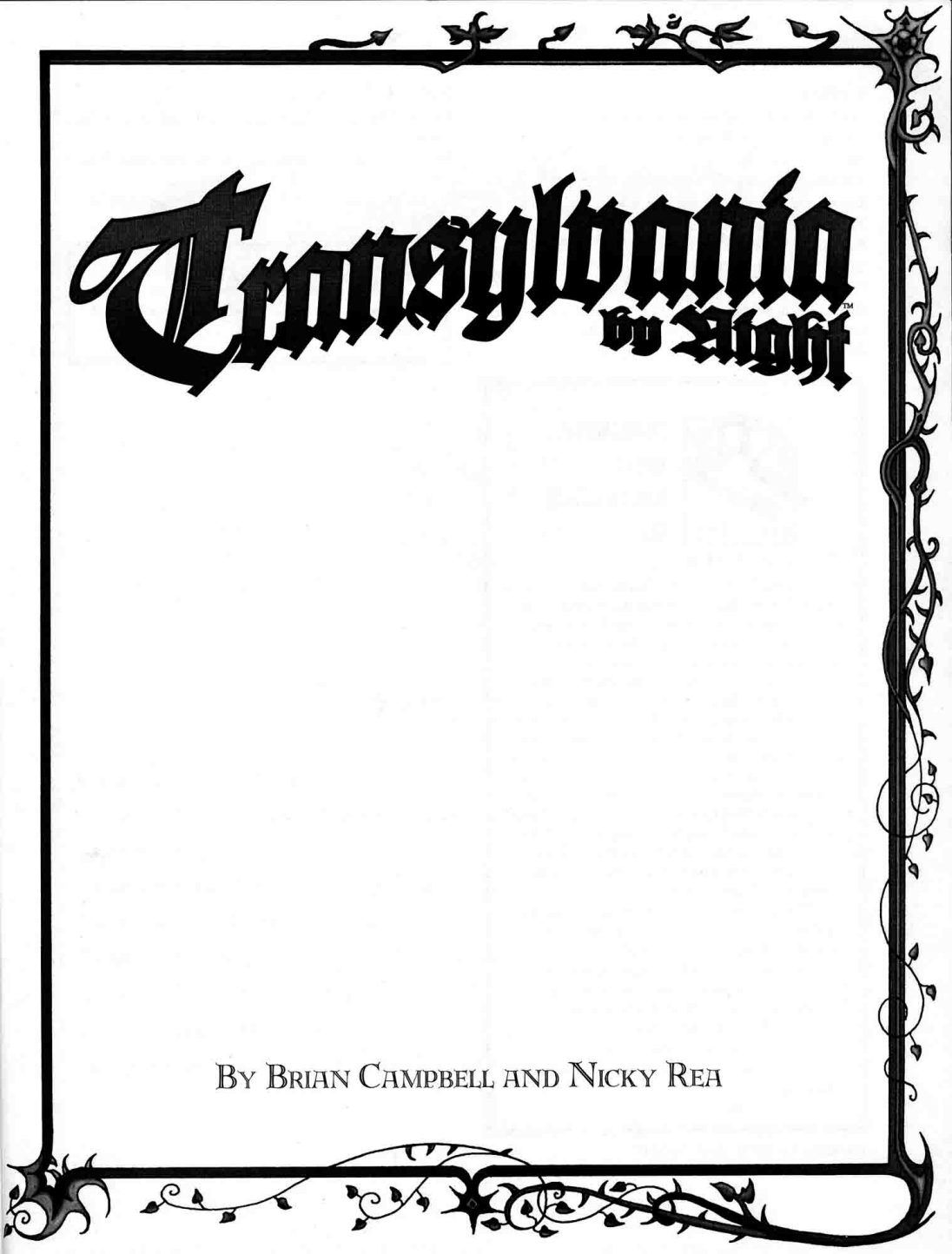


Transylvania

by Night



A SOURCEBOOK FOR VAMPIRE: THE DARK AGES®



Transylvania by Night™

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Brian's Dedication: This book is dedicated to the inventors of Mountain Dew and Cap'n Crunch. Without their wondrous creations, this book would never have been completed.



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TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

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Chapter One: Introduction

This is a land of legends. Generations to come will whisper of haunted, vampire-plagued Transylvania. Over the centuries of the Long Night, Cainite elders will speak of ancient dangers in the lands beyond the forest. The Voivodate of Transylvania will one night become the land where Vlad Tepes visits his retribution against invading Turks, where Romanians curse the oppression of the Hungarians and Szeklers, where Gypsies slave under the yoke of their masters, and where an aging count welcomes an unwitting solicitor from London. As war breaks out in the shadow of the Carpathian Mountains, the legend begins here...in the Dark Medieval world.

AN AGE OF DARKNESS

Many of the struggles and hatreds endemic to Transylvania can be traced back for centuries, or even millennia. Religious division between Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians, strife between Christians and pagans, and political struggles between aristocrats and the oppressed thrive in this dark land. Ethnic conflicts between Romanians, Hungarians, Szeklers, Saxons and Vlachs pass from generation to generation, like a hereditary disease. This is just as true for the undead, who transfer these same burdens from sire to child.

While mortals suffer the result of their hatreds by day, Cainites wage wars and plot horrors by night. Peasants and nobles alike shutter their windows and bar their doors when the sun sets, and few mortals have the courage to travel by moonlight. Of those who do, the most unfortunate are enlisted by the undead and engaged in their devious schemes. Caine's children are the unquestioned masters of the night in Transylvania.

THEMES

The dark holds terrors no mortal can overcome. The daytime lives of serfs and peasants are a sharp contrast to the *dance macabre* enacted by moonlight. In the 12th century, human civilization may appear prosperous while the sun is shining, but its accomplishments are at best a facade. No matter what a mortal liege lord says about the knights who have sworn fealty to him or the protection his vassals promised, the common folk are aware that the nobility cannot save them from the night-fiends. Behind the mask of civility lie the bestial impulses of barbarity. Feudal lords grow wealthy as they witness the suffering of their lessers, yet these same masters know that they, in turn, must pay homage to the lords of the night.

Cainites also speak of civility, but the Beast hungers within the souls of the Damned. Appetites are sated here through methods ranging from the subtle to the grotesque. The undead have their own feudal hierarchies, yet the pretense of civility remains just as false for them. The strong prey upon the weak. Behind the mortal lords are beasts, and behind their cunning societies lie ancient predators. As you pass through these lands, leave the gentle ways of the West behind you.

MOOD

The dominant mood in Transylvanian chronicles is one of enduring hatreds and thus, undying grudges. Heritage defines conflict. Just as race and religion can tear mortal societies apart, much of a vampire's identity is shaped by his affiliations. Individual conflicts often escalate into clan wars. The struggle between the Tremere and Tzimisce is particularly brutal, as the mightiest clan of the Old Country rapidly falls to the insidious schemes of one of the most powerful clans of the new age.

As a coterie ventures into the Balkan Kingdoms, its members' unity will be tested. Vampire lords will seek to set their consanguineous brethren against their enemies, seeing any travelers exploring their domains as potential allies. The vampires of your coterie, however, have an edge over these embittered Cainites. They have access to a greater amount of information because they come from different clans and have learned to work together. It is easier for the members of a coterie to work together if, say, their Tremere can get them into Ceoris, their Gangrel can parley with the armies of the woods, or their Brujah can get them employment in patrols to the east. Clan hatred is an integral part of the mood in the lands beyond the forest, but ingenious vampires can turn this hatred to their advantage. Coterie lacking diversity must tread carefully, lest they be swept away by the currents of bitter rivalry.

There is an accompanying disadvantage. The more allies a coterie makes, the more enemies it will gain. The coterie's Tremere will be abhorred by the Tzimisce, and the steadfast Brujah will be a liability when consulting with the Gangrel. The diversity of a coterie can be an advantage, but fully exploiting it takes work.

