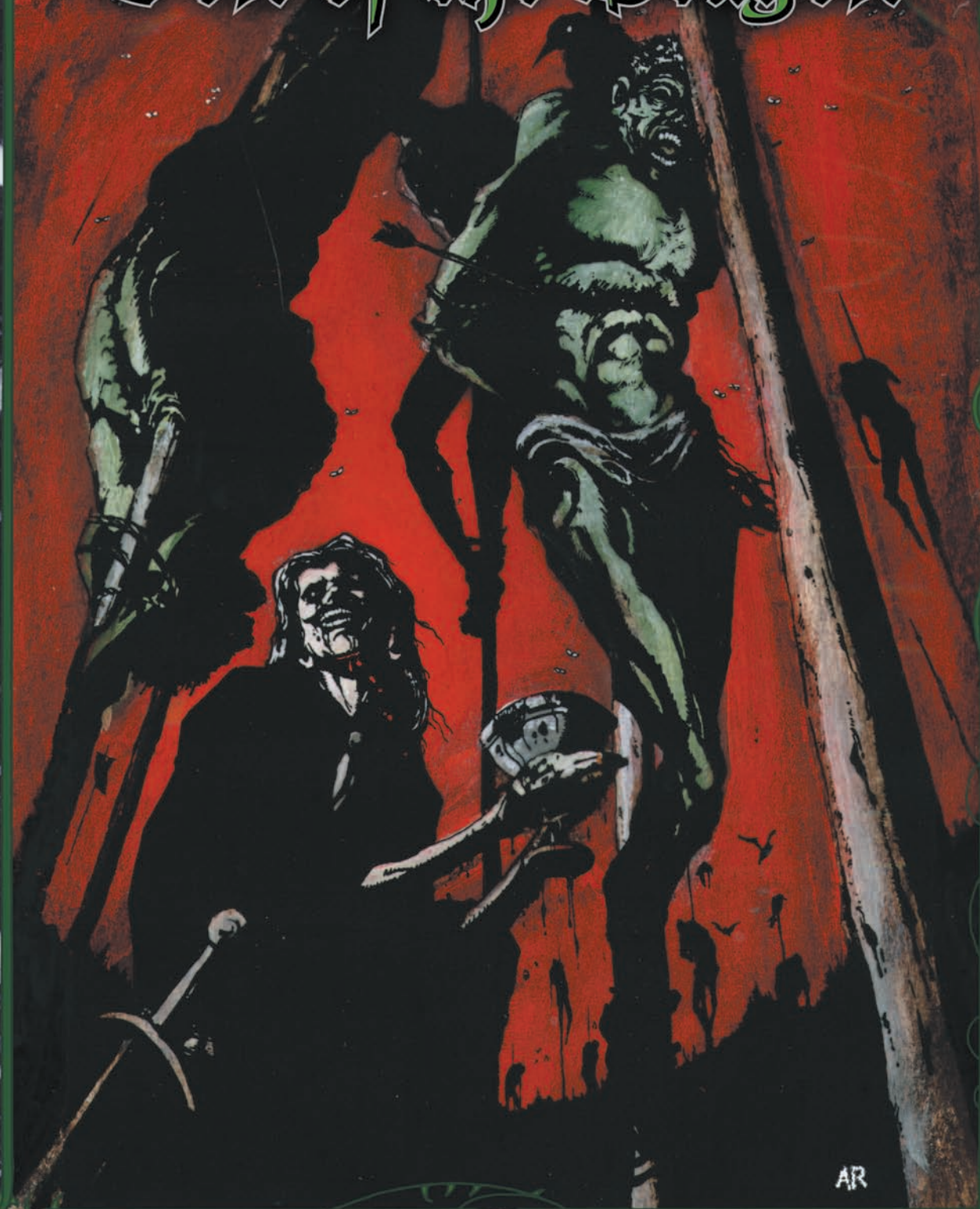


Transylvania Chronicles II[™]

Son of the Dragon



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



Transylvania Chronicles II[™] — Son of the Dragon —

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Transylvania Chronicles II™

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	6
CHAPTER ONE: SHADOWS OF TRANSYLVANIA	12
CHAPTER TWO: BLOOD CALLS TO BLOOD	32
CHAPTER THREE: HACELDEMA	50
CHAPTER FOUR: PROPHECY IN AMBER	72
CHAPTER FIVE: CHARACTERS	86
CHAPTER SIX: STORYTELLING THE CHRONICLE OF AGES	102
APPENDIX: THE ROLES OF HISTORY AND DESTINY	110





Wenn die Todten reiten Schnell.

(for the dead travel fast)

- Gottfried August Burger, 'Lenore'

As the childer of Caine destroy their elders

and war among themselves, the Son of the Dragon

worms his way into their poisoned hearts of darkness

The sands in the hourglass portending Gehenna continue

to trickle away, as does the vitae of elder and neonate alike.





Introduction

Here I am noble; I am boyar.
The common people know
me, and I am master.
- Bram Stoker, *Dracula*



TRANSYLVANIA CHRONICLES II

The latter years of the Middle Ages compose one of the most tumultuous periods of vampiric history, particularly in the voivodate of Transylvania.

In the "lands beyond the forest," packs of roaming neonates pervert the traditional practices of Clan Tzimisce, establishing the first *ritus* of the Sabbat. Within the secret chambers of Germanic Ventrue, power-hungry vampires extoll the virtues of the Camarilla, organizing against the chaos in their midst. And not far away, as rebellious peasants set the homes of feudal lords ablaze, anarchs strike the first blows against a stifling oligarchy of the night. The political sects that the 20th-century Cainites know so well originate during this time.

The end of the Anarch Revolt ushers in the beginning of a new age. Clan Tremere was scandalized by the actions of the treacherous Goratrix. Now, as he rejects their order and forms his own, the Warlocks are threatened by his youngest childer. By carefully manipulating and culling the mortal rulers of Transylvania, they recruit new leaders into their ranks. One of the most promising of these is Vlad the Impaler, the mortal known as the Son of the Dragon, though he will flout the Fiends' attempts at dominance.

For all the clans, the birth of the Renaissance brings new ideas... and spawns new horrors. Transylvania's saga continues.

THE CALL OF THE NIGHT

In both our world and in the Dark Medieval world, Transylvania's very name conjures up classic images of vampiric legend. In its dark lands, there is little pretense of a Masquerade. The Silence of the Blood holds no meaning here, for the kine of Transylvania are fearfully aware of the presence of the undead. Simple folk shutter their windows and bar their doors when the sun sets behind the misty Carpathians, for nocturnal warfare in Transylvania is unashamedly brutal and bloody. Peasants furtively whisper stories of the terrible sounds they hear in the night. Superstition is commonplace here — legend becomes truth, and those who uncover dark secrets learn to live in fear.

Ancient Cainites have much to fear as well. Caine's youngest childer rebel against a millennium of oppression, uniting against the tyranny of vampiric lords and princes. Consumed with rage and ambition, they slay their sires to purchase their freedom. Roaming coterie of the undead defend the boundaries of traditional domains, but they cannot escape the packs of anarchs and *antitribu* that hunt down the elders of their own clans. Clan Tzimisce, in particular, is caught in the throes of this violent revolution. Fiendish neonates stalk in the shadows of once great castles, fighting not for land or honor, but for the fulfillment of their bestial desires.

By the end of this century (and the end of this segment of the **Transylvania Chronicles**), the childer of Caine will have completely reworked the structure of vampiric society. Those who side with the fledgling Camarilla vainly attempt

to hold onto their humanity while hiding behind the mortal societies of humans. Opposing them, the most bestial Cainites — including the childer of Goratrix, the Tzimisce anarchs and the Cainites who destroyed Lasombra — forsake human morality and humane concerns, descending into the violent world of what will one night become the Sabbat. Caught between these two extremes, Tyler of Clan Brujah leads the dispossessed and outraged against the leaders of both sects, beginning the eternal war of the anarchs.

Transylvania reflects this division. This is a land where corruption is rampant. Here the very earth is tainted with an ancient and unspeakable evil. The fearful roar of Gargoyles on the wing, the screams of terror as innocents are victimized — these are the sounds of the call of the night. While the rest of the world forgets the tales of the Old Country, the bloodshed in Transylvania is a grim reminder of an evil that never dies. An age of darkness draws to a close, but another epoch of desperate tragedy follows in its wake.

NEW LEGENDS OF THE OLD COUNTRY

This is the second book in the **Transylvania Chronicles**, an epic vampiric saga spanning eight centuries. While modern vampires are easily distracted by night-to-night intrigues, older Cainites know that surviving the horror of Caine's curse depends on schemes that take decades to fulfill. The political concerns of one city pale in comparison to the saga that can unfold in a nation over centuries. Through your retelling of vampiric legends, the Cainites of your chronicle become legends as well.

While each of the stories in this series can be used on its own, this chronicle shows “snapshots of time” to illustrate the evolution of the voivodate. Each act of this drama is separated by decades of mortal history. Most likely, your troupe's saga will not limit itself to a few scant years of events — we have compiled 800 years of legend as the background for your story. This book details Cainite conflicts between 1450 and 1500, one of the most dangerous periods in vampiric history.

Take what you will and shape it to your sinister designs. History is at your command.

THE THEME OF IMMORTALITY'S CORRUPTION

This chronicle slowly taints the protagonists of Cainite society. Time is a vampire's worst enemy. The jaded neonates of the modern age speak all too quickly of the curse of Caine, but they cannot understand its true threat. The thirst for blood, the scorn of mortals, the distractions of politics — these are comparatively minor details of unlife. The greatest burden vampires endure is immortality itself.

Vampires are static creatures, but the world around them constantly changes, twisting and distorting their grand ambitions. Idealism turns to shame. Triumph becomes disgrace. Base schemes



INTRODUCTION



turn villains into conquerors, while altruistic Cainites create nightmares of their own choosing. Time alters all things. The repercussions that vampires' actions have on history reflect the most sinister aspect of Caine's curse. As your coterie survives, all that it achieves only furthers the madness of despair and the fulfillment of dreadful prophecies. Destiny awaits, for better or for worse.

THE MOOD OF LEGENDARY TRANSYLVANIA

There are two dominant moods in Transylvania — they are as different as night and day. Life in the daylight is relatively safe. Mortals are strongly influenced by the actions of the supernatural creatures among them, yet throughout Eastern Europe, most are also perfectly capable of creating their own sagas. Vampires think they control everything, warping history to fit their master plans, but in Transylvania, knowledge of their lords' true natures prevents this gross manipulation. Shadows reach far in the lands beyond the forest, but the Children of Caine are nonetheless relegated to them, waiting for the setting of the sun and the rising of the moon.

Once the sun sets, Cainites rule the night. Don't be afraid to get a little extreme in your nocturnal version of Transylvania. Many horror fans associate this land with the most enduring clichés of the vampire genre — your task is to overcome their superstitions and recreate them. The archetypes of vampiric legend brood in your subconscious. Nurture them

in the tainted soil of this land. Recall the terrible castle on the hill, the cry of wolves by moonlight, or forgotten crypts where cultists harbor secrets that would destroy the sanity of mortals. Stalking in an endless nightmare, the children of the night continue their saga of despair.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Welcome to my home. Enter freely. Go safely.

— Count Dracula, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

All of the books in this series share a similar structure for ease of use. **Chapter One** of this book describes the major characters and events of the last installment, **Dark Tides Rising**. This time, a description of domains and *tirsas*, summaries of the Transylvanian Cainites, and a brief history of the three major sects of this era are presented for your edification.

Chapters Two, Three and Four present three stories for your chronicle. First, your troupe has the opportunity to traffic with Vlad the Impaler. He's trapped in a web of Cainite treachery and conspiracy. Your coterie can either sever the threads that bind him or witness his... *destruction*. Next, they'll participate in one of the most important events of Cainite history — the Convention of Thorns. Once there, they'll have a chance to discuss ideas that lead to the formation of the Camarilla... and inspired the vengeance of the Sabbat. Finally, your coterie must travel to Castle Arghes in Wallachia, where an anarch stalks one of the most nefarious

villains of Cainite history, and fate lurks outside the castle walls. Destiny depends on your coterie's actions.

Chapter Five describes the *dramatis personae* of these stories and offers more ideas for using them in your chronicle. Clan warfare rages fiercely in Transylvania, but much of vampiric history is shaped by the individuals your coterie will meet. **Chapter Six** offers some useful devices for epic Storytellers, including a few more systems for handling the interludes and events of downtime between stories.

Finally, for the historically minded, the **Appendix** describes some of the events of mortal history that occurred during this time. This is contrasted by a series of summaries for several prominent Cainites of the late-15th century. The most relevant of these is a brief treatment of the origins of Vlad Tepes, the Son of the Dragon.

Wander through the bleak castles we have constructed for you. Lose yourself in their dark corridors, and emerge with further revelations of the Old Country. Enter freely and leave safely, for when you finish your exploration, you will carry with you stories of legendary Transylvania.

INSPIRATION AND REVELATION

The Storyteller has a number of choices to make for her chronicle right from the start. Will it be a saga of historical recreation, or will it echo the dark legends of the vampire myth? We prefer using a little of both. With that in mind, we have drawn from a variety of sources. Transylvanian chronicles can't survive on history alone. Mortal history forms the inspiration; classic archetypes of horror bring them to vivid unlife. The following sources can help guide further research for your chronicle:

A History of Transylvania by Stephen Pascu
History of Transylvania ed. by Lazslo Nikai, et al.
History of the Late Medieval Balkans ed. by John Fine
A World Lit Only By Fire by William Manchester
Vlad Dracula: Prince of Many Faces by McNally and Florescu
In Search of Dracula by McNally and Florescu
Vlad Tepes by Stoiescu
and, of course, *Dracula* by Bram Stoker

OTHER RESOURCES

Several of the most influential vampires during this time are summarized in **Children of the Inquisition**. That book provides additional ideas for 15th-century chronicles, as well as detailed essays on Vlad Tepes, Durga Syn, Etrius, Lambach, Tyler, Rafael de Corazon and many other Cainites of the era. We owe a debt of gratitude to the author, Daniel Greenberg, for inspiring much of the foundation for this book.

Unfortunately, **Children of the Inquisition** is long out of print. For those of you with Internet access, the book is archived for free download at the White Wolf website at <http://www.white-wolf.com>. Individuals without Internet access are advised to peruse the shelves of used-book and game stores, or to improvise. (The continuity police won't come to your house, we promise.)

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM...

...Is not eternal vigilance, but the willingness to make modifications to the tale as told.

The **Transylvania Chronicles** are rooted in vampire history, which maintains that the Camarilla ended the Anarch Revolt in 1493 and Dracula was Embraced by Lambach. The story, as presented, assumes that **Vampire** history continues unchanged. The characters are present on a personal level, collecting allies and enemies and building the groundwork for the centuries of unlife that lie ahead of them.

But so what? If you don't like that, adjust it. If your coterie ends up sabotaging the Convention of Thorns and the Anarch Revolt rages on, so be it. Maybe cunning characters in your coterie end up as prisci or cardinals in the Sabbat — good for them (well, sort of...). Don't be constrained by the story herein — it is only clay in your able hands. Make your part of the World of Darkness your own.





Chapter One: Shadows of Transylvania

*I have said that this is a very lonely
place. Judge whether I say truth
- Sheridan LeFanu, "Carmilla"*

THE DAWN OF A NEW AGE

In the late-15th century, Eastern Europe witnesses many changes. Coaches replace ox carts, drastically reducing travel time between distant cities. After gunpowder is perfected, the brutality of the Renaissance mercenary replaces the chivalry of the medieval knight. Feudal responsibility slowly changes as peasants resist the yoke of oppression. By daylight, industrious men and women struggle to drive back the darkness of the Middle Ages.

Once the sun sets, however, even hopeful mortals flee the growing shadows. Fearfully, they keep their hearth fires blazing, barricading themselves inside their homes. The veil separating the living and the dead is gossamer thin. When it parts, the resultant horrors drive sane men mad. Ancient creatures rule the night in Eastern Europe, even in the largest cities.

WHEN WE LAST LEFT OUR VILLAINS...

Before we descend into Transylvania's maelstrom of social change, we should summarize some major details from the last episode in the **Transylvania Chronicles**. If you haven't uncovered the secrets in the first book of the series, **Dark Tides Rising**, this chapter can help you catch up on our story so far. If, on the other hand, your coterie has survived everything the last two centuries had to offer, this section can serve as a quick way to recall the major aspects of the chronicle... and uncover a few surprises.

Each installment of the **Transylvania Chronicles** builds on the details of the last, creating a cast with centuries of history behind it. Old rivals return; neonate childer arise; forgotten secrets create new horrors. If you are presenting this chronicle to new players in your troupe, the summary below should help bring them up to speed.

Storytellers are granted permission to photocopy the Chronicle Summary for personal use.

NOTABLE CAINITES

Against the backdrop of mortal history, the undead act out the eternal drama of their passion play. Clan warfare becomes increasingly common, largely because the eldest Cainites are able to stir their consanguineous brethren against ancient enemies. In the years that follow, the schemes of individuals slowly succumb to the treacherous alliances of Transylvanian clans.

Neonates may speak of their clans' elders with scorn, but the names of the Ancients of Transylvania still evoke fear and

awe. Few would be foolish enough to openly revile **Tremere**, the Antediluvian leader of the Usurper Clan. Only the most suicidal would venture uninvited into the depths of **Yorak's** labyrinth, the Cathedral of Flesh, where fanatic Tzimisce learn the forgotten secrets of their ancestors.

Rebellious neonates scheme to usurp the power of these two Methuselahs, but they face the competition of other Ancients. **Michael** of Clan Toreador watches in horror as his power rapidly diminishes under Turkish siege in Constantinople. His nights are numbered, for in 1453, the city will be conquered by the Ottoman Empire. To the east, **Arnulf**, a powerful Gangrel, waits for the night when the Turkish host will overrun Transylvania. Nearby, Assamite Methuselahs also wait for reports on the advance of the Turkish conquerors.

The Ventrue pose another threat to the freedom of younger Cainites. The Eastern Lords — Ventrue on the frontier of Eastern Europe — regret that **Bulscu**, an Inconnu of their clan, has fallen into torpor, but the opportunity to exploit what he has built in Hungary is still there. The Saxon Ventrue are well known in Transylvania, both for their greed and their tenacity.

WANDERERS IN THE NIGHT

Many Cainites haunt and protect the same domains for centuries, but they cannot restrain undead who travel wherever they please. **Anatole** is one such creature, a Malkavian prophet who seeks visions of God's plans. In contemplating the injustice of the universe, he uncovers prophesies of the coming of Gehenna. **Lucita** is a rogue Lasombra assassin who travels in his wake.

In the last few centuries, several elder Assamites have remained hidden in the major cities of Europe. Now many flee for safety. **Husayn's** career has been successful. After fulfilling his contract in Prague, he returned to Alamut to await his next assignment. **Fariq** is another story: He once controlled the merchant section of Buda-Pest, but was never called upon to fulfill his assignment. Instead, he gained sympathy for the mortals of Transylvania and has since fled to their realm.

The nomads and mortal families of Clan Ravnos have suffered violence, persecution and prejudice from Europeans and Turks alike. Originally, they had hoped to find a new homeland in Europe, but their dreams have been cruelly destroyed. **Vassily Taltos** was once a diplomat to the Ventrue; now he influences several packs of his fellow Ravnos. He is well aware of the suffering of the newly arrived Gypsies in eastern Hungary, and will eventually create a childer, **Vladislav Taltos**, as the instrument of his vengeance.

Finally, there is **Zelios**, a well-known visionary of Clan Nosferatu. He has gained notoriety for designing many of the major castles throughout Europe. Unfortunately, he has gained some devious enemies, including a cult of power-hungry Setites.

CHRONICLE SUMMARY: OUR STORY SO FAR

Anyone who wants to greatly simplify the legend of Dark Medieval Transylvania can sum it up succinctly: Most of the trouble in this land comes from the conflict between East and West. In the 12th century, the Western clans tried to organize the domains of eastern Hungary to serve their selfish purposes. The Eastern Lord Ventrue were the most ambitious. Eagerly, they schemed to expand their influence into the voivodate of Transylvania.

Their designs were not wholly without merit. One of their plans helped settle the more remote regions of eastern Hungary and Transylvania. After King Geza II of Hungary encouraged the colonization of Transylvania with the proclamation of 1141, the aristocracy of western Hungary encouraged Saxon settlers from the Holy Roman Empire to establish a network of settlements in Transylvania. The most prominent of these settlements were the Siebenburgen, an alliance between the seven most prosperous cities in the region. Western Cainites soon recognized these places as the seats of power for major domains.

There was, however, one major complication to this ambitious plan. Since the days of Ancient Rome, the local populace of Transylvania had built a civilization of its own. Romanian families that descended from the settlers of Ancient Dacia rejected the claims of Western invaders. In a similar vein, Eastern Cainites ignored the dictates of Western vampiric rulers.

The Tzimisce offered the most passionate resistance to the Eastern Lords' schemes. The Fiends had always defined their own boundaries, both in politics and morality. The *knezi*, the esteemed princes of their clan, continually enacted elaborate Trials by War to redefine the boundaries of their domains. They violently fought to maintain control of their ancestral demesnes, fervently disregarded the dictates of the Patricians, and ruthlessly opposed any who questioned their authority.

As the Tzimisce resisted the schemes of the Western European vampires, they waged war against another deadly enemy: the Usurpers of Clan Tremere. The Fiends and Usurpers nurtured their hatred for ages, enacting the vengeance of a pact of blood. Clan Tremere first learned the secrets of vampirism by capturing weaker Fiends and using them in diabolical experiments. The Usurpers of the East built a conspiracy of Thaumaturgical power over centuries. Unified, their order slaughtered many Tzimisce vampires.

The feudal lords of Clan Tzimisce were too fractious to destroy the Tremere during the Dark Ages, but since then, younger Tzimisce have learned to form fanatically loyal packs of undead. United at last, they respond to the threats of the Usurpers and the Ventrue. Blood calls to blood, and the bonds of the *vinculum* have made these childer deadly. Disaffected vampires of other clans rally to their cause, giving rise to an army of the night aligned against the elders.

The soldiers of this army nurse fervent hatred for their elders, threatening and sometimes slaying the Cainite lords

of Eastern Europe. Through fanaticism and an undying lust for power, anarchs even assist other neonates in turning against their undead masters. Feudal domains are fracturing, and the rebellious childer are quickly gathering power. In 1450, they still refer to themselves as anarchs; over the next decade, many of these rebels proclaim their packs *antitribu*, or "anticlans." The Anarch Movement has begun.

Within a few scant years, Transylvania is beset by another enemy. The forces of Sultan Mehmed II move toward Eastern Europe. Answering Allah's will, the Turkish host conquers Constantinople, one of the most powerful cities in Christendom. The Assamites watch the Turks' carefully, noting opportunities to expand their realms of influence. All of Eastern Europe lies before the Assassins. The lands of Transylvania are but a minor hindrance to their conquest... for the time being.

By the end of the 15th century, the Tzimisce and Tremere fight at the vanguards of two terrible sects: the Camarilla and what will soon be known as the Sabbat. Anarchs act as a third faction, seeking to destroy both sides. If your coterie is unified, it has a better chance of surviving this madness; otherwise, the same forces that tear the Children of Caine apart will test the alliances within your coterie, possibly to the breaking point.

The stage has been set. Childer slay their sires. The Tremere and Tzimisce are locked in a deadly war. The Turkish host advances as Alamut sends forth its spies and assassins. New orders strive to overcome chaos. The Cainites are taking sides once again, and your coterie is caught in the midst of it all. This is the violent world your vampires must attempt to survive.

THE ANARCH REVOLT'S ORIGIN

In 1395 an impetuous Brujah named Patricia of Bolingbroke opened the door to what became known shortly thereafter as the Anarch Revolt. After her Embrace, Patricia took the name of her mortal lover, Wat Tyler, an English reformationist, in honor of his impassioned cause.

Tyler née Patricia gathered a motley force of her fellow Brujah vampires and other insurgent "anarchs" to mount a symbolic strike against the elder society that oppressed the younger Cainites. The subject of her attack was none other than the Founder of the Camarilla, the Ventrue Hardestadt. In light of Tyler's success, the anarchs rallied to the cause of ending elder oppression, touching off the nocturnal civil war known as the Anarch Revolt.

Almost 100 years later, "Hardestadt" called for the Convention of Thorns, however. In the time between Tyler's attack and the convention, Hardestadt's childer assumed his sire's identity, hoping to prevent the loss of all the work his sire had done in the interests of "Kindred" society. Tyler, embarrassed beyond expression and discredited among her anarch followers, swore revenge....

THE CAINITES OF THE SEVEN DOMAINS

Despite the current stalemates of Ventrue forays into the East, the Patricians were once perilously close to completely dominating all of Hungary, including Transylvania. After thoroughly corrupting the mortal rulers of western Hungary, they organized the Council of Ashes, a coterie of undead rulers that oversaw the seven domains of the Siebenburgen of eastern Hungary.

The rulers of Transylvania have since fallen from grace. Childer have risen against them, attempting to take their place and seize their power. It is said that as a ruler becomes corrupt, his lands reflect the torment in his soul. This is doubly true among the undead, for they have centuries to plunge into despair. The Cainite rulers of the Transylvanian domains have strong ties of loyalty to their lands. Now, as their authority withers, their lands suffer even more. Like starving beasts in a cage, fallen princes exact their frustrations on each other.

THE NORTHERN DOMAINS OF TRANSYLVANIA

In northern Transylvania, the threat of the Tremere-Tzimisce War is not as strong as it is in the south. Other conflicts are far more critical, however. *Antitribu* rejoice at the decline of well-respected elders. The rulers of the Council of Ashes are losing power, and

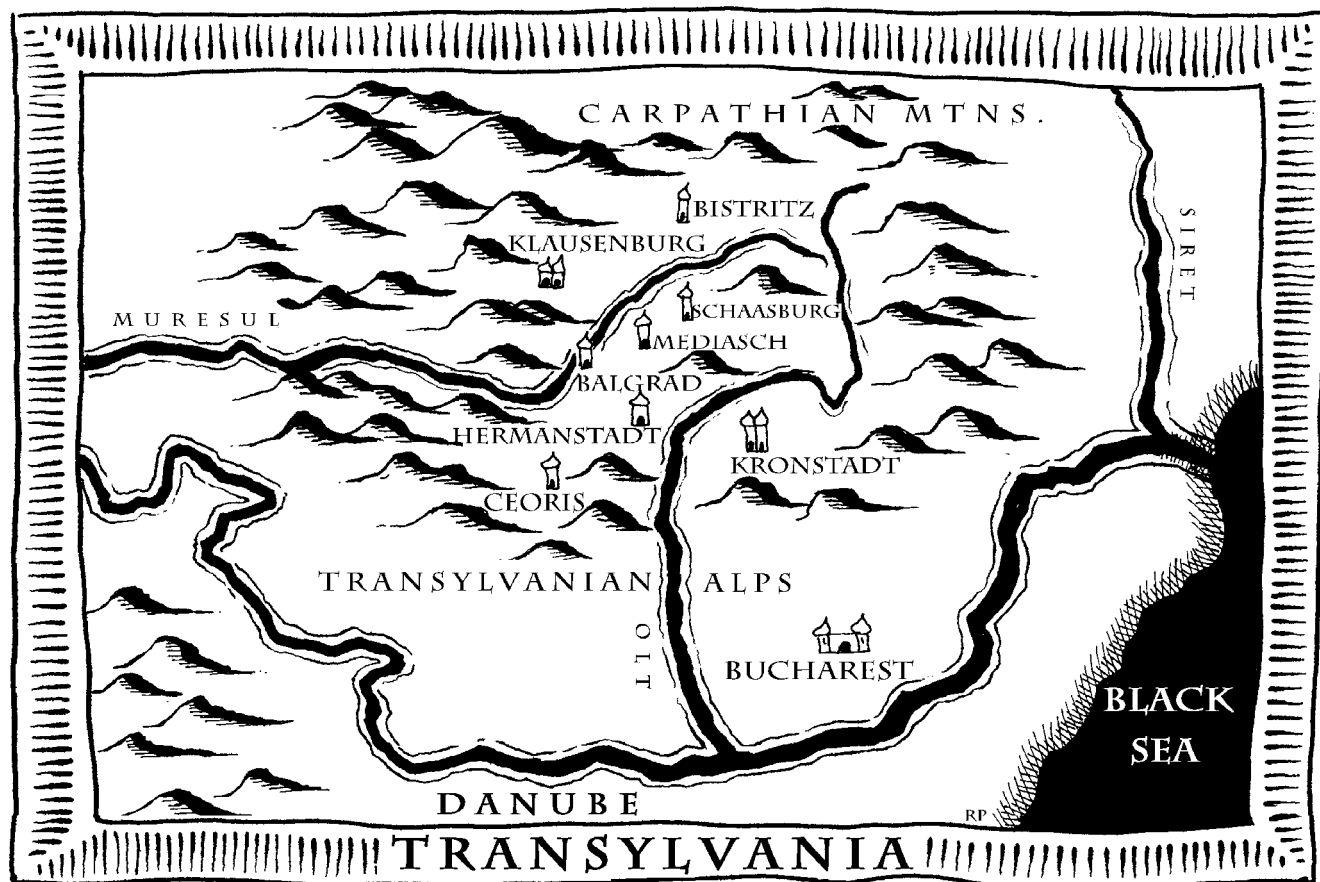
younger revolutionaries hunt them with fervor and fanaticism. Wanderers flee, seeking places of safety from the madness around them. Soon, for better or worse, these realms will be ripe for conquest by younger, more capable vampires. Over the next two centuries, the power of the Sabbat grows in northern Transylvania.

THE DOMAIN OF KLAUSENBURG

In the first act of the *Transylvania Chronicles*, a brutal ruler assaulted a coterie of neonates traveling through Hermanstadt. This assailant was **Mitru the Hunter**, a Gangrel who rose from his humble origins in Klausenburg to enforce his laws throughout a vast domain. After the Mongol invasion, Mitru was hounded by other members of Clan Gangrel for failing to repel the forces of his sire, Arnulf.

Travel through northwestern Transylvania is now especially difficult. Constant conflicts, especially between packs of Gangrel and bestial Tzimisce, steel the local vampires for nightly warfare. Mitru has Embraced too many childer, and they savage each other like beasts to secure alpha status within their packs. Any who travel through this realm should be ready for a fight.

Far to the east of this domain, Count Vikto Danislav of Clan Tzimisce rules over the **Danislav Estate**. Although geographically remote, the concerns of Tzimisce politics in **Tara Maramesului** sometimes conflict with Mitru's desires. Despite Mitru's ploy to convince Danislav revenants to destroy their master Count Florescu, Vikto betrayed his own family and received the Embrace as both reward and punishment.



THE DOMAIN OF MEDIASCH

In the 12th century, the alleged ruler of the Council of Ashes was **Nova Arpad**. She served as a Ventrue representative to the Patricians of the Holy Roman Empire. Since then, she has been deposed as the prince of Mediasch and has fled to Ceoris. She hopes to salvage her reputation by strengthening the alliance between the Ventrue and Tremere. Her enemies are ancient, however, and do not forget the past so easily.

Nova's estate was in Mediasch. Even after her departure, the city's proximity to Hungary made it easy for the Hungarian Ventrue to monitor events occurring there. Since then, many younger Tzimisce have either embraced or used other methods to bring mortal rulers of this domain under sway. Hungarian and Szekler Tzimisce contemplate their move westward to seize further power.

THE DOMAIN OF BISTRITZ

The most esteemed member of the Council of Ashes was **Count Radu**, a talented diplomat who has since become an anachronism of the worst variety. Caught between the concerns of the Western Cainites and the ambitions of the Eastern Tzimisce, he has gained many enemies. Neonate *antitribu* have since overrun his ruling city of Bistritz. The count has retreated to a fortress in the **Tihuta Pass**. Saxons refer to the crumbling castle in the mountains as **Birkau Castle**.

Northeastern Transylvania is now home to several alliances of bellicose Tzimisce. The packs and *knezi* of two Tzimisce territories now vie for control of Radu's former home. **Tara Maramasului** is the first battleground. It is ruled by **Count Vikto Danislav**, a tyrant who watches over an estate of revenants bred from werewolf kin. The second, **Tara Hategului**, contains a number of smaller *tirsas*; no one ruler has emerged to control them all.

THE SOUTHERN DOMAINS

The Ventrue have awarded the princedoms of three of the remaining domains of Transylvania to ambitious younger Cainites. If you've adapted the stories from the last book to your chronicle, some of your vampires have probably risen to these esteemed positions. Depending on how the saga evolves, your coterie might help Camarilla vampires extend their influence into the southern domains or betray them to the Sabbat Crusade. Either way, the Cainites of your saga probably have some powerful rivals, as well as several lesser anarch and *antitribu* foes.

THE DOMAIN OF HERMANSTADT

South of the Domain of Mediasch, **Marusca** once used her Nosferatu Disciplines to command legions of wolves from her haven in Hermanstadt. She has since been summoned by **Yorak** and brought to his Cathedral of Flesh, where she has received his tutelage. The Eastern Lord Ventrue chose to replace her with the Ventrue **Otto**. Marusca's childe, **Ruxandra**, has learned to impersonate Otto, however, and rules in his stead.

Ruxandra, as prince of Hermanstadt, has assumed control of many of Marusca's spies. A conspiracy of Nosferatu watches

all that happens in this domain. The bestial creatures controlled by the Tzimisce **Marelle** in the *tirsa* of **Tara Fagarasului** to the southeast are their greatest concern. Marelle is a sinister fiend of the night who contorts and fleshcrafts entire packs of wolves.

THE DOMAIN OF KRONSTADT

This is a difficult territory to control, largely because of its proximity to Ceoris. A Gargoyle pack patrols here frequently, and travelers are far more likely to encounter warfare between the Usurpers and Fiends here than in any other region of the voivodate. Knowledgeable occultists also fear the secrets hidden beneath the Black Church in **Kronstadt**.

The region is surrounded by three Tzimisce *tirsas* that war with Ceoris and each other: **Tara Fagarasului** is to the west; **Tara Bisei** is to the east; **Tara Romanilor** is to the north. Further south is **Tirgoviste**, the temporary capitol of Wallachia, where Vlad the Impaler will one day — and night — rule the mortals of **Tara Romaneasca**.

THE DOMAIN OF MULBACH

Mortals know of the ongoing struggle of a number of independent peasant communes in this area. For the undead, this results in **Mulbach's** status as a military staging ground for neonate Brujah and other rebellious Cainites. This domain is also home to a number of Saxon communities that live in fear of Turkish attack. The Saxon citizens of Mulbach have erected wooden walls to protect their city, which is now considered one of the most well-defended areas in the voivodate.

DOMAIN OF BALGRAD

A smaller domain in southeast Transylvania is ruled from the traditional city of **Balgrad**. One of the most notable features of this city is a Roman necropolis nearby. Surviving Cappadocians know of the area's significance to the lingering ghosts of the dead; other Cainites may not be so enlightened. This is also the realm of the infamous **Dragomir Basarab**, a diabolist of the worst variety.

CEORIS

The deadliest and most threatening region in Transylvania is not a domain at all, but the independent and fiercely defended refuge of the eldest Tremere. From their fortress in the Southern Carpathians, the Usurper Clan sends out their Gargoyles to watch over several domains in Transylvania. They have good reasons for these defensive precautions.

In Ceoris, the Antediluvian **Tremere** lies in torpor. **Etrius** acts as seneschal in his stead. **Goratrix** has forsaken his clan, Embracing, rather, magi who join his crusade against the Tremere. **Malgorzata** still carries out her sire Goratrix' secretive plans by scheming with factions of conspirators and luring others into the ranks of the Tremere *antitribu*. **Celestyn** is a loyal magus working hard at expanding the chantry's occult library.

By the 16th century, the Tremere will establish a greater refuge in Austria, turning away from the overt warfare of their Transylvanian origins. Etrius will decide that the constant conflict surrounding Ceoris

WHERE ARE WE

One of the most difficult aspects of learning Transylvanian geography is remembering how names change. Saxons and Romanians have different names for many of the cities in the voivodate. In this book, we've used the Saxon terms for the cities of the Siebenburgen. By the next book, the concept of "seven Saxon cities" becomes less important, especially during periods of Transylvanian independence. Next time, Romanian names will become more important.

Over the next five centuries, some of these place names will change three or four times. The debate over which usage is correct reflects the cultural conflict in Transylvania. Using the wrong name in the presence of one of these ethnic groups can be embarrassing; confusing the names in the presence of Ventru or Tzimisce can be even worse. We have tried to greatly simplify this dilemma. For Storytellers who want to keep track of such complications, the following table should help.

Saxon name	Romanian name
Bistritz	Bistria
Kronstadt	Brasov
Klausenburg	Napoca
Mediasch	Medias
Muhlbach	Sebes
Hermanstadt	Sibiu
Balgrad	Alba Iulia

jeopardizes the unholy slumber of the Tremere Antediluvian and will move to relocate the seat of Usurper power to his own chantry in Vienna. During the move, a clever Ravnos nomad manages to see the slumbering Ancient and takes a brand to his own eyes after witnessing Tremere's rest. Horrific tales of the Usurper's founder and his diabolical... *metamorphosis* circulate throughout the Ravnos community and soon disseminate into the main body of Cainite society.

OTHER IMPORTANT REGIONS

A few additional areas are of particular interest to the **Transylvania Chronicles**. Each one offers further possibilities for expanding your saga. If you are curious about the history of neighboring countries, their histories may very well inspire you to add new dimensions to your campaign by investigating other conspiracies in Eastern Europe.

WESTERN HUNGARY

The Ventru have a stranglehold on western Hungary. **Vencel Rikard** is still the prince of **Budapest**. He inhabits an elaborate series of chambers buried beneath the castle overseeing Buda. Within this labyrinth, lackeys guard the torporous war chief **Bulscu**. Bulscu's fawning servant **Roland** awaits his return while cultivating a web of influence and contacts in the slums of the city.

BOHEMIA

Throughout this period, Bohemia maintains its independence. **Josef Zvi** of Clan Nosferatu preys upon Christians who

oppress the Jewish Quarter in Prague. A **golem** constructed by a long-forgotten Kabbalist once terrorized the streets of that city. It now waits, dreaming in a museum; one day, perhaps, a sinister occultist will control it once again. **Shaagra** of Clan Tzimisce is another danger. Soon, she will become a terrible foe for Camarilla vampires in Prague.

SCHAASBURG

This city, known as **Sighisoara** to the Romanians, plays an important role in backstory to this drama. In 1430, **Vlad Dracul** is appointed as the mortal ruler of much of this domain, along with the Wallachian duchies of **Amlas** and **Fagaras** to the south. His son, **Vlad Dracula**, the Son of the Dragon, inherits his legacy.

ALLIANCES OF BLOOD

Geography is one of the more direct ways of categorizing the Transylvanian Cainites, but over the next two centuries, the divisions between the undead become even more pronounced. Several major sects will contest for control of talented childer, including the protagonists of your chronicle. The Camarilla, Sabbat and Anarch Movement become far more powerful than any individual prince.

Until the Anarch Revolt incited by Tyler's assassination of Hardestadt, individual princes controlled their domains (whether large cities, a single castle, a town or village), while their lesser cousins sought influence in the Church, the military or at the sides of mortal rulers. Some elders created broods of childer to serve them or provide them with company through the long nights. Although clan affiliation counted for making alliances (or naming one's foes), the clans themselves were loose confederations of like-blooded Cainites rather than cohesive groups working toward a common goal (as is still partially the case). Even when clan members allied, the more powerful princes continued to rule their territories much as they pleased, regardless of their clans' "official" plans for the various areas. Cainites were (as a rule) more visible in their workings — content that mortals' fears would keep them from challenging those they could not hope to defeat.

In the late-12th century, the Inquisition unearthed many Cainite heresy cells among the other heresies endemic to the early nights of the Church. These cells led Inquisitors to the havens of many Cainites, who often bargained for their own unives at the price of revealing the locations of others. Fleeing the Inquisitors' forces, many elders panicked, throwing their childer to the torturers — and the burning stake — by ordering them to stay and fight while the elders themselves escaped. Spurred on by the peasant revolts rocking Europe and by the knowledge that their sires had no intention of ever sharing their wealth or privilege, disillusioned younger Cainites (who assumed the name "anarchs" to show their new commitment to autonomy, though some suspect it has its roots in the Cainite term "autarkis") took to banding together and attacking their elders. Starting in England with Tyler's attack on Hardestadt and spreading outward, the conflict became known as the Anarch Revolt.

In response to the need to hide from the Inquisition, yet cooperate in thwarting attacks from the anarchists, many elder

Cainites acknowledged the necessity for a congregation of their own kind to discuss their options and plan their responses to the threat posed by their childer. Within the next few years, like-minded Cainites banded together in loose factions, each espousing its own philosophies, each with different amounts of power, but all with roles to play in the centuries to come.

INTEGRATING THE SECTS

Except for the Inconnu (rumored to exist since the fall of Rome), the various factions detailed below came into existence (or became known to those outside their own group, in the case of the Inconnu) about the time the stories in this book take place. The births of the Anarch Movement, the Camarilla and the Sabbat are pivotal moments in Kindred history; before this time, Cainites were united by at least one thing — their shared existence as supernatural creatures. After the Anarch Revolt and the Convention of Thorns, things would never be the same again. From 1493 on, Storytellers may be faced with troupes that contain characters who belong to different sects. While it is difficult to integrate anarch, Sabbat and Camarilla characters into a single storyline, it isn't impossible. In fact, creating stories in which internal friction among characters becomes part of the challenge can be extremely rewarding, as well as fostering some very intense roleplaying.

A few suggestions may help.

- It may not be apparent to each character what faction the other characters support (if any). Except for the Tremere *antitribu* (who do not yet exist under that name), it isn't as if vampires have their sect or faction affiliation tattooed on their foreheads.

- Not every vampire belongs to a sect. Some simply want to be left alone. Independents may cooperate with whomever they choose and cease that cooperation when it suits them. (Of course, those in factions may do that too, but that's another story.)

- Remember that the Sabbat and the anarchs are not necessarily enemies; nor are the anarchs and the Camarilla (except during the actual revolt).

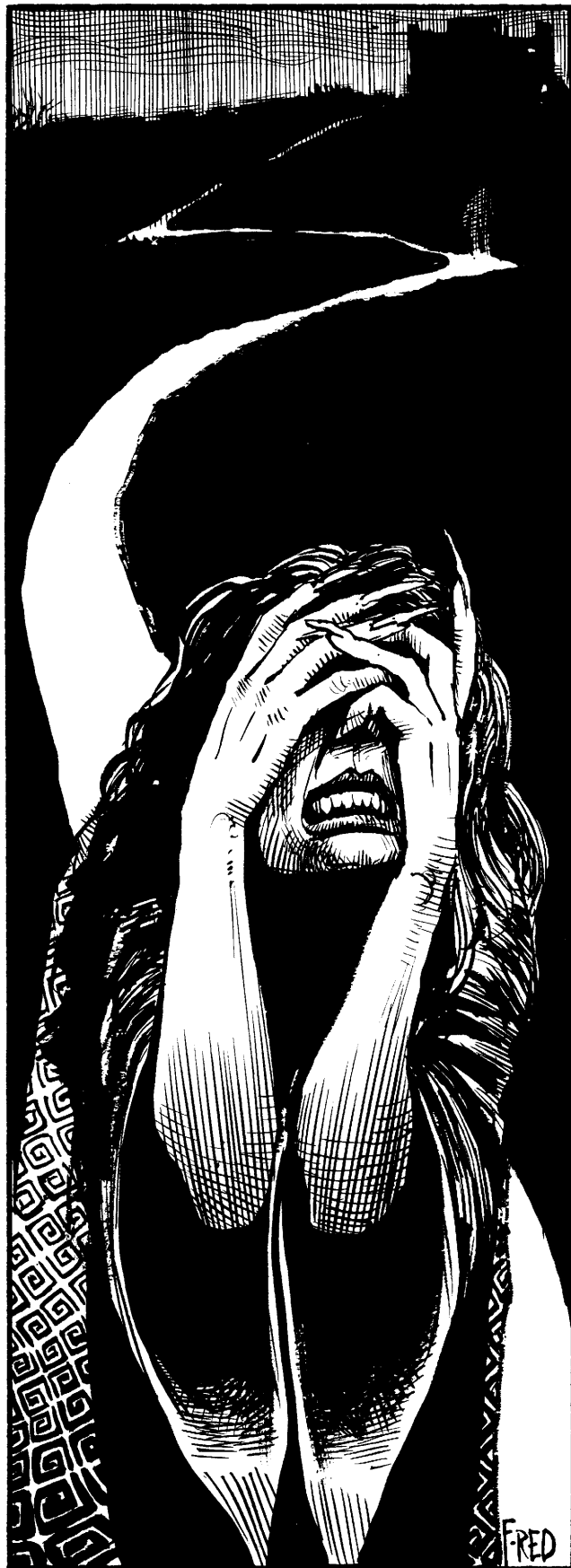
- Camarilla Cainites may cooperate with Sabbat who seem reasonable when it is to their advantage and vice versa.

- Different groups may want to accomplish the same goal for different reasons and be willing to put aside their enmity until the goal is accomplished.

- Just because people join different political parties, they don't throw away friendships or business ventures they've been involved with in the past. Vampires are smart enough to keep old allies, even if they no longer understand them. You never know when an old acquaintance may prove useful.

- It may not be apparent that a member of a group has switched sides or joined a new movement. What better way to spy on the opposition than to convince them that you're one of them?

- Occasionally, a sect may send a member to accomplish a goal that is ostensibly against its best interests. Usually, this furthers some other goal or turns out to be an underhanded move that rids the sect of an untrustworthy member (or some



such reason). Characters could, thus, work with rival sects while not going against their own.

Storytellers will undoubtedly find dozens of other reasons why characters belonging to different sects travel together. Advanced troupes might even split along sect or faction lines, running part of the story from one perspective, then running the other part of the troupe as a counter. Eventually, the two groups will meet and must then decide if they are working at cross purposes and if they will use deadly force to attain their goals. Further, while it's unlikely that Inconnu characters would be participants in the stories detailed in *Son of the Dragon*, if the Storyteller or players can find a good justification for such, well, it's your game.

THE CAMARILLA

Ask almost any member of the Camarilla how and why the sect formed and they will answer that the Camarilla came into existence to protect vampires from the Inquisition and to hide Cainites from prying mortal eyes. While that is the generally accepted explanation, it is only partially true. In essence, the Camarilla grew from the thwarted ambitions of younger Cainites and the fears of their elders.

Unlike human society, in which elders eventually fall before the infirmities of disease, injury and age, creating openings for younger, stronger mortals to assume positions of power, Cainite society remains mostly stagnant. Older Cainites are generally of lower generation, making them stronger than their progeny. Even those who lack lower generation often remain stronger than more recently created Cainites due to decades or centuries of experience and cunning.

Traditions and customs of the time also play roles. Although these centuries bring forth a new middle class and allow for some movement from one social rank to another, society as a whole has conditioned people to accept their allotted place: Nobles rule while peasants work, and children's lives, training and marriages are dictated by their parents or guardians. Even with the heady powers granted to Cainites upon their Embrace, many childer accede to their elder's wishes at first, dutifully assuming the roles assigned them and learning what their sires have to teach. For their part, elders close ranks against any younger Cainite who would dare question that her elder's centuries of survival grant him the right to rule over the more recently "reborn."

RISE OF THE CAMARILLA

Eventually, it became clear that there were not enough domains available for the younger generations to claim. Like the younger sons of landed families, lesser Cainites carved out domains for themselves in foreign lands or sought influence in the Church, but even these positions taxed the ranks of the more civilized areas of Europe. Further, elders manipulated their childer, using them as pawns in elaborate games and ongoing feuds, or sacrificing them to maintain their own power or unives.

Finally, the childer rebelled. In 1394, elders from the seven clans that would eventually form the Camarilla (as well as many others) agreed to meet together to discuss how to deal with the

so-called anarchs. Though at first they viewed the anarchs as disobedient and ungrateful childer, the elder generations realized that their own progeny posed a serious threat to their continued existence. Several of those who attended the convocation recognized the need to create an organization that would formalize the Cainites' traditions and work in the best interests of all the Children of Caine. They believed that such an organization would bring together all Cainites, thus leading the childer back into the fold and ending their destructive rampages.

Seven of the most vocal proponents came together to formulate the structure and laws for the new organization. They would become known as the Founders. Its founders consisted of Hardestadt of Clan Ventrue, the Gangrel Milov Petrenkov, Adana de Sforza of the Brujah, Camilla Banes for the Malkavians, Rafael de Corazon of the Toreador, the Nosferatu Josef von Bauren and Mistress Fanchon of Clan Tremere. The Founders represented many of the political factions of vampiric society as well as their clans' particular interests. The Founders set to hammering out a basis for cooperation among the Children of Caine and a roster of accepted regulations that would bind all Cainites.

A year later, when Tyler attacked Hardestadt, the elders became even more willing to sacrifice some individual power in the name of greater authority. They planned to crush the anarchs through interclan alliance. By 1435, the Founders had reached an agreement, and the new organization, known as the Camarilla (to denote both that it was a convocation of peers or comrades and that it met in session secret from mortal knowledge), was born. The Spanish word *camarilla* also means to mutually scratch one another's back, a meaning that would be given expression in the convoluted workings of prestatation throughout the sect.

Though the Camarilla claimed all Cainites as part of the new organization, not all accepted the honor. The Setites and Ravnos were too concerned with their own agendas to join as a clan, while the Lasombra and Tzimisce were in the midst of violent upheaval, battling their younger members, who had already committed diablerie upon the clan founders. The Cappadocians found little interest in forming a new organization and would soon fall before their childer, the Giovanni. The Giovanni were more concerned with consolidating their gains and asserting their stolen supremacy.

