, several fires burn uncontrollably since the water pressure is inadequate for crews to extinguish them. Who knows if the house might catch on fire while the characters lie trapped and helpless below?

If the characters want to find an alternative place to rest for the day, they have approximately four hours to do so. They might consider, however, that crews are moving throughout the city, digging through the rubble for survivors. They need to find a deserted building that hasn't sustained damage and that has little chance of burning.

Anyone who manages to find a way to check on conditions outside Sighisoara learns that the earthquake seems to have affected most of Romania — even those portions not usually subject to seismic activity. Reports indicate that Bucharest was the worst hit, but many areas along the Danube suffered massive damage. No reports regarding the nuclear power station are available yet.

REFLECTIONS

Once the characters have a chance to rest and a place to stay, let them bring up Ying Lei's cry during the earthquake or have Celestyn ask him to explain what he meant. If that seems too contrived, Ying Lei might vent his frustrations over his failure to hold the Sixth Age at bay. Adjust the information given under "Translating the Ivory Tablets" to tell the characters about the Wheel of Ages and the coming of the Sixth Age if they don't ask him about the tablets. Allow the characters a chance to remember that they have a Chinese scholar among them, however, and that he may be able to translate the ivory tablets. If they don't think of it, allow each player (starting with the one who has



done the least so far) a chance to roll her character's Intelligence (difficulty 7) to remember they have the plaques.

Ying Lei thinks for a few minutes, then sighs and says, "Very well. My master said I must trust new allies. This shrugging of the dragon's back, this earthquake, was not natural. The storm feels wrong as well. I study the balance of things. Although I am more used to the dragon lines of my own part of the world, I know when the dragon moves of his own will and when another goads him. My people have long foretold that the coming of the Sixth Age begins with the cracking of the world."

Give the character time to ask questions or suggest theories. At least one might remember Anatole's prophecy. In the end, however, Ying Lei can explain things by translating the ivory tablets.

TRANSLATING THE IVORY TABLETS

Ying Lei takes about an hour to begin the translation of the first plaque as he gets a feel for the flow of the language. He haltingly continues beyond the first plaque, translating as he goes. The Storyteller can simulate Ying Lei's difficulties translating by pausing and offering slightly different interpretations of select words. He makes the following translation:

In Ages to come, my Siblings, if you judge me harshly, then think upon this and know why I do what I do. Blame me not. Lay your hatreds upon Caine, the liar, upon Caine, the betrayer, who called himself our Father, but who is truly our tormentor.

Our Father told us he was the first, a unique being cursed by God himself as punishment for the murder of Abel. We believed. Why should we not? For we are his childer and his childer's childer, each of us created to provide our sires with love and companionship. I myself sired childer, those whom I felt deserving of long life, those whom I greatly cherished.

He named me Zao-lat, the beloved one, and for ages I worshiped him. Of all his loving children, I alone truly spoke to Caine's heart, so I thought. Gifted to foretell the future, I spoke prophecy for all my brethren, elder and younger.

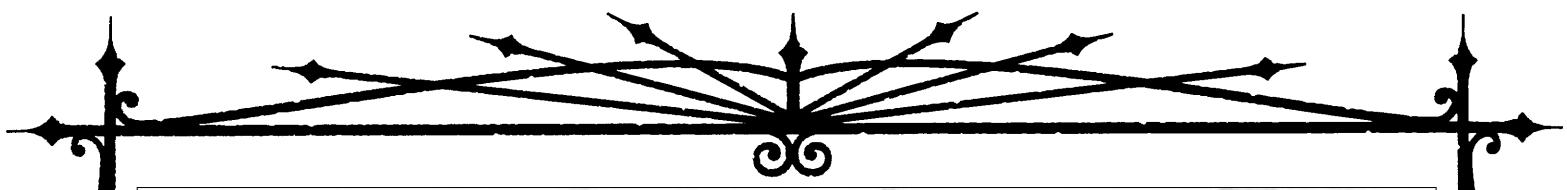
Long I thought upon our condition. We must consume the blood of the living to remain upon the Earth until God calls us to be judged alongside the First. My mind and hand were turned to deeds meant to help all, whether of our kind or mortal kind, for were we not all brothers of a sort? Yet my search for peace within my own heart led me away from our home. I traveled to the land called the Middle Kingdom.

There I discovered others. The First lied. He was not the first, merely one among many punished for his sins. Yet he is unlike these. The undead children of the East need not drink blood. They are beyond the need for blood and suckle upon chi, the life and death energies of the world. Those who cannot rise to this higher state, but remain dependent upon blood or flesh for sustenance are considered lesser beings, unworthy and outcast where they are suffered to live.

Everything Caine told us is a lie. He too traveled to this land, yet never surpassed his blood lust. Worse, rather than letting each of us make our fortunes, then be punished or rewarded by God, he took it upon himself to stop our natural cycle of life and forced his blood upon us that we might become as he is. He has cursed us all to consume blood rather than giving us the chance to ascend to a higher state of being. We have been forced to accept a lesser existence by he who made us. May Caine be damned to suffer eternal torment in the embrace of ever-living flames for the existence he has condemned us to.

Though they greatly pitied me in my condition, some of the enlightened ones of the East taught me what they could, trying to ease my heart's betrayal. I believe they hoped to bring me to a state of peace and acceptance of my own existence. I feigned that they did so, yet inside, my thoughts were clouded with anger and my heart burned with vengeance. But I discovered the great unfolding of the world. I could throw off the stigma of being lesser by becoming master of all in another Age.

I learned of the Celestial and Infernal Courts and their struggle against one another, which balances the world. Others like unto me, but far more advanced, taught me of the turning of the Great Wheel of the Ages. We inexorably move from a brighter age to one more brutal and dark until we reach the halfway point of the wheel. There at the bottom of the cycle, we plunge into darkness and horror for thousands of years, ruled by a powerful evil warlord or sorcerer whose whim decides the fate of all. At that point, the world might stop, the wheel forced from its path and stuck in that Age until the end of time.



Or, if beings of goodness could mitigate the severity of the darkness or find a way to overcome it, in time the Great Wheel turns once more, swinging upward again through more enlightened ages until reaching paradise at the top again.

Those who pride themselves on their enlightenment take sides in bringing about the turning of the wheel, yet they make no plans beyond this Age. I do not make that mistake. If I am accursed, then let me be great in my depravity. I shall gain all I can for myself. I shall help to move the Great Wheel toward collapse and I shall smite that dreary realm with an iron fist and whip of fire. No longer shall I care what my father or my brethren want. I shall be hidden in my plans and circumspect in my dealings with all. But they must not suspect my hand's stirring. Let them squabble among themselves and vie for position. Let them believe they struggle to reach ascendancy. In the end, as the wheel turns and darkness covers all, I shall sit atop the throne of destiny, stronger than they, stronger than Caine, stronger than she who gave us our powers — perhaps even stronger than the god who originally cursed the First.

Then I shall rule and if it be that the wheel must turn again, I shall again transform myself and ride it back to the top again. I shall have my vengeance for Caine's thoughtless curse that he laid upon me. For one thing I now know that others consider not: Should the Wheel of the Ages reach the top once more, even in its apparent perfection, I shall linger like a blot upon pure sand. The wheel shall one night turn again.

ANOTHER DAY DAWNS

Once the plague has been read and the conversation afterward lags, the Storyteller should explain that the sun is rising and the characters need to sleep. Some characters may want to start out for the power station immediately after the earthquake. While they may do so since Celestyn has a large car capable of transporting all of them, roads are almost impassable due to cracks, ripped up roadway and wrecked cars blocking the narrow streets. People wander aimlessly, seeking safety or shelter, though they seem afraid to go indoors. It takes far longer to travel and they if they leave after the quake they are caught by the sun a quarter of the way to Bucharest. If they choose to go, the Storyteller should create some serious difficulties for any characters who cannot find shelter for the day. Those who escape the sun receive uneasy dreams of a great darkness stirring within the earth followed by dreams of another earthquake opening the soil around them and exposing them to the sun. Those receiving such dreams must succeed on a Courage roll to avoid Rötschreck. Those failing the roll frenzy, bursting from the earth and exposing themselves to the sun's rays for real.

SCENE SIX: CHOICE AT CERNAVODA

Scattered reports of devastation along the Danube trickle in the next evening. The news concerns entire regions sinking 12 to 15 feet and huge geysers erupting from the soil, spewing out enormous boulders like cannonballs. Reports by foreign journalists broadcasting to the few areas with power speak of breaks in the lock system causing massive walls of water from the Danube — roiling waves over 20 feet high — to flood the countryside. Refugees flee north to escape the destruction.

The army (such as it is) turns away anyone they find trying to enter the area. Reporters must do flyovers to get stories. No ground traffic moves through the disaster corridor.

Speculation runs high that the nuclear power station at Cernavoda may be compromised. Some believe the containment unit may be leaking; others suggest that the facility is on the verge of a meltdown. Many wonder if the country is up to the task of averting catastrophe. If the characters don't attempt to discover this themselves, they overhear a radio report or the conversations of someone they pass on the street.

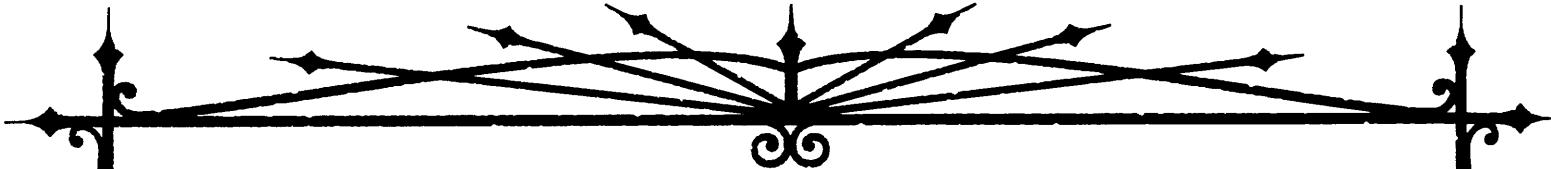
At this point, it's up to the characters whether they take action. If the characters decide to ignore the station, another massive earthquake rips Romania apart, destroying most of the country. The missiles fire, the Ancient Obscures them — still ignorant that some are headed for China — and they fall undetected on Manhattan and Beijing. World War III probably ensues.

Yeesh.

Then again, it's your game. Someone else could stop them if the characters don't, unless you're ready for some significant divergence from future source material.

The road to Cernavoda proves treacherous. Trees and wrecked cars litter the road. Bridges hang crazily or have collapsed altogether. What were once level surfaces end in drop-offs or fields too broken to traverse. Rocks, mud, splintered trees and twisted wreckage from ruined houses block mountain roads and threaten to slide even further down on the tilted pavement. Tangled spiderwebs of downed power lines criss-cross roads, lanes and fields.

Characters who persevere and continue onward despite the obstacles can locate a way through the scattered army lines and reach Cernavoda.



The region is deserted. Blackness covers everything. Power failures have extinguished all light. The coterie's car, if they're in one, moves sluggishly through standing water that threatens to swamp it, brushing past tangles of tree limbs and around the bloated bodies of cows caught by the earthquake or floodwaters. Moving through the water proves dangerous since the driver cannot see rifts in the earth. Night passes as they slowly approach the power station. They arrive with barely an hour before dawn. It's immediately apparent that the power station is in serious trouble — and only the characters can possibly fix it because they seem to be the only ones here.

THE POWER STATION

Mired in almost five feet of swirling, muddy water from the Danube, what's left of the Cernavoda power station thrusts starkly against the cloudy sky, its containment unit twisted as it leans precariously to one side. Lights flicker and glow within — testament that the plant's generators still function. Steam rises into the sky, not the pure, white controlled plume usually associated with a nuclear power plant, but an angry gray billowing, spreading out over the river and the inundated land. The area seems deserted, and muddy river water choked with debris roils dangerously around the facility, blocking easy access.

Characters trying to enter the power station must wade to the door and open it against the force of the water, a task requiring a Strength of 4 or better. Of greater concern is somehow closing the door behind them once they get inside (requiring a Strength of 8, though two people at a time may combine their efforts). If they don't close the door, water rushes in and quickly finds the lowest level, pouring down a staircase and interfering with the generators keeping the facility running. The water fills the building from there until it reaches a level equal to the water outside. As the reactor lies on the lowest level, this could prove disastrous. The entire facility already sits on unstable terrain and further stress conceivably makes it impossible to contain a nuclear meltdown. The characters can prevent a meltdown if they're careful and quick. They have only an hour before dawn in any case.

The group needs to make its way to the control room, which has been deserted by panicked staff members — all except one. Dr. Helena Ilianescu, a small, thin woman in her 50s, still works within the control room, desperately trying to halt the meltdown but woefully unable to do so. She can explain to the characters what is wrong.

The switch that lowers the boron carbide rods into the superheated water to stop the reactor and shut down the chain reaction is not working. The reactor continues to pour irradiated water into the pipes and the steam turns the turbines, converting it to electrical power. The damage to the building has disrupted this process. Somewhere along the way, a leak has developed. Radiation escapes with the steam.

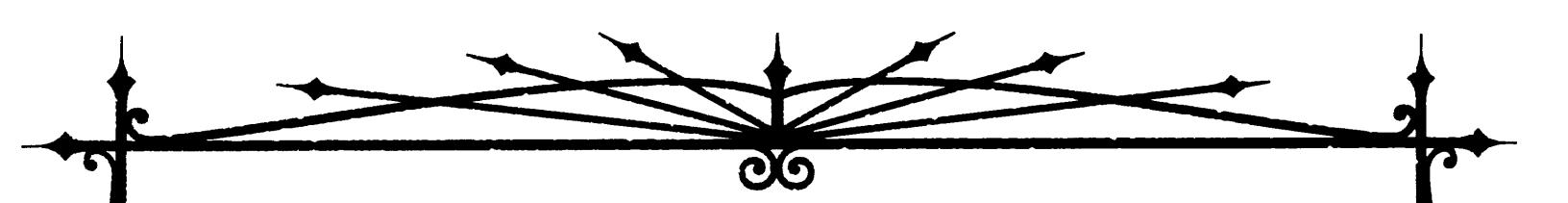
Since the rods don't respond to commands from the control room, someone must go down to the containment unit and work them manually. Such a person has to be incredibly strong, however, because the shift in the building has bent the controlling mechanism, which is why it can't function mechanically. Further, there is obviously a leak somewhere in the unit itself because the nuclear fuel is overheating. This means the level of the demineralized water meant to keep it cool must have dropped precipitously; Dr. Ilianescu has been unable to add more. Perhaps the valves are stuck or they too have become bent and need to be operated by hand.

Dr. Ilianescu has been doing what she can to avert disaster, but she isn't strong enough to do the manual tasks. In the end, she planned to simply do an emergency shutdown, though that would probably result in a meltdown anyway. Still, it seemed her only choice and the last chance to save Eastern Europe from contamination. Now, though, she can tell the characters what to do, she can slowly shut down the station.

If the characters agree to help, she directs them to the lower level. If they failed to shut the door, that level is now covered in water. They have to swim and perform their tasks underwater. Luckily, they don't need to breathe. While the river water has replaced the pure liquid that cools the reactor, they must still lower the rods. The dirty, debris-filled water provides a solution to the meltdown while increasing the odds of an actual nuclear explosion as the neutrons bounce off elements never intended to be in the mix. Only by lowering the rods into the reactor can they stop the cycle. Manually lowering the rods calls for an extended Strength + Athletics roll (difficulty 9). One success per turn is required and it takes four turns to force the bent rods out of their holders far enough for them to drop the rest of the way. More than one character may try to pull the rods free and a success from any of them counts toward the total. Freeing the water valve takes a Strength of 4 or better.

Whenever the characters move to turn the wheel manually or free the rods, six of Nosferatu's agents, left here to prevent such interference, attack. Use Mihail's ratings (above) for these agents. If the characters released Mihail, he has been Dominated into the attack by the Ancient. None of these vampires has any concern for their own safety and all of them fight until incapacitated. Additionally, they are clever, Obfuscating and striking from the darkness, only to run away and harry the characters a minute later. The characters have to defeat the attackers before they can deal with the mechanical problems besetting the facility.

If the characters cover the fuel with water and lower the rods, the meltdown is averted. Keep track of the time. If they get the job done within half an hour, they succeed. If they fail, a huge cloud of radiation escapes, poisoning half of Eastern Europe and making the Danube a river of death for hundreds of miles.



Regardless of the characters' success with the reactor, Dr. Ilianescu says, "The power plant is not the only threat. Once, several years ago, we were all dismissed from work for several weeks and replaced by soldiers. When we came back, we discovered that the land had been dug up and replaced in several locations. We have long known that Ceaucescu emplaced missiles here under cover of the plant. I do not know where they all are or where the control bunker is — we were not encouraged to ask questions and those who did soon disappeared — but it must be nearby. If the plant was damaged, it is likely that the bunker and even some of the missiles were too."

If possible, Dr. Ilianescu begins to shut down the plant. Although this deprives nearby structures of electrical power, she is certain that the bunker and missiles must have emergency generators of their own. If they do, even with the plant shut down, the generators can provide power for perhaps 30 minutes to an hour on their own. Thus, there should theoretically be lights in the bunker. She urges the characters to go with her to check things out. She says she realizes that the facility is underground and that the water makes finding it all but impossible, but asks their help anyway. She says she has no respect for the technological expertise Ceaucescu employed in building the power plant; she fears the same shoddy workmanship went into the secret bunker as well.

DEATH RISES

As the characters leave the power station, they hear a loud rumbling sound. The ground beneath their feet shakes as if from another earthquake. Then, as they watch in the lightening pre-dawn sky, all around them slender silver shapes bedecked with fins and canisters shoot up out of the water, blasting into the air on powerful rockets. They wink out one by one, as if erased from the universe. The roar of the rockets continues, but the missiles themselves have disappeared. Clever characters who know they're facing Nosferatu may realize who their opponent is and intuit that someone has just Obfuscated the missiles. No one in Manhattan or Beijing can see them coming, much less attempt to shoot them down. The only chance to stop them now lies within the secret bunker. Observant characters may make Perception + Science rolls (difficulty 7) to locate the bunker based on the locations of the silos.

Knowing where the bunker lies, the characters can swim down and locate the hidden entrance. Because of the shifting of the earth and the rushing floodwaters, the soil layer has washed away, leaving the door uncovered for anyone to find — if they're looking underwater. Unclogging the hatch requires a Strength of 4. One character at a time may jump down into the bunker, accompanied by a torrent of water. If all characters have Celerity, they can get in much more quickly and close the hatch behind them, requiring two successes on a Strength + Athletics roll (difficulty 9) to force the door against the water. If they cannot close the door, the whole

bunker soon fills with water; within two minutes, the electrical equipment inside shorts out, the guards inside drown and the characters cannot possibly stop the missiles. For that reason, the Storyteller should be generous and allow more than one person to try closing the hatch each turn.

STOPPING THE MISSILES

Within the building that houses the mechanisms for launching the missiles, the characters find a pair of security guards wearing Romanian army uniforms. One guard, seated at a control console, has apparently just completed the launch sequence. The other guard stands at the alert. The characters may assume correctly that these individuals are ghouled or Dominated mortals under the direction of Nosferatu's agents. Overcoming the guards should not present a problem for the characters.

Figuring out what to do to abort the missile launch, as well as discovering the number of the missiles and their destinations constitutes the real challenge.

After dealing with the guards, characters may react to the situation in various ways. Panic may result in blindly punching buttons, flipping levers and toggling switches in an attempt to halt the missiles' progress. Some characters may notice a prominent button marked "ABORT" (in Romanian) to one side of the control console. Pushing this button has no effect. A keypad next to it indicates that some sort of numeric code is necessary to enable the abort sequence.

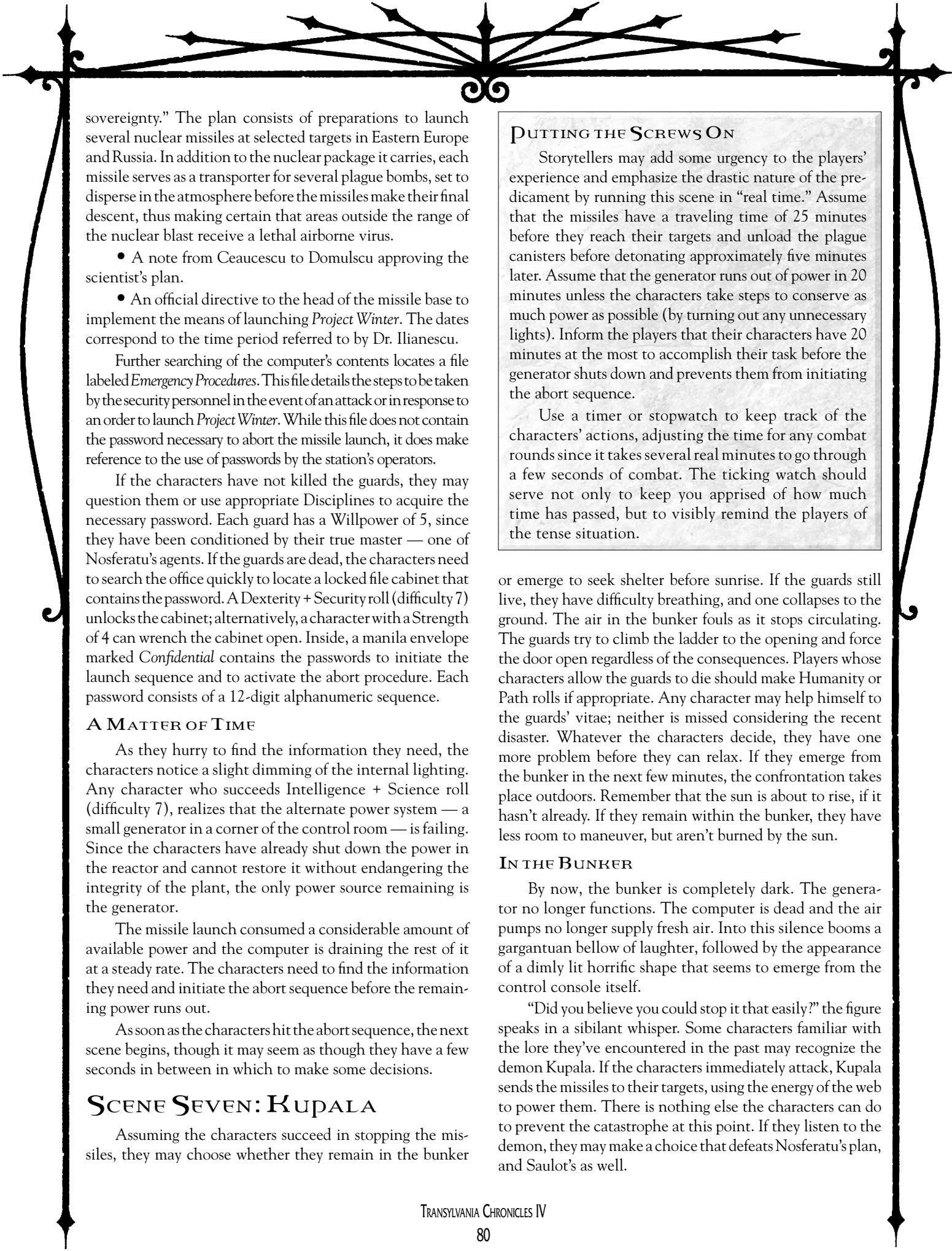
Characters may realize, either on their own or with an Intelligence + Science roll (difficulty 7), that they have a grace period of at least a few minutes — maybe as long as thirty minutes — before the missiles reach their targets. This gives them some time to look around the room and locate possible sources of vital information.