A WARNING CONCERNING THE CHOCULA FACTOR

There is another mood that is sometimes evoked in this type of chronicle, one that can be difficult to accommodate. Just as Transylvania is a legendary land, it has been represented countless times in the retelling of that legend, creating many of the enduring clichés of the vampire genre. Running a Transylvanian chronicle can be difficult for this reason. No matter how much research you undertake or how serious your intentions, no matter how badly you want to evoke the pinnacle of horror in gaming, be aware that the mood you seek to attain can be shattered by the first Bela Lugosi impression or bad Romanian accent. Transylvania has also been the land of giant bats on strings and buxom young actresses in low-cut gowns for some. Dialogue from the worst of the *Dark Shadows* episodes can come all too easily. This is the result of the dreaded Chocula Factor.

As a **Vampire** game goes beyond good taste, the influence of the Chocula Factor can become deadly. If you encounter it, one approach is to meet it head on; if you cannot defeat it, use it to your advantage. Unlike chronicles in other parts of Europe, you should not be afraid to steal a plot or two from a Hammer film, engage in too much melodrama, quote *Dracula* a little too freely or shudder dramatically at unspeakable terror. If you are not afraid of the Chocula Factor, you need not take yourself too seriously in your Transylvanian chronicles. Have fun.

WHAT THIS BOOK CONTAINS

The structure of this work differs slightly from that of past **By Night** books, so a few prefatory words are necessary. This book not only details Transylvania, but it also covers most of Eastern Europe. **Chapter One** includes this very laudatory introduction, which describes the tome's contents and presents suggestions for mood and theme. **Chapter Two** details

A WORD ON HISTORICAL ACCURACY

We've done our best to make sure the facts contained within are accurate, but we must voice a disclaimer. This is a game supplement, not a doctoral thesis. Graduate students in Eastern European studies will find flaws in this book, but we freely admit that we have taken some liberties in the interest of drama.

Well, actually, we haven't taken liberties with history so much as we've thrown it down and had our way with it. In many cases, we have "bridged time" — placing buildings, markets, city walls, castles and other sites in our 12th-century Dark Medieval setting when, in fact, they do not appear until the 13th or 14th century in the real world. We attribute this to vampiric influences working to advance the growth of cities.

For example, Buda-Pest in our world began to take shape only after the Mongols swept through in 1240 or so. In the Dark Medieval world, the presence of "vampyr" lords and appetites in the region create the need for a large, well-stocked city as early as the 10th century. Their influence thus speeds up the development of the region. Purists will no doubt be offended by this historical inaccuracy. Yet, horror fans will simply enjoy the sinister castles and dark winding streets, whether they are supposed to be there at this time or not.

Here, then, is a word of warning: Do not quote this book for the sake of history exams. If you must, check out the bibliography and read the sources for yourself. In other words, enjoy the story.

history, setting the conflict between Hungary and Transylvania in the context of Eastern Europe as a whole. **Chapter Three** covers geography, presenting locations ranging from the gates of Constantinople to the cold Russian steppes.

Chapter Four presents over 30 Cainites usable in chronicles set anywhere from Bulgaria to Lithuania. **Chapter Five** details the nefarious antagonists and potential heroes among Clan Tzimisce. In contrast, **Chapter Six** offers an extensive view of the Usurper Clan, the Tremere, including a treatment of Ceoris — their fortress against the marauders of the night.

Chapter Seven gives further ideas for storytelling, including advice on how to handle the mortal aspects of chronicles and religion in Eastern Europe. This chapter also includes a number of "story sketches" for adventures. **Chapter Eight** details the lives of other supernatural creatures, including magi, wraiths, faeries and the dreaded Lupines of the East. And finally, the **Appendix** to this weighty tome gives further information on two revenant families trapped in service to the Tzimisce.

INSPIRATIONAL SOURCES

Whether you prefer your **Vampire** stories brimming with attitude or just this side of a good Hammer flick, many sources are available to give you further ideas of how to expand your chronicle. Some suggestions are:

Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

A History of Hungary, ed. by Peter Sugar

A History of Transylvania by Pascu

Transylvania by Podea

The Early Medieval Balkans by John V.A. Fine, Jr.

A History of Pagan Europe by Prudence Jones & Nigel Pennick

The Slavs by Roger Portal

Lithuania Ascending by S.C. Rowell

Black Lamb and Grey Falcon by Rebecca West

Balkan Ghosts by Steven Kaplan

Travel guides for Eastern Europe and its component countries also provide stunning pictures as well as information on regional arts and culture.





Chapter Two: A Land Bedecked in Darkness

It's not people...it's something that comes out of the ground in certain parts of the world that has an effect on the human psyche, causing man to react in exactly the same way generation after generation

- John Burdett, The Last Six Million Seconds

Space limitations make it impossible to examine every notable event that shaped the lands of Eastern Europe. The histories in this chapter touch on the highlights of each area profiled instead, incorporating known human history with the shadow history of the Cainites. Because of its central location and importance in the ongoing story of these benighted lands, Hungary (and its province of Transylvania) holds pride of place as the most lengthy entry. Anyone wishing to learn more concerning Hungary or any of the other countries depicted here need only check out the reference books mentioned in Chapter One.

BOHEMIA

Although Bohemia holds the remains of 25,000-year-old settlements, its Dark Medieval existence began with the arrival of the Slavs during the sixth and seventh centuries. Traveling through the Carpathian Pass, they entered through the Moravian Gate (one of many open passes through the mountains, which are called "gateways" due to the ease of crossing through them) and into Bohemia. There the Slavs intermixed with Celts and Germans and formed a tribal group under a Frankish merchant named Samo. The newfound kingdom collapsed upon his death.

A great western Slavic tribe led by a charismatic woman named Libussa moved into the area during the seventh century, intermingling with the former inhabitants and settling in great numbers. Libussa, recognizing that her tribe was tired of following her leadership, chose a common plowman named Premysl as her consort and husband. She turned the rulership of her people over to him, after she prophesied that a great city named Prague would someday rise upon their chosen home, a city that would outshine all others.

Or, so the story goes. In actuality, Libussa and her people were host to an ancient Tzimisce, a female warrior of great cunning named Shaagra. Fleeing encroaching barbarians and realizing that her tribe could no longer support her appetite alone, Shaagra used her favorite ghoul, Libussa, to urge them into westward expansion. Taking their place alongside the earlier arrivals, the newly named Premysl nobility began their quest for the throne.

The state of Great Moravia, which included Moravia, Bohemia and western Slovakia, grew strong in 833, when good relations with Byzantium prompted Prince Ratislav to send for Christian missionaries. Cyril and Methodius, known as the apostles of the Slavs, arrived in 863 and converted much of the population to the new state religion. The two also developed the Slavonic Glagolitic script and received permission for sermons to be given in Slavonic after the lesson was read in Latin.

Sometime around 880, the Premysl family began construction of Prazsky Hrad (Prague Castle), which dominates a promontory overlooking the Vltava. The castle was intended to serve not only as a fortress and Premysl family residence, but also as a fortification to guard the resting place of Shaagra. Duke Borivoj was baptized by Bishop Methodius in the same year. He built a wooden church inside the castle five years later and dedicated it to the Virgin Mary.

In 900, seeing a need for more fortifications, Shaagra insisted on building a new stone castle two miles upriver from Prague Castle. Accordingly, her family built the Castle of Chrasten-Vysehrad. Most settlements arose between the two fortresses; the most important one, known as Mala Strana or Little Quarter, sprang up at the foot of Prague Castle.

Intermarriage between the Premysls and other nobles allowed the family to claw its way to the top. Shaagra rewarded useful servants with her potent blood and long life. These servants, in turn, intermarried with close relatives, who were also ghouls, until some within each new generation were born with the Tzimisce's blood already in them. Other family members found strength through the practice of the forbidden arts of magic; some practiced even darker rites. The family of Premysl (some of whom were now revenants) thus emerged as the supreme power in Bohemia, with Prince Wenceslas (also known as Vaclav) as the sole ruler. Other Tzimisce found welcome among Prague's dark streets as long as they acknowledged Shaagra's preeminent place.