Although the Founders assumed the authority to seek out Cainites who did not bow to the Camarilla's dictates, their reach was only so long. When individual Cainites acted against the best interests of the Camarilla, the Founders' punishments ranged from ostracism to confiscation of a domain to Final Death depending on the offense. Many Cainites resented what they considered to be the heavy-handedness of the Founders; many refused to acknowledge the authority of the Camarilla at all. Having appointed the Founders to be their representatives, most princes and elders went back to doing what they had always done. The Inquisition lost its fire for a time as the immediacy of the threat of witchcraft briefly lessened; witch hunts abated and the crisis seemed to be over. While most vampires supported the idea of the Camarilla — especially its

aims to quiet troublemakers and keep the Church from hunting them — most elders gave it little real thought.

THE ANARCH REVOLT ESCALATES

Then in 1458, the Church distributed the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hammer of Witches). Throughout its ranks, priests and parishioners alike became alarmed at the idea of witches once again being within their midst, and the Inquisition rose anew. Determined to crush witchcraft and signs of the devil wherever they might be found, the Inquisitors once more sought out and destroyed vampires. As elders sacrificed their childer to make good their own escapes, more and more young Cainites rebelled, throwing in their lot with the anarchs and turning on their cowardly elders to punish them for their abandonment. The Anarch Revolt gained new impetus, and the elders saw that their own response must be harsher and more unified if the older Cainites were to survive their childers' attacks.

Meeting together in the first global convocation of the Camarilla in 1486, representatives from the seven clans grappled with their response to the anarchs. They temporarily granted sweeping powers allowing the Founders to punish any Cainite caught breaking the Traditions (as set down by the Camarilla). In particular, anyone found guilty of committing diablerie on another Cainite would receive the most severe punishments the Founders could devise, followed by Final Death. Now called Justicars (for their just sentencing of wrongdoers), the seven Founders were empowered to appoint lesser justices (called Archons) to assist them in apprehending and punishing wrongdoers. Those elders who attended the convocation agreed to meet again in seven years to reassess their progress. Within that time, the Justicars, Archons and forces belonging to the elders of the Camarilla would win two great victories (against the anarchs and the Assamites) that set the stage for one of the seminal events in Cainite history: the Convention of Thorns.

THE ASSAMITE PROBLEM

Alongside the Anarch Revolt, the elders of Europe also grappled with another problem: Assamites followed in the wake of the Turks, sweeping into Europe and committing diablerie on every elder they could capture. If gangs of anarchs bent on burning down their manors and inspiring their peasants to revolt were not enough to mobilize the elders, the threat of dissolution beneath the fangs of ravening Assamites frightened them into a war against the assassins.

Although the battle raged for several years, the Camarilla was unable to gain the upper hand until a mortal army (and one Nosferatu traveling with them) discovered where Alamut, the great fortress of the Assamites, lay. Bolstered by their new-found knowledge, the Camarilla managed to capture several influential Assamite leaders and threatened to tear Alamut itself stone from stone. With their home and clan threatened with destruction, the Assamites sued for peace.

Soon thereafter, the anarchs admitted they could no longer battle the elders; the price was too high. They too agreed to cease hostilities and to meet with the Camarilla to discuss peace terms.

THE CONVENTION OF THORNS

The Founders summoned Camarilla, Assamite and anarch representatives to a meeting to be held on October 23, 1493, in the tiny hamlet of Thorns, a small village near the town of Silchester in the neutral kingdom of England.

From that meeting, a strengthened Camarilla emerged, their Traditions accepted as the norm, and the Masquerade agreed upon as the response Cainites must adopt to survive. As part of that Masquerade, Cainites agreed to stop referring to themselves openly as the Children of Caine. Instead, to reinforce the idea that all vampires were related by blood, they would henceforth call themselves the Kindred. Rule by generations and conservative values (such as prestation) became synonymous with the Camarilla. In the following centuries, the Camarilla would dominate Europe and establish itself in the heartland of North America at the expense of the Sabbat, who, in all objectivity, got there first.

Despite the apparent cooperation among the clans and among individual Kindred who made up the Camarilla, personal animosity, blatant power games, clan maneuvering and elaborate schemes remained the norm.

The Jihad continued beneath the apparently placid surface.

Further, the Camarilla was not unchallenged. Other factions maintained resistance to Camarilla arrogance or arose from the ashes of the Anarch Revolt to carry on the battle that ostensibly ended with the Convention of Thorns.

THE ANARCHS

Much has already been said under the Camarilla heading concerning the anarchs, and need not be belabored. While it may seem as though the anarchs were all but destroyed by the Convention of Thorns, this is an inaccurate picture. The Anarch Movement was begun by the Brujah, who took heart from peasant revolts occurring throughout Europe. They were joined by many of the younger Lasombra and Tzimisce who wearied of constantly fighting for position.

The anarchs argued for their right to domains of their own and to prove their competence. Failing that, they sought to cut the strings of Blood Oaths that allowed their sires to play them like puppets and they sought to undermine their elders' carefully built power structures and alliances. In hopes of achieving their aims, they encouraged rebellion among those who had nothing to lose, and excelled in creating difficulties and chaos for those in power. From rhetoric to action is only one step; from action to violence only one more.

The Anarch Revolt began with the assassination of Hardestadt and swept through Europe igniting rebellion among disenfranchised Cainites. Two clan founders, Lasombra and Tzimisce, felt the fangs of their lesser childer at their throats, as the anarchs sought some means of increasing their own power enough to battle their elders. Their diablerie of their clan founders symbolized the anarchs' message of frustration and their intent to take what the elders denied them. Their acceptance of the practice of drinking one another's blood to strengthen their ties to one another (a refinement of an older Tzimisce

ritual) had the added benefit of freeing many from hated slavery to their sires due to Blood Oaths forced upon them in their earliest nights as Cainites. Discovered by the Tzimisce, the Vaulderie (the special ritual that could break Blood Bonds and replace them with ties of loyalty to those whose blood was used in the ritual) allowed childer to rebel against those who had formerly held them in thrall.

Although the anarchs lost the war and had to accept their place within the Camarilla in peace negotiations at the Convention of Thorns, they never ceded their right to rebel. Their overt violence was temporarily quelled, yet the anarchs kept alive the spirit of revolution and freedom that had just begun to surface among mortals and that inspired the peasant uprisings of the time. Further, while many anarchs surrendered to the strictures placed upon them at the convention, others violently rejected this role and broke away completely to become the Sabbat. Interestingly, the Sabbat would love to recruit the anarchs to its fold, but most anarchs value their individual freedom and vision too much to surrender it to the Sabbat's aims and causes.

THE SABBAT

To say that the Sabbat grew out of the Anarch Movement is both true and too easy. While the Sabbat sprang from the anger and repudiation of the elders by younger Cainites who refused to give in to the Camarilla, it also grew from their understanding of the place assigned to younger vampires by the Jyhad. Given immortality only to be a slave to an elder

was bad enough; to then discover that they would have no chance for power themselves and that older, more powerful Cainites slept in hidden tombs waiting to rise and feast upon the weaker Cainites' blood was too much.

In a real sense, the Sabbat was born in the aftermath of the Convention of Thorns. Midwived by those anarchs who refused to sign the convention and nurtured through its first blood-soaked, rebellious nights by younger Cainites and a few dissatisfied elders, the Sabbat overcame the powers set against it, surviving to become the Camarilla's greatest rival.

The Sabbat exists only rudimentarily at this time; the sect does not truly coalesce until the mid-16th century. After the Convention of Thorns, those who continue the rebellion against the Camarilla form into independent anarch/*antitribu* packs. Their beliefs and practices will eventually form the core of Sabbat philosophy and the pack will remain the chief grouping within the Sabbat. Though they do not yet call themselves Sabbat (usually), we refer to them that way to avoid later confusion.

Although the Camarilla sees the Sabbat as its enemies and uses its powers to destroy the sect, the Sabbat believes that its real enemies are not the Camarilla pawns, but their masters, the Antediluvians. Should Camarilla lackeys get in their way and refuse to move, however, the Sabbat is willing to destroy the hapless Kindred to accomplish their aims.

While the Camarilla concerns itself with maintaining power and rule by generation and the anarchs jealously clutch their



individual freedom, the Sabbat acts to save all Cainites from the threat posed by the torporous Antediluvians. The Camarilla functions like a shaky alliance of feudal princes and their vassals. The anarchs behave as though they are individual merchants and craftsmen brought together by a guild's common interests. The Sabbat first formed and will function throughout its existence as an army. In essence, the motivation behind the Sabbat is not for either individual power or freedom, but to achieve those two goals within the structure of a group. The Sabbat is held together by loyalty to one another (rather than to a prince or ruler) and the need to strengthen itself for the coming Jyhad (the beginnings of which were already apparent).

Fearful of the Inquisition, the Camarilla chooses to go underground, hiding the existence of vampires beneath an elaborate Masquerade. The Sabbat, while acknowledging that hiding from the Inquisitors is necessary for the time being, refuses to completely submerge itself in the pretense of being human; The Sabbat believes this pretense makes vampires weak when they need to be strong. Away from prying mortal eyes, the members of the Sabbat fully accept their inner Beast, ostensibly reveling in their powers as dark angels elevated far above their former existence as humans even while their souls are damned for eternity.

Rather than shrinking from Blood Oaths, the Sabbat adapts them, indulging in repeated drinking of one another's combined blood to forge binding ties with the group. When combined with the ritual of the Vaulderie, this has the added benefit of breaking former Blood Oaths they had with elders, freeing Sabbat members from the threat of being controlled by elder Cainites who would use them in their maneuverings and ultimately sacrifice them to the Antediluvians. Equally important, the Vaulderie forges bonding ties to one another (known as the Vinculum), rendering each participant loyal to the others. As the Vaulderie becomes widespread, the Sabbat is free to train for the coming Jyhad and strengthen itself to defend all Cainites on the final nights.

Naturally, "altruism" comes with attendant drawbacks. Considering themselves damned or distanced from humans means that most Sabbat see mortals as useful tools or convenient food sources. There is little love for or coddling of humans among Sabbat. Of course, in Dark Medieval times, life was short, brutal and subject to the whims of prince or Church; In treating humans with blatant disregard for their feelings or lives, the Sabbat was in keeping with their times — not that they changed their views when the Renaissance made those views less correct....

Embracing their natures as vampires means Sabbat members conduct horrific rituals and indulge in monstrous practices. New recruits are drained of almost all their blood and buried, forced to claw their way out of the grave. This practice makes Sabbat fully aware that they are dead creatures who undergo a hellish rebirth, monsters who must prey upon other creatures to survive. It also makes them strong. Weak candidates fail to rise and must spend whatever existence they have left trapped and starving or in eternal torpor. Diablerie is an accepted practice among the Sabbat, for in stealing the power of stronger Cainites, the

Sabbat both removes a potential enemy and makes itself more powerful for the eventual battle.

Many Sabbat lose themselves in excess, becoming crazed beasts ravaging through the countryside. Due in part to their creation rites and partly from the sudden lifting of all restrictions on their actions, the madness claimed so many newly created Sabbat that those who overcame it recognized that some sort of philosophy was needed to give the crazed Beast something to explain or mitigate the horror of her existence. The Paths of Enlightenment grew from the need to keep new Sabbat from destroying themselves and their packs while in the throes of madness. The insane vampire recovers as she accepts one of the Paths as a guide to her damned existence, forsaking the weak tenets of humanity.

At this time, the packs that will eventually come together to form the sect grope toward an understanding of their purpose and try to formulate the Paths of Enlightenment through trial and error while strengthening themselves for the inevitable battle.

Whether during Dark Medieval times or later, many Camarilla vampires never see that the Sabbat is not defined by its crazed members, but embodies an understandable cause for which its members are willing to put their unlives on the line. The despicable acts of cruelty and the bloody-handed warfare the sect wages make the Sabbat utterly unacceptable to the Camarilla. Since the Sabbat sees the Camarilla as a tool of the Antediluvians, they really don't mind.

THE INCONNU

Not "officially" a sect, the Inconnu are said to be the vestiges of Roman, Carthaginian and Dacian Cainites who agreed to withdraw from the Jyhad. If they exist, the Inconnu represent a faction of powerful Cainites (including many Methuselahs) who have taken a step back from feuding with other vampires. It is said that they have reached Golconda and that they can teach others how to reach it as well.

Other rumors speak of the group's pact with Satan or of the practice of sending agents to spy on various Cainites. Most vampires believe the Inconnu to be no more than fiction, however. A few dissenters claim that the Inconnu exist and that younger vampires ought to seek out and diablerize these weak elders for their potent blood. The Inconnu make no reply to any speculation.

INDEPENDENTS

Somewhere lost among the Camarilla and Sabbat are the true independents. These include clans like the Setites, Ravnos and Giovanni, who are not part of either sect. Aside from these clans, however, individuals from both Camarilla and Sabbat clans sometimes claim independent status. Lasombra and Tzimisce *antitribu* may disagree with their Sabbat clanmates, but they don't always see eye to eye with the Camarilla either. Some members of the rarer bloodlines feel the same way. Even the most staunchly Camarilla clans (such as the Ventrue) can have their rebels, Cainites who never signed the Convention of Thorns, but don't leap into the Sabbat either. Most independents are fairly quiet about their non-affiliations, usually letting others assume they belong to a group, when they actually do not.

CAINITE HISTORY AND POLITICS

As the Dark Ages draw to a close, the Childer of Caine completely rework the structure of their hidden societies. As we have seen, the birth of a new age has brought new ideas. In gatherings throughout Europe, elders and neonates discuss a wide range of political issues: how to react to the Inquisition, how to oppose the Anarch Revolt, whether to accept the Founders' proposal for the Camarilla, and so on. All too often, formal gatherings of vampires break out in heated debates over these vital issues. History tests the ideas they discuss. With each major event in Eastern Europe, local politicians apply what they learn to support or condemn the Camarilla or the Anarch Movement.

By the end of the century, the rest of the Europe will adapt these last two ideas, but Transylvania continues to preserve many Old World traditions. As the Tremere and Tzimisce continue their endless war, the voivodate remains a battleground for their respective sects. Supporters of the Camarilla influence the major cities, but they are surrounded by domains controlled by anarchs and *antitribu*. There are reasons for this, reasons that can be traced back to Hardestadt's first proposals for the Camarilla in 1435.

History and politics are inextricably intertwined, and major historical events have a strong effect on the political struggles of the undead. The conquest of Constantinople, the Bobolna Revolts of 1437, the anti-Turkish Crusades — these major occurrences and similar events in Eastern Europe shape the societies modern vampires know so well. Mortals relegate these events to history books, but Cainites remember them in a more personal way — often firsthand.

POLITICAL DEBATES

The effect history has on ideologies isn't just theoretical. The next three acts of the **Transylvania Chronicles** will test your coterie's political savvy and diplomatic acumen. Whether they gather in Count Radu's drawing room or assemble at the Covenant of Thorns, the coterie encounters plenty of Cainites who insist on knowing where the characters stand on current events. Not everyone is readily identifiable as a overly idealistic anarch, Camarilla stooge or potential Sabbat flunky. Sometimes, political debates and heavy roleplaying are the only way to figure out who sides with whom.

The information in this chapter can help ambitious Storytellers flesh out many of the debates that take place in this book. In addition, any Transylvanian should be able to cite recent historical events to illustrate his political views. If the characters survive **Son of the Dragon**, they won't just side with the anarchs, Camarilla or Sabbat for trivial reasons. They'll have to make an informed decision after weighing all sides of several political debates.

TRANSYLVANIA CHRONICLES II

HARDESTADT'S PROPOSAL AND TRANSYLVANIAN REACTIONS

As we have seen, Hardestadt of Clan Ventrue first advanced the idea of a unified society of vampires in 1435. At first blush, many Transylvanians rejected the idea outright. Some stated that the concept had been tried and rejected in the voivodate centuries ago. In the 12th century, the nominal rulers of Transylvania composed a coterie known as the Council of Ashes to watch over the vampires of their seven domains.

Of course, the Council failed miserably. Princes who thought they would bring order to the voivodate allowed petty struggles and political differences to tear their alliance apart. The neonates they ruled rose up against them. After destroying that failed society, the same vampires weren't terribly enthusiastic about letting elders rebuild it under another name. The idea of "one unified society" was an amusing theory, but in the lands beyond the forest, Transylvanian vampires paid it little notice.

Travelers from other parts of Europe insisted that this political union would be different. The Camarilla could offer benefits the council never provided. Nova Arpad's scheme was little more than a coterie of seven vampires forced to report to the Saxon Ventrue, but the Camarilla would allow hundreds of princes to watch over Cainite activity in the major cities of Europe. They could enforce the Six Traditions and uphold standards of civility that could prevent disputes between Caine's childer.

The idea was far ahead of its time, especially in Transylvania. For many reasons, the concept was too dangerous to take hold. To begin with, the idea of the Camarilla depended on princes who could stress and advance mortal concepts of civility and humanity. Historically, Transylvanian princes never had absolute control over their domains. In the lands beyond the forest, many of the local princes ruled in theory, but not in practice.

In some cases, such as the Domain of Klausenburg, the only quality that separated a prince from the vampires he allegedly ruled was his ability to defeat them in battle. In the court of Prince Mitru, for instance, Trial by Ordeal was still the most common method of resolving disputes. Vampiric rulers made for great figureheads in dramatic ceremonies, but enforcing their beliefs was another matter entirely.

Proponents of the Camarilla faced another severe obstacle. Throughout Transylvania's history, Western societies had repeatedly tried to impose their laws and culture on Eastern Europe. In the same manner, many Transylvanian Cainites cursed the Saxon Ventrue as a monolithic society established to rob the Romanian vampires of their independence. Thus, the Camarilla initially looked like another scheme that the Germanic Ventrue and other Western clans would use to seize control of Romanian land. Transylvania had its own traditions, and they did not die easily. The events of the next few years would illustrate that quite vividly.

THE BOBOLNA REVOLUTION AND THE ANARCH MOVEMENT

All of these arguments discouraged Transylvanians from readily accepting the idea of the Camarilla, but one drastic event forced them to reconsider. In 1437, the peasants of Transylvania unified to overthrow the masters of the state. History books tell us that they revolted to secure rights the Szeklers and Saxons already possessed. Cainites recall that the peasants didn't rise up against just their mortal rulers.

Many Romanians who fought in the Bobolna Revolt suspected that their *taras* and *tirsas* were threatened by supernatural creatures. The Silence of Blood was little more than a pretense in Transylvania, the least significant of the Six Traditions. As the houses of mortal rulers were set ablaze, flames spread to the havens of the nobles' Cainite masters. In an era when witch-hunts were common, mobs of Transylvanian peasants gathered torches and pitchforks to destroy the refuges of suspected vampires.

In response, the mortal nobility of Transylvania quickly and brutally crushed the Bobolna rebellion. Mortal rulers gathered in Hermanstadt to discuss the sovereignty of the Three Estates of Transylvania. The Hungarian overlords recognized Saxons and Szeklers to be members of independent nations, but the Romanians were never granted the same privileges. Instead, the nobility increased taxation on Romanian lands, demanded more "voluntary" forced labor from serfs, and reduced the number of independent communes where Romanians could own their own property. Simply put, the rich became richer, and the poor became poorer.

Rebellious mortals were unable to take further action against the nobility, but the undead had no such restrictions. Throughout Transylvania, many Romanian Cainites were outraged that ruling vampires could allow such injustice to thrive. How could European nobility reap profits from crops Romanians sowed? If the Romanians had settled Transylvania over a thousand years ago, how could they have fewer rights than the Saxons and Szeklers who seized their land? And wasn't it odd that the eldest vampires benefited the most from this?

The analogy was obvious. The "princes" who claimed to rule mortal cities used the same tactics as the Hungarian nobility. Hungarian nobles used political power to exploit their subjects for financial gain. Transylvanian princes considered themselves the rightful guardians of the Six Traditions, but vampires who had survived in Transylvania for centuries knew that rulers were corrupted by such authority. Princes passed judgment on neonates to oppress and exploit those who did not kneel before them. Whenever the disenfranchised insisted on the same rights as the wealthy, politics and imposed morality became methods for subjugating the masses.

Elders indifferent to this vituperation incited the Romanian anarchists to further acts of violence. As the youngest childer continued to malign the conspiracies of their elders,

many realized that the proposed Camarilla was just one more way for a few to hold power over many. The fate of the Romanians, the descendants of the original settlers of Dacia, showed what the Westerners really intended for the Transylvanians. Vampires weren't really all that different.

In response, elders argued that the Bobolna Revolts were actually an illustration of Transylvania's desperate need for stronger government. If the Cainites couldn't strengthen their hold over mortal society, it would be all too easy for mortals to root them out again. The Bobolna Revolts started because of a lack of Cainite authority, not injustice. Moreover, if the Transylvanian Cainites had upheld the Silence of Blood more rigidly, as the Founders were suggesting, the revolution wouldn't have turned into a hunt against unseen vampiric masters. Hardestadt's ideas encouraged subtle manipulation of mortal history; anarchistic ideas of absolute freedom did not. In the wake of the rebellion, conflict between neonates and elders intensified.

THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE AND OTHER CAINITE CONSPIRACIES

Such debates continued for many years throughout the voivodate, but these theories remained little more than intellectual diversions to many Transylvanians. Then, in 1453, one of the most important events in Cainite history shocked the vampires of Eastern Europe from their complacency. In that year, the armies of the Ottoman Empire began their relentless assault on Constantinople. Constantine Paleologus, the mortal ruler of the city, watched in terror from his palace as thousands of soldiers crashed through the city gates to pillage, loot, slaughter and destroy. The unthinkable had happened — the advancing hordes of the paynim had devastated Christian Europe's first line of defense. The Ottoman Empire advanced toward Bulgaria, threatening the security of Eastern Europe.

Vampires are egotistical creatures, eager to assign praise or blame among their own kind for the mortals' greatest achievements. Throughout Cainite society, many elders theorized which vampires were responsible for the fall of Constantinople. Those who knew of the Jyhad — the eternal struggle between Ancients — believed that a shadowy power had called for this crusade as part of an ancient grudge against Michael, the Toreador Methuselah who watched over the city.

Others blamed the Assamites, claiming that the masters of Alamut had designs on the rest of Europe. After all, many knew that Arabic vampires traveled in the wake of the advancing Turkish host. As mortal kingdoms fell prey to Ottoman raids, Saracens used the opportunity to their advantage, stalking the undead rulers of the adjacent domains. Both the mortal threat of the Turks and the unseen threat of the Assamites forced the Children of Caine to take action.

When news of the advance of the Ottoman Empire reached Transylvania, the rulers of the voivodate were shocked. For centuries, they thought the real threats to their freedom came

from the Ventrue of the Holy Roman Empire and the other Western clans. Now a new menace arose from the south. Ventrue, Tzimisce and Tremere all asked the same question: Could Eastern Europe defend itself against the next assault?

Supporters of the Camarilla capitalized on this opportunity. The threat of a common enemy made the idea of a unified society of Cainites far more acceptable. Caine's childer could no longer allow themselves to be isolated by distance and ideologies. Until 1453, no one thought Constantinople would fall, but it did. In the same manner, no one believed that any one force could destroy the secret societies the Cainites had constructed. Now one empire threatened all of Europe. If the Children of Caine could form an alliance, they could prevent such an atrocity from happening again. As part of this, it was clear that the Saracens were a threat that had to be stopped.

Others replied that the real problem was not Clan Assamite, but the Ancients. In fact, some suggested the Assamites had the right idea. The Saracens destroyed Bulgarian princes and their lackeys, but they also threatened the Inconnu and others. In other parts of Europe, anarchs destroyed the hierarchy of vampiric power not just to secure their own freedom, but to prevent the manipulation of the elder generations. If the destruction of Constantinople was a result of the Jihad, the formation of a European society of vampires wouldn't prevent such an atrocity from happening again. In fact, acting as slaves to the eldest Cainites would only encourage further incidents.

ETHICAL DEBATES AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

Another debate concerning the Camarilla relied upon ethical issues. Supposedly, Camarilla princes could pass judgment on the so-called "moral" beliefs of the Cainites, applying human standards of morality to vampires. Civility was allegedly a means to preserve "humanity." This rapidly became an extremely personal and vitriolic issue. The Cainites of Transylvania had followed many different Roads during the Dark Ages. Abandoning a philosophy that had kept Cainites sane for centuries is not an easy task — spiritual fulfillment is not easily sacrificed for political convenience.

Once again, Transylvanian history refined this political issue. Other cultures had tried to enforce outside standards of morality in Transylvania long before the Founders' ideas. Any one who had survived in the voivodate for centuries could recall the conflict between the Roman Catholic Church in Rome and the Eastern Orthodox Church in Constantinople.

Centuries ago, the spread of Catholicism was used in an attempt to unify Eastern Europe with the rest of Christian Europe. To the Romanians, religion became a method of eroding Transylvanian culture and dictating ideology. The Eastern Orthodox Church acted as a contrary force, attempting to advance Eastern mystical tradition as a way to define a common culture in the East. No wonder westerners think of the stereotypical Transylvanian vampire as a creature who recoils at the sight of a cross.

TRANSYLVANIA CHRONICLES II

The Transylvanians were jaded. They had seen it all before. Another government was trying to gain support in the voivodate by questioning the old ways and traditional practices. Transylvania already had its own culture, its own religion, and its own law. Many elders stressed that they didn't need the Western clans to preach to them about the need for an outside government to "civilize" them once again. The old ways had endured.

THE TZIMISCE AND THE DRACULESTI-DANESTI FEUD

The staunchest resistance to the Camarilla came from Clan Tzimisce. While other countries in Europe respected the idea of a society where elders could use prestation to exchange boons, the Tzimisce utterly rejected it. The oldest and most powerful clan in Transylvania did not need to recognize such arbitrary ideas. Their own traditions for resolving disputes had evolved. They used methods that didn't depend on princes recognized by the Western Cainites.

Among the Fiends, the strongest ruled. Trial by War and Trial by Ordeal were common practices. Tzimisce practiced these traditions openly. From the earliest nights of Hungary, when the Arpads and other nobles attempted to subjugate Transylvania, Tzimisce schemed to set them against each other. In the more remote portions of eastern Transylvania, they crushed them or brought them into their clan. Fiends used the mortal lines of nobility in Transylvania as their breeding stock. Some were cultivated so carefully that they evolved into the many families of revenants known tonight.

Over time, Transylvanian mortal politics and Tzimisce politics became one and the same. Transylvanian nobles with centuries of breeding became pawns in Tzimisce conflicts. An excellent illustration of this from Cainite history was the manipulation of the Basarab noble line. For centuries, two families — the Draculesti and Danesti — contested for control of Wallachia and southern Transylvania. The fighting was especially brutal because the rulers of Wallachia did not recognize primogeniture. Once a mortal ruler died, there was no guarantee his son would succeed him. Instead, dozens of boyars fought to support — or be — the next prince.

Controlling nobles and boyars required the Tzimisce to develop legacies, manipulating mortal rulers over generations. Mortals who were capable of using treachery and threats of violence rose to positions of authority. Their enemies were tortured, exiled or merely killed. When Vlad the Impaler, a Draculesti noble, became a threat to the Tzimisce, Danesti Fiends maintained their ancient grudges against his noble house. According to the Fiends, the other clans had no right to intercede in such disputes.

The Fiends also had no desire to cower and hide like lesser creatures. They openly bred mortals like cattle and orchestrated mortal conflicts to cull these herds. Their victims were called "kine" for a reason. Human herds were raised in the shadows of terrible castles over generations. In addition, the Tzimisce corrupted and suborned mortal Transylvanian nobility more thoroughly than any other clan, including the Ventrue. The idea of a separation between the world of the living and the undead was ludicrous.



There was no room for the Silence of Blood in the philosophy of the Transylvanian Tzimisce. Thus, the arguments for hiding behind mortal society and erecting the shifting mirrors of the Camarilla fell on deaf ears. The elders of Clan Tzimisce saw no need to accept standards of civility valued in other parts of Europe. Their opposition was so severe that the Ventrue abandoned all hope of gaining their support for the Founders' society of Cainites.

VLAD THE DRAGON AND THE SILENCE OF BLOOD

By contrast, the idea of vampires hiding their true nature from mortals was crucial to supporters of the Camarilla. The "Masquerade" they proposed had its precedent in the Silence of the Blood. With the growing threat of the Inquisition, the thought of "hiding one's presence from those not of the blood" was a simple survival instinct. In Transylvania and Wallachia, however, the idea of the Silence of the Blood was a mere formality. Numerous Transylvanian Cainites preferred to demonstrate their undead strength openly before the local rulers of Transylvania. In the secret chambers of noble estates, they forced the nobility to submit to their will.

An excellent historical example of this type of alliance was the agreement between Durga Syn of Clan Ravnos and Vlad the Dragon, the mortal prince of Wallachia.

In the early 15th century, continuous anarch raids in Tara Romaneasca not only terrified the local peasants, but threatened the wily Ravnos' elder allies. To stop this, Durga

Syn informed Vlad the Dragon about the world of the undead. The Ravnos became his most valuable (if least reliable) advisor. With Cainite guidance, Vlad's armies easily drove these warriors from their midst. Vlad knelt before Durga Syn to receive her immortal knowledge. This was a dangerous precedent, but in Eastern Europe, few would question the motives of such a powerful vampire.

THE ASSAMITES AND HUNYADI'S LAST CRUSADE

Of course, the threat of the Turks still remained. No nation resisted the advance of the Ottoman Empire more fervently than Transylvania. While the Founders' supporters used the "advance of the paynim" to rationalize a unified society in Eastern Europe, the vampires of those domains soon grew tired of that patronizing argument. There was a good reason for this. The mortals of their domains had done their best to resist the Turks. Their failures in 1444 and 1456 had thoroughly demoralized Eastern Europe.

It didn't take much vampiric influence to stir up an army against the Turkish invaders. Janos Hunyadi, a wealthy merchant trained by one of the finest military minds in Europe, achieved that goal without Cainite assistance. With the Transylvanian military at his command, Hunyadi rushed to meet the advancing troops of the sultan. Sadly, his campaign was a disaster. In addition to using poorly chosen tactics, Hunyadi's army had grossly underestimated the strength of the Turks.

SHADOWS OF TRANSYLVANIA

At Hunyadi's trial for his alleged incompetence, Vlad the Dragon stated that the Ottoman Sultan typically went "on a mere hunting expedition with more troops than the Christians brought to this battle." Turkish forces easily repelled the Eastern European crusaders. Hunyadi fled; only with the assistance of Wallachian peasants was he able to find safety.

Though Vlad the Dragon tried to blame Hunyadi for the failure of the campaign, Hunyadi's widespread support as the "White Knight of Christendom" prevented the Dragon's scandal from succeeding. In 1456, Hunyadi gathered an army in Hunedoara and prepared another anti-Turkish Crusade. His ally, St. John of Capistrano raised an army of Transylvanian peasants to aid him. Independently, the armies of St. John and Hunyadi moved toward Belgrade. Fanaticism proved to be a greater force than sheer force of arms, for St. John's army fared better than Hunyadi's. The triumph of 8,000 peasants armed with farm implements against the Turkish host was nothing short of miraculous.

Hunyadi's crusade reestablished the southern border of Wallachia, but within a few months, it could press no further. Weather and disease proved to be the two most deadly adversaries to the gathered armies. Swarms of infected rats followed the carnage inflicted by the Turkish host. As a result, Hunyadi himself died of plague not far from Belgrade. The crusader ideal died with him.

There was no reason for the Transylvanians to blame the Turkish advance on Clan Assamite. The vampires of Eastern Europe knew that the Turks didn't need supernatural allies to lead them into battle. These Cainites held little hope of Western European nations unifying to rush to their aid. If the clans were unified, it wouldn't make a damn bit of difference to the Ottoman Empire. The argument for Cainite unity against the Assamites and the Turks worked in other parts of the world, but it seemed irrelevant to vampires who had seen mortal crusades fail first-hand.

THE DRACULA PROBLEM AND THE CONVOCATION OF HERMANSTADT

While modern Cainites are familiar with general arguments regarding the Camarilla, these issues take their own unique slant in the voivodate of Transylvania. The Inquisition is often cited as a reason for the Camarilla's formation. When Transylvanians refer to witch-hunts, they often cite the treachery of one man: Vlad the Impaler.

As we've noted already, Vlad the Dragon, one of the mortal princes of Wallachia, was well informed about the undead. His son, Vlad the Impaler, became even more infamous. During his rule, he was known to demonstrate his authority through acts of severe brutality. Before leading his crusade against the Ottoman Empire, for instance, he secured his northern border by slaughtering thousands of Transylvanians. His honor guard, the Axes, impaled tens of thousands of mortals and left them to rot as an example to any who questioned his rule.

Cainites suspected that the Son of the Dragon had another motivation. Vlad the Impaler was a noble of the Draculesti line. Several of the Danesti nobles, the members of an enemy house, received the support of the unseen *vampyr*. When the Impaler found

evidence of this, he led a pogrom through the countryside to destroy these foul creatures, just as his father had done before him.

When the veil that separates the living and the undead is parted, the result is horror in its blackest form. Obviously, the Tzimisce of southern Transylvania had little regard for the Silence of the Blood. The resulting Inquisition threatened all the vampires of the region. In the years that followed, the Impaler's executioners destroyed dozens of vampires. Eventually, tales of Vlad the Impaler's butchery were retold throughout the Holy Roman Empire. These stories became the basis of the legend of Count Dracula, the bloodthirsty butcher that descended from Draculesti nobles.

The many facets of "the Dracula problem" became a common topic among Transylvanian vampires. In fact, the Convocation of Hermanstadt in 1472 (shown in Act One of this book) was called largely to address this problem. The Tzimisce insisted that they had the right to address the issue on their own; other clans weren't as willing to trust the Fiends' sense of justice. Although the Camarilla wasn't extensive enough to conduct an actual trial of this mortal, the arguments concerning Cainites meddling in kine society continued for many years afterward.

THE HOUSE OF MIRRORS

In the 15th century, the value of the Camarilla became the most dangerous topic of debate among Transylvanian Cainites. Due to many events in Cainite history — the fall of Constantinople, the Bobolna Rebellion, the Draculesti-Danesti feud, and Vlad Tepes' inquisition — Transylvania's history would continue to taint these discussions for centuries afterward.

By the start of the next act of the **Transylvania Chronicles**, that society was little more than a political theory. The few steps the Cainites had taken to establish it didn't hold back chaos and rebellions, as many elders thought it would. The Camarilla was little more than a house of mirrors, endlessly reflecting the diverse philosophies of the undead. Nowhere was this more true than Transylvania, a realm where vampiric history and politics reflected the malignant Jihad of the Cainites.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Improvements in technology can drastically affect the existence of both the living and the undead. Players who are well acquainted with other roleplaying games will likely want to exploit these developments as rapidly as possible, demanding more firepower from weapons, better protection from armor and faster transit between distant cities. At least a passing familiarity with these innovations should make these elements of your chronicle run smoother.

FIREARMS

Veterans of the Dark Medieval world have learned to conquer using relatively simple weapons, such as swords, daggers and crossbows. If they can make it through the end

of the Long Night, they'll be able to improve their arsenals. The following guidelines should help you represent the role of firearms in your game without requiring you to become an expert in obsolete technology. Traits for various commonly used firearms are included at the end of this section.

Technically, characters might use firearms as early as the mid-14th century, but those devices are so primitive as to be almost worthless. The cannonlock was the earliest form of *handgonne*. It consisted of a small handheld cannon, a stock and a touch hole where a heated wire or burning match could prime the gunpowder inside.

Although certainly dangerous, this type of armament is extremely unreliable. A person firing a cannonlock must use one hand to steady the weapon while using the other to light the powder inside. This makes aiming nearly impossible, and hitting anything with the projectile is mere chance. (In game terms, when a character attacks with a *handgonne*, the difficulty to hit is always at least a 9!) By the early 15th century, this device becomes obsolete.

Medieval firearms couldn't be aimed until someone invented a mechanical method of igniting the powder inside them. This led to the matchlock gun, next step in the evolution of firearms. The first schematic illustration of this type of weapon was documented in 1411. By pulling a crude trigger (known as a *serpentine*), a marksman could bring a slow-burning fuse in contact with a touch hole. Later designs incorporated a shoulder stock and a pan cover to protect the gunpowder.

Readying a matchlock by priming the *serpentine* requires a full turn and a successful Dexterity + Firearms roll. (This ability must be bought as a new Skill; defaulting from Archery just won't work.) Once this has been done, the matchlock can be aimed: After three turns of aiming, the final roll is made at a -1 difficulty. Generally speaking, reloading a matchlock or cannonlock requires about 60 seconds of uninterrupted effort. Attempting this during combat is futile, so characters with pistols are encouraged to "fire and forget" them early during a fight.

The matchlock is the primary type of firearm used until the end of the 18th century. Various models include pistols, long-guns, breech or muzzle-loaders and, after about 1475, rifles. In addition, there are various unusual designs that allow multiple shots, but the vast majority of matchlocks are single-shot weapons. For simplicity, we have listed two single-shot varieties.

Readying a matchlock is unwieldy, so the next innovation in firearms relied on a method of igniting gunpowder without a match or external source of flame. The first self-igniting firearm, the wheellock, was invented at the beginning of the 16th century.

This type of weapon was capable of "holding its own fire." A serrated wheel spun against a piece of iron to produce sparks in the chamber. Some areas of Europe outlawed wheellocks for precisely this reason. The wheel inside is primed by turning a small detachable crank, making these pistols ideal "holdout weapons."

Skill with Archery does not bestow an inherent knowledge of these weapons. Instead, characters wishing to have knowledge of *handgonnes* or other firearms should invest experience points in the Firearms skill. For each point a character has in Firearms, the player should declare a specialization in one of the types of weapons listed. For Storytellers who require more detail on 15th-century firearms, further guidelines and information are available in **Mage: The Sorcerers Crusade**.

Storytellers and players looking for extensive detail and broader selection (including a few name-brand weapons dating back to the 16th century!) are encouraged to check out Michael Hurst's *GURPS: High-Tech*. It's a bit "crunchy" for the Storyteller system, but much more complete for those who want extensive detail.

ARMOR

Once your players know that brigands on the road might use firearms, their natural reaction might be to buy some armor. Role-playing games tend to have extremely liberal attitudes regarding its use. In many fantasy roleplaying games, for instance, the thought of heroes stomping about in full suits of plate mail day and night is accepted as normal. To address the aspirations of players who prefer their characters to walk about like two-legged tanks, we should make two points regarding the use of plate mail. In answer to the first question players have: Yes, plate mail is period. In answer to the second question: No, most players really won't want their characters to use it.

During this period, full plate is used as early as the beginning of the 15th century — it is typically employed by knights on horseback traveling to war. For a creature of the night, any pretense of subtlety is lost once he begins wandering the woods of Transylvania late at night girded to the teeth for an all-out assault on a neighboring domain.

For a Cainite in plate mail, Dexterity and Perception Dice Pools are reduced by 3. Movement is drastically hindered. Even Cainites using Celerity are slowed considerably. Stealth is impossible without the use of Disciplines; wearing plate mail increases the difficulty of Stealth rolls by 2. Chainmail offers three extra dice for soaking damage with considerably less encumbrance; plate mail provides five dice, but is not worth the trouble.

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage	Range	Reload Time	Conceal
Handgonne	8	8	20	1/6	N
Matchlock pistol	7	5	30	1/5	C
Matchlock musket	7	6	35	1/5	N
Wheellock pistol	6	5	30	1/4	C
Wheellock rifle	6	6	35	1/4	N



The sight of a warrior in full-plate riding into a domain can be taken as a hostile gesture, and may result in an immediate counterattack. If you've played **Dark Ages**, you've probably already conditioned your players to not bring polearms into taverns or draw ballistae through small towns. The same guideline applies here.

TRAVELING

With so many dangers on the road, characters will want to travel quickly through enemy domains. The types of wagons used in **Dark Ages** are, of course, still available during the time period covered in this book, but they're notoriously slow — almost as slow as walking! Beginning with the next act of our story, wealthy vampires may prefer to travel by coach instead. As lords of the night, it is entirely appropriate that the members of your coterie may choose this mode of conveyance for their journeys between cities. Additionally, coaches may be insulated from the baneful light of the sun.

If one of your stories set during this time relies on travel times between cities, assume that a coach can cover approximately 30 miles over 10 hours. Pushing a team of horses for longer than 10 hours is possible, but not advised; horses become fractious and eventually wear themselves out.

Traveling on horseback is somewhat faster, although vampires must find shelter once the sun rises. Assume that characters can cross 40 miles for every 10 hours of travel.

Walking on foot can be difficult between large cities; stating that a coterie or pack can cover 20 miles in 10 hours is rather generous. Ox carts travel at roughly the same speed.

THE PASSAGE OF TIME

As time wears on, even the static Cainites undergo subtle, if significant, changes. Many of the conventions accepted in the Dark Medieval world have grown outdated, especially given the rise of new technology and new philosophy.

Storytellers who want to illustrate the signs of the times are encouraged to begin integrating the systems from **Vampire: The Masquerade** into their chronicles, leaving the systems from **Vampire: The Dark Ages** behind.

Vampiric Disciplines change quite a bit over time, in name and effect. Other vampires the characters encounter may speak in "new" terminology with regard to their mystical powers, and the "modern" 20th-century effects they have begin to show up at the end of the 15th century. Members of clans whose proprietary Disciplines change radically over time — Assamites, for example — would do well to learn the new forms of their powers or risk being obvious anachronisms.

In the wake of the Camarilla's formation, many vampires decide to uphold the *Via Humanitatis*, which they refer to as Humanity. This should be a fairly seamless change for those

already on the Road, but others who wish to join the Camarilla may have some moral decisions to make — which create excellent opportunities for in-depth roleplaying.

Many of the Lost (clans and bloodlines doomed to destruction) feel the inexorable weight of time and destiny by this point. Lhiannan and the Salubri should face almost nightly threats from outside sources, and a Cappadocian's existence should be uncomfortable, indeed. Players of these clans should take their chance and meet Final Death in an appropriately dramatic way — that's their reward for playing a member of a terminal bloodline. I suppose if you *really* want, you could bring a Lost character into the modern world, but that diminishes the value of their disappearance. None of this "but I'm the last Cappadocian" hokey in my chronicles, let me tell you. (Besides, the remaining 20th-century Cappadocians are really the... oh, never mind.)

Finally, certain Abilities are changing to meet the inexorable flow of time. As mentioned prior, the knowledge of Firearms is coming into prominence. As communication speeds increase, the

simple ability to steal becomes less important and the cultivation of criminal contacts becomes paramount (i.e., Larceny gives way to Streetwise). Hearth Wisdom suffers a true fall from grace, as the Classical and humanistic mind-sets of the Renaissance push superstition out of humankind's collective consciousness almost entirely. Whew; that sounded like it came right out of a *Mage* sourcebook....

The Cainites of the Dark Medieval world are also well on their way to becoming the Kindred of the modern nights — see the boxed lexicon for more information on the parlance of the undead at this time.

Storytellers are advised to integrate these changes to illustrate how times change and how the vampires must struggle to maintain their new Masquerade. To hide among humankind, one must resemble it, and prancing around town with a bow and arrows while those who may legally bear arms carry gunpowder weapons is a bit telling. You can bet the forces of the Inquisition will have their eyes open.

LEXICON

As the dark Medieval nights segue into the modern World of Darkness, inevitable change overtakes Cainite — which is rapidly becoming Kindred — society. One of the most common changes among the society of the undead is their language. New words have come into vogue while old terms vanish completely. Some existing words take on new and terrifying meanings as well. Use these new terms as symbols of the grave state of flux in which the Cainites find themselves — or use them to gauge the age and possible power of your rivals. After all, a Cainite who has no knowledge of the "Kindred" is likely very old indeed, or very isolated from the thirsty fangs of the anarchs.

Anarch — A vampire who opposes the rule of elders in favor of a more egalitarian system of domain.

Antitribu — A vampire who rejects the traditions of her clan; literally an "anticlan" or "antitribalist." Most *antitribu* actively seek the destruction of their elders and the elders of other clans, seeing them as servants of the Jyhad and the Ancients. By the middle of the 16th century (beyond the scope of this book), the *antitribu* will have united under the banner of the Sabbat (q.v.).

Elysium — A concept put forth by proponents of the Camarilla; an Elysium is a "neutral zone" where Cainites put aside their hostilities and agree to act as civilized individuals. Elysium is a radical concept to many Cainites, who view others entering their domains with discomfort and antagonism. For the most part, Elysium dictates that one not stoop to *physical* violence in an area so endowed; vampires will always be social monsters, stabbing each other in the back, breaking their promises to one another and committing other innumerable treacheries.

Kindred — A vampire. Under the Camarilla's auspices, all vampires are part of one vast society; all Cainites are Kindred to one another. Many elders regard the term as laughable, while supporters of the Camarilla believe it will bring a new age of vampire prominence.

Sabbat — Although the term "Sabbat" does not attain its political meaning as the title of a sect until the middle of the 16th century, many anarchs and *antitribu* have taken to calling themselves "sabbats" based on the fearful cries of superstitious peasantry who believe them to be witches, devils and other monsters called forth from Hell. This should be a terrifying word to encounter for the first time — it signifies that those among the "sabbats" have utterly turned their backs on humanity.

Vaulderie — A practice based on ancient Tzimisce *koldunic ritae*, whereby vampires perform a ceremonial ritual over a vessel of the commingled vitae of their peers and drink it. The Vaulderie, when performed correctly has the power to break existing Blood Oaths, though it replaces them with vinculi. (See below.) The Vaulderie is not, as many anarchs believe, simply mixing a volume of different vampires' blood together and drinking it — it is a mystical ritual, of which partaking of mixed blood is only one part. Many young Cainites, almost exclusively among the anarchs and *antitribu*, practice the Vaulderie, which ensures their loyalty to one another.

Vinculum — A kind of multifaceted Blood Oath, though it applies to multiple individuals as opposed to one. Each vampire whose blood is mixed in with the Vaulderie receives a mystical loyalty from those who drink from the vessel. Needless to say, those who practice the Vaulderie ensure that *everyone* who contributes vitae takes their draught.





Chapter Two: Blood Calls to Blood

"Tell me, my friends, who lives in
the castle on the hillside?"...

"Silence, stranger. God forbid that
he should hear."

- Frederick Covales, "The Vampire
of Kaldenstein"

STORY BACKGROUND

In the late-15th century, one of the most important schemers among the Transylvanian Cainites isn't a vampire at all. His infamy is so great that he will one night become a legend among mortals. When tales of his treachery are retold in Germany, they appear as horror stories. These crude examples of late-medieval "pulp fiction" form many stereotypes about the undead in Eastern Europe. As early as 1471, Viennese scandal sheets describe the cruelty and viciousness of a Transylvanian nobleman named Dracula.

Surprisingly enough, Dracula is real. "Vlad Dracula" is the son of Vlad the Dragon, a scheming ruler who was a villain to those he oppressed and a hero to the Romanians he defended. His family, the Draculesti line, had been elevated to the status of nobility in 1431 when he, as prince of Wallachia, was invested into the Order of the Dragon. In Romanian, the word *dracul* means "dragon"; to the enemies of the Draculesti line, the word also means "demon."

Vlad the Dragon had three sons. The eldest brother, Mircea, led numerous crusades against the Turks in Wallachia. The second, Radu, was an attractive youth who eventually became known as Radu the Handsome. Vlad, the youngest son, was the darkest of the three children. By the 1450s, his enemies called him Vlad Tepes — Vlad the Impaler. To the Romanians who praised him, he was remembered as the son of Vlad Dracul. Thus, they referred to him as Vlad Dracula, "the Son of the Dragon."

This infamous figure plays a major role in this Transylvanian story, "Blood Calls to Blood." A passing familiarity with Vlad the Impaler's life can help make running this story easier. For your convenience, a quick summary of his mortal life is included in the Appendix. Even if you aren't familiar with late-medieval history, though, this story should acquaint your players more thoroughly with political dangers and treacherous schemes within the voivodate, preparing them for further chapters of the **Transylvania Chronicles**.

ACT I: THE SERPENTS' LAIR (1472)

Transylvania is once again under assault, this time by the armies of the Ottoman Empire. Nineteen years have passed since the Turks conquered Constantinople. During that time, Sultan Mehmed II has repeatedly sent his armies on raids into Eastern Europe, preparing the Bulgarians, Transylvanians and Hungarians for conquest and subjugation.

Western Europe is too demoralized to launch another crusade against the Turks, especially after the disastrous anti-Ottoman campaigns. The last time the Europeans assaulted

the Middle East, it resulted in the death of Janos Hunyadi by plague and the defeat of Vlad Tepes, the Son of the Dragon. In fact, Vlad was eventually captured by the Hungarians and falsely imprisoned for allegedly aiding the sultan's cause.

Now it is 1472, and the mortal Dracula has been released from captivity. His trusted ally, Prince Steven of Moldavia, has bargained for his freedom. King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary now believes that Vlad Dracula could be Eastern Europe's last hope for retaking Constantinople. While imprisoned in the fortress of Visegrad, Dracula had the occasion to meet with visitors to the king's summer home. Some Hungarian nobles profess that the man once known as "Vlad the Impaler" has changed. He's converted to Catholicism and even married the king's sister.

Fall is fast approaching, and Vlad is *en route* to his home in Mediasch. From there, he intends to lead another crusade against the Ottoman Empire. He's changed all right — more than the king will ever realize. He has found powerful allies, and through them, knowledge that even the king does not possess. Just as his father learned of the activities of the Transylvanian anarchists from Durga Syn years ago, Vlad now knows of the conflicts between the Assamites of the Middle East and the Transylvanian Cainites.