To one side of the console, a computer screen displays a list of missile trajectories — presumably the target locations for the individual missiles. Characters knowledgeable in science or mathematics may roll Intelligence + Science (difficulty 8) to determine the approximate destinations of the missiles. Half are headed toward New York, half toward Beijing. Those without the appropriate scientific background can roll Intelligence (difficulty 9) to recognize the approximate locations of the missiles' targets on the continental maps displayed above the console.

Characters who know something about computers may attempt to search the files for access codes for the abort sequence. Passwords are not necessary to gain access to the files since the computer is already on.

Searching the files produces some interesting bits of information, including the following communications contained in a file labeled *Project Winter*:

- A copy of a letter to Ceaucescu from a V.S. Domulscu, Ph.D. outlining a plan to "ensure the future freedom of Romania by eliminating the major foreign threats to Romanian



sovereignty." The plan consists of preparations to launch several nuclear missiles at selected targets in Eastern Europe and Russia. In addition to the nuclear package it carries, each missile serves as a transporter for several plague bombs, set to disperse in the atmosphere before the missiles make their final descent, thus making certain that areas outside the range of the nuclear blast receive a lethal airborne virus.

- A note from Ceausescu to Domulscu approving the scientist's plan.

- An official directive to the head of the missile base to implement the means of launching *Project Winter*. The dates correspond to the time period referred to by Dr. Ilianescu.

Further searching of the computer's contents locates a file labeled *Emergency Procedures*. This file details the steps to be taken by the security personnel in the event of an attack or in response to an order to launch *Project Winter*. While this file does not contain the password necessary to abort the missile launch, it does make reference to the use of passwords by the station's operators.

If the characters have not killed the guards, they may question them or use appropriate Disciplines to acquire the necessary password. Each guard has a Willpower of 5, since they have been conditioned by their true master — one of Nosferatu's agents. If the guards are dead, the characters need to search the office quickly to locate a locked file cabinet that contains the password. A Dexterity + Security roll (difficulty 7) unlocks the cabinet; alternatively, a character with a Strength of 4 can wrench the cabinet open. Inside, a manila envelope marked *Confidential* contains the passwords to initiate the launch sequence and to activate the abort procedure. Each password consists of a 12-digit alphanumeric sequence.

A MATTER OF TIME

As they hurry to find the information they need, the characters notice a slight dimming of the internal lighting. Any character who succeeds Intelligence + Science roll (difficulty 7), realizes that the alternate power system — a small generator in a corner of the control room — is failing. Since the characters have already shut down the power in the reactor and cannot restore it without endangering the integrity of the plant, the only power source remaining is the generator.

The missile launch consumed a considerable amount of available power and the computer is draining the rest of it at a steady rate. The characters need to find the information they need and initiate the abort sequence before the remaining power runs out.

As soon as the characters hit the abort sequence, the next scene begins, though it may seem as though they have a few seconds in between in which to make some decisions.

SCENE SEVEN: KUPALA

Assuming the characters succeed in stopping the missiles, they may choose whether they remain in the bunker

PUTTING THE SCREWS ON

Storytellers may add some urgency to the players' experience and emphasize the drastic nature of the predicament by running this scene in "real time." Assume that the missiles have a traveling time of 25 minutes before they reach their targets and unload the plague canisters before detonating approximately five minutes later. Assume that the generator runs out of power in 20 minutes unless the characters take steps to conserve as much power as possible (by turning out any unnecessary lights). Inform the players that their characters have 20 minutes at the most to accomplish their task before the generator shuts down and prevents them from initiating the abort sequence.

Use a timer or stopwatch to keep track of the characters' actions, adjusting the time for any combat rounds since it takes several real minutes to go through a few seconds of combat. The ticking watch should serve not only to keep you apprised of how much time has passed, but to visibly remind the players of the tense situation.

or emerge to seek shelter before sunrise. If the guards still live, they have difficulty breathing, and one collapses to the ground. The air in the bunker fouls as it stops circulating. The guards try to climb the ladder to the opening and force the door open regardless of the consequences. Players whose characters allow the guards to die should make Humanity or Path rolls if appropriate. Any character may help himself to the guards' vitae; neither is missed considering the recent disaster. Whatever the characters decide, they have one more problem before they can relax. If they emerge from the bunker in the next few minutes, the confrontation takes place outdoors. Remember that the sun is about to rise, if it hasn't already. If they remain within the bunker, they have less room to maneuver, but aren't burned by the sun.

IN THE BUNKER

By now, the bunker is completely dark. The generator no longer functions. The computer is dead and the air pumps no longer supply fresh air. Into this silence booms a gargantuan bellow of laughter, followed by the appearance of a dimly lit horrific shape that seems to emerge from the control console itself.

"Did you believe you could stop it that easily?" the figure speaks in a sibilant whisper. Some characters familiar with the lore they've encountered in the past may recognize the demon Kupala. If the characters immediately attack, Kupala sends the missiles to their targets, using the energy of the web to power them. There is nothing else the characters can do to prevent the catastrophe at this point. If they listen to the demon, they may make a choice that defeats Nosferatu's plan, and Saulot's as well.



Given the chance, Kupala continues. "Those contemptible darts could not even reach their targets without me! The Great One commands that I send them on their way despite your momentary interference. Even now, they hang in the sky awaiting my touch. I must obey him, for he holds me prisoner. Yet you may deny him his victory and assure yourselves that he can never again use my power for his own. Free me. Use the Sword of the Dragon to cut through the lines of power that form the web. Once they are broken, I am released and he cannot command me. Do this and I shall let the weapons die and fall into the waters. Harm me and they strike his foes. Which will it be?"

The characters may attack. If they do, Kupala releases his hold on the missiles. They hit Beijing and Manhattan with consequences best left up to Storyteller's imagination. Obviously, this is a fairly stupid thing to do.

They may agree to the demon's plan. If they do, they must take the sword and cut through the eight lines of power that Kupala makes visible as shimmering, vibrating lines just above water level. All touch a central area just above the bunker like the spokes of a wagon wheel. It takes one turn to sever each line. Remember that the sun is definitely up by now and Kupala cannot wait until dark for them to perform this task. The characters must suffer the consequences. Of course, they could take turns.

As the last line is severed, the sword shatters and the earth once again groans as another huge earthquake hits, burying the bunker and most of the power plant. The characters have to swim for it or be jerked into the Danube and flung downstream like twigs in a white water. If they can reach a nearby patch of trees on an elevated mound, they may shelter from the sun and get above the rising floodwaters. Once the earth stops shaking, they can either Earth Meld or cover themselves with leaves and dirt to make it through the day.

If characters do not have Dracula's sword, Lei knows how to sever the lines. If he must do so, he hands his sword to the strongest character and commands him to sever the line as Lei weakens it. Lei can last just long enough to finish

the job. His jade amulet gives him three minutes' protection against the sun; his amulet begins to rot away when exposed to it. It takes Lei two turns to weaken each strand, though it takes only one for the sword wielder to sever it. In the end, Lei melts into a puddle that swirls in the water and is gone.

Kupala speaks to them once again if they have destroyed the web, saying, "You have freed me and for this I grant you the right to continue existing — for now. Do not seek to bind me again or you will feel my true power. Leave. I reclaim the land I once ruled. If you are still here two nights hence, you will know agonies that make sunlight seem but a lover's kiss. Unless, of course, you wish to stay and serve me? No? Then be gone before I feast upon your souls, or what is left of them...." The demon departs, sinking into the earth, which blackens at his touch. The ground shudders, from his passage or an aftershock? The characters may never know. Of course, if they choose to serve Kupala, the Storyteller is encouraged to invent every heinous, soul-deadening horror for the characters to commit in his name until they cease to be player characters and emerge as some of the most villainous Storyteller characters of your chronicle.

AFTERMATH

Whatever Celestyn promised them as a reward awaits the characters in Sighisoara. They may collect their due and leave the country with no further difficulties. Some time after the characters leave, whether together or alone, each receives a small package brought by a courier, who cannot remember who sent the parcel. Inside each package is a filigree brooch shaped like an intricate spiderweb. Under it rests a note, each addressed to the character by name. In a strangely lettered upslanting handwriting it reads:

"To you, the first round,
but many more remain.
My congratulations and
my warning,
— A"





CHAPTER FIVE: DRAMATIS PERSONAE

But whether wake or dreaming, this I know
How dreamwise human glories come and go;
Whose momentary tenure not to break,
Walking as one who knows he soon may wake,
So fairly carry the full cup, so well
Disordered insolence and passion quell,
That there be nothing after to upbraid
Dreamer or doer in the part he played;
Whether to-morrow's dawn shall break the spell,
or the last trumpet of the Eternal Day,
When dreaming, with the night, shall pass away.

— Pedro Calderon de la Barca, “The Dream Called Life”

PLAYERS IN THE ETERNAL GAME

This chapter provides descriptions and, where appropriate, Traits for the significant Kindred who appear—or might appear—in the three stories that make up **The Dragon Ascendant**. If you feel you need to flesh out the numbers for characters with abbreviated treatments, you are free to do so, but remember that the most powerful characters are unlikely to come into direct, physical conflict with the player characters. If they do, the players’ characters may well be the ones to suffer.

ASSAMITE ANTITRIBU

FARIQ, CRUSADER ASSASSIN

6th generation, childe of Azif

Nature: Visionary

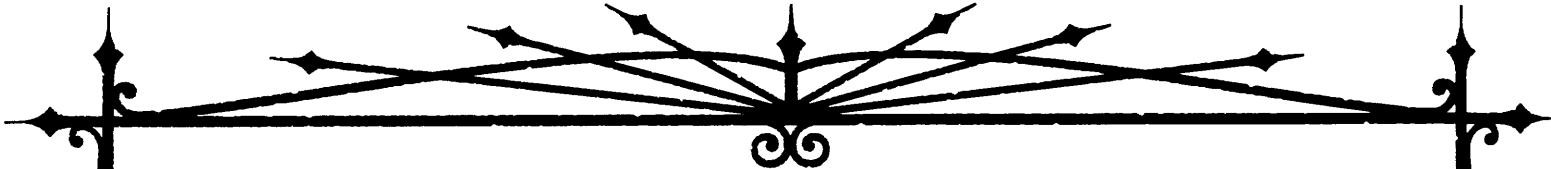
Demeanor: Rogue

Embrace: 4th c. B.C.

Apparent Age: early 30s

In 1566, Transylvania gained its independence from Hungary. While the Ottoman Empire maintained a stranglehold on Moldavia and Wallachia, the Turks granted “independence” to Transylvania, but only so long as it obeyed the will of the sultan. Exploiting this opportunity, a sorcerous Assamite vizier organized nocturnal crusades against the land beyond the forest. Unfortunately, his efforts met resistance from a strong network of princes organized by the Ventre.

The Ottoman Assamites failed to seize even one *tirsa* of Transylvania, but Fariq and Assamite *antitribu* like him focused on the Cainites who hid behind these domains. In service to Karif, the *hulul* who led the Assamite *antitribu*, they plotted to execute the Camarilla princes of Eastern Europe. Fariq’s top priority was the Eastern Lord Ventre who defended Transylvania. While Ottoman Assamites and Eastern Lord Ventre conspired against each other, their struggle gave Fariq and other Angels of Caine an opportunity to build networks of espionage throughout Eastern Europe. In the process, Fariq



has become one of many Cainites who helped the Sabbat utterly dominate nocturnal Transylvania.

Within a century of the Ottoman conquest of Transylvania, the Habsburg dynasty mustered enough power to drive back the Turkish hordes. While Hungary conquered the region by day, Sabbat packs continued to resist at night. Fariq had gained enough influence among his peers to assemble highly trained packs of Sabbat assassins. Working with other Angels of Caine, he culled the bloated ranks of Hungary's undead nobility. Although Budapest was home to Embraced Arpads, Habsburgs and other nobles, their ranks were decimated by Fariq's skillful attacks.

Fariq's mastery of pack tactics involved far more than simple strategic concerns. Before his Embrace, Fariq had been a humane and religious man. In the fourth century B.C., he was almost stoned to death by irate Christians for observing unholy rituals. Fariq served Dagon, a god who has since been abandoned by the world of men. Fariq has spent centuries in torpor, but after he rose again, he turned his back on the new gods of the human world. Fariq later reconstructed his ancient beliefs, coloring his rituals and observances with the practices of the Sabbat. To help organize skillful packs, he assumed the role of a Sabbat priest who performed the religious *ritae* that motivate Cainite packs to grand achievements. As a Cainite priest, he combined ancient rites in service to Dagon with modern Sabbat *ritae*. As such, he has become a minor religious leader, a Sabbat priest known for assembling cults of fanatic Saracens.

The centuries that followed Fariq's religious innovations provided perfect opportunities to test the skill of the fanatic packs he formed. Eastern Europe eventually became a battle-ground for two powerful factions: the Ottoman Empire and Russia. From Alamut, packs of non-Sabbat Assamites continued their raids on Eastern Europe, but to no avail. Although the Ottoman Assamites prospered in Wallachia and Moldavia, Transylvania remained beyond their grasp. For the Sword of Caine, pack mentalities triumphed where humanity failed. Following the *ignobilis ritae* Fariq devised, selectively chosen Angels of Caine learned to fight with wild abandon, harnessing the power of the Beast to drive them to greater glory.

The Embrace forever changed Fariq. Before his Embrace, he was a humane man and a religious scholar, but the Blood has given him both power and the temptations that come with it. In service to the Sabbat, he has abandoned his compassion. Over the last century, he has learned to incorporate his ancient religion into another system of ethics: the Path of Caine. Human religion no longer inspires him. Instead, he has learned to revel in the wisdom of the First Vampire. Fariq has attracted the attention of Sabbat Inquisition, but he has proven time and again to have the interests of Cainites at heart. In his haven in the Carpathians, he still secretly receives Sabbat packs who wish to attend his incarnadine observances.

BRUJAH ANTITRIBU

DOMINIC, BRUTE PATRIARCH

6th generation, childe of Samal

Nature: Barbarian

Demeanor: Rogue

Embrace: 3rd c. B.C.

Apparent Age: early 30s

Dominic is an unaging testament to Clan Brujah's origins: He was Embraced by a fifth-generation vampire in Carthage on the very night that Roman soldiers stormed the gates. He then began an epic campaign of revenge against the Roman Ventre and their descendants.

Dominic traveled in the wake of a great Magyar army, one led by a mortal known as Bulscu, the Man of Blood. As Magyar tribesmen attacked the Holy Roman Empire, Dominic rejoiced at finally having a chance to strike at the Ventre Methuselahs who hid behind it. Bulscu was a promising pupil, a ferocious mortal who seemed perfect for the Embrace. As a talented ghoul, the Man of Blood reverently accepted Dominic's *vitae* each week, but his master tantalized him with promises of immortality and the true power of Cainite blood. Dominic guided his pawn expertly, but just as he was about to triumph against his rivals and avenge Carthage, Bulscu betrayed Dominic. He tired of waiting for his promised reward, and instead petitioned Dominic's enemies to grant him the true power of the Blood. After accepting the Embrace from a Ventre, Bulscu revealed his newfound strength by driving a stake through Dominic's heart.

After Dominic arose from torpor, he tried to muster a revolution in Transylvania against the Holy Roman Empire, the Hungarian aristocracy who remained under their command, and the hidden Ventre who exploited them. His ultimate objective was revenge against Bulscu, his new prey in the ongoing Jyhad. Although serfs from Dominic's Transylvanian domain revolted against Hungarian overlords, Dominic was betrayed once more, this time by a Ravnos named Vassily Taltos. Vassily suggested an alliance with Yorak, the Tzimisce who once made his haven in the Cathedral of Flesh. Dominic fell into his trap and was tortured in that foul labyrinth for centuries. Through Vassily's misdirection, Hungarian Ventre were eventually blamed for Dominic's disappearance. The Methuselah became a martyr for displaced Dacian Brujah and the enemies of the Eastern Lord Ventre. It was impossible to prove what really happened to Dominic because he had been destroyed... or so his enemies believed.

Near the end of the 19th century, Dominic emerged from the Cathedral of Flesh. Surviving an honorary Creation Rite that had taken centuries, he was reborn into the ranks of the Sabbat. Although he was ancient enough to rise above the concerns of sect and clan, allying with the Sword of Caine perfectly suited his campaign of revenge. Once the Habsburg Ventre's mortal minions had been driven back to Hungary, Dominic created powerful *antitribu* childe to lead further crusades against the cities of Eastern Europe, especially those held by Camarilla Ventre. Bulscu, the Magyar who betrayed him eight centuries ago, had by then moved from the city of Budapest to a haven far to the north.

By the end of the 20th century, with the aid of Fariq and

his Assamite *antitribu*, Dominic finally destroyed Bulscu, but not until Eastern Europe suffered extensively in the process. Bulscu's Final Death, the fragmentation of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Shadow Curtain eventually opened up vast new territories throughout Asia. Dominic has withdrawn from such concerns, however. Having used his alliance with the Sabbat to destroy an ancient enemy, he has turned his back on them to join the ranks of the Inconnu, where he remains a distant observer of Cainite society. Methuselahs like him pursue epic goals that span millennia, but Dominic has finally fulfilled his role in the Jyhad. Patiently, he awaits the coming of Gehenna and the revelations of the Final Nights. As the fires of vengeance have waned within him, so has his control over the Beast, and the modern nights often see Dominic barely in control of his murderous frenzy.

FAIRUZA, SABBAT PACK DUCTUS

Background: Fairuza's family emigrated from Iran to the United States in 1980. Settling in California where her father opened a small Middle Eastern food store, Fairuza quickly adapted to the American lifestyle — much to the chagrin of her traditional family. Her father, fearing for his daughter's virtue, made her a virtual prisoner in their home, monitoring her trips to and from school and keeping her busy helping with the family business.

Matters came to a head when Fairuza graduated from high school and wanted to attend college. Her father forbade her from seeking further education, claiming that, as a woman, she had no need of it. Fairuza pretended to submit to her father's will but watched carefully for an opportunity to escape. The chance presented itself when Fairuza found herself alone in the bakery one day. She closed the shop and bolted, taking money from the cash drawer. She bought a bus ticket to Los Angeles and vanished from her family's lives.

As a runaway, Fairuza learned quickly how to survive on the streets. She hooked up with a gang led by a charismatic young man named Boudreaux, who appeared only at night and initiated her into his group's strange rituals — such as the drinking of his blood. By the time Boudreaux Embraced Fairuza, she was willing to do whatever he wanted her to... for a while.

Fairuza soon realized, despite her blood bond to her sire, that she was as much a prisoner of Boudreaux as she had been of her father. Boudreaux controlled her every action, keeping her close to him and dictating everything from the clothes she wore to the people she could associate with. Fairuza plotted her escape. A nomadic Sabbat pack provided her with the "out" she needed.

Fairuza willingly underwent the Creation Rite and survived her probationary period, earning the right to be called True Sabbat when she killed her sire and most of his gang. For a time, she relished the freedom of unlif with her pack. Eventually, she noticed that her pack leader, a Lasombra named Ruiz who prided himself on his machismo, rarely paid attention to her ideas. Fairuza watched him in battle and noted his lack of sophistication while she honed her



own skills. One night, she invoked the *ritus* of Monomancy, challenging her leader to a duel to the death. Expecting an easy victory over an upstart pack member, Ruiz toyed with Fairuza, not realizing that she had slipped inside his guard until it was too late. She gutted him from groin to throat.

Fairuza claimed Ruiz's place as *ductus* and has managed to retain that position through her charisma and sheer determination, rather than through tact or martial prowess. Five years ago, Fairuza and her pack traveled to Mexico to visit the center of Sabbat activity and attend the sect's most prestigious *Palla Grande*. Sascha Vykos also made an appearance at that grand rite and its exotic, genderless beauty drew Fairuza to it like a magnet.

The brash, determined young Brujah, in turn, impressed Sascha with some inner quality, for it requested that Fairuza and her pack escort it to several other appointments in Mexico City and Southern California. Since then, Fairuza's pack has served Sascha as a personal guard whenever the itinerant priscus decides to travel around the American continents, remaining on call whenever it has a need for them. Recently, Sascha has requested they oversee its negotiations with some high-ranking Camarilla Tremere in, of all places, Raleigh, North Carolina.

Fairuza's current pack consists of Guggenheim, a 9th-generation Toreador *antitribu*; Dinaro, a 10th-generation Lasombra; Flayer, a 10th-generation Tzimisce; Blitzkrieg, an 11th-generation Gangrel *antitribu*; Mole, a 13th-generation Nosferatu *antitribu* and Burn, a 9th-generation Ventre *antitribu*. Rowdy and Razor, two new recruits, are currently in their probationary period, hoping to survive long enough to join Fairuza's pack as True Sabbat.

Image: Fairuza has dusky skin, dark curly hair that reaches her shoulders and dark brown eyes. Like many Iranian women, she is shorter than average, with slight but athletic build. Graceful in her movements, Fairuza exudes an "in-your-face" attitude when



in the presence of anyone who might challenge her authority (with the exception of Sascha Vykos). She dresses for mobility and comfort rather than adornment. She wears no jewelry except for the 20 or so thin silver hoops that line her ears.

Roleplaying Hints: No one is ever going to control your life again. You have looked for freedom since before your Embrace and now you have fooled yourself into believing that you have found it in the Sabbat. While you accept the fact that you sometimes have to follow orders, you prefer that those orders come from someone who appreciates your talents rather than someone who just sees you as a subservient female. Sascha Vykos fits the bill perfectly. It does not consider you in terms of your gender but looks beyond the outer appearance into your spirit. Ironically, as much as others fear Sascha, with it you feel safe and unthreatened — as long as you do your job. Recently, Sascha has begun to reawaken your interest in academics, something your human family forced you to abandon. It reminds you that your clan has a history for scholarship as well as military excellence. You feel you should listen to its urgings for you to hone your intellect as well as your body.

Haven: Fairuza and her pack currently use an abandoned warehouse in Raleigh, North Carolina as a communal haven.