Shaagra began to slip into torpor soon after Wenceslas took the throne. Lacking her counsel and direction, Wenceslas was thrown back on his own devices. Attempting to throw off the *vampyr's* yoke, he turned to outside help rather than relying on familial power to hold his throne. Wenceslas swore allegiance to the German Emperor Henry I in 929, which caused the Bohemian ruling classes to withdraw their support for him. German Ventrue entered Bohemia, theoretically to assist Wenceslas, but really to establish themselves politically and economically. They did nothing to stop the murder of the revenant prince only a few years later, hoping to provoke a time of turmoil that would allow them to take complete control.

The prince's brother Boleslav murdered Wenceslas in 935 and created a powerful state, ruling over Bohemia, Slovakia, Moravia and parts of Silesia and southern Poland. His rule was troubled by repeated attacks from the Holy Roman Emperor Otto I. Though Boleslav tried to ignore his familial duties, his relatives made occasional trips into the crypt where Shaagra slept in torpor and fed her the blood of captives. After Boleslav's death by the sword in 967, Boleslav II became prince and stabilized the kingdom. Fearing further attacks from the Christian monarchs of Western Europe, Boleslav appealed to the Pope and founded the Bishopric of Prague in 973. A few Toreador and Lasombra, vying for control of the Church, began to enter Bohemia and establish themselves in Prague.

Bretislav, Boleslav II's successor, achieved the permanent union of Bohemia and Moravia, though he was forced to depend on German advice to keep the Premysls in control. A Ventrue took control of the reins of power for the first time in Bohemia and raised himself to the position of Prince of Prague. He offered alliance to the few Toreador in Prague, simultaneously keeping Bohemia in the Holy Roman Empire and cutting Lasombra rivals out of the Church in Bohemia.



Many mortal wizards and scholars took up residence in Prague, drawn to the city by the presence of Jewish scholars and Kabbalists, who had flocked to the city in hope of protection from persecution. Their Cainite counterparts from House Tremere soon followed. Nosferatu and Cappedocians arrived and found a place in the Jewish ghetto. The practice of medicine thrived here; Jewish surgeons gained great knowledge of anatomy through the study of corpses (unlike Christians, who were forbidden to do so).

In 1091 a devastating fire at Prague Castle prompted the Premysls to move their court to Vysehrad and begin replacing old wooden fortifications with stone ones. Shaagra was moved to a carved cellar beneath Vysehrad Castle, where she remained in torpor.

Briefly held by Poland in 1102, Bohemia reasserted its independence. Attacked by the Hungarians in 1107 and 1112, Bohemia fought off foreign invasion while the various townships that made up the city became more unified. A noted trade route since the beginning of the 10th century, Prague soon boasted a market to rival those of the greatest Western European cities. New buildings sprang up to accommodate the influx of German merchants. One of the first stone bridges in Eastern Europe, Judith Bridge, was constructed around 1157 to connect both banks of the Vltava. Old Town and New Town developed rapidly soon thereafter, with stone houses and Romanesque churches dominating.

A civilizing influence and a center for learning, the Great University of Prague arose in Old Town, financed by the Ventrue prince and the Premysl dynasty. Many of Europe's greatest minds went to teach and study there. With the university came a couple of Brujah parasites, there to study and to seek lands where they could put their philosophies to the test.

The Ventrue ruler of Prague invited a Tremere ally, who was under pressure from the Tzimisce in Hungary, to enter Austria with his cabal and attack Tzimisce holdings there. With the Tzimisce thus occupied, the prince turned his attention to holding off Lasombra rivals in Germany. So, with the collusion of the Ventrue Prince of Bohemia, the Tremere established themselves in Austria, eventually taking Vienna as their new headquarters.

Bohemia remains an autonomous kingdom in 1198, though still a part of the Holy Roman Empire. Its main city of Prague serves as a major trade center and an outpost of civilization on the edge of what most of Europe considers the "barbaric" East. Most people forget that Prague lies further west than Vienna. The people of Eastern Europe see Bohemia as a possible ally against takeover from the West, feeling that here in the "magic city" of Prague the people might understand their views. Poised between East and West, linked to both, but truly part of neither, Bohemia must tread a careful path or be swallowed in the ongoing struggle between opposing cultures.

POLAND

Poland's broad expanse of plains, bounded on the west by the Oder River and by the mighty waters of the Vistula on the east, supported a strong enclave of paganism until the 10th century. Caught between the Holy Roman Empire and the lands of Lithuania and Russia, Poland's many princedoms formed a constantly shifting buffer zone marked by the struggle between the expanding Christian faith and the followers of the older religions. Here, too, Ventrue and Tzimisce have engaged in a battle for supremacy over the mortal population.

The push to Christianize the pagan tribes of Poland began as early as the ninth century, when the chief of the Vistulanian tribe received baptism according to the Slavonic rite out of fealty to Moravia. When the marriage of Prince Miesko I to Princess Dubravka of the Czechs in 965 resulted in Miesko's conversion to Christianity, the Latin Church strengthened its hold on the region and, with it, German Ventrue gained entry into an area long dominated by their Tzimisce rivals.

The Tzimisce lords of Poland, little concerned with whom the pathetic mortals worshipped, nominally embraced Slavic Christianity. They didn't bother to prevent the steady encroachment of Germanic Ventrue, whose mortal emissaries introduced the Latin rite into the region. A Latin missionary bishopric at Poznan supplanted an earlier Slavonic see. The

ecclesiastical province of Polonia arose in conjunction with a consolidated Polish state comprising Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) and Malopolska (Lesser Poland) by the end of the 10th century. In order to prevent a complete takeover by the German Empire, the Tzimisce Razkoljina of Krakow convinced her fellow Tzimisce to allow this union to take place, even though it meant acquiescing to the Latin Church and, therefore, to Rome.

Emperor Otto III visited Poland in A.D. 1000, and he greeted Miesko's successor, Boleslaw Chrobry (called "The Brave"), as an ally. Benedictine monasteries occupied sites in Miedzyrzecz and Tyniec by this time. Boleslaw, who ruled from 992 to 1025, earned his sobriquet through his fearless actions on behalf of Poland. He stormed Prague in 1003 and, 15 years later, marched on Kiev, notching its Golden Gate with his sword. In 1018, the Pope honored Boleslaw with a royal crown, making him Poland's first actual "king."

Nevertheless, paganism continues to exert itself (though furtively) in the Polish countryside, supported and encouraged by the Gangrel Jolanta. Desperate to thwart the schemes of both the Tzimisce and Ventrue, Jolanta participated in the pagan revolt of 1037, a doomed effort to overthrow the grip of the Catholic Church. Although it failed, Jolanta survived to continue her battle against the encroachment of the city on her wilderness, which is becoming even more feral as the city has grown and prospered.



TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

The martyrdom of Stanislaw, Bishop of Krakow, in 1079 exposed a growing rift between secular and clerical authority — and between the Tzimisce and Ventruie masters of Poland. For his defiance of Boleslaw the Bold, the Polish king, Bishop Stanislaw, met a violent death in his own church at the hands of the king's knights.

The capital of Poland moved to Krakow in 1083, where the Piast dynasty transformed the kingdom into Eastern Europe's prime center of Catholicism. This distinction lasted for less than half a century. Continuing rivalry between political and religious factions resulted in the breakdown of the unified Polish Kingdom, culminating in 1146 with the ousting of Vladislav, eldest son of Boleslaw III.

Poland exists as a collection of discrete duchies and principalities in 1198, each with its own Cainite overlord.