Unfortunately for him, uncovering the secrets of the Silence of Blood has a terrible price. Vlad knows too much, and several Cainites have formed conspiracies to change the course of his destiny. One faction of Tzimisce wants to Embrace him so that it may aid him in his crusade, seizing Bulgaria and Constantinople in the process. Another faction wants revenge for his destruction of its brethren, Dan III and Vlad the Monk, during the Inquisition of 1460. While some Fiends want to use Dracula as a figurehead for unifying their clan, other *knezi* want him destroyed. As usual, the members of the clan cannot agree on a common course of action.

Your players' coterie is about to be drawn into this political maelstrom. An old ally of theirs, Count Radu, has his own plans for Dracula. Of course, he cannot achieve them without their help....

SCENE ONE: AN INVITATION FROM COUNT RADU

Our story begins in a fortress in the Tihuta Pass. In 1197, a valiant coterie of Cainites fought long and hard to lay its foundations. The completion of the project was financed by Myka Vykos, a Tzimisce from Constantinople. Since then, he's used his financial leverage to help the Fiends seize control of the estate. Count Radu now uses the fortress as his refuge. At night, he stalks the parapets, looking out over the domain he once protected.

The players' coterie is invited to an audience with Count Radu. If they've survived the events of the last book, **Dark Tides Rising**, chances are good that the characters are on favorable terms with him. If not, then you may need to contrive a reason for the coterie to be indebted to him. If all else fails, Radu offers a boon in return for the characters' cooperation.

Of course, the journey to Bistritz is not an easy one, particularly if the vampires in the coterie have gone their separate ways since the last

chapter of the chronicle. Fortunately, Radu can ensure the safe arrival of his guests. He sends his Gangrel lackey, Tiberiu, to fetch them by coach. Tiberiu has traveled through the dark woods of Transylvania for centuries, often with nothing but his Wolf's Claws and wits to protect himself. Now he travels by coach, driving a team of fell beasts before him with his harsh mastery of Animalism and the sting of his whip.

You may choose to compose some formal message to convey the intent of Radu's summons; otherwise, simply state that Tiberiu arrives at the vampires' havens one by one, inviting them to Radu's castle. Regardless of which you prefer, the first scene begins with our protagonists riding in a coach along the road to Castle Bistritz. The road to the mountain fortress is as treacherous and winding as the coterie remembers it in centuries past. A yawning abyss waits hungrily mere inches from the window of the carriage. Wolves howl in the distance, and the valley below is hidden in darkness.

The journey is much the same in the 15th century as it will be in the 19th century. This is the same route that another traveler, Jonathan Harker, will take in the beginning of Bram Stoker's novel. Storytellers who enjoy using other media as part of their games may choose to show one of the cinematic portrayals of this journey to set the mood. The aforementioned passage from *Dracula* also conveys the ambiance suitably.

Tiberiu drives the horses at a breakneck pace. The coach tips slightly on the tightest turns, no doubt startling the pas-

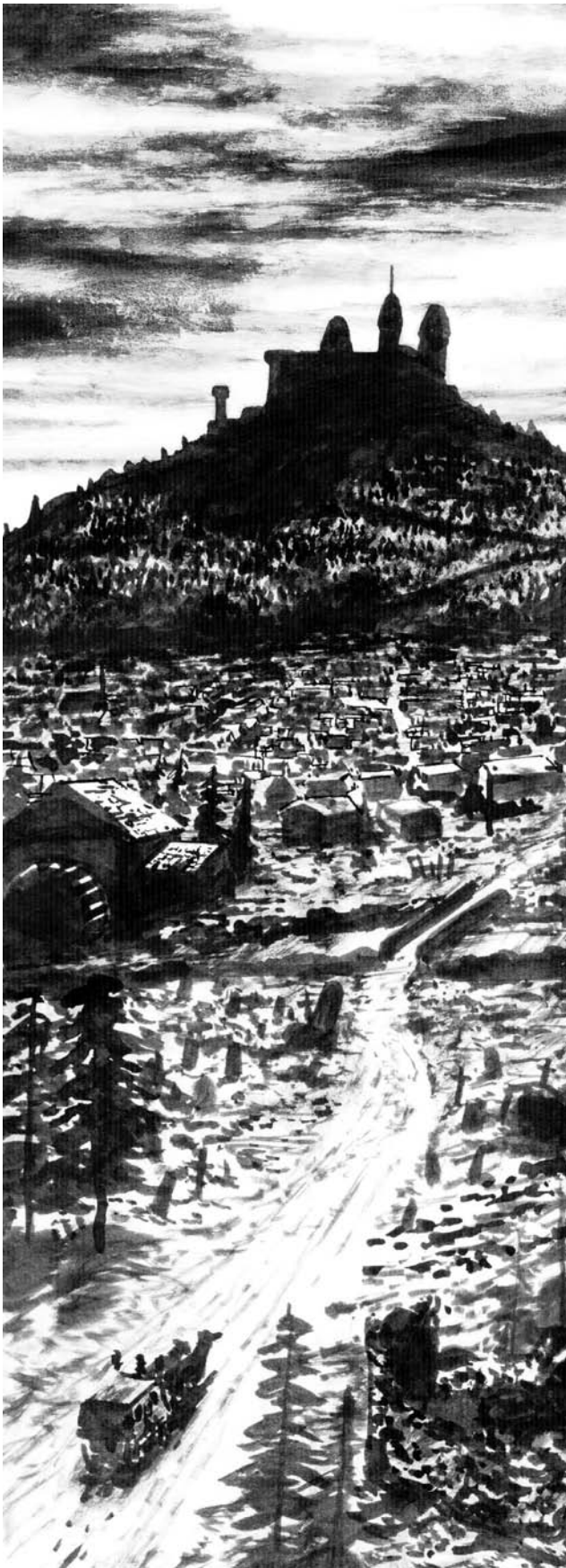
sengers inside, but the coachman has traveled this route for centuries. Before long, the coach approaches the formidable iron gates of Castle Bistritz. Tiberiu cracks his whip again over his monstrous steeds as they charge into the courtyard. When the Gangrel coachman finally pulls back the reins, the coterie sees Count Radu illuminated by torchlight at the front door of his estate. His clothes are slightly out of date, corresponding to the dress of a Saxon count or burgrave of a century ago. "Welcome," he says. "Welcome to my home, the last refuge for the old ways of the Tzimisce. Welcome to Birkau Castle."

Radu offers the travelers an opportunity to recover from their long journey, extending his hospitality to his guests. If any ghouls are present, they are easily won over by his offer, especially after they are led to a sumptuous banquet. Count Radu has also prepared a number of... drinking vessels... for the coterie. A recent raid on a village in Bucovina has provided a number of slaves for the travelers to exsanguinate, should they so choose.

Once the guests have been put at ease, Count Radu has a chance to casually converse with the characters about their journey. Sitting in a luxurious, antique chair, he feigns an insouciant air. He is eager to talk about current events. (If any of your players are the sort who love to talk about their characters' grand achievements, encourage them. Radu loves to listen.) He is able to discuss a wide range of topics, including the most recent *antitribu* raids on Bistritz, the mounting threat



BLOOD CALLS TO BLOOD



CASTLE BISTRITZ

It is possible that one or more characters may take offense at Radu's occupation of the Castle Bistritz, especially if they helped build it over two centuries ago. If they make remarks about it and press the point, Radu tries to be as diplomatic as he can. He points out that the castle would never have been finished without Myka Vykos' financing. In addition, he remarks that the Tzimisce still technically control this domain, even though it has been overrun by their rebellious childer. Finally, he makes a somewhat surprising remark: The castle is also owned by the mortal Vlad Tepes, who received it as a gift from Count Mihaly Szigaly of Bistritz. He mentions in passing that the clan is currently negotiating with Dracula for further control over the surrounding territory.

If Tzimisce ownership of the fortress conflicts strongly with the story you've established so far, feel free to arrange some other reason for Count Radu to be hiding here. The castle may have changed hands during the last interlude, or perhaps the Tzimisce Count has an alliance with the faction of Cainites that owns it in your chronicle. Any way you choose to justify it, Radu never leaves the safety of this fortress, especially since *antitribu* rampage through the countryside below it.

of another Turkish invasion, and the usual scandals involving Hardestadt's political aspirations.

This sets the scene for his proposal. The conversation turns to dwell on the amount of danger in the voivodate, and soon thereafter, Radu makes a show of taking the coterie into his confidence. Dramatically, he stands up and remarks that Transylvania is at a turning point in its history. He paces over to a portrait hanging on the wall. It is a portrayal of Vlad Dracula, the former mortal prince of Wallachia.

(Centuries later, the painting he is standing beneath will be known as the Ambras portrait and displayed in a gallery in Innsbruck. Twenty minutes in a library and 30 seconds at a Xerox machine should get you a copy to show to your players.)

"I have a grave topic to discuss with you," he declares. "We must do something about this upstart Dracula." The conversation that follows shouldn't be one-sided — give the characters ample opportunities to ask for more details and question Radu's intentions. The count has a thorough understanding of "the Dracula problem," and summarizes the salient points for the characters.

Simply put, few Tzimisce agree on what to do about Dracula, especially now that he has been released from prison. Some believe that his crusade should be supported. Even the Ventrue want to repel the Turkish invasions (and their attendant Asamites), for the advance of the Ottoman Empire threatens the safety of all of Europe. Other Tzimisce are appalled by Dracula's actions. They want revenge for his atrocities, especially his attacks on newly Embraced Fiends. In fact, several Tzimisce

in the western *knezates* have called for his destruction. As a diplomat, Radu can argue either side of the debate.

The first argument proceeds like this: Each time the Turks raid Transylvania, the anarchs and *antitribu* use the situation to their advantage. The cities suffer, and the Transylvanian princes must use their resources rebuilding instead of controlling the anarchs. If the mortals cannot defend Transylvania's southern border, everything the Cainites have supported over the last 300 years could be destroyed. The last hope for stopping the advance of the Ottoman Empire is Vlad Dracula. For that reason, the Cainites want to give him what support they can in his next crusade. With the cursed power of the Embrace, he could possibly even retake Constantinople — for the benefit of the Eastern Cainites, of course. A man of such talent could be molded into a great tool... er, leader.

The contrary argument is rather straightforward: Dracula is too devious to be controlled by any individual. If Dracula had such power, Radu maintains, his actions in the past indicate that he would abuse it. He was a magnificent leader, to be certain, and embodies many traits valued by the Tzimisce, but it wouldn't be safe to Embrace such a tyrant. Without Caine's curse, he has already killed several Tzimisce. If he should manage to diablerize an elder or two, who knows what he might do? A man who has butchered tens of thousands of Transylvanians cannot be trusted with the power granted by Caine's curse.

Of course, there are other variations on these two ideas. Some say that if Dracula ascended to power in Cainite society, he would have the authority to subjugate the Transylvanian anarchs and *antitribu*, just as he demonstrated absolute authority over his mortal domains. Others point out that if the Tzimisce do not Embrace him, another clan might. The thought of the Saxon Ventrue or the Assamites forcing the Son of the Dragon into a Blood Oath and using him as their pawn is too terrible to consider.

Radu stresses that the debate is not purely theoretical. In fact, the issue will become crucial within a few weeks. An exclusive fete is being held in the city of Hermanstadt. The gathering promises to be memorable, as many prominent Cainite princes and courtiers are expected to be in attendance. He offers this information as though he is doing the coterie a favor, even though any prince who is present may have already heard of the event (at the Storyteller's discretion).

The host, Prince Otto of Hermanstadt, has scored a significant diplomatic coup. Radu has learned that at least 15 Cainites will be present. Prince Otto, who has always had a rather liberal attitude toward the Silence of Blood, has encouraged his guests to bring any mortals they wish to introduce to Cainite society. A small faction of Tzimisce in western Transylvania has seized this opportunity by inviting Dracula himself.

Of course, Radu cannot attempt the journey to this convocation, since packs of *antitribu* in the city below are howling for his blood. Thus, he offers the coterie a chance to act as his proxy for the event. Normally, he would send Tiberiu to simply gather information about what's going to happen there, but

Radu has greater plans. He does not want to watch; he wants to act. His request is simple: Travel to Hermanstadt, speak with Dracula, and bring him back to Castle Bistritz.

Tiberiu has been busy convincing several of the eastern Transylvanian Tzimisce to side with Radu in resolving the Dracula problem. The Western Fiends have too many personal issues at stake. By the time the coterie returns, the gathering of Eastern Tzimisce will have decided whether to Embrace Dracula or kill him. If the coterie has strong feelings on the topic, especially after having traveled with him for two weeks, the Fiends are quite willing to entertain them. Until then, the coterie should use whatever means it can to convince the Son of the Dragon of the benefits of the Embrace. In fact, the characters may say that Count Radu himself has offered him a high-ranking position within Clan Tzimisce. If Vlad Dracula accepts, his conquest of Wallachia is assured.

Radu offers the coterie a chance to prepare for the journey. In addition to his hospitality, he offers them the use of his study. They are free to research whatever they think will prepare them for the trip. His political expertise is also at their disposal. He offers to tell them what he can of current politics, the factions involved in Transylvania, possible guests present, and some of the debates that may ensue. Some Cainites may consider this opportunity enough of an incentive to take up Radu's offer and do what they can to help him.

It should be evident now that Radu's casual discussion of current events earlier has been an attempt to see how conversant the characters are in politics. If your players feel a little overwhelmed at this point, they may need to fall back on some Politics rolls later on. If they're to survive such a treacherous journey, they're going to need all the political savvy they've got.

A BRIEF INTERLUDE IN THE STUDY

Radu retires to his study to give the coterie time to decide how it will prepare. Let the characters discuss their opportunity at length. Do they trust him? Do they need further assurances? Will they require further research to prepare?

When they are ready to speak to Count Radu again, they find he is not in the library as he suggested he would be. Instead, they encounter the *szlachta* Cierna, who guesses that her master is in the study. With a little bit of prompting, she takes them there. Quite abruptly, she throws open the door and says, "Master! Your guests wish to speak with you!"

Count Radu has been relaxing, thinking over Transylvania's problems. His most recent intellectual distraction is the art of sculpting. Radu does not use clay, however. A hapless young man sits on a footstool, remaining absolutely still. The count is carefully resculpting the bones of his subject's face. On the opposite wall hangs a portrait of Julius Caesar. Radu has done a rather poor job, but is struggling admirably. Count Radu leaps to his feet. "Cierna!" he shouts. "You must knock when you enter a room!" He then turns to his guests. "Forgive me," he states, "I was merely meditating." He throws a sheet over his model, then escorts the characters to the library.

Once there, he is willing to negotiate the terms of their deal, speak with them further, brief them on local politics, and do whatever else is necessary to close the deal. Once Radu has fulfilled the coterie's concerns to your satisfaction, have him bid his guests goodnight.

SCENE TWO: CASTLE HERMANSTADT AWAITS

The start of Scene Two should see the coterie completing its preparations for the task ahead. Radu stands in front of the gates of his castle with the most prominent member of the coterie. The terms of the prestation have been discussed, and an agreement has been reached. Tiberiu waits beside the coach. Fell beasts of incredible strength stamp the ground and champ at their bridles, eager to stretch their muscles over the long journey ahead.

The journey from Castle Bistritz to the outskirts of the nearby town takes up most of the evening. The first few hours of the trip are quite uneventful, but as the characters approach Bistritz, they notice signs of *antitribu* activity. The occasional sight of a building in flames, the brief outline of a pack of vampires crucifying an enemy on a monstrously misshapen tree, or the remains of a fleshcrafted peasant discarded by the side of the road should be enough to convince the characters why Radu does not travel abroad.

If you like, you may even choose to have a group of anarchs waylay the carriage on a dark road not far from the city. A pack of 15 *antitribu* forms a barricade across the dirt path and levels its firearms at the carriage. Unless this leads to a brutal (and pointless) fight, the anarchs demand to know what the travelers are doing in "their domain." If necessary, they'll even search the carriage to see if Count Radu is inside. As long as no one does anything stupid, they'll let the coach go. If you choose to play out this interlude, don't spend too much time on it — the real story waits for the coterie in Hermanstadt.

The rest of the journey from Bistritz to Hermanstadt takes roughly two weeks and proceeds without further incident. As the coach approaches the city, the characters can see a fortress on a great hill in the distance. Silhouetted against the nacreous moon, the castle defends a countryside that has been raided by Romans, barbarians, Mongols and Turks. Some Cainites may consider it to be much more than part of the city's defenses. It is a symbol that the Childer of Caine have survived the Dark Ages, and that their power will endure.

The fortress is a relic from the 13th century. Mortals believe that the Saxons erected it to protect their interests in the region. Cainites may be more familiar with its hidden history. Zelios, the Nosferatu master mason, acted as the foreman for its construction. The kine who reside here have been thoroughly Dominated by the local Cainites into submission, and they know little of the secret rooms and passages within the fortress.

Tiberiu alights from the coach and opens the door. As he directs the coterie to the front door, he makes a passing remark about the castle being in a state of Elysium. The concept is a somewhat recent one, but he's encountered this type of situation before: Anyone committing an act of violence will face retribution. As for anyone attempting obvious use of Disciplines... well, this is a prestigious party with guests who probably won't take it too kindly. He wishes them good luck and leads the horses to a nearby stable.

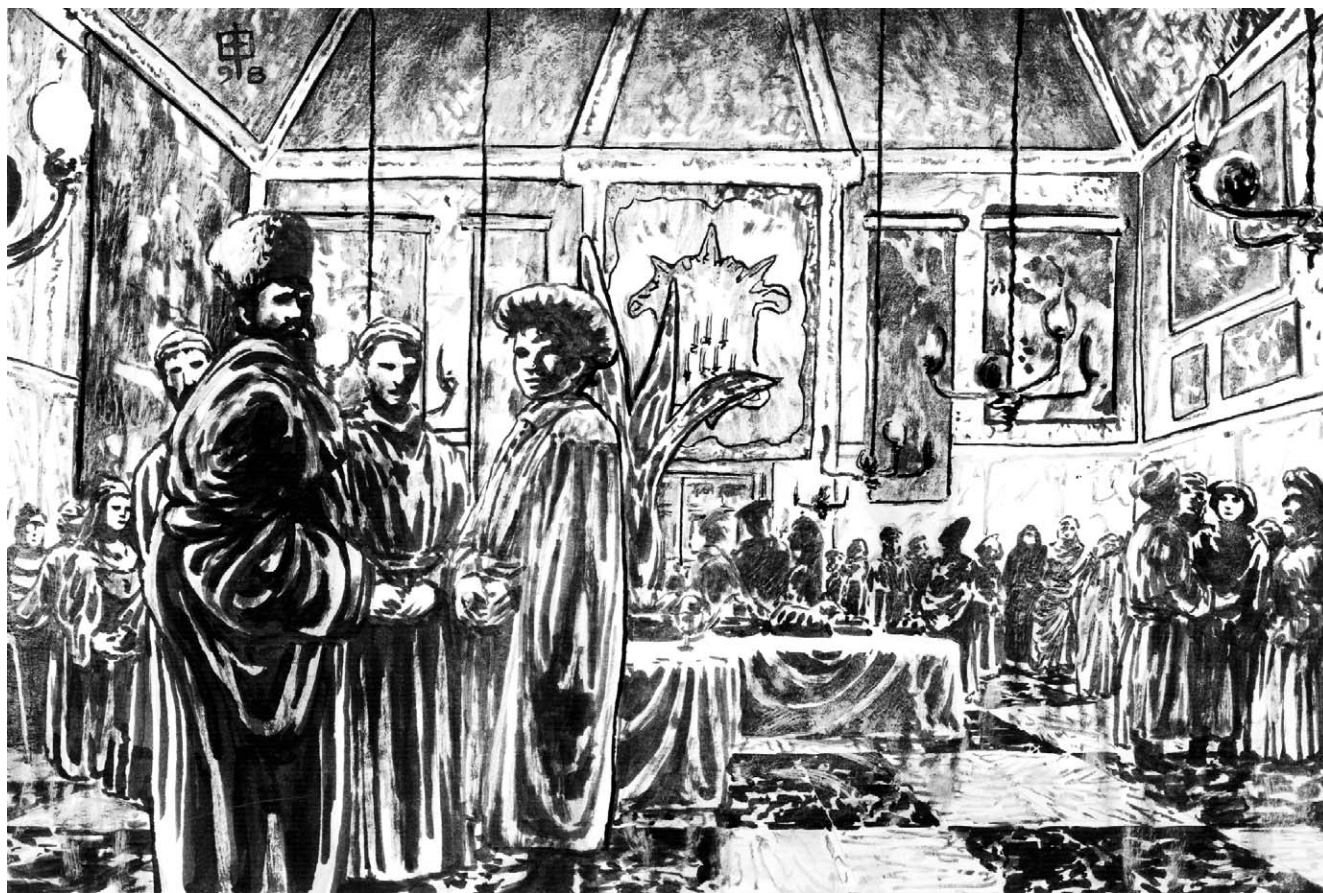
SCENE THREE: PIECES ON A CHESSBOARD

Two ghouls stand waiting in the doorway to the foyer of castle Hermanstadt. These doormen are obsequious in the extreme. When the vampires of the coterie approach, the ghouls humbly petition them for their names. Unless there are any princes present, the ghouls look quite puzzled. A quick reference to Tiberiu or Count Radu is all that is necessary to get them inside. One even jumps at the chance of leading the coterie to the ballroom. Crashing the party seems a little too easy. One of the characters may catch on that security isn't very tight.

The route to the ballroom is somewhat Byzantine, leading through two spiral staircases, a door behind a bookshelf, and several winding corridors. If anyone states that they're paying close attention to the path, make sure to acknowledge it succinctly. After describing a labyrinth of dimly lit passages and the echo of footsteps, have the ghoul open a huge set of wooden double-doors. Now contrast the emptiness of the hallways with the opulence of the gala. Hidden behind the maze of dreary corridors is a grandiose ballroom. The ghoul who led the coterie makes a stentorian announcement proclaiming its arrival, adding extra emphasis if any of the characters are princes. Fifteen Cainites stop their conversations and turn to examine the coterie briefly.

Count Radu has grossly understated the grandeur of this meeting. A wealth of different impressions assaults the characters' senses. On a raised dais nearby, a group of Parisian musicians demonstrates its artistic brilliance. A fabulous ice sculpture melts slowly in the middle of the room. Obscenely expensive tapestries and paintings adorn the walls. A sumptuous banquet has been laid out for the mortal guests, though no one dares to touch it.

All these distractions overwhelm the coterie briefly, until one impression overpowers all these sensations: There is a monstrously powerful vampire in the room. When a fifth-generation Cainite uses Majesty, everyone damn well knows it. An aura of fear and respect for this ancient vampire hangs in the air. He stands in a far corner of the room, maintaining the anachronistic posture of a Roman centurion. He is far more than that, however. Over the centuries, he's become accustomed to powerful mortal rulers kneeling before him.



Depending on the clans present within the coterie, the next feeling may be one of imminent danger. The mysterious noble is a paragon of Cainite potency. He does not need to even look at the characters — it is obvious that he can speak with the wisdom of the Inconnu. Methuselahs don't just stop by to say hello: It is likely something is very, very wrong.

Before the characters react to this, tell them that their attention is immediately drawn to Count Vladimir Rustovitch in the opposite corner. He doesn't need Presence; raw charisma and an entourage of Fiends are enough of a substitute. The pillar of ice stands between the apparent Inconnu and the *voivode* of the Tzimisce. The two never look at each other, but the resulting tension in the room is overwhelming. The two leaders are like magnetic poles, instantly repelling each other and affecting the reactions of everyone within their spheres of influence.

Ask for Manipulation + Etiquette or Perception + Empathy rolls if you like. Anyone who is perceptive in social situations may sense that the convocation has only begun. As for the rest of the coterie's impressions, it doesn't take five dots in Etiquette to notice that the gala is not doing well. The polarized feel of the room has encouraged the guests to stay near the individuals they trust most. It takes courage and diplomacy to cross the no-man's-land between the Ventrue side of the room and the Tzimisce corner.

Wise characters may ignore this and scope out their objective right away. Vlad Dracula stands two feet from Count Rustovitch. He does not look like he wants to wander far from the *voivode*, and it is obvious that he enjoys the protection of the Tzimisce. As a whole, the Fiends do not appear to be overly concerned with the other vampires in the room. In fact, they are quietly debating among themselves. They seem continually on the verge of turning on each other, but still struggling to make some show of solidarity. Dracula looks as though he isn't terribly impressed by this.

To reduce the characters' apprehension, the host of the event, Prince Otto of Hermanstadt, approaches them to welcome them personally. He is saddened to hear that Count Radu is still uncomfortable with the thought of leaving his domain and makes a disparaging remark about some Tzimisce having trouble controlling their own. His Ventrue haughtiness is just short of being offensive, but he is quick to offer the coterie his assistance if they need it. He is more than willing to make introductions where necessary.

Combat-ready Cainites may feel decidedly uncomfortable in this environment. There's a good reason for this. They probably have no problem standing up to mortal mobs or fervent Inquisitors. Big deal. The players should realize one thing if they survive this evening: When powerful vampires gather in one place, the danger is much greater than any enemy they would face with claws and fangs.

BLOOD CALLS TO BLOOD

PRINCE OTTO

At the beginning of the event, Prince Otto should seem as though he's very influential... and very foolish. The gathering is a disaster waiting to happen. If he's lucky, the Ventrue and Tzimisce will find some reason to take offense at some minor event and rationalize an act of revenge later, far away from the castle. If, on the other hand, one person gets close to a frenzy, there could be blood on the walls within minutes. Why would Prince Otto do such a thing? Why indeed...

If you've read through the last book, you may remember that the Cainite formerly known as Ruxandra, the Mistress of Disguise, has taken Otto's place. She's gone beyond merely using the Obfuscate Discipline. She's rent Otto's face from his body and had it fleshcrafted it onto her own. Now he's more of a puppet ruler than ever.

Ruxandra plays both ends against the middle. As long as the Fiends and Patricians have fresh reasons to hate each other, she can gather more allies among the Ventrue by acting as Otto. After doing that, she sends her spies to offer more secrets to the Tzimisce. What better way to foster hatred between clans than putting them in the same room? "Prince Otto" is eager to introduce Cainites of vastly different factions to each other, but secretly, she sides with her Nosferatu spies, the Tzimisce, and any *antitribu* willing to support them.

ROOK TAKES PRINCE'S PAWN

Curiously enough, the tiles on the floor of the ballroom form a checkered pattern, rather like the squares of a chessboard. Figuring out who really controls the various pieces on the board may take a little work. Once the vampires venture forth from their starting squares, the amount of tension in the room slowly increases.

The current state of the board at the beginning of the convocation is summarized below. It'll stay that way for about 20 minutes into the party. For about 10 minutes after that, each faction will send out "scouts" to offer diplomatic platitudes to the other Cainites. Once the introductions are over and the political discussions are underway, the different factions begin their heated arguments. They'll gather in the center of the room, but the lines of battle will remain clearly drawn.

For most of the evening, Dominus, the Ventrue Inconnu, does not need to leave his corner of the room. Anyone who wishes to approach him must do so with extreme courtesy. He radiates certainty that all of Transylvania will one day be under the control of a new Roman Empire.

A few feet away, two Tremere converse with Nova Arpad. Nova weighs her words very carefully, for she knows an extremely powerful Ventrue is watching her closely. She mouths the party line as best she can. Her main goal is to make sure

DOMINUS, VENTRUE INCONNU

Paint a portrait of this Ancient One with broad strokes: He speaks little, preferring to impose his grandeur upon lesser creatures who nervously stutter their obsequious reports to him. His use of Majesty this evening is a slight strain against the concept of Elysium, but who the hell is going to tell him that? Dominus is six foot four, with alabaster skin gained from spending over a millennium away from the sun. As a regal, aristocratic and vastly wealthy creature, he speaks with the authority of a once-mighty empire. Although his decisions are made with the assistance of a small cabal of fellow Inconnu and warmasters, he directly takes credit for over 1,000 years of Western history.

Here's a good guideline when portraying a creature of such epic stature: Individuals who really have power never need to flaunt it. As part of that, don't use any of his hidden Disciplines unless they're absolutely, positively necessary. When a 1,000-year-old vampire is forced into a situation where he must show off his strength, something has gone very wrong. In that case, rolling dice is a waste of time. The walking god must solve the problem quickly and decisively, then walk away as the lessers around them slowly realize that such awesome power could have easily destroyed them. Again, don't do this unless the story needs it.

No Traits are provided for Dominus; simply let him do what is necessary. Anyone foolish enough to pick a fight with him (provided they somehow overcome his Majesty), well, *dies...* graphically. Dominus' air of overpowering menace should serve as enough warning to anyone with ill intent.

the Tremere are happy with what the Ventrue say. As for the rest of the people in the room, they're potential enemies for the Ventrue and Tremere. Nova postures as a staunch ally of the Warlocks, though this is a ruse. (See Chapter Five.)

If you own **Transylvania by Night**, the two Tremere she's talking to are Malgorzata and Celestyn. If you don't have that book, then cut two Warlocks from whole cloth. Anyone who knows Tremere politics should realize something about these magi: Although they're important to the clan, the Usurpers aren't stupid enough to send anyone vital to such a dangerous gathering. Etrius has a "previous engagement."

The Usurpers' attitudes suggest that they are almost ready to act as bodyguards. Anyone who can get away with using Auspex (or better yet, Empathy) senses that the Tremere anticipate an outbreak of violence. Anyone reaching psychic tendrils into their mind is in deep trouble, though — imagine two Tremere elders and a Ventrue Methuselah turning and looking at the transgressor in unison. If this happens, Dominus advances one square toward the Tzimisce and the tension in the room rises a few notches.

Closer to the ice sculpture, Arianne of Clan Toreador regards her surroundings with cold appreciation. She obviously doesn't give a damn about politics — she just finds the sight of so many uncomfortable Cainites in one room to be delightfully entertaining. If anyone can charm her with wit or gloat over someone's misfortune, she is able to give the most accurate account of who's hating who. She even makes a few brief suggestions on where the best place to spark an argument (or light a fire).

Opposite Arianne, Stanislaus of Clan Brujah looks vastly out of place. He is obviously here as some token gesture to his clan. He looks as though he's stoking his courage, getting ready to charge into Ventrue territory and give them his best rant. If anyone talks to him at length, he remarks that the Tremere look like they're preparing for conflict, and Dominus looks like he's going to try to get away with something. Before he can have his moment of glory, the events of the next scene humiliate him.

If you've read **Transylvania by Night**, Gutka of Clan Nosferatu walks slowly from one axis of the room to the other. She's got power and prestige, and she isn't afraid to demonstrate it. Her status outside Transylvania allows her to make somewhat gross generalizations about local politics. Her status within her clan allows her to get away with just being Gutka. Terrible rumors of her preference for Cainite vitae circulate among the guests. Storytellers without **Transylvania by Night** should create a suitably grotesque emissary for Clan Nosferatu.

Zelios is here as well. Inviting him was the easiest and least offensive way to include more Nosferatu. He is the most polite person in the room, and has a reputation that allows him to graciously approach anyone else present. On the other hand, the only subject that truly engages his interest is architecture, and he makes small talk about it all night.

Anatole and Lucita wander about, and are here mainly to observe. Anatole, the only Malkavian in the room, is bold enough to make remarks to just about anyone here. He always begins his conversations seeming quite rational, but eventually his dialogue becomes offensive: When he starts to remark about God's plans for the Cainites, it gets to be a bit much. Lucita looks concerned for his safety. Her primary thought is making sure her friend has an escape route. Lucita's deadly reputation as an assassin precedes her, however, and the other Cainites afford her a wide berth.

If you like causing trouble, have one or two Nosferatu spies Obfuscate about the room while listening to private conversations. If they remain undetected, "Prince Otto" will gather even more information. If they don't, then Gutka or Zelios may take grief from the other Cainites. Ruxandra doesn't mind, as long as all of the Nosferatu get out of the room alive.

Clan Tzimisce is ostensibly holding its own gathering in their section of the hall. Anyone approaching Count Rustovitch must make it successfully through the pack of Fiends. Razkoljna of Krakow is here as the most objective of the Fiends. (Again, those without **Transylvania by Night** should create an appropriately anti-Germanic Fiend.) She favors the idea of Embracing Dracula, but does not voice her opinion too strongly.

She likes the idea of Count Rustovitch taking Vlad under his wing, hopefully using the Son of the Dragon to stem the tide of Western influence in Eastern lands. If the Tzimisce are unified, after all, that makes it easier for her to understand them.

Vintilla, a minor Tzimisce the characters have never seen before, avoids Razkoljna. He looks as though he can barely contain his rage. If anyone gains his temporary confidence, he gladly regales his listeners with tales of Vlad Dracula's butchery. He provides the most dramatic retelling of Dracula's slaughter in Kronstadt, decapitation of Dan III, and impalement of Tzimisce in forests of stakes. Occasionally, he fires a hateful glance at Dracula, but is quickly repelled by Rustovitch's glare.

A few other minor Tzimisce are here as well. Have fun with them. They don't quite blend in with the rest of the crowd, they argue with each other incessantly and they have quite a few amusing remarks about what they'd like to do with the two Tremere. Prince Otto chose them wisely. There isn't a chance in hell they'll walk away from this respecting the Ventrue or Tremere.

Eventually, the coterie needs to approach Count Rustovitch, the *voivode* of the clan. He never lets Dracula out of his sight. His main interest is that the Son of the Dragon should learn about Cainite society as quickly as possible. He visibly demonstrates to any uncertain parties that this wild card is under his control. Occasionally, he whispers remarks about various occurrences in the room.

Several mortals drift about the room, blissfully unaware of who hates whom. They are all potential candidates for either the Embrace or life as a ghoul. One is a Saxon merchant; a second is wise old man from a Romanian commune; a third is a politician from Hermanstadt. At one point, have a mortal chat with one of the characters. An amusing subplot could develop when the kine's intended sire takes offense.

If the characters charge into the Tzimisce section of the room at the beginning of the party, they will find it more difficult to gain sympathy from the Cainites lurking on the opposite side of the room. If they're smart, they'll split up immediately. Nonetheless, the battle lines have been drawn, and other Cainites want to play the factions against each other.

Let the games begin. The pieces begin to maneuver for position.

SCENE FOUR: A LIVELY DISCUSSION

The coterie may feel rather nervous about a meeting with so many prominent Cainites, particularly if they have attended such meetings in previous years. The conversations range from trivial to profound. The members of the coterie may soon find themselves talking to vastly different Cainites about various pressing matters: Hardestadt's plans for the Camarilla, the threat of the Anarch Revolt, the activities of the Transylvanian *antitribu*, the dangers of traveling through the voivodate, and so on. Check out Chapter One for issues plaguing Transylvania currently — that's why it's there.

While many of the guests have rather vociferous reactions to the events in Transylvania, most are cautious enough to test the youngest Cainites present for their reactions, particularly if they are princes by this time. Each of the elders present has an agenda of his own. If the characters really want to circulate, they can gather this information quickly, offering some opportunities for heavy roleplaying.

The experience should be something of a novelty. While 20th-century vampires have the luxuries of transportation and communication that allow them to gather practically at will, not many 15th-century Cainites are comfortable in this sort of soiree. A brief word of advice for running it: Improvise as many subplots as you want, but make sure the characters feel as though they are at the center of the action. Indulge them in their urges to wander into dangerous territory, but if they decide to hide from others, maneuver another chess piece to threaten their position. If a player gets really stuck talking about local politics, mention her character's evening in the study with Count Radu. If all else fails, the more dots a character has in Politics, the more she remembers from her preparation.

The coterie's ultimate objective, Dracula, never ventures far from the Tzimisce. He is taciturn, observing far more than he says. In fact, anyone with Auspex or familiarity with the Empathy Talent can sense that he is trying to hide his fear. He is used to being in positions of absolute power, but now he is the weakest creature in the room.

Eventually, the characters will get around to the moment of truth: making Radu's offer to Dracula. First, they must ask Rustovitch if they can speak to Vlad alone. If they don't offer this courtesy, the count hovers nearby and casts a pall over the conversation. If, on the other hand, at least one member of the coterie has been able to survive the heated discussions of the Tzimisce, the Fiends grant him the honor of speaking to their guest.

When roleplaying the Son of the Dragon, be polite, but brief. Lead the coterie into talking more than you do. There's a reason for doing this. As long as the offer is reasonably polite, Dracula surprises the coterie by acceding to the argument quite readily. Anyone who can read between the lines will sense that he wants to get out of here as quickly as possible.

As the evening progresses, characters may notice that the gala is starting to deteriorate. The conversations linger at a point just short of physical violence. Though no one would be gauche enough to force the use of Disciplines or intimidation at a gathering like this, the divisiveness in the room is about to bring the evening crashing to a halt. Some roleplayers hate dragging out these sorts of discussions for too long. They may even try to stir up the pot a bit by grandstanding or doing something stupid with Disciplines. If the characters have had their conversation with Dracula, wait for the moment when all hell is about to break loose. Then hit 'em with the next scene.

TRANSYLVANIA CHRONICLES II

SCENE FIVE: A HEATED ALTERCATION

Several guests raise their voices in their conversations. The tension builds. It finally breaks when a pack of five vampires throws open the doors suddenly. One of them holds the head of the poor ghoul who escorted the coterie here. The pack charges into the room, screaming war cries. With weapons drawn, they surge into the gathering, splitting up immediately. In an instant, violence breaks out as the band assails the assembled guests.

As this occurs, Dominus stands at the far end of the room, doing nothing. He has no real urge to leap into the fray, instead he amuses himself by seeing how the lesser Cainites react. If a member of the coterie is near the door, that unfortunate character is also one of the first victims attacked. Vintilla, our minor Tzimisce, is an ideal candidate for victimization. Remove a few of his body parts and let him bleed a bit.

ANARCH GATECRASHERS

Generation: 11th

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Rebel

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3

Skills: Melee 3

Knowledges: Politics 1

Disciplines: For each anarch, divide three points between Celerity, Potence and Fortitude.

Virtues: Conscience or Conviction 3, Self-Control or Instinct 2, Courage 4

Road (Humanity or Beast): 6

Willpower: 6

Notes: Of course, the anarchs have Traits other than these. There's no chance of other Traits being used in this encounter, however.

The melee does not last long. Give the coterie a few turns to brawl with the anarchs (just long enough to let the combat monsters show off). One of the mortals is grievously wounded in the fray. This enrages the eldest Cainites in the room. Through Thaumaturgy, Celerity and other undead means, the anarchs are quickly slaughtered. One bursts into flame; a second is lifted off the ground and smashed into a wall; a third watches in horror as his flesh is shredded by shadowy apparitions, and so on.

Shortly thereafter, Otto directs the ghouls present to clean up the chunks of meat and ashes soiling the floor of his ballroom. A silence falls upon the room. Give the characters a chance to quip something, if they're bold enough. At the opposite end of the room, Dominus laughs uproariously. The sight of anarch rebels using such crude tactics amuses him to no end. Following this macabre display, the other Cainites jeer derisively as well.

It appears as though the tension in the room has been dispelled, if only briefly. The conversations resume, and this time, every discussion immediately shifts to the topic of the Anarch Revolt. ("If this is their idea of a revolution," one Cainite quips, "I think Hardestadt's Camarilla has nothing to fear!") The general attitude in the room is one of superiority. For a brief moment, everyone in the room can agree on one thing: The anarchs must be taught their place. Stanislaus storms out of the room, choosing a tactical retreat.

This leads to a heated debate on Cainite ideology — everyone agrees that the anarchs need to be put down, but before long, the finer points of the issue ignite the crowd. Some favor extinction of the anarchs; others demand subjugation or Blood Oaths; a few consider them an insignificant threat. The conversation, of course, foreshadows the upcoming schism between the Camarilla and Sabbat. The characters should be encouraged to participate in this debate. The elders present try to elicit the coterie's stance on the issue as quickly as possible.

Dominus continues to show his derision for the Anarch Movement, laughing off the matter as a mere distraction from larger issues. The Patrician's opinion, however, visibly changes when he sniffs the air rather contemptuously.

"May I have your attention, please?" the Roman remarks with cold nonchalance. At his merest utterance, the room falls deathly silent. "At this moment, I should remark that the castle is on fire. I shall take my leave of you. Thank you for a most amusing evening."

Let the words hang in the air for a moment. Dominus casually fades out of view, using his Obfuscate Discipline as a graceful way of leaving an unpleasant situation. The crowd is baffled. There is no sign of a fire. A few elders make perfunctory remarks and walk slowly to the front door. One laughs nervously, obviously concerned for his unlife. Vintilla, our wounded minor Tzimisce, is the youngest Cainite present. He runs for the door at full speed.

If the characters hesitate, they do so at their own peril. The moment the first vampire in the coterie walks into the hallway, he sees that the fire is somewhat more dangerous than previously anticipated. The hallway is a raging inferno. Vintilla has already succumbed to Röttschreck and in his frenzied flight he lashes out like a madman at any unfortunate guest near him. Witnessing this is quite demoralizing; increase the difficulties of further frenzy and Röttschreck rolls by one.

Vlad Tepes is quite at a loss for how to regard this immediate danger. He waits to see if anyone escorts him from the room. The coterie should move quickly. If they do not immediately think of rescuing Dracula, one of the Tzimisce offers his help first. If this occurs, the characters may have to convince the Fiend of their more pressing need to ensure Vlad's safety. Let them win, but let them also realize that they've earned the Tzimisce's animosity. Either way, Dracula's getting outside the building.



BLOOD CALLS TO BLOOD

THE CONFLAGRATION

By now, the corridor immediately above the ballroom is in flames as are all apparent exits around them. Call for Wits + Alertness rolls (difficulty 4) all around. This might startle the players; they may think they're gearing up for a combat encounter in a burning castle. That's not the case, however: The member of the coterie with the most successes on the roll notices a rather unusual person testing stones along one of the walls. Examining this stranger's aura reveals that the mysterious figure is a ghoul. The clock is ticking, though, so just give him a chance to speak.

"I know another passage out of the castle," he calmly states. "I was one of the men who helped build it. For three phials of your blood, I will get you out of here safely. Would this be acceptable?"

The ghoul, Nicholae Olahaus, can indeed show the characters a secret escape route out of the castle. If the characters refuse, the alternative is leaping through the flames, possibly making several dangerous soak rolls (if the characters have Fortitude), and riding out a frenzy as they run down a fiery stairwell. You shouldn't feel obligated to kill the entire coterie, but don't let the characters know that — they might choose to take this devil's deal.

Either way, the scene ends with the coterie watching Castle Hermanstadt in flames from its surrounding courtyard. Many of the servants die in the conflagration. By morning, the citizens of Hermanstadt will have to start rebuilding their castle. With Zelios in the neighborhood, though, this shouldn't be too hard.

SCENE SIX: RETURNING TO BISTRITZ

It's four a.m. Dawn is an hour away. The castle is gutted, there are no buildings for miles, and a man who's butchered tens of thousands of innocent people is standing in front of your coterie. No problem. They've been through worse.

If the troupe has been diplomatic, they've already convinced Dracula of the benefits of meeting with Radu. Vlad has been traveling toward Mediasch over the past few weeks, enjoying the sights of his native land after years of imprisonment. He's quite willing to delay his trip. Tiberiu has hitched up the hellhorses (or substitutes thereof) and is ready to escort Vlad Dracula and the triumphant coterie back to Radu's domain.

After the journey proceeds for several days of downtime, Dracula leads the characters into a topic they're familiar with: the benefits of the Embrace. He wants to know everything. If the characters meet up with him in a few centuries, they'll find it rather surreal that *they* once knew more about Caine's curse than *he* did. He is eager to know more, and pursues answers like a predator stalking his prey.

If you're familiar with the life of Dracula, this would also be an excellent time to have him relate a story from his

career. (Florescu's books have plenty of these.) Possibilities include the time he nailed turbans to the heads of visiting Turkish emissaries, the occasion on which he boiled a Gypsy spy alive, his joy at feasting before forests of impaled victims, the details of tearing a servant's womb open with a dagger to prove she was not pregnant — anything that establishes his violent sense of humor. Then remark that he is silent and introspective for the rest of the journey, occasionally chuckling at similar fond reminiscences. Apparently, his wedding and conversion to Catholicism did not change him much. It is important, however, to maintain an air of Dracula's feral charisma amid his tales of depravity. This is a fierce man with an indelible code of honor and sense of duty.

Before too long, announce the sight of Tihuta Pass in the distance. Dracula is delighted by the scenery. Staring up at the castle, he is singularly impressed by it. Although he technically owns it, he has not yet had a chance to visit. He's eager to walk through the corridors of his castle. Your description of the gates opening, the wolves howling, or the sinister moonlight is probably losing its dramatic effect by now, but feel free to linger on the moment that Dracula crosses the threshold of Castle Bistritz for the first time.

Radu greets Dracula warmly, showing deference while mouthing platitudes. He makes the expected remarks about how his clan eagerly awaits the day when Constantinople will be reclaimed, etc. It is obvious, though, that something has decreased his enthusiasm. A brief exchange occurs in the hallway. Count Radu invites Dracula into the next room for a quick discussion. Radu states that he will return momentarily, then escorts the Impaler into the library.

In a few minutes, Radu returns, saying that his conversation with Vlad must wait a few moments. The coterie should be surprised by this.

"I must speak to you privately," he says. "Our decision has been made for us." Clever vampires may now notice that there are no other Cainites inside the castle. "Someone more powerful than the Eastern Tzimisce will decide Dracula's fate. Tiberiu is to leave within the hour to deliver Vlad Tepes to him. You are encouraged to accompany them on the journey, as a measure of security. I am guessing that you have never had the honor of seeing the interior of the Cathedral of Flesh."

If this isn't the first session in your chronicle, the words "Cathedral of Flesh" may have come up in conversation before. If they haven't, an Intelligence + Occult roll (difficulty 8) should identify it immediately. It is the lair of Yorak, a Tzimisce Methuselah. Several prominent Cainites have descended into that Metamorphosist's lair, never to return. The words "Hell on Earth" should come to mind.

Count Radu asks the coterie to wait for him for about 10 minutes. He states that his hands are tied in this matter. Yorak has either chosen his child or determined his victim's method of execution, and he will enforce it, one way or another. Radu can oppose the will of the Tzimisce who wish to destroy him, but he cannot deny Yorak. In fact, he says that he's surprised

HEY, RADU? I EMBRACED DRACULA!

If some hyperactive player wants to Embrace Drac and tries to circumvent the whole story, it's possible, but not advisable. First off, Vlad the Impaler's got a few powerful contacts in Clan Tzimisce who wouldn't take to it very kindly. Chalk up a few dozen Tzimisce enemies right away. Next, Radu's been sculpting a revenant in his study. (Remember that?) If it's absolutely necessary, Count Radu can fleshcraft the ghoul into Dracula's image. Vlad can then have the slave impersonate him by day and continue his mortal career.

If the coterie Embraces Dracula in the carriage, continue with the plot as normal. Upon returning to Count Radu's castle, the coterie's patron reveals that Yorak insists on acting as Vlad's mentor. The coterie's little blood toy is eager to go. Once that's done, you can either: a) kill Dracula in Scene Eight and have the thoroughly conditioned revenant replace him, or b) have them both travel back to Mediasch and carry out the events of the interlude. Neither option is as satisfying — or as sensible — as the story presented here.

Oh, and don't forget the third significant point: Dracula later becomes fascinated with the concept of diablerie. If Vlad concludes this story as a character's child, sooner or later, he'll gain a coterie of his own. They'd love to help him consume his sire's soul. So much for escaping fate....

If one of your players absolutely *must* Embrace Dracula, go ahead. Just make sure you're prepared to deal with the attendant discrepancies and plot concessions you'll need to make as Storyteller. It's your game.

that this creature of such power didn't just reach out across the leagues to Dominate his mind.

Just as those words leave his mouth, Count Radu stops in mid-sentence. He clenches his fists and bows his head. He shakes ever so slightly. A wine glass on a nearby table shatters. Then, in an instant, the pressure is released.

"The legends of Yorak's prowess," Radu states, "are indeed most impressive." Abruptly, he leaves the room for his private conversation with Dracula.

SCENE SEVEN: THE WILL OF ELDERS

Ten minutes pass. Radu returns again. He apologetically states that Yorak will no doubt be grateful to the coterie for their assistance in escorting his honored guest. He seems somewhat unnerved, as though he has resigned himself to fate. Speaking rather softly, he states that an invitation to the

Cathedral is a great honor, one not to be refused. The temple upholds the ancient practices of the ancient Metamorphosist cults. Although the demon Kupala seeks to spread its tendrils of corruption through Transylvania, the *ritus* of the *koldun* religion has maintained the purity of the land. Radu is dispassionate as he gives this description, as though his opinion of it does not really matter.

The coterie could respond to this in any number of ways. They might decide that the cathedral is the last place they want to go. If so, they can run for their unives now and try to make it to a house in Bistritz before dawn. There's not much chance of that. They might decide that receiving Yorak's gratitude is actually a good thing. If so, they're fools, since Yorak doesn't really give a damn about them. Another possibility is that the characters may want to warn Dracula, or perhaps accompany him to the cathedral to watch out for his best interests and theirs.

If any of the characters are from Kronstadt or Mediasch, they might secretly be chuckling by now. Vlad Tepes has butchered thousands of people there, and anything Yorak does could be much worse than anything they could devise. If that's the case, they'll probably want to go along just to see him suffer.

Radu looks as though he is growing increasingly paranoid. He whispers a remark to any Tremere or Malkavians in the group, "Protect your minds, my friends, for His powers are strong." The count is struggling to maintain his defenses against psychic assault. Anyone foolish enough to attempt to probe his mind is met with rage, fear, and as much Willpower as necessary before he flees from the room. Hopefully, such a shameful display will not be necessary.