Secrets: Fairuza may know details of Sascha's doings in individual situations, but is willing to die before she revealed them to anyone she didn't think should know.

Influence: Within the Sabbat itself, Fairuza has little influence. As an adjunct of Sascha Vykos, however, she has the respect of most of the Sabbat (except for Sascha's rivals).

Destiny: Sustenance.

Clan: Brujah *antitribu*

Sire: The Devil Boudreax

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Bravo

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1985

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Grace 1, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Panhandling 2, Streetwise 2, Style 2, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Firearms 3, Melee 3, Stealth 2, Survival 1

Knowledges: Clan Knowledge (Tremere) 1, Computer 1, Investigation 2, Law 1, Linguistics (Kurdish, Spanish) 2, Occult 1, Politics 3

Disciplines: Celerity 3, Potence 2, Presence 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Resources 2, Sabbat Status 1

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

Morality: Path of Honorable Accord 5

Willpower: 6

GANGREL AND GANGREL ANTITRIBU

MITRU, KUPALAN CULTIST

7th generation, childe of Arnulf

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Defender

Embrace: 1190

Apparent Age: early 20s

Cainites who endure over the centuries either adapt to the changes around them or fall into stasis — and likely torpor. Mitru has ceased to evolve. He was once a powerful hunter stalking the forests of Transylvania, but has since degenerated into bestial fury, animal instincts and fallen almost wholly to the Beast. In his mortal days, he hunted the vampires who preyed upon the Transylvanian village of Cluj. As a creature of the night, he has become like the monsters he once destroyed.

As a defender of Transylvanian domains, Mitru maintained a fierce hatred of the Ottoman Assamites; thus, he allied with Dracula's Axes. He is now the leader of a pack of Gypsies and violent Gangrel that frustrates the designs of Assamite elders who hope to seize Transylvania and establish it as part of their sphere of influence. As part of this alliance, he pursues other tasks on behalf of his patron, Dracula.

By 1897, when *The Dragon Ascendant* begins, Vlad Dracula has failed to bring London under his sway. He returns instead to his timeless objective of mastering Kupala, a demon lurking beneath the soil of Transylvania. Mitru the Hunter, as part of his alliance with the Son of the Dragon, agrees to lead a pack of independent Gangrel to the city of Vienna, where he hopes to retrieve the *Incunabulum Kupalam*. His pack also has a second, more covert objective in Vienna. Through koldunic rituals — the only type of magic the Tremere do not know how to counter — the Axes attempt to poison the soil beneath the Viennese chantry.

In this first task, Mitru fails, overcome by Transylvanian rivals. In the second, he achieves surprising results. Summoned by koldunic rites, spirits of Kupala slowly infest the soil beneath Tremere's alleged haven. Barely escaping with his unlife, Mitru becomes the target of a worldwide blood hunt called by Clan Tremere. If the Hunter is not destroyed by the players' conspiracy, he is eventually slain by Etrius's Warlocks. Regardless, his centuries of suffering come to an end.

TIBERIU, THE RECALCITRANT SERVANT

10th generation, childe of Harnuth

Nature: Traditionalist

Demeanor: Conformist

Embrace: 1050

Apparent Age: indeterminate

For centuries, Tiberiu has acted as a scout and messenger to the most remote realms of Eastern Europe. Throughout the 19th century, he remained a faithful servant to both Radu

Bistri and Vlad Dracula. When Radu left for the New World, Tiberiu stayed in Transylvania to serve Dracula. Throughout the Victorian Age, those who wished an audience with the Son of the Dragon summoned Tiberiu to Bistria. The mysterious Transylvanian cautiously took them in a rickety coach through the dismal mountain roads leading to Borgo Pass.

While Radu remained an anachronism in a rapidly changing world, Vlad Tepes wanted to evolve with this new age. In a vain attempt to side with the Camarilla, the Son of the Dragon attempted to set up a series of havens in the heart of London. Tiberiu himself led a solicitor named Renfield, the poor fool who later became Dracula's favored ghoul, to the castle in Borgo Pass. Just as Tiberiu assisted Vlad in escaping across the Carpathians in the 15th century, the Gangrel minion worked with Renfield to organize his master's voyage from Varna to Whitby. Dracula's scheme failed utterly, however, and within a few years, Tiberiu again aided the Son of the Dragon when he fled back to Transylvania.

Cardinal Radu was overjoyed to hear of his rival's failure and immediately returned to Transylvania to exploit further political opportunities. There he learned of the unwholesome activities of the childe of Vassily Taltos, recent victories of the Inquisition and an ancient tome called the *Incunabulum Kupalam*. Tiberiu was then enlisted to deliver messages to many of Radu's old confidants, including Nova Arpad and a rather remarkable conspiracy of elders from Transylvania.

In the century that follows, Tiberiu continues to serve as a messenger for what is left of the Council of Ashes, a conspiracy of vampiric once-weres from the Dark Ages. He also fares poorly in the struggle against the Beast over the intervening centuries, and takes on many aspects of the bears, wolves and bats of his homeland at the foot of the Carpathians.

By the end of Act Three, if the characters' conspiracy treats him with respect, Tiberiu may continue to serve as an informant and messenger for them, bringing choice morsels of information about Sabbat domains from Mexico City to Montreal.

LA SOMBRA ANTITRIBU

LUCITA

Background: Born to the Aragonese nobility, Lucita's willful spirit and independent nature put her at odds with her family and indirectly led to her forced Embrace by her "confessor," Monçada. Her transformation did nothing to tame her boldness, however, and Lucita eventually parted company with her sire and—after the Lasombra defection to the Sabbat—her clan. While she has served the Camarilla as an archon in the past and still prefers that sect over its rival, Lucita operates as an independent agent. As a Lasombra *antitribu*, she harbors a burning hostility for her former clan, seeing in them an insufferable arrogance that has no true nobility to sustain it.

Over the years, Lucita's association with Anatole, the Malkavian prophet, has taken her over much of the world.

Her martial skills, honed over the centuries, have made her a consummate warrior, while her diplomatic training allows her to function as an ideal spy and agent provocateur. Although she perceives herself as Anatole's guardian, she has developed her own interest in Kindred history, making her a scholar in her own right. Together with Anatole and Beckett, Lucita is one of the foremost authorities on the Final Nights and the signs of the awakening of the Ancients.

Lucita travels with Anatole and Beckett to America, where she continues to act as the anchor for her two mystical, driven companions. Her own reputation as a warrior (albeit an independent one) on behalf of the Camarilla grows nightly. Her ability to adapt to the changing times gives her an edge over others of her age and generation, lending her insight into the modern world and increasing her ability to protect her self-appointed charges.

Image: Tall and willowy, with olive skin and dark black hair, Lucita exemplified the classic appearance of old Spanish nobility. She has updated her wardrobe to reflect the times, although she still prefers stylish clothing in dark colors and often wears skirts instead of more casual attire.

Roleplaying Hints: You have changed your outward appearance to blend in with the modern world, but you secretly mourn the passing of true nobility among mortal society. What passes for aristocracy—the so-called "jet set" of celebrities, media stars and rich, young entrepreneurs—pales before the true elegance of those born to the Blood. Still, the excitement and vigor of the modern world impresses you and you can't bear to see it destroyed by Gehenna. Your commitment to Anatole and Beckett remains strong because it is voluntary, although you worry even more about Anatole since his diablerie of Octavio. You try to steer him away from others such temptations. You firmly believe, however, that Anatole and, to a lesser extent, Beckett hold the key to Kindred survival in the coming nights.



Haven: Anywhere that presents a safe shelter for herself and her traveling companions.

Secrets: Lucita's knowledge of Gehenna has grown over the centuries. She also knows of Anatole's many diableries and of his conviction that the demon Kupala now speaks through him. This disturbs her greatly.

Influence: Lucita exercises great personal influence among Kindred who have met her and have availed themselves of her skill and knowledge. Her reputation as a warrior and her willingness to defend the Camarilla against the Sabbat has made her many allies — as well as enemies. Scholars of Kindred history also look to her for advice and for interpretations of Anatole's incomprehensible utterances.

Destiny: Lucita continues her wanderings, taking advantage of the ease of travel to spend time in both the Americas and in Europe.

Clan: Lasombra *antitribu*

Sire: Ambrosio Luis Monçada

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Defender

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1190

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Grace 3, Intimidation 1, Leadership 4, Streetwise 1, Style 4, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Archery 2, Drive 2, Etiquette 4, Melee 4, Performance 3, Ride 2, Security 1, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Academics 3, Camarilla Lore 3, Investigation 3, Linguistics (you name it, she probably speaks it) 5, Occult 4, Politics 3, Sabbat Lore 3

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Celerity 3, Dominate 5, Fortitude 4, Obfuscate 3, Obtenebration 6, Potence 3, Protean 2, Serpentis 1

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 5, Herd 2, Influence 2, Resources 5, Sabbat Status 1, Status 1

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

Morality: Humanity 4

Willpower: 7

MALKAVIAN

ANATOLE

Background: Even as a mortal, spiritual matters fascinated Anatole. The prophetic visions that visited Anatole after his Embrace indicated that Anatole had a mission in his unlif as a conduit to express God's purpose for the Children of Caine. Led down strange paths by his dreams, Anatole committed diablerie on other vampires in an attempt to absorb their insights. Many of his visions concerned Gehenna; others told him of the demon Kupala's restless dormancy beneath the soil of Transylvania.

During the French Revolution, Anatole experienced a transformation of his visionary goal, drawing him away from attempts to reconcile Kindred existence with the will of God. Instead he became a harbinger of the Final Nights.

His meeting with Octavio, another mad prophet who claimed to be the mouthpiece of the demon Kupala, led to a fateful turn in Anatole's unlif. Unwilling to bear his burden any longer, Octavio sought to pass his legacy to Anatole through diablerie.

Since that time, Anatole has carried within him a double curse. Octavio's spirit continues to dwell within Anatole's body, providing him with more profound insights into the coming darkness of Gehenna. In addition, Kupala now speaks through Anatole, who incorporates the demon's perverse omens and directives into his utterances.

Anatole's attachment to Lucita provides him with a faithful companion who can sometimes interpret his visions for others. He considers himself Lucita's protector and, in fact, demonstrates a fair degree of competency as a warrior.

For the last two centuries, Anatole has kept company with Beckett, another seeker of the truth of Kindred existence and a noted commentator on the *Book of Nod*.

Image: Due primarily to Lucita's insistence, Anatole has changed his appearance to conform to modern fashions. His matted blond dreadlocks give him the appearance of a Rastafarian and his piecemeal clothing gives him the look of a vagrant. Of medium height and unremarkable features, Anatole has the face of a fanatic. His eyes burn with the fire of his visions.

Roleplaying Hints: Your inner torment drives you to the edge of despair as you see clearly what will happen but cannot express your visions except in symbols that mean little to others. Now that you harbor within you the soul of your mentor and the voice of a demon, your insights draw you ever closer to the truth. Sooner or later, the future must manifest to you with the brilliance of a long-forgotten sunrise. Your respite comes only when the eight signs pass and your voices and visions trouble you no more.

Haven: Wherever Anatole can take shelter for the day.

Secrets: Anatole has an ability akin to True Faith, although it does not seem connected with any recognizable religious belief. His ability to repel unwanted Kindred and other supernatural creatures defies explanation. He can also perform miraculous deeds at critical moments.

Influence: While Anatole lacks traditional "status" among Kindred, those who have met him cannot deny his conviction. He has acquired a following of ghouls and human acolytes who believe he is a holy man.

Destiny: In the late 20th century, Anatole grows more desperate to communicate the urgency of his visions. He travels frantically from place to place, in the Americas, in Europe and in parts of Asia and Africa, searching for Kindred who might believe and act upon his prophecies. Finally, just before the turn of the millennium, Anatole pours out his visions into a stream-of-consciousness epic and meets his Final Death.

Clan: Malkavian



Sire: Pierre l'Imbecile

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Penitent

Generation: 6th (due to his diablerie of Octavio)

Embrace: 1193

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 4, Expression 4, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Archery 2, Crafts 3, Drive 1, Etiquette 1, Melee 3, Ride 1, Stealth 3, Survival 4

Knowledges: Academics 3, Computer 2, Enigmas 4, Investigation 2, Law 1, Linguistics (Spanish, English, Romanian, German) 3, Occult 4, Theology 2

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Auspex 5, Celerity 2, Dominate 4, Fortitude 4, Obscure 6, Potence 2

Backgrounds: Herd 3, Retainers 4

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 2, Courage 5

Morality: Road of Heaven 5

Willpower: 6

True Faith: 1

BECKETT

7th generation, alleged child of Aristotle de Laurent

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Judge

Embrace: unknown

Apparent Age: late 20s or early 30s

Although many believe Beckett's claim to be the childe of Aristotle de Laurent, many more question his clan

affiliation—since he exhibits none of the peculiar tendencies that might mark him as a Malkavian. Whether de Laurent actually Embraced Beckett or simply adopted him as a protégé matters less to Kindred who have encountered Beckett than his reputation as a scholar of Gehenna. Beckett's theories concerning the origin and veracity of the *Book of Nod* have caused controversy in some Kindred circles.

His world travels in search of information regarding the mystery of Kindred existence and his questions regarding the destiny of Kindred place him in the company of philosophers and madmen, sages and prophets.

In the 1890s, Beckett finds his way to Vienna, where the ideas of Dr. Sigmund Freud concerning the human psyche fascinate him. Perhaps out of a desire to correlate Freud's research with the vampiric condition—particularly with regard to the relationship between sire and childe—Beckett studies the techniques of psychoanalysis from the master himself.

His interest in Kindred history does not flag, however. In the 20th century, Beckett's travels take him all over the world. Occasionally in the company of Anatole and Lucita, he spends his nights tracking down even the most obscure rumors that might add to his ever-growing knowledge of Kindred lore.

NOSFERATU

ZELIOS, MASTER MASON

7th generation, childe of Hannibal

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Pedagogue

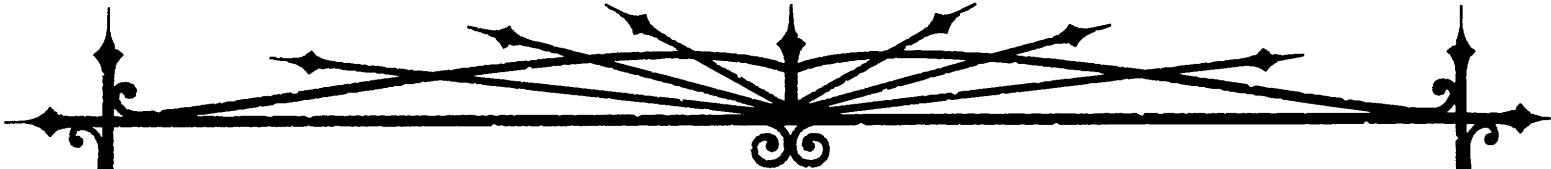
Embrace: 1020

Apparent Age: early 30s

After completing his occult studies in the Middle East, Zelios left for the New World, becoming a primogen in the New World. As it turned out, his skills as a politician were not as developed as his talents as an architect. Not long after Zelios came to the New World, New York City fell before the claws of the Sabbat. Before the Sword of Caine took over, however, Zelios had influenced the construction of a series of massive labyrinths beneath the city. Throughout the Victorian Age, the Nosferatu *antitribu* modified Zelios's extensive system of subway tunnels and sewer mains.

Zelios returned to his calling as an architect, finding no solace in the political arena. Although he was no longer able to build complex castles and palaces, he still furthered the growth of cities in the New World. With his assistance, Nosferatu developed their underground kingdoms, building unseen realms beneath the cities of kine. While princes gathered boons in the streets above, Nosferatu secured their territories below. Zelios was soon welcomed in cities throughout the New World, offering his assistance to any who wanted to expand the clan's underground domains.

Despite his accomplishments, Zelios never truly felt like any of his work was *complete*. Fortunately, the modern age has given him a chance for redemption. The Tremere



covet Manhattan and have once again moved against the Sabbat packs that stalk the streets. While they maneuver in the city above, Zelios is more concerned with the city below. For centuries, the Nosferatu *antitribu* have overseen radical changes to the underground terrain, creating unseen labyrinths the kine of the city never suspected.

In Act One of The Dragon Ascendant, if any Nosferatu in the players' conspiracy has remained on good terms with Zelios, he may continue to advise them on ways to expand their underground domains. Prior to Act Two, however, Zelios meets Final Death; the circumstances are not yet widely known.

RAVNOS

VLAĐISLAV TALTOS, THE INSTRUMENT OF REVENGE

9th generation, childe of Vassily Taltos

Nature: Rogue

Demeanor: Conniver

Embrace: 1362

Apparent Age: 23

In the 14th century, Vassily Taltos, a former confidant of the princes of Transylvania, tired of the machinations of the Eastern European Jihad. Turning his back on an unlif of uncertainty and chaos, he made a valiant attempt to create a haven for his Ravnos allies and Rroma relations. His *kumpania* made its home on the Field of Blackbirds in the province of Kosovo Polje. Guided by Vassily's astute political leadership, the Gypsies established a small hamlet with a population of several dozen. Despite occasional troubles from the local Serbs, the Rroma protected by Vassily prospered. They named this hamlet after the local province: Kosovo.

The Turks, however, had other plans in mind. In 1362, the Field of Blackbirds became the site of a terrible skirmish, the Battle of Kosovo. This was Eastern Europe's last desperate stand against the encroaching Turkish hordes. The advancing Ottoman Turks not only forced back European armies, but also decimated most of the towns in the region. The Serbs suffered the most, losing their lands to soldiers of a vastly different culture.

Mere nights after the battle, Vassily swore his revenge. Filled with hatred and mourning the death of his *kumpania*, he sired Vladislav, a childe conceived in rage. That night, Vassily abandoned all hope of finding a permanent home for his people. If the Ravnos could not exist peacefully with the other clans, then they were forever set against them. Long ago, he had learned the treacherous politics used by the Eastern Lord Ventru. On the night of his childe's Embrace, he vowed to use this same tactics against them. Schooled in the ways of Cainites by his sire, Vladislav inherited Vassily's hatred. Many of the European Ravnos also harbored a hatred for the Camarilla. Vassily came to represent this quality at its worst.

His childe Vladislav's greatest crusade against the princes of Europe involved an elaborate scheme against the Camarilla

domain of Vienna. In his travels, he uncovered a tome printed in the late 15th century, the *Incunabulum Kupalam*. He soon learned of several cults that desired this treasure, including one within the Black Hand. Playing both sides against the middle, he made a tentative offer to Clan Tremere, sending a messenger to their largest chantry in Vienna. By igniting open warfare between the most powerful Warlocks of Europe and Sabbat agents in the heart of the city, he orchestrated a grand scheme of deception, an accomplishment that was repeated around Gypsy campfires well into the modern nights.

If Vladislav survives Act One of **The Dragon Ascendant**, he continues to raise hell in the largest cities of Eastern Europe. If he actually manages to survive the decades that follow, he eventually returns to the Field of Blackbirds in Kosovo, where Vassily's *kumpania* once attempted to build a village bearing the same name. In 1999, he witnesses the local Serbs campaign of "ethnic cleansing" against the Albanians of the region. Some justify their acts by citing the Battle of Kosovo in 1362. Hatred never dies.

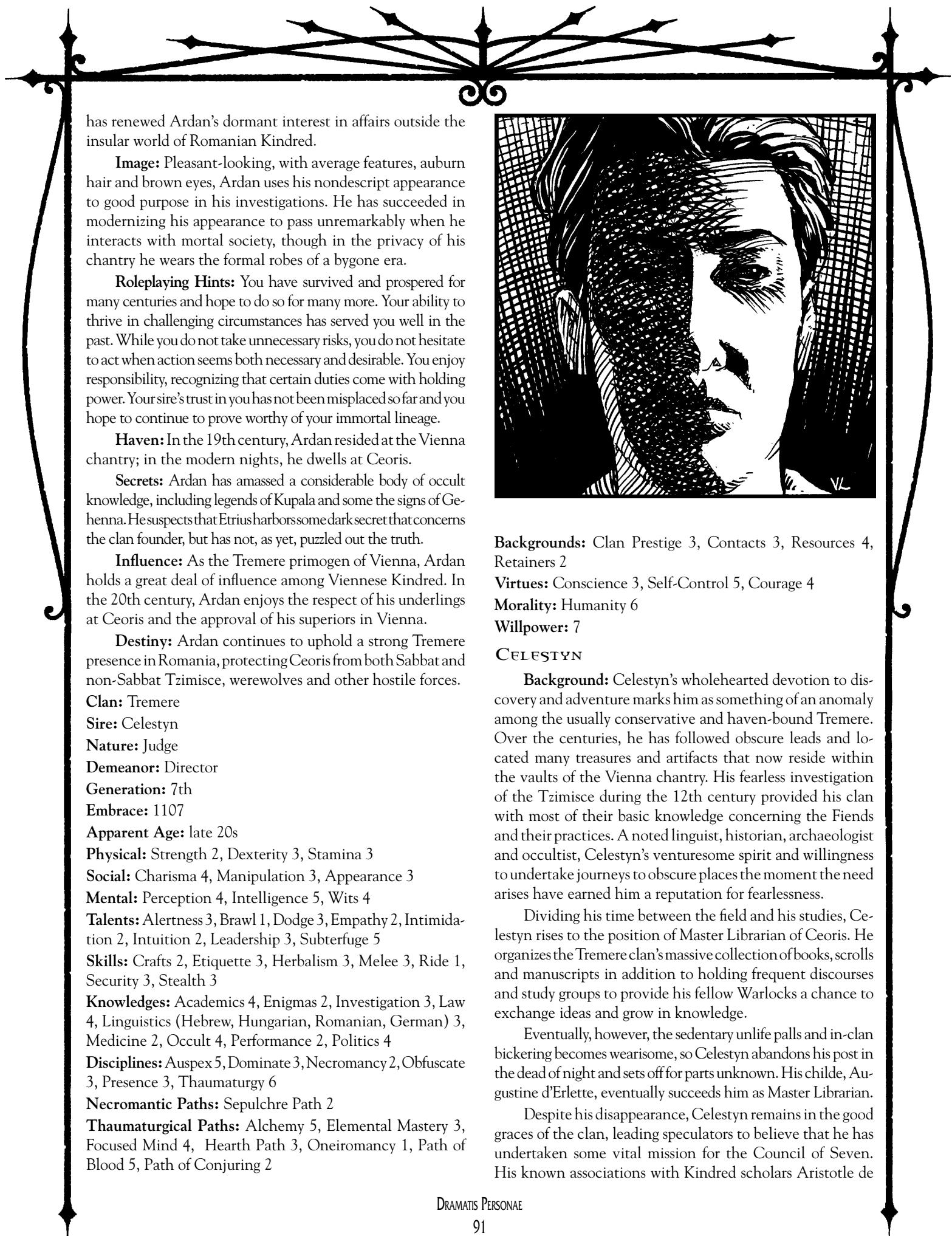
TREMERE

ARDAN LANE (FORMERLY ARDAN OF GOLDEN LANE)

Background: Combining personal ambition with a desire for responsibility, Ardan has risen through the ranks of the Tremere over the centuries of his unlif. Given charge of a secret chantry in Prague in the 12th century, Ardan now serves the Tremere well as an infiltrator, providing safety and financial support for the clan's efforts in Transylvania. Rewarded with the command of Ceoris after the relocation of Tremere's slumbering body to Vienna, Ardan holds that chantry until summoned to Vienna in the 1900's to assume the position of Tremere primogen.