HUNGARY

Like much of Europe, this region was once home to Celts. Occupied and incorporated into the Roman Empire, the lands called Hungary were then known as the Province of Pannonia. The Romans fortified the area through the erection of a system of earthen ramparts, which stretched along the Danube River to the Carpathian Basin and the western slopes of the Transylvanian Alps. The empire made its stand here, building strong fortresses and towns. The empire's defenses were upheld by the capital of Pannonia in the west, a fortress-town known as Aquincum (later to be known as Obuda). Constructed on a natural hill overlooking the Danube at the point of a natural ford, Aquincum provided the Romans with a fortified position from which to keep invaders from crossing the river and sweeping onward to Rome. Seeing the flatlands to the other side of the Danube, the Romans realized that another fort and settlement would also slow the advance of foes trying to reach the river. That settlement, Contra-Aquincum, would later form the nucleus of the town of Pest. The Romans also penetrated eastward of the province, crossing the Danube from the south and moving upward into what is now Wallachia.

Humans did not act alone in their attempt to "civilize" the barbaric East. Several Cainites supported the Roman Empire. Those Cainites who were satisfied with Rome's amusements and comforts and those who were most respected and honored chose to remain close to Rome. Their political rivals and a few idealists and rebels were sent (or chose to go) to the far-flung reaches of the empire — including provinces like Pannonia and Dacia.

They attempted to expand the empire northward from Dacia, but every time the legions tried to penetrate the dark lands beyond the fertile Dacian plains, they failed. Living and unliving alike were faced with foes beyond their knowledge and with unexplained opposition from the land itself. Despite having carved out an empire throughout the known world, the fearless Roman soldiers were afraid of the "darkness of the forests."

The darkness in the land was far older than the empire. Since before remembered time, the lands had housed a great demon — a twisted, maddened entity known as Kupala. This abominable thing rested within the deepest caverns of the Carpathian Moun-

tains. Removing his black, gangrenous heart so that he could not be slain by anyone who did not possess that organ, he entombed it in the lightless depths beneath the forested Carpathian foothills. Kupala's evil influence oozed upward and outward, poisoning and infecting the land even as it granted it a breathtaking, wild beauty and an indefinable sense of mystery. Rocks, plants and earth were imbued with power, becoming magical and attracting those beings who could feel their emanations. Madness and psychic disease slowly spread in waves from Kupala's center in Transylvania, reaching outward to encompass lands as far away as Bohemia, Poland, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Russia.

Along with the native Tzimisce who had long ruled and feasted on the Dacians, brutal Shadow Lord werewolves stalked the land. One of their Kinfolk, known as Decebel, King of the Dacians, invaded Pannonia and slaughtered the Roman armies there in the first century A.D., bringing both Dacia and Pannonia under barbarian rule. Emperor Trajan led the Roman armies in an invasion of Dacia in A.D. 106, and Decebel was driven to suicide. Over the next 20 years, the Romans rebuilt their civilization. After fierce fighting with the Dacians, Rome settled some of her soldiers among these independent tribespeople to prevent another uprising. The two cultures merged to become people known as the Romanians. The Shadow Lords retreated to the Transylvanian Alps to lick their wounds.

The stability of the Roman Empire crumbled with the passage of time. Rome withdrew from her northern provinces in 271, leaving the empire's Goth allies to defend the northern border from more "barbaric" invaders. Although many of the wealthy (including most of the Roman Cainites who had come with the legions) chose to evacuate, others (mostly commoners who had established homes in the area) remained and accepted the rule of the Goths.

Defying many Roman senators, Constantine made Byzantium the second Roman capital in 330. The decision to establish a second capital reflected a schism in the empire — one that would eventually divide the Balkans completely. The empire was torn in two, with the west ruled by Rome and the eastern provinces looking to Byzantium, which would later be renamed Constantinople. This division would affect the history of the Balkans well into the 20th century.

With its collapse, Rome's outposts in Dacia and Pannonia were abandoned. Pannonians moved westward, pushed along by invading barbarians, while the Romanians fled to the Carpathian Mountains and into Transylvania. When the Roman troops fled, they left behind a sleeping Cainite, a native of the region who had been Embraced by a Roman Malkavian. This tormented soul had unwittingly bound himself to the demon's heart while mortal, which maddened him with its visions of the future. This made him the perfect candidate for the Malkavian Embrace. The Cainite took the name Octavio, for he believed that eight great signs would portend the awakening of the demon Kupala. After slaying his sire in a moment of madness, Octavio haunted the Roman settlement of Aquincum until he fell into torpor when the legions withdrew. Destruction of some of the town overhead failed to disturb the underground crypt where he lay sleeping.

The Carpathian Basin became an outpost of the Hun Empire in the fifth century. Attila the Hun assaulted the eastern portion of the Roman Empire, driving his troops as far as Constantinople. A huge ransom (and some say, other methods of persuasion by Michael of Clan Toreador, patriarch of the city) dissuaded Attila from pressing further; his kingdom was short-lived.

Less stable kingdoms followed. Gespids routed Huns. Odoacer deposed the last Roman emperor in 476. Theodoric of the Ostrogoths dethroned Odoacer. Kingdoms rose and fell as barbarian hordes moved across the land in waves. Chaos spread throughout the East. Bulgars conquered the southern lands near Constantinople; Slavic tribes invaded the Balkans, sometimes with the assistance of either Shadow Lords or Tzimisce and Gangrel who moved westward with them. The northern Slavs did not come as conquerors, but as settlers. They put down roots in areas where they could farm without coming into conflict with more aggressive tribes. Avars dominated the Carpathian Basin through the seventh and eighth centuries until the power of Charlemagne subdued them. Many accepted Christianity as the price of their continued existence.

The rift between East and West continued to grow as the Byzantine Empire practiced the Eastern Orthodox faith, turning away from Western Europe's Roman Catholic Church. The Balkans remain transfixed by religious war even today, crucified on the altar of differing doctrines. The Orthodox Church, with its veneration of icons and married priests (so unlike the Catholic Church), has remained mysterious and disturbing to the West for centuries.

THE LAND'S ANCIENT MASTERS

Within their ancestral fastnesses in Transylvania dwelt Ancient Ones who preferred to isolate themselves from the tumult of the mortal world. In darkness, the Tzimisce lived in contemplation of the horror within. Communing with the night, infected by the miasma of corruption that lay in their territory, the eldest would sometimes walk among men and be worshipped as gods.

Humanity was never a concept the Tzimisce understood. Endless experimentation on the mortals they bred brought them knowledge, but never understanding. The Tzimisce built their temples within caves and labyrinths in the eastern Carpathians. The greatest of these shrines was created by the Methuselah Yorak. Ghouled servitors brought Yorak abducted mortals, from whom he fed. Breeding and experimenting on them, he soon began to craft them into elaborate sculptures that stretched across the walls of his meditation chamber. Thus, the Cathedral of Flesh took its abhorrent and unnatural shape.

While many of the childer of Tzimisce spread throughout Europe, the Old Country Tzimisce became increasingly introspective. Seeking to understand the Beast Within through working horrors upon their own (or others') flesh, they became an alien race — more monstrous than human. The shadows over Transylvania deepened as many fell to the demon's madness.

The land's current history begins with the arrival of the Hungarians, or, as they called themselves, Magyars. The name "Magyar" derives from the Turkish word "Onogurs," meaning "10 arrows," indicating they once were a confederation of 10 tribes. They originated near the Ural Mountains, where Shadow Lords watched over their development. Many of these fierce warriors were Shadow Lord Kinfolk. Seven of those tribes lived a nomadic life in the Khazar Khanate, acting as soldiers for the Kagan, by the seventh century. The strongest tribe was the Magyars, and all seven tribes eventually became known by that name.