The count grants the coterie a chance to convene in the next room to discuss how bad things are. When they get back from this private discussion, you'll know how to sell them on this idea instead of railroading them. Regardless of which motivation they choose, Dracula seems enthusiastic about the trip. He thanks Radu for his assistance, and asks the coterie to accompany him on this journey. The coach proceeds toward the Cathedral of Flesh the next night.

Vlad appears to regard Radu's suggestion with equanimity. He is eager to get underway, and states that he would be most grateful for the coterie to accompany him. He is certain that he can find some way to... compensate them... for their assistance. If this offer is advanced correctly, the coterie should be too curious to refuse.

At this point, the characters' relationship with Dracula becomes pivotal. If they confide in him that Radu has little choice, and that they're doing this by dictate rather than desire, Dracula may believe them. He'll consider them as allies compromised by fate. If the coterie gladly carries him off to the Cathedral, however, he may get suspicious of their motives and never forget this display. Not that the characters should care — the Son of the Dragon's about to get offed, right? Possibly. Nothing is quite what it seems....

SCENE EIGHT: THE CATHEDRAL OF FLESH

Tiberiu's carriage rolls through a bleak wasteland in southeastern Transylvania, not far from the city of Deva. The locals have a legend regarding this blasted heath: A sinister witch once fought an ancient demon here, and the battle tainted the soil forever. Within a few miles is a cone of volcanic ash. On that site, the spirits of the earth supposedly fought with the spirits of the air. Both tales are not far from the truth. Anyone familiar with Tzimisce occultism knows of Kupala, the ancient demon of corruption who has despoiled much of the land.

The legion of spirits who serve Kupala poisons the earth, ravaging it to bring power to its lord and master. While Fiends must sleep in the soil of their native land by night, earth that has been befouled by Kupala's servitors gives no comfort. Through *koldun* sorcery, the Tzimisce have learned how to repel this infestation, preserving the purity of their homelands in Transylvania. The most sacred night for this task is Kupala's Night (which may hold other significance for young Tzimisce or characters who played through Act Three of **Dark Tides Rising**). The ceremony is performed here monthly. Near the cathedral, however, Kupala's strength is incredibly strong.

Tiberiu's carriage crests a large hill, showing a godforsaken valley of barren soil. The horses immediately stop. They are obviously afraid, and will go no further. The blasted heath extends for several miles in every direction. At the center of it is a cave that yawns like the maw of hell. Tiberiu dares not breathe a word. He alights from the carriage, opens the door for their coterie, and motions to the entrance to the cave. Anyone watching him can see that he is desperately trying to use what command of Animalism he has left to keep the horses from bolting.

Dracula calmly approaches to the entrance to the cave, showing no fear. "Yorak!" he cries out. "You seek me! Here I am!" The coterie can choose to tremble like Tiberiu or follow Dracula. (The options for characters who watch from outside the cave are described at the end of this scene.) If necessary, Vlad turns to them and says, "My friends, you are vampires, are you not? Come with me."

If the coterie insists upon behaving like craven cowards, have a remarkably human-shaped Yorak show up at the entrance of the cave and greet them heartily. He offers them his blessing, carries a wondrous gift for them that they cannot possibly refuse — a tiny coffin lined with supple infant skin — and motions for the beasts to draw the carriage toward the cavern. Failing all else, if no one in the coterie has the courage to enter the cathedral, send Tiberiu and the ghouls in their place to shame them. Once he's ejected (see below), he'll describe everything, lingering on the grisly details he witnessed. This isn't as exciting, but that's what the characters deserve for letting poor Tiberiu do their dirty work.

Hopefully, someone's got a spine. A few feet into the cavern, visitors to the cathedral notice something growing on the stone walls. The amorphous mass seems like plant matter, but it appears to shiver ever so gently. Veins in the walls sluggishly propel fluids with a faint luminescent glow. Anyone with medical expertise can see various... organs... illuminated in the chunks of tissue. As the cathedral's sobriquet suggests, the walls are actually crafted from human flesh, shaped and distorted to form a tapestry of viscera. The tainted fluids churn through a complicated network of capillaries, arteries and veins as they provide faint illumination.

Characters who travel through these faintly glowing corridors can discern only faint outlines of the shapes within them. For this, the coterie should feel grateful.

Two red eyes peer from the darkness. Anyone with Witness of Darkness detects two misshapen figures loping toward them. These figures are servitors of Yorak. They do not speak, but hiss in some forgotten form of communication. A tendril of psychic energy leaps from one mind to the next as the servitors speak, bringing on painful headaches and testing the limits of the coterie's willpower.

Twenty feet further, the mass of tissues spreads across the floor as well, absorbing the coterie's footprints with moist, sickening sounds. Some sculpted forms protrude from the wall, but not all of the body parts represented here are identifiable... or even human. The tapestry of flesh periodically surges, indulging in a brief rippling of peristalsis. At any given moment, the vestiges of a head or face may emerge to the surface, twisting in a glorious expression of ecstasy and horror.

The Metamorphosists have had millennia to sacrifice victims to the tapestry. Now all who remain here are sustained by small amounts of vitae, trapped into eternal worship of the vile Yorak. The two servitors lead the visitors onward, escorting them to a fleshy gateway crafted into the shape of a vast human orifice. The threshold is guarded by two monstrous *szlachta* warriors. It is uncertain where the guardians end and the walls begin.

The servitors whisper in a forgotten tongue, then lick the softest portions of the *szlachtas'* skins to placate them. As the servitors pass, they dip their fingers in a communal bowl of brackish fluid, then drip the congealing liquids onto the ground. The fleshy tapestry eagerly absorbs its nourishment, responding favorably with delightful bursts of luminescence. Other horrors in the walls groan in perpetual hunger. If blood is spilled near them, the tapestry eagerly soaks it up — even bulging forth to do so — and exudes an aura of satisfaction.

Thousands of bodies have been woven into the tapestry, but the minds trapped within have knit together. They show the moods of their crude gestalt through the different colors of their glow. Anyone using *Auspex* can detect hundreds of minds sharing the same joy and fear. With a little more effort, the thoughts of these slaves can be heard echoing through their minds: "Yorak... Yorak... Yorak..."

As the journey into the abyss proceeds, the petitioners can still hear the dull roar of vitae churning in the walls around them. The hypnotic sound becomes louder as they proceed, calling to something bestial inside them. Blood calls to blood. Anyone who wishes to harm the tapestry in some way must overcome this chant of vitae. (The player must roll Willpower at a difficulty of 9.) No one should be planning a fight scene with this Stygian village of the Damned any time soon, though.

The thought of so much blood close by preys on the coterie's eternal hunger. If a Cainite is close to a feeding frenzy, she's in deep trouble; she'll descend on the protuberances with orgiastic abandon, glutting herself on the heady vitae. If this happens, the unfortunate victim is occupied for the rest of the scene. You should only occasionally refer back to her ecstasy — she'll keep feeding even as she sweats the excess blood through her pores and the rippling walls of flesh slowly engulf her.

Anyone who can see in the dark can note the expression on Vlad's face. It is contorted into a rictus of reverence and joy. He is overwhelmed, and has no qualms about proceeding further. As the flood-beat grows louder, the coterie notices that it's entering a large chamber. The arteries in the wall are several feet around. Blue and red cables spiral up toward the ceiling.

Suspended from the web of veins and arteries in the middle of the cathedral, Yorak awaits. He revels in obscene biology, expressing his satisfaction in a melange of atavistic shapes. Long ago, evolution rejected the thousand forms of Yorak. Portions of his body are sculpted into limbs nature never intended. Gradually, the rippling viscera transforms, shrinking in upon itself and compacting into a vaguely anthropomorphic guise. When the transmogrification is finally complete, an elderly man stoops in the center of the cathedral's narthex.

Yorak throws his arms wide. Dracula obeys. The count slowly marches toward his new master, advancing like a bride to the altar. The fleshy tapestry shivers in anticipation. Yorak throws back his withered head, displaying serpentine fangs. As Vlad helplessly stumbles into the Ancient's embrace, Yorak lovingly strains to reach Dracula's throat. The tip of one of his fangs punctures Dracula's skin. The Methuselah hesitates. Something is wrong. A single drop of Dracula's blood falls to the floor.

The flesh of the cathedral cannot resist its excitement any further. The walls ripple in an excited shudder of orgasm. Bilious fluids weep from every orifice, coating the floor with a marsh of viscous liquids. The floor grows unsteady. Anyone failing a Dexterity check (difficulty 8), stumbles as the tapestry surges in the first throes of vomitus.

For centuries, Yorak has bound the thousands of bodies of the Cathedral of Flesh in eternal torment. Each time blood has been spilled, the tapestry has eagerly devoured it. Now, after countless rituals, the mass of bodies has formed one vast organism and one intelligent gestalt. It has watched helplessly as many powerful Cainites have been sacrificed, but its awakening mind senses the aura of destiny that surrounds Vlad Dracula. While Yorak is distracted by the catharsis of having acquired such a promising mortal, the Cathedral of Flesh decides to exploit the opportunity for all it's worth.



BLOOD CALLS TO BLOOD



TRANSYLVANIA CHRONICLES II

The entrance to the narthex closes like tightened sphincter. Yorak screams. He lifts his head and hisses at the trap that has been sprung. A thousand mouthlike lesions erupt from his body, exuding a charnel odor and emitting keening cries of rage. He is terrified as he realizes that the Cathedral of Flesh is poised to strike, channeling its willpower into one massive act of rebellion against the godlike creature who tortured it for millennia. From all directions, fanged tendrils leap out from the walls of the cathedral, affixing themselves to various portions of Yorak's anatomy. Chittering maws of canine teeth devour his twitching muscles, sinuous eel-veins entwine his limbs, arrays of crustacean pincers gnaw at exposed bone, and tubular proboscis with violently eager cilia suck vitae eagerly.

The diablerie of Yorak has begun! Damn it, man, call for a Röttschreck roll (difficulty 8), and do it now! All who fail are spared conscious thought as their senses are assailed by the tapestry's myriad forms. Cainites indulging in this reverie cry out in gibberish, reverently extolling the Cathedral's glory in displays of blasphemous ecstasy. See the sidebar for more details.

For those who succeed, enough reason remains for them to be assailed by a horrid revelation: *How many bodies have been sacrificed here? Have they allied to rise up against their master?* Then reality comes crashing in: The rippling walls of the cathedral have formed a crude hive mind, becoming one ravenous vampire thirsting for Yorak's very soul!

The tapestry vomits again, hurling the coterie down an esophagus of the cathedral. Any who want to fight the flow of bile may do so, but they'll soon notice the *sphincters of the Cathedral continue to open and close. Bowels surge, forcing them upward and evacuating them into the land above!*

The coterie is spewed from the uppermost chambers of the cathedral. After being ejected through countless corridors, the vampires are hurled through the air about 10 or 20 feet, then fall to the ground. Tiberiu is behind them, praying fanatically. Merely watching the experience has been too much for him. He kneels on the ground before the entrance to the cathedral, eyes open, mouth covered in bloody froth. He mutters one word over and over. "*Kupala... Kupala... Kupala...*"

Anyone who ran outside, or never entered the cathedral in the first place, misses all the fun. Instead, they watch as their comrades are purged by the massive intestinal tunnel of flesh. They can assault the cathedral, run screaming, call down lightning bolts—any damn thing they want. Assaulting a fourth-generation Tzimisce with as much bulk as Zelios' last castle is futile. Flesh is weak, but the cathedral's Fortitude is incredible.

Once the terror ends, have the Cainites roll against Röttschreck to avoid frenzying into their first instinctive response. Any who can hold on to their reason long enough may rush to attend to the wounded. The entrance to the temple is walled over with chitinous flesh, rejecting all further attempts. Yorak has reached his Final Death. Now the cathedral is one unwholesome organism, one incredible, utterly inhuman vampire. It has one mind, one body, and a thousand different forms. The diablerie of Yorak is complete.

TEMPORARY INSANITY

It may seem as though the insanity brought on by Yorak's diablerie may prevent the characters from reacting properly to this scene. In fact, the opposite is true. Let the roleplayers in your troupe describe their vampires' most extreme reactions. Temporary insanity shouldn't inhibit action—it encourages absolute freedom of action, allowing indulgences unrestrained by mere reason.

The vampires may think they are fighting for their unives. Encourage their instinctive use of Disciplines and pervert them into the most horrific responses you can imagine. Anyone who wants to shred the tapestry with demonic abandon may do so, tearing into layer after layer of soft flesh. The outburst is to no avail. Anyone who tries to reach the soil beneath the walls of flesh with Earth Meld gets to experience the rest of the scene from *inside the Cathedral's walls*.

Does anyone want to Walk of Flame? The surging conflagration chars an entire wall of raw flesh, overpowering everyone with a sickening charnel odor. Celerity? In an instant, the fleeing Cainite leaps into a gigantic collapsing diaphragm. Within moments, he's wriggling and vibrating as quickly as he can within the soft moist tissue. Don't deny the vampires the chance to attempt drastic measures—just twist it to amuse the cathedral's victims instead of killing their spirits. If anyone screams in mock terror, it's working.

Once the frenzy has subsided, give everyone a chance to breathe deeply and towel down. Several of the vampires present can see only a red haze before their eyes. This takes a few moments to pass. After everyone has recovered, the next impression they receive is the realization that Dracula is not here. Don't discourage them from searching frantically for a body. Then again, don't be too surprised if they walk up to the entrance of the labyrinth and mourn the Impaler's death. Once the curiosity in the room is as thick as London fog, tell the players that someone behind them is chuckling softly.

Cresting the hill and advancing toward the coterie, Dracula is silhouetted against the harvest moon. His clothes are dripping with gore and viscera. He leads one of Tiberiu's horses behind him as he grips a pair of severed reins. Though the characters may be in a questionable state of mind, Vlad Dracula desperately tries to retain his composure.

"No more," he states. "If I decide to join your kind, I must do so on my own terms. But not like this." His next statement becomes essential for foreshadowing Act Three. He thanks

the characters heartily for their assistance so far. He even uses the following words: "You have protected me on a treacherous journey. I am in your debt. I thank you." The coterie may be somewhat stunned by this. Granted, some of them may not believe it, but the legendary vampire Dracula is indebted to them. They may need to collect that debt later. Dracula mounts his unholy beast, preparing to ride off on his own.

There are several actions the coterie may take at this point. We should address the foolish ones. If anyone acts out any violent hatred for the Butcher of Brasov at this point, the fleshcrafted beast of burden defends its rider. Anyone tactless enough to use Celerity to jump Vlad Tepes gets a twisted hoofprint smashed in his face, right before Dracula flees off into the night. Anyone wanting to Dominate him can attempt to do so, but the beast speeds off anyway. After all, the coterie has had several weeks to mess with Vlad, so if they've waited until the final scene to do anything foolish, they shouldn't feel too cheated.

No doubt your players' coterie has a little more tact and a better sense of drama. As Dracula flees from the Cathedral of Flesh, the coterie bids him farewell. The Son of the Dragon rides off to meet his destiny.

DENOUEMENT

There is one more event to foreshadow before the conclusion of this story. Anyone with Auspex, Occult or some similar potential may feel something sinister surging within the cathedral at the end of Scene Eight. Though they may not realize it at first, what they're feeling is the presence of Kupala. If they have a chance to experience this sensation again later, point out that it matches the evil they sensed at the end of this story. By that time, the coterie should be ready to do just about anything to drive it from the voivodate of Transylvania. Until then, Kupala controls the Cathedral of Flesh. This time, for a change, the demon wins one small victory.

Pass out the blue-books, if you like, and give the coterie a chance to consider their reactions to all this. During the interlude, one of the characters may decide to lead an assault on the cathedral. As you'd expect, that's a monumental task. Kupala's cathedral becomes a spawning pool for horrid things, the least of which are Metamorphosist monstrosities. Within a year, an honor guard of Kupala's demonic spawn (see **Transylvania by Night**, or improvise suitable Traits) occupy the area around the cathedral.

Before the next act begins, the players have earned a description of what occurs during the downtime between stories. In the years that follow, Count Radu does indeed aid Vlad Tepes on his crusade. With the help of Prince Stephen of Moldavia, Vlad returns to Wallachia, but does not rule for long....





Chapter Three: Haceldema

Haceldema is the field of Blood, the Potter's field of the gospels which the chief priest bought from the silver they'd paid Judas to betray Christ. [it is] a field of retribution and vengeance.

- P.C. Doherty, *A Tournament of Murders*

This story places the characters at a pivotal moment in Cainite history, allowing them to participate in — or merely observe — the events surrounding the Convention of Thorns. On October 23, 1493, near the village of Thorns, in the County of Southampton, in southern England, members of the recently formed Camarilla and the rebellious Cainites of the Anarch Movement meet together for the purpose of declaring an end to the Anarch Revolt. The decisions that arise from this gathering not only establishes the Camarilla as a firm controller of Cainite society, but also results (eventually) in the formation of the Sabbat as its prime opponent. Additionally, the Convention of Thorns marks a profound change in the nature of the Assamite Clan and creates an irrevocable rift between the Camarilla's supporters and those who choose to remain outside it.

STORY BACKGROUND

The Anarch Revolt is over. Overpowered by the strength and potency of their elders, the rebellious Cainites who dared to attempt to change the established order of Cainite society now face the prospect of paying the price for their actions. The victorious Camarilla, less than 50 years old (young by Cainite standards), looks forward to solidifying its power base and putting into action its plans for protecting Cainites from the prying eyes of mortal society. Some Cainites, as always, remain on the outer edges of the conflict. Despite their official stance of neutrality, these independents acknowledge that the end of the Anarch Revolt signifies a new era for all Cainites.

In the mortal world, a century of peasant revolts in the 14th century has transformed the nature of European monarchies. Near the end of the 15th century, the numerous principalities and duchies of Germany lie ripe for conquest by the Hapsburgs of the Netherlands, while the city-states of Italy struggle to resist (mostly unsuccessfully) Spanish invaders. In France and England, powerful monarchs have succeeded in establishing a stable power structure, while to the east, the Ottoman Empire looms as one of the strongest political factions in the world. The various states of Eastern Europe (including Transylvania) exist in an atmosphere of perpetual uncertainty, vulnerable to the ambitions of both the Ottoman Turks and the Muscovites. On the eve of the Renaissance, Church and state stand poised for a great power struggle.

These general trends toward consolidation of small states into larger ones and the emergence of strong temporal governments as rivals to the authority of the Church mirror the events of the Convention of Thorns.

SETTING

Although the heart of Haceldema takes place in a relatively circumscribed area (the towns of Thorns and Silchester and the Toreador-controlled abbey that lies

between them), the story actually covers a vast canvas of European geography. The early scenes involve the preparations for, and journey to, England from Transylvania — no mean feat in the centuries before rapid transit. Characters have the option of traveling overland across the face of Europe, with a short sea voyage across the English Channel; undertaking a sea journey from Transylvania to the English coast; or combining land and sea travel in a number of ways. Each provides advantages and disadvantages, though all methods allow the characters a variety of experiences.

Although Storytellers need to have some familiarity with the general setting (15th-century Europe), the most detailed scenes occur in southern England. Brief descriptions of the towns of Silchester, Thorns and the Abbey of the Sacred Crown are provided here in order to give Storytellers an idea of the physical surroundings of the story.

SILCHESTER

The town of Silchester, located approximately 30 miles north of England's southern coast, originated as the Roman town known as Calleva Atrebatum. Built upon an even earlier Celtic defensive structure, the town sits on a slight elevation (300 feet), providing a "high" ground from which to view the flat, dense woodlands that surround it. A series of narrow roads wind through the forests to the town, leading to the main thoroughfares that traverse Silchester. Remnants of the walls that once enclosed Calleva Atrebatum still remain, demarcating four gates at the north, south, east and west sides of the town. A central square (once a forum) serves as the principal marketplace for the residents of the town. Houses and small shops radiate outward from the town square in a haphazard fashion. The most prominent building in Silchester is its church, which lies at the easternmost end of the town. Ideally situated in terms of farmlands and water supply, Silchester boasts a thriving population of about 1,000 people — mostly peasant farmers and crafters.

THORNS

The hamlet of Thorns lies four miles southwest of Silchester. Like its sister city, Thorns stands upon the ruins of an earlier Roman settlement, in this case, an outpost once linked with nearby Calleva Atrebatum. Smaller in size than Silchester, Thorns contains a little over 300 inhabitants. The town's name comes from the proliferation of thorn bushes that grow in the vicinity. Villagers harvest the thorns, which range in size from slender ones suitable for use as needles, to larger, thicker thorns capable of serving as utensils and tools. Stripped of their natural weaponry, the supple branches of the thorn bushes make excellent material for woven baskets and mats. Thus, despite its small size and its proximity to Silchester, Thorns has managed to prosper without becoming assimilated into its larger neighbor.

THE ABBEY OF THE SACRED CROWN

Situated midway between Silchester and Thorns, the Abbey of the Sacred Crown rests atop a small rise (150 feet) in a clearing surrounded by a mixed growth of forests and thorn bushes (some as tall as small trees). Built in the early 12th century, the abbey consists of a complex of buildings enclosed by a sturdy stone wall; a gatehouse marks the main entrance of the Abbey while a small postern gate provides a rear passage through the walls. Inside the walls, a church, monastery, abbot's manse, kitchen and guest house surround an inner courtyard and adjacent vegetable garden. Despite its small size, the abbey possesses several advantages that make it suitable as a site for the Convention of Thorns.

The most amenable feature of the Abbey of the Sacred Crown consists of a series of underground cells located beneath the monastery. These small rooms, intended for use as meditation areas or as penitence chambers, provide adequate resting quarters for visiting Cainites. While the abbey lies near enough to both Silchester and Thorns to provide Cainites with access to a consistent food supply, its relative isolation ensures that the activities of those within its walls remain private. Finally, the head of the abbey, Father Samuel, is a Toreador and acts as the *de facto* "prince" of Southampton. Seeing an advantage (possible contributions to the monastery's coffers and a chance to speak with several influential, learned and talented Cainites) Father Samuel has offered his abbey as the site for the peace negotiations between the Camarilla and the anarchs.

The Abbey of the Sacred Crown takes its name from a legend that attributes the origin of the thorn bushes to Joseph of Arimathea's arrival to England in the first-century A.D. An early follower of Christ and the owner of the tomb that held the body of the crucified Jesus, Joseph became one of the earliest Christian missionaries to the distant reaches of the Roman Empire. Popular belief states that he bore with him the crown of thorns that Christ wore on the cross; local embellishments state that some of those thorns, quickened by the blood of Christ, took root in the soil near the hill upon which the abbey now stands.

ADAPTING THE STORY

This story assumes that the characters have played through the events of the previous story and are located in Transylvania or some other part of Eastern Europe. If the characters hail from elsewhere in Europe or have not participated in Act One: Blood Calls to Blood or the events of **Dark Tides Rising**, the Storyteller should adapt the early scenes to reflect this. In particular, the early scenes that involve travel may need to be adjusted to account for the geographic location of the characters at the beginning of the story.



HACELDEMA

ACT II: OF CAINITE BONDAGE (1493)

SCENE ONE: A CHOSEN FEW

For over a century, war between elders and their rebellious progeny has overshadowed Cainite affairs in Europe. Although much of the bloodshed and carnage has taken place under cover of peasant uprisings and petty wars, enough rampant violence has occurred to draw the attention of the Inquisition. Already alert for evidence of witchcraft, heresy and diabolism, the Church has become sensitive to the possibility that supernatural forces are at work, undermining the established hierarchy of temporal power.

The threat of exposure has finally brought Cainites from both sides of the Anarch Revolt to the bargaining table. After months of delicate discussions between emissaries representing the warring parties, the leaders of the Camarilla and the anarchs have agreed to a cessation of hostilities. For the anarchs, this is tantamount to an acknowledgment of their defeat. For the Camarilla, the fact that the anarchs have conceded the need for parley means that victory lies within their reach. Those Cainites who have managed to remain apart from the hostilities know that the end of the Anarch Revolt signals a new era for Caine's children.

This scene begins in the early months of 1492, when the characters learn of the proposed Convention to be held near the village of Thorns.

If the Storyteller has a plausible way of bringing all the characters together, Anatole and Lucita send word of their imminent arrival via messenger, and reach the characters' lodge the next evening. In this case, the Storyteller should read or paraphrase Anatole's and Lucita's words to the characters. If they are not together, each receives a letter from Lucita delivered via messenger to whatever abode he or she inhabits. In that case, skip the dialogue and give the players copies of the letter (not the short note) given below.

GATHERED TOGETHER

If the characters are together:

As the characters talk or interact, a messenger approaches them, note in hand. It reads:

I hope this missive finds you well.

Anatole and I once again find ourselves traveling the lands nearby. It is our intention to join you at your current location tomorrow eve. We bring news! Should you not wish to see us, please send word by our messenger, else we shall come to you some hours after moonrise tomorrow night.

Lucita

The characters have an evening to speculate concerning the news Lucita brings. They might also catch up on things if they have not seen one another in some time.

The next evening, some three or four hours past moonrise, Anatole and Lucita arrive. Anatole seems even more distracted

than usual, stroking his clothing and whispering about "Blood, blood between and among us all!" If they previously parted on good terms, Lucita addresses the characters warmly; if the parting was less than cordial, she apologizes for the misunderstanding and says she hopes for a new rapport to come from their visit. (Lucita is a currently staunch supporter of the Camarilla and will suppress her own desires to some extent to encourage Cainites to attend a convocation she considers vitally important to the future of Caine's children.)

She tells the characters, "We came to speak to you concerning a great meeting of Cainites to be held in England. I know you will feel that since this is so far away it has no meaning to you, but you would be wrong. The troubles caused by the anarchs and the *antitribu* are almost over! A convocation of Cainites calling itself the Camarilla seek to end this destructive civil war among our kind. This convention is the key to doing so. We are threatened by so many outside forces — the Inquisition and mortal superstition, the tides of war that sweep over us from time to time — the Camarilla sees the need to eliminate the threat we *can* control, that posed by internecine warfare.

"Surely, you have experienced some of the destruction wrought by this fighting among ourselves? Many nights have passed since last we spoke; I do not know your minds concerning anarchs and elders. You might support the anarch cause yourselves. Whether you now be prince or *antitribu*, your voices are needed at the convention. Everything we do, everything we become from this moment on will be colored by the decisions made at this convocation. I know it is a long and arduous journey, but as you can see, Anatole and I travel frequently from west to east and into the northern lands as well. We have survived. It is not so difficult. Say that you will attend."

Should the characters agree, she can tell them other details:

"I have come to you now so that you may make adequate preparation for the journey. The convention will be held in the third week of October in 1493. Near Silchester, England, lies the hamlet of Thorns, which boasts a monastery called the Abbey of the Sacred Crown. Its abbot is a Toreador and he has promised us secure havens during the day and privacy by night."

At this point, Anatole interrupts; his voice suddenly grows in volume beyond his earlier incoherent mumbling:

"Lo! The Dragon returns, wreathed in blood, and after him, a raging torrent of flames and destruction follow. The earth cannot hold him, nor the fires of the sun contain his fury. Darkness claims all who challenge the Dragon's will. From the eastern mountains his anger rises; a tide of woe drowns the faithful of Byzantium as the ravages of war bring the old cycle to an end.

"Too much carnage! Beware the field of blood. Let the young bow down before the old lest the Dragon consume them all in disarray!"

Lucita looks distinctly uncomfortable throughout his tirade. When he has finished, Anatole seems unaware that he has spoken aloud. If questioned, he remembers nothing of what he said, nor can he speculate on his statements' meaning (except with a vague Malkavian *non sequitur*).

Lucita seizes the initiative again to urge the characters to attend the Convention of Thorns. She is as persuasive as she can be. Once the characters have agreed to go or have stated absolutely that they don't wish to attend, Lucita and Anatole turn to other topics — the Turks, rumors they have heard and other gossip. After a night's visit and a day's haven from the sun, they take their leave, explaining that they have other Cainites to call upon.

SEPARATE MESSAGES

If the characters are not together, each receives a copy of the following letter:

Salutations, Old Companion;

We have not spoken in some while, but I hope that you will remember both Anatole and me. I write to you tonight to urge your attendance at a great convocation that promises to forever change our kind's existence. You will be aware of the many disruptions and dangers posed by the fighting between the anarchs and elders. Surely, you have seen evidence of this in your own lands. Perhaps you even support the anarch cause.

The troubles caused by the anarchs and the antitribu are almost over, however! A convocation of Cainites calling itself the Camarilla seek to end this destructive civil war among our kind. This convention is the key to doing so. We are threatened by so many outside forces — the Inquisition and mortal superstition, the tides of war that sweep over us from time to time — the Camarilla sees the need to eliminate the threat we can control, that posed by internecine warfare.

Whether you now be prince or antitribu, your voices are needed at the convention. Everything we do, everything we become from this moment on will be colored by the decisions made at this convocation. I know it is a long and arduous journey, but Anatole and I travel frequently from West to East and into the northern lands as well. We have survived. It is not so difficult. Say that you will attend; let your thoughts be heard.

The meeting is to be held in the third week of October in 1493. Near Silchester, England, lies the hamlet of Thorns, which boasts a monastery called the Abbey of the Sacred Crown. Its abbot is a Toreador and he has promised us secure havens during the day and privacy by night. Although the journey will take many months, I believe you shall find worth in having a voice in the governance of our kind from this night onward.

Should you choose to come, I have found it of use to travel in the company of others so that we are mutually protected. Anatole is not always the most comfortable with traveling companions, yet he has never failed me in a bind.

May your journey safely. I look forward to seeing you at the convocation.

Lucita

Post-Scriptum — Anatole has told me to warn you of the rise of the dragon from the eastern mountains. It will be followed by a rain of blood and destruction, so he claims. He warns you to beware the field of blood and says that the young must bow to the elders. As our purpose is to bring an end to this conflict, perhaps this bodes well for us. As to the dragon — I confess I am unable to discern his meaning. Perhaps his words hold instruction for you of which I am unaware.

MOTIVATIONS

While it is fine to have another Cainite invite them to attend the convocation, some characters may feel that they have no real reason to go nor any say in how things turn out. The Storyteller may wish to sweeten the pot by any of the following methods that seem to make sense (i.e., it is unlikely — though not impossible — that a prince would receive a summons to defend his anarch leanings, but quite within reason for him to be asked to attend as a representative of his clan). Common sense should dictate which might be useful.

- The characters receive a summons (or an invitation) to attend the meeting as representatives from Transylvania (or whatever region they currently inhabit).

- Characters who support the elders or who have attained some status within the fledgling Camarilla may participate in the Convention to argue the demands of the victorious elders.

- Anarch characters may be asked by their peers to attend in support of the Anarch Movement, bearing instructions to make a final attempt to gain the best terms possible for their rebellious comrades when they surrender to the will of the Camarilla.

- Some anarchs may anticipate that the victors will insist on their surrender; those who attend the Convention with no intention of admitting total defeat may hold out some hope for rallying last-minute support for their cause. (These die-hard anarchs will form the core of the Sabbat, which emerges as a distinct sect opposed to the Camarilla shortly after the Convention of Thorns.) Such sentiments might not ever be expressed without the characters there to do so.

- Since the clans unaffiliated with the Camarilla realize the importance of this meeting for all Cainites, they also seek to send observers and, perhaps, delegates to the Convention. Characters belonging to any of these clans may attend as observers or rabble-rousers.

- Some attendees may simply be true independents whose own curiosity (or that of their elders) drives them to travel to Thorns to witness the event.

- In such an important meeting, neutral characters, especially those who have attained high status within Cainite society, may attend as moderators and arbitors, with the responsibility of hearing arguments, recommending judgments and enforcing decisions.

- In addition to representing either the elders or the anarchs, characters may also represent their particular clans, geographic regions, or factions such as the Eastern Lords.

Storytellers should decide for themselves how to best motivate the characters to attend. Perhaps their sires or vassals ask it of them; perhaps they have other business in England and use the convention as an excuse to go. Whichever reason they use to justify the journey, the characters should be aware that they need several months to travel to England from Transylvania. For example, a sea voyage from Venice to Alexandria in Egypt (which simply crossed the Mediterranean, a rather quiet sea) usually took a merchant ship about 65 days at this time. The distance from Eastern Europe to the south of England presents a formidable obstacle for mortals; for Cainites, the problem of long journeys holds special terrors and uncertainties.

MAKING PREPARATIONS

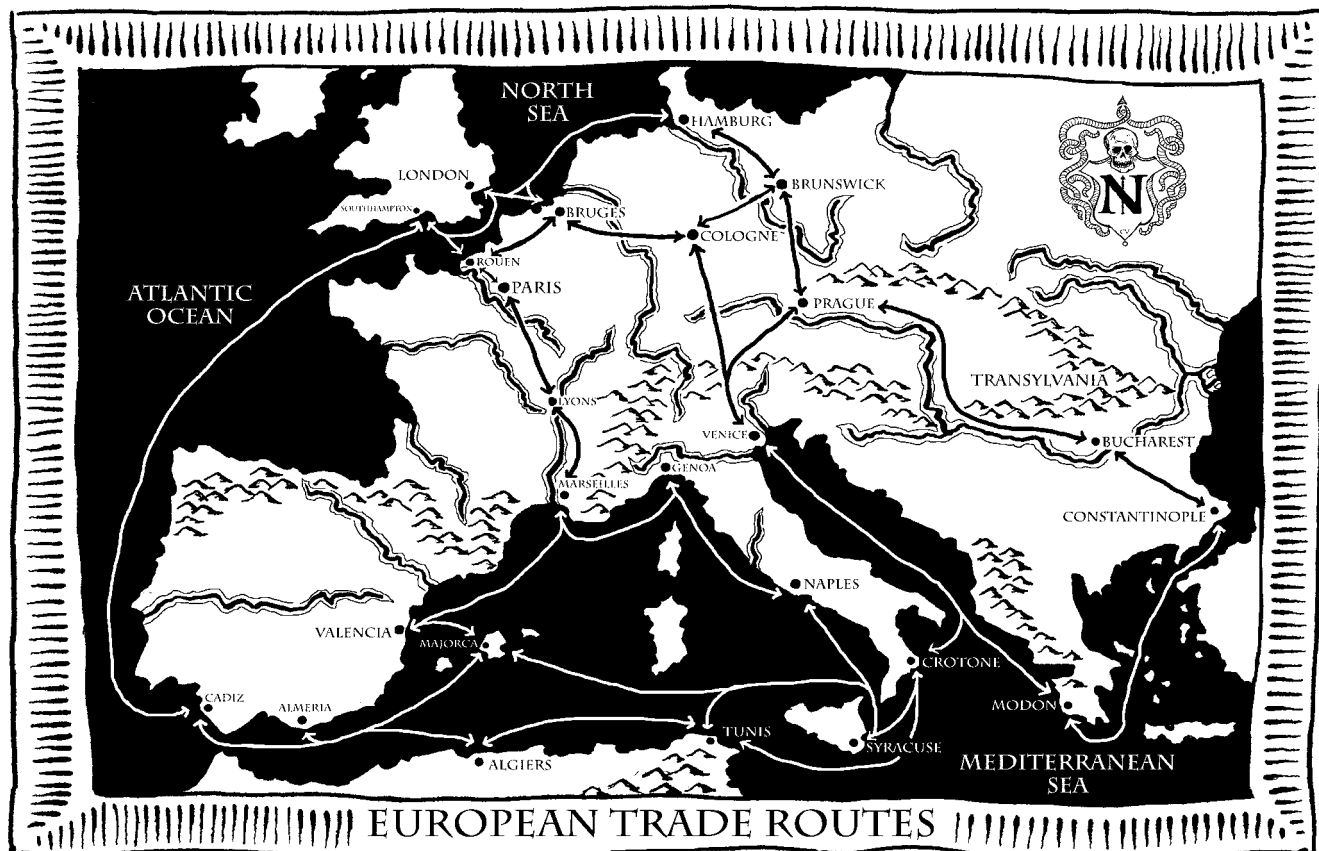
Few Cainites travel without a retinue. Characters may garner a group of servants, ghouls and retainers using experience points as described in Chapter Six under Background or may use Resources to purchase the services of servants and mercenary guards. If they have no ghouls, they still need someone to look out for them during the day no matter how they travel. Therefore, characters who lack their own retainers may (at the Storyteller's discretion) acquire essential personnel from their sires (or mentors or allied Cainites) as a boon or an incentive. In addition to personal servants and security providers, characters may realize the wisdom in taking along a guard or two to protect them from enemies or curious mortals (who may wish to know what's inside the big box). Wise characters may have the foresight to send someone ahead of them to arrange for lodg-

ings, fresh horses, adequate blood supplies and other amenities to be waiting for them. It would be unfortunate for the characters to reach England only to find they have no covered coach in which to travel and the sun is due up in five minutes....

In addition, once the characters make it known they are traveling to Thorns, they receive from the Camarilla sponsors guarantees of safe passage through Cainite domains otherwise inimical to them. Of course, if the characters have appointed themselves as delegates to the convention and told no one they are going, they must secure these sureties of safety for themselves. Whether or not any such promises hold true — particularly with regard to Tremere traveling through Tzimisce lands or vice versa, or Setites journeying through anyone else's territories — remains in the hands of the Storyteller. In general, however, the point is to get the characters to the Convention of Thorns, not to so bedevil them along the way that they miss it altogether.

WAYS AND MEANS

Characters should choose whether they will travel by sea, use an overland route or combine the two methods. From Transylvania, most characters seeking an overland journey must travel to Krakow or into Russia in order to go west by land. Though it may take longer, the characters could take advantage of a less arduous sea journey by traveling overland to Constantinople, sailing for Italy and, from there, around Europe to make the crossing from France to England. Of course, once in Italy, they might travel overland through Germany and Flanders and take ship from there. Consult the trade route map below.



Later in the year, the seas — especially the northern ones — get rougher and more perilous due to storms and ice floes; sailing also limits the characters' blood supply unless they travel with a sizable herd or make frequent stops. Overland travel, while providing more opportunities for feeding, also makes it easier for those who might want to harm the characters to locate them. Anyway you look at it, however, the journey is both long and hard.

After the characters have made their preparations for the journey to Thorns and have decided on their route and method of travel, the Storyteller should proceed to Scene Two (if the characters choose sea travel) or Scene Three (if they opt for an overland journey). If characters combine the two forms, the Storyteller may use appropriate parts of both Scenes Two and Three.

A NOTE TO STORYTELLERS

Players who seem reluctant to involve their characters in this scenario may need more incentive than usual. Personal requests from allies or sires, demands to repay a boon through attending the convention, or hints that their standing in their clans might be enhanced should they attend are only a few of the ways of gaining their cooperation. Blackmail (threatening to reveal certain skeletons in the closet), promises of payment or reward of some kind, even flattery ("We must have you there; your political acumen is legendary...") might be used to draw reluctant characters into the story. If all else fails, take the members of the troupe who *are* willing and dismiss the others from play for the time it takes to run the scenario. Do not feel that you must give equal time or experience points to those who refuse to attend; they have simply lost out on a chance to play and gain experience. Maybe next time they'll feel more like cooperating — even if it *does* move their characters out of familiar surroundings and expose them to the dangers of long travel in the 15th century.

SPEEDING THE JOURNEY

Nothing loses a player's interest more quickly than nights and nights of tedious travel. In order to avoid boredom, the Storyteller should compress time by using snapshot vignettes to give the impression of an eventful journey without running the risk of "over packing" the travel phase of the story. In addition, a few descriptions of notable places and landmarks can add to the illusion of long-distance travel. Travel books that feature the areas characters will be traveling through are invaluable — especially if they include pictures of the terrain or coast. A quick read-through can tell a Storyteller what was in the area during the time period (usually castles, old Roman ruins and such). Obviously, modern buildings, highways and such will not be present during the time in question, but even a single picture or the description of a small village overseen by a castle can make the journey seem more vibrant.

Storytellers may also want to throw in a few possible events with the potential for combat or challenging roleplaying. If the characters choose to travel in the company of mortals who do

not know of the existence of Cainites, one of these ignorant humans might get curious about the nocturnal habits of his fellow travelers. Someone may inadvertently chance upon a character in the act of feeding, or a cheeky merchant might take offense at an imagined (or intentional) slight and challenge a character to a duel. Shipboard or caravan romances and intrigues might draw the characters into all sorts of interesting complications. Of course, attacks or ambushes by pirates or bandits always provide a break from the humdrum routine of travel. Several small territorial wars plague Europe at this time and might enmesh the Cainites in other plots and plans. Even feuds between barons might cause problems for groups moving from one area to another. ("Spies, milord! Shall we shoot them first and question the survivors?") Feel free to make unlife interesting for the travelers, just not so interesting they forget about the convention.

SCENE TWO: TIDES OF FORTUNE

Two major sea routes exist at the end of the 15th century: the Hanseatic (northern) and Venetian (southern) trade routes. If the characters elect to travel by sea, they must take one or the other of these routes in order to get from Eastern Europe to England. Each possesses its own advantages and disadvantages, and the Storyteller should either leave it up to the characters to choose which route they prefer or else arrange matters so that only one route is practical.

THE HANSEATIC TRADE ROUTE

The traders of the Hanseatic League (based in the Netherlands) control most of the sea traffic along the northern coast of Europe. Their cooperation with the Venetian merchants of Southern Europe ensures a steady flow of rare spices, precious silks, wine and fruits from Southern Europe in exchange for the rich stores of metals, furs and textiles prevalent in France, Germany and Eastern Europe.

To take advantage of the northern route, characters must first travel overland to Danzig or one of the other ports on the Baltic coast. Such a journey takes at least a month (if not more). From Danzig, the journey to England takes the characters along the northern coast of Europe with possible stops at Stralsund, Wismar, Rostock, Oslo, Hamburg, Kampen and Bruges before finally arriving on the English coast at Southampton or continuing up the Thames to London. The frequency of such stops depends on whether or not the characters are traveling on a commercial ship that needs to visit several ports to load and unload their cargo of trade goods. If the characters have managed to charter a ship from the Hanseatic League for their sole use, they may be able to get by with fewer stops (although they may need to put into port frequently in order to feed).

Characters should be aware of the problems with taking the northern route, particularly during the latter months of the year. In cold weather, the northern seas are susceptible to great ice storms

and rough waters, not to mention icebergs and floes that can block passage of ships for months at a time. The best time to use this route is during the late spring, summer and early fall. At best, the total journey from Eastern Europe to the Baltic Coast (overland) and from there to London (by sea) should take 60 to 90 days.

THE VENETIAN TRADE ROUTE

Alternatively, characters may opt to take advantage of the trade routes used by the Venetian merchants. From Transylvania, characters must either travel overland to Constantinople or else make an even more arduous trip across the whole of Eastern Europe (and across the mountains) to Venice itself. Storytellers may assume that this land route takes about four weeks, with allowances for delays making up the difference in time between the shorter journey to Constantinople and the longer one to Venice.

A ship from Constantinople traverses the entire coastline of Mediterranean Europe, putting into port along the coast of Greece before crossing the narrow waters that lead to Italy's boot. Some ships sail up the eastern coast of Italy to Venice before retracing their path and continuing onward along Italy's western face toward southern France, making port at Nice and Marseilles. The next leg of the journey traces the Spanish coastline, with stops at Barcelona and Valencia before passing through the Straits of Gibraltar and putting in at Cadiz. The last stretch involves a journey up the western coast of Spain, leaving the relative calm of the Mediterranean for the unpredictability of the Atlantic Ocean. The journey ends on England's southern coast at Southampton.

While this route does not suffer from the extreme severity of weather common to the northern sea, the waters of the Mediterranean can sometimes become turbulent. The passage between Spain and Africa might become a difficult leg of the journey as Moors cast out of Spain seek pirate's vengeance against Europeans. The final phase of the voyage, skirting the Atlantic coast of Spain and France, can prove every bit as perilous in colder months as the icy Baltic journey. The length of the journey varies with the number of stops made, but, in general, Storytellers may assume that the characters will spend approximately eight weeks at sea in addition to the four-week land portion of their journey.

FEEDING

The main problem for Cainites who travel by ship lies in the difficulty of obtaining blood on a regular basis. Unless characters bring along a sizable retinue of mortals from whom they can feed, they must rely either on the ship's crew (which could prove disastrous) or on frequent stops along the way. Feeding while in port should present most characters with little difficulty. If the characters resort to preying upon members of the crew, their actions will likely expose their true natures; the sailors may lack sophistication, but they are not stupid.

Of course, in the event that the crew does realize that their passengers are vampires, there is little they can do to protect

themselves while the characters are awake. When the vampires retire at dawn, however... Alternatively, when they reach port, survivors may alert the authorities — including the Inquisition — if they are able to do so. Aside from these considerations, it simply doesn't make sense for characters to drain their own crew to the point of exhaustion or collapse; if they do so to more than one crew member, the Storyteller might have several crew jump ship at the next port, fleeing the mysterious malady on board. Delays and the trouble of replacing lost crewmen should serve to convince characters it isn't wise to dine on board.

Once the characters have reached the channel between France and England, the Storyteller should proceed with Scene Four.

SCENE THREE: OVERLAND TRAVELS

Characters may decide to travel overland for the entire journey (except for the necessary short trip across the English Channel). From Transylvania, the easiest route with regard to passable terrain involves traveling to Krakow and, from there, journeying across the middle of Europe (above the Alps) until they reach the northern coast of France. This trip takes approximately eight weeks.

While the cumulative time appears shorter than a sea voyage, characters traveling overland must take into account the political tenor of the various regions through which they journey. In addition, the weather (particularly when passing through mountainous regions) may make land travel nearly impossible during some parts of the year. Characters traveling in a caravan or as a small party are also vulnerable to attacks from bandits, rival Cainites and the terrible Lupines of Europe's eldritch forests. In short, Storytellers, pass the journey uneventfully or add an encounter that suits your troupe's tastes.

SCENE FOUR: MATTERS OF IMPORT

This scene encompasses several smaller scenes, since it comprises the various meetings and discussions that result in the agreement known as the Treaty of the Convention of Thorns. The format of the gathering consists of a series of councils attended by the delegates, followed by periods of discussion in which attendees engage in lobbying for their views. Storytellers should feel free to alter the number of meetings (perhaps simply summarizing some of the less important ones) if players seem restless at the prospect of "too much talk, not enough action." On the other hand, if the troupe enjoys roleplaying the conflict of ideas that eventually results in the peace treaty, the Storyteller should allow the players to indulge themselves. After all, this gathering is a landmark in Cainite history, and the characters have a rare opportunity to help shape their own destiny.

Characters have the chance to debate and, if they are actual delegates, vote on several issues. If their votes do not

agree with the outcome as set out in **Vampire: The Masquerade** and its sourcebooks, the other delegates simply outvote them. In any case, the characters' opinions and votes are noted by both allies and rivals. Should Storytellers wish, they may allow the characters' votes to "change" vampiric history. Doing so significantly alters the future, but hey — it's your game. The rest of this book assumes that Storytellers do not allow their players' characters to fly in the face of established events.

During the meetings, the characters may meet with important leaders of the Camarilla and the Anarch Movement as well as with the individuals who are destined to found the Sabbat. The presence of so many influential Cainites provides an ideal situation for characters to make valuable contacts or persistent enemies.

Don't feel you must adhere too closely to the script. Characters will undoubtedly become interested in certain Storyteller characters and wish to interact with them at greater length or more frequently. Philosophical discussions, social salons, midnight mass, hunting parties (in search of deer and the like), card or gaming parties and numerous other activities (including romances and "friendly duels") may all be a part of the convention. Even vampires can't just feed and talk all the time. Try to vary the activities enough to maintain interest while not losing sight of why the characters are there.

ARRIVAL

The Storyteller should plan to have the characters arrive on or just before October 17, 1493. This takes into account several months of travel and the time spent preparing for the journey. Delays caused by bad weather, changes in route due to local wars or physical barriers (passages blocked by avalanches, mudslides, flooded rivers, etc.) can help keep the characters from arriving too early and facing the prospect of waiting around for things to happen.

Characters who seem surprised that the convention is taking place at a religious site have their suspicions allayed almost immediately upon their arrival within the abbey's walls. A pair of monks greets them on behalf of their "master," the prince of Southampton, and offer to stable the characters' horses and see to their belongings. Another monk guides the characters to their quarters in the complex of underground cells below the monks' dormitory and inquires if the honored guests require sustenance. If the characters are in need of blood, the monks will provide them with goblets of vitae; Should any of the Cainite characters question the origins of the blood, the monks reply that it comes from donations freely given by the residents of the monastery or through bleeding the peasants (a common medicinal practice). In addition, animal blood from herds of cattle is in plentiful supply for those characters who prefer nonhuman vitae.

Once the characters have settled in, they are conducted into the presence of Father Samuel, the abbot of the monastery as well as the prince of Southampton.



HACELDEMA

PRINCELY GREETINGS

Father Samuel receives the characters in a small room on the ground floor of the two-story manse that serves as his residence. A servant (not a monk) ushers the characters into a small waiting room and informs them that the abbot will see them as soon as he has finished with a previous visitor.

After a few minutes, the door to an inner room opens and the abbot's visitor takes his leave. Characters may recognize Myca Vykos from earlier encounters with him though he has modified his appearance with Vicissitude. Vykos seems upset and does not deign to recognize or speak to the characters unless they, too, are anarchs. (He has just had an argument with Father Samuel over security precautions for the anarch delegates and he fears that the Camarilla may intend hostility despite the truce agreements currently in force.) If the characters are part of the Anarch Movement, Vykos indicates that he will talk with them later, then leaves. Once Vykos has left, the characters are allowed in to see Father Samuel.