In Vienna, Ardan proves a capable primogen, demonstrating his skill at the political and social games and earning the respect of his fellow Tremere. His ability to plan for the unexpected as well as his willingness to undertake the search for the *Incunabulum Kupalam* draws the attention of his superiors in the clan. When war breaks out in Austria in 1914, Ardan once again moves to Ceoris at the behest of the Council of Seven, who feel his subtlety serves them best in Eastern Europe. Unlike many Kindred, Ardan does not flee Romania during the Nazi occupation. He maintains Ceoris as a haven for Tremere refugees (those who disagree with serving Hitler's National Socialism) and continues his efforts to hold the chantry inviolate against both mortal enemies and hostile Tzimisce.

Ardan weathers the Communist regime in Romania, seeking alliances with some of the more tolerant (if such is possible) non-Sabbat Tzimisce whenever possible. After the fall of Ceausescu, Ardan attempts to reassert Tremere power among the Kindred of Romania. The recent reappearance of his sire, Celestyn, from his journeys among the Kuei-jin



has renewed Ardan's dormant interest in affairs outside the insular world of Romanian Kindred.

Image: Pleasant-looking, with average features, auburn hair and brown eyes, Ardan uses his nondescript appearance to good purpose in his investigations. He has succeeded in modernizing his appearance to pass unremarkably when he interacts with mortal society, though in the privacy of his chantry he wears the formal robes of a bygone era.

Roleplaying Hints: You have survived and prospered for many centuries and hope to do so for many more. Your ability to thrive in challenging circumstances has served you well in the past. While you do not take unnecessary risks, you do not hesitate to act when action seems both necessary and desirable. You enjoy responsibility, recognizing that certain duties come with holding power. Your sire's trust in you has not been misplaced so far and you hope to continue to prove worthy of your immortal lineage.

Haven: In the 19th century, Ardan resided at the Vienna chantry; in the modern nights, he dwells at Ceoris.

Secrets: Ardan has amassed a considerable body of occult knowledge, including legends of Kupala and some of the signs of Ge-henna. He suspects that Etrius harbors some dark secret that concerns the clan founder, but has not, as yet, puzzled out the truth.

Influence: As the Tremere primogen of Vienna, Ardan holds a great deal of influence among Viennese Kindred. In the 20th century, Ardan enjoys the respect of his underlings at Ceoris and the approval of his superiors in Vienna.

Destiny: Ardan continues to uphold a strong Tremere presence in Romania, protecting Ceoris from both Sabbat and non-Sabbat Tzimisce, werewolves and other hostile forces.

Clan: Tremere

Sire: Celestyn

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Director

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1107

Apparent Age: late 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Intuition 2, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Crafts 2, Etiquette 3, Herbalism 3, Melee 3, Ride 1, Security 3, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Academics 4, Enigmas 2, Investigation 3, Law 4, Linguistics (Hebrew, Hungarian, Romanian, German) 3, Medicine 2, Occult 4, Performance 2, Politics 4

Disciplines: Auspex 5, Dominate 3, Necromancy 2, Obfuscate 3, Presence 3, Thaumaturgy 6

Necromantic Paths: Sepulchre Path 2

Thaumaturgical Paths: Alchemy 5, Elemental Mastery 3, Focused Mind 4, Hearth Path 3, Oneiromancy 1, Path of Blood 5, Path of Conjuring 2



Backgrounds: Clan Prestige 3, Contacts 3, Resources 4, Retainers 2

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 5, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 6

Willpower: 7

CELESTYN

Background: Celestyn's wholehearted devotion to discovery and adventure marks him as something of an anomaly among the usually conservative and haven-bound Tremere. Over the centuries, he has followed obscure leads and located many treasures and artifacts that now reside within the vaults of the Vienna chantry. His fearless investigation of the Tzimisce during the 12th century provided his clan with most of their basic knowledge concerning the Fiends and their practices. A noted linguist, historian, archaeologist and occultist, Celestyn's venturesome spirit and willingness to undertake journeys to obscure places the moment the need arises have earned him a reputation for fearlessness.

Dividing his time between the field and his studies, Celestyn rises to the position of Master Librarian of Ceoris. He organizes the Tremere clan's massive collection of books, scrolls and manuscripts in addition to holding frequent discourses and study groups to provide his fellow Warlocks a chance to exchange ideas and grow in knowledge.

Eventually, however, the sedentary unlife palls and in-clan bickering becomes wearisome, so Celestyn abandons his post in the dead of night and sets off for parts unknown. His childe, Augustine d'Erlette, eventually succeeds him as Master Librarian.

Despite his disappearance, Celestyn remains in the good graces of the clan, leading speculators to believe that he has undertaken some vital mission for the Council of Seven. His known associations with Kindred scholars Aristotle de

Laurent and Beckett lend support to the idea that Celestyn has embarked on a secret quest for more information about the Final Nights or the secrets of the vampiric condition.

In actuality, Celestyn has decided to travel to the mysterious lands of the Cathayans and investigate them himself. Unsatisfied with the incomplete reports of the Tremere in Hong Kong and other Asian cities, Celestyn makes his own inquiry, ignoring his fellow European vampires as much as possible. Although he proceeds cautiously, he seems to have gained some acceptance among the Asian vampires — as proven by his survival. The reversion of Hong Kong to China in July 1998 serves as a sign to Celestyn that his time in the East has come to an end.

He returns to Ceoris and, after speaking with Ardan Lane, travels to Vienna to meet with the Council of Seven and present his report. After spending many hours closeted with Etrius in the elder's private chambers, Celestyn leaves the Vienna chantry and sets out on a "tour" of European chantries. What he discovered in the East remains known only to Etrius, for the present.

Image: Celestyn has a pleasant face, dark blond hair and brown eyes. His muscular body gives him a distinctly unscholarly appearance and suits him for travel and rugged unlfe. He dresses in comfortable khakis and rugged twills except when formal occasions demand more appropriate attire. He has acquired a considerable collection of clothing and jewelry from his Asian travels.

Roleplaying Hints: You have learned many curious facts about the customs and beliefs of the Eastern vampires, and the fact that you survived seems more and more remarkable to you with each passing night. Sometimes you wonder if your sources haven't deliberately misinformed you in order to use you to spread misinformation about the "Kuei-jin," as they call themselves. Still, much of what you have learned makes sense — particularly with regard to the Asian vampires' interpretation of the Caine legend and their animosity to the renegade they refer to as Zao-lat. You only wish there were more time to learn from them. Instead, it seems that conflict between East and West looms on the horizon — just one step ahead of Gehenna. Nevertheless, you strive to do what you can to ameliorate both the coming problems with the Asian Kindred and the inevitable war with the ancient vampires.

Haven: Celestyn occupies a series of chambers in Ceoris when he is not traveling elsewhere in Europe.

Secrets: Celestyn can ferret out many secrets worth knowing (in his opinion). Currently, he is perhaps one of the few Kindred who has any reliable information about the mysterious Asian vampires. Celestyn's inquisitive nature lends him an open-mindedness rarely found among Kindred. He does not scoff at the possibility that western vampires have somehow misunderstood their condition. His one fear, however, is that he may one night fall to one of his Tzimisce enemies such as Sascha Vykos, his archenemy, and pay for his past investigations into the Fiends' secrets.



Influence: Celestyn deliberately refrains from exercising his clout among his fellows, preferring to let his ideas and arguments speak for themselves. He enjoys the admiration and respect of his childer, Ardan Lane and Auguste d'Erlette, as well as the esteem of Etrius and Meerlinda among the Council of Seven.

Destiny: Celestyn continues his quest for knowledge on the eve of Gehenna.

Clan: Tremere

Sire: Etrius

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Celebrant

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1039

Apparent Age: late 20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Enigmas 2, Grace 2, Intimidation 1, Intuition 2, Leadership 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Archery 1, Drive 1, Etiquette 3, Herbalism 4, Meditation 3, Melee 3, Performance 3, Ride 3, Stealth 3, Survival 4

Knowledges: Academics (Metaphysics) 5, Astrology 2, Cartography 2, Hearth Wisdom 3, History 3, Investigation 3, Law 1, Linguistics (Arabic, English, French, Greek, Hungarian, Cantonese, Mandarin, Russian) 4, Navigation 2, Occult 6, Science 3

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Auspex 3, Celerity 2, Chimerstry 1, Dominate 4, Fortitude 4, Obscure 3, Potence 2, Protean 4, Thaumaturgy 5

Thaumaturgical Paths: Elemental Mastery 2, The Green Path 4, Path of Blood 5, Thaumaturgical Countermagic 2

Backgrounds: Clan Prestige 3, Contacts 4, Influence 3, Resources 4, Retainers 1

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

Morality: Humanity 7

Willpower: 7

TREMERE

3rd generation Antediluvian of Clan Tremere

Nature: Unknown

Demeanor: Varies

Embrace: 1022

Apparent Age: varies

One of the most potent mages in Europe during his lifetime, Tremere and seven of his followers discover a ritual which transforms them into vampires. His diablerie of Saulot in 1133 solidifies the Tremere's status as a clan. Unfortunately, Tremere does not fully understand the implications of his action, for Saulot's soul remains active within the former mage, plunging him into a centuries long battle of wills for control of his own body.

Guarded by Etrius, Tremere wages a silent struggle with Saulot, slipping into and out of torpor as he attempts to subdue the Salubri Antediluvian's desire for dominance. Cursed (or blessed) with an unstable form as a result of his "Embrace," Tremere finds his body assuming numerous and often horrific forms, at times leaving him a mouthless quadriplegic, while at other times cocooning him in a hideous, larval mass.

Eventually, it becomes clear to Tremere that Saulot is winning the battle. Tremere embarks on a bold ploy to salvage what he can of himself and to warn his clan of Saulot's diabolical intentions.

Using Etrius as a temporary vessel, Tremere leaves his body and inhabits his most faithful servant. He instructs Etrius to deliver him to Mexico, where he believes he can find a more suitable body to possess — that of his rogue student Goratrix.

Despite his agonizing mental struggle (or, perhaps, because of it), Tremere has retained his sanity — indeed, a plunge into madness would have guaranteed his immediate destruction by Saulot. Nevertheless, he is far from a paragon of mental fortitude, exhibiting a fanatic desire to achieve his goal, driving Etrius to exhaustion in his utter focus on gaining a permanent body.

Tremere knows of Saulot's deception and of the Salubri founder's plans regarding Gehenna. He is also aware of Saulot's connection with the Baali. He hopes to use this information to his advantage in the upcoming tribulation.

No Traits exist for Tremere. As a bodiless spirit, he has no Physical Attributes. His Mental and Social traits surpass most (if not all) extant Kindred. If characters come into conflict with him, they lose. Period. Do not test the gods.

ETRIUS, THE LOYAL

4th generation, nominal childe of Tremere

Nature: Unknown

Demeanor: Conformist

Embrace: 1022

Apparent Age: early 30s

Once a powerful Swedish mage, Etrius follows Tremere into unlife—and has regretted it ever since. Still, his devotion to his "sire" and mentor has sustained him through the long nights of inner torment. Driven by his anguish at what he has become, Etrius emerges as the leader of those Tremere who oppose Embracing mortal members of House Tremere against their will. Although he fails to dissuade his fellow vampires from this tactic, Etrius remains unwavering in his loyalty to Tremere. His rivalry with Goratrix for Tremere's attentions (and, some say, affections) causes such discord within the clan that Tremere finally disperses his seven council members to distant parts of the world. Etrius remains at Ceoris, keeping vigil over Tremere's slumbering form. Eventually, Etrius moves Tremere (and the clan headquarters) to Vienna. There he passes the time in study, honing his keen intellect and becoming adept at many forms of Thaumaturgy.

Gradually, Etrius becomes aware of the intense, nightly struggle going on inside Tremere's body. Receiving cryptic telepathic messages from Tremere, Etrius pieces together most of the story of Saulot's secret treachery. When Tremere announces to Etrius his plan to transfer his spirit to another body, using Etrius as a temporary vessel, Etrius submits — though not without question — to the will of his master.

Etrius usually disguises his astute intelligence behind a placid, somewhat morose façade. While he serves as a host for Tremere's spirit, however, he exhibits erratic changes of mood and personality, as Tremere drives him to complete his purpose.

As with Tremere, no Traits are given for Etrius. Storytellers who feel they need to quantify Etrius's Traits may do so as they wish, with the understanding that Etrius clearly outstrips the characters. His command of Thaumaturgy includes all known paths (as well as some obsolete ones) and he knows whatever rituals necessary for the purposes of the story.

GORATRIX, THE BETRAYER

4th generation, nominal childe of Tremere

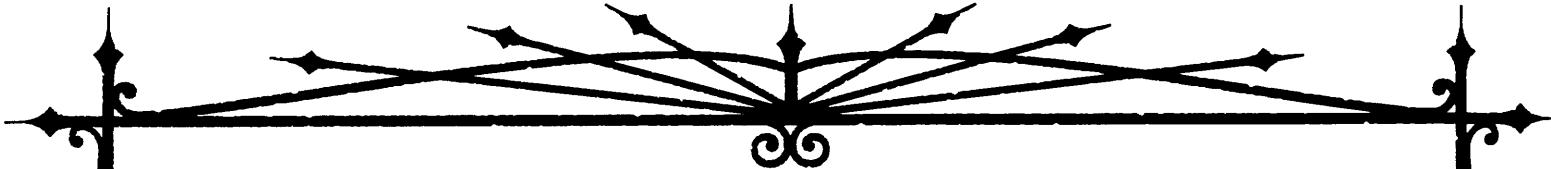
Nature: Unknown

Demeanor: Rogue

Embrace: 1022

Apparent Age: early 30s

The creator of the ritual that transforms Tremere and his seven most trusted colleagues into vampires, Goratrix leads the faction that advocates the forcible and immediate transformation of the remaining mortal Tremere mages into vampires. Brilliant and egotistical to the extreme, Goratrix takes to his new unlife with relish. Adamantly opposed to Etrius, his primary rival in the eyes of Tremere, Goratrix



embarks on experiments that result in the creation of Gargoyles as servants of the clan. Given the position of regent for France, the wealthiest and possibly the most important region of Europe in the 12th century, Goratrix embroils himself in many risky ventures — the most notorious one involving the discrediting of the Templars and the attempt to acquire their treasure. Summoned to Ceoris to answer for his misuse of power and his endangerment of the clan, Goratrix receives the censure of his fellow Warlocks.

Although he makes an appearance before the Council, Goratrix rebels against his clan and flees before his trial reaches an end. He allies himself with the anarchs during their uprising and, after the Convention of Thorns, casts his lot with the fledgling Sabbat. As the head of the Sabbat Tremere (whom he refers to as "House Goratrix"), Goratrix continues to indulge his talent for bizarre experimentation and, reportedly, flirts with summoning infernal creatures. Rumors spread that the Tremere *antitribu* consort with demons and other nefarious monsters of the infernal host.

Goratrix's power within the Sabbat grows until he threatens the highest levels of the sect's leadership. Although the Sabbat recognizes a need for magical support, most members do not trust Goratrix's Tremere.

Goratrix prides himself on his appearance. With dark brown hair, hazel eyes and a clean-shaven face, he attracts admiring glances from those around him, yet few miss the cruelty that lies just below the surface. He dresses in stylish clothes that speak of wealth without ostentation and cultivates the image of himself as a scholar, sage and genius.

Storytellers who wish to create Traits for Goratrix should feel free to do so. His Traits should rival those of Etrius and exceed Kindred of higher generations.

TZIMISCE

SASCHA VYKOS

6th generation, childe of Symeon

Nature: Monster

Demeanor: Visionary

Embrace: 1002

Apparent Age: indistinguishable

Once known as Myca Vykos, Sascha has painstakingly transformed itself into a creature of alien beauty and horrid fascination, shedding the last vestiges of its identification with humanity in the process. As Myca, Sascha participates in some of the key actions that led to the formation of the Sabbat and to the supposed diablerie of the Tzimisce clan founder. It masterminds the attack on the village of Silchester, near Thorns, as a protest against the humiliation of the anarchs at the Convention of Thorns. That action, seminal to the creation of the Sabbat, inspires Sascha to undertake a lengthy (ongoing) recrafting of its body and a continual "makeover" of its identity.

Sascha Vykos serves the Sabbat as a scholar, putting its vast knowledge of Kindred lore and Noddist scholarship to use for the benefit of the sect, and as a canny and ruthless warrior, outthinking as well as outfighting its opponents.

As an itinerant priscus, Sascha commands a great deal of power within the Sabbat. Its eerie presence acts as an unliving reminder that vampires have separated themselves from their mortal beginnings. Its wisdom and insight, based on centuries of observation, experience and study, lend direction to the elders of the Sabbat, while its zeal and ferocity as a warrior endear it to the sect's younger, more violent element.

Sascha's willingness to undertake the delicate negotiations between Etrius and Goratrix, despite its personal vendetta against the Tremere, offer incontrovertible proof of its devotion to the Sabbat.

A detailed portrait of Sascha, along with appropriate listings for Traits, can be found in *Children of the Night*. Storytellers should use the statistics provided in that book if necessary. The characters should know better than to provoke Sascha's anger or engage it in hostilities. In they are foolish enough to do so, however, the characters deserve everything they get.

VLA'D DRACULA, THE SON OF THE DRAGON

5th generation, childe of Lambach

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Tyrant

Embrace: 1495

Apparent Age: early 40s

In 1710, Vlad Tepes thought he had secured his ascension to power. By attempting to channel the demon Kupala, he tried to rise above such petty concerns as the struggle between the Camarilla and Sabbat. Ultimately, he failed, defeated by an ambitious Transylvanian conspiracy. His rivals stopped a koldunic ritual by seizing the legendary Sword of Dracula and using it against the Son of the Dragon himself.

Brooding, Vlad descended once more to his chambers beneath Castle Arghes. As the Sabbat secured the voivodates of Transylvania, the Dragon remained distant from struggles conducted in the shadows of his terrible castle. His continuing studies of koldunic sorcery distracted him from petty political concerns, even as the Turks seized Transylvania itself. After the Habsburg Ventre led their crusade for the lands beyond the forest, the region had been weakened enough to allow the Sabbat to attain prominence. Vlad Dracula was appalled by the events that followed.

This new, younger generation bared only a marginal resemblance to the "sabbats" and esbats of the 15th century. An overpopulation of Cainites resulted in plenty of raucous childer for the Old World Tzimisce. In response, a sect allegedly devoted to freedom and the destruction of the Camarilla began to create its own nobility. Ironically, the Sabbat became in many ways as static as the Camarilla it swore to destroy. Ancient vampires seized or invented new titles to aid them in suppressing ambitious young packs.



Disgusted, Dracula soon realized that he was also becoming an unliving anachronism, a pale imitation of his former self. By contrast, stories of prosperous Camarilla cities intrigued him. He asked his servant Tiberiu to bring him news from the cities of Europe, including London, Vienna and Paris. While continuing his occult studies, he turned his attention to lighter reading: novels, newspapers and scandal sheets of the day. To avoid becoming as anachronistic as the hoary old Feudalist Tzimisce, he embarked on a plan to move his haven to one of the most prosperous Camarilla-held cities. Vlad Dracula resolved to secure a domain in the heart of Victorian London.

The Son of the Dragon masked his true intentions behind a false agenda. He spoke of establishing a faction of noble Tzimisce within the Camarilla — a plan that thankfully never saw fruition. While advancing this idea, he petitioned a Ventre named Anne to allow him to establish an estate in her domain. Just as he had once charmed the daughter of the King of Hungary, he convinced Anne of his sincerity. Anne went before the Ventre prince, Mithras, to speak on Vlad's behalf. Within a year, the Son of the Dragon contacted a legal associate named Renfield to assist him in moving his possessions to London.

Once news of Dracula's achievement spread throughout the undead societies of Europe, his rivals quickly conspired against him. First, a London Harpy scandalized him throughout the domain. Another rival, a Sabbat Toreador named Arianne, then tricked him into a romance with a mortal — an affair that ended in tragedy. Within a few months, a group of human hunters harried Dracula across Europe and back to the shores of Varna. As the final dagger in his heart, Cardinal Radu Bistri took a personal interest in Dracula's downfall, turning several of the non-Sabbat Tzimisce against him during his absence.

Furious, the Son of the Dragon vowed revenge on both the London Camarilla and the Transylvanian Tzimisce. He dispatched Tiberiu to the north once again, this time to retrieve a struggling author he had hired to help write his memoirs. Vlad's Gangrel minion brought back letters and samples of writing from this gentleman, an Irish fellow who was then working as a personal servant to Sir Henry Irving. The result of their extensive correspondence was a tale designed to shatter the Masquerade: a reworking of the events of Dracula's journey from the Old World to London. Although Bram Stoker took extensive liberties with the tale, he crafted a masterpiece that would endure for ages afterward.

As for Vlad himself, he eventually relocated to the crumbling remains of an obscure Transylvanian castle, continuing to study koldunic sorcery as he awaited his chance to rise from the ashes of his past failures.

Several Kindred scholars allied against him by warning the European Camarilla of an ancient prophecy. The legend they repeated stated that if "the Dragon should rise again," one of the signs of Gehenna would be fulfilled. Unfortunately,

their interpretation of this Kupalan prophecy was not entirely accurate. Their mistake not only frustrated the design of the Transylvanian count, but also gave Kupala's cultists a chance to fulfill the actual meaning of the prophecy.

In the end, Dracula's grand scheme against the London Camarilla failed. Bram Stoker crafted a masterwork, but it failed to disrupt the Masquerade as much as his patron expected. Although Dracula became notorious, the Kindred used Vlad's propaganda to their own advantage, learning to "hide in plain sight." Unable to adapt to the modern world, the Son of the Dragon became a tragic reflection of his literary persona.

In the real world, Vlad the Impaler's legacy has become more than a Romanian legend — it has been transformed into a means of drawing tourists. The house in Sighisoara where Vlad Tepes was born has since become a restaurant. An elaborate "castle" in the Borgo Pass now serves as a tourist hotel. Castle Arghes, although it is in ruins, looks lovely on scenic postcards. In the World of Darkness, Castle Arghes survived and is also an attraction for European travelers. Beneath this tourist site, Zelios has constructed elaborate chambers where Vlad Tepes endures in the shadow of his own fame.