When they refused to help the Kagan put down an uprising, the Magyars had to leave their homes. Many Shadow Lords went with them, traveling westward in search of new caerns. Led by a charismatic leader named Arpad, the Magyars migrated westward across the Carpathians and entered the Alföld in 895. In light of later events, when the chieftains of the tribes chose Arpad to lead them, they swore fealty to him and his male issue by the ritual drinking of their mingled blood.

Each of the tribes was given a portion of the land they entered for their home. Arpad's tribe took the land around Buda. Then began a period that Hungarians refer to as "the adventure." Years of lightning-quick horseback raids across the Danube and into Western Europe ensued. The Magyars plundered Bavaria and northern Italy. The name Hungarian was similar to "Hun," and the Magyars did not apprise the terrified Westerners that they were no relation to the terrible Attila.

In 933, Emperor Henry the Fowler led heavily armed knights against the Magyars and defeated them. *Agyula* of the Arpads made an alliance that would ensure the success of his warriors in 948. Bulscu, a fierce leader known as the "Man of Blood," made a treaty with the rulers of Constantinople. By accepting Orthodox Christianity in Byzantium, he gained the support of the mortal Patriarch of the Orthodox Church. Michael of Clan Toreador also allied with Bulscu, seeking a tool to use against the Holy Roman Empire.

Hungarian cavalry assaulted Western Europe. The Hungarian race had lived by tribal warfare for centuries, and their warriors spread like wildfire throughout the German lands. Supernatural assistance aided them. Michael had enlisted allies, as certain Balkan Brujah were eager to join his crusade against the north. The Teutonic Venture held power there, and a military assault on their domains would weaken them.

The undead leader of these Brujah was Dominic, a vengeful warrior who had witnessed the destruction of Carthage firsthand. His soul hungered for vengeance and the struggle presented him with an opportunity. Dominic and other warriors of his clan accompanied units of Hungarian cavalry in their raids to the north. There were still Kinfolk in the warriors' ranks as well.

The patriarch employed a devious tactic to further the efforts of this alliance. The most promising mortal warriors were allowed to feast on Brujah vitae on the eve of battle. Strengthened by Cainite blood, Kinfolk ghouls were made into ferocious fighters. In return for this assistance from the Brujah, a few of

these select mortals would accept the Embrace. Dominic, in particular, had designs on the mortal ruler Bulscu, as he considered him a promising weapon against Ventruite rivals.

Bulscu's success attracted other interested manipulators, however. His fame grew as the Hungarians became more powerful. The petty nobles of the north were forced to bow before him, yet Bulscu was seduced by the dominating voice of a powerful German Ventruite named Heinrich of Volstag. Outraged at the audacity of Michael's pawns and the temerity of the Brujah who rode with them into battle, Heinrich knew that leading Bulscu astray would further his revenge. The Man of Blood had an unshakeable addiction for vitae, and his strongest warriors lusted after the power Cainite blood could grant them. While his warriors hungered for the vitae of the Brujah, Bulscu dreamed of the power held by the Ventruite.

Otto, the Holy Roman Emperor, fought the Hungarian horde to a standstill in 955. Their raiding days being over, the Magyars retired to the Carpathian Basin. Bulscu succumbed to the Embrace of his Ventruite mentor, strengthening his family's power over Hungary. Trade with the West became a source of riches for the Arpads.

Members of the family were selectively baptized into darkness. Under their influence, mortal Arpads continued to make Hungary into a monarchy styled after those in Western Europe. Zombar, the son of Bulscu, became an emissary to Constantinople by 953 and after ritually feeding upon Ventruite vitae, he proclaimed his loyalty to the mortal patriarch, the Toreador Michael, and the Ventruite of the city.

Eastern Hungary, known as Transylvania or "the land beyond the forest," was reluctant to accede to the desires of the Magyars. In the mortal sphere, tension steadily mounted between the descendants of the Dacian-Roman settlers and the Magyar invaders. By night, Transylvanian vampires turned against the Magyar Ventruite. The Sept of the Night Sky prepared for war against the new invaders in the shadow of the southern Carpathians.

The descendants of the Arpads continued to gain power. Geza, a mortal Arpad ruler, realizing that the West would soon attack his lands, reasoned that his people's only hope was in converting to Catholicism. Although wooed by both Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, Geza and his family converted to Roman Catholicism in 975. Western leaders were forced to cancel plans to invade Hungary, as it now became the newest conquest of the Pope. Emissaries to the Imperial Diet in the Holy Roman Empire solidified the trade routes through Hungary. Geza sued for peace with Otto, received missionaries to convert his people, and moved to Esztergom, where he maintained a bodyguard of Bavarian knights, to whom he deeded large estates.

However, Geza also wanted to make peace with the eastern peoples of his kingdom. Although he had been baptized as a Christian, he began to publicly venerate the pagan gods. On one hand, he broke the power of the shamans secretly operating in his kingdom; on the other, he attempted to spread a bastardized version of the Christian religion to unify the land.

When Geza took a wife, he chose the sister of the *gyula* of Transylvania. Her religion was unfortunately an affront to many of those who followed the Roman Catholic Church. Her faith was described by religious leaders as "worse than barbarism" because it was infected with paganism.¹ Religious disagreement was rife during this time.

Before his death, Geza was recruited into the kingdom of the undead. Bulscu's Embrace and the transition unnerved him greatly. Far from being grateful for the immortality that Bulscu had bestowed upon him, Geza developed an abiding hatred for his sire. He had always thought of his association with the Roman Catholic Church as useful to his kingdom, though of little personal importance. Now he saw himself as corrupted by evil, forever damned and forever exiled from the Kingdom of Heaven. The mere sight of the cross forced him into apoplexy at first. Later, he was seduced by the dark taint of the land.

Determined to overcome this horror, Geza fled to the city of Esztergom. There, he took his revenge on the Church. His ghoul servants, innocent children who had served the churches at a younger age, were taught rituals of desecration. Geza prayed for the forces of the infernal to guide their hands. The thought of former altar boys invoking the names of the ancient Slavic gods brought him endless amusement.

He then allied with some members of Clan Malkavian to corrupt the servants of the Roman Catholic Church. Hungarian Malkavians rallied around their elders, delighted at the irony of this unholy association. Under Geza's guidance, the clan pursued its mission throughout the next centuries. Behind the facade of the Church he had aided in breathing days, Prince Geza of Esztergom — the so-called "Archbishop" of Hungary — gained great power. His anger knew no bounds when he discovered that Bulscu had Embraced one of the Bavarian knights who had served as Geza's bodyguard. That his sire would Embrace a mere knight, making him the equal of one who had been King of Hungary, turned Geza completely against Bulscu and prompted him to plot revenge.

Geza's son, Istvan, educated as a Christian knight, was crowned King of Hungary on Christmas Day in the year 1000. Istvan then issued an edict: Henceforth all in his kingdom (except Jews and Muslims) must convert to Christianity. Istvan invited foreigners — especially Germans — to come into Hungary and settle. Though he ruled from Esztergom, the twin cities of Buda and Pest rose and became one, their growth spurred on by Ventruite trading interests. As the city once again came to life, Octavio stirred from his long sleep and began to walk the night again. Angered that time had passed him by, he sought omens of the eight great signs that portend the awakening of the demon.

Monastic orders began to settle in Hungary, including the Cistercian and Benedictine monks. Ten bishoprics developed a network of churches, and pilgrimage routes leading through Constantinople to Jerusalem were established. The force of Catholicism brought national unity. Laws soon prohibited serfs from moving too far from the church, and burial grounds were established near churches, tying ancestor worship to Christian

holy grounds. While western Hungary turned ever more toward Western Europe and civilization, eastern Hungary (known as Transylvania) became a war zone where new German settlers and Hungarian nobles subjugated the Romanians' descendants.

Istvan was angered by the resistance in the eastern fringes of his kingdom. After executing his cousin in the east, whom he declared an "incestuous pagan," Istvan then moved against the *gyula* of Transylvania. Vicious battles gave way to atrocities, with each side inflicting needless cruelties and no side giving quarter. Hungarian Catholics took the lands of those Orthodox Romanians who refused to convert, and the Dacian remnants were made serfs. Spurred on by the upheaval, paganism flourished.