The prince greets the characters warmly, asks about their journey and inquires if their rooms seem suitable. He then informs them that they may feed discreetly in either the town of Thorns or Silchester but cautions them to practice frugality, since the sheer number of delegates puts a significant strain on the available food supply. He warns them to avoid unnecessary expenditure of vitae and cautions them to exercise restraint in dealing with

other delegates who might hold drastically opposing views. He reminds them that this is a meeting of peace, not another stage in the war between the anarchs and the elders.

He has offered to host the gathering because, while he ostensibly follows the principles of the Masquerade, he is not officially affiliated with either the Camarilla or the anarchs. His neutrality during the conflict has made it possible for him to offer a safe place for the convention and he intends to make certain that nothing happens to violate the truce. Father Samuel finishes his audience with a warning that individuals who prove obstructive or who succumb to frequent frenzies will be staked between sessions in order to ensure the safety of the other delegates. He wishes the characters well and dismisses them so that he may greet the next arrivals.

FATHER SAMUEL, ABBOT OF THE ABBEY OF THE SACRED CROWN, PRINCE OF SOUTHAMPTON

An ascetic, yet handsome, Toreador, Father Samuel has surrounded himself with a coterie of fanatically devoted monks — ghouléd retainers — as well as a small army of soldiers to protect him from his enemies. He retains his power and influence in Cainite society through acting as a diplomat and offering his monastery as a haven for Cainites in the area. He has allied himself with the other Cainite princes in England and hopes that this will help him avoid his enemies (Cainite or clerical).



Samuel is a tall, gaunt man who appears to be in his late 40s. His pallor accentuates the ascetic features of his face — thin lips, piercing black eyes and high cheekbones. His dark hair is styled in the monk's tonsure. He wears dark-brown robes secured by a braided rope belt. Despite his deliberately understated appearance, Samuel's fine bones and aristocratic bearing give him a handsome, almost regal look. While his clothing suits a monk, it is made of fine materials and his rope belt is actually made of twisted strands of fine linen.

RUNNING THE CONVENTION OF THORNS

The Convention of Thorns takes place over six evenings, from October 18 (when the gathering is called to order) to October 23 (when the articles of peace are proclaimed to the gathering). The following outline should help in organizing the events of the convention. Storytellers should feel free to exercise the snapshot technique to avoid too much repetition for troupes that do not wish to roleplay every debate at the convention.

• **October 18: First Meeting** — Eleanor de Valois (the moderator chosen for the convention) explains the issues to the assembled delegates. The Founders are introduced by name and clan. The predominant attitude of most of those attending is of cautious probing of the enemy position while readying for an attack. There is a feeling that violence is barely restrained and the smell of suspicion and the barest hint of trust permeates the meeting. Afterward, the attendees break up into smaller groups to discuss what they have heard. As each group relaxes its stance somewhat, the individual members become more willing to speak with strangers.

THE FIRST MEETING

The Convention of Thorns officially begins the night after the characters arrive. The first meeting takes place on the evening of October 18, in the courtyard of the abbey (which is the only space large enough — aside from the church — to accommodate all the delegates, their retainers and interested observers). All seven of the Founders are present as well as Myca Vykos and other leaders of the Anarch Movement. This is perhaps the single largest gathering of Cainites to date, comprising at least 50 individuals representative of all the clans, factions and geographical regions.

Once all the delegates have gathered together (with the Camarilla supporters arranged on one side of the courtyard and the anarchs on the other), a slender young woman steps up to the speaker's dais located in the center of the courtyard. Introducing herself as Eleanor de Valois of Clan Brujah, she declares the formal opening of the Convention of Thorns and outlines the three issues that face the delegates. In a clear voice that commands the attention of all who hear it, she delivers the following statement of the aims of the convention. Storytellers may use the text as given or adapt it as necessary.

"The first decision we face regards the return to the fold of those Cainites who have declared themselves anarchs. How should this be accomplished in a peaceful fashion? Shall the

beliefs that led to this state of war between generations be allowed to proliferate, and if so, how can this happen without a return to bloodshed? Should Blood Oaths be required of those who recant their rebellion and, if so, who should hold those oaths? What guarantees shall the Camarilla accept to assure the future behavior of those formerly in rebellion?

"There can be only one authority among Cainites, and that authority is the Camarilla. Your presence here testifies to your acquiescence to that fact." (Murmurs of dissent become audible from the anarch delegation at this statement, since some of them have actually come to express their disapproval of the proceedings.)

"Should a general amnesty be granted to those whose actions led others astray, or should the leaders surrender themselves to the judgment of the Camarilla's Founders and their Archons?

"The actions of Clan Assamite require stern measures to curtail." (She nods in the direction of the four Assamite delegates who stand apart from the main groupings.) "The commission of diablerie practiced by their members must stop. Recently, the Camarilla has discovered the location of their stronghold of Alamut, an action that has convinced Clan Assamite to engage in negotiations as to their status within Cainite society.

"Should Clan Assamite remain independent of the Camarilla and refuse to subject themselves to its rulings? If they do remain apart, how may we ensure that their practices pose no future threat to us? We must seek some sanction or control over the Assamites if they do not join with the Camarilla.

"Finally, the Founders of the Camarilla," she indicates the seven individuals led by Hardestadt, "have been acting as Justicars for the Camarilla and taking on assistants to act as their Archons. Shall this system of governance continue? If we agree to abide by the adjudication of a council of Justicars, shall the current holders of that office remain in their positions? If not, who will be the new Justicars? How will we select future Justicars and what will be their duties and responsibilities? Will we appoint a council to oversee the Justicars or shall those justices serve as the highest authority of the Camarilla?

"For the next four nights, we shall hear arguments on all sides of these issues. Your voices are welcome in peaceful discussion. We shall convene every evening for a formal accounting of the previous night's discussions. Afterward, you may talk among yourselves and attempt to reach a consensus. By this time, five nights hence, on the 23rd night of October, in the year of Our Lord 1493, we must reach a decision on each of the issues presented. Thank you for your attendance."

When she has finished speaking, Eleanor de Valois leaves the dais and returns to her place in the retinue of the Founders. The gathering breaks up into smaller groups as Cainites on both sides of the conflict attempt to find allies for their viewpoints and begin the process of canvassing the other attendees.

• **October 19: Second Meeting** — The results of the previous night's discussions are summarized for the assembly. Myca Vykos makes an impassioned speech in favor of the goals of the anarchs: "For too long have we suffered the yoke of the elders'

HACELDEMA

outdated rulership. We are not children to be forever told to mind our elders and punished when we step outside the bounds they consider proper. We are thinking beings, *powerful* beings, and if we are not accorded what we deserve, we will take it by force."

Hardestadt counters with an insistence on the necessity for discipline within the clans and demands a return to the hierarchy of rule by age and generation: "Let pups like Vykos yelp and posture. It is age and wisdom that deserve to rule. He is fit only to bow down before us, beg our forgiveness for daring to question his betters and receive a good whipping for his impertinence! We are here because we have already crushed the anarchs' insignificant movement. They have sued for peace for they cannot stand against us. There will be punishment, for the anarchs have acted like unruly and destructive children. Still, they are our childer and we shall forgive them — but only when they agree to proper restitution and to cease their foolish rebellion!"

He goes on vociferously about his disdain for mortals: "Some here have argued that we are met together because we fear what the mortals may do to us with their Inquisition and superstitions. Some otherwise intelligent Cainites counsel that we ought to take responsibility for leading the mortals. I, for one, shall not! Why should we better the lives of mortals? Do they not hound me and strike at me at every turn? I owe them nothing but ashes and spite and would not stoop to help them even if we all became safer for it!"

• **October 20: Third Meeting** — After a summary of the previous night's progress, Husayn al Fatin, a delegate from the Assamites, speaks for his clan. A heated discussion follows, during which Mistress Fanchon and the other Tremere, in particular, call for strong measures to prevent the continued practice of diablerie. Myca Vykos and some of his anarch companions greet her words with derisive comments in oblique reference to Tremere's diablerie of Saulot and the Giovanni ascension within the Cappadocian clan.

While the battle of words rages, the anarch leader Tyler bursts from the assembled delegation in a desperate attempt on Hardestadt's unlife. The gathered anarchs rally and issue a collective, impassioned cry, supporting Tyler's gesture with all the fervor they drew from her attack on him a century ago. However, this assault fails. She comes at him from the flank, throwing back the hood of her cloak and brandishing a pair of pistols as Hardestadt dismantles Vykos' argument. Leaping toward him, she screams out, "May your arrogant, black heart be sundered and your soul sucked down to Hell, Hardestadt! And this time, *stay dead!*" Tyler thrusts both guns close to his heart and fires them. Two loud cracks of sound issue forth as each *handgonne* flashes. Hardestadt staggers back and falls under the impact of two pistol balls entering his chest from a foot away. Smoke boils upward. At first, Tyler is overjoyed, believing that this new weaponry has killed her enemy. The Camarilla assembly stands shocked; things seem to move in slow motion. The characters may take actions, but Tyler manages to elude their grasp.

After a moment, Hardestadt sits up clutching his wounded chest. While hurt, he is obviously in no danger of Final Death. Tyler curses and flees the hall. A few delegates start to give chase only to find themselves (along with the characters) blocked from following her by a line of anarchs. If the characters wish to speak with Tyler later, they may make arrangements to do so through one of the anarchs accompanying Myca Vykos. Unfortunately for Patricia, *handgonnes* are so new to Cainites that she had no idea they would have so little effect on Hardestadt; they're very effective against mortals!

• **October 21: Fourth Meeting** — A statement of progress opens this gathering. The ancient Malkavian Unmada calls for cooperation and warns of disaster should this initiative fail: "I foresee a rain of blood and fire that consumes us all if we do not unite. My clan, the Children of Malkav, shall perish utterly if we do not make common cause with those who seek to end senseless warfare and destruction. We must overcome our blind, unreasoning hatred for those different from ourselves and accept our childer back into our hearts, lest we destroy them and destroy ourselves by our unthinking cruelty to our younger brethren."

An open forum provides the characters with an opportunity to make their statements to the entire group of delegates. (Outside this chance to speak, characters who wish to address the convention must petition for the right to do so and be added to the roster of speakers. Players who make that effort but who fail to organize their thoughts into coherent and somewhat brief arguments should be shouted down by impatient delegates or asked to surrender the floor to other speakers.)

Rafael de Corazon shares his vision of the importance of the Masquerade and the necessity of the Camarilla. At first, he is ridiculed and almost forced to step down. His impassioned arguments gain converts, however, and the Masquerade is adopted: "The Fifth Tradition commands us: Thou shalt *not* reveal thy true nature to those not of the blood. Thou shalt *not* reveal thy true nature to those not of the blood! Do not seek to drag me from the speaker's stair! You elders, who seek to force me to silence, *you* are to blame for abandoning our sacred traditions. It is your fault that mortals seek to slay us, reviling us for our excesses! You are to blame as well, Hardestadt. *We* are to blame. We have lost our claim of blood by living so conspicuously among mortals. Living openly among mortals has been our ruin! We violated the spirit of the Fifth Tradition, and we pay for it in blood!"

"How many of us have lost a childe or an ally to the fires of the Inquisition? How many have had to flee, leaving behind everything we valued? Mortals are too numerous and too jealous of our power. They will try to destroy us as long as they know of us. We must hide from their envious eyes. From this time forward, we must no longer live openly, but remain hidden, pretending to be no more than mortals when we must interact with them. We must adopt a Masquerade, pretend that we are not vampires, ridicule the idea that there ever were such creatures as ourselves. This is the only way we will survive the Inquisition's incursions. We must disappear if we are to remain in existence."

At the end of the discussion, Etrius and several senior Tremere excuse themselves to begin the ritual that will prevent the Assamites from drinking Cainite blood. If the Storyteller wishes, rumors may circulate that anarchs or the Assamites themselves may try to disrupt or taint the ritual, making it necessary to place a guard on the Tremere. Should the characters volunteer, they might be assigned one shift (about 4 hours) worth of duty. It is up to the Storyteller whether that shift is boring or whether someone actually is out to disrupt the Tremere. (It might even be Tzimisce trying to embarrass the Tremere by befouling their ritual.)

• **October 22: Fifth Meeting** — Durga Syn is already in place on the speaker's platform when the rest of the delegates arrive. She makes the case for non-intervention: "Rafael de Corazon has proposed that we hide from mortals, making them forget that we ever existed. Many of you now agree with him that this is the best course of action. Others among you think we should crush mortal opposition. I would argue for a third course. Let us leave mortals alone. We shall not hide from them, nor shall we seek to revel in their fear of us. You who want to compel their obedience, what fools you are! You cannot even govern your own childer, much less thousands of mortals. And you who seek to bury the knowledge of our kind and hide your faces from mortal scrutiny, you, too, are fools. Once known, always ready to be rediscovered. But play your game, indulge in your Masquerade. It shall serve you — for awhile — and be all the worse when our true nature is revealed. No mask lasts forever. Take care, lest when the Masquerade is over, the mortals hunt you again — not because they fear you, but because you have lied to them and made them look foolish. I call for leaving the mortals alone, but I am only one woman and a Ravnos at that. No doubt you tired of listening to Gypsies long ago."

The issue of Justicars and their succession takes up the first half of the discussion once Durga Syn has left the platform. The delegates make their final arguments to the assembly and cast their votes. The attendees disperse, with some taking part in drafting the Treaty of the Convention of Thorns and others (the unrepentant anarchs) finalizing their plans for a statement of protest. The Tremere continue casting their ritual.

• **October 23: Sixth Meeting** — The gathering listens to the reading of the treaty. (See Scene Seven.) The delegates who agree to its terms sign the document. The Tremere continue the ritual begun three nights before, ending just before sunrise. The convention ends.

INTERLUDES

The characters may now mingle with the other delegates. While the characters may wish to engage the Founders in conversation, these bastions of the Camarilla are unlikely to alter their beliefs to any significant degree. (Further, unless the characters are particularly well known, the Founders have little to say to them; they're simply not in the same league.) Likewise, Myca Vykos remains adamantly opposed to the surrender of the anarchs, though he may attempt to enlist anarch characters in his plans for a "grand spectacle" meant



HACELDEMA



TRANSYLVANIA CHRONICLES II

to embarrass the elders of the Camarilla and demonstrate the anarchs' contempt for that organization. He proves uncommunicative to characters who attempt to convince him to accept the Camarilla's authority over him.

Other Cainites in attendance may change outlooks because of their interactions with the characters or may influence the characters' own opinions by the strength of their arguments. Storytellers should use any or all of the following vignettes (and feel free to invent their own Storyteller characters and scenes) during the meeting breaks to provide the characters with a good sampling of the arguments held by the delegates to the Convention of Thorns. Paraphrasing the speeches will make them sound more natural, and Storytellers should attempt to work in these vignettes naturally rather than present them one after the other like set pieces. Reading through the characters in Chapter Five should give Storytellers better insight into many of the delegates and allow them to be presented via appropriate scenes rather than simply walking up to unfamiliar Cainites (the characters) and conversing with them.

THE PEACEMAKERS

A pair of delegates, one wearing the distinctive robes of a Dominican priest and the other dressed in the clothes of a French nobleman, approach the characters after the first meeting on October 18. The priest introduces himself as Father Jean-Marc of Clan Toreador; he indicates that the noble accompanying him is his cousin, Gilbert d'Harfleur, of Clan Ventruue. The two wish to discuss some of the issues with Cainites they have not met before. The characters fit that bill. If the characters seem reasonable and look as though they support the Camarilla, Jean-Marc and Gilbert come in the spirit of solidarity. They hope to find like-minded Cainites who also share their views on protecting humankind from vampiric domination. Should the characters appear to be anarchs, the priest and the warrior-monk want to sound them out, discover their grievances and urge them to accept the peace initiative so that all may benefit. They do not tell the characters they are Archons unless asked. Father Jean-Marc opens the discussion:

"Our sires Embraced us in an emergency, and we have determined not to allow our clan differences to alter our previous ties of blood. We have come here in the entourage of the Founders and seek to garner your support for a lasting peace among Cainites."

Gilbert nods to the characters, greeting them respectfully if distantly.

"My cousin and I hope that we can convince you to approach the matters under discussion in the spirit of charity and compassion — regardless of whether you side with the anarchs or with the Camarilla. We have a need for the mortals whose lives frequently depend on our whims. They should be allowed to enjoy what we have been denied without fear of being taken in the night to serve our appetites. Too many of them have died while we sort out our political differences. The time has come to put an end to all that and to seek a different forum for arguing our beliefs."

Father Jean-Marc asks if any of the characters feel the need to confess their sins. "I believe God has not totally abandoned us and that there is still some hope of ultimate redemption. I

remain a priest, and have found my faith strengthened since my Embrace. Before that, I sought power and influence; now I seek merely to do God's will, for there is no other reason I can divine for my continued existence."

If any of the characters wish to take advantage of Father Jean-Marc's offer, he can take them to the church and hear their confession. He does not press them on the matter, however. If any characters come from Templar backgrounds, they may recognize Gilbert's mannerisms and realize that the Cainite belongs to that now extinct order of militant monks.

THE PRICE OF HONOR

A dark-skinned Cainite approaches the characters after the meeting on October 20th and introduces himself as Husayn al Fatin, a member of the Assamite Clan. If characters have had a prior association with him (see **Transylvania by Night**), his greeting takes into account the circumstances under which they last met. If he and the characters parted as friends or under terms of respect, he addresses them amicably, as potential sympathizers. Otherwise, he couches his arguments with wariness and prefaces his speech with a request that the characters preserve an open mind in listening to him.

Asking for a minute of their time, he outlines his clan's position with regard to the "Assamite question."

"This talk of the behavior of my clan suffers from gross exaggeration. We but carry out a necessary service for those of our kind who do not wish to soil their hands with Cainite blood. Our traditions are both ancient and honorable, and we govern ourselves with rigorous discipline in order to prevent spurious and unauthorized killings. We do not wish to submit to an authority we neither recognize nor comprehend. Can you blame us for exacting payment in blood for the services we perform? We consider such a price appropriate to the risks we take as well as a means of paying respect to the essence of a worthy adversary.

"Our position is, however, precarious. The survival of our clan depends on our willingness to accept the terms dictated by this gathering. I ask your assistance in our attempt to gain the most favorable decision possible. Would you have us placed under the rule of those who might order us to serve their own purposes? Or would it not be preferable for us to conduct our own affairs unaffected by the politics and concerns of the Camarilla? There may come a time when you may need the services of one of my clan. Would you rest content with the suspicion that one of your enemies might hold power over us?

"We do not oppose your Camarilla. We wish, however, to remain outside it. Do you truly desire to have an army of holy slayers under the command of your masters? Think on my words and consider carefully before you voice your opinions before the assembly."

If the characters seem sympathetic to the Assamite cause, Husayn continues to explain his clan's position, emphasizing the regulations that govern accepting contracts for assassination and the absolute discipline of the clan members. He does not reveal any of the clan's secrets to anyone other than a fellow Assamite.

Before he finishes his speech, however, a second Assamite joins Husayn and adds his opinion. Karif is a very angry delegate. While he joins the discussion in an attempt to make other Cainites understand that they are to blame for the Assamites' attacks upon them, he does not truly believe that his words will even be understood, much less cause any Western Cainite to agree with his point of view.

"Forgive my interruption, honored delegates, but I could not hear such weak phrases voiced by my clanmate without adding my own exhortations to his pitiful pleas for understanding. Understand this; I have come here under duress and do not intend to accept the rulings of this gathering of infidels as binding." He pauses and surveys the characters, as if marking their faces for future recall. "My name is Karif al Numair. I have served my clan faithfully for seven centuries and do not intend to see the walls of our holy fortress crumble under the weight of foreign demands. It was not we who first began the fight, but you Europeans who came into our lands, slaughtering our people in the name of your God. We but respond to that offense.

If you do not wish to become the next victims of your leaders' shameless desire for unlimited power over all Cainites, you will support our insistence on complete and unfettered freedom to conduct our affairs. You will demand that the Camarilla withdraw their forces from our lands and seek not to meddle in our traditions or customs. There can be no compromise between your rulers and our clan." He delivers a scathing look at Husayn and strides back to the other two Assamite delegates.

Husayn shrugs. "Even such as we have our dissidents and our firebrands," he says. "Let us hope that your Camarilla understands the dangers it faces in dealing too harshly with us."

THE ETERNAL CYNIC

Unless the characters have noticed him before and sought him out, sometime after the meeting of October 21, a Nosferatu delegate approaches the characters — although he appears no more monstrous than the abbey's monk to the characters due to his masking of his true appearance through the Obfuscate Discipline.

He may approach them because of something they said during the meeting or because he overheard them talking among themselves while he was Obfuscated. He may simply be curious who they are and from where they come.

The Nosferatu introduces himself as Federico. Characters may note that he appears to be one of the Archons traveling with the Founders. If they ask, he claims Josef von Bauren as his patron. While Federico does serve the Founders, he has a mind of his own and is not hesitant about expressing his opinions. Although he acts as an agent provocateur for the Founders, he also understands the anger of the anarchists at the excesses of their elders. He attempts to assess the characters' positions and, if they are supporters of the Camarilla, to caution them against placing too much power in the hands of the Justicars.

"The Founders make pretty speeches, don't they? I have heard Hardestadt wax poetical about his achievements and we all just heard de Corazon praise the brilliance of his Masquerade. So much talking, so little said. Still, it's better than no organization at all. In my mortal life, I was a soldier — a mercenary, in fact. I understand the need for order and method even in our sordid existence. But good soldiers also know how to think for themselves. I support the Camarilla, but I do not blindly subject myself to its whims. Test everything by your own standards before you accept anything. Listen to the anarchs as well. They have a point to make. We cannot enjoy the loyalty of our childer and use them as pawns in our petty schemes. We cannot prey haphazardly upon mortals without diminishing what is left of our humanity. The Founders have made a start, but do not expect them to carry the entire burden of responsibility. That way lies slavery."

If the characters are anarchs, he seeks to assuage their anger by counseling patience and subtlety in their actions.

"I did not ask for the gift of immortality; it was forced upon me to create a diversion so that my sire could survive. I have never forgiven her for that, but I have come to terms with my hellish fate. Do not permit yourselves to act in anger. You have made your point by demonstrating your refusal to cower before your elders. They have called this meeting out of respect for your position. They may posture and insist that they have won, but yours is the true victory. Never again will they disregard their progeny, thanks to your struggle for recognition. If the terms are harsh, remember that they are a measure of your strength — not your weakness.

"There are many ways to voice your opposition; consider the subtle ones first, for they will stand you in good stead in the long years to come. I have heard rumors that some anarchs plan a demonstration of their contempt. I would advise you to stay well away from such a blatant bid for attention. It can only hurt your cause and jeopardize everything you have worked so hard for. Do not give in to your baser impulses. Fate has made us monsters, but we need not submit willingly to our inner Beasts. Then again, who am I that you can trust me? Do what you must do. Just bear in mind that your own leaders are as hungry for power as any of the Founders. Ask yourselves who really profits in any precipitous action you might take."

CONTAINED REBELLION

At the after-meeting interlude on October 19th, a young woman seeks out the characters — particularly if any are female or if they have made any statements in support of the anarchs. She wants to know their reaction to Myca Vykos' speech. Further, she has noticed (if this is so) that one of the characters seems particularly intelligent or thoughtful and wants to speak with a like-minded or scholarly individual. While she is totally loyal to Federico, Gilbert and Jean-Marc, she sometimes yearns for secular companions who are also versed in philosophy and learning. She introduces herself as Lilika and says that she serves as an Archon for Adana de Sforza.

"They tell me I belong to a clan of philosophers, but I see an unfortunate trend toward bestial violence surfacing among my clanmates. My sympathies lie with those who desire freedom; it is something that is very important to me as well. But I cannot countenance recklessness or rash behavior.

"I had to suffer many indignities in my mortal days from those who did not believe that a woman could be educated, and so I understand the arguments of the anarchs who feel that their sires do not grant them the respect they deserve. Even before my Embrace I sought that respect, and fought for it when newly Embraced as vigorously as the anarchs now do. I have been known to rebel merely for the sake of proving I had the right to disagree with my elders. Still, I would counsel you to prudence.

"I have read the works of the Greek and Roman philosophers as well as the writings of the theologians and mathematicians. All wise thinkers counsel moderation and self-control over sheer self-indulgence and extremes of behavior. I see neither of these virtues arising from anarchy. I do believe that the Camarilla is an attempt at self-control and that the Masquerade provides a way for us to walk the middle road set forth by Aristotle. I hope that you, too, can envision the virtue that lies in containment and responsible government."

FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

Near the final nights of the Convention on October 22nd, a delegate from the anarchs approaches the characters and introduces himself as Gabriel Baruch, a Lasombra. If the characters side with the Camarilla, he graciously acknowledges their position as "victors," while hoping to win them to his cause with one more appeal to the value of diversity.

"I concede that you have amply demonstrated your power to dictate terms for us. However, you must understand that some of us will not bow to your rule. We do not wish to draw an irrevocable line between us, but if we must do so in order to preserve our freedom, we shall take whatever means are necessary to remain outside your authority. There are issues at stake that you do not fully understand; the most important of these is the need to break free of the chains that bind us to the sleeping ones, the ancient founders of our clans. The dangers inherent in an organization like the Camarilla, which attempts to keep younger Cainites enthralled to their elders, cannot be overstated. You are making a mistake if you believe that you will find safety within such an organization of puppets.

"Please, reconsider your motives for quashing the actions of those of us who disagree with you. Whose hidden schemes dictate your actions? Do you know who your masters truly are? Think on it before you destroy your only chance for responsible freedom."

If the characters are anarchs, Gabriel greets them as brothers and sisters. If they still labor under Blood Oaths, he offers them a chance to escape that. While he does not come right out and say it at this point, he also hopes to warn the characters not

to become mixed up in “spectacles” that serve the purposes of others rather than the true aims of freedom (as he sees it).

“They think they can destroy what we have built. We must not let them do so. Prepare yourselves to reject their terms, particularly if they involve surrendering your free will to an oath of blood. Some of us have already agreed that we will not submit ourselves to the decisions of these so-called Justicars. Whose justice do they represent? Not ours, surely, but their own.

“We have learned how to break the Blood Oath, so if you feel you must make a pretense of submission, come to us later and we will rid you of your dependency on the elders of the Camarilla. Loyalty cannot be bought, it must be earned. That is one lesson we have learned during this costly war. The other lesson, of course, is that slaves do not make the most dedicated warriors. We seek to form a brotherhood of free soldiers, ready to do battle against our elders when the time is right. If you believe in freedom and loyalty, find me and my comrades when this farce is finished.”

INVITATION TO A SPECTACLE

If the characters have not already sought out Myca Vykos, he also finds them after the October 22nd meeting. By this time, it should be clear that the Camarilla intends to exact some fairly harsh terms of surrender from the anarchs. Many rebellious Cainites have indicated that they will not accept the decisions of the Camarilla. If the characters support the Camarilla, Myca delivers the following warning to them.

“Do not believe that you have conquered us just because you have brought us to the bargaining table. We are here because we want an end to this stupid struggle, not because we relinquish our belief in the justice of our cause. If you treat us with contempt, we shall answer you in terms you cannot ignore.”

If the characters belong to the Anarch Movement or are sympathetic to its cause, Myca greets them warmly and voices his sentiments as follows.

“What a mockery! These strutting peacocks truly believe that by enforcing their pretense of a Masquerade and ruling the actions of their childer with fists of iron that they can delude the world into ignoring our existence. Or do they think that by pretending to be mortals they can regain that status? They are fools and imbeciles to the last!

“Nevertheless, our cause is lost. They will seek to crush our spirits and tame our actions so that we are once again mere extensions of their power. We will show them how wrong they are. How can we return like lost lambs to the sheepfold when we have known the glory of living like the predators that we are?”

If the characters express interest in Myca’s cause and wish to commit themselves to achieving freedom from the Camarilla, he goes on to explain his plans for the evening after the convention, provided that events go as he expects and the anarchs lose their independence from the elders.

“Some of us are planning a grand spectacle to celebrate our refusal to submit to their decrees. If you wish to join us in exposing the fragility of the Camarilla’s pitiful Masquerade

SPILLING THE BEANS

If they have played through the other parts of the *Transylvania Chronicles*, the characters possess certain information regarding one of the major players of the Jyhad. They may wish to make that information known to the gathering, especially if any delegates mention (as Gabriel does) the sleeping Antediluvians. Should they reveal what they know publicly, the overall reaction from the Camarilla delegates is one of disbelief and derision. How might such lowly pawns come by information they claim is so important?

Though most delegates do indeed react this way, a few realize what it is the characters have stumbled onto. At least one Camarilla delegate (Malthéas, a Ventrue Methuselah monitor pretending to be of much younger generation) notes everything the characters do and say from then on. He attempts to speak with the characters himself while posing as a somewhat provincial younger Cainite named Malthéas who is overawed by all the powerful vampires in attendance — including the characters. Once he latches onto them, he attempts to stay with the characters, acting as if he needs their protection and hanging on whatever advice he can elicit from them.

From this time forward, though they may not realize it, the characters will be under constant surveillance from the Methuselah’s agents. Naturally, those agents may occasionally lose track of the characters, but it is safe to say that the Methuselah will be made aware of any plans and travels the characters make in the future unless they actively notice the spies, seek out the agents and slay them. For now, the Methuselah is content merely to watch; that won’t always be the case. Malthéas is searching for Cainites he can win to his side in case the Jyhad catches up to him. Ostensibly a member of the mysterious Inconnu, he has attempted to influence events in Eastern Europe for centuries from his secret haven in Germany.

Further, certain anarchs who have made it their business to learn everything they can about the Antediluvians will seek out the characters and try to question them about every aspect of what they know. Should the characters prove reluctant, the anarchs (who will shortly become Sabbat) have no qualms about using coercion and brutality. Eventually, they will release the characters, but only in the hope that the characters will learn more in the future. Of course, the characters may always choose to freely share their information too, especially if they join the Sabbat. Conversely, the proto-Sabbat may rue their actions when they discover that the characters are tougher than anticipated; this might provide some welcome relief (a chance for some righteous butt-kicking) from all the talk as the characters show the upstarts what centuries-old Cainites can do when annoyed.

and striking terror into their hearts at the expense of a few mortal lives, come to Silchester tomorrow evening and share in our revels. We will never surrender! We are drinkers of blood and monsters of madness. Tomorrow night, everyone here shall see the truth of our existence revealed in all its horrid splendor.”

FEEDING DURING THE CONVENTION

Unless characters have brought their own vessels with them, they need to feed upon the local mortal population. The towns of Thorns and Silchester are each about an hour’s walk (faster on horseback) from the abbey. Since Father Samuel has given permission for the delegates to make use of the residents of those towns, the characters may do so with little difficulty. Like most peasants and craftsfolk, the villagers tend to remain indoors during the evenings except for visits to the local taverns.

Cainites who visit either the Stinging Thorn in Thorns or the Six, Eight and Eighty in Silchester may find some locals to slake their thirst or they may happen upon a vagrant or beggar. The presence of wild beasts in the countryside makes it possible to excuse a few accidental kills with the pretense of animal attacks, but too many eventually arouse the suspicions of the villagers.

The Storyteller should keep track of the characters’ feeding habits in order to decide if they remain within the bounds of discretion or if their actions betray their supernatural origins. In general, if the characters are not down a few Blood Points or if they feed every evening, they are taking too much. Most delegates feed just often enough to keep themselves from frenzying and to have a small reserve at need. Anarchs who plan to stage a protest will try to keep themselves as full as possible. A delegation of concerned villagers may visit the abbey to voice their concern over the number of “disappearances” of townsfolk, adding a little excitement and suspense to the Convention.

SCENE FIVE: PEACE AND RETRIBUTION

This scene takes place on the evening of October 23, 1493 and depicts the actual outcome of the debate. The issues have been decided and all that remains is the formal announcement of those decisions and their implementation. Eleanor de Valois reads aloud the document known as The Treaty of the Convention of Thorns and places the parchment upon a table for the delegates to sign, thus acknowledging their acceptance of its decisions.

The terms of the Convention require all anarchists who agree to end hostilities to drink the blood of all the elders present (including that of the characters, if they qualify as Camarilla elders). If the characters are anarchists, they must decide if they will drink the mixed blood of the elders or refuse and remain in rebellion.

TRANSYLVANIA CHRONICLES II

Additionally, the elders explain that the Assamite Clan has been ordered to undergo a Thaumaturgical ritual to prevent their practice of diablerie. If one of the characters is a Tremere, she may have already participated in the group ritual that curses the Assamites who agree to it. Should a character be an Assamite, she must decide before the ending of the ritual if she will accept the curse placed upon her clan or break with them in favor of continuing rebellion along with those anarchists who refuse to be reigned in.

ENDING THE CONVENTION OF THORNS

After the signing of the treaty and the cursing of the Assamites, the delegates disperse. Since the ceremonies have taken up most of the night, most Cainites plan to leave the following evening.

If characters succeed in a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 7), they notice that not all of the anarchist delegates were present for the signing and the enforced drinking of elder vitae in token of their submission to the Camarilla. Three or more successes also allow characters to notice that only three of the four Assamite delegates are in attendance; Karif al Numair has disappeared.

Camarilla characters may wish to report their observations to the Founders or one of their Archons. They can find Gilbert, Jean-Marc or Lilika among the delegates, but Federico is nowhere to be seen. The Founders brush aside the characters, busied with sundry affairs, saying that they are aware of the situation and that it is being looked into. Unless the characters are themselves among the Founders’ retinue, they get no further information from the seven elders of the Camarilla.

The three Archons who have previously met the characters are more approachable. They listen carefully to the characters’ information and ask them to remain at hand in case their help is needed. They imply that Federico is exercising his clan’s talent for intrigue and that they expect him to return with more news of what the missing anarchists are up to. Upon hearing the missing anarchists’ account from the Archons, the Founders request that no other delegates leave the grounds of the monastery — on pain of Blood Hunt called on any who disobey.

Dawn approaches; Federico has not yet returned and no other information is forthcoming.

Should the characters wish to join the anarchists in their “grand spectacle,” they are approached by one of the anarchists who ostensibly agreed to Camarilla demands. She asks the characters to accompany her to a hidden refuge, a hidden root cellar beneath a house in Silchester. Once there, the characters may sleep through the day. Scene Eight then becomes either a chance for them to indulge themselves in a full vampiric rampage or to abstain from such an action.

SCENE SIX: THE FIELD OF BLOOD

This scene, rather than the signing of the treaty, forms the true climax of Haceldema and offers a possible explanation for one of history's puzzles — the disappearance of the town of Silchester before the end of the 15th century. Characters who are unrepentant anarchs or who have allied themselves during the convention with the still-rebellious anarch delegates awaken in the root cellar and are briefed by Myca Vykos. He explains that Silchester is to be destroyed as a lesson to the arrogant Camarilla; the characters may choose whether or not they wish to be part of the assault on Silchester. Characters who refuse to participate may try to save those mortals they can or may leave. Should they leave the scene, they later hear a full report of what happened in Silchester that night. Other characters — those not contacted by the anarchs — find out about the attack on the village after it has already begun.

As soon as the sun has set on the evening of October 24th, the anarchs who refused to sign the treaty and who left the Convention of Thorns before the closing ceremonies rampage through the streets of Silchester. These proto-Sabbat vampires run wild through the town, slaughtering any mortal they encounter — in some cases not even bothering to drink their blood in the process. Displaying fangs, claws, red eyes and any other signs of their nature they care to assume (some of the

Tzimisce assume truly horrific visages, while Nosferatu simply show their true faces), the attackers lay waste to the town.

Characters who participate in the savagery automatically lose at least one point from their Humanity or Road scores unless they follow the Road of the Beast or the Road of the Devil. Rampaging characters must also make a Self-Control roll to avoid frenzying, unless they deliberately choose to loose their Beasts. If they are considering joining what eventually becomes the Sabbat, the characters probably won't be too concerned about lost Humanity or succumbing to frenzy anyway.

If the characters belong to the Camarilla, either as elders or as anarchs who have returned to the fold and have accepted the dictates of the Camarilla, their first awareness of what is going on in Silchester comes with the approach of one of the Archons. (The Storyteller should choose the Archon to which the characters are best disposed.)

"Federico has returned from Silchester. The rebels are slaughtering the villagers. Will you help us save what we can of the townspeople?" Without waiting for a response, the Archons leave for the town. The characters may accompany them, if they are quick, or they may proceed on their own to the town.

Alternatively, if the characters have not met the Archons and have not promised their help, a small delegation of townsfolk arrives at the abbey. They appear haggard and desperate. Gasping for breath, they cry out to anyone within earshot that "Devils have come to Silchester and are murder-



HACELDEMA

THE TREATY OF THE CONVENTION OF THORNS

Storytellers may wish to present the document known as the Convention of Thorns to their players as the culmination of this scene. Although the *Storytellers Handbook to the Sabbat* contains the text of the treaty, it is reprinted here for easy access. Props can go a long way in establishing mood in a game. Copying the document onto light brown or cream colored parchment with sepia colored ink may help players feel its reality more fully. The text of the document is as follows:

Many years have passed since the start of our current conflict, now called the Anarch Movement. Be it known that on this night of 23 October, 1493, the Jyhad has ended. The time for self-destruction is over.

This Convention, bound in the Covenant of Caine by sacred vow, represents an unyielding, vigilant truce between the Kindred known unto themselves as the anarchs, the Clan Assamite, and the free-standing Kindred bound under the title of Camarilla. Henceforth, the parties shall be recognized by faction as the Anarchs, the Assamites and the Camarilla.

Each of the parties agrees to the responsibility of maintaining peace. Each shall lay its censures upon any who breach or oppose this sacred Agreement. Accounting will be made of all parties for violations by them to either the letter or the spirit of this Agreement. This document is legally binding under the accepted Lextalionis of all Cainites as it has passed through the ages. All Kindred are entreated to accept and gain pleasure from this peaceful accord.

Be it known that the Anarchs will enjoin with the Camarilla as an accepted part, making it whole. Anarchs are expected to work peacefully to achieve their own ends. They must become defenders of all, and they shall receive full entitlement to all rights and privileges belonging to all Camarilla Kindred. All Anarchs shall be accepted back unto their elders and their formerly denounced clans without any fear of reprisal. Only the most vicious of atrocities shall not be forgiven. These shall stand written for the Justicars to hear within one year, after which all allegations are no longer valid. All Anarchs shall reclaim all remaining and rightful property

confiscated from them. In return they must turn over any war gains taken during the conflict by giving them to their sires or any recognized clan elder.

Know also that if the Anarchs are further warred upon, this open jyhad invalidates their responsibility to maintain peace with their attacker. They may act freely without fear of reprisal from nonactive members of the Camarilla. Anarchs are guaranteed the freedom to act as they please, short of breaching the "Masquerade" imposed for the protection of all Kindred from the kine.

It is also noted that any member of any other self-proclaimed sect must openly declare this before his elders and renounce this relation. Failure to do so will result in the destruction of any deemed guilty. No Kindred may be sent unknowingly to his death by an elder or sire, unless the security of clan or Camarilla outweigh the possible loss of unlife.

From this night forward, the Assamites shall henceforth no longer commit diablerie upon members of other clans. The Assamites must commit themselves to this acceptance by a mark of assurance placed upon them in the form of a thaumaturgical limitation. All members of the Assamites shall become unable to drink freely of the vitae of other Kindred from now unto forever. In addition, the Assamites shall pay the Brujah elders of Spain two thousand pounds of gold, in ransom of the five Assamite elders captured committing diablerie. Also, the Assamites may no longer participate in Blood Hunts.

Be it also known the Assamites are guaranteed complete independence from Camarilla demands. The Assamite fortress, Alamut, shall be free from any further assaults. Assamites are also granted, out of respect of their beliefs, the freedom to commit diablerie within their own clan without restraint and the right to commit diablerie upon all Kindred not recognized as holding membership within the Camarilla.

It is rendered that all parties involved and all showing allegiance to any of these parties shall be held responsible for all aspects of this Convention brought forth here, in the neutral Kingdom of England, outside the hamlet of Thorns, near the town of Silchester. May Caine hold truth and peace for us all.

ing the whole town!" They beg the monks — or anyone they meet — for help for their families and friends.

By the time the characters get to the town, the "sabbats of devils and witches" have been at work for nearly three hours. The town itself is in ruins, fires rage in several of the thatch-roofed houses and spread quickly throughout the streets. Throughout the town, people flee in terror, some of them laden with their possessions, others carrying small children in bundles on their

backs and in their arms. Bestial creatures with glowing red eyes and long fangs and claws pursue helpless victims down the center of the streets, pulling them down and ripping their throats open to drink the blood spurting from severed arteries.

If the characters arrive with the Camarilla contingent, they can try to rescue people, herding them to a safe place outside the town, or they may try to take the attackers into custody or slay them outright

(since reprisals for killing other Cainites are unlikely to be forthcoming under the circumstances). They can recognize Myca Vykos among the ringleaders of the assault (at least until he assumes *zulo* form), but fail to find Gabriel or any of his companions. (Gabriel has already left the area, believing that Myca's scheme is a self-indulgent and wasteful exercise.)

The Storyteller should allow the characters the leeway to engage in combats or conduct rescues according to what they prefer to do. Hardestadt and the other Founders arrive shortly after the characters and join in the attempt to put down the attack. In the end, however, Silchester lies razed and the surviving attackers flee into the night. Among those who escape is Myca Vykos. If the characters participated in the slaughter of Silchester, they may flee along with their allies or be captured by Camarilla forces (though the Storyteller is urged to be fair in allowing the characters a chance to escape). Any Cainites who are captured are executed after painful questioning reveals that they don't know the hiding places of the rest of the unrepentant anarchs.

Hardestadt and Rafael de Corazon take charge of the mortal survivors, using their combined Disciplines to erase the memories of "demons" from the minds of the humans in the interests of preserving the Masquerade. Once that has been accomplished, Hardestadt and Adana de Sforza vow to follow the trail of the attackers. If the characters offer to help, Hardestadt "requests" that they return to their homes and spread word of what the Convention of Thorns has achieved.

With this, he and the other Founders take their leave of Haceldema — the field of blood. The characters are free to obey Hardestadt's command or mount their own hunt for Vykos and the other anarchists. Unless they intend to join the Sabbat, that hunt will be unsuccessful for now. The characters may choose to remain in England for a short time; longer stays elicit visits from English Cainites who really don't need the competition from foreign blood-suckers.

The characters may return home to Transylvania only if they take a southern sea route. The winter of 1493 proves a harsh one, closing the northern sea routes and most of the passes through the land routes. This chapter of Kindred history is closed — for now.







Chapter Four: Prophecy in Amber

What need is there for interpretation when the Scripture is entirely clear? But if it is so clear, why have such eminent men groped so blindly and for so many centuries in such an important matter as our adversaries claim? If there is no obscurity in the Scriptures, what need was there for prophecies in apostolic times?... I hardly know whether, like the gift of healing and the gift of tongues, this gift of prophecy has not also ceased. If it has not ceased, it should be asked to whom it has passed.

— Erasmus, *On Free Will*

STORY BACKGROUND

The year is 1495, two years after the Convention of Thorns. In those years, the world has discovered (via the voyages of Christopher Columbus) that a new passage across the oceans has opened. Thought to be the fabled shortcut to India, it instead leads to a wholly new land that will come to be known as America. Ushering in an age of exploration, this discovery also provides the means for overpopulated Europe to send her native sons and daughters to carve out new lives in the wilderness — a pioneering effort that gives rise to a new spirit of independence and self-reliance.

In like manner, unrepentant anarchs who refused to sign the compact have banded together with other rebellious Cainites into independent roving packs that will eventually call themselves the Sabbat. Officially, the Camarilla denies the existence of the Antediluvians; the rebels who will form the core of the Sabbat dedicate themselves to fighting the Ancients, whose existence the Camarilla denies — a force training for their part in the Jyhad. Despite their differences, both sides vie for copies of the *Book of Nod* hoping to learn the signs leading to Gehenna and, thus, prepare themselves for the final nights.

If the characters played through the previous stories in **Dark Tides Rising** (Book One of the **Transylvania Chronicles**), they already know something most other Kindred don't: Prophecies other than those found in the *Book of Nod* exist. Several of the characters' travails have brought them into contact with those prophecies. One such contact occurred almost 100 years in the past, when the characters attempted to perform a service for Nova Arpad, then prince of Mediasch. Sent to find several pieces of jewelry stolen from her by Gypsies, they likely returned some items, but were unable to recover all of them. Among those they may have brought back were a gold pectoral that contained etched writing the characters were able to translate with a translation key they had (and hopefully still have) in their possession.

Though they did not realize it at the time, another item of jewelry — a companion piece to the pectoral — also contained important information. This jewel, a gold brooch set with a piece of amber, can be opened, though this is not readily apparent without good eyes and a detailed appraisal of the brooch. Inside, on each half, faint scratchings can be seen, but are impossible to read. Removing the amber from its setting and looking through it (flat side down) at the scratchings makes them slightly larger and considerably more legible.

Nova Arpad never realized the brooch opened and it is unlikely that the characters did either. After losing her control of Mediasch and fleeing to the Tremere, Nova found it necessary to sell some of her jewelry. Bought by a Saxon merchant of Brasov, the brooch became one of his greatest treasures. During one of Dracula's punitive actions against the Saxon

A QUICK NOTE ON HISTORICAL ACCURACY

According to history, Dracula was assassinated in 1476, his head cut off and sent to the sultan, and his body interred near the altar in the Snagov Monastery. Then again, Bram Stoker has him undead and active in Borgo Pass in the 1800s. Our story tells the tale of how Dracula became a vampire in the year 1495. How can we reconcile that with history? First, we can't really. Chalk it up to cooler roleplaying opportunities if Dracula is Embraced after the Convention of Thorns. Second, unless your players are dyed-in-the-wool historical accuracy police, they probably won't know the difference and couldn't care less so long as they have a good time playing. If you must go for the rational approach, however, here are two of the best fudges.

The In-Game Explanation

Dracula lived to be Embraced in 1495 because the man killed some 20 years earlier was not really Vlad Dracula, but a flesh-crafted revenant made into his double and sent by Radu to take his place. Learning that his double had just been assassinated, Vlad let people believe he was dead and used the opportunity to give Tzimisce assassins the slip and disappear. Thus, it was the revenant's head that was removed and Dracula survived to be Embraced another day... er, night. Even at over 60 years of age, Dracula's physical condition was fine; as a revenant, the Cainite blood in his veins enabled him to remain active longer than normal mortals.

The Real-World Explanation

Transylvania and Wallachia held to the Orthodox calendar rather than the Roman one. Discrepancies encompassing decades were not uncommon during a time when communication was often a matter of getting a letter through within several months time — if it got through at all. Now, this is actually a double fudge, since the Orthodox and Roman calendars were used mainly to schedule Church functions (such as the date when Easter occurred) rather than having any difference of opinion regarding what month or year it was. Chances are, though, that your players won't know the difference between a secular and a canonical calendar. If the explanation satisfies them, that's the only thing that matters.

It is still better than the treatment accorded Dracula's wife, the princess who threw herself into the river (an event lionized by Coppola's movie *Bram Stoker's Dracula*) rather than face the Turks she believed were on her doorstep. History records no name for her. In the movie, she was given the moniker Elizabeta and players familiar with the film may be surprised to find that we call her Livia. Since nobody knows one way or the other, we decided to go with the name Livia because it is a Romanian

merchants, Followers of Set whom Dracula never suspected were there “liberated” much of the merchants’ wealth. Some of that wealth was funneled into the Wallachian prince’s coffers, but the Setites kept the brooch. Studying it, the Setites found its properties, but could not discover the language in which it was written. Thus, the brooch has lain forgotten in a Setite stronghold for many decades. Now it becomes once more an important piece in the ongoing Jyhad as the Setites give it and a companion tome they discovered in Egypt to Zelios in an attempt to influence the great Nosferatu architect.

The following story assumes that the characters played through prior portions of the **Transylvania Chronicles** — specifically through the scenarios in **Dark Tides Rising** in which the characters uncovered the translation key in the tower at Tihuta Pass and the one in which their sires sent the characters to recover Nova Arpad’s jewelry from the Gypsies who stole it. If they did not play through those stories, the Storyteller will have to make some major adjustments to this scenario. She will need to provide some means for the group to translate the markings inside the brooch and to find some reason why Zelios would ask the characters for their help and offer them the brooch and book as payment.

THE REAL DRACULA: THE ROMANTIC DRACULA

While the Saxon merchants that Dracula bedeviled and the boyars of Transylvania and Wallachia feared the wrath of the Son of the Dragon, many of the common people cheered him as their champion and savior. Tales of Dracula’s cold cruelty and stories of his great intelligence and undeniable personal charm exist side by side.

So which Dracula will the characters meet? That depends on their attitude going into the story. Vlad Dracula grew to maturity in the climate of myriad convoluted political games played out by the canny double-dealing of his grandfather and father. Both made alliances with Christian and Turk alike; both reneged on such alliances when it suited them. Dracula was sent as a hostage to the Sultan Murad’s court as a young boy where he was subjected to the Turks’ cruelly sophisticated practice of older men training young boys. The older men took them as their lovers and trained them for warfare and leadership. As a foreign (and Christian) hostage, Vlad was treated more harshly than was normally the case. His experiences undoubtedly molded his interest in tortures such as impalement and dismemberment (common practices among the Turks). Yet, he also learned much concerning warfare, philosophy, rulership and the arts of love from the Turks.