The Wallachian count is now unable to compete with the thousand interpretations of his legend. Fame has overtaken him, sometimes pressing his real-world persona beneath the stereotypical accent of Bela Lugosi, the melodramatic acting of Christopher Lee and the chilling mania of Gary Oldman. Although Vlad the Impaler was reviled in the 15th century by cheap scandal sheets, their circulation was insignificant compared to the modern flood of fiction in bookstore chains, movie theaters, and video stores. Beneath Castle Arghes, the Son of the Dragon tumbles in and out of torpor, waiting for the night when he can again rise to prominence. Until then, mortals continue to revisit his legend over and over.

CARDINAL RADU BISTRI, THE SENESCENT MASTER

7th generation, childe of Visya

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Director

Embrace: 1125

Apparent Age: mid-30s

Hunted by Dominic's childer and reviled by a new generation of Transylvanian Sabbat, Count Radu could not maintain his position as a figurehead of the Tzimisce for long. He fled the Borgo Pass castle centuries before the modern nights, relying instead upon the hospitality of Feudalist Tzimisce to survive. As an elder without a domain, he traveled from *tirsa* to *knezate* to *voivodate*, calling upon his fellow Fiends while invoking the most traditional forms of etiquette. Only one significant Tzimisce refused Radu this courtesy — Lord Dracula, who rushed to recover the Borgo Pass castle from the claws of Septemus and the rampaging Sabbat Brujah *antitribu*. Vlad Dracula remained there until the Victorian



Age, when he decided to relocate to London. Because Radu had abandoned the Borgo Pass castle, the Son of the Dragon cursed his name.

Through etiquette and diplomacy, Radu garnered enough political influence to appeal to a few key voivodes among the eldest Transylvanian Tzimisce. By speaking against the new generation of Sabbat vampires as a threat to the security of the Feudalists, Radu helped create a new political office: Cardinal of the Land Beyond the Forest. Although the Tzimisce's alliance was tenuous, it helped stave off the depredations of a new generation of neonate Sabbat. After a decade, Radu left for the New World to bring his ideas to the Sabbat abroad. After witnessing firsthand the dangers that the younger generations of Sabbat could create, he used his experience to push through the Purchase Pact, a dictum forbidding Sabbat from warring against each other instead of their true enemies in the Camarilla.

Septemus and his allies were later slain for "violations of the Purchase Pact," but by then, a new wave of Brujah *antitribu* had spread throughout Eastern Europe. Transylvanian Brutes became infamous throughout the Old World, even as they were reviled by the Transylvanian Fiends. Nonetheless, Radu had managed to perform an impressive feat: temporarily uniting the Tzimisce, the most fractious group of Cainites on the planet. After the events of Act Three, if the conspiracy is still on good terms with Radu, he can continue to advise them on matters of Tzimisce politics.

EASTERN KINDRED (KUEI-JIN)

YING LEI, "THUNDER HAWK"

Background: Ying Lei grew up just before the British occupation of Hong Kong. His traditional family encouraged him in the pursuit of both spiritual knowledge and the ways of the world. Ying Lei spent most of his early years studying the martial arts and honing his body to a keen edge. He also steeped himself in the occult arts, learning geomancy (or *feng shui*) and various types of divinatory practices, including the casting of the I Ching, astrology and other forms of foretelling the future. His devotion to his family kept him from following in the tracks of many of his friends, who eagerly sought to make their way upward in the British-ruled hierarchy of finance and politics. While he adopted some western mannerisms when necessary, in his home he followed the traditional forms of behavior and beliefs.

Tragedy struck Ying Lei's family in 1856 during the Second Opium War, when British soldiers arrested Ying Lei's family for treason against the Crown, alleging that they trafficked in contraband and the illegal sale of opium. Only Ying Lei managed to escape. When he attempted to rescue his family from British custody (realizing that a fair trial from the *gueilo* masters was impossible), he discovered that his efforts came too late. His entire family was gunned down by a British firing squad. Enraged, Ying Lei launched a suicidal attack against

the first group of British soldiers he encountered, killing four of them before he finally fell to their bullets.

His stay in the Yomi World was brief. Driven by rage and a desire to avenge his family, Ying Lei emerged and reclaimed his body, thus joining the ranks of the Kuei-jin, or Cathayan vampires. After spending nearly a decade as a mindless devourer of (mostly British) flesh, Ying Lei was captured and subdued by an elder Kuei-jin named Lun Meng, a philosopher and practitioner of the Kuei-jin Discipline of Feng Shui.

Lun Meng sensed a way to channel the rage belonging to his charge by directing it toward an enemy more worthy than the British and, at the same time, to help fulfill his own purpose. Long ago, Lun Meng's master, a truly ancient and now deceased Kuei-jin, met a western vampire named Zao-lat, a renegade and traitor who stole many secrets of the Kuei-jin and perverted them to his own advantage. Lun Meng inherited the duty from his master of keeping alive the tale of Zao-lat's infamy and of finding a way to repair some of the damage done by this heinous creature.

Indoctrinating Ying Lei with the tale of the westerner who perverted the teachings of the Kuei-jin proved a simple task. Along with the story of Zao-lat's treachery, Ying Lei learned the tale of Zelios and his search for truth in the East.

Unlike most Kuei-jin, however, Ying Lei recently discovered that not all Western vampires share the same spiritual blindness as Zao-lat. His meeting with the Kin-jin (western vampire) named Celestyn marginally tempered his views of non-Cathayan vampires. When Celestyn felt compelled to leave Hong Kong and return home, Ying Lei recognized the incompleteness in their association.

Now, Ying Lei has traveled via dragon lines, through the spirit world, to Romania to answer a call from Celestyn for aid in untangling a blighted knot in the heart of Transylvania. With the approval of his master Lun Meng, Ying Lei has come to cleanse the dragon lines of this little known part of the world lest their poisons seep into their own lands. Ying Lei does not doubt that the task is dangerous. If he survives, however, he has a rare opportunity to observe the Kin-jin in their own lands and bring back that information to his master for use against the *gueilo* vampires.

Image: Ying Lei appears as a warrior from Chinese legend. He has long black hair, shaved halfway back from his forehead, with a single gathered warrior's knot in the back. His handsome features rarely show any expression, as if reserving judgment (or judging everything he sees). His laughter, however, quickly dispels such a sour first impression. His body is lithe and well-muscled due to his martial arts training. He moves with the grace and economy of a panther. Ying Lei feels most comfortable wearing loose trousers and a tunic. He usually conceals his sword under a long coat.

Roleplaying Hints: You remain always mindful of your Dharmic path and practice moderation and balance in everything you do. Although you hold yourself aloof from most people, you are willing both to teach and listen. You usually



serious manner displays your focus, and you have little time for the manipulative political intrigues of the Kin-jin. You have your own agenda — the cleansing of the dragon lines — and everything else must take second place to this vital task.

Haven: As the guest of Celestyn, Ying Lei has taken up residence with his host for the duration of his stay in Romania.

Secrets: Most of what Ying Lei knows can be considered a “secret” to western Kindred, since they have little or no understanding of the mysterious Cathayan vampires.

Influence: In the west, Ying Lei has no influence except as Celestyn’s guest. In Hong Kong and other parts of Asia, however, he is known as the beloved apprentice of a distinguished master of Feng Shui and a fearsome warrior in his own right.

Nature: Visionary

P’o Nature: Legalist

Chi Balance: Balanced

Direction: South

Dharma: Thousand Whispers 7

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Dodge 4, Intimidation 4, Leadership 2

Skills: Acrobatics 3, Animal Ken 1, Drive 2, Etiquette 4, Martial Arts (lethal blows) 5, Meditation 3, Melee (sword) 4, Portents 2, Stealth 4, Survival 2

Knowledges: Enigmas 3, Investigation 3, Linguistics (Mandarin, Japanese, English, Romanian) 3, Medicine 2, Occult (*feng shui*) 4, Politics 2, Rituals 4

Disciplines: Black Wind 4, Equilibrium 5, Tapestry 4, Yin Prana 1, Blood Shintai 3, Chi Sight 2, Feng Shui 4

Rites: Trace the Dragon’s Blood; Behold the Spirits’ Doorway; Imbuing the Jade; Cloak the Dragon’s Passage; Rite of Supplication; Harmonious Shielding of the Guarded Home

Backgrounds: Horoscope 2, Jade Talisman 2, Resources 1, Rites 4

Chi Virtues: Yin 8, Yang 8

Soul Virtues: Hun 6, P’o 6

Willpower: 8

Note: The Traits for Ying Lei use of the rules for character creation contained in *Kindred of the East* and *Kindred of the East Companion*. Storytellers who do not own these books may use the following substitutions to simulate the Disciplines. Black Wind 3 equals Celerity 3, but may only be used in combat situations. Treat Equilibrium and Blood Shintai as if Ying Lei possesses the Thaumaturgical Path of Blood 5. Chi Sight 2 is roughly equivalent to Auspex 2. Yin Prana allows Ying Lei to conceal himself as if he possessed Obscure 2 or Obtenebration 1. Tapestry 4 and Feng Shui 2 have no equivalent among Kindred Disciplines but allow Ying Lei to cleanse areas of inharmonious or demonic influences.

Ying Lei’s Rites enable him to see chi (Trace the Dragon’s Blood); locate entry ways into the spirit world (Behold the Spirits’ Doorway); move through the spirit world with the assistance of a piece of jade (Imbuing the Jade); and hide the entries into the spirit world (Cloak the Dragon’s Passage). The Rite of Supplication allows Ying Lei to announce his presence to any guardians of a spirit doorway before entering it. Harmonious Shielding of the Guarded Home approximates the Thaumaturgical Ritual Defense of the Sacred Haven.

Ying Lei’s Portents Skill allows him to calculate the likelihood of events occurring in the near future by reading omens or throwing the I Ching.

Instead of possessing an inner “Beast,” Kuei-jin have a P’o or shadow nature. Rather than succumbing to mindless frenzy, a Kuei-jin who fails in a P’o roll (treat as Self-Control) reverts to his P’o nature and becomes a different personality, usually to the detriment of his primary Nature. In Ying Lei’s case, the Legalist seeks to divert him from his purpose by bogging him down with procedural details.

Chi represents a spiritual essence that roughly equates to Blood for vampires, Gnosis for werewolves, Quintessence for mages, Glamour for changelings and Pathos for wraiths. Yin Chi stands for negative energy and works best when used for violent actions, while Yang Chi stands for positive energy and works best when used for healing or purification.

Kuei-jin do not possess generation. For game purposes, with regard to generation-related powers such as Dominate, treat Ying Lei as if he were Seventh Generation.





*See how they hang from heaven's high balconies,
The old lost years in faded garments dressed....*
— Baudelaire, *Sois Sage O Ma Douleur*

More than a hundred years pass between the end of the Victorian era, when the first of the three stories in *The Dragon Ascendant* takes place, and the end of the millennium, when the second and third stories occur. Unlike previous centuries, however, the 20th century ushers in an age of exponential technological progress. For humanity, the years since 1900 have resulted in one miraculous invention after another, each one designed to chip away at the hardship of daily life. For vampires, the changes offer a problematic mix of blessings and curses.

The characters who began their journey through Cainite history with *Dark Tides Rising* have now existed for nearly a thousand years — possibly longer. They have seen the world progress from the barbarism of the Dark Ages into the splendor of the Renaissance, followed by the bloody revolutions of the late 1700s and the rise of industrialization and the modern state. In Kindred society, they have witnessed the revolt of the anarchs, the rise of both the Camarilla and Sabbat, and have most likely chosen a side in the nocturnal struggle between these rival sects.

How then, can these venerable Kindred — the players' characters — adjust to a world in which even more changes seem to take place every night?

This chapter provides an overview of the 20th century along with strategies and guidelines for determining how well elder vampires can adapt to its drastic alterations. In

addition, Storytellers can find a few ideas for filling in the time between the three stories presented here. Finally, in case things go awry in any of the stories, this section also gives troubleshooting advice — such as how to deal with a meltdown in Romania or a nuclear strike on downtown Manhattan.

TEN DECADES OF CHANGE

The last century has seen more transformations — in technology, society, culture and science — than any other single century since the dawn of the Renaissance. Progress in medicine, agriculture and technology combine to make life easier for humans, thus increasing the mortal life span, diminishing the infant mortality rate and enabling the population to increase dramatically. By the middle of the 20th century, more than 70 cities have populations exceeding one million. The proliferation of cities provides a veritable feast for vampires of both the Camarilla and Sabbat. But humans have done more than just propagate; they have altered the pace of modern life with their technology. While younger vampires, as products of the modern world, have an easier time adapting to the rapid change, elder vampires almost invariably find it more difficult to grasp the vast transformations wrought by the restless kine.

A CENTURY OF “FIRSTS”

This decade by decade countdown of historic “firsts,” scientific discoveries and technological breakthroughs provides Storytellers and players with a guide to the rapid progress of the 20th century. Encyclopedias and other resources can give more specific dates and flesh out the details of any given period for troupes that wish to participate in stories set during the century between Acts One and Two.

1900-1909

In the first decade of the 20th century, scientists experiment with radio waves to transmit human speech, develop the first photoelectric cell and create the first ultraviolet lamp. Transportation advances with the construction of a railroad tunnel beneath the Hudson river, the trial flight of the zeppelin airship, the production of the first “Model T” automobile and the Wright Brothers’ first successful flight. Firearms manufacturers produce the Browning revolver and the commercial production of Bakelite inaugurates the Age of Plastic. Einstein formulates his theory of relativity and the race to the poles begins.

1910-1919

This decade marks the discovery of cosmic radiation, the proposal of the theory of jet propulsion, the beginning of assembly-line manufacturing, the first airmail delivery and the first nonstop trans-Atlantic flight. The first transcontinental phone call and the first deep-sea expedition take place during this period. The Panama Canal opens and the Trans-Siberian Railroad reaches completion. In the aftermath of the Great War, medical personnel identify a phenomenon they dub “shellshock.” Freud publishes his *Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, the first baseball game takes place and Daylight Savings Time begins in the United States.

1920-1929

The Twenties include the opening of the first public broadcasting station, the development of the tuberculosis vaccine, the invention of the self-winding wristwatch, the electric razor, the iron lung and liquid rocket fuel. The first 16mm movie film revolutionizes the medium while the first color motion pictures bring a new look to the cinema. Doctors first use insulin to treat diabetes. The first birth-control clinic opens and researchers discover penicillin. The first transmission of the human form through “television” takes place. The first crop-dusters fly over Canadian farmlands and scientists develop the first Geiger counter. The Graf Zeppelin flies around the world.

1930-1939

Despite a worldwide economic depression, the Thirties see milestones such as the discovery of the neutron, heavy hydrogen and the Rh factor in human blood. Technological

advances include a process for refrigeration of meat cargoes, the development of the first artificial heart, the patenting of nylon by the du Pont Company, the invention of the ballpoint pen and the electron microscope. The military first uses radar to detect aircraft and helicopters make their appearance in the air. An international radio audience hears the live broadcast of the Hindenburg airship disaster. The Golden Gate Bridge opens and the 40-hour work week becomes the norm in America.

1940-1949

World War II casts its pall over the decade that sees the beginning of underwater photography, the first computer, the first supersonic airplane flight, magnetic recording tape, the transistor, the development of xerography, the long-playing record and cortisone. Fermi splits the atom, scientists discover plutonium and the Manhattan Project leads to the development of the atomic bomb.

1950-1959

The 1950s usher in the Cold War and the space race. Scientific developments include the use of atomic energy to produce electricity, the development of the heart-lung machine and the first contraceptive pill. The military launches the first nuclear-powered submarine. Transatlantic telephone service begins, color television first appears in the U.S. and stereo technology advances the quality of recorded music. The U.S.S.R. launches Sputnik I and II, while the U.S. establishes the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and counters with Explorer I. Scientists discover the Van Allen radiation belts

1960-1969

As the Cold War escalates and the counterculture emerges from the antiwar and Civil Rights movements, scientific breakthroughs continue. Meteorology advances with the launch of the first weather satellite. Medical research results in the first use of an artificial heart during surgery, the first human heart transplant and the production of synthetic DNA. The Concorde supersonic jet makes its first test flight, the first astronaut orbits earth and, in 1969, the first astronauts land on the moon.

1970-1979

The decade that finally sees the end of the Vietnam War as well as the political fiasco of Watergate also heralds the first successful synthesis of a complete gene, first use of nuclear-powered pacemakers and the production in the laboratory of the human growth hormone. NASA launches the Skylab missions, Pioneer 10 sends back pictures from Jupiter, Mariner 10 provides pictures of Venus and Mercury and a space probe lands on Mars. The first manned voyage of the space shuttle *Enterprise* takes place; scientists test the neutron bomb and the first test-tube baby is born.

1980-1989

Health organizations recognize AIDS as an identifiable syndrome. IBM produces its personal computer and compact discs become available to the public. The development of the silicon microchip revolutionizes the computer industry and the Internet becomes popular in communities other than research and government. The development of computer simulations, or "virtual reality," signals a new dimension for computer technology. Cellular phones become the latest in personal communication while the completion of the tunnel under the English Channel links the United Kingdom with the European continent. A nuclear accident in Chernobyl stirs up concern over the safety of nuclear power. Crop circles appear in the United Kingdom, reviving interest in the supernatural.

1990-1999

Millennial fever sweeps the end of the 20th century. The Soviet Union dissolves, effectively ending the Cold War and creating new political problems in Eastern Europe. A computer defeats the top-ranking chess master, moving science several steps closer to their goal of true artificial intelligence. The widespread use of the World Wide Web unites the globe in virtual space as a medium for communication, research, business and entertainment. The invention of the digital camera, development of high-definition (HDTV) and direct-view television mark the next step in entertainment.

BRINGING THE CHARACTERS INTO THE 20TH CENTURY

Vampires who have existed for a millennium or more find it hard to change with the times, but change they must in order to continue their quest for power, influence, survival or—in the case of the characters involved in the *Transylvania Chronicles*—knowledge of the true signs of Gehenna. Almost every aspect of society has assumed a very different guise from what these venerable Cainites once understood as customary and usual. Some vampires, particularly elders of the Camarilla, avoid the necessity of dealing directly with the modern world, delegating such chores to trusted lieutenants or ghoul retainers. For the players' characters, however, who must risk themselves in the pursuit of their goal and reap the consequences of actions undertaken over the course of centuries, secondhand involvement is not enough. They must learn to adapt.

APPEARANCE IS EVERYTHING

In the last century, fashions have undergone extensive changes, from the cloche hats of the Roaring Twenties' flappers to the functional clothing of the Great Depression to the tie-dyed look of the Sixties and the grunge, glam, punk and gothic styles of the last two decades. While some Kindred—particularly elders—may not interact extensively with the

living, others indulge in nightly contact with selected mortals or take part in club scenes, the artistic community or backroom politics. In order to mingle with the *kine*, vampires, even elder ones, must fit in with the look of the night, or at least avoid unwanted scrutiny of their anachronistic appearances.

Fortunately for many Cainites, modern fashions allow for a wide variety of acceptable styles. While knightly armor certainly qualifies as *outré*, other period clothing might pass as decadently retro or even notably eccentric. Nevertheless, the art of blending in includes dressing the part, and elder vampires must make themselves presentable to the modern world. Since a vampire's appearance (length of hair, facial hair, dental condition and general body type) does not change from the time of her Embrace, adopting the latest fashion sometimes involves considerable effort to reconstruct the proper "look" upon rising each evening.

For Camarilla vampires, appearing in touch with the times is a vital function in upholding the Masquerade. Sabbat vampires have less to worry about since they do not bother to disguise what they are, thought nothing prevents them from conforming to the latest style. Then again, most Sabbat are Embraced and die during the same decade....

MIND OVER MATTER

The sum of human knowledge increases dramatically in the hundred years between the end of the Victorian Age and the last decade of the 20th century. Advances in science change the way we comprehend the universe, shattering old concepts and introducing radical new theories. The availability of information, in particular, marks a distinct difference between the modern world and the preceding centuries. The average person not only knows more about the world around her but also has the means of acquiring even relatively obscure information. The advent of public libraries puts many resources in the hands of anyone who can read, resources that were once the purview of academicians.

Life speeds up in the 20th century. Automobiles become the preferred mode of transportation, replacing horseback riding and the horse-drawn carriage. Computers revolutionize the fields of communication, business and research. The airplane makes it possible to travel vast distances in hours rather than months, bridging the gaps between continents.

Art and culture change drastically as well. Although classical music and traditional art remain popular, new forms of art and music arise, much of it alien to the eyes and ears of elder vampires. The Toreador elder who once performed as a troubadour in medieval France may find it difficult to grasp the rhythms electronica. While the troubadour may continue to pursue his musical career in the halls of Elysium or among mortal aficionados of period music, he may also decide to update his musical repertoire and hit the club scene.

THE INNER CHILDE

New ways of thinking crop up in the last century of the millennium. Freudian and post-Freudian psychology redefines

the concept of “self” and pigeonholes aberrant behavior into numerous categories of neuroses and psychoses. Jungian theory explores the ideas of the collective unconscious and universal archetypes. The principles of human rights give rise to liberation movements all over the world. In addition, scientific theories such as global warming, quantum physics, superstring theory and the Big Bang undermine basic belief systems and catapult the physical sciences into the realm of near mysticism. The inner workings of the mind become a playground for scientists in the fields of medicine and psychology, creating complex arsenals of syndromes to describe everything that was once categorized under the simple category of “madness.” Pop psychology introduces the concepts of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and attention deficit disorder (ADD) into the common vocabulary.

How do these modern notions affect the characters’ mindsets? Can they grasp these new concepts? Some characters, of course, can adapt, albeit with great effort. Others just cannot wrap their minds around ideas that contradict the precepts they have held for centuries. Many elder vampires may still see madness as caused by demons rather than chemical imbalances or childhood trauma.

Even such basic notions as the individual’s relation to society change in the 20th century. Elders who once believed that a single person mattered only as much as she contributed to society must now take into account the fact that modern humans place personal fulfillment ahead of many other loyalties. This elevation of the individual over society even affects the structure of vampiric existence. Some young Kindred no longer feel the strong affinity toward their sires that vampires once did. Even the most loyal Ventre ancillae Embraced in the latter half of this century places her own goals on an equal, if not higher, footing to those of some nebulous “clan.”

MATURATION AND EXPERIENCE

A system of maturation points can be used to handle character development during downtime to reflect the “off-stage” periods between the stories covered in the four books of the *Transylvania Chronicles*. More than a century passes between Act Three of *Ill Omens* and Act One of *The Dragon Ascendant*. Another century passes between Act One and Act Two of this supplement. Each of these periods should provide the characters with *as many as* 15 maturation points to use for improving existing Traits or acquiring new ones.