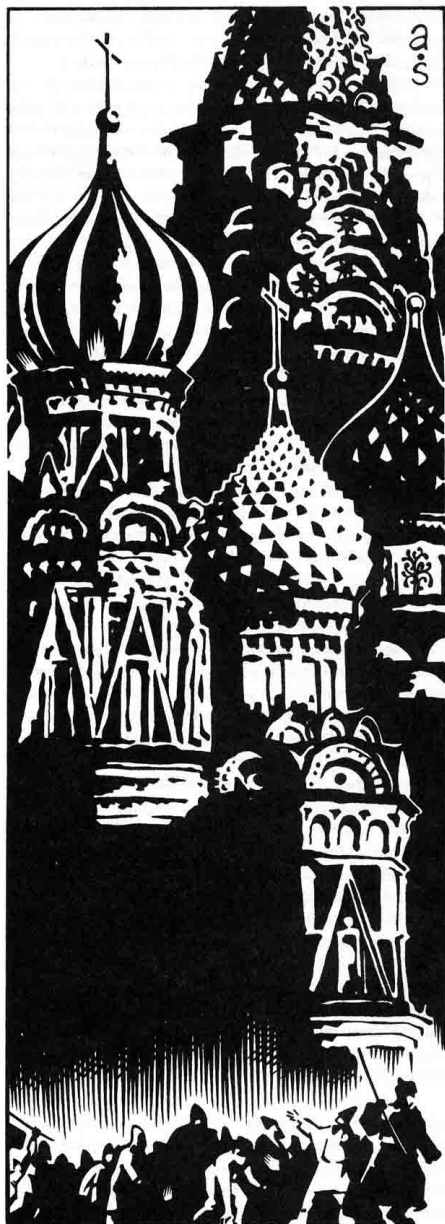
By night, blood warfare between Ventruie and Tzimisce ensued. Open warfare between Cainites was disastrous for the mortal populace. The villagers of Transylvania learned to bar their doors and windows at night. All business ended at sundown. By moonlight, ghouled warriors charged into the darkest parts of the Carpathian Mountains and the Tzimisce's unholy shrines. Civilization was at risk once again. Undead packs openly fought against the fleshcrafted ghouls of the Tzimisce.

The war against the east was far more successful by day. Istvan's troops captured the *gyula* of Transylvania and Istvan annexed his lands. While the sun shone, the lands were safe, but when the sun set, the facade went asunder. Patrols of Hungarian Cainites slaughtered the abominations that were spawned in darkness. Yet, it would take another faction to drive back the Tzimisce, the Usurper Clan known as the Tremere.

For many years, mortal wizards in search of the key to immortality had maintained a chantry named Ceoris high in the Transylvanian Alps. These magi were always desirous of more power, especially the gift of immortality. When they discovered a ritual that would grant them this boon, they captured and used Tzimisce vampires in their magical ritual of change. By thus becoming Cainites, they made undying enemies of the Fiends. Quick to seize the opportunity, the Ventruie allied with the Tremere, offering them supplies, assistance and funds to wage their war against the Tzimisce. Glad of the support, the Tremere quickly accepted.

Istvan's actions on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church led to his canonization as St. Stephen, patron saint of Hungary. He ruled a prosperous kingdom, but his death in 1038 brought decades of turmoil.

The Byzantine Emperor Manuel I tried to reconcile his empire's differences with the Kingdom of Hungary in 1071. Prince Bela, heir presumptive to the throne of Hungary, was also declared as Manuel's heir. Uprisings in Byzantium gave him an opportunity to seize Balkan lands controlled by Manuel, and Bela was soon a powerful leader in his kingdom. Under King Bela, the Kingdom of Hungary almost outshone Constantinople. The glories won by the king have been lovingly chronicled by a scribe in Bela's employ, a monkish figure known only as Anonymus [sic]. Esztergom has become an archbishopric, and many monasteries dot the countryside.



TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

Bela established monopolies on coinage, customs, castle construction and decisions regarding immigration. Hungary welcomed foreigners who could bring knowledge to the country — if they could pay additional taxes to Bela. Though much of Bela's wealth supported his Cainite relatives' luxury, Bela remained one of the wealthiest rulers of the era.

With a strong ruler on the throne, fairs and markets intensified trade. Muslims, Jews, Russians, Italians and Germans traded in weapons and wax, silver and leather, copper and enamel. Mining in Transylvania also filled the coffers of the kingdom.

With Bela's death, his son Imre is king, and the land waits to see where he will lead them. But even as some parts of Hungary have gained a degree of stability, the peasants know better than to stray from their homes by night. An even greater war rages on beneath the thin veneer of peace. The land itself is accursed and that sickness courses through all that exists within it.

The wild and dangerous region of Transylvania, awarded to Istvan when the Pope declared him King of Hungary, has always considered itself a separate territory. Remnants of the Dacian-Roman people claim to have been in the area when the Magyars passed through during their migration westward. Many Romanian *boyars* (nobles) claim titles stretching back for centuries. Romanian *boyar* families usually claim ancestral holdings, often fortresses or castles that oversee several small villages nearby. Because centers of population are so small, much of the land is left untilled, the forests uncut.

This suits the Gangrel who roam the area, as well as the Lupine Shadow Lords, who have long been a major power in Transylvania. The Shadow Lords acknowledge Kinfolk living in villages throughout the land. Although the Lords have an intense hatred for the Tzimisce *voivodes* who rule over the mortal population, they have never been able to eradicate them. Nonetheless, they have managed to keep the mortal population relatively small, which has limited the *voivodes'* power. Ironically, the depredations of the Tzimisce provide an equally effective cull for the populace.

The Hungarian king is sending in nobles, German merchants and farmers to build towns in Transylvania. Large settlements and cities threaten to arise for the first time. The old Romanian nobles cling desperately to their Orthodox faith. Displaced by Roman Catholic Szeklers and Magyars, the Vlachs (as the Romanians are known) have become serfs working the lands their Hungarian overlords have usurped. Breaking the old Romanian nobility has greatly weakened the arrogant Tzimisce, who have long depended on their support. A talented and intelligent Ventru, Nova Arpad, has been instrumental in this movement. The Szeklers' and Magyars' success in subduing the native populace has greatly enhanced Nova's reputation among her clan.

The Saxons support the Magyar rulers. Invited to settle in Transylvania, many German peasants moved south to escape heavy taxes and to gain the chance to become more than mere serfs. In exchange for financial obligations to the western

kingdom, Saxon peasants gained hereditary titles. The head of each village, for instance, gained the title of "Count" and was entitled to a larger plot of land.

Seven great cities were founded by the Saxons. Notable for their size, and for the creation of early castles and fortifications that made them more defensible, each city has risen to prominence within its respective domain. This concerted effort also resulted in the frequent use of German names for Transylvanian cities. Thus, the "Siebenburgen" is a term that applies to the seven cities as well as the castles within them.

One of the Siebenburgen was controlled by Nova Arpad, who watched over six princes chosen from the region itself. These seven Cainite princes allied and formed a coterie known as the Council of Ashes a few generations ago.

The Tzimisce refused to acknowledge the authority of this council; the invasion of the Hungarians was an affront, peace with the Holy Roman Empire meant nothing to them, and the growing power of the Szekler nobles threatened their power base and their control over the Transylvanian peasants. The Tzimisce lords maintained their domains, flaunting their power despite the efforts of Western Cainites.

One domain remained fully under Tzimisce control. In the city of Bistritz, far from western Hungary, Radu of Clan Tzimisce maintained his fiefdom. Though openly disavowed as a traitor by many of his Carpathian clanmates, this cunning diplomat ensured that his allies learned of the Council of Ashes' activities. The information he discovered helped his allies to betray the council, and within a few scant decades, it was disbanded.