Dracula is not a cartoon figure, but a complex, deeply passionate man, a man driven to claim the throne he sees as rightfully his, to expel the Turks from his homeland and to punish the boyars who murdered his father and brother. To maintain the power to rule, he knows he must keep others off balance. Thus, he plays games with people, seeking to trap them with words. Those unfortunate enough to stumble beneath his rapier-thrust questioning find themselves firmly seated atop the end of a blunted



PROPHECY IN AMBER

stake, sliding down toward the ground as their entrails are slowly pierced. Others who evince wit or acknowledge that Dracula is the absolute ruler of all who enter his domain, fare well. To those guests, Dracula shows his great personal charm and magnetism, conversing at length with them and offering them the best food, wine and comforts of his castle. Dracula tolerates no disrespect or challenge to his rule. Those who offer him none should find their personal interactions with the prince stimulating and no more dangerous than, say, stepping between two striking cobras.

One detail the characters may not know is that Dracula is part of the Basarab revenant family. Born with the blood of Cainites in his veins, the Prince of Wallachia has always been stronger than normal, more ferocious in battle, driven by greater passions and harder to kill than a normal human. Because he was sent from his family before his heritage was explained to him, Dracula does not know what he is. He discovers how powerful he can become only when he drinks the blood of a captured Cainite.

DRACULA LATER

Since the death of his wife Livia, Dracula has also been a very lonely figure. He seeks companionship from one who can truly understand him — and who better than a vampire, a creature whose arrogance and loneliness match that of the Dragon's son? Unlike those he rules, Dracula is sophisticated and sybaritic in his lovemaking. He is not constrained by the morals that govern Transylvanian peasants; instead, he takes his pleasure from whoever attracts him, be they male or female. Should one of the characters stimulate his interest, the prince of Wallachia seeks to promote a romance between them. Whether his attentions prove welcome or not depends on the character or the player.

Dracula's main concern at this stage in his life is his quest for the immortality the Embrace brings. Coached by Durga Syn, Dracula knows that he wants to become a vampire, yet he wants no entanglements that will force him to cede his power to his sire. He desires independence from both a Blood Bond and the new Camarilla. Should he become romantically involved with one of the characters, Dracula becomes uncertain: He wants his lover to provide the blood that will change him, yet he does not wish to jeopardize what they have together. Dracula's pleas for blood and the Embrace coupled with his insistence that there be none of the usual sire-child bonds may destroy whatever fragile love has developed between the two. Whether the character and the Son of the Dragon continue their love affair after Dracula becomes a vampire is up to the player and Storyteller. Eventually, as all things do over time, the love may fade. Conversely, it may remain and become one of the underlying story threads woven through the **Transylvania Chronicles**. Regardless, Dracula eventually leaves his lover and strikes out on his own.

Needless to say, this is a very progressive concept, and not to the tastes of every troupe. Use Dracula as a romantic element only if your players and their coterie seem to be receptive to the idea. Otherwise, just leave it out rather than risk offense or discomfort.

TRANSYLVANIA CHRONICLES II

ACT III: IN THE DRAGON'S DEN (1495)

Ideally, the Storyteller should set up Act III in a short prelude before beginning the actual story. The prelude takes the form of a messenger bearing a letter informing the characters that Zelios wishes to meet with all of them in Brasov (deep within the bowels of Bran Castle, actually). If the characters are already together, they need merely travel to the castle and follow Zelios' directions to enter. Should they not be together, however, having a letter sent to each character allows them to gather at the castle and enter without wasting a great deal of time on travel and non-essential distractions. On the other hand, if each player deserves (or wants) a little individual attention for her character, she can now have that through a short, customized vignette that occurs on her way to meet her allies, courtesy of the Storyteller.

Whether as a group or individually, the characters receive the following letter, brought by paid messenger:

My Allies,

You have helped me in the past and now I find that I must beg your indulgence again. You well know of the ritual I have sought to complete in order to hold the demon Kupala from rising. In recent months, I have discovered that a key to completing the ritual lies elsewhere. I would ask the favor of your assistance in bringing this site into alignment with those already marked.

For your trouble, I offer the following: two items of exceptional beauty and value that also contain information related to the golden translation key you found so many years ago in Tihuta Pass. I give them to you freely in hopes that you may find them useful.

Please come in secret to Bran Castle above the city of Brasov, where I await you. Come to the east facing of the castle and there you will find a gallowss tree that grows over a forgotten barrow. Remove the stone that covers the earthen tomb — this passage leads to a stairway that descends into the rock below the castle itself. Follow the stairway until you reach the bottom and you shall find me there, where I have constructed a temporary haven.

I look forward to meeting with you again.

Yours,

Zelios of Clan Nosferatu, Master Mason

SCENE ONE: GUESTS IN DEATH

Bran Castle is the quintessential spooky Transylvanian castle. Dozens of pictures of it abound and it is usually (incorrectly) identified as Dracula's castle for 20th-century tourists. A picture of the structure's soaring towers among the Carpathian peaks can set the scene for the players more effectively than any description. Such views are readily available in guidebooks on the region.

Once at the castle, the characters need only follow the instructions in Zelios' letter to successfully find the barrow and reach his hidden haven. If the characters approach secretly, no one among the small crew manning the castle notices them.

The characters must provide some sort of illumination or have the Protean Discipline Witness of Darkness to see once within the barrow-haven. Chancing the stairs without a light source is possible, but certainly disorienting. It feels as though the stairs wind down forever into the dank darkness, with a great yawning gulf open to the characters' right side. Small stones kicked into that gulf seem to fall and fall with no sound, while a chill breeze wafts upward from far below. Several stairs are badly in need of repair and should characters not have some way of seeing, they will need to roll Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 7) at least twice while descending. This will need to be done in order to stay on the stairs rather than tumbling off the open side and falling several hundred feet to the chamber below. Those who fall sustain so much damage that they will probably be in torpor for a long, long time. (See *Falling* in either **Vampire** rulebook.) Of course, any character who can change into a bat has plenty of time to do so....

As they near the bottom, the characters can discern a faint light from below. It is provided by dozens of candles in glass holders. They are set haphazardly around the large chamber in which the stairs end. Seated at a plank table watching the characters descend is Zelios. The master mason is surrounded by what looks like a moving fur carpet and table covering. Closer examination reveals these to be hundreds of rats.

Zelios calls out to the characters, "Have you dined? My little companions are full of vitae they are willing to share, should you so desire."

Should any characters wish to feed, they may catch enough rats to gain two Blood Points worth. If no one wants to imbibe, Zelios makes a silent gesture and the rats disperse.

After pleasant greetings, Zelios explains why he asked the characters to come.

"I have recently discovered another key point in my grand design to bind the demon Kupala. It lies not in Transylvania, but Wallachia, in a castle once occupied by Vlad Tepes, the mortal prince of that land. Although he is rumored to be dead from an assassin's arrows, I believe the Son of the Dragon may yet live, and that he once again resides within the walls of Arghes Castle.

I have heard from reliable sources that you have had dealings with this prince once before and are therefore known to him. Those same informants have warned me that it is quite dangerous for strangers to approach the former Wallachian prince for he sees all such as enemies, impaling them first and questioning their motives later. It is my hope then that you will consent to travel to his keep and persuade Dracula to allow you to place runes upon his foundation stones similar to those you have emplaced elsewhere.

"While I do not know if you parted as enemies, I hope that my offer of a future favor extended to the prince and this small coffer of gold given to him as surety of that promise will persuade him to agree. Perhaps he may even agree if you tell him the purpose of the runes. They are there to protect him and all of us from the ravages of Kupala. Then again, I have heard that Dracula is called the Son of the Devil as often as he is called Son of the Dragon. If he has infernal connections, it would be quite dangerous to explain the runes. You must be the judge of the truth and decide what you will tell him. I would counsel against attempting to place them there secretly, for I have learned that an ancient wise woman tells him her visions of the future and you would be discovered. That would go ill for you indeed.

"In return, I offer you two treasures. A brooch of amber set in gold and a golden tome."

Zelios pulls forth a brown leather pouch just large enough to fit in the palm of a hand. Inside the pouch, wrapped in a small square of silk is a piece of jewelry. Made of gold, the oval brooch holds a large golden amber at its center. Set into the gold, the amber has been smoothly polished into a dome on the upper side, while the underside is flat.

Though it is not evident, the brooch opens into two halves. Unless the characters look for such an opening, they will not notice it until after speaking with Zelios.

Zelios displays the gold and amber brooch to the characters.

"Curiously, this jewel was once owned by Nova Arpad. My informants tell me that you once recovered it for her when it was taken by Gypsies. When she found it necessary to sell some of her jewelry, the brooch became the property of a merchant of Brasov, and from there, found its way into my hands.

"You will understand that I speak with many worthy scholars and so have learned much lore regarding this treasure. Perhaps you already know of it, but should you not, I repeat it here for your pleasure.

"I call your attention to the seam along the side of the brooch. If prodded, the brooch opens into two sides, each inscribed with faint, small writings. These cannot be read except by sliding the amber from its setting and laying it atop the markings. When such is done, it enlarges the script in much the same manner as the magnifying lenses from the East. Though the script itself becomes clear in this fashion, I must confess that I have been unable to find a translation for the odd characters that make up the writing. Perhaps the translation key you retrieved from Tihuta Pass so long ago may assist you in this."



Zelios gives the characters a crafty look as he waits to see if they will comment on his knowledge.

"Once you inscribe the runes on the castle, I shall know. Return here and I will give you the brooch and its companion volume. Rather than the small scratchings herein, the tome contains a much longer piece of writing. Aside from their obvious value and beauty, I believe that these items may hold much information concerning the prophecies surrounding Kupala. I give them to you. Will you accept them as payment and do as I ask?"

Should any characters ask where the book is, Zelios tells them it is elsewhere. "I thought it best to keep it safe separately from the brooch. I will fetch it when your return, never fear."

If the characters agree, they can travel to Wallachia and Castle Arghes. Zelios provides them with detailed drawings of the markings they need to make.

SCENE TWO: DRACULA'S CASTLE

To reach Arghes Castle, the characters must travel to Wallachia. Highest of the Transylvanian peaks, the Transylvanian Alps have been sculpted by wind and water into weird and twisted rock formations. Several passes wend their way through these forbidding reaches, among them Bran Pass, the main road through from Transylvania into the Wallachian plains. It should be a fairly easy journey to cross through Bran Pass (a major trade route), follow the road to Tirgoviste, then travel along the Arghes River until the characters reach the small towns of Curtea de Arghes or Arefu. From either town, the menacing castle can be seen crouched on the cliffs above, almost as if hovering, ready to throw itself several hundred feet down into the river below.

The castle itself is a little harder to reach. A set of 1400 steps is cut into the rock of the mountain leading upward to the castle. One person at a time can negotiate the steps without falling. A plunge from the stairs throws whoever falls into the river several hundred feet below. Except that they do not wind, these stairs are very reminiscent of those the characters negotiated in Zelios' hidden lair beneath Bran Castle. Some characters might question whether the similarity in design is purely coincidence. It is, but if the characters want to speculate, let them. Anyone carrying a torch up the stairs is visible for miles and easily spotted from the castle above.

The castle itself is Romanian in style rather than Teutonic. It has five towers that flow upward into the dark sky, connected by thick walls. It seems to arise from the rocky bones of the mountain itself.

By the time the characters reach the top of the stairs, several men at arms block their way, asking their business at Arghes Castle. Should the characters answer in a civil manner that they are there to meet with the master of the castle, they are allowed up, though a soldier is assigned to guard them. Dominating guards or using Presence to smooth the way might

also be successful. Rude answers lead to attempts by the guards to use their pikes to knock the characters from their precarious positions on the stairs. Each character struck in this manner must make a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 8) to maintain his footing or plummet into the river below. Whether the characters win or lose such a confrontation, Dracula is highly displeased with their boorishness and seeks to capture and stake them as soon as possible unless they can make amends quickly and convince him of their sincere regret.

Assuming the characters behave themselves, they are allowed into the castle and shown to an interview with Dracula.

SON OF THE DRAGON

The master of Castle Arghes remains the picture of health and vigor despite his advanced age: His revenant blood grants him a longer life span than most mortals. Dracula is above average in height. He has long, flowing black hair and a mustache, a high forehead, long aquiline nose and very large, piercing green eyes. Though mortal, he has an indefinable air of dignity and power that would be the envy of many vampire princes.

Whether they parted as friends or enemies, Dracula politely welcomes the characters to his home and asks if they have supped. If they indicate that they have not had sustenance, the prince calls forward several men-at-arms and bids them to offer themselves. The men obey without question, obviously more afraid of displeasing Dracula than of baring their necks or arms to vampires. Should they accept his hospitality, Dracula eagerly watches how the characters feed, noting techniques and the orgasmic lassitude that comes over their victims once the Cainites begin feeding from them.

If they refuse the offer, Dracula merely shrugs and invites them into his sanctum where they may sit in comfort as they speak. Even if they parted as enemies, Dracula is curious to know why the characters have come to him. While his survival and residence in the castle are not entirely secret, he also hopes to discover who knows about it and who told the characters he would be here. He also wishes for the characters to help him in his quest to become immortal. If he can convince one of them to Embrace him while forswearing the usual bonds between sire and childe, he is willing to help them with whatever is their need.

There are a few complications: Durga Syn has warned him against accepting the Embrace from either a Nosferatu or a Malkavian. Dracula has no wish to appear as a monster or to lose his intellect to madness. He also has no wish to join either the Camarilla or the anarch bands that oppose him; he requires strict and utter independence.

With his goal in mind, however, Dracula sets out to woo the characters, acting as a gracious host, regaling them with amusing stories, listening carefully to all they tell him in return and providing them with whatever they need. He also focuses his not-insignificant charm on one character in particular, lavishing his attention upon that person and making clear his sexual interest in him or her.

He isn't quite so mercenary as he seems, however. Dracula has been very lonely ever since the death of his wife Livia. He may tell characters the sad story of her suicide by leaping into the river below from the battlements when it looked as though the Turks would overrun the castle. Wishing for another love like that he had with his wife, Dracula seeks someone who will love him in return, unreservedly.

This may grow naturally out of the interactions among the characters and the prince during the course of play, or the Storyteller may need to (forgive the pun) vamp the character a little, playing up Dracula's attentions and emphasizing how attractive and compelling the man is. If the player of said character is not made too uncomfortable by Dracula's attentions, the Storyteller might push it as far as things can go. The prince sits near the character, stroking his or her arm, gazing into the character's eyes and being as erotic as possible while in public (in the privacy of his bedchamber is another story). Any character who tries to take advantage of the prince's gazing into her eyes is doomed to disappointment: Dracula exhibits an inexplicable, mystic invulnerability to the Dominate Discipline.

GETTING TO THE POINT

The characters may wish to explain what they want from Dracula and get to it. Dracula is amused that they have come all this way to carve runes into his castle walls, though he does not dismiss the seriousness of their claims. Rather, he tells them that he wishes their company for several nights, invites them to stay as his guests and refuses to discuss the matter further until they have had time to enjoy one another's company first.

Their enforced company is not unpleasant. Each is given a sumptuous room built along the inner walls of the castle (i.e., they have no windows to let the sun in). Their wishes are seen to by Dracula's servants. He provides them with fine clothing if they lack it and offers them delightful mortals on whom they may dine (so long as they refrain from killing the vessels). Well versed in certain lore concerning Cainites, Dracula knows what will most probably please the characters and make them feel like honored guests.

He spends the next few evenings learning all he can about the characters and their vampiric existence. He does not reveal that he has a captive vampire staked in his dungeon. He had considered waking that vampire (a spy sent by Lambach to ferret out Dracula's secrets and force him into union with their pack, which they call a Sabbat) and forcing the spy to Embrace him, but felt he needed to know more first. What he is learning from the characters (even if they tell him nothing, he is a keen observer) has helped him decide to proceed with his plans. Now, however, he may have fallen in love with one of the characters and wants that person to Embrace him, yet he is reluctant, for he knows that the sire has a hold of blood over the childe and he fears this will destroy their love — and his ambitions.

During the next few nights, he proposes games of chance, weaponry practice, listening to musicians or watching mummery brought from the towns below — anything to distract his visitors and make them stay a little longer. Depending on how jaded the characters seem, he arranges for erotic vignettes, sessions of sadomasochism and other sophisticated entertainment. While these pleasures occur, he strengthens the bonds between himself and his lover, constantly touching his beloved, offering him or her special gifts, and both mastering and surrendering to his loved one in lovemaking.

Eventually, however, Dracula gives his permission for the characters to make the marks on his castle. Carving the glyphs takes them several hours, ending just before sunrise. Unlike the spectacular effects that occurred when they marked Basarab's castle in Transylvania, there is no shaking of the earth or outward sign that anything has changed at all. As they finish marking the castle, the characters notice a man pushing himself to the limit, climbing the many, many stairs from the town below. Dracula's guards also notice the man and summon the prince. The stranger arrives about 10 minutes before the sun rises. Nervous characters may have already retired to their chambers inside the castle.

SCENE THREE: THE DRAGON'S BITE

If the characters fail to remain and hear the messenger's news, they can simply be told when they awaken the next evening that a pack of vampires calling itself a "Sabbat" is on its way to the castle. Those characters who are willing to brave the sun learn the following: One of Dracula's agents, the man toiling up the steps, arrives bearing an urgent message for his master, which he gasps out.

"A band of demons and witches has entered Wallachia, milord. They are headed for the castle."

From the messenger's description of the invading group's actions, the characters — and Dracula as well — can ascertain that the intruders are Cainites. The agent estimates that the group will arrive at the castle on the following evening.

In addition to Dracula's queries, the characters may wish to ask their own questions about the nature of the invading force. The messenger informs his master — and the characters — that the group travels only by night and that they seem to possess supernatural strength and quickness. He calls them monsters, saying that he has seen their blood-red eyes and hideous fangs.

"They feed upon the lifeblood of the people, ripping their victims' throats and drinking blood from them while their hearts still beat. I have heard that they call themselves a Sabbat and that they claim to bow to no master," the messenger reports, his voice filled with horror and awe. He adds that he has heard only the names Lambach and Tabak mentioned in connection with the group and assumes that these two are the leaders of the band.

Rather than sending out a force immediately to intercept the group, Dracula instead orders his agent to keep track of

the group and report to him of their activities. He invites the characters to remain at the castle until the resolution of the matter of the intruders. If the characters insist on leaving, Dracula does not stop them, but makes it clear that they have disappointed him in doing so. In any case, the lateness of the hour prevents the characters from leaving immediately.

The following evening, the characters awaken to the sounds of combat just outside the castle gates, on the small plateau at the crest of the mountain. The Sabbat has arrived and the battle has begun.

COMPLICATIONS

Unless the characters decide to join in the battle immediately, they have a few moments to view the scene unfolding in front of the castle. The Sabbat pack consists of 10 vampires. In addition, a second group of vampires has joined the fray, ambushing the Sabbat as it completes its ascent of the stairs leading up to the castle. Dracula's forces are conspicuously absent.

If the characters attended the Convention of Thorns, they may recognize two of the eight individuals in the second group as Justicars. Savvy Cainites may assume that the other six Cainites are Archons. A successful Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 7) reveals Lucita's presence among the vampires attending the Justicars.

The Camarilla vampires clearly have the advantage over the poorly organized Sabbat. As the characters watch, three of the Sabbat pack go down under the disciplined assault by the battle-hardened Archons led by Lucita. Milov Petrenkov, the Gangrel Justicar, proves particularly formidable in combat and brings down another member of the Sabbat, rending that unfortunate individual in half with his claws.

Without warning, Dracula's forces ride out from the castle, swinging their mounts around to assail the Camarilla's forces from the flank. The battle changes course almost immediately, as the Sabbat enjoys an unexpected reprieve. From his position in the midst of the battle, Dracula calls out to the characters to join him.

"Wallachia allows no one to trespass upon its borders! Join with me now and bring honor and glory to your names!" he exhorts, his challenge ringing out above the clamor of battle.

THE DILEMMA

Once Dracula has committed himself to the battle, the characters have four options. They may remain within the castle and watch as the bloody three-way battle involving Dracula's army, the Justicars and the Sabbat concludes in a decisive, though costly, victory for Wallachia's prince. The characters may join in the battle on the side of Dracula, attacking the Justicars and ensuring their host's victory; they may side with the Justicars (and, therefore, the Camarilla), or they may assist the doomed Sabbat pack.

If the characters choose to remain neutral, they may watch the Impaler in action as he and his troops slaughter their enemies.

The Storyteller should pull out all the stops in describing the gory battle. Dracula lives up to his reputation as a ruthless and skilled warrior as he severs heads, lops off arms and legs and uses his steed to trample his enemies after they have fallen. Although the Justicars and Lucita escape the carnage, fleeing from the battle after it is clear that they have no hope of surviving otherwise, the rest of the Camarilla's forces fall to Dracula and his troops. Two of the Sabbat, Lambach and Tabak, are literally run through with wooden pikes and carried, immobilized but still conscious, into the castle.

If the characters aid Dracula, they do so with the knowledge that their actions may very well destroy their reputation in the eyes of the Camarilla. This may not pose a problem for some characters, particularly if they are anarch sympathizers or if they have enemies among the leaders of the Camarilla. It is also possible that one or more of the characters may join in the battle to give the appearance of supporting Dracula while, in actuality, aiding some of the beleaguered Camarilla forces in making their escape. Since it is imperative that Lucita survive this encounter, Storytellers may allow characters to assist in her escape by pretending to engage her in battle and using the opportunity to allow her to slip away from them. Unless some such action is undertaken, Lucita notes their presence among Dracula's forces and regards them as enemies from then on.

If the characters see no other course of action except to support the Justicars, they must accept the consequences

of their repudiation of their host by doing so. In any case, Dracula's force far outnumbers the Justicars easily, even with the addition of the characters to the latter's ranks. At best the characters can help the Justicars make a judicious retreat with what is left of their forces. If they side with the Justicars against Dracula, however, the characters had better retreat along with them as Dracula is quite unforgiving of traitors — even ones he has grown to love.

Should the characters decide to aid the Sabbat (and, if they are themselves members of that fledgling group, they may feel obligated to take this course of action), they find themselves decidedly outnumbered and must battle both the Camarilla forces and Dracula's army. Even if they survive the battle, they cannot prevent Dracula's capture of Lambach and Tabak or the slaughter of the other Sabbat members. The Storyteller should make one attempt to encourage the characters to retreat once it is clear that they have no hope of surviving (except as prisoners of their former host). If characters ignore this hint, they must accept whatever fate lies in store for them — most likely not a pretty one.

Regardless of what the characters decide, the Justicars and Lucita escape with their unlives, while Dracula seizes both Lambach and Tabak as prisoners.

The following Traits can be used to simulate any Archons or Sabbat the characters might fight. If the characters are particularly powerful, the Storytellers should feel free to toughen up these folk. Just remember they're terminal characters, fated to meet Final Death.



PROPHECY IN AMBER



ARCHONS/"SABBAT"

Generation: 8th

Nature: Defender/Deviant

Demeanor: Tyrant/Rebel

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

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

Skills: Firearms 1, Melee 3, Ride 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Knowledges: Linguistics 1, Occult 2

Disciplines: The Storyteller is encouraged to showcase any Disciplines or occult powers would best heighten the drama in the scene. To hell with rules!

Virtues: Conscience/Conviction 2, Self-Control/Instinct 4, Courage 4

Road: Humanity or Chivalry /Beast, Humanity or Devil 7/6

Willpower: 7

Lambach and Tabak are given no Traits as the characters will not interact with them. They are taken out of the fight and staked.

Milov Petrenkov and Mistress Fanchon (the two Justicars) are detailed in Chapter Five, as is Lucita. While Traits are not given for the Justicars, such can be found in **The Last Supper**, Book One of the **Giovanni Chronicles**. In essence, however, they are simply too tough to fall to the characters and should escape the carnage, likely leaving casualties and carnage in their wake.

SCENE FOUR: INTO UNDEATH

After the battle, the characters will either have fled or will be free to go. If one of them has become involved with Dracula and did not betray him during the battle, that person is free to stay with the prince, though Dracula asks for several nights alone to conclude his business with those who attacked him. If that isn't acceptable to the character, he or she may assist the prince in becoming one of the undead. If all the characters proved their loyalty to Dracula, all may assist him if they so choose.

While the characters may not know it, Vlad escaped the manipulation of the Tzimisce and held onto his throne through Lambach's incompetence. The vampire prisoner is one of Lambach's spies. Now Dracula has Lambach and his more potent pack leader Tabak. Two nights after the battle, Dracula gives Lambach a choice: Embrace him and forswear any further contact or die. The cowardly Lambach agrees. Watched over by a few faithful servants (or the characters), Dracula forces Lambach to Embrace him. Dracula then turns on the defenseless Sabbat pack leader and diablerizes Tabak, thus becoming equal in generation to his sire. True to his

WHAT'S GOING ON BEHIND THE SCENES

Though the characters may not know it, Dracula's prisoner is a member of the Sabbat pack that has come to attack the castle. Their enmity toward Dracula stems from his practice of capturing Tzimisce vampires by impaling them and drinking their potent blood before destroying them. The Tzimisce favored the Danesti claimant to the throne of Wallachia rather than Dracula and plotted against him while he ruled. His actions against them were in retaliation for that treachery. Dracula may or may not choose to reveal this to the characters. It would certainly help them understand why the pack is attacking Arghes Castle.

While the individual Fiends Dracula drained and killed before had no allies concerned enough to try to rescue them, this time the prisoner has allies bound to him by the vinculum. Lambach and his pack hope to overrun Dracula's castle, free their captive packmate and use the fortress as their stronghold. Pity for them they've been caught between a group of Justicars and Archons bent on their destruction and Dracula, who sees their arrival as the answer to his dilemma over being Embraced.

No one (except the prince and his trusted messengers) knows that Dracula has arranged the whole thing. Warned far in advance of his "messenger's" arrival that a pack of slaying anarchs were coming to kill him, Dracula sent secret messages to the Justicars informing them where they could find the "Sabbat." After waiting for the Justicars to do much of his work for him, Dracula plans to swoop down, destroy the Justicars and take the Sabbat for his own use. Who said mortals couldn't be as devious as vampires?

word, Dracula allows Lambach to go free and his sire flees into the night. Storytellers should heighten the drama of the scene by describing Dracula's Embrace at Lambach's hands and his diablerie of Tabak thereafter. Play up the horror of vampirism; let the horrid dungeons of Castle Arghes set the mood for this blasphemous act.

Once Embraced, Dracula seems to change somewhat. While he is still attentive to the characters (if they remain at the castle), he seems more distant. He plans to leave his castle and make himself known to the other Tzimisce soon. As he has much to do, the prince asks that the characters now leave — even his beloved. He assures them that he is still their ally (and lover), but explains that he must travel a different road for now. If the character who has become

Dracula's lover refuses to leave, that person may stay if he or she begs enough. The others should accede to Dracula's wishes and go. This will not be the last they hear of Dracula.

SCENE FIVE: RETURN TO BRASOV

Once the characters have concluded their business with Prince Dracula, they can return to the barrow beneath Bran Castle for their reward. True to his word, Zelios is waiting for them with both the brooch and the tome. He doesn't mention that he didn't actually have the tome before because a group of Followers of Set had not yet given it to him. Zelios is treading a very fine line, concerned with containing the demon, yet making pacts with those who are little better than tools he needs to complete his geomantic ritual.

Once within the inner chamber, Zelios hands over the brooch and tome. He reiterates what he said about the brooch in Scene Two to remind them how to work the brooch. Should they not understand that they need to slide the amber over the gold pages of the book as well, he can also explain that to them. If the characters have the translation key with them, they will be able to read the text of the brooch and the tome now. Otherwise, they must wait and read it when they have the key. Whenever they have the translation key, brooch and tome together, they may discover the following:

INSIDE AMBER'S HEART

Once the characters open the brooch and slide the amber over the writing inside, they can translate the words within through use of the translation key they found in the tower of Tihuta Pass. Using the translation disk, they can make out the following text:

I am the key. Within the heart of my twin shall I reveal the truth. No more shall our father's lies entrap us. All shall now know the black rot that lies behind his fair face. Read of his betrayal and weep for us all.

The book itself is a rounded tome. Its cover appears to be made of two thin sheets of amber with multiple inclusions, giving it a mottled look. They enclose pages of beaten gold. Bound around the tome and keeping it shut is a heavy band of metal. Centrally located on the band's front is an oval depression. Fitting the brooch into it unlocks the band, allowing the book to be opened. The gold pages inside have been deeply etched.

The markings on the gold can be read by sliding the amber from the brooch and moving it across the writing. When enlarged by the amber, the etchings look as if they were filled in with some sort of blood-red liquid, making the marks themselves look as though they are on fire. The characters' translation key will be needed once again to decipher the story told within, which is as follows:

My Brothers and Sisters,

I write this warning to you knowing it may be that I shall never see any of you again. If it must be that my words reach you from beyond my Final Death, then I accept that it is so. I do not fear death itself, only what my dreams tell me may await my soul beyond that portal. Yet my heart retains its hope; I can imagine nothing more hideous than that which has already befallen me, and so I pray for true death, for a peace that admits no torment, no nightmares.

They will come for me soon, I think. I have but little time to finish, and so, must make a start. Think kindly of me in the nights to come if this should preserve you from the horrors that have stripped my existence from me. May you see the truth in my words and flee that which would destroy your souls.

[Here the text grows illegible, the gold having corroded and greened beyond recognition.]

...Shu made us welcome with great feasting, summoning forth slaves whom his attendants tortured and slew in such hideous fashion that we, who had seen many terrible things inflicted on the helpless who displeased our own kind, shuddered with revulsion at their savagery. In the following nights they tempted us with riches and the most succulent of babies' flesh and blood. They offered us powers beyond any dreamed of by Caine himself. Again and again, they enticed us to partake of their rituals, to swear oaths with demons, and to inflict the most cruel tortures on innocents.

And then Karesh fell to their seduction. He denounced the rest of us and the wicked fell upon us like the very hordes of Hell. Vekis, Madiel and I were made captive and by the most agonizing of torments, forced to embrace the mortal leaders of the Ba'al. Then Madiel was slain, his blood drunk and his essence taken by his own newly made child. Vekis and I were left alive so the Ba'al could question us.

I shall not tell you of all the terrors and degradation visited upon us in our captivity. Vekis died in torment, vainly trying to hold back information the Shu desired. I was questioned over and over, each time with new and more horrible tortures. My flesh was laced with worms and maggots set to eating their way out of my body, my thirst was like a red shroud that enveloped me in unbreakable torment. But the worst times were those when my former brother came to me, whispering seductively and offering me my freedom and peace if I would but join him. He told me terrible secrets that broke my mind and shattered my sanity. I feared I should be kept thus forevermore, a pitiful remnant, a broken toy the evil Shu refused to put down.

Then in the midst of a moment of clarity, I found a way to escape. All I could recall was that my brother had betrayed us to the Ba'al and that they now possessed the gift of immortality. Somehow, I found my way back to the City. Kneeling before our Father and Grandsire, I told them what I had learned and begged for protection and for blood. Our Father seemed crazed by the news I brought. He urged Caine to make immediate and total war upon the Ba'al. With our Grandsire's approval, he called forth our clan's warriors. I was too weak to go with them.

Each day I slept uneasily, dreaming of Karesh's whispers and the horrors that he told me. Each evening I awoke, covered in blood sweat, unable to recall what he told me, but knowing it portended disaster for us all. I went to our Father, begging him to help me unlock the secrets held within my dreams. He seemed distracted by the war and promised to assist me later. Our messengers returned night after night with news that another of my warrior brethren was dead, slain by jade devils. Though Shu suffered devastating losses, it seemed the war was not going well. Our Father became ever more determined, sending out his warrior children until none existed any longer. Then he turned to our healers, asking that they pick up the slayer's sword as well.

That day as I slept, I dreamed again — and I remembered what had twisted my mind to madness. I saw again Karesh coming to me, searing my flesh with heated metals while he whispered to me these words:

"Ah, my foolish brother, I take such delight in watching you writhe at my touch! And yet, this torment is as nothing before the knowledge I tell you now. You were betrayed, but not by me. I but followed the wishes of my sire. He sent us here, not to learn the plans of the Baali, but to see if they would make worthy children of our line. For many years now our sire has been disappointed with our clan. He has grown weary of waiting for us to awaken to his true teachings, to throw off the pitiful

constraints we have placed upon ourselves, to reach beyond the idea of Shu's guidance to the font of true power. Peace and inner harmony are for weaklings, and that is what our line has become — a clan of pining fools who have forgotten that we are the accursed of God. Our Father remembers and revels in it. Let the weak believe the lies he spins for them; when our time comes, they shall fall before us like wheat to the scythe.

Do not believe that our Father's first line will survive. Most of us have proven too peaceful, too willing to enter the search for Golconda rather than to rip out the hearts of any who deny us our rightful heritage as the overlords of the Earth. They shall be swept away in the red tide of battle, slain by his new children, the Ba'al of Shai. Those among the new who survive will be the strongest and the most cruel. None shall know of our ascension until it is too late to turn aside our wrath. And on the night that the last of our sire's first children bleeds his life into the mouths of his newborns, I shall rise to sit by our Father's right hand and command all who dwell upon the Earth."

I have remembered. I am afraid. This have I written to warn those of you who are left. Heed not the words of our Father, for he is a liar. He seeks only your deaths. The Ba'al are not his enemy, but his tool for our destruction. Flee if you can. I shall bury this beneath the floor of my room and hope that our Father does not find it. The key to reading it, and my warning not to give the key to our Father or his minions, flies even now to one of our sisters who rests far from here and is, thus, safe for the moment.

It is almost dawn. Though awake, I am once again tormented by the nightmares that give me no peace night or day. My warning is finished. I hear our Father's footsteps as he comes toward my room. Unknowing, I asked him to unlock my dreams and he has done so. Now he knows that I know the truth and he cannot allow me to exist with such knowledge. He knocks upon the door and gently tells me to ready myself. It is come. I do not know if I am more afraid to greet the sun or to look upon our Father's face, knowing him for the first time as what he truly is. I shall bury this now and hope he does not find it when the sun's kiss sears my flesh and brings me, at last, to peace.

Javaniel, Second Bone Dragon

Childe of Yavok,

Childe of Zao-Lat

AFTERMATH

The characters have Javaniel's journal and the knowledge it contains. Now they must decide what they will do with such knowledge. In the nights to come, several people might contact them wishing to buy the tome or trade it for something of great value to the characters. Goratrix would love to possess the tome, as would any Tzimisce or Tremere. The Sabbat leadership would find the writings most useful, while pawns of the Jihad in the Camarilla might seek to destroy it.

Will the characters sell it or broker it for power? Will they refuse? If they refuse, how will they keep the book safe from discovery or theft? Do they want to warn other Kindred and share what they've learned? Though most will not believe them, a few will. Eventually, should they survive, the characters will stand upon the very brink of Gehenna; they must decide whose side they will be on.





Chapter Five: Characters

Come, fools; throw yourselves at
me. Fall upon me in legion, and die by
the score. I am eternal, immortal. I am
invincible!

- Lord Jurgen von Verden, deceased

Hereafter are located the players, major and minor, in the drama that is **Son of the Dragon**. Many of these character descriptions are presented in the abbreviated format. This is intentional, for two reasons: First, space constraints prevent full expositions of their Traits—the story's what's important, here, not who has what level of Dominate. Second, very few of these characters should come into actual physical conflict with player characters. Most of their interactions with the coterie should be social, and should require no rolling of dice, so a list of Traits would be unnecessary.

Those who insist on full character treatments are encouraged to locate the appropriate characters in other White Wolf books, or to create Traits they deem appropriate to the story and their troupe's power level.

As always, the Golden Rule applies: If you don't like something presented here, change it or throw it out.

ASSAMITE

KARIF AL NUMAIR

Background: Born into a family that provided servants to human assassins, Karif learned the value of silence and obedience early. As he went about his daily tasks, he watched the slayers, picking up their mannerisms and imitating their actions. By the time he was 12, Karif knew how to wield the knife, garrote and sword. He had also come to the attention of an Assamite named Wasim who saw in the boy the sort of dedication required of those who could bear the curse of undeath.

Eventually, Wasim came for him. Waiting until the boy was sent to fetch wood beyond the confines of the assassin's stronghold, the Assamite cut off his return and hunted him. Karif quickly realized that someone was after him. Understanding that he would not make it back to the stronghold, Karif quickly gathered whatever makeshift weapons he could to defend himself from his unknown stalker. It was a doomed effort from the start.

Throughout the night, the Cainite played cat and mouse with the servant boy, testing his reflexes, intelligence, courage and determination. At one point the boy even managed to set a trap for the Cainite and wound him slightly with a sharpened stick. Wasim was pleased. Ending the game by capturing the youth, Wasim took him to Alamut.

When he realized the honor being paid him, Karif willingly accepted his role as servant to Wasim. Seven years later, he became an apprentice. From the rudimentary training he had absorbed as a boy, he then graduated to full-scale assassinations.

For the next seven centuries, Karif faithfully served his clan, fulfilling the contracts assigned to him and paying his tithe of blood to his sire. He fought against the infidels who came to force Christianity upon his homeland and learned their barbaric tongues.

Following the road he had been taught, Karif was among those who swarmed into Eastern Europe with the Turks, diablerizing those he could. He also wanted to punish the arrogance of those who had invaded his home with the crusades. Taking their lands and feasting upon their blood satisfied that desire.



In the wake of the Anarch Revolt, Karif received word that Alamut was under attack from the European jackals. As he turned his steps toward his home to defend it, he heard that an accord had been reached. Karif was summoned to a meeting of those slayers who did not agree that they should bend the knee to the Europeans. They sent him to the Convention of Thorns to speak for their views, even against the express wishes of the Old Man of the Mountain. Karif found no ears willing to listen to him at the convention and joined with those anarchists who also refused to yield to the Camarilla.

Image: Karif has dark skin and eyes. He has long, black hair, which he wears bound into a queue. He disdains Turkish finery in favor of easy to move in desert robes and keffiyah. Although he rarely raises his voice, his tone is grating and seems filled with bitterness. The look in his eyes immediately tells all who see him that they stand in the presence of an unrepentant killer.

Roleplaying Hints: You are filled with anger over the treatment these Christian dogs have inflicted on your people. Now they seek to subjugate you once again. So they have discovered Alamut. Why do the others give in? You will never surrender so long as there is blood within you and rage in your heart. Let the Europeans tremble, for your knife will twist in their sides and your scimitar shall remove their arrogant heads as you lap their blood from their unbeating hearts.

Haven: During the characters' encounter with him in **Son of the Dragon**, Karif makes his haven at the Abbey of the Sacred Crown as a guest.

Secrets: Karif knows of the attack planned on Silchester and of a secret meeting place arranged by those who plan to participate. They shall meet there afterward to discuss future plans.

Influence: Currently, none since he is acting against his clan's wishes and is very far from home.

Destiny: In nights to come, Karif will help establish the Sabbat, becoming one of the first members of the Black Hand. Though he will never lead the Black Hand, his views will temper the group's philosophy.

Clan: Assamite

Sire: Wasim

Nature: Director

Demeanor: Fanatic

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 717

Apparent Age: mid 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Archery 4, Etiquette 2, Herbalism 2, Melee 4, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Knowledges: Academics 2, Investigation 2, Linguistics (Arabic, French, Italian, German) 3, Occult 3, Politics 1

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 3, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 4, Potence 1, Quietus 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 2, Generation 4, Mentor 3

Virtues: Conviction 3, Self-Control 5, Courage 4

Road: Blood 6

Willpower: 8

BRUIAH

LILIKA KAIROS

7th generation, childe of Maximarius

Nature: Innovator

Demeanor: Rebel

Embrace: 1444

Apparent Age: early 20s

A Greek merchant, Lilika defied convention by gaining a scholarly education. Lilika moved to Florence and married an Italian merchant at a young age, with whom she anticipated a life as a devoted wife and mother. When she miscarried her first child, it became clear that Lilika could bear no more children unless she wished to face death in doing so. Accordingly, she instead helped her husband in his business until his death due to plague. As a young widow, she turned the running of the business over to a proxy and used her knowledge to search out texts and relics of interest to the Church.

CAINITES AT THORNS

The Cainites with whom the characters may meet and interact with at the Convention of Thorns are listed below. Only a few are detailed in full under their respective clans. Storytellers should feel free to assign Traits as needed to these Cainites, should they become absolutely necessary in the course of the story. The Founders of the Camarilla are described completely in *The Last Supper*, Book One of the *Giovanni Chronicles*.

THE FOUNDERS OF THE CAMARILLA ARE:

Hardestadt, Ventrue

Adana de Sforza, Brujah

Milov Petrenkov, Gangrel

Camilla Banes, Malkavian

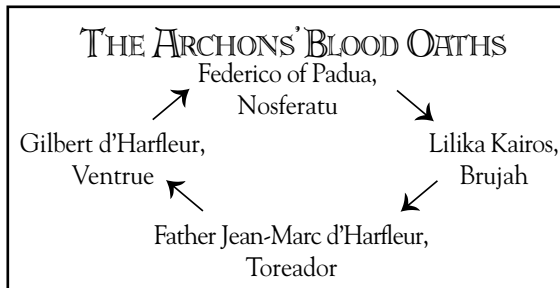
Josef von Bauren, Nosferatu

Rafael de Corazon, Toreador

Mistress Fanchon, Tremere

THE ARCHONS

Though they act as Archons for the Founders, the four Kindred detailed below are not under Blood Oath to their respective Justicars. Hounded by more powerful Cainites during the first nights of their new unlives, they learned of the power of the Blood Bond and opted to bond to one another through sharing their blood. Each Archon is under the Blood Oath to another, who has in turn sworn the oath to yet another. The bonds that exist within this coterie are its greatest secrets, yet also a source of strength it can depend upon in times of crisis.



OTHER CAINITES AT THE CONVENTION

Eleanor de Valois, Brujah

Father Samuel, Toreador

Patricia of Bollingbroke, Brujah *antitribu*

Unmada, Malkavian

Durga Syn, Ravnos

Myca Vykos, Tzimisce

Maltheas, Ventrue

Karif al Numair, Assamite *antitribu*

While on one such expedition, Lilika encountered Cainites for the first time. Embraced by a cruel Brujah as the expedient solution to a problem, she was thrown to those who hunted her sire on the first night of her unlife. She has never forgotten how she felt when so cruelly used and determined she would never be helpless again. While her Brujah blood calls to the rebel within her, she seeks to work for moderate change rather than outright rebellion or destructive anarchy.

ADANA DE SFORZA

5th generation Brujah, childe of Losario

Nature: Innovator

Demeanor: Rebel

Embrace: 1093

Apparent Age: late 20s

This 5th generation Brujah is a petite blonde with narrow blue eyes and sharp features. Adana acts as something of a devil's advocate, encouraging change — but not blind change. She often maneuvers others into declaring their positions so she may then adopt an opposing stance. Throughout the convention, she speaks out at odd moments, sometimes disrupting almost-agreed upon solutions, in order to challenge her fellow Cainites' perceptions and beliefs.

ELEANOR DE VALOIS

6th generation Brujah, childe of Adana de Sforza

Nature: Innovator

Demeanor: Judge

Embrace: 1407

Apparent Age: mid 20s

An attractive young woman with long dark hair and frank, appraising eyes, Eleanor is the childe of one of the founders of the Camarilla, Adana de Sforza. Despite this close affiliation, Eleanor is trusted by the anarchs as a voice of moderation and reason. A philosopher at heart, Eleanor sympathizes with the anarch position, but privately agrees that the Kindred need the Camarilla's protective influence to keep them safe from destruction at the hands of mortals.

As the facilitator and chief spokesperson for the convention, Eleanor keenly feels her responsibility to keep the meetings focused and to prevent the attendant Cainites from lapsing into shouting matches or brawls. While polite, she maintains a cool reserve toward everyone at the convention, lest she be accused of playing favorites. Eleanor follows the Road of Humanity and excels in etiquette. She speaks French, Italian, German, English and Latin. Although her best Discipline is Presence, she has impressive fighting skills augmented by her Celerity and Potence. Her mastery of Auspex allows her to look into the hearts of others and make accurate assessments of their intentions.

PATRICIA OF BOLLINGBROKE, TYLER

6th generation Brujah *antitribu*, childe of Robin Leeland

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Conniver

Embrace: 1381

Apparent Age: unclear — late 20s/early 30s

Among the peasants who rose in support of English rebel Wat Tyler, Patricia became his lover after her husband was murdered. She marched on London with the rebellion, assisted in the murder of the archbishop of Canterbury, and helped force the king to answer to the peasants' demands. Captured a short while later, she was in prison awaiting death when a Brujah who admired her revolutionary zeal, Robin Leeland, Embraced her.

Fleeing England, she became one of the prime leaders in the anarch cause. Her successful attempt on Hardestadt's unlifeline helped trigger the Anarch Revolt. Patricia discovered that drinking the blood of an Elder dramatically increased her power. She has come to the Convention of Thorns to bolster the anarchs and to assassinate Hardestadt the Younger, who has set himself up as Hardestadt the Elder, lest others think the Camarilla a paper tiger. For more information on Patricia of Bollingbroke (aka Tyler), see *Children of the Inquisition* and *Chicago by Night*.

GANGREL

TIBERIU, DIPLOMAT AND MESSENGER

Background: As the personal messenger of the former Council of Ashes — the coterie of elders that once ruled Transylvania — Tiberiu possessed a modicum of status among the members of his clan. Bound by oaths of blood, he betrayed many of the secrets he was asked to carry to Count Radu, the Tzimisce who held him in thrall.

Tiberiu has since risen in status. He has become instrumental in carrying the plans of Tzimisce elders from *knezate* to *knezate*. As the Fiends become more concerned with mortal politics, their Gangrel servant not only becomes more useful, but also develops diplomatic skills. Mitru, Marusca and Ruxandra still consider him a staunch ally, as he periodically gives them choice morsels of information. Ultimately, however, were it not for his bond to Radu, his true loyalty would be to himself first.

Tiberiu often travels by coach, proudly commanding the team of fell beasts that draw it. Closer examination of these mounts reveals that their muscular tissue has been sculpted, undoubtedly by Vicissitude. Most passengers don't realize that these beasts have portions of human bodies grafted into their physiognomy. Once each week, they are fed with vampiric *vitalae*, magnifying their strength and stamina to obscene proportions.



Image: This messenger is tall, pale and scarred. He looks as though he survived the worst that Transylvania has to offer. Flowing dark hair trails behind him as he runs through the woods. His demeanor has become increasingly inhuman. His eyes are bloodshot, and his skin grows more pallid with each passing year. When he hears the cries of wolves in the night, he yearns to follow them.

Roleplaying Hints: Across the years, you have become cold and uncaring. You no longer consider the results of his actions; only your obedience to Radu matters. Nothing shocks you, and you stop at nothing to fulfill your master's desires.

Secrets: Unknown to Radu, Tiberiu still has occasion to visit the former members of the Coterie of Ashes. The viciousness with which they've turned on one another does not surprise him. Still, he occasionally relays a choice bit of news to one of his former allies. This demonstrates a marginal amount of freedom and allows him a small bit of revenge against those who would try to exploit him. He has also had opportunities to speak with Lupines. Tiberiu has risked his life by traveling to the Sept of the Night Sky in the southern Carpathians.

Influence: Tiberiu trades information with a host of contacts throughout Transylvania. This is a considerable advantage, as he is privy to many secrets others would dearly love to know. Much of what he hears, however, is whispered to his master, Count Radu.

Destiny: One night Radu will learn of one of Tiberiu's indiscretions. He will grow furious, exacting his anger on his servant's very flesh. After Radu's torture, Tiberiu will become stooped and hideous. He'll learn to fear the kiss of a whip and the back of his master's hand.

Clan: Gangrel

Sire: Harnuth

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Loner

Generation: 10th

Apparent Age: 23

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Melee 2, Ride (Drive carriage) 4, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Investigation 2, Occult 1

Disciplines: Celerity 5, Animalism 2, Protean 4

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 5, Mentor 4, Status 2

Virtues: Conviction 3, Instinct 3, Courage 4,

Road: Beast 6

Willpower: 6

MILOV PETRENKOV

6th generation Gangrel, Childe of Scendrak

Nature: Barbarian

Demeanor: Loner

Embrace: 974

Apparent Age: mid 20s

Milov is a slim, dark young man with shaggy hair and innocent looking eyes that note everything he sees. Quiet, but with an air of restrained power, he knows himself to be what he is — a vampire, the ultimate hunter — and all others are his rightful prey. For all his quiet, Milov is exceedingly observant and insightful. Because he rarely wastes words, when he does speak, Milov's words carry immense gravity.

LASOMBRA

LUCITA

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

CHARACTERS



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

After her Embrace, though, Lucita's relationship with her clan was hardly idyllic. She struggled with Monçada just as she had struggled with her mortal father, craving autonomy and freedom.

Lucita is a formidable master of martialry, both overt and covert. Her speed and natural grace aid her in this endeavor, and she can masterfully whittle down stronger foes before they manage to land a single blow upon her. When she combines her martial prowess with her trademark Lasombra control of darkness, she becomes a terrible enemy indeed. By the time of Dracula's Embrace, Lucita is working as an Archon for the Camarilla, having found nothing noble in Clan Lasombra's destruction of its Ancient.

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

Roleplaying Hints: Your patrician birth and upbringing have given you a natural nobility and carriage. As an Archon, you nominally serve the Camarilla, but you also serve yourself.

TRANSYLVANIA CHRONICLES II

Although you have studied combat, you most often succeed through tact and negotiation. Your thirst for freedom is best satisfied by traveling to distant lands. Let no one tie you down or force you into anything you don't want to do.

Haven: Wherever is convenient along the road.