MATURATION VS. EXPERIENCE

Maturation points allow characters to grow in the periods between stories. They represent the slow development of relatively quiescent characters as opposed to the rapid improvement made by characters who remain in the midst of the action. Because characters do not earn maturation points through play but receive them as free awards for merely surviving from the end of

one story to the beginning of the next, these points accumulate slowly. Furthermore, maturation points cannot be saved from one period of downtime to another. Players must spend all their maturation points to increase their characters’ Traits before they participate in the next story. Unused points are lost.

This means that characters who have gained 15 maturation points in the period between Act Three of *Ill Omens* and Act One of *The Dragon Ascendant* must spend those points before the start of Act One. In the same fashion, characters who acquire maturation points between Acts One and Two of *The Dragon Ascendant* need to account for their expenditure before beginning Act Two. Characters may use a combination of experience and maturation points to improve their Traits provided they use up their maturation points first, since these points do not carry over.

MATURATION POINT CHART

Years of Downtime	Maturation Points
10-100	1-15
101-250	16-25
251-500	26-40

PASSING THE TIME

Downtime, or the time that passes between stories, represents intervals of relative calm for the characters. During downtime, players do not actively roleplay their characters, but time passes for them in the World of Darkness just the same. To account for what the characters accomplish between the end of one story and the beginning of another, you can use a number of methods.

INTERLUDES

Interludes are brief episodes in a character’s unlife that fill the gaps between stories. Like the prelude that encompasses the mortal life of a character prior to her Embrace in a few broad strokes, interludes paint a series of pictures that link together the time between stories. Interludes can take many forms — snapshot sessions, blue-booking, one-on-one storytelling or simple discussion.

Snapshot sessions allow a Storyteller to create mini-stories with limited choices and a foregone conclusion. If the players agree that their characters want to remain in touch with each other during the period from 1896 to 1998, the Storyteller can contrive two or three situations that bring the characters together. For example, World War II might force some characters to flee Eastern Europe and take refuge with other characters who have already migrated to Western Europe or America. The Storyteller can describe the escape for the characters who decide to flee the Nazi onslaught, allowing the players of those characters to elaborate on the steps taken to secure refuge across the seas or in a neutral country. In the meantime, the players whose characters have agreed to shelter their companions have their own tasks — securing havens for

the new arrivals or easing their transition to a new city and introducing the immigrant Kindred to the appropriate Camarilla prince (or Sabbat archbishop). These events need not become full-fledged stories, though they might deserve such treatment. Players and Storytellers can simply get together and talk their way through the significant scenes.

Blue-booking serves as another way for Storyteller and players to keep a record of what transpires between stories. Players may use the techniques for blue-booking described in previous volumes of the *Transylvania Chronicles*, or they might wish to keep journals for their characters. This technique of writing "in character" provides further development and advances the individual stories of each character. Journals allow characters to express opinions on developing trends of the 20th century.

For example:

June 8, 1913

Following my instructions, Edmund has purchased for me one of the new "model-T" horseless carriages recently invented by Mr. Henry Ford. I spent most of this evening learning to maneuver the contraption and found it most delightful once I finally succeeded. Although the reek of gasoline becomes somewhat bothersome at times, the sensation of motoring down the road without exerting oneself more than compensates for the discomfort. I must consider whether to invest some of my funds in Mr. Ford's company. I should hate to commit myself to the support of an endeavor that might not last more than a few years....

A player making this journal entry for her Ventrue elder indicates her character's willingness to accept change (and profit from it) and gives the Storyteller a justifiable reason for allowing the player to acquire the Drive Skill for her character through the expenditure of maturation points.

Journal entries can also develop relationships between characters, as can the practice of communicating through letters. Just as some novels consist entirely of letters that serve to advance the plot, an interlude might consist of a collection of letters passed from one character to another (usually with the Storyteller's awareness of their content) that progress through the decades from 1900 to 1990. Letters can also illustrate growing relationships between characters, who may fall in and out of love in the interim between Acts One and Two or find themselves increasingly estranged from their companions.

TORPOR AND OTHER HAZARDS

Although the possibility exists for a character to fall into torpor between the first and second stories of *The Dragon Ascendant*, doing so presents some distinct disadvantages. Storytellers may decide not to force the characters to make the requisite Humanity (or Path) rolls to see if their characters slip into the sleep of the ages. If players state that they wish to park their characters in torpor until the *Transylvania Chronicles* continue, they may, of course, do so with the Storyteller's



THE GEHENNA SYNDROME

Over the course of the *Transylvania Chronicles*, the characters have amassed a considerable amount of knowledge concerning the signs of Gehenna. During the heat of storytelling sessions, when the emphasis falls on quick thinking and quicker actions, characters have little time to sit back and speculate on what they have learned. Storytellers may wish to encourage their players to keep a journal of their characters' responses to the information they possess. This exercise serves two purposes. First, recording information helps players (and their characters) remember what they have learned when significant periods of real time pass between stories. Second, the act of putting together information and trying to make sense of it increases the paranoia factor and allows characters to speculate about the meaning of the various documents, tablets and scraps of knowledge they have collected.

By the time Acts Two and Three of *The Dragon Ascendant* begin, the characters might well suffer from the Gehenna Syndrome. They have seen the fulfillment of six of the eight signs and should realize only two signs remain. A sort of Gehenna fervor may engulf some of the characters, leading them to see omens of the Final Nights in seemingly ordinary events. Storytellers can use this acute sensitivity to their advantage, so that gathering the characters together for the last two stories in the *Transylvania Chronicles* presents few problems. If the Storyteller pays attention to her characters' speculations, she may gain some insights that allow her to tailor the stories to

permission or else entrust their characters to the luck of the dice. Players should, however, keep in mind the difficulties involved in taking their characters out of the loop during the 20th century, which is part of the fun of playing elders.

Although characters in torpor spend fewer points to develop their Traits, some things simply cannot be learned without true hands on experience. No matter how long a character studies the theory of maneuvering an automobile, she cannot acquire the Drive Skill while in torpor. For the same reason, characters in torpor cannot purchase Computer or the Secondary Ability Pilot. Increasing Firearms or Security involves familiarity with new developments in weaponry and the latest security and surveillance techniques. The Storyteller should remind players who want to place their characters in torpor from 1896 to 1998 that they may not be able to spend maturation points on certain Traits. For more information on torpor and its effects, see the Storytelling Chapter in *III Omens*.

Another factor comes into play in the 20th century—the danger of discovery and destruction increases due to the peculiar nature of the times. Characters who are in torpor during World War II may find their “secure” haven falls down around them during the heavy bombing of Europe by both sides. Eastern Europe, in particular, suffers massive destruction during World

War II. The Hungarian uprising in 1956 and the subsequent Soviet invasion to “restore order” results in extensive damage to numerous cities. Woe betide the Kindred in torpor in a house targeted for destruction. The rapid growth of cities during the 20th century involves widespread development of land. Construction crews tear down old buildings and erect skyscrapers in their place. The excavation of tunnels for subways also places vampires who have fallen into torpor in a precarious state—especially if they happen to choose a spot marked for “urban renewal.” The increased activity by modern Sabbat packs that specialize in locating and diablerizing elder vampires also makes this time an unsavory one for those in torpor.

All in all, the characters would serve their interests better by remaining active during the interval between Acts One and Two.

SPENDING MATURATION POINTS

This chart lists the point costs needed to raise Traits through maturation.

Trait	Cost to Raise Trait
New Ability	3
New Discipline	10
New Thaumaturgy	
or Necromancy Path	7
Attribute	NRx4
Ability	NRx2
Clan Discipline	NRx5
Other Discipline	NRx7
Thaumaturgy or Necromancy Path	NRx4
Virtue	NRx2
Humanity/Path	NRx1

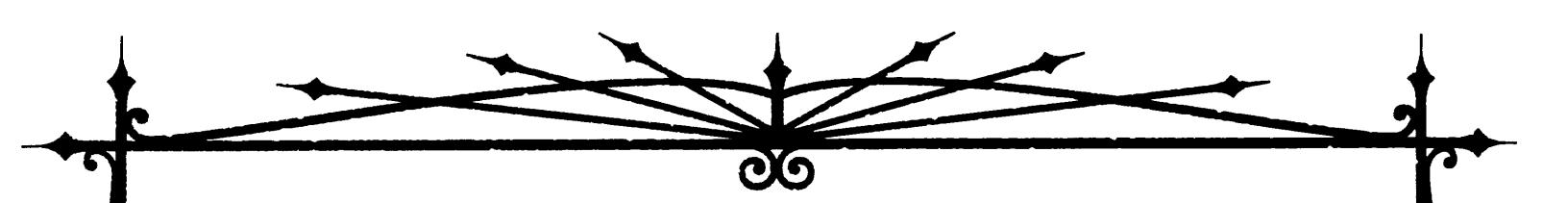
* NR = New Rating; the rating the character wishes to achieve

THE PERILS OF AGE

Many elder vampires, particularly those who have lived for more than 500 years, like the players' characters in the *Transylvania Chronicles*—may discover that they can no longer sustain themselves on the blood of mortals. The need to ingest vampiric blood does not always affect elder Kindred, but as vampires advance in years, the possibility of developing a need for Kindred blood increases.

Since the need to feed exclusively on vampiric blood does not come about automatically but differs from Kindred to Kindred, relying on a simple checklist or a die roll may not provide the best means of determining whether or not a character has succumbed to this limitation. Storytellers may wish to use the guidelines detailed in *Elysium* (or its reprint volume, *War of Ages*) and elaborated on here as a way to determine whether the characters have fallen victim to the need for Kindred vitae.

Even if a character meets most of the criteria necessary and both the player and Storyteller agree that the switch from



mortal to vampiric vitae seems likely, the actual change should come about in the context of storytelling. If the character shows tendencies toward acquiring the need for Kindred blood during the course of Act One, downtime activities might determine whether or not this change comes to pass before the beginning of Act Two. Blue-booking sessions, one-on-one storytelling or an interlude can help both the Storyteller and the player determine how this change comes about.

Unless your troupe is mature enough to handle this development, you might be better off leaving this idea aside. Stories that revolve solely around whacking other vampires and drinking their blood become stale quite quickly.

CRITERIA FOR KINDRED BLOOD DEPENDENCY

The following list provides several indicators that a character may develop a dependency on Kindred vitae. If a character meets only a few of these criteria, she still has a chance to avoid the need to feed from other vampires. If, however, the character manifests most (or all) of these indicators, she may be on the road to full dependency.

- **Diablerist** — If the character has committed diablerie, she has already acquired a taste for Kindred blood. This predisposes her to developing a dependency on it. The likelihood increases dramatically each time she commits diablerie.

- **Sire addicted to Kindred vitae** — In and of itself, this indicator does not mean that a character becomes dependent on Kindred blood. If the character's relationship with her sire includes shared feeding, however, this predilection might result in such a dependency.

- **Humanity (or Path) of less than 3** — Since a character's Humanity serves as a gauge of her empathy with mortals and with her own mortal past, a low Humanity can lead to a character's disassociation from humanity to such an extent that she no longer even considers mortals as food.

- **Sire a diablerist** — While not a sure sign that a character develops a dependency on Kindred blood, if both she and her sire have committed diablerie, the chances are that her bloodline is predisposed to dependency on vampiric blood.

- **Active for more than 500 years** — While the relationship between periodic torpor and the freedom from Kindred blood dependency is unknown, the tendency to develop a need for vampiric blood does seem to increase with age. On the other hand, continued activity keeps Kindred more connected to the world — and to their own Humanity. If a character has spent most of her time awake instead of entering voluntary torpor from time to time, the Storyteller should determine whether the character's actions make her more likely to develop dependency on Kindred vitae.

FEEDING THE UNQUENCHABLE THIRST

For characters who thirst for the vitae of other Cainites, feeding no longer becomes a routine task. Instead, each time the character feeds, she must locate another vampire from whom she can take her sustenance. This might prove increasingly difficult if the character wishes to avoid the blood bond. Characters who are already blood bound to a regnant do not have this difficulty and may drink from the same vampires over and over again. The way to avoid the blood bond, unfortunately, lies in destroying the Kindred vessel after feeding, either with or without diablerizing the individual. Since this puts the character in the position of violating the Cam-

- **Has a Derangement related to blood or feeding**

— A character who already restricts her intake of blood to certain types of mortals or certain kinds of blood may develop a dependency on Kindred vitae more readily than other vampires. Restrictions on feeding do not apply to vampiric vitae so characters with selective digestion or prey exclusions may find it easier to feed on Kindred blood when their preferred vessel is in short supply. For some reason, this does not seem to apply to Ventrite unless they have acquired a second restriction in addition to their clan's feeding limitations.)

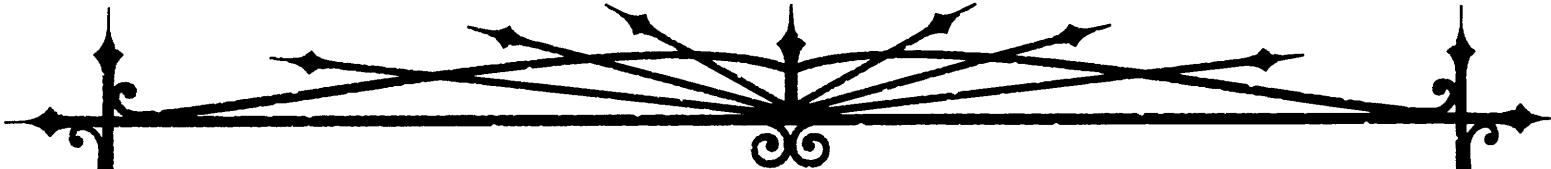
- **Has created a number of childer** — The relationship of this indicator to the development of a Kindred blood dependency remains uncertain, but many Kindred who now sustain themselves on vampiric blood have sired numerous progeny.

- **Has blood bound a number of younger vampires, especially one's own childer** — Since a regnant may freely drink of blood from her thralls, this criterion provides a character with ample opportunity to develop a taste for Kindred vitae and makes it more likely that she develops a full blown dependency.

- **At odds with one's own sire** — Characters who have a hostile or otherwise negative relationship with their sires may experience an Oedipal need to drink the blood of other vampires. At least, this is the theory put forth to explain the correlation between this indicator and the development of a dependency on vampiric vitae.

- **Has almost no mortal allies** — Kindred who isolate themselves from mortals may eventually lose the desire to feed from humans. In contrast, Kindred who maintain relations with various mortals show less likelihood of developing a dependency on Kindred blood.

Storytellers should decide whether to use these criteria to determine if the characters are at risk of developing a dependency on Kindred blood. If so, the next step involves deciding how many of the criteria a character must meet before she is in danger of the dependency. Finally, Storytellers need to devise a method of making a final determination about any characters who fulfill the required conditions.



illa's Sixth Tradition forbidding the destruction of another Kindred, the problems involved may prove overwhelming for the character unless she somehow acquires a "license to kill" from an august member of the Camarilla. The same problem does not apply to Sabbat characters, who may slay non-Sabbat vampires with impunity or acquire blood from frequent trips to the Vaulderie chalice.

STEMMING THE TIDE

Characters who run the risk of becoming dependent on Kindred vitae should have the opportunity to reverse or delay the tendency. In light of their knowledge of Gehenna, the characters may realize that the need for vampiric blood is a liability for them.

A Storyteller can work with the player to roleplay the character's struggle to avoid the dependency. This might involve repeated expenditures of Willpower to forestall the need. Reversal of dependent tendencies can happen either through roleplaying or with the expenditure of maturation or experience points to increase Humanity if it has fallen low enough to place the character in jeopardy.

Characters may also wish to consult Kindred experts on blood. In Act Two, the characters have the opportunity to request help from Etrius, whose mastery of the Path of Blood certainly qualifies him to tackle the problem of dependency on Kindred vitae. This may, in fact, fulfill the Tremere boon a character earns by assisting Etrius in Act Two. In the same fashion, characters who have developed a favorable relationship with Sascha Vykos may request its help as well.

In any case, the determination that a character has developed a need for Kindred vitae should involve the participation of both Storyteller and player and, ideally, add depth to the game rather than detract from the chronicle.

FORTUNE PATHS

Maturation points express the slow but steady improvement of characters' Traits over time, regardless of whether they are active in the world around them. Backgrounds, however, change due to circumstances that are not always under the control of the character. In the *Transylvania Chronicles*, the use of Fortune Paths reflects the unpredictable fluctuations that can affect characters' Backgrounds for good or ill.

The drastic changes brought about by global wars, economic and social upheavals and the technological revolution of the 20th century do not leave the characters unscathed. Perhaps more so than any other period in history, the modern era sees the vicissitudes of individual fortunes. While players do not have to use the Fortune Paths to determine whether their characters' Backgrounds survive intact, doing so can assist players in developing the unchronicled periods in their characters' unives. A sudden shift in a character's Backgrounds should prompt the player to construct a reason

to account for the change. Perhaps the character has dabbled in the political arena and has formed some associations with local officials. The pursuit of Gehenna lore might lead a character to cultivate a friendship with a mortal historian whose expertise in the ancient past proves consistently valuable. Likewise, a player whose character loses her entire Herd through an unlucky roll on the Fortune Paths chart might seek a reason for this disaster. Perhaps the city in which she resides suffers some natural catastrophe that claims her Herd as victims. The 20th century certainly has its share of wars, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, mass murders, airplane crashes, epidemics and gang conflicts to account for the loss of a group of mortals.

SYSTEM

For every 50 years of downtime, a player may choose one Background and roll once on the Fortune Path table for that Background. This roll costs no experience or maturation points. Players may elect to spend experience or maturation points to gain additional Background rolls (on the same or on a different Background) at the rate of three points per additional roll. In addition, players can gain an advantage of +1 to the die for every additional point spent (up to three points per roll).

Since a hundred years pass between the end of *Ill Omens* and the beginning of *The Dragon Ascendant*, this means that players have the chance to roll twice, at no point cost, on the Fortune Path table. In between Acts One and Two of this volume, the players gain an additional two rolls, giving them ample opportunities to alter their Backgrounds.

Once the player makes her rolls, she and the Storyteller should elaborate on the meaning of the results, fleshing out the bare bones of the table to create viable reasons for the Background changes. Note that there is no table for Generation, since this Background remains static unless decreased through Diablerie, an action that should never fall under the province of arbitrary dice rolls.

Storytellers should also decide whether the characters may attain Background Traits of more than 5. If the characters have acquired status through playing the various episodes of the *Transylvania Chronicles* (or through additional stories) or if they roll exceptionally well on the Fortune Path tables, the Storyteller may rule that Backgrounds may exceed 5. Note that a character must be of the Seventh (or lower) Generation to have Trait ratings of six or greater.

Each Background table contains not only a list of gains and losses resulting from rolling on the table but also possible reasons for the changes.

*The possible causes for changes in background are meant only as suggestions and include references to the century between Act Three of *Ill Omens* and Act One of *The Dragon Ascendant* as well as the century between Acts One and Two of this book. Feel free to use your own ideas instead of the ones presented here.*

ALLIES

1-2: Disaster. Lose one Ally.

3-5: No change.

6-9: Gain one Ally.

10: Gain two Allies.

Possible Causes for Gains

- Your military expertise (gained over the centuries) has netted you the support of a paramilitary group.
- You fund research projects that have endeared you to the academic community in your city.
- You've developed a relationship with the crime underworld in your region.
- You assist the dissident community in your part of Eastern Europe.

Possible Causes for Losses

- A change in government causes your allies to flee the country.
- You become the victim of a slander campaign that alienates the artistic community that once looked to you for support.
- You flee Germany on the eve of World War II; your allies remain behind.
- An enemy turns your friends in the media against you.

CONTACTS

1-2: Disaster. Lose one Contact.

3-4: No change.

5-8: Gain one Contact.

9-10: Gain two Contacts.

Possible Causes for Gains

- You gain the ear of an advisor in the Romanov court of Russia.
- An officer in the Prussian Army owes you a big favor.
- The president of an international banking concern becomes enamoured of you.
- A leak in the government spills his intelligence to you first.

Possible Causes for Losses

- Your contact dies aboard the *Titanic*, *Hindenburg*, *Lusitania*, *Andrea Doria* or some other doomed vessel.
- The Soviet gulag system swallows up your contact among the Russian literati.
- An enemy subverts one of your contacts, claiming her for himself.
- The conquest of Eastern Europe by the Nazis forces your contact underground. You lose track of him.

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 Causes for Gains

- You become the head of a religious cult and regularly feed on your followers.
- You acquire control of a small village or housing development, including the use of its residents.
- You perform charitable acts for the city's impoverished; you feed them, they feed you.
- As the silent partner in an asylum, you enjoy the fruits of your investments.

Possible Causes for Losses

- Most of your regular sources for vitae perish during the bombing of London.
- Your herd gets caught up in the mass exterminations of World War II.
- A smallpox epidemic wipes out most of your herd.
- An earthquake destroys the village where your herd dwells, claiming several of your vessels as casualties.

INFLUENCE

1-2: Disaster. Lose one point of Influence.

3-4: No change

5-6: Gain one point of Influence.

7-8: Gain two points of Influence.

9-10: Gain an additional sphere of Influence.

Possible Causes for Gains

- You gain control of an important functionary in one of the courts of 19th century Europe.
- You own the majority of stock (as well as a few stockholders) in a global industry.
- Your patronage of a popular film director has developed your ties to the entertainment business.
- Your backing of a successful politician garners you considerable influence in the government.

Possible Causes for Losses

- Your influence in media collapses during the McCarthy investigations.
- A *coup d'état* ends your association with a European government.
- A Toreador rival usurps your control over the fashion industry.
- You lose your influence in the Church when the Society of Leopold censures your pet cardinal for unholy associations.

MENTOR

1-2: Disaster: Lose your Mentor

3-5: No change.

6-9: Gain one point in Mentor. (Either your current Mentor increases her power or else you acquire a new Mentor in addition to, or instead of, your old one.)

10: Gain two points in Mentor (as above).

Possible Causes for Gains

- Your Mentor rises in the ranks of the Camarilla or Sabbat to a position of great power.
- Through your past actions, you gain the favorable attention of an undead luminary such as the Sabbat Noddist Sascha Vykos or the Camarilla warlord Karsh.
- You accept the position of archon and your justicar now acts as both Mentor and commander.

- One of the Inconnu — or perhaps an even older presence — guides your actions.

Possible Causes for Losses

- Your Mentor's actions gain her a place of infamy on the Camarilla's Red List and you disassociate yourself with her in order to escape similar censure.
- Your Mentor disappears in the confusion and mass destruction of World War II. You have had no communication from him since then.
- A Sabbat pack locates and diablerizes your Mentor.
- Your Mentor falls into torpor.

RESOURCES

1: Total Disaster: Lose all but one point of Resources.

2-3: Disaster: Lose one point of Resources.