Nova Arpad, despised by many of the council members, has been captured by Transylvanian Cainite partisans allied with the Tzimisce. A pretender, the Nosferatu Ruxandra, has taken her place. Any Cainite willing to declare himself as a prince recognized by the Hungarian Ventru becomes little more than a target. Vengeful Tzimisce, crafty Usurpers, incendiary Brujah, outraged Shadow Lords — there is no shortage of enemies for those who seek to impose their order on a land infested with chaos.

Formerly an area dominated by mountain fortresses and a few small villages, Transylvania is acquiring a network of trading settlements and trade routes linking it to the West. In short, Transylvania is undergoing massive change — and almost none of the prior residents will accept it without a fight.

The main combatants, the Tzimisce, have a different battle on their hands. Although Gangrel and Nosferatu stalk the wilds of Transylvania, these lands are the Fiends' territories first and foremost. Territorial to the extreme, the Tzimisce must lie in their native earth when they rest. This earth sustains them even as it infuses them with its poisonous emanations. Though the youngest Tzimisce are little affected, their elders have spent centuries bathing in these dark energies, leaving them no choice but to defend their domains or die.

Staging ground for the Tremere-Tzimisce war that rages throughout the region, Transylvania has little energy left to fight off her conquerors from the West. Cainites journeying

through the region are at risk from every side, never more so than if they supposedly have a safe conduct. Mortals often become fodder for the slaughter. Even traveling in large groups is no guarantee against attack from one faction or another. All the former *boyars* and peasants can do is lock their doors, shutter their windows and pray the carnage passes them by.

Thus, the late 12th century in Transylvania is a time of great turmoil. For ambitious Cainites who can act quickly, it is still possible to secure control of a large domain. Competition is fierce, however. Wars between the Fiends and Usurpers, rivalries between Cainites seeking control of the remaining domains, and the continual threat of the Lupines pose great hazards to those who desire to create kingdoms. There is a chance to seize great power here, but there is also great peril. Idealists who desire to conquer a divided land will no doubt find their visions tested to destruction in Transylvania by night.

BULGARIA

Bulgarian history stretches back at least four millennia before the birth of Christ, centering around the Black Sea coast at Varna. Nomads from the steppes of Central Asia made homes for themselves in this idyllic land of forested mountains, rich valleys and lush plains. Nevertheless, the region's fertile fields stood ripe for conquest by the armies of Alexander and, in turn, the Roman Empire. Ventrue and Toreador arrived with these conquerors but found the unsophisticated frontier of Bulgaria inhospitable and the local Tzimisce downright hostile.

The Huns occupied Bulgaria after the fall of Rome, eventually intermingling with Slavic tribes who entered the region in the sixth century. This particular "mix" of peoples produced a warlike, expansionist civilization, feared by the western lands of Europe and by Constantinople as well. The Ugri, as they called themselves, became known throughout Europe as the "Bulgars."

The struggle to Christianize Bulgaria encompassed most of two centuries and mirrored the clashes between Tzimisce lords. Despite the conversion in 611 of the Bulgarian King Kurt, the vast majority of people remained loyal to their traditional deities. Casting an avaricious eye on the Byzantine Empire, the pagan King Krum took advantage of the ongoing battle between the Greeks and the Arabs in 811 to attack and slay the Emperor Nicophorus. The late emperor's silver-plated skull served as a drinking vessel for the victorious Bulgarian ruler and enraged the armies of Constantinople.

The Greeks blockaded Bulgaria's coastal waterways 50 years later and succeeded in forcing the Bulgarians to adopt their version of Christianity. A brief return to paganism by King Vladimir near the end of the ninth century lasted until the reign of Vladimir's brother, Simeon the Great. Simeon incorporated the Christian religion into his scheme to forge Bulgaria into a power rivaling Constantinople. Under Simeon's rule, the Bulgarian warriors, living up to their fierce reputation, drove the Magyars into what would become known as

Hungary. From their fortresses in the mountains of Bulgaria's interior, Tzimisce *voivodes* orchestrated the push to rid Bulgaria of "foreign" (particularly Ventrue and Brujah) influences.

Attacks from Kiev during the 10th century weakened the Bulgarians, so that eventually Constantinople asserted its dominance over its warlike neighbor, bringing Bulgaria under Byzantine rule in 1018. This act opened up Bulgaria once more to influence by Cainites from outside the region, who now found Byzantine Bulgaria more to their liking.

Byzantine rule has stifled Bulgaria's development as a power, subsuming its culture and reducing the importance of its religious leader. Little by little, Constantinople instituted changes that bled Bulgaria's economy of potential wealth. Local customs and language fell by the wayside or suffered active persecution, while the Bulgarian aristocracy found itself displaced by nobles imported from Constantinople, several of whom served Ventrue and Toreador interests. The few native landowners allowed to remain did so at the cost of their loyalty. Divisiveness among the Tzimisce reached new heights at this time due to the diverging political currents sweeping over Bulgaria.

Popular resentment against the Byzantine overlords grew, sparking a series of rebellions beginning as early as 1040, with the liberation of a large portion of Bulgarian territory by Peter Delyan, known as the "tsar" of Bulgaria. Though his reign was short-lived due to the treachery of greedy relatives and the machinations of one faction of Tzimisce, he set a precedent that would repeat itself throughout the remainder of the century. Three more uprisings between 1072 and 1086 ended in failure, but Bulgaria's point was made.

Bulgaria has seen a succession of bloody conflicts for most of the 12th century. The armies of the First and Second Crusades left their mark on the Bulgarian countryside as they tramped across Europe to the Holy Land. Renewed barbarian incursions from the eastern steppes threw the burden of defending Europe and the Byzantine Empire wholly onto the backs of the Bulgarians. Marauding Gangel and packs of Silver Fangs from the Russian lands harried the local Cainites for a good part of the 1100s. The struggle to preserve their lands and people from the depredations of European and Asian raiders deflected further attempts at throwing off the Byzantine yoke.

Constantinople, occupied by threats from the Seljuk Turks and beleaguered by the advent of the crusaders *en route* to Jerusalem, was unable to assist the Bulgarians in the defense of their lands. Nonetheless, by the end of the century, the old dreams of Bulgarian independence resurged as the native aristocracy reasserted their warrior heritage and again began an extended campaign to rid themselves of the Byzantine yoke. Despite the divided sympathies of the Tzimisce, the push for independence commenced.

Under the leadership of brothers Peter and Ivan Asen, the Bulgarians initiated a new assault on their Byzantine masters in 1186. Bulgaria currently stands on the verge of achieving its dream. While some Tzimisce *voivodes* continue to support Byzantium, others feel that only an independent Bulgaria will ensure their continuing supremacy in the region.

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

LITHUANIA

The ferocity of the aurochs, boar and wolf which roamed the forest was matched only by the stubborn resistance of the human population to the unwelcome attention of neighboring Christian armies.

— Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending*

In 1197, the geographic region of Lithuania is about to come under siege. Lithuania is one of the last pagan territories of Europe, and Christian knights are eager to subdue Aistian tribes that have lived there for millennia. Legends of barbarous pagan practices will be used to justify the violent oppression of what has been historically a very isolationist nation. The only crime the Lithuanians are guilty of is holding religious beliefs different than those of the Western Christians, but over the next few years, that will be enough to earn them bloody retribution.

Many histories of Lithuania begin in the 13th century, for the region will not be truly recognized as a kingdom until around 1223. King Mindaugas, through intertribal marriage, assassination and military prowess, will unify the Aistian tribes at this time. The princes who are not defeated in battle or married into his family will be exiled to Rus to conquer the furthestmost regions seized by the king. Facing outside opposition, however, he will later be forced to accept Christianity as part of the Lithuanian religion. As with other kingdoms, this will encourage discourse and diplomacy between his people and other Christian nations.