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

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

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

Clan: Lasombra

Sire: Ambrosio Luis Monçada

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Defender

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1190

Apparent Age: 17

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Leadership 1, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Archery 3, Etiquette 3, Melee 4, Ride 2, Stealth 3

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

Disciplines: Celerity 2, Dominate 2, Obtenebation 3, Potence 3

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

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

Road: Humanity 6

MALKAVIAN CAMILLA BANES

6th generation Malkavian, childe of Mellandis

Nature: Caretaker/Tyrant

Demeanor: Tyrant/Caretaker

Embrace: 1063

Apparent Age: mid 30s

This dual-personality (one sadistic, the other mothering) 6th-generation Malkavian is exceedingly tall, and rosy cheeked. Her eyes change between dreamy vagueness and glittering intensity. Her sixth level of Auspex allows her access to brief glimpses of the future. She might speak of the bloodbath to come in Silchester, yet she does so in such non-specific terms as to be impossible to interpret until the event itself transpires.

UNMADA

5th generation Malkavian, childe of Brahina

Nature: Caretaker

Demeanor: Judge

Embrace: 369

Apparent Age: mid 70s

Unmada appears as an ancient Brahmin, a holy man from India. A devotee of the mortification of the flesh, his body is punctured with hundreds of metal wires, wooden barbs and bone hooks. He carries a pointed wooden staff with him that he uses when he walks. Gifted with the insight of his clan, Unmada often utters prophetic statements. Accompanied by his childe Vasantasena, he has met the mysterious vampires of Cathay and traveled throughout Europe. It is by Unmada's urgings that the Malkavian clan has supported the Camarilla thus far, responding to his calls for unity in the face of the reckless violence of the anarchs and the religious zeal of mortals. He and his childe attend the Convention of Thorns in hopes of tempering the other Cainites' feelings concerning mortals. More information on Unmada can be found under his childe Vasantasena in **Children of the Inquisition**.

ANATOLE, HOLY HARBINGER

9th generation, childe of Pierre l'Imbecile

Nature: Defender

Demeanor: Penitent

Embrace: 1193

Apparent Age: 20

Anatole is the earthly conduit for God's word. His Derangement, a tendency for random hallucination, often causes him to see symbols, people and objects that do not exist, though to Anatole's mind these hallucinations are quite real and reveal God's presence.

Lately, however, Anatole has begun to reinterpret his visions. He's no longer sure that they reveal the works of God to him, though exactly what they *do* reveal is not yet clear. What powers the Malkavian possesses is unknown, but he has been known in the past to repel Cainites with powers resembling True Faith by calling out to angels whom he sees in his fractured mind.

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

Anatole typically keeps the company of the Lasombra Lucita, and acts as a strong right arm to her as they move through Dark Medieval Europe. He has also been seen with an entourage of monklike pilgrims, who are commonly believed to be either ghouls in his service or his herd.

Anatole's keen insights grant him divine visions. These visions explain to Anatole what he must do or where he needs to go. In recent nights, Anatole's visions have commanded him to diablerize other Cainites. He used to believe this was so those he diablerized might enter God's kingdom cleansed of their vileness; he's no longer certain this is true and has begun to wonder — if God is not controlling him, who is? This hasn't endeared him to many others. More information on Anatole is available in **Transylvania by Night**.

NOSFERATU FEDERICO OF PADUA

Background: An Italian mercenary, Federico fought across the face of Europe, eventually joining Janos Hunyadi in his battles against the Turks. There he met and became something of a mentor (imparting the wisdom of a realist) to Gilbert d'Harfleur after saving the young knight's life. Embraced against his will by a cruel and whimsical Nosferatu, Federico underwent a painful transformation. He has never forgiven his sire for his Embrace. Federico has become the eternal cynic. While he believes that the Kindred must work together, he does not blindly follow orders, instead questioning what he is told and judging others by their actions rather than generation or clan. He supports the just claims of younger Cainites, but will not countenance violence where words should suffice. Oddly, he is a deadly fighter, combining his Obfuscate Discipline with a prodigious strength and a no-quarter attitude.



CHARACTERS

Image: As a mortal Federico was a little above average height with a strong frame, brown hair, beard and eyes, and a roughly handsome face. He often wore armor, stripping down to underpadding and basic clothing when not in battle. This is the image he usually projects when using his Obfuscate Discipline to create a normal face for himself. When in his natural state as a Nosferatu, Federico is hairless, with an elongated nose and a face that resembles melted candle wax. Somewhat stooped, he bears pustulent sores on all parts of his body. His brown eyes remain intelligent, amused and cynical. Most of the time, however, Federico has no image, as he spends a great deal of time invisibly observing those around him.

Roleplaying Hints: You are nobody's fool. Long before being thrust into Cainite society, you understood the difference between common soldiers and the nobles who supposedly commanded them. People like Hardestadt may bluster, but those who stand up to them can force them to back down in the face of true conviction. You fight for the Camarilla because it stands the best chance of serving the interests of all Cainites, yet does not advocate enslavement or torture of mortals. You remember all too well your own treatment at the hands of your sire.

Secrets: Because of his penchant for invisible investigation, Federico knows many secrets (and guesses many others) of the Founders and most Cainites he comes in contact with. It is likely that Federico has at least a passing knowledge of the secrets of any Kindred with whom he has been in contact for an appreciable amount of time.

Influence: As an Archon for Josef von Bauren, Federico has a great deal of influence in the new Camarilla. His views make him a respected figure among anarchs as well, however. He has almost no influence among mortals.

Destiny: Federico survives Haceldema (the Silchester battle), going on to cultivate significant influence in the Camarilla. He establishes himself firmly in the role of Archon, and aids Camarilla Justicars for centuries to come.

Clan: Nosferatu

Sire: Mariennia (adopted sire: Josef von Bauren)

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Survivor

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1444

Apparent Age: early 30s?

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

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

Skills: Archery 3, Melee 4, Ride 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Knowledges: Hearth Wisdom 2, Linguistics (French, Hungarian) 2, Occult 2, Politics 3

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Auspex 3, Obfuscate 4, Potence 2

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

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

Road: Humanity 6

Willpower: 7

TRANSYLVANIA CHRONICLES II

JOSEF VON BAUREN

6th generation Nosferatu, sire unknown

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Autocrat

Embrace: 1006

Apparent Age: early 60s

Von Bauren's frame is stooped and wizened. He stands no taller than four feet nine, and is covered with huge, suppurating warts. Von Bauren's sixth level of Obfuscate allows him to hide large inanimate objects. The Nosferatu is never hasty, weighing his words and options before committing himself. Well respected, for he speaks only when he has something important to say, he hates waste of any kind, be it gold, Kindred or kine. Von Bauren is the Founder most likely to interact with the characters should he perceive them to be intelligent and circumspect.

RUXANDRA, RULER FROM THE SHADOWS

8th generation, childe of Marusca

Nature: Celebrant

Demeanor: Autocrat

Apparent Age: 17

Embrace: 1175

In the early 14th century, Ruxandra of Clan Nosferatu rose to power within the city of Hermanstadt. Her sire, Marusca, fell prey to one of the greatest failings of a prince: letting her personal concerns overwhelm her Cainite obligations. A lengthy vendetta against a nearby Tzimisce knez led to Marusca's seduction, abduction and eventual political decline. As Marusca fell prey to the Tzimisce's scheme, her childe, Ruxandra, became the next prince of the city. While Marusca wanders the woods of Transylvania contemplating the revelations that shattered her sanity, Ruxandra now commands more power than her sire ever realized.

Clan Nosferatu often acts upon a time-honored belief regarding princes: The most visible Cainite in a domain is not always its actual ruler. Both Marusca and Ruxandra epitomized this approach to leadership. In the 13th century, Marusca began the tradition of employing many minions to stealthily watch over the lands surrounding Hermanstadt. Several Nosferatu spies, aided by armies of wolves and bats, kept her well informed. Ruxandra had become accustomed to leading this coterie on its stealthiest missions of espionage. Thus, when the prince fell, the real power rose to assume her place.

In the meantime, the Saxon Ventrue believed that they were still the rightful rulers of the Domain of Hermanstadt. After all, Saxon mortals had originally colonized the city; thus, they thought it only fitting that a Saxon Ventrue should rule it. In a formal ceremony before one of the Ventrue of the Holy Roman Empire, Patricians appointed the city's new prince. Otto the Just was one of the most successful of the Eastern Lords, and the Holy Roman Ventrue were certain this lackey would fulfill their ambitions admirably. In 1450, Otto assumed control of the domain surrounding Hermanstadt.

Otto was convinced of his glorious destiny as assuredly as he was of his birthright. Exhibiting the same egomania that would become so popular among Ventrue princes in the Camarilla centuries later, he also strained the limits of the Silence of Blood. Almost immediately, Otto assumed a mortal persona. He then falsified evidence of his relation to the current mortal burgrave of the city.

Ruxandra cared little for the acquisition of power in mortal society, and the Tzimisce of neighboring domains never acquiesced to Otto's demands. They frequently traveled in secret through the neighboring *tirsas*. Ruxandra received constant updates on their activity from her spies. By recognizing the hidden princes within her domain, she soon found diplomatic alliances with the Fiends to be far more profitable than Otto ever would.

Ruxandra never rejected the sovereignty of the Tzimisce, instead offering to unite them against the Saxon Ventrue threat. When packs of Nosferatu and Tzimisce worked together to abduct Otto the Just, Ruxandra performed a formal ceremony of her own. The Ventrue was tortured before an assembly of Romanian Cainites to pay for his race's atrocities. Otto lost face in more ways than one — especially after Ruxandra used her newly found powers of Vicissitude to rend his face from his skull and graft it onto her own.

ZELIOS, THE MASTER MASON

7th generation, childe of Hannibal

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Innovator

Embrace: 1020

Apparent Age: early 30s

Zelios is a master of the science of architecture. Over the centuries, he has watched the construction of the greatest masterpieces of European engineering. By subtly influencing the mortal engineers who design these edifices, he alters them to fit the needs and aesthetics of the local Cainites. Hidden passageways, secret rooms, and chambers inaccessible to mortals are all signature elements of his work.

These innovations constitute just one part of his designs. With a few choice words, he can critique a competent architectural design, suggesting improvements to transform it into a masterpiece. Eternally patient, he has traveled throughout the kingdoms of Eastern Europe, constructing a vast network of castles to shelter the havens of the most powerful Cainites. Architecture alone inspires him. Great age has reduced his enthusiasm for all other aspects of unlife.

His insights often come in brief visions, sometimes during mathematical reveries. For centuries, he has struggled to understand the true significance of these revelations. His travels through the temples of Egypt and the cities of the Cathayans have shown him glimpses of truth. Zelios has an intuitive grasp of geomantic principles. Often, the suggestions he advances to improve a design channel unseen energies, reinforcing his

masterworks by drawing upon local ley lines. He dares not explain this to Westerners, however. Many Cainites want the status of living in an estate or fortress redesigned by the master mason. They don't give a damn about how he does it.

Zelios believes that devoting his unlife to the continual pursuit of his craft is the best ethical choice he can make after receiving Caine's curse. Little does he know that each project is part of a larger design, one that is not of his own choosing. Under the influence of a Nosferatu Methuselah, Zelios has placed several castles at the nexi of powerful ley lines, connecting them into greater patterns. Though he does not realize it, the geomantic energies they harness act as a glyph of warding... or possibly one of summoning...

RAVNOS

DURGA SYN

6th generation Ravnos, childe of Vladovos

Nature: Caretaker

Demeanor: Survivor

Embrace: Unknown, sometime around 200

Apparent Age: unclear, at times late 70s, at others mid 20s

A young priestess of the Mother Goddess, Durga Syn fought against the mad excesses of Baba Yaga, who cursed her with ugliness and the semblance of age. Durga Syn continued to resist the hag and worked to undo the havoc she wreaked in Russia. Fatally wounded by Christian missionaries, she was rescued from Baba Yaga's attempt to Embrace her by Russian Ravnos, who took her into their clan instead. Eventually, as magic faded from the world, the hag went into torpor. Since that time, Durga Syn has sought to act as a mediator among Cainites, helping the newly forming Camarilla discover what its goals actually are, and should be, while also counseling anarchists in their rebellion against their elders. Durga Syn eventually becomes a counselor to Vlad Dracula; her advice leads the Wallachian ruler to seek independence when becoming a vampire. More information on Durga Syn can be found in **Children of the Inquisition** and the **Giovanni Chronicles**.

T OREADOR

FATHER JEAN-MARC D'HARFLEUR

7th generation, childe of Count Dravik

Nature: Penitent

Demeanor: Judge

Embrace: 1444

Apparent Age: early 20s

In many ways the heart of the Archon group, Jean-Marc once served as a papal legate. A womanizer and lover of music and fine things, the handsome young priest (second son of an

CHARACTERS

important French noble) sought his own advancement rather than his service to Christ and his flock. With his black hair and startling blue-green eyes, Jean-Marc seemed certain to advance far in the ranks of the Church.

While traveling in Eastern Europe, Jean-Marc attracted the attention of a sadistic Toreador. Torturing the young priest, whose music was one of his greatest joys, the Toreador slashed and broke Jean-Marc's hands so that he could not play, then forced him to try playing through the agony. When his sire Embraced him, Jean-Marc gained a new understanding of himself and those in need of his counsel and comfort. Through the very act of becoming a monster, Jean-Marc discovered his true calling, and soon thereafter found True Faith. With the help of his cousin, who had also fallen prey to a Cainite, Jean-Marc escaped his sire.

A peacemaker at heart, Jean-Marc is often a voice of reason and a proponent of cooperation among Kindred. Both he and his cousin Gilbert strongly feel it their duty to act as protectors of humankind.

RAFAEL DE CORAZON

5th generation Toreador, childe of Callisti y Callisto

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Gallant

Embrace: 1389

Apparent Age: mid 20s

Gorgeous beyond belief (Appearance 7), this 5th generation Toreador has a mellifluous voice to match his looks. Witty and eloquent, de Corazon is credited with being the originator of the Masquerade. He uses his looks to sway others to his point of view. His main flaw is his desire to always be the most beautiful person or thing in any setting. During the Convention of Thorns, de Corazon makes an impassioned speech in favor of adopting the Masquerade, a suggestion that becomes one of the main goals of the Camarilla in the coming centuries.

FATHER SAMUEL

7th generation Toreador, childe of Herodian

Nature: Caretaker

Demeanor: Autocrat

Embrace: 1333

Apparent Age: mid 40s

Abbot of the Abbey of the Sacred Crown and Prince of Southampton, Father Samuel is a meditative Toreador who finds beauty in simplicity. Samuel has surrounded himself with a coterie of fanatically devoted monks — ghouléd retainers — as well as a small army of soldiers to protect him from his enemies. He retains power and influence in Cainite society through offering his services as a diplomat and his abbey as a safe haven for the area's Cainites. He has allied himself with the other Cainite princes in England and hopes that this will help him avoid acquiring enemies in either vampiric or Church circles.

Samuel is a tall, gaunt man who appears to be in his late 40s. His pallor accentuates the ascetic features of his face — thin lips, piercing black eyes and high cheekbones. His dark hair is styled in the monk's tonsure. He wears dark-brown robes secured by a braided rope belt. Despite his deliberately understated appearance, Samuel's fine bones and aristocratic bearing give him a handsome, almost regal look. While his clothing is suited to that of a monk, it is made of fine materials and his "rope" belt is actually made of braided strands of fine linen.

Realizing that England is neutral territory, Father Samuel offered his monastery as the site for holding the Convention of Thorns. Although he hopes that the Camarilla can come to terms with the anarchs and avoid more bloodshed, he feels that his role in maintaining the secret nature of the conclave and acting as a father confessor for the delegates (should they wish to confide in him) may keep tempers cool and prevent unfortunate confrontations. In the wake of the conclave, when the proto-Sabbat slaughtered the people of Silchester, Father Samuel feels that he failed in his duties. Blaming himself for the bloodbath, Samuel leaves the monastery and disappears. No one knows if he survived beyond this time.

ARIANNE, POLITICAL CHAMELEON

7th generation, childe of Oliver

Nature: Loner

Demeanor: Romantic

Embrace: 1120

Apparent Age: early 20's

In politics, scandal is the deadliest weapon. Arianne began her unlife as an expert on etiquette and culture. After traveling through much of Western Europe, she became a regular guest at many functions in Eastern Europe as well. Never staying in one court for long, she did all she could to bring the local Cainites' standards of civility up to acceptable levels. Her greatest weakness, however, was a fascination with the concept of courtly love. She twisted the 22 rules of this noble amusement to bring suffering to her paramours.

The 13th rule of courtly love tells us that a man in love eats little and sleeps little; when Arianne controls him, he suffers greatly. She often dominates mortals as puppets in her romantic dramas, amusing herself by watching their lives self-destruct. Seeing others in love fills her with envy; destroying a budding romance justifies her jaded attitudes. While this has earned her a host of enemies, her valuable insights into the people she has destroyed have also brought her many allies hungry for the information.

In recent years, these contacts have arranged for her invitations to the many gatherings of the fledgling Camarilla. She can easily drift into any private function by hanging on to the arm of an influential, vain or lonely courtier, male or female. For some reason, many politicians consider the *artistes* of Clan Toreador as little more than decoration for their formal gatherings. Arianne loathes that stereotype. Though

she appears innocent, she quickly gathers information about the most powerful vampires present. Over the last 10 years, she has specialized in hunting down secrets of various high-ranking members of Clan Ventruue. Over the next 50 years, she plans to use it as part of her bid for power.

TREMERE

MISTRESS FANCHON

6th generation Tremere, childe of Shavrael

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Judge

Embrace: 1357

Apparent Age: mid 40s

Long black hair frames startling green eyes set into the handsome, middle-aged face of this Usurper. Strong willed and thaumaturgically talented, Mistress Fanchon seeks to disarm opponents by confusing them, commanding verbal trickery and a rapier wit. She prefers to be in control during any situation. She proposes that the unruly anarchs be blood bound both to their immediate sires and Clan Tremere as the price of their readmission to Cainite society, so that she and her clanmates may keep a close eye on them.

TZIMISCE

MYCA VYKOS/SASCHA VYKOS

Background: Scion of the Vykos family, Carpathian royalty, Myca grew up assuming he would inherit his father's lands and title. Soon after he entered puberty, however, he fell prey to strange dreams and fits. An old herbalist, defeated in her attempts to cure him, suggested that the family take Myca to see a wizard who lived nearby. There the boy discovered that he was a magus and joined the organization of wizards known as House Tremere of the Order of Hermes. Taken to a local chantry, he quickly mastered apprentice level magic and became a journeyman mage. As part of the Vykos family, Myca was able to smooth the way for the Tremere magi to set up chantries in Transylvania. His importance to the house led to jealousy, however, and a brilliant magus named Goratrix soon became his rival. Myca could make no move without the other wizard challenging him, nor could he perform any magic without Goratrix seeing it as competition.

One night, as Myca traveled on business for the house, he was set upon by Tzimisce vampires who hated House Tremere and saw the wizards as threats. Unknown to Myca, Goratrix had deliberately let slip where the house's agents would be, hoping the Tzimisce would slay Myca. Instead, noting that he was Transylvanian royalty, they "reclaimed" him by Embracing him into

the Tzimisce clan. Some time thereafter, the Tremere wizards — performing a ritual designed by Goratrix — became Cainites. Once again, Myca was bested by his rival. Hating his clan, himself and the Tremere, Myca fled to Constantinople where he became a historian and researcher to escape his own past.

Myca would dearly love to learn Thaumaturgy, hoping someday to best Goratrix at the Tremere's own game. He corresponds with two Transylvanian Fiends, Lugo and Velya, who share his scholarly interests. (These are the same Tzimisce who were involved in the Amaranth of the Tzimisce clan founder in 1413.) He established cordial relationships with many other Tzimisce in Transylvania, seeing this as a key to his eventual return and ascendancy within his clan. Myca has secretly been a part of the Anarch Movement for some time, however, and it was his scholarship (combined with information from a coterie of Transylvanian Cainites) that pinpointed the resting place of the Tzimisce clan founder, allowing his friends to diablerize the Lord of the Fiends.

The Turks' takeover of Constantinople in 1453 results in Myca having to leave the haven he has long occupied. Moving to a hidden haven prepared for him in Transylvania, he now helps direct anarch strikes against both elder Tzimisce and any Tremere he locates. In 1493, he attends the Convention of Thorns as an outspoken opponent of surrender. Along with the others who walk out of the conclave, Myca becomes one of the earliest members of the Sabbat. He changes his name



CHARACTERS

to Sascha Vykos in honor of a comrade-in-arms who falls fighting the Camarilla.

Image: In his “original” chosen form (the one in which he first interacts with the characters), Myca had a dusky African skin tone, long black hair and large hazel eyes. His face seemed all planes and shadows, with his high cheekbones his most prominent feature. Tall and slim, he had very long fingers and pointed, painted fingernails. For years, he affected robes and cloaks of the finest Byzantine quality. His voice was cultured, his manner pleasant. Such was his beauty (enhanced by Vicissitude) that both sexes lusted after him. After the Convention of Thorns, Sascha gradually assumes an alien, androgynous aspect, refining his wicked Vicissitude and shaping himself into a beautiful angel of death.

Roleplaying Hints: You are cultured and intelligent and have spent much of your time building alliances and spying out others’ secrets. Denied a place in your own country, you spent long years in Constantinople nursing your grievances — grievances most of your acquaintances never hear. You have bided your time, but the right moment has arrived when you can band together with others and overthrow the hated elders. Let them hold their foolish convocation; you are here to show them what their posturing is worth after the talking stops.

Destiny: “Myca” Vykos ceases to exist after the Convention of Thorns. “Sascha” Vykos escapes the Camarilla retaliation at Silchester and goes on to join the nascent Sabbat, becoming an important Priscus.

Clan: Tzimisce

Sire: Symeon

Nature: Monster

Demeanor: Architect

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1002

Apparent Age: mid 20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Intrigue 3, Subterfuge 3

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

Knowledges: Academics 4, Hearth Wisdom 2, History 3, Investigation 1, Law 1, Linguistics (Greek, Hungarian, French, Russian) 4, Occult 3

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 3, Celerity 2, Dominate 3, Presence 2, Vicissitude 5

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Resources 4, Retainers 1

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

Road: Bones 7

Willpower: 8

TZIMISCE

COUNT RADU OF BISTRITZ, FALLEN PRINCE

7th generation, childe of Visya

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Director

Embrace: 1125

Apparent Age: mid 30s

The feudal ways of Clan Tzimisce are becoming a thing of the past. Elder *knezi* are swarmed by packs of ambitious neonate Fiends. Tzimisce, Nosferatu and Gangrel childer now form *antitribu* packs. Their alliances are strengthened by communal bonds of blood. They have taken the traditions of Kupala’s Night, especially the rite of Vaulderie, and perverted them into a method of enforcing pack loyalty. Even Radu has fallen before these ambitious crusaders, retreating to a 200-year-old fortress in the Tihuta Pass.

Nonetheless, the Tzimisce have triumphed in other endeavors. To combat the growing political power of the Ventrue in Eastern Europe, elder Fiends have become more ambitious in their attempts to manipulate mortal politics. One result of this is the strengthening of ties between the three Romanian empires: Transylvania, Moldavia and Wallachia. Mortal rulers have learned to kneel before the unquestioned masters of the night in Eastern Europe. Defying the Silence of Blood, *knezi* now hold audiences with the mortal rulers they have groomed for positions of power.

Radu knows that he cannot leave the safety of his fortress, but through his messenger, Tiberiu, he can still relay messages to other kingdoms. While taking long walks along the parapets of his castle at night, he contemplates the political turmoil in Hungary, Wallachia and Moldavia. He also occasionally sees packs of Tzimisce childer running through the streets of Bistritz, the city he once controlled. Civility has dulled his instincts, but he still believes that intellect and cunning can help him subjugate the bestial and depraved.

VENTRUE

GILBERT D’HARFLEUR

7th generation, childe of Lady Justania

Nature: Defender

Demeanor: Defender

Embrace: 1444

Apparent Age: 18

Born into one of the Templar families (nobles from whom many of the Knights Templar arose), Gilbert was destined to become Baron of Harfleur. Following family custom, the young knight swore himself to the Templar cause, though the order had been disbanded and its reputation blackened years before.

Painfully Embraced by an arrogant Ventrue noblewoman whose favors he spurned, Gilbert's first nights of unlife were spent battling for his own existence and that of his cousin Jean-Marc and their sworn companions, Lilika and Federico. Like Jean-Marc, Gilbert is concerned with preventing Cainites from abusing or permanently harming mortals — a legacy of his Embrace and the anger and frustration he felt during it. He defends his companions with equal zeal.

Since becoming a Cainite, Gilbert has made contact with the remnants of the Templars and concerned himself with acquiring both treasures and artworks to add to their legendary coffers and hidden strongholds for the order's use. Indebted to a Cappadocian who helped him when Gilbert was newly Embraced, the noble Ventrue has also arranged for the building and maintenance of a remote monastery where a few remaining Cappadocians hide from the Giovanni. In return, they have taught him some of what they know about the world of the dead.

Saved in battle against the Turks by Federico while still mortal, Gilbert still defers to the older soldier's wisdom and instincts, but otherwise usually acts as the spokesman for the group.

MALTHEAS (METHUSELAH MONITOR OF THE INCONNU)

5th generation Ventrue, childe of Veddartha

Nature: Innovator

Demeanor: Judge

Embrace: 554

Apparent Age: mid 30s

With his small frame, dark curls and almond shaped eyes, Maltheas hardly looks like a Methuselah. Dressed in the most current German fashions, he has come to the Convention of Thorns to oversee what happens for the Inconnu. Supposedly divorced from the Jihad, Maltheas plays a secret game of control, manipulating many of the Cainites of Eastern Europe as his unwitting pieces. His ultimate aim is to bring down the Tzimisce and open Eastern Europe to his own control. He acts the part of the wide-eyed neonate while attending the convocation, the better to get to know some of those who may end up being his pawns (or even his rooks and knights). While he would like to see the Camarilla stabilize relations among Cainites for now, he also wants to keep a hand in with the anarchy faction in case he ever needs to use them. He may secretly assist either or both factions, but not in any way that is traceable back to him.

HARDESTADT THE ELDER

5th generation Ventrue, childe of Hardestadt the Elder

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Director

Embrace: 1191

Apparent Age: early 40s

Hardestadt is a tall, strapping man with dark hair and intense eyes. Arrogant to the core, Hardestadt believes that respect should be accorded to those of greater station. Of course, few can rival his exalted station. He uses bluster and his overpowering will to attain what he wants. Initially thunderously indignant over the anarchy daring and scathingly dismissive of humans, Hardestadt realizes at the Convention of Thorns that he must temper his excesses of opinion somewhat in order to promote harmony among the members of the newly born Camarilla.

Of course, this is all a ruse. Patricia of Bollingbroke led a small force of anarchy against Castle Hardestadt in the late-14th century, killing Hardestadt the Elder in the process. The fallen Ventrue's favored childe, Hardestadt the Younger, knew that with this dreadful turn of events, all of his sire's work was in jeopardy.

With grim resolve, Hardestadt the Younger assumed his sire's visage through his mastery of Presence. He continued the Elder's agenda, pushing for the Camarilla as if nothing had ever happened. Obviously, Patricia is leery of "Hardestadt's" re-emergence in the Cainite world, but she has played it careful until this point.

NOVA AREAD, DIPLOMAT TO THE TREMERE

7th generation, childe of Gregor

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Curmudgeon

Embrace: 1050

Apparent Age: early 30s

Although corrupt and selfish, Nova is still loyal to her clan. Centuries ago, she had hoped to subjugate the vampiric lords of Transylvania for the needs of the Eastern Lord Ventrue. That epic scheme has failed utterly, and few of the Transylvanian Cainites trust her. Desperation has driven her to flee to Ceoris, where allies of the Eastern Lords faithfully aid Clan Tremere.

The Ventrue and the Tremere, thus, have a common enemy: Clan Tzimisce. Nova has become a mouthpiece for many of the Eastern Lords, diplomatically speaking on behalf of her clan. Of course, she realizes that her clan now considers her expendable, for if the Tremere really wanted to destroy her free will, they could. Then again, no one north of the Carpathians trusts her anyway, so it is unlikely that she would be a useful pawn.

DRACULA: ENIGMA VLAD THE IMPALER

Background: Curiously enough, one of the most prominent figures in the vampiric history of Transylvania wasn't a vampire at all. Though praised for his defense of the kingdom of Wallachia, he was also condemned for atrocities that far exceeded those of the Transylvanian Cainites. After learning of the existence of vampires, he led a brutal Inquisition in southern Transylvania that would never be forgotten.



Vlad the Impaler first suspected the existence of the undead during his youth. He had heard legends of how his father, Vlad the Dragon, had been advised by a mysterious creature of the night. That was the mysterious Durga Syn, a cagey Ravnos who betrayed information about the Wallachian anarchy to the mortal ruler of the kingdom. Though the Dragon's sons were too young to accompany him on his skirmishes against these vampires, they were captivated by his stories of fierce battles by moonlight.

At the age of 12, Vlad and his younger brother Radu accompanied their father to a parley with the sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Deep within Turkish-held territory, the Dragon was betrayed and captured by Sultan Murad. After the two sons were taken prisoner, the Dragon was forced under duress to swear oaths of loyalty to the Ottoman Empire. His two sons remained as hostages in the city of Egrigöz. Years of imprisonment in the sultan's court gave young Vlad an opportunity to learn from his captors. He later began his studies in the occult. Before long, he saw evidence of a sinister conspiracy: a secret society of Arabic vampires that covertly influenced many of the grandest schemes of the Ottoman Empire.

Vlad eventually found favor with the sultan, who decided to support him in a crusade against Wallachia. After forcing the Danesti prince Vlad II from Tirgoviste, Vlad realized that the sultan could soon turn against him. He fled to Moldavia, where he continued his studies. With the aid of Prince Steven of Moldavia, he later returned to conquer Wallachia and southern

Transylvania. From there, he ruled as a tyrant, using shocking, bestial methods to prove his authority and rule through fear.

Within a few months, Vlad the Impaler found out that local boyars had conspired against and murdered his eldest brother, Mircea. Shortly thereafter, he held a great Easter feast on the Poenari hills. When the citizens of the city arrived, the Impaler's troops surrounded the celebrants and placed them in chains. For weeks, they were forced to build his fortress there stone by stone, even as their Easter clothes were torn to shreds. This became the site of the infamous Castle Arghes.

Vlad later found that his brother had been buried face down. He summoned the local boyars to test their loyalty. When their answers were not to his satisfaction, his executioners impaled them on rows of stakes outside his estate. Later, the Impaler started the practice of feasting before whole forests of his dying enemies, dipping his food in their blood to strengthen himself.

After securing his power in the Transylvanian districts of Amlas and Fagaras, he became increasingly paranoid, searching everywhere for signs of legendary, immortal creatures who wielded more power than he did. He even sent out messengers to find the mysterious Durga Syn, but to no avail. When he finally found evidence that two of his enemies from the Danesti line of nobles had been accepted into the kingdom of the undead, he spared no effort to hunt them down.

After capturing one of these Danesti rivals, Dan III, Vlad and his men bound their captive above a massive stake. Hours of torture not only proved Dan's inhuman nature, but also gathered information on the Transylvanian undead. Vlad immediately staked his victim and slowly drained him of his blood. When the Impaler feasted this time, however, the *vitalis* he drank gave him incredible strength and stamina.

Despite the true reasons behind this vendetta against Dan III, Vlad justified his campaigns of terror as a way to ensure this security of his northern border. Within the year, Vlad Tepes and Janos Hunyadi, his military mentor, led a crusade against the Turkish forces subjugating southern Wallachia. Because of this valiant campaign, Romanians remember Vlad as a hero for driving the Ottoman armies back to the very gates of Constantinople. Unfortunately, the Hungarian king eventually withdrew his support of the crusade.

After Vlad retreated to Castle Arghes, he watched in horror as Turks overran the city of Tirgoviste nearby. His first wife leapt from the castle's parapets in defiance of the Turkish host, gracefully falling into the waters of the Agrish River. Vlad Dracula fled to Transylvania, where he was captured by the king's envoys and imprisoned for 12 years on falsified charges of treason.

Vlad's fame for defending Wallachia was great, but his infamy was greater. Transylvanian Cainites have heard legends of inquisitions throughout Europe, but few exceeded the butchery of Vlad the Impaler. Tens of thousands of mortals had been staked to uncover a few Tzimisce vampires. Homes, farms and monasteries were burned to the ground to destroy his unseen enemies. When stories of his butchery were retold in the Germanies, this violent Draculesti noble became a legend. Before long, his name

was whispered in fear throughout the Holy Roman Empire. From these stories, the legendary vampire Dracula was born.

A more thorough treatment of Vlad the Impaler's life can be found in the Appendix.

Image: Vlad's heritage as a noble of the Basarab line and defender of the Draculesti dynasty is quite evident. His dark-green eyes are penetrating, instantly searching for flaws in those who invoke his disdain. His cheeks are slightly emaciated, and the deep shadows under his eyes suggest great concern. A long nose, sallow skin, long dark hair and tightly set lips complete the image. As a whole, the appearance is both imperious and distant, but undeniably noble and charismatic.

Roleplaying Hints: You are ruthless, an amoral genius of epic proportions. You always attempt to negotiate from a position of strength, demonstrating your authority as an absolute ruler through unspeakable atrocities. You are the "cunning fox" that Machiavelli describes so well in *The Prince*. You value quick wit, and you possess a bestial and violent sense of humor.

Secrets: Few know of Vlad Tepes' proficiency with the occult. He has begun research into the rites of *koldun* sorcery, but is also intrigued by legends of the Tremere magi. He has heard tales of the demon Kupala, though he would dare not repeat them.

Influence: His reputation as the tyrant of Wallachia gives him the authority to rule through fear. His infamy elicits animosity from some Fiends, but often gains praise from their enemies.

Destiny: Vlad eventually received the instruction of Count Rustovich and Count Radu. For years, his thirst for vitae would allow him to live on as a ghoul, though he was curiously immune to the Blood Oath. Years later, he established a haven in Castle Arghes. From there, he sought out a victim who could grant him the Embrace.

When the Methuselah Lambach sent a Sabbat spy to watch over Vlad, he enacted a scheme to exploit them both. Within a few nights, Vlad had not only received the Embrace, but also diablerized Lambach's pack leader.

Dracula then retreated to Birkau Castle, near Bistritz. Enlisting Count Radu's aid, he forced the Tzimisce anarchs into submission. After convincing them to enter the bonds of Vaulderie with him, he led them on nightly crusades across northern Transylvania. His first nocturnal crusade achieved some nominal unity for the Tzimisce anarchs, allowing him to become the first Tzimisce *voivode* of the Transylvanian Sabbat.

Clan: Vlad is a mortal from 1431 to 1474; he lives as a ghoul from 1474 to 1495; he is finally Embraced by Clan Tzimisce in 1495.

Sire: Lambach

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Tyrant

Generation: 5th

Embrace: 1495

Apparent Age: After 18 years of drinking Cainite blood, he is 43 years old at the time of his Embrace.

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation (Machiavellian) 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 3, Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Subterfuge 5, Leadership 4

Skills: Etiquette 5, Firearms 2, Melee 3, Ride 3, Stealth 1, Survival 2

Knowledges: Academics 3, Hearth Wisdom 1, Investigation 1, Law 4, Linguistics 3, Occult 3, Politics 4, Seneschal 3

Disciplines: In late 1495, Vlad begins with Auspex 2, Dominate 3, Fortitude 2, Potence 2 and Vicissitude 1. He also possesses elementary knowledge of *koldun* sorcery. This changes within a matter of months.

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 5, Influence 4, Mentor 1, Resources 3, Status 4

Virtues: Conviction 4, Instinct 4, Courage 5

Road: Chivalry (a twisted version, hence the different Virtues) 7

Willpower: 9





Chapter Six: Storytelling the Chronicle of Ages

...for my mind misgives,
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels;
But he, that hath the steerage of my course,
Direct my sail!
- William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*

In Book One of the *Transylvania Chronicles*, *Dark Tides Rising*, we outlined some ideas for running an epic chronicle that spans several hundred years. Some of the information given there is presented here for convenience or expanded upon. Also covered are suggestions for using Maturation and/or experience points to flesh out characters, buy off Flaws, and gain new Merits.

INTERLUDES

Just as Storytellers use preludes to summarize events that transpire before the chronicle begins, they may also use interludes, events that occur between stories. Interludes add versatility to a chronicle like this one, as a long time passes between different parts of the story. For example, the first story in this book occurs in 1472, the second in 1493 and the third in 1500. While the seven years between the last two adventures isn't very long, the 30-year stretch between the first two constitutes a significant amount of time — even for a vampire; much can happen in 30 years. Entire generations of mortals are born and die in that time, nations rise and fall, new philosophies gain adherents and social customs change. Ideals once highly valued may become virtually worthless over a 30-year span.

Take for example the craze that occurred among the aristocracy and wealthy merchants for multi-colored tulips during the 18th century. Individuals spent fortunes to obtain a single prized bulb; families paid bribes in tulip bulbs for royal preferences and favors; painters were obliged to depict the parti-colored flowers in their portraits of the rich and noble or be dismissed as cretins. After speculators spent several years' profits on something as ephemeral as flower bulbs (which might fail to grow in foreign soil or be killed by overwatering or early frost), the craze ended. This left investors holding a handful of worthless flowers while the highborn yawned with boredom and looked for new entertainment.

Clearly, if a troupe does not wish to play through much of the intervening period (called downtime) between the planned stories — and who wants to roleplay every night of an 800-year-old Cainite's unlife? — some method of determining what happens to the characters during that interval is needed. That method is the interlude. As explained in *Dark Tides Rising*, several methods of handling interludes exist. Players may use blue-booking (a method in which players write up schemes their characters plan to undertake, then get together with the Storyteller to determine if they actually occurred or were successful) or the Storyteller may contrive a capture scene (one that takes the character out of the picture for a brief time, but from which her escape is planned shortly before the next scheduled gaming session). Maturation points and Fortune Paths represent other ways of handling interludes.

WHAT TIME IS IT

Several allusions to time turn up in this chapter. Here's what each reference means.

Game Time

Game time is the time that passes in the context of the game while the troupe is playing. If the coterie attacks Ceoris during one of your game sessions, it's all happening in game time.

Downtime

Downtime is the time between storytelling sessions, when it is assumed the characters are doing something. Blue-booking, below, is an excellent way of handling downtime — the player is not actually portraying his character at the table, but the character is nonetheless "active," and will have accomplished something before the next session.

Real Time

Real time is the player's time spent away from the storytelling session. Real time is when that whole life thing is addressed.

MATURATION AND EXPERIENCE

Storytellers (or players) may wish to dispense with determining interlude events and turn instead to maturation points. Maturation points represent small experience awards made to the characters for surviving through the interval between stories that may be a century or more apart. They are "subsistence experience points" rather than earned experience points given for actually playing through stories; they are, therefore, less generous than what a character might accrue from several months of play. Then again, they're free. The character didn't really earn them; they were just awarded because the character presumably survived and gained wisdom or craft. Players of elder characters will find that increasing Traits by simply surviving (the lazy method of improvement) becomes progressively more expensive. This represents the static nature of vampires as well as the fact that the character is not actively seeking to improve herself. Obviously, this experience system lends itself to quick-and-dirty storytelling; there's not much depth involved with "You manage to stay hidden from the *antitribu* for another decade by cowering in your castle."

Maturation points are awarded for every period of extended downtime thus:

Years of Downtime	Maturation Points
10-100	1-15
101-250	16-25
251-500	26-40

It is unlikely that any character playing through the **Transylvania Chronicles** has spent over 500 years in downtime. The Storyteller determines how many points within the given range the character receives. If, for example, the character's stated aim over the next 25 years is to stay at home, Embrace a childe and teach her fledgling what he needs to know, the character may be entitled to only 5 Maturation points. The character isn't really learning anything new and is spending the time instructing her childe, not improving herself.

On the other hand, a character who plans to travel to a remote location in search of a legendary tome, or one who plans to start a mercantile enterprise and who needs to interact with mortals and other Cainites in doing so may well garner the full 15 points. Then again, if something akin to the Mongol Invasion rolled through the first character's territory while she was trying to teach her new childe how to be a Cainite, well, that might earn a few more points for the character.

Once the Storyteller has given a character Maturation points, that character's player may use them to raise her character's Traits. When using the Maturation system, a Trait cannot be raised by more than 1 point for each century that passes. (This would not, however, prevent a player from also raising Traits using the regular experience rules. Maturation points are awarded and spent separately from regular experience points.)

Storytellers may also choose to make increasing Traits through Maturation more expensive as a character grows older — vampires are stagnant creatures and accumulating more

learning becomes increasingly difficult as they move through the centuries. New things and new ideas may be harder for them to grasp as they settle into routines. For a more complex treatment of the Maturation system, see **Elysium**.

The cost for raising Traits through Maturation looks like this:

Trait	Cost of Raising Trait
New Ability	3
New Discipline	10
New Thaumaturgy Path	7
Attribute	CRx4
Ability	CRx2
Clan Discipline	CRx5
Other Discipline	CRx7
Thaumaturgy Path	CRx4
Virtue	CRx2
Road	CRx1

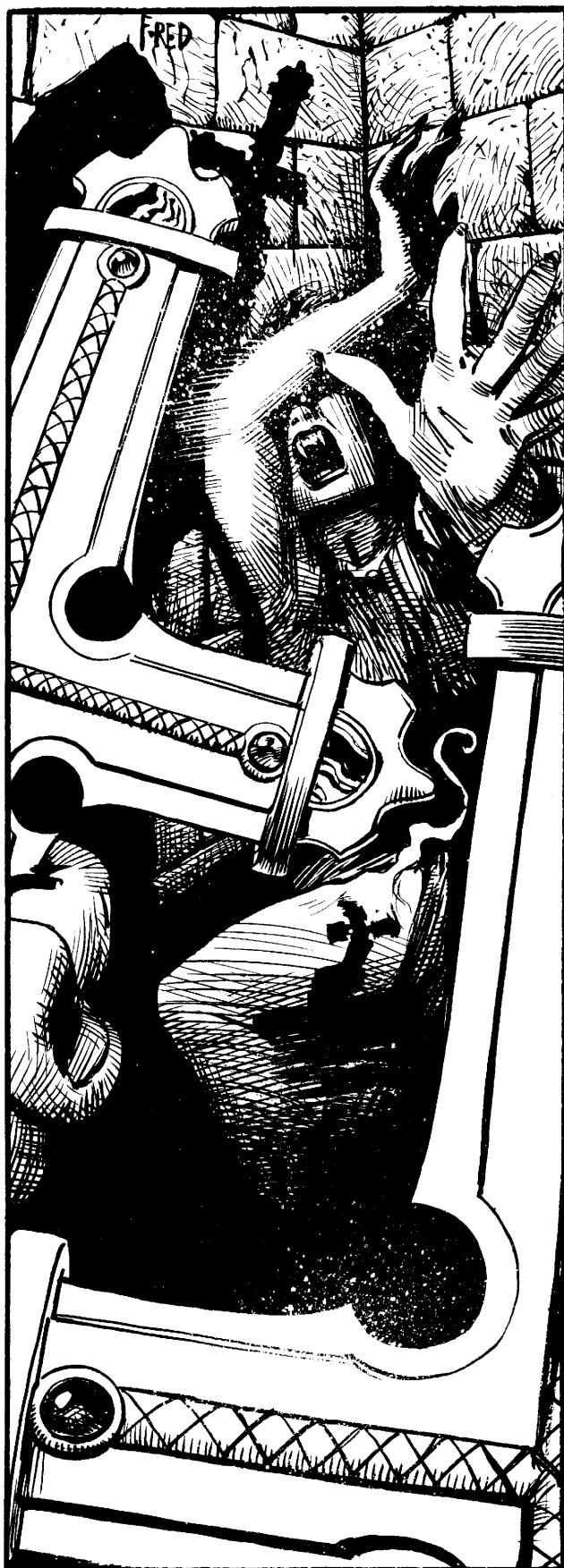
CR = Current Rating

For example, Geoffrey the Malkavian spent 20 years holed up in Kronstadt, and the Storyteller rules that he has earned four Maturation points. Geoffrey's player spends those four points to increase Geoffrey's Academics Knowledge from 1 to 2.

Maturation points unspent during an interlude are lost.

The Background Trait is not listed on the above table since it is handled in the next section under Fortune Paths. Players cannot increase Background Traits through Maturation.





TRANSYLVANIA CHRONICLES II

FORTUNE PATHS

Background dots are relatively cheap because the advantages they confer don't necessarily last very long. In 1437, for example, a character may have an important contact or a loyal retainer, but by 1493, there's no guarantee that the contact won't have died, been destroyed, come to hate the character or simply disappeared. Havens may crumble, the vagaries of time may erode even the greatest fortune, status may melt away as new princes come to power and herds may succumb to the Black Plague. About the only really stable Background is Generation, but it is also a static one. A vampire cannot lower her generation using experience points after the character creation process; to do that, she must commit diablerie.

When things may change precipitously almost overnight in a short-term campaign, it becomes that much harder for characters involved in an epic chronicle to keep any stability around themselves as they try to make lasting changes to their world. Using the system detailed below does not guarantee that a character will improve his fortunes. Rather, it is a roll in which the character leaves his fate to chance. If he loses, well, that's what happens when you use an arbitrary chart rather than roleplaying out scenarios.

So why take a chance? First, it is a fast-and-loose method for dealing with those pesky dots that some players believe will remain static forever. Wiping out a vampire's herd when the Black Plague sweeps through town may inspire the character to get out more and experience the world a little more personally (sparking new chances for stories). Rolling on the tables may also give players or Storytellers ideas for new stories that explain why certain things happened. This may lead to additional stories or provide a rationale for how the character spends his interlude — and consequently, what Traits he is likely to have improved during that time.

Aside from all of that, it provides a method to wean players away from always spending their experience points on gaining greater power ("I want Celerity 5 and Thaumaturgy 4! Who cares about being able to ride a horse?") at the expense of creating more well-rounded and believable personas. Win or lose through the Fortune Paths, each change provides the opportunity for roleplaying and deeper exploration of the character's personality.

THE SYSTEM

Here's how the system works: For each 50 years that pass, a player may choose one Background Path to focus on and roll on that table. That's a freebie; it costs nothing because it reflects time passing, events happening, and whatever else the character is doing. For an investment of three experience (*not* Maturation) points, the player can roll on a second table; for six points, he can roll on three tables. Furthermore, before making any die roll (even the freebie) the player may spend up to three experience points to get a die modifier of +1 to +3 (that is, for each experience point he spends, he gets a die modifier of +1, to a maximum of +3). By modifying die rolls, the player can greatly improve his chances of improving his Background rather than losing something. Naturally, should the Storyteller or player want to achieve a losing roll in order to simulate something they'd like to see happen in their ongoing story, they are free to take negative modifiers or simply assign the loss instead.

Sometimes, despite the investment of experience points, the roll indicates that things simply don't change. That's both good and bad. It means the character doesn't lose anything (keeping his retainer, for example), but he also gains nothing new. Don't be discouraged by this result. Sometimes the fact that nothing changes can inspire its own story. ("Why are things so stagnant around here? It's as if some malevolent force was keeping things just the way it wants them!")

The Fortune Paths delineated in **Dark Tides Rising** split the paths into three headings, showing rationale, result and disaster. For space considerations, that system is not repeated here. Besides, if you're clever enough to play a storytelling game, you're clever enough to justify gaining a dot of Herd, aren't you?

Those wishing to do so may create their own rationales for both good luck and bad; if Storytellers need to jump-start their imaginations on that score, they need merely consult **Dark Tides Rising**. Anything too out of date for the time period may be replaced by a more up-to-date version (i.e., instead of "your Tremere ally," it might now be "your anarch contact"). Feel free to improvise whatever best suits your chronicle. Further, as Storyteller, you may ignore, adjust or re-roll any outcome that flatly contradicts common sense or that would throw your story out of whack.

Finally, you should decide (if you haven't already) whether Background Traits may exceed 5. Before rolling on the tables, the Storyteller must decide what the accepted maximum will be for the characters in her game. Elder characters and Storyteller characters of lower generation have been known to have Background scores as high as 10 (especially if they are Inconnu or Methuselabs). More information on Background scores above 5 can be found in **Elysium**.

The rationales, results and disasters of these tables pertain to the 15th century. Chronicles that continue past this date should modify their natures to reflect the changing times. More information for changing Fortune Paths through time will appear in Transylvania Chronicles III: Ill Omens.

ALLIES

- 1-2: Disaster. Lose one Ally.
- 3-5: No change.
- 6-9: Gain one Ally.
- 10: Gain two Allies.

CONTACTS

- 1-2: Disaster. Lose one Contact.
- 3-5: No change.
- 6-9: Gain one Contact.
- 10: Gain two Contacts.

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.

INFLUENCE

1-2: Disaster: Lose one point of Influence. If you had no Influence to lose, you now have negative Influence. Mortal institutions in your area either ignore or fear and avoid you. To return Influence to 0 or greater, you must receive a result of 6 or greater when you next roll on this table.

3-5: No change. If you had no Influence before, you still have none.

6-9: Gain one point of Influence. Roll a 10-sided die on the Influence specialization chart below or (with the Storyteller's permission) choose what area you want your character's Influence to encompass.

10: Gain two points of Influence. Go to the Specialization chart for Influence below and roll a 10-sided die twice. If you achieve the same roll twice, you have 2 points of Influence in that one area. Otherwise, you have a point of Influence in two different areas. With the Storyteller's permission, you may choose what area you want your character's Influence to encompass instead.

Influence Specialization Chart

Roll a 10-sided die for each point of Influence gained.

1 Aristocratic: Your Influence comes through your interactions with nobles, perhaps even mortal princes or kings. This connection gains you access to the court (whether local or royal) and so long as you remain in favor, you are unlikely to lose lands, titles or privileges granted by the mortal world.