4-6: No change

7-8: Gain one point of Resources.

9-10: Gain two points of Resources.

Possible Causes for Gains

- You get in on the ground floor of the telecommunications industry.
- You invest in the transcontinental railroad.
- You know how to play the stock market, buying and selling at just the right times.
- You own a professional sports team.

Possible Causes for Losses

- The stock market crash of 1929 wipes out most of your finances.
- You invest heavily in the wrong area, such as Beta videocassettes, eight-track tapes or zeppelin airships.
- You assumed the tobacco industry would never fold.
- You loaned the Confederate States of America a sizeable sum. Now it's uncollectable.

RETAINERS

1-2: Total Disaster: Lose all your Retainers (up to five).

3-4: Disaster: Lose one Retainer.

5-6: No change.

7-8: Gain one Retainer.

9: Gain two Retainers or one specialized human ghoul. Roll once on the Specialized Ghoul Chart (see below).

10: Gain two special Retainers such as a Lupine bodyguard or a Fae historian. Alternately, you may choose two specialized human ghouls by rolling twice on the Specialized Ghoul

Chart below. You may also choose one special Retainer and one specialized human ghoul.

Possible Causes for Gains

- You find among your Herd a promising individual and ghoul her to your service.
- A Kindred repays a boon by gifting you with one of his servants.
- You Dominate a retired prize-fighter and promote him to the position of bodyguard.
- You rescue a mortal from the clutches of the Sabbat and she offers you her services in repayment.

Possible Causes for Losses

- A roving Sabbat pack murders one of your servants.
- In anticipation of a move to America, you send one of your ghouls ahead of you to prepare the way — aboard the *Titanic*.
- A formerly trusted servant betrays you; you destroy him.
- A greedy prince demands you surrender one of your ghouls to his service.

Specialized Ghoul Chart

Roll a 10-sided die for each specialized human ghoul gained through a roll on the Fortune Path table for Retainers. All Merits listed under “applicable Traits” are optional.

1 Chauffeur/Crack Driver: This individual has raced on the Grand Prix or NASCAR circuits, worked as a test driver for a major automobile company or does stunt driving for films. Now she works for you, ferrying you about from place to place in style and safety. If you never acquired the Drive Skill, this ghoul provides a necessary service for you.

Applicable Traits: Dexterity 3+, Drive 4, Daredevil Merit

2 Computer Expert: Skilled in the latest hardware and software technology, systems design, programming, networking, online and Web capabilities, this ghoul functions as a competent hacker as well. You don’t even need to learn how to point and click.

Applicable Traits: Intelligence 3+, Computer 4+, Eidetic Memory Merit

3 Legal Consultant: This ghoul has all the legal skills necessary to handle those necessary functions in the mortal world including real estate transactions, serial wills (so that you can “inherit” from yourself) and passport applications. In the event that you need to exploit a tax loophole or destroy a rival or powerful mortal through the legal system, your ghouled legal consultant takes care of the details.

Applicable Traits: Intelligence 3+, Law 4, Eidetic Memory Merit

4 Pilot: Able to fly anything from a two-seater to a private jet, this ghoul frees you from the whims of commercial airlines.

Applicable Traits: Wits 3+, Pilot 4 (Secondary Skill), Lucky Merit

5 Private Investigator: You gain the services of a skilled detective who can make use of a network of informers as well as her own intuitive faculties. This enables you to conduct

inquiries into the affairs of other Kindred or ferret out useful information for expanding your mortal power base.

Applicable Traits: Perception 3+, Investigation 3+, Common Sense Merit

6 Research Assistant: You gain the services of a scholar with access to research facilities as well as the knowledge of how to research almost any conceivable topic.

Applicable Traits: Intelligence 3+, Academics 4, Concentration Merit

7 Security Specialist: This ghoul possesses numerous security skills as well as a fair amount of knowledge regarding weapons, explosives, surveillance devices and alarm systems. Perhaps a former member of a military special ops team or a demolitions expert, your security specialist can secure your haven and your person against most intrusions or attacks.

Applicable Traits: Dexterity 3+, Security 4, Acute Sense Merit

8 Stockbroker/Banker: You have acquired a ghoul with extraordinary financial acumen. This individual handles your financial investments, buying and selling on the stock market as well as keeping abreast of the latest information regarding futures, mutual funds, options and other eccentricities of the stocks and bonds trade.

Applicable Traits: Intelligence 3+, Finance 4, Oracular Ability Merit

9 Translator: This ghoul has a gift for languages and speaks several modern and obscure ones. Dialects and regional variants of foreign languages come easily to her, thus facilitating your travels to lands where you have no knowledge of the local tongue.

Applicable Traits: Intelligence 3+, Linguistics 4, Natural Linguist Merit

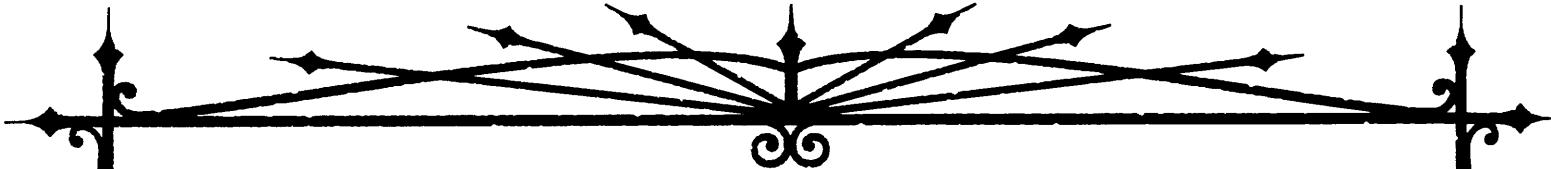
10 Choose any of the above or create your own specialized ghoul.

FAME AND STATUS

Because the Fame and Status Background imply active contact with mortal or Kindred society, these Backgrounds have not been included in the Fortune Path categories. Storytellers can design their own tables if they wish to leave changes in these Backgrounds to the vagaries of a die roll. Storytelling provides a better means of altering Fame and Status. Blue-booking sessions or one-on-one interludes present players and Storytellers with a more realistic way to change a character’s Fame or Status, particularly if characters wish to advance themselves in Kindred circles, either through acquiring a princedom or else holding some important position within the Camarilla or Sabbat.

A PLETHORA OF CHARACTER SHEETS

If players have not already switched their characters from the rules governing *Vampire: The Dark Ages* to *Vampire: The Masquerade*, they need to do so before



beginning the stories in **The Dragon Ascendant**. The character sheet contained in the revised edition of **Vampire: The Masquerade** provides a good template. Another possibility, for players who enjoy keeping extensive notes on various aspects of their characters, is the 4-page character sheet available in the **Vampire Storytellers Companion** or on the White Wolf Web site (<http://www.white-wolf.com>).

You and your players should work together on making substitutions for old skills such as Ride, Herbalism and Hearth Wisdom. Whether you decide to allow players to convert points spent on obsolete Abilities on a one-for-one basis or else rule that new skills (such as Drive) may take the place of old skills (such as Ride) at a one- or two-dot penalty is your prerogative as Storyteller.

You may wish to allow players who want to retain outdated but possibly useful skills such as Herbalism or Crafts to keep them as Secondary Skills.

STORYTELLING THE 20TH CENTURY

Unless the characters want to go into Acts Two and Three without any 20th-century aptitudes, they should probably avoid falling into torpor (regardless of how cost effective torpor is in terms of purchasing Traits). As mentioned earlier, a character in torpor may not learn to drive a car, fly a plane or use a computer!

This section provides some ideas for Storytellers whose players not only elect to have their characters remain awake and active during the interval between Acts One and Two of **The Dragon Ascendant** but also wish to continue taking part in stories to pass the time in between. Naturally, if this is the case, characters earn standard experience points instead of maturation points, though Storytellers may still wish to use of the Fortune Paths to arbitrate Background fluctuations that might not come up in the course of their stories.

Once you have decided to entertain your players with a century's worth of stories, how do you get them through most of the 20th century without them making significant progress on their research into Gehenna? The story hooks presented here not only provide Storytellers with ideas for occupying the characters' nights between the end of Act One and the start of Act Two but also set up a series of impediments to the characters' search for the truth of the Gehenna prophecies.

WAR AND PEACE

World Wars I and II engender conflict on a scale heretofore unknown in human history. In addition to the difficulties Kindred face traveling through war-ravaged Europe, most of their sources of information have likely gone underground (literally or figuratively) or are in the process of being bombed out of existence. Nevertheless, the war years provide ample opportunity for you to involve the characters in other schemes. As

the Allied armies battle the Axis across Europe, Kindred find themselves caught up in the struggle for survival. Some vampires attempt to continue their influence over mortal affairs, only to discover that humans have their own sources of power that do not always bend to Kindred whim. Several story possibilities arise from the confusion and turmoil of both wars.

TO END ALL WARS: WORLD WAR I

The First World War introduces the concept of mechanized warfare on a scale never before seen in the modern world. The trenches along the Maginot Line become sites for a hideous war of attrition. Behind the scenes, industrialists and armaments manufacturers reap the benefits of the carnage. Many European Kindred, in particular, see the sustained period of hostilities as a chance to expand their bases of power and influence.

- **Over the Top** — Relying on the Ventre tradition of granting hospitality to another member of the clan, a Ventre acquaintance of the characters seeks to make his way from Eastern European to France, where a fellow clan member has promised him hospitality. Unwilling to make the journey alone, the traveler requests the company of the characters on the arduous trek. This provides an opportunity for you to expose the characters to the bitter reality of the war in the trenches, including the ravages of mustard gas (which doesn't affect non-breathing individuals) on the unlucky soldiers. Whether they find hospitality at the journey's end depends on how well their host has weathered the war.

- **Changing of the Guard** — The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 throws Russia into turmoil. The supporters of the czarist government — both Kindred and mortal — suddenly find themselves on the wrong side of a firing squad. Rumors that Rasputin possesses a book or item that can add to the characters' growing collection of ancient lore might cause them to risk traveling to Moscow or St. Petersburg in the heat of the uprising. Brujah characters may hear of their clan's involvement in the revolution and wish to witness it or participate at close quarters.

BLOOD AND TEARS: WORLD WAR II

World War II bestows the legacies of nuclear annihilation and genocide on future generations. The mass bombing of enemy cities by both sides nullifies the concept of noncombatants, claiming millions of civilian lives — and many Kindred unlives as well. Some European Kindred, sensing the destruction that lies ahead, attempt to flee Europe; some succeed, while others remain behind, seeking shelter in a world where safety has no meaning. German and Austrian Kindred, in particular, either withdraw from the madness that sweeps over their fatherland or, like many of the kine, become caught up in the fanaticism of the Nazi ideology. The Tremere use the German conquest of Eastern Europe as a camouflage for intensifying their old vendetta against the Tzimisce.

- **Missing in Action** — Lucita contacts the characters and beseeches them to help her search for Anatole, who has gone missing "somewhere in Romania." She fears he has taken up traveling with some Gypsies in search of more visions. If the



characters decide to help Lucita based on their long association with her and Anatole, they face the Nazi occupation of Romania and the round-up of Romanian Roma first-hand. They may make alliances with partisans, join the resistance or simply try to keep their heads down as they search for the mad prophet.

- **The Price of Beauty** — The Nazis loot the countries they occupy, stealing priceless art for their private collections. Clever characters may try to get the jump on the Nazis, spiriting paintings and other valuable objects away under the noses of the occupying armies. Their mission may even take them into the heart of Germany, in an attempt to steal back some of these treasures. This type of story may involve the characters with German Ventru and Tremere who might either work with the Nazis or secretly assist the beleaguered enemies of Hitler.

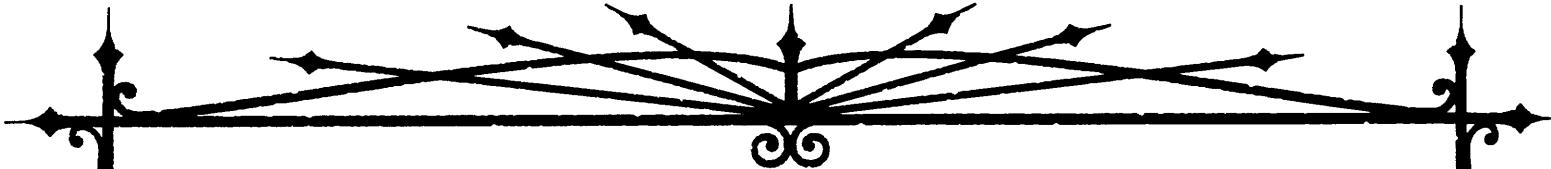
- **Here's Looking at You** — Remember *Casablanca*? The desert war in Northern Africa and the Middle East provides a chance for characters to interact with Assamites, Brujah and Setites in a more exotic setting than the Europe they are used to. The lure of Methuselahs sleeping beneath the sands or ensconced in ancient Egyptian ruins may appeal to Sabbat characters, while Camarilla Kindred may find themselves caught up in wartime intrigue in the streets of Tobruk. Survival in the desert may prove a unique challenge for the Kindred of Europe.

THE POLITICS OF FRUSTRATION

After WWII, the Cold War discourages free travel and access to necessary information. This period becomes an age of frustration for the characters. Those who remain in Romania experience the repressive Communist regimes of Georghiu-Dej and Ceausescu. Similar hardships affect characters in other parts of Eastern Europe. Lack of communication with colleagues in the West and restrictions on travel may result in the characters' separation from the rest of Kindred society for much of the 20th century. The fall of the Soviet Union promises an end to the isolation — but the awakening of Baba Yaga and her mystical power over her former homeland intervene.

From 1990 until her demise near the end of the century, Baba Yaga prevents free passage into the countries behind the "Shadow Curtain" until her Final Death brings down the barrier. Only in the last years of the millennium can the characters finally gain access to the places and people they need to complete their desperate — and growing more so by the night — search. By then, however, time has nearly run out.

- **Road to Nowhere** — For characters who leave Eastern Europe for other parts of the world, the search for clues to the remaining signs of Gehenna continues. Storytellers may take the opportunity to add their own embellishments to the information already gained by the characters in earlier stories of the *Transylvania Chronicles*, such as commentaries on some of the signs or even alleged documents refuting the information the characters possess. Alternatively, the characters may hear rumors of Noddist scholars in Egypt or South America and seek out these individuals in hopes of new



insights. In most cases, such searches prove fruitless—or else offer evidence that someone (possibly under the influence of the Ancients themselves) actively seeks to interfere with the characters' undertakings.

• **Repossessing the Homeland**—If characters flee Romania during World War II, they may attempt to return after the war to reclaim their old territories. Storytellers should emphasize the difficulties encountered by characters seeking conventional means of travel, including the necessity of Dominating customs officials and the risky nature of transporting themselves as “cargo.” Once they arrive in their former havens, characters may discover that, in their absence, other Kindred have laid claim to their domains. Former princes, in particular, may find that their cities have come under the sway of young Tzimisce Sabbat or have fallen into the hands of rivals who weathered the storms of war. Reestablishing old contacts may also present problems. Mortal allies or contacts may have died during the war or faced forced relocation. Kindred acquaintances may have met Final Death or else gone into hiding.

• **Trust No One**—Over the centuries of their unlivess, the characters have amassed both friends and enemies in high places. Unless the characters have been quiet about their discoveries, their reputations as Noddists, Gehenna fanatics or meddlers earn them the enmity of those whose interests lie in preserving the idea that Gehenna is a myth. Characters may find themselves targeted by Assamite assassins, Ravnos thieves, Tremere or Tzimisce rivals, Ventre and Toreador diplomats or any number of potential factions. Don’t forget that the agents of the sleeping Antediluvians are out there as well, suppressing information that might lead to the premature discovery of the true plans of the Ancients. Storytellers may choose to have the characters hunted by members of the nascent Imbued, the Inquisition, the World Health Organization or the Romanian secret police directed by rival Kindred. If characters have achieved positions of power in their chosen sects, they may find themselves besieged by rivals who wish to discredit them, either for personal reasons or because they are acting under orders from above. A story that involves unknown pursuers can make the characters realize just how precarious their positions are as harbingers of the Final Nights.

THE MODERN ERA

The last decade has seen a radical transformation of human society. The traditional values of hard work, virtue, ethical behavior and religious spirituality give way to blatant opportunism, situational ethics and personal fulfillment. The world becomes a global village linked by computers, supersonic jets and electronic investing. At the same time, the deterioration of the environment, rampant violence and overpopulation contribute to a growing pessimism and an overwhelming feeling that the end of the world is at hand.

Kindred who pulled the strings of world leaders now find themselves at a loss to explain how the kine managed to create such a predicament for themselves. Elder vampires bemoan

the dumbing down of culture and the loss of “civilization” (as they remember it). Young Kindred revel in the changes and the lack of order. No rules, no fear, no limits.

ELEVENTH HOUR MADNESS

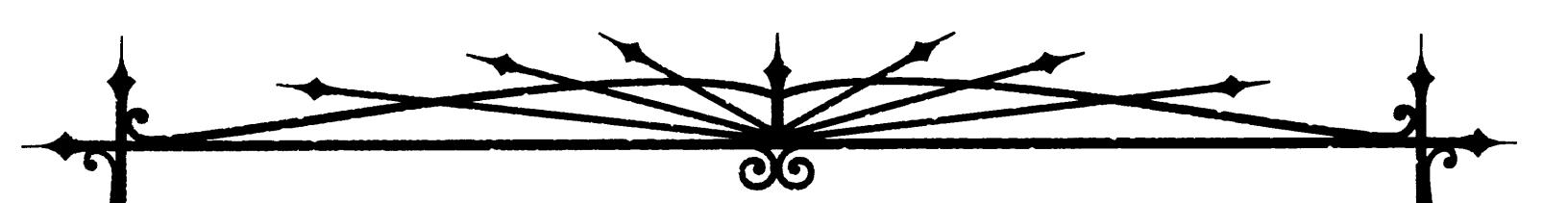
Ever since the publication of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, vampires have captured the imagination of the media. Portrayed as sinister, brooding and dangerously romantic, vampires become the subject of novels, films and fashion. Of course, no one believes that vampires really exist—and that is exactly what the Kindred have in mind.

In some ways, however, the plan works too well. The interest in New Age spiritualism, coupled with the increasing mystification of physics sparks a new wave of belief in the existence of the supernatural. Angelic visitations, evidence of past lives and rumors of “aliens among us” result in a curious backlash of belief. Now the Masquerade grows flimsy in many quarters as humans once more espouse the possibility that creatures such as vampires, werewolves and ghosts might exist. As the third millennium dawns, people look for proof that something exists beyond the dying, material world.

In the cities of the Camarilla, Kindred attempt to repair the damage to their Masquerade, while in Sabbat strongholds, vampires take advantage of mortal gullibility.

• **Voices in the Wilderness**—For the characters, the fragile state of affairs that exists in the late 20th century seems like another signpost on the road to Gehenna. As the Masquerade shows signs of wear and tear, the sense of urgency grows to warn the Kindred that their nights are numbered. The characters may decide to alert powerful vampires in either the Camarilla or Sabbat to the true signs of the Final Nights (assuming they have not done so already). They may seek an audience with justicars, prisci or other high-ranking Kindred in order to gain support. The meeting of the Inner Council of the Camarilla in 1998 provides an opportunity for the characters, if they manage to pull the right strings and acquire an invitation to that select gathering, to bring their findings before the powers-that-be. Of course, these elders may not want to hear what the characters have to say, or having heard it may attempt to suppress the information. Storytellers may up the ante with regard to the final two stories of *The Dragon Ascendant* by placing the characters in an unenviable position of censure from above. Even the Sabbat, which claims to exist to prepare for Gehenna, may not believe the characters or may think that their knowledge consists of carefully constructed misinformation meant to mislead the armies of the Sabbat.

• **The Public Eye**—Millennial fever among the kine may infect the characters in the last decade of the 20th century. Particularly devious Kindred rivals may put tabloid reporters, end-of-the-world cultists and vampire worshippers on the trail of the characters in an attempt to harass or expose them. Characters may find themselves called to account for endangering the Masquerade by attracting excessive attention from mortals. While stories of this nature may contain elements of dark humor as characters strive to



dissuade acolytes hungry for the taste of immortality or fend off the *paparazzi* (a particular problem for Lasombra), such stories also emphasize the dangers of public exposure in the World of Darkness. The characters may experience unpleasant recollections of torch-wielding peasants and black-robed priests as they dodge the tabloid reporters. Of course, two can play at the whistle-blowing game, and characters may seek to use the same tactics on their enemies.

GAMES KINDRED PLAY

Apart from (or because of) their involvement in the *Transylvania Chronicles*, the characters have most likely made their marks in Kindred society. Whether as scions of the Camarilla or as pillars of the Sabbat, they have encountered movers and shakers of vampiric unlif and probably number among those who affect the course of Kindred affairs. As a temporary departure from the *Transylvania Chronicles*, Storytellers can involve elder characters in some of the nightly affairs of Kindred politics. Not everything the characters do needs to pertain to their ongoing quest. They have unives as well.

- **Princes and Paupers** — As the result of their actions in the three previous books, characters may have become princes of some of the cities of Transylvania (now Romania). The nightly activities of the Kindred in their domains can spark stories of treachery, the settling of disputes, the siring of childer or other similar pursuits. If characters decide to abandon their princedoms during World War II, seeking safety across the ocean, how do these erstwhile princes cope with their new status as immigrants in America? Can they rely on the largess of clannmates or do they find their former status a liability to American Kindred who may consider them rivals?

- **Night Moves, Sabbat Style** — Characters belonging to the Sabbat (and, in all likelihood, most Tzimisce and Lasombra characters join the mass defection of their clans) have the upper hand in Romania and Eastern Europe for most of the early 20th century. If they remain in their homeland during the Nazi and Communist occupations, they may have to exercise extreme caution in order to survive or else attempt to recruit human agents from among the mortals in power. If, however, they flee Europe and seek sanctuary in the Americas, they can involve themselves in the Sabbat's nightly struggle to solidify their hold over the eastern United States, Mexico and parts of Canada.

- **Both Sides Now** — If the characters have divided their loyalties between the Camarilla and the Sabbat or if they include some independent Kindred, the modern era provides grand opportunities for storytelling. The shared experiences of the characters may transcend sectarian differences, bringing them into conflict with others in their particular sect. They may need to practice circumspection in order to keep in touch with each other if they become separated over the course of the century. After all, the leaders of the Camarilla and the Sabbat might question why the characters have friends on the other side. Independent characters may serve as go-betweens for their Camarilla and Sabbat colleagues. The recent secession of Clan Gangrel from the Camarilla may force Gangrel characters to

choose between any clan loyalties they have and their allegiance to the Camarilla. Tremere characters already juggle clan ties with alliances outside the pyramid. The possibility that some of their long-time associates may have joined the Sabbat or left the Camarilla altogether puts the Warlocks in a precarious during Acts Two and Three of *The Dragon Ascendant*.