2 Church: Your Influence stems from your interactions with the Church. You may control important clergy or endow monasteries, and that involvement may protect you partially from the scrutiny of the Inquisition.

3 Natural Resource: Your Influence stems from your control over something. This might be a strategic keep, access to the local water supply, mining interests, ownership of the forest or some other natural resource. Whatever it is that you control, the mortals in the area need it (they may even work for you as miners, foresters, etc.) and you can Influence their actions toward you through this control.

4 Fashion: Whether in the demesne of architecture, clothing, art, music, dance or sculpture, your tastes influence what people wear and admire. You may act as patron to promising artists or merely follow the trend while appearing to be out in front leading. Your advice is always asked; you are consulted on matters of taste and propriety. Fashionable and important people vie for your company. You always know the latest trends.

5 Mercantile: Your Influence encompasses traders, merchants or caravaners, or it may extend to banking interests. Whatever your personal resources, you can usually gain access to reasonable loans or fine goods. News from far away comes to you through traveling merchants and you might even be able to determine whether or not someone else gets a loan.

6 Military: You have Influence over the military. Either the soldiers who defend the area are raised and supported through your levies or you may sway an important military commander or noble. In either case, you can count on their aid

in defending your holdings and may be able to influence when and where — and possibly even whom — they fight.

7 Political: You are able to influence others in their political dealings. You may be the spokesman (or control the spokesman) of a council of barons or *voivodes* or represent the interests of guilds. Secretly, you may be a leader in peasant revolts. In any case, you know the latest scandals and whispers from the halls of power and might be able to assassinate someone socially by skewering her reputation among your cronies.

8 Reputation: Your Influence stems from your personal reputation. You might be known as a great scholar, a powerful warrior, an innovative artist or a canny diplomat. Whatever area you excel in, the mortals of the area know your reputation and turn to you for advice — even outside your field of expertise.

9 Academic: You help fund or maintain correspondence with scholars at colleges and universities. You may influence developing philosophies, introduce new theories or preserve old knowledge you don't want to see lost. You have access to the latest thinking among scholars and to learned tomes and ancient texts.

10 Choose one or formulate another.

MENTOR

1-2: Disaster. Lose your Mentor.

3-5: No Change.

6-9: Gain one point in Mentor. (If you already had a Mentor, either you've gained a new Mentor or your old one has increased her power.)

10: Gain two points in Mentor.

RESOURCES

1-2: Financial Disaster. Lose two points of Resources.

3-4: Disaster. Lose one point of Resources.

5-6: No Change.

7-8: Gain one point of Resources.

9-10: Gain two points of Resources.

RETAINERS

1-2: Total Disaster. All Retainers (up to 5) killed or lost.

3-4: Disaster. Lose one Retainer.

5-6: No Change.

7-8: Gain one Retainer.

9: Gain two Retainers.

10: Gain a special Retainer — The Storyteller should create a retainer with a unique or special ability. This may be anything from a hedge wizard to a fae-blooded sage to a Lupine, or anything the Storyteller wishes to use in the context of the story. This is not an excuse to "load up" on supernatural minions; rather, it is an opportunity to introduce a strange — and hopefully, a little frightening — new element to the game.

STATUS

A word on status: Using this table in conjunction with other systems may be confusing. If a character is rewarded with

a political title during the game, for example, he need not roll on this table every 50 years to bring his Status up; instead, the Storyteller should simply raise the Trait to the appropriate level. Of course, Status is a tricky thing, and Storytellers are within their rights to ask those who don't work at keeping theirs to see if they lost any.

1-2: Reputational Disaster. Lose two points of Status.

3-4: Disaster. Lose one point of Status.

5-6: No Change.

7-8: Gain one point of Status.

9-10: Gain two points of Status.

ON FORTUNE PATHS

Our goal is not to force anyone into a series of random rolls to determine their character's fate, but to provide an easy way to discover how things may change over time. Use them to generate story ideas or give the character larger goals. Mix and match however you like or don't use them at all. Remember, it's your game; do what seems best for it.

EXPERIENCE. MERITS AND FLAWS

Just as a character's Backgrounds may change over time, her Merits and Flaws may change or disappear altogether. People may alter their opinions, overcome phobias, learn to read or even acquire noble titles. Though more static than mortals, vampires also change over time. What constituted notorious behavior in 1199 may no longer carry such a stigma in 1447. Why then shouldn't characters be able to rid themselves of Flaws or purchase new Merits through spending experience points? How about taking new Flaws to gain extra experience points just as players can get extra freebie points when initially creating characters?

The following system is designed to allow players to invest in new Merits and Flaws during the chronicle of ages — with Storyteller approval, of course. This isn't intended as a method of creating supercharacters who can never be surprised, fooled or staked through the heart as they seize control of the Church while using their spy network to manipulate the law courts. Conversely, we don't want characters to struggle through the game lame, hard of hearing, blind in one eye and restricted to drinking only the blood of red-haired noblewomen as they flee from hunters whom their amnesia prevents them from remembering. Having too many Merits without attendant Flaws to balance them makes a character unplayable (not to mention boring and annoying), so does having too many Flaws. So long as both players and Storytellers keep that in mind, things shouldn't get out of hand.

The system detailed below helps Storytellers determine what sorts of Flaws and Merits can be changed. Point costs for doing so are also explained. The Flaws and Merits listed below are detailed in *Vampire: The Dark Ages*. While there are additional Merits and Flaws available in the *Vampire Players Guide*, most are too modern for use in a 15th-century chronicle.

NEW SYSTEMS FOR MERITS AND FLAWS

If it affects only your beginning Traits or is something that cannot be learned or overcome with practice, it can't be changed.

For example, under Aptitudes, a character could train herself to become Ambidextrous given plenty of practice, but she could not become a Natural Linguist or Fast Learner. Those are things that you're either born with or you're not. In like manner, it makes no sense to try to take Unskilled any time except when the character is first created.

Physical shortcomings call for extreme measures to change them.

Flaws such as having one arm or being disfigured may only be overcome if the character spends the points to do so, and also if she possesses or has access to the requisite levels of Vicissitude necessary to make the change. Storytellers are within their rights to refuse to allow a character to change herself from being a Child through this method. Then again, Vicissitude can lengthen bones.... Also, vampires heal prodigiously, and it takes a truly grave wound to leave an undead body scarred for any significant length of time.

Initially, characters are limited to the maximum of seven points of Merits and Flaws.

In essence, this means that if the character wants a new Merit, but already has seven points' worth, she must give up something else — a Merit equal in points to the new one she wishes to take. Further, the change must make sense for the character. For example, if a character wants to gain Manse, a two-point Merit giving her a large manor, she might give up her two-point Merit of Reputation. As you've probably noticed, this calls for some sort of roleplaying (whether in a regular game session or in downtime). The same rule holds true for Flaws; you can't take a new Flaw without giving up an old one of equal value without the Storyteller's permission. Additionally, a player who wants her character to take a new Flaw during the course of a chronicle must get her Storyteller's approval as well.

Buying off Flaws, on the other hand, can be done with no other effect than freeing up space to take more Flaws!

For every 100 years of age a character possesses, she may add one more point worth of Merits and Flaws than the seven points initially allowed.

This means that if a character has weathered a century as a vampire and already has seven points worth of Merits (for example), she may choose to buy another one point Merit, bringing her total to eight. Alternatively, if the character had seven points worth of Flaws, she could take a one point Flaw, thereby gaining an extra point to spend along with her regular experience points.

A Word of Warning: We recommend that characters max out at 10 points worth of Flaws and/or Merits regardless

of how many they may be entitled to. Eventually, Storytellers lose track of so many benefits from Merits — especially when each character has six or eight. Nothing ruins a game faster than springing a surprise on the troupe only to have one player whine about her character's Danger Sense and complain that the Storyteller didn't give it a chance to function. The game comes to a crashing halt; players feel cheated and Storytellers feel harried by too many details.

Note that characters need not take advantage of this. They may still choose to sacrifice something else to gain a new Merit, or they may combine the sacrifice of a lower level Merit with their new ability to gain more points to take higher level Merits and Flaws.

Common sense rules the night and you can't get something for nothing.

It should be obvious that a deaf character cannot suddenly develop an acute sense of hearing (at least not until the advent of modern surgery and even then, ear surgery is unlikely to work on vampires). Common sense should determine any changes made to Merits or Flaws. Further, those changes that are made must come from somewhere. A vampire doesn't simply wake up one evening with the ability to eat food. She must have tried to develop her ability to do so over a period of time — and must play out her attempts either in game or through bluebooking (or other form of interlude). The Storyteller is the final arbiter of how long (or how many story sessions) it takes to make any changes.

Time is relevant

Players should not be able to change their Merits and Flaws too often or at whim. It should take several years (at least 10) for any significant change to occur through the expenditure of experience points. This does not cover those Flaws or Merits Storytellers assign to characters as the result of play.

Costs

Acquiring a new Flaw costs nothing, though it does not earn the character any additional points. Buying a new Merit costs the same number of experience points as if it were bought with initial points. Buying off a Flaw costs two times what the Flaw was initially worth.

DOWNTIME AND INTERLUDES

Systems for handling downtime and a more detailed discussion of interludes (the periods between "active" game time) are covered in **Dark Tides Rising**. They have been omitted from this volume due to space constraints, but they do provide excellent opportunities for maximizing the time away from the storytelling table. Those troupes wishing to expand the depth of their chronicles (in ways other than roleplaying their characters' every waking moments) are advised to peruse the storytelling chapter of the first book in the **Transylvania Chronicles**, **Dark Tides Rising**.





Appendix: The Roles of History and Destiny

And as they go on the sacrifice groves
- Wislits, "This Island Earth"

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TRANSYLVANIA (15TH-16TH CENTURIES)

For Storytellers who insist on historical accuracy and mortal accomplishment in their campaigns, we have included a quick summary of the history of Transylvania and its neighboring regions during this time. Nonetheless, game supplements make for questionable history texts; if in-depth research is critical to your stories, we recommended going directly to our sources: the books listed in the bibliography.

This appendix offers a secondhand summary of that information — the original authors have done a far more thorough job of detailing the evolution of mortal Transylvania. The following section is included for ease of reference. Hopefully, it should make studying the mortal history of this era much less daunting if you feel further research is required for authenticity.

Several specific Cainite events are listed in italics and marked with two dots (••).

TIMELINE

- 14th century: With King Charles Robert's approval, the 20-year rule of Toma Szecheny allows him to extend his jurisdiction to include all of Transylvania. Voivode Szecheny convenes and presides over a Transylvanian assembly, ruling like a sovereign. This era also establishes true dynasties of voivodates.

- 1314: *A coterie of Transylvanian Cainites escorts Goratrix to face censure at the Tremere chantry of Ceoris. Reprimanded by his fellow councilors, Goratrix flees Tremere's wrath and disappears.*

- 1382: Voivode Ladislaus of Transylvania joins a coalition against Hungary.

- 1401 to 1437: The reign of the Csaks dynasty holds power in Transylvania.

- 1413: *A group of anarchs led by younger Tzimisce diablerize the Tzimisce clan founder.*

- 1437: Peasant uprisings in southern Transylvania lead to a massacre at Bobolna.

- 1440: Ladislaus the Posthumous contests with Vladislav Jagiello for control of the Hungarian throne. Rebellions against Hungary break out in Transylvania.

- 1442: Iancu of Hunedoara (Janos Hunyadi), the son of a southern Transylvanian *knezi*, becomes voivode. Wallachia and Moldavia form an anti-Ottoman bloc.

- 1442: A Turkish assault against Transylvania is repelled. Two armies — one conscripted from the lower classes and one led by Vlad Dracul ("Vlad the Devil" or "Vlad the Dragon") — defeat the Turks soundly near Ialomita.

- 1443: The fall and winter of this year see the beginning of a "long campaign" against the Turks. Armies of Southeastern European troops achieve great victories.

- 1444: An army of knights from various European countries is defeated at Vama. Vlad the Dragon blames Hunyadi for this failure.

- 1445: Wallachians led by Hunyadi win major victories. Janos Hunyadi overcomes the opposition of the Hungarian nobility and is chosen as "governor of Hungary." He is considered the "true ruler of the Hungarian kingdom."

- 1447: The alliance between the three Romanian countries — Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia — grows stronger.

- Janos Hunyadi is referred to as the "*voivode* of Tara Romaneasca" and "Captain of Wallachia." Bogdan II, Prince of Moldavia considers him a "father" and pledges the fealty of all his armies. Bogdan states that Transylvania and Moldavia are one, consolidating the anti-Ottoman front.

- 1453: Sultan Mehmed II conquers Constantinople.

- 1456: Hunyadi's army, which includes a great number of common people, scores military successes.

- 1465: *A rogue branch of the Tremere within the anarchy ranks make its presence known. Descendants from Goratrix, these rogues seek protection from the Tremere within the ranks of the anarchy. In the 16th century, when the Sabbat forms, the Tremere antitribu are cursed (much like their sire Goratrix) with the mark of the traitor magically branded on their foreheads. Though invisible to normal sight, the mark is instantly noticeable by any non-Sabbat Tremere.*

- 1466: Hunyadi dies.

- 1467: The Transylvanian voivodes lead a full-scale rebellion against King Matthias Corvinus (Janos Hunyadi's son). Saxons and Szeklers unite with them. They work to unite Hungary and Transylvania and advance Voivode Janos Szentgyorgyi to the throne as king.

- 1476: Vlad the Dragon considers Transylvania and Moldavia a common country. He dies the same year.

- 1479: Transylvanian armies led by Voivode Istvan Bathory and Pavel Chinezul are victorious at Cimpu Piiui.

- By the end of the century, Bathory states that he is king and voivode of Transylvania.

- The prince of Moldavia, Steven the Great, leads Szeklers against the Turks at Vaslui and wins. Saxons consider him "sent by God to rule and protect Transylvania."

- A treaty between Matthias Corvinus and Steven the Great assures free entry and unrestricted travel to Moldavian and Muntenian merchants. Brasov becomes a central marketplace, an "emporium."

- 1492: Columbus "discovers" the Americas while searching for a new route to the Indies; his discovery is made known to the Spanish court the following year.

- 1512: *Dracula destroys the Gangrel Arnulf.*

- 1514: An antifeudal uprising spreads like wildfire across the voivodate. The resulting oppression will hinder the Magyar's efforts to raise peasant troops in 1526.

- 1526: Hungarian army routed in August of this year at the Battle of Mohacs. They lack the support of the common people, as the nobles are afraid to call them to arms.

SNAPSHOTS OF TIME

During this time, Transylvania gains greater independence from the kingdom of Hungary. Politically, socially, economically and culturally, the region became more distinct. By developing its own administrative infrastructure, the Transylvanian voivodate gained enough strength to act as a “buffer zone” against the Ottoman Empire well into the 16th century.

The trend began when King Charles Robert of Hungary encouraged Voivode Toma Szechenyi to extend his jurisdiction over all the inhabitants of Transylvania. Over this 20-year period, Transylvania underwent drastic political and economic change. Following this tradition of strong rule, several dynasties of voivodes followed Szechenyi's example.

Nonetheless, confident Transylvanian leadership brought conflict between the Hungarian and Romanian aristocracies. Szechenyi insisted on foreign policy that not only worked independently of Hungary's demands, but sometimes even defied it. After the death of Louis I of Hungary in 1382, the Transylvanian voivode joined a Balkan coalition against Hungary. To mortal rulers (and the Cainite rulers who emulated them), their Transylvanian kingdom was no longer dependent on the West.

By 1440, the conflict between eastern and western Hungary was so fierce that it influenced the succession of power in the kingdom of Hungary. When Transylvanians revolted, they held enough power to force their views on western Hungary. That year, Ladislaus the Posthumous and Vladislav Jagiello contested for the Hungarian throne. Rebellions against Jagiello in Transylvania were violent enough to facilitate Ladislaus' ascendance to power.

Transylvania was growing economically stronger, and the privileged knew that if the voivodate could find a resolute ruler, it could determine its own destiny in the years to come. In 1442, Iancu of Hunedoara (Janos Hunyadi) provided the leadership Transylvania needed, ascending to power as the next voivode. As the son of a family of Romanian *knez* from southern Transylvania, he enjoyed the support of the common people of the land. This allowed him to act as the center of a powerful anti-Ottoman alliance.

Iancu was able to stir up enough popular support to mobilize armies of peasants against an Ottoman invasion that year. Iancu's leadership was bolstered by the military tactics of Vlad Dracul, the father of Vlad Tepes. This led to the famous “long campaign” of Balkan armies against the Turkish host. Facing a common enemy, several Eastern European countries set aside their differences to follow Iancu's vision. Although they suffered minor setbacks — such as the defeat of army of nobles and knights at Varna in 1444 — Iancu eventually turned these defeats into victories.

By 1447, Janos Hunyadi had forged an alliance between the three “Romanian countries”: Transylvania, Moldavia and Wallachia. By that time, some even referred to him as the voivode of Tara Romaneasca and captain of Wallachia. Bogdan II of Moldavia considered him a “father” and pledged the fealty of his armies. This alliance would prove crucial in the years to come.



THE ROLES OF HISTORY AND DESTINY

Each time the Turks advanced, that alliance grew stronger. The lines of battle were clearly drawn after Sultan Mehmed II conquered Constantinople in 1453. The event, which some consider to signal the end of the medieval era, also influenced Hunyadi's support of Vlad Tepes as the appointed ruler of Wallachia. Confident that Vlad would be able to develop the Wallachian armies into a formidable force, Hunyadi gathered support among the nobility of western and eastern Hungary, the Romanian *knezi* and the peasants.

When nations are dependent on such strong leaders, however, it becomes difficult to replace them. After Hunyadi's death, fights for succession tore the Romanian alliance apart. A large scale rebellion against Hunyadi's son, Matthias Corvinus, broke out in 1467. The nobility of Transylvania responded by allying with Saxon and Szekler counts to assure the further independence of the voivodate. Once their differences were resolved, they appointed Janos Szentgyorgyi as the king of Transylvania.

In 1479, the Transylvanian armies won great victories against the Turks. Istvan Bathory, father of the infamous Countess Bathory, led many of these raids. After Szentgyorgyi established Transylvania as an actual kingdom, Bathory's military successes allowed him to become the next king of Transylvania. By the end of the century, Istvan Bathory remarked that any who questioned his authority would need two heads, so that when the king decapitated one, the offending questioner would survive with the other.

Stephen the Great of Moldavia enjoyed even greater success. To overcome a common enemy, Stephen enlisted a diverse army to oppose the Turks. Szeklers and Saxons alike fought under Stephen's command. Many spoke of him as being "sent by God." Vlad Tepes supported this belief, stating that under Stephen the Great's leadership, the three countries were one.

This prosperity and optimism had wide-ranging effects upon the development of Transylvania. Alliances between Saxons, Szeklers and Romanians precluded the need for independent communes; instead, the lands were incorporated into the feudal structure of Transylvania. Rich local merchants from Brasov and Sibiu made major investments in mills, tanning shops, fisheries and mining camps. Within a century, neighboring kingdoms would lust after Transylvania's wealth.

In villages, the number of artisans increased, replacing their areas' dependence on agriculture alone. Local tradesmen were able to meet more of the local demand, allowing small towns to ensure their economic independence. In larger cities, the number of agriculturists decreased dramatically as they were replaced by merchants and artisans.

The development of an increasing number of trades led to the formation of the first guilds. Consortiums of master craftsmen gathered together to control competition, establish standards of quality, and monitor prices. As supplies eventually exceeded demand, a merchant class developed in Transylvania to assist in the distribution of these goods. While merchants continued

to trade in Hungary and the Germanies, most of their exports went, understandably, to Moldavia and Wallachia.

Despite the open conflict between various social classes in previous centuries, social stratification was also defined further during this time. Both Romanian and eastern Hungarian peasants continued to serve as serfs. While a few independent peasant communes struggled to survive, they died out by the early 15th century. Although Romanian traditions survived, they were syncretically absorbed by the ruling class.

The Germanic Saxons fared only slightly better. While they generally enjoyed a status only slightly higher than that of the serfs, their domains were slowly incorporated into the independent feudal structure of Transylvania. Political distinctions developed among the Saxons as a result: Counts and burgraves gained recognition as part of the Transylvanian aristocracy.

Accordingly, Szekler communes also disintegrated. While a few Szeklers prospered enough to "buy their way" into the nobility—often through the spoils of war—most lost social status. The poor remained indentured to the rich, who developed noble lines that were passed on from generation to generation. Szekler society evolved into three classes: the elite, the knights, and the common people.

The strain of this evolving feudal system eventually led to antifeudal revolts. The leaders of these rebellions cried out for the reduction of taxes and mandatory labor, the abolition of serfdom, and modification of the feudal system. The largest such revolt occurred in 1514. Bishop Bakocz of Esterzgom called for a crusade against the Turks. By late spring, serfs from throughout Transylvania traveled to Buda-Pest to form an army of 40,000 peasants. The military leader of this army was George Doja, a Szekler peasant and veteran of a previous crusade.

The feudal lords were horrified by the thought of so many peasants traveling abroad. If the crusade continued past harvest time, after all, who would work in the fields? Nobles used force to prevent more peasants from joining the army. Entire families were humiliated—some were yoked to carts and wagons, while others were subjected to torture. When news of these practices reached Buda-Pest, Doja decided that the real object of this crusade should be the Transylvanian nobles.

Peasants and outlaws gathered in other areas of Transylvania as well. When Doja declared war on the nobility, rebellions spread into southeast and northeastern Transylvania. Miners from Turda, Rodna and other major eastern cities joined the rebellion. Victories in the Banat and towns along the Mures River encouraged further revolution.

Voivode Janos Zapolya replied by rallying the elite and middle nobility to his cause. For the nobility, the thought of so many Hungarians, Romanians and Szeklers allied together was terrifying. Nonetheless, the peasants lacked organization. The masses could not agree on common demands or one leader to help define them. Zapolya concentrated on fighting an army of peasants at Timisoara and achieved a sizable victory. Once this peasant army was crushed, the others were easier to oppose. As was the tradition in Transylvania, Zapolya imprisoned and tortured the rebel leaders.

Once the peasants' unity was shattered, bloody massacres resulted throughout Transylvania. Meszaros, a peasant leader who had escaped the defeat at Timisoara, tried desperately to rally an organized force at Cluj, but was defeated soon thereafter. Tens of thousands of peasants died in the months that followed. As a result, oppression of the serfs by the nobility not only resumed, but increased. The laws redefining peasant obligations, the Tripartium, were described as "written in the blood of the serfs." The amount of required service and taxation was drastically increased. History repeated itself again.

THE LEGACY OF DRACULA

Cainite propaganda is infamous. Vampires have composed endless tirades on their manipulation of every imaginable aspect of mortal history. Politics, culture, conquest, religion — the vainest of undead claim that all of these endeavors are advanced by Childer of Caine. Many vampires insist that the Assamites led the Turks on their crusade against Tirgoviste, that the Ventrue created the Holy Roman Empire.

History is written by survivors, after all, and no one outlives the undead. The truth, on the other hand, is as elusive as a Tzimisce fleeing for safety after the first crowing of the cock at dawn. Cainites witness much of history, but they later reinterpret it to conform to their beliefs. Each vampire remembers her own personal legend differently, and each one witnesses history from a different perspective.

By recalling the sagas of notable individuals, we can piece together different stories to ascertain the so-called "truth." Sometimes contradictory, often egotistical, frequently revelatory — these are the histories and destinies of the Childer of Caine. Our insights into vampiric history begin with an examination of a prominent mortal in their midst.

VLAD THE IMPALER

The story of Vlad the Impaler begins in 1431. In February of that year, Emperor Sigismund, the ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, invited the Impaler's father, Vlad the Dragon, to his court. After the Dragon traveled there with his wife and three sons, he swore an oath of fealty to the emperor. In addition, he vowed to protect the Holy Roman Empire, defend the emperor's realm and, most importantly, defend Transylvania against the Turks.

In return, he was granted a hereditary title to the Transylvanian districts of Amlas and Fagaras. From then on, the descendants of the Draculesti line were recognized as defenders of the Order of the Dragon, nobles bound by their family's pledge. The Romanian word for "dragon" is "dracul"; thus, Vlad the Dragon was known to the Transylvanians as "Vlad Dracul." In the same manner, his youngest son was soon known as "The Son of the Dragon" or "Vlad Dracula."

Vlad the Dragon betrayed his oath. While pretending to uphold the emperor's ideals, he assisted the Turkish sultan on raids against Amlas and Faragas. At the same time, he relayed information about the sultan's battle plans to his eldest son, Mircea. As he helped the Turks exploit many minor villages within his domain, his eldest son led a series of counterattacks against Turkish territories. In this manner, he set the sultan and the emperor against each other.

By 1438, Vlad Dracul openly led Turkish armies on brief raids on the lands near Mediasch. His other two sons, Radu and Vlad, accompanied their father and Sultan Murad on one of these assaults. By 1444, the Hungarian king swore to avenge these atrocities. Vlad Dracul offered his knowledge of the Turkish forces to Janos Hunyadi, the general of Transylvania's armies. Though the Turks eventually defeated Hunyadi's forces, the general's successes were impressive. By 1447, Janos Hunyadi became *voivode* of Transylvania.

In response, Sultan Murad, Vlad Dracul's former ally, invited the Dragon to an audience in his court. Dracul immediately accepted, crossing the Danube with his two youngest sons. When they arrived, Sultan Murad accused the Dragon of disloyalty, placed him in chains and forced him under duress to swear further oaths of obeisance. To enforce the oaths, the sultan took Dracul's two sons as hostages. The children were sent to the city of Egrigoz and placed under house arrest. This event was to change the lives of Radu and Vlad forever. Vlad Dracula, the Son of the Dragon, was only 11 years old.

As captives of the Sultan, Vlad and Radu learned to survive in the midst of the Turkish court. Radu, the youngest son, was considered effeminate and weak-willed, easily submitting to the indoctrination of his captors. He soon became a minion of the sultan and a Turkish candidate for the Wallachian throne. Vlad, on the other hand, did not share his brother's weakness. Instead, he gained a reputation for trickery, cunning, insubordination and strong will. The Son of the Dragon quickly mastered the Turkish language, as well as the intricacies of Turkish warfare. He became infamous within the Sultan's *harim* and even inspired fright in his guards.

Vlad Dracula learned other secrets from his captors. His Eastern education included Greek philosophy, Sufi mysticism and Arab classics. He had heard legends of the Transylvanian *vampyr* from his father; now he deconstructed Arabic superstition in an effort to understand the occult secrets of the East. He began to notice hints of the machinations of the Assamites, immortal servants of Alamut who sought to exploit the expansion of the Ottoman Empire for their own gain.

The Son of the Dragon used his time wisely, waiting for the day when he would return to the north. The opportunity finally came when the sultan learned of Vlad Dracul's assassination. When the Son of the Dragon heard the news, his rage was boundless. The need for revenge consumed him. Though the sultan could have supported Radu as a puppet ruler of Wallachia, he was impressed by Dracula's ferocity. Sultan Murad released Vlad with a small Islamic retinue and gave him the means to retake Wallachia.



TRANSYLVANIA CHRONICLES II

With a fury that could only be born of vengeance, Dracula led his army to the north and captured Tirgoviste, the capital of Wallachia. Vladislav II barely escaped alive. The sultan rejoiced, confident that his carefully indoctrinated student would advance his plans. The Son of the Dragon knew of his peril, however. To the south, Sultan Murad would demand further control of Wallachia; to the north, enemies of the Draculesti continued to conspire against him.

The Son of the Dragon's success was short-lived — he held power for only two months. Despite his triumph, Vlad still feared the presence of the assassins who murdered his father. After ruling briefly over an insecure kingdom, he fled to Moldavia. Allying with Prince Steven of Moldavia, Dracula formed an alliance with Hunyadi. Soon, he grew knowledgeable enough to aid Hunyadi in a campaign to retake Amlas and Fagaras. Triumphant, Dracula returned to his father's Transylvanian domains.

Having restored his freedom and his lands, Dracula returned to his occult pursuits. Vlad remembered Romanian legends his father had taught him, and soon sought out further information regarding the Transylvanian Tzimisce. From conversations with elderly Gypsies, some of whom were Ravnos spies, Vlad learned many of the customs of the Tzimisce clan.

Vlad also learned of the struggle between the youngest and eldest *vampyr* from Romanian sages — the struggle that would develop years later into the Anarch Movement. Cainite legends tell us that Dracula sent men to search for Durga Syn, who had betrayed Tzimisce secrets to his father. Coupled with his meager understanding of the Assamites, he began to realize the implications of the conspiracies of the undead. The thought of so many unseen enemies terrified him.

The stability of Dracula's new life was eventually threatened by the unthinkable. In 1453, Constantinople fell to the Turks. Constantine Palaeologus died, falling prey to the ambitions of Murad's successor, Sultan Mehmed II. Vlad was overwhelmed with emotion. To force loyalty through fear, he exacted his anger on the people of his own domain. With a contingent of 20,000 soldiers, Dracula led a raid on Sibiu. His army killed, maimed and tortured 10,000 of his fellow citizens. The pillaging and looting that resulted were worse than the results of the Turkish raids of a few decades ago.

In January of 1456, Dracula's military mentor, the aforementioned Janos Hunyadi, gathered an army in Hunedoara for another anti-Turkish Crusade. Before the White Knight of Christendom moved his troops toward the southern border, he instructed Dracula to remain at Sibiu to defend the city. Hunyadi also granted Dracula the freedom to move south when he deemed necessary and lead the offensive against Vladislav II when the time was right. Once Vladislav and Mehmed's armies had been weakened, Vlad would be ready to retake Wallachia.

The Son of the Dragon had gathered an army of his own, a force consisting largely of mercenaries, outlaws and Gypsies. Once assured of the Transylvanians' victory, Vlad Dracula then led his army into Wallachia and killed Vladislav II in hand-to-hand combat, driving his father's sword into the heart of his

foe. The Son of the Dragon returned to power as the prince of Wallachia. His oath of vengeance had been fulfilled.

Wallachia was secure again. Dracula had used the opportunity to return to power, becoming a hero by defying the might of the Turkish host. A grateful populace praised him as a savior of the Romanian nations. The boyars of Tara Romaneasca immediately elected him to the throne of Wallachia. For the Romanians, Vlad Dracula was their greatest hope. If the 25-year-old ruler continued to triumph, he would eventually drive the Turks from Constantinople. If he failed, however, Transylvania and possibly the rest of Christian Europe would be destroyed by the Turks.

This began the most... colorful... period in Dracula's life. Prince Dracula initiated correspondence with the mayors of Brasov and Sibiu to gain their further support in opposing the Ottoman Empire. He turned to the same strategies his father once employed. In order to stay in power, he demonstrated his unquestionable authority. To the mayor of Brasov, he sent this message: "Pray, think that when a man or prince is powerful at home, then he will do as he wills. When he is without power, another one more powerful than he will overwhelm him and do as he wishes." This rationale justified the brutal events that followed.

The prince soon became well known for his demonstrations of absolute law and absolute authority. During his reign, he strictly enforced his concept of justice. The Son of the Dragon enlisted the assistance of the *armas*, executioners who would enforce his laws. Some knew these butchers as "the Axes." The group included many foreigners — Hungarians, Tartars, Serbs and even Turks — who wielded the axe or lifted the stake when necessary. Gypsies who were caught for their crimes were sometimes given the option of joining Dracula's mercenary forces.

In other legends, Cainite indiscretions are responsible for forcing many of Dracula's atrocities. Fearing the presence of the undead in his court (these stories relate), Vlad brutally showed them the consequences of acting against him. If hundreds of mortals were impaled in a small village, there was a chance that one or two vampires hiding there would be staked in the process. And if, as some suspected, Cainites were responsible for the murder of Dracula's brother or father, his witch-hunt against the undead surrounding him would have been an act of revenge, one only slightly more severe than the Inquisitional tactics used in other parts of Europe.

As the son of a Romanian, allegedly one of the descendants of the original Roman settlers of the region, Vlad harbored a growing hatred for the Saxons of Transylvania. In the summer of 1457, he led a series of raids on Saxon-held territories.

The first raid was against Bistritz, where the Germanic Saxons rebelled against Count Mihaly Szigaly. Though the city was defended by massive walls, Vlad's army quickly penetrated these defenses and burned the homes of the insurrectionists. He was rewarded with a gift: Birkau Castle in Tihuta Pass.

Brasov was the next major target in his Transylvanian campaign. The mayor of that city had been espousing the cause

of Dan III, a Danesti rival of the Draculestis. The governor even recognized Dan as the Duke of Amlas and Fagaras, a title that Emperor Sigismund had given to Vlad the Impaler's father. As the mayor of Sibiu joined in an alliance against the Draculestis, the Saxons of the region plotted to seize control of Wallachia.

Unknown to mortal history, there were hidden reasons for these crusades. Once again, cabals of Tzimisce conspired to expand their domains. As part of their traditions, several Tzimisce had Embraced the most successful feudal lords of Transylvania. Two rulers in particular had attracted their attention: Vlad II (an illegitimate son of Vlad the Dragon), and Dan III (a ruler of the Danesti line). Once Vlad the Impaler learned of this dark secret, he spared no effort to destroy these foul pretenders.

Even with Durga Syn's support, his father had never secured enough power to go after the elders of the clan; now Vlad the Impaler had enough authority to tear the Tzimisces' conspiracies apart. Fearing his undead enemies, Vlad impaled entire villages to root out a few Tzimisce vampires. While hunting Vlad the Monk, he burned numerous monasteries where he thought the Fiend was hiding by day.

Vlad's response to the Embrace of Dan III began in 1459. He led an extensive raid on Brasov. His army burned villages, forts and towns, destroyed crops, and slaughtered thousands of men, women and children. Dan fought savagely, displaying amazing feats of strength in battle. The prince took as many captives as he could, but still left forests of impaled victims in his wake. In 1460, Dan III led a counter-attack. He arrested many of Vlad's supporters, seized Amlas and Fagaras, and led a skirmish against the Wallachian border. The peasants defied him, sometimes even taking up arms against the Danesti ruler. When at last Dan was found, Vlad's allies seized this creature of the night and took him to Castle Arghes in Wallachia.

In a private ceremony, Vlad staked the Fiend and drained him of his blood. Intoxicated with the strength of Cainite vitae, he preached his need for revenge before the assembled executioners, extolling his plans for conquest of both the living and the undead. Several vials of Tzimisce blood were disseminated among the *armas*. No longer content to merely rule the living, Vlad soon dreamt of conquering the kingdoms of the Cainites.

His fascination with blood blossomed soon thereafter. One account tells us that in the months that followed, Vlad began the practice of feasting before the impaled Saxons as they died. The prince would often dip his bread in the blood of his victims, as he believed it would give him strength. This particular practice not only defied the Silence of Blood, but also became one of the most commonly retold legends of Prince Dracula, one that resulted in many similar stories of his thirst for human blood.

Dracula led his final Transylvanian raid during the summer of 1460. Invading the territory of Amlas, he renewed his pursuit of Vlad the Monk, a supporter of the Danestis. Entire villages succumbed to the torch. The Impaler took up the chase with

Inquisitorial zeal, using the same tactics already employed against the undead in other European realms. Surprising, the citizens of Amlas did not rally to aid him. The Impaler was appalled. The result was the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. After liberating the town, the Impaler ordered the slaughter of thousands of Saxons. A priest led the citizens on a procession to an open field, and the Impaler's army planted another forest. Once again, Vlad feasted, reveling at the sight of so much spilled blood.

Once his absolute control of Transylvania had been proven, Dracula turned his wrath against the Ottoman Empire. As the Hungarian king requested, Dracula led a crusade against the Turkish host. His Wallachian army fought their way to the very gates of Constantinople. Dracula then dispatched messengers to King Matthias to ask for reinforcements. If the king could not send his own army, Dracula stated, he should add least send aid from the Transylvanian Szeklers and Saxons. In one message, he stressed that the reinforcements would have to arrive before the Feast of St. George or all would be lost. He needed more troops to take Constantinople; otherwise, the sultan's reinforcements would drive them back to the Danube.

The king of Hungary never sent the aid that Dracula requested. Instead, after April 22, 1462, Dracula was forced into a strategic retreat. Over the next few months, the Wallachian army was driven back to Tirgoviste. On June 17th, Dracula decided to risk his survival on one last night attack in an effort to kill the sultan himself. With a small force, he took the enemy by surprise, slaughtering all in his path until he arrived at the tents of the enemy commanders. The sultan fled the encampment, and Dracula's assassination failed. Resigned to defeat, Dracula retreated to his fortress in the Carpathians by the Agrish River. His wife Livia defied the advancing Turks by leaping from Castle Arghes into the Agrish River below it.

The Turkish army advanced into Tirgoviste. Once there, they witnessed the depths of Dracula's depravity. As the sultan led his troops toward the nearest castle, they passed through a forest of the dead. Twenty thousand impaled Turks decomposed in the noon-day sun. Flocks of ravens fed on the rotting bodies. In the heat of mid day, the stench was unbearable. That night, the sultan ordered his men to dig a deep trench around the city, hoping to secure the city. The next day, he ordered a retreat. The sight had demoralized him so much that he decided the cost of victory was too great.

Nonetheless, the Turks still sought to kill Vlad Dracula. The Son of the Dragon fled across the Carpathians into Wallachia. He continued to implore the Hungarian king for assistance. Unknown to him, however, a group of Transylvanian Saxons had false evidence of a conspiracy between Dracula and the Turkish sultan. The Hungarian king arranged a meeting with Dracula, one that led to Vlad's capture and imprisonment.

Dracula remained imprisoned until 1471, when the Moldavian prince, Steven Bathory, convinced the king of Hungary that Dracula was the only real hope of driving back the Turkish host. Cainites that the Hungarian king probably

responded to other pressures as well. Within a year, an assembly of Transylvanian vampires met to address many current issues, including "the Dracula problem": Should he be Embraced or destroyed?

Still in control of his destiny, he returned to the city of Mediasch to renew his crusade against the Turks. From Mediasch, Dracula joined Stephen Bathory in an expedition to "purify" Transylvania and destroy the Ottoman Empire. First, they assaulted Brasov, driving a Danesti ruler from the throne. The army passed through Bran Pass in the south and besieged Bucharest, engaging Prince Radu's army. Aided by Bathory's troops, Dracula quickly regained control of Wallachia and Transylvania. The tyrant had returned.

When Bathory's forces left Wallachia in 1479, however, the mortal Dracula was vulnerable. His defense relied on a scant force of 200 Moldavian soldiers. Realizing opportunity, the Turks attacked. History tells us Vlad's last battle was outside Bucharest, not far from the scene of his father's assassination. The Wallachian prince was decapitated at the age of 45, and his head was later displayed in Constantinople.

According to legend, monks from Snagov carried the headless body to a nearby monastery. Dracula had generously donated to their order throughout his life, so to protect the body from desecration, they secretly buried his corpse. The life of Dracula ended with a mystery, however. Despite numerous archaeological excavations within the church of Snagov, the body of the mortal Dracula has never been found.

Cainites later found out that Vlad Tepes' death had been carefully staged. A revenant sculpted to resemble him had been set loose on the battlefield that fateful day. Through his contacts in Clan Tzimisce, the Son of the Dragon had learned of the Turkish assault, and by the time his realm was overrun, he had retreated to Castle Arghes and fed upon the blood of Count Rustovich of Clan Tzimisce. Legends of Dracula's continued existence persevered for over 20 years after his death. In truth, Clan Tzimisce hoped to use him as their pawn during this time.

Unfortunately for them, Vlad was strangely immune to the Blood Oath. Nonetheless, he continued to learn from the clan elders, just as he had learned from Janos Hunyadi long ago. When he could no longer tolerate being treated as a mere ghoul, he seized yet another opportunity. Using the same tactics he had used against Dan III (with timely intervention from Camarilla Archons), he captured Lambach Rithven and Tabak, leaders of a troublesome Tzimisce "sabbat." After forcing Lambach to Embrace him, he diablerized Tabak to gain the potency of his blood, as the wily Durga Syn had told him.

In the years that follow, Dracula will play the Sabbat and Camarilla against each other, just as his father betrayed Sultan Murad to aid Emperor Sigismund. He will master the *ritae* of *koldun* sorcery, even as he uncovers the secrets of Thaumaturgy. As one of Caine's childer, he will break all the rules of vampiric society, becoming a master of temporal power and mystical accomplishment.

THE DEMON'S PROPHET...

Both Anatole's and Octavio's destinies are interwoven with that of Kupala (introduced in **Transylvania by Night**). Not much has been said in this book about Kupala, though the demon plays a pivotal role in revealing several prophecies of great import to Cainites. Kupala is inextricably bound up with the mysterious land of Transylvania. His black heart lies beneath the soil, infusing the very ground — and any creatures that touch that land — with his malignancy. Bigotry, hatred, unnatural desires, chaos and terror are the demon's legacies to whoever wishes to possess the lands of Transylvania — and many desperately want that rich and beautiful country. Throughout its existence, successive groups seek to conquer and hold Transylvania, almost as if compelled to do so.

Octavio was native to the lands now called Hungary when Rome's legions built Aquincum. As a mortal, he was a shaman who somehow touched upon Kupala's dark heart and became suffused with madness. He took the name Octavio since he firmly believes that eight portents will herald the awakening of Kupala and the demon's ascendancy over the world.

Embraced by a Roman Malkavian, Octavio subsisted quite well on the soldiers and townsfolk. He staked and diablerized his sire in a murderous rage precipitated by his ties to the land. Octavio found himself slipping into torpor when the legions were recalled to Rome.

When Obuda began developing around him, Octavio awakened. Shocked when he realized that so much time had passed, he quickly learned the barbaric new language of the Magyars. Driven even more insane by the centuries he has slept within the tainted earth of his homeland, Octavio captured mortals (and any Cainites he can) and put them through elaborate games (physical challenges, riddles, battles, torture), then sacrificed them to Kupala (whether to aid the demon or bind him, even Octavio doesn't know).

Soon after awakening, Octavio created a cult around himself, hoping to become powerful enough to defeat Kupala. Those who worship him call him Havnor, believing he is an ancient Magyar god. He so rarely remembers exactly what his plans are when his head is afire with prophecy that he must disseminate to warn the world! In 1416 Octavio again fell into torpor. Now he dreams his mad prophecies, awaiting the moment when the demon once again calls him forth. During his slumber, Octavio reaches out to Anatole, granting his fellow Malkavian a glimpse of the hell he foresees.

Octavio will spend the next centuries warning anyone who will listen of the coming of the signs. Most will ignore him, putting his warnings down to the ravings of a lunatic. Never recognizing that his visions encompass something far greater than the maneuverings of one demon (however powerful), Octavio loses hope in the 18th century, feeling that he has failed to have any effect on Kupala whatsoever. Octavio then allows Anatole to diablerize him, making Anatole keeper of the mysteries and the harbinger of Gehenna.

More information on Octavio is located in **Transylvania by Night**, for those who need it.

...AND THE DEMON HIMSELF

Long ago sensing the intrusion of powerful forces into lands he considers his own, the demon has made it his business to learn everything he can about his rival for power, though he has yet to learn that rival's true name. Kupala's own actions are limited to sending out his lesser minions and granting visions to a madman who was once a shaman. Through Octavio, the Malkavian prophet, Kupala disseminates knowledge of his rival's plans.

Unfortunately, while the visions he grants are true, they are limited in scope; then those visions roil through the fractured landscape of Octavio's mind before the Malkavian foretells the future. Octavio does not always understand (or even remember) what he sees. This means that signs and portents he speaks of may actually illuminate something quite different than what either he (or those who listen to him) believe. Nonetheless, they remain one of the few ways a coterie can learn of the convoluted machinations occurring around them, hidden just beneath the surface of Cainite society.

Kupala's chosen prophet Octavio thinks that the visions he sees portend the rising of the demon and that entity's claiming of Transylvania and the lands of Eastern Europe. The prophet hasn't quite grasped, yet, that the things he foresees are related to a far larger picture — Gehenna. Eventually, Octavio will pass on his gift to Anatole, who will understand the meaning of the visions, making the French Malkavian the Harbinger of Gehenna.

Though not much in evidence during this time, Kupala is still around and still working his chaos on the area. Evidence of the demon's continuing influence can be found in the Anarch-Assamite war (see below) in Transylvania — a war that makes no sense on the surface of things. The elder Tzimisce still celebrate Kupala's Night, but they do so more circumspectly now that their clan's founder was attacked on that eve. Octavio himself has fallen into torpor, temporarily leaving Anatole as the only one available to interpret the signs revealed by the demon. Despite the loss of his chief prophet and the maneuverings of the demon's as-yet unnamed rival, Kupala is far from gone. In fact, by 1500, when many mortals begin to question the very existence of demons, Kupala is just getting started.

THE ANARCH-ASSAMITE WAR

As the Turks battled Eastern European forces and overran more and more territory on their push toward Western Europe, Assamites followed in their wake. Soon, Assamites spread across Transylvania seeking the heart's blood of elder Tzimisce. During the same period, gangs of the dispossessed childer of the Tzimisce also roamed the wilds of the land, seeking their elders' havens and hidden resting places. Both factions, Assamite and Tzimisce anarchs, sought the same thing — the potent vitae of the *voivodes*. An alliance between the two groups of diablerists would have ensured their success, yet they chose to war against one another rather than ally against a common foe.

THE REVEALED SIGNS OF GEHENNA

Many Kindred believe they know the signs that will signal the coming of Gehenna. Those who believe that Gehenna is real search out copies of the *Book of Nod*, which is supposed to contain within it the prophecies of Saulot. Indeed, within that work many signs are discussed. Like those omens given in *Book of Revelations* (which portend the end of the world), these prophecies are interpreted as occurring just before the advent of the dreaded date. That is not, however, the case. Vampires are unlike mortals; rather than a few, brief decades, they may live for centuries, granting them much time in which to work out foretold events.

Further, they do not have a unifying religion served by a single book available to all. The real signs of Gehenna have been recorded only in a few, unlikely, hidden places, lest their secrets be too easily revealed and cost a warlord of the Jyhad his advantage. Those foretellings given in the *Book of Nod* are mere shadows of the actual signs — side effects, as it were. Further, the workings of the prophecies occur over several hundred years, and many have for millennia been planted in fertile soil (some might even say demon-corrupted soil) waiting for the proper time to blossom. Those omens given below are those that have been revealed to the mad prophet Octavio. Several more have yet to be made known.

The chaotic tenor of the land itself (a land the Tzimisce needed in order to rest properly) worked against them, as did the cleverest of the *voivodes*. Knowing the Assamites' taste for powerful Cainite blood, some of the Tzimisce *voivodes* offered the assassins a deal: If the Assamites would leave the *voivodes* alone, preying instead upon their unruly childer, the elder Fiends would assist the assassins in finding and capturing potent Tremere and Ventrue to slake their thirsts.

The Assamites agreed, regarding the agreement as a contract they would fulfill. There was always time later to return and drink of the *voivodes* after the Fiends had foolishly decimated their own ranks. Meanwhile, the assassins had free reign against others in the land without fear of retaliation from the land's eldest defenders. For their part, the Tzimisce believed they had successfully deflected a threat to themselves while finding a curb to their ungrateful childer. That fact that it allowed them to set the Assamites on the hated Tremere and Ventrue intruders only sweetened the deal.

The anarchs feared that the Assamites would not only steal all their sires' *vitae* (which should, by right of clan, belong to the childer), but that the assassins would take the *voivodes*' strongholds and use them as fortresses to buttress the Turks' claims to the land. Wherever anarchs and Assamites met, they violently came into conflict. Nocturnal war raged once again across the land beyond the forest.

Before the Transylvania Chronicles

- **Sign One** — The Hidden Darkness: the diablerie of Saulot.

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: Childer rebel against elders, sparking the Anarch Movement; Younger Lasombra and Tzimisce commit diablerie on their clans' founders.

- Though not an actual sign yet, the geomantic web Zelios is constructing will become the foundation for another, later omen leading up to Gehenna.

Book Two: Son of the Dragon

- **Sign Four** — The Rise and Return of the Dragon: Although those involved believe this sign foretells the Embrace and career of Dracula, it, in fact, means something quite different (though as yet, unrevealed).

- **Sign Five** — The Making and Breaking of the Compact of Kindred: the formation of the Camarilla (and later foundation of the Sabbat).

Further complicating matters, both the anarchs and the Assamites found assistance from antitribalist rogue Tremere, childer of Goratrix (called the Betrayer by the rest of the clan). Goratrix's childer used a heretofore unknown Tremere ritual that greatly enhanced the effectiveness of the diablerie each group practiced. Known as the Ritual of the Bitter Rose, the ritual allowed more than one recipient to benefit from the blood of an elder taken in diablerie. Suddenly, whole packs could gain greater power rather than just a single chosen member.

Outraged Tremere and Ventrue, frightened by the prospect of annihilation, called for stronger measures against the Assamites and the anarchs, cementing the Usurpers and the Patricians in an alliance of necessity that would ultimately lead to their clans' strong advocacy of the formation of the Camarilla. Enhanced with Tremere magics, the fledgling organization became more than a match for the disorganized and weaker anarchs. Further, Tremere magic helped clan Ventrue uncover Alamut, the secret lair of the Assamites, and to capture several important Assamite elders, forcing the assassins to sue for peace. Thus, because of Tzimisce intrigue, those who should have found common cause instead engaged in war, while the Usurpers of Clan Tremere whose founders committed diablerie upon Saulot, become staunch conservative adherents to the Camarilla and bitter foes of those who would practice the Amaranth on others. Had he a mouth to do it with, Kupala would have laughed with demonic glee.

Transylvania Chronicles II

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