TROUBLESHOOTING

While the three stories that make up *The Dragon Ascendant* attempt to address potential problems within the context of each story, sometimes things work out differently than what's been printed; if something isn't radically different from the books, you may have cause for worry.... What does a Storyteller do if the players make so many unanticipated decisions for their characters or tackle problems in such unpredictable ways that they run the risk of ignoring the story entirely? That's where this section comes in.

The suggestions provided for each story cannot possibly cover everything that can go astray, but they should give Storytellers a feel for how to accommodate for the characters unexpected actions.

ACT ONE: A MASSIVE BETRAYAL

Recovering the *Incunabulum Kupalam* and keeping it out of Dracula's (or anybody else's) hands is the goal of Act One. While the nonlinear nature of the story allows characters a great amount of leeway in pursuing their objective, it also may lead to a certain amount of floundering by the characters.

CLUELESS IN VIENNA

If the characters don't seem inclined to talk to any of the necessary sources of information or if they don't ask the right questions of the Vienna Kindred, the Storyteller might have to bring the information to the characters in less subtle ways. The characters present an unknown (or novel) element in Vienna's Kindred society. An underling of a prominent Viennese Kindred may want to impress these new and possibly important vampires with what they know. By letting slip a few tidbits of information in hopes of gaining some knowledge of why the characters are in town, these less important vampires might actually provide the characters with what they need to know to push them in the right direction.

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

Even if they follow up on the hints given by Radu or Nova Arpad, the characters may proceed so slowly that the Storyteller decides that one of the other factions has had ample time to locate and retrieve the tome. In this case, the characters arrive on the scene in the aftermath of the conflict at St. Stephen's and have the chance to chase down whichever faction succeeded in grabbing the book. This could take the story in a different direction, but so long as the characters eventually acquire the book, they can garner some sense of satisfaction. Of course, they may alienate some

groups of Kindred in ways that have repercussions throughout the next century. Isn't that what **Vampire** is all about?

CONFLAGRATION IN VIENNA

If the characters start a fire at St. Stephen's in the hope of smoking out the guardians of the *Incunabulum Kupalam*, they run the risk of destroying what they hoped to acquire. Should this happen, the Storyteller may decide that a second copy of the manuscript exists. This manuscript falls into the hands of whichever faction the Storyteller deems most appropriate (or problematic). A later story involving the recovery of *that* copy might take place between Acts One and Two. Imagine the characters following up a rumor that the book has found its way to the Tremere chantry in Dresden on the eve of the bombing of that city. Eventually, the characters may succeed in catching up with the book, but the time needed to digest its contents might be in short supply.

ACT TWO: SINS OF THE FATHERS

While some potential problems are handled within the story itself, a few problems may arise that require special solutions. This act does not have quite as much room for departure from the main plot as the previous one, but a few things can still throw a wrench into the best-laid plans of the Storyteller.

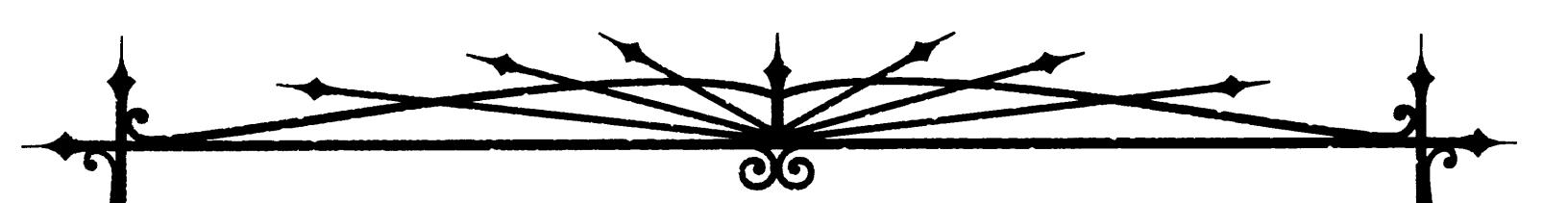
DIABLERIE ON THE ROAD TO MEXICO

As stated in Act Two, if any character makes the gross mistake of diablerizing Etrius (assuming that the character can throw off the protective ritual), Tremere simply takes over the unfortunate character. The Storyteller need not inform any of the other characters. Instead, the Storyteller should take the player aside (on the pretext of running a private scene describing the effects of the diablerie) and inform her that her character is now completely under Tremere's control. Because it is in Tremere's interest to conceal his presence from the other characters, however, the Storyteller can inform the player that she may continue to play her character as usual but that she cannot tell her companions that she is no longer "herself." If the characters abandon the journey to Mexico in the event of Etrius's death, Tremere uses his new vessel to ensure that the characters deliver him to his destination. If subtlety fails, Tremere may be forced to show his hand and compel the characters to continue on to Mexico. Once he has arrived and has accomplished his transfer to Goratrix's body, he releases his control over the character. He may not bother to take revenge immediately on the character for diablerizing his faithful servant Etrius, since he has more important things to do. He does have a long memory, however, and eventually the character learns that it's not nice to toy with the Tremere Antediluvian.

FAILURE TO FIND ETRIUS'S NOTES

If the characters do not steal Etrius's notes, they miss out on discovering what is going on at the heart of their journey to Mexico. In addition, they fail to find confirmation of what they might already suspected from earlier information — that Saulot survived his diablerie by Tremere. It is possible, though less satisfying, for the characters to go through Act Two without knowing what Tremere intends. Storytellers may wish,





however, to have the characters learn what they have helped accomplish after the fact — perhaps from an Obfuscated eyewitness to the destruction of the Tremere *antitribu* or else from a guilt-stricken Etrius. At some point, particularly if Etrius believes that he may not survive the journey, he may entrust his notes to one of the characters, possibly a fellow Tremere. This situation practically begs exploitation by the characters, and Storytellers may have the new guardian of Etrius' notes make Willpower checks (difficulty of, oh, let's say 9) in order to resist taking a peek at the contents.

SAVING THE TREMERE ANTITRIBU

If, by some means, the characters manage to prevent Tremere from destroying the Tremere *antitribu* or if they contrive to save even a few Sabbat Tremere from destruction, the Storyteller should realize that her World of Darkness has diverged from the canon. That's all. Storytellers can make appropriate adjustments for subsequent stories based on future supplements.

Keep in mind, however, that unless the characters somehow kill Tremere himself, the Antediluvian finds some other way to accomplish the destruction of Goratrix's brood. His hatred for his disloyal protégé knows no bounds and he cannot rest until the Tremere *antitribu* are history. That may just have to wait for another time and place.

ACT THREE: END OF THE AGE

This story contains the greatest potential for seriously altering the World of Darkness. Storytellers need to stay on top of the situation involving the nuclear reactor and the guided missile in order to avoid drastic consequences. Things can, however, go wrong.

<Failure to Prevent the Meltdown

If the characters do not interfere at the nuclear power plant, a meltdown occurs similar to the one in Chernobyl. This has serious consequences for most of Eastern Europe as well as for the lands watered by the now-toxic Danube. Storytellers may want to set up a fail-safe in the event that the characters can't avert the meltdown. An equipment malfunction might work in the characters' favor, halting the exposure of the rods before the situation becomes critical.

If the Storyteller decides to allow the characters' actions (or inaction) to stand, then she needs to do some research on the effects of nuclear meltdown. Since the characters may not survive this scenario, they are probably be unable to prevent the missile launch either.

MISSILES AWAY

If the characters allow the launch of the missile aimed at Manhattan, they still have several opportunities to save New York. Since it takes time for the missile to travel halfway around the world, the characters may act quickly and alert authorities at either end of the trajectory. Notifying the Romanian military may result in a successful abort of the missile,

while alerting the U.S. military may give them time to shoot the missile down. Then again, with the missile Obfuscated by Nosferatu, that may not be such an easy proposition. Of course, since the missile has remained idle for many years, it may not function properly. The prospect of a search through downtown Manhattan for a malfunctioning nuke might provide some macabre amusement for your troupe.

If no attempt to stop the missile succeeds, then a nuclear explosion engulfs Manhattan, wiping out all or most of the city and making a good portion of the eastern United States a hot zone for the foreseeable future. While some Storytellers may feel capable of continuing their chronicle in a World of Darkness on the verge of nuclear winter, this is not a recommended finale for the *Transylvania Chronicles*.

EX MACHINA

Storytellers may give players a second chance by allowing this catastrophic failure to take place within a shared dream sequence. Certainly, some powerful Kindred have the ability to send dreams to the characters warning them of what might befall them. Although this technique seems forced or deprives the characters their of right to fail, it has several advantages. First, it prevents too drastic a divergence in the Storyteller's World of Darkness. Second, a realistic dream sent by an anonymous Kindred (perhaps even one of the Antediluvians) can emphasize the incredible power that truly ancient vampires command and make the characters wonder who has taken such an interest in their affairs.

ON THE EVE OF GEHENNA

The Dragon Ascendant ends the *Transylvania Chronicles*. This does not necessarily mean the end of the chronicle, however. The characters now know that the signs of Gehenna have all come to pass and that the Final Nights are at hand. What they do with this information can have major repercussions for the Camarilla, independent Kindred and the Sabbat. The knowledge that the characters possess may provide a rallying point for the sects or further divide them into staunch unbelievers and fanatic doomsayers.

Future supplements may deal with the prophesied awakening of the ancient vampires and the final struggle for Kindred survival. Of course, you can always make your own decisions as to what form Gehenna takes in your World of Darkness. And then there is the matter of Kupala....

With a demon on the loose in Eastern Europe, the stage is set for interesting times. The characters whose actions resulted in the dismantling of the geomantic web may feel obligated to find some way to rebind the demon. They have a number of potential allies to call upon — notably Etrius and, possibly, Tremere himself. A certain count might also join in the search for Romania's native demon....

Although the *Transylvania Chronicles* have come to an end, the possibilities for storytelling are only beginning. Enjoy them.





APPENDIX: TIME'S INEXORABLE CRAWL

Whatever can be done, will be done. If not by incumbents, it will be done by emerging players.... Stopping them is not an option.

— Andy Grove, Intel's co-founder and chairman, in conversation

Behind the scenes of the Transylvania Chronicles, the panorama of human history unfolds. Cainites have rewritten this history many times, always placing themselves at the center, but despite the efforts of even the most powerful Methuselahs, humans still assert control over their own world.

Cainite history is listed in italicized print and marked with two dots (••).

• 1278: Rudolf IV (later Rudolf I of the Holy Roman Empire) defeats Ottokar II, Duke of Austria. The Habsburgs maintain control of Austria until 1918.

• 1362: The Battle of Kosovo. On the Field of Blackbirds (Kosovo Polje), Turkish troops drive back European defenders. Constantinople is finally surrounded by the Ottoman Empire.

• Mid-14th century: The Arpad dynasty ends. King Charles Robert of Hungary dies in 1342.

• Late 14th century: Wallachia becomes a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire and remains one until the early 19th century.

•• 1520-1530: *The Tremere move from Ceoris to a new chantry in Vienna.*

• 1452: Constantinople falls to the Turks.

• 1455: Moldavia becomes part of the Ottoman Empire. Transylvania remains part of Hungary.

• 1526: Hungary defeated by the Ottoman Empire. Transylvania gains independence and maintains it for forty years.

•• 1560: *The Ventre of Transylvania implement a more rigid hierarchy in their cities, ferreting out Sabbat spies and maintaining their influence during the Sabbat Crusades. The practice quickly spreads to other Camarilla cities across Europe.*

• 1566: Transylvania falls under Turkish rule. The Ottoman sultan decrees that all Transylvanian princes must be approved by him after appointment by the Diet.

• 1568: The territory of Hungary is divided into three portions. Western Hungary remains in control of the Habsburgs. Transylvania gains autonomy under Turkish suzerainty; the rest remains under direct Turkish control.

• Late 17th century: Austrian Habsburgs replace the Ottomans as Hungary's rulers.

•• 1800: *Bulscu of Clan Ventre moves his haven to Russia.*

•• 1801: *The Sabbat establishes the Purchase Pact, which forbids Sabbat packs from warring with each other. Cardinal Radu Bistri witnesses the signing of the document.*

• Early 19th century: The Napoleonic Wars fragment the Holy Roman Empire. A portion of it becomes the Austrian Empire. Napoleon lives in Vienna for a few years. The Ottoman Empire and Russia suppress insurrections in Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania.

• 1812: Russia gains control of Bessarabia in Southeastern Moldavia.

• 1815: Napoleon is defeated at Waterloo.

• Mid-19th century: Austria asserts supremacy over the remaining German states. Metternich helps establish an autocratic government. *The Vienna Camarilla usurps greater influence over the Austrian bureaucracy, creating a new generation of Ventre Embraced for their political skills instead of their noble heritage.*

• 1848-1849: Inspired by recent revolutions in other nations, Lajos Kossuth leads a revolution in Hungary,

attempting to establish a parliamentary government. Hungary declares its independence from Austria in 1849. Kossuth then becomes a virtual dictator, alienates other world leaders, and eventually flees to Turkey.

- 1854-1856: The Crimean War. Czar Nicholas I insists on protecting Christian shrines in Jerusalem and the Ottoman Empire. Russia occupies the Balkans. In response, the Ottoman Empire allies with England, France and Sardinia to drive out Russian troops. In 1856, Russia withdraws its claim to the Balkans. Wallachia and Moldavia become independent principalities.

- 1859: Wallachia and Moldavia unite under a single prince, forming a *de facto* state called Romania. The nation is not internationally recognized until 1878.

- 1866: The Austro-Prussian War ends Austria's expansion. Emperor Franz Joseph refocuses his efforts on coming to terms with rebellious Hungarians.

- 1867: Austria, with Russian backing, reasserts control of Hungary. The dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary is established in March.

- 1877-1878: Another Russo-Turkish skirmish; Russia seizes more of the Ottoman Empire.

- 1878: Romania receives international recognition as a sovereign nation under the Treaty of Berlin.

- 1895: *Vlad Tepes of Clan Tzimisce attempts to rejoin the Camarilla and purchase several estates in London.*

- 1896: *A blood hunt is declared against Vlad Tepes, who flees to Transylvania.*

- 1897: Bram Stoker publishes *Dracula*, romanticizing Transylvania and vampires for Western readers.

- 1914: Archduke Ferdinand, nephew of Emperor Franz Joseph, is assassinated by a Serbian nationalist in Sarajevo. The Great War begins.

- 1917: Revolution in Russia ends czarist rule. Lenin assumes the title of Chief Commissar and Russia withdraws from the Great War to concentrate on internal affairs. A rift opens between Russian Kindred and other European Camarilla. The Sabbat attempts, without success, to take advantage of the split.

- 1918: The Great War ends. Romania's territory doubles with the addition of Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia. Although this satisfies several nationalist movements, newly incorporated minorities become dissatisfied with the government in the decades that follow.

- 1918-1930: The boundaries of Hungary are radically redefined. Territories are handed off to Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Austria, Poland and Italy. The remaining lands are dominated by ethnic Magyars. *The old Tzimisce retreat to secluded havens, leaving devastated Eastern Europe to the Sabbat, made up of mostly younger Tzimisce and a few other antitribu clans.*

- 1930: Worldwide economic depression. A fascist movement similar to ones in Germany and Italy surfaces in Romania.

- 1930s: *Many Eastern European Kindred, particularly the Tremere, support the rise of fascism, applauding its emphasis on law and order. Seeing fascist governments as a useful check on social unrest*

and as a potential weapon against the Sabbat, conservative Kindred lend assistance to the proponents of totalitarianism.

- 1938: Germany annexes Austria.

- 1939: Germany invades Poland. World War II begins.

- 1941: Romania allies with Nazi Germany. Half a million German soldiers occupy the country. Germany attempts to invade the Soviet Union and retake Bessarabia. The results are disastrous; over 350,000 Romanian soldiers die.

- 1941-45: *Venture and Tremere allies of the German occupying forces attempt to oust the Tzimisce from their native soil. Bizarre occurrences plague their efforts, as if the land itself intervenes.*

- 1944: Soviet troops overrun Romania. King Michael of Romania declares an alliance with the Soviet Union against Germany.

- 1945: A Soviet occupation force, aided by local Communists, establishes a pro-Soviet provisional government in Hungary. The Soviet Union returns Transylvania to Hungary (as a reward for their alliance), but keeps Bessarabia.

- 1945-49: *The Sabbat Tzimisce reassert their dominance over Eastern Europe, driving out the remnants of the German and Austrian Camarilla Kindred from Romania and other regions of Eastern Europe. Despite Sabbat efforts, the Russian Brujah remain. The Tremere retreat to Austria or seclude themselves in Eastern Europe.*

- 1947: King Michael of Romania is forced to abdicate.

- 1948: *Brujah antitribu seize control of several key archbishoprics in Romania.*

- March, 1948: Romanian Communists dominate national elections. The country adopts a Soviet-style constitution and is proclaimed the Romanian People's Republic.

- 1949: The Hungarian People's Republic forms.

- 1956: In Hungary, the Soviet Union suppresses fierce opposition to the local Stalinist regime. *Under the cover of the Hungarian uprising, Russian Brujah and Hungarian Sabbat vampires carry out bloody skirmishes in the streets.*

- 1957: *The Third Sabbat Civil War in the Americas bleeds over into Europe, emerging as another battle between the Brujah antitribu in Romania and local Tzimisce.*

- 1960's: Gheorge Gheorghiu-Dej and his eventual successor, Nicolae Ceausescu, implement foreign policies independent of Soviet agendas. The Communist Party of Romania forces the growth of heavy industry, transforming Romania from an agrarian to an urban society.

- 1970's: Ceausescu attempts to modernize the Romanian economy by investing huge loans from Western credit institutions. Many of his projects fail, forcing a rigorous "austerity program" to pay off the nation's debt. The standard of living plunges. A secret police terrorizes the populace. Ceausescu's family squanders the nation's wealth on public monuments and urbanization schemes.

- 1989: The Romanian army joins a national uprising against Ceausescu. He flees the country but is later captured and executed.

The Council of the National Salvation Front takes over, calling for a transition to a free-market economy. Romanian vampires, regardless of clan or sect, unite to expel Russian vampires from their midst. Those who do not leave are destroyed or go into hiding.

• 1989: Hungarian communists voluntarily abandon their political monopoly. Hungary's constitution is amended to allow other parties. In 1990, the Hungarian Democratic Forum wins the first democratic elections.

• 1990: Baba Yaga awakens from torpor and overwhelms the supernatural denizens Russia, slamming down a supernatural barrier that prevents Kindred from leaving. Contact with the Brujah who support the Soviet government breaks off abruptly and many Kindred in Russia disappear.

• 1991: The National Salvation Front becomes the Democratic National Salvation Front. Romania drafts a new constitution. Civil war erupts in Yugoslavia. The Soviet Union collapses.

• 1993: Czechoslovakia splits into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

• 1994: Hungarians vote the Socialist Party back into power. Kindred refugees from Romania find havens in Hungary.

• 1995: Members of the European Union create a timetable for Eastern Europe's entry into the European Union.

• 1996: Kindred from Western Europe take advantage of reestablished relations with Eastern Europe and resume travel to former Iron Curtain countries.

• 1998: Baba Yaga meets Final Death and the barrier isolating Russia from the rest of the world falls. Rumors circulate throughout the Sabbat that the Hag's death came about at the hands of Black Hand Seraph Jalan-Aajav, while some Camarilla Kindred claim that their own warlord, Karsh, is responsible for her demise.

• 1999: Slobodan Milosevic calls for the evacuation of ethnic Albanians from the Yugoslavian province of Kosovo. NATO begins bombing key targets in the region. Under pressure, Milosevic agrees to NATO's peace proposal. NATO and Russian troops occupy Kosovo.

THE SIGNS OF GEHENNA

Through the four books that comprise the *Transylvania Chronicles*, the characters have had the opportunity to discover — and in some cases participate in — the Eight Signs that herald the coming of Gehenna. Noddist scholars in both the Camarilla and Sabbat disagree as to the nature of these signs. Some traditionalists maintain that the signs of Gehenna revealed in the *Book of Nod* are the true signs. These scholars posit that the signs revealed instead merely herald the rise of the demon called Kupala and that this demon only affects a small portion of Romania — hardly a concern for most Kindred.

The tablets and other documents the characters have acquired through the centuries indicate otherwise, however. Not only do the writings reveal Saulot's duplicity and his connection to the Baali, they refer to Saulot's visions of these other signs as the true indications of Gehenna. The visions of the Malkavian prophets Octavio and his heir Anatole corroborate that these signs, which began in the Dark Ages and end in the last nights of the 20th century, are true. Kindred familiar with the signs of Kupala and the *Book of Nod* maintain that both are needed to fully understand the many warnings of the impending conflagration.

Controversy rages in some circles as to whether the eight signs merely announce the coming of Gehenna or actually set in motion the Final Nights. Whether they serve as warnings or as milestones on the road to Gehenna, the signs offer visible proof that the Antediluvian threat is real.

These are the eight signs of Gehenna as revealed throughout the *Transylvania Chronicles*.

Prior to the *Transylvania Chronicles*

• **Sign One** — The Hidden Darkness: the diablerie of Saulot by Tremere.

Book One: Dark Tides Rising

• **Sign Two** — The Threefold Breaking: the destruction of the Templars, the loss of the Holy Land and the fall of a mighty wizard.

• **Sign Three** — The War of the Children: Young vampires rebel against their elders, sparking uprisings that become the Anarch Revolt. Young Lasombra and Tzimisce diablerize the founders of their clans, laying the groundwork for the Sabbat.

• Zelios constructs his geomantic web. Though not itself one of the omens, it leads to the fulfillment of the next to last sign (see below).

Book Two: Son of the Dragon

• **Sign Four** — The Rise and Return of the Dragon: Most Kindred who know of this sign believe that it pertains to Vlad Tepes, known as Dracula (the Dragon). Another interpretation has gained credence in the light of recent events: the true "dragon" of the prophecy is Saulot, whose dominance of Tremere reveals that he is still very much a part of the Jihad.

• **Sign Five** — The Making and Breaking of the Compact of Kindred: the formation of the Camarilla and the subsequent creation of the Sabbat after the Convention of Thorns.

Book Three: Ill Omens

• **Sign Six** — The Martyred Innocent: The death of Maria Asunción, last of the Cappadocians, ends the Giovanni purge of their parent clan and assures the onslaught of the Final Nights.

Book Four: Dragon Ascendant

• **Sign Seven** — The Web of Power: The activation of the geomantic web built by Zelios many centuries past places Eastern Europe (and Manhattan) on the verge of nuclear disaster.

• **Sign Eight** — The Cracking of the World: Terrible storms and upheavals rock the world, signifying the rise of the Antediluvians — and their elders.

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