However, this declaration will take a slightly different cast in Lithuania than in, say, Hungary or Bulgaria. Accepting the teachings of Christ within the Kingdom of Lithuania will mean adding Him to their extensive pantheon. Incorporating another deity into their practices and beliefs will prove much easier than turning away from a system of belief that has formed the basis of Lithuanian culture for countless centuries. The worship of the old gods will not be abandoned. In addition, Mindaugas's recognition of the Christian faith will earn him favor with the Pope, who will grant him the right to seize lands in Rus and further east in 1253. By 1260, however, Mindaugas will renounce Christianity and his apostasy will increase Lithuania's isolation from the West. Lithuania will remain predominantly pagan for centuries.

Prior to the reign of Mindaugas, the territory of Lithuania consists of a vast array of pagan tribes. While many of them worship the same gods, the pagans have no central organization behind their government. Customs vary greatly from one region to another, and despite the claims of many Western scholars that there is a central religious authority in Lithuania, religious beliefs vary greatly from one domain to another. There are, however, a few unifying aspects of the tribal lands of Lithuania: They are one people, the Aistians, and they have built their civilization over centuries.

The Aistian tribes lived on the shores of the Baltic Sea in the 11th century and consisted of four main groups: the Old Prussians, Yatvegians, Letts and Lithuanians. Most of these



A LAND BEDECKED IN DARKNESS



tribes have since been annihilated. (The Old Prussians were destroyed by the Teutonic Knights, the Yatvegians were slaughtered by Eastern Slavs and Poles, and the Letts were subjugated by the Livonian Order.) Isolated by the Baltic Sea, extensive forests and elaborate marshlands, the Aistians had little desire to migrate as far as many of the other ancient tribes. Although they benefited from settling between the great trade routes of the Vistula and the Dnieper, they had limited contact with the outside world.

The first record of the name "Lithuania" used in a document comes from *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, the work of a German scholar in A.D. 1009. There are, however, written records of the Lithuanian region dating back to the Roman Empire. Several Roman scholars, including Tacitus, wrote of the cultures of the Baltic region. Among other things, Romans traded with the Aistians. Wax, furs, honey, salt and amber were common trading items. The early Aistians were also known, oddly enough, for their skill of beekeeping. During the later years of the Roman Empire, the Aistians were subjugated by Hermanaric, a Gothic king, but the conquest was relatively short-lived. Trade continued, especially with other Finnic tribes and the occasional Arabic or Greek merchant.

In the eighth century, the region now known as Lithuania was brought to Charlemagne's attention. His intent was to spread Christianity throughout Europe, and he sought more information on peoples outside his empire's grasp. Accordingly, he demanded

more information on the populace living on the northern shores of the Baltic. His scouts brought back reports of the Lithuanians, but Charlemagne's grip never extended into Lithuania.

The Vikings posed a far more immediate threat. They ravaged the Baltic coast after the year 800, launching their attacks on Aistian territories from a series of outposts along the Baltic Sea. Much of their activity involved securing control over the mouth of the Dvina River and lands near the Dnieper, where Viking colonists protected their most frequent trade routes to Byzantium. By the turn of the millennium, however, all of the Vikings' outposts along the Baltic shores had been destroyed.

As with the Balkan nations, Lithuanian advancements in agriculture brought about a feudal system of government. Fallow farming and animal husbandry increased the yield of plants and animals in the early 10th century, and the introduction of the potter's wheel made it easier to store foodstuffs.

Hill forts were used to defend the lands of farming communes, as they were easy to erect and defend. Stockpiles of kindling were often kept on nearby hilltops for signal fires. When these bonfires were lit, families and livestock would be led into the hill forts or driven into the woods. Some of the largest fortifications were quite extensive and sometimes several were interconnected to facilitate communication or to aid in escape from one to another. Secret passageways, networks of tunnels and submerged stone bridges leading across rivers and lakes made traveling between hill forts easier.

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

The Lithuanians' agricultural society was built around the farms and castles of elite warriors. The "kunigai" (dukes) and "bajorai" (noble servants) were the strongest and wealthiest defenders of the land. Several families would unify under an elective leader during times of war. Regional leaders could, over time, become "kunigaikštis" (princes). (In fact, there would be over 20 of these princes by the early 13th century.) As with other nations, their wealth had a price: the obligation to raise armies to defeat invaders.

A kunigas was often both a military and religious leader. The title means "priest" today. As with other pagan societies, the prince-priest had to be fierce in battle and wise in the ways of the world. The chief of the warrior princes, the grand duke, functioned as a high priest in addition to serving as a political leader. A bajoras was a soldier and farmer, and typically protected a large tract of land. By comparison, ordinary "ukinikas" (freemen) did not hold as much wealth or land. They paid taxes to the grand duke, and they were obligated to go to war with their own weapons, assist in the repair of hill forts, and perform guard duties. Through hard work, a freeman could become a bajoras. Bankrupt farmers became bondsmen, paying off their debts by farming the lands of the bajorai to whom they were indebted.

This feudal system of the Lithuanian princes was sorely tested over the next few centuries. As the regions became more prosperous, the Aistans were raided again by Northmen, including Swedes and Varangians. Lithuania was also invaded by the feudal armies of Poland and Rus from the 11th century onward. Over the next two centuries, before the reign of Mindaugas, invaders would come from both East and West.

To the East, enterprising Scandinavian merchants organized the local Slavs in the later part of the ninth century. Their loose political alliance formed the structure of Rus and they established their capital at Kiev. To secure the safety of their trade routes, Kievan rulers launched a series of military expeditions against the Aistans. Vladimir of Rus defeated the Yatvegians in 983 and routed them to their easternmost territories in 1038 and 1040. By 1044, Yaroslav attacked the Lithuanian Aistans and founded a settlement nearby. When Yaroslav died in 1054, however, the Ruthenian state (that is, the territories of Rus) disintegrated into small principalities.

Despite their success against other Aistan tribes, the Slavs of the East (and their Tzimisce parasites) constantly quarreled, which prevented their unity against the Lithuanians. In fact, it was not uncommon for the Easterners to enlist the aid of the Lithuanians in settling their disputes. As an example, Volodar Glebovich of Novgorod asked for the aid of the Lithuanians against the dukes of the Principality of Polock in 1159 and 1162, but in 1180, it was Vsevolod of Polock who asked for Lithuanian aid against Novgorod. As a result of the gradual disintegration of power in the East, the Lithuanians assumed the rule of all of the Aistan peoples and began to abandon their defensive policies set up against

the Eastern Slavs. Novgorod and Polock countered this by entering into a mutual assistance pact against Lithuania, but they will be defeated in 1198.

Many of the written accounts of Lithuania prior to the reign of Mindaugas have been skewed by a Western bias. Medieval scholars found it easy to portray the pagans of the Baltic region either as a threat to the Christian way of life or as a primitive and violent people. This belief was not shared by all scholars, however. One account that remains of Lithuanian culture was written by Peter of Dusburg, an early 14th-century scholar. He speaks of the Balts' virtue: They do not covet wealth, nor do they dine on fine foods; they do not succumb to decadent luxury; they show their guests humility; they drink pure water, mead and milk; no one is allowed to endure poverty; the poor and needy are welcomed; and murder is punished by a *lex talionis*. His account shows many stereotypically "Christian" values and is written in a style to shame the medieval Western reader.

However, some of Peter's details are questionable. He states that the pagans of Lithuania practiced polygamy, despite the fact that there is no evidence of it. In addition, he also continued the legend of the Krivė, a "pagan pope" who was the central religious authority of the Lithuanians. This high priest ruled allegedly from a temple or city known as Romuva, though no evidence of this locale has been found. Although many of Peter's other ideas would be ignored, this legend of a hidden high priest would continue for centuries.

After their conversion of the Poles in the early 10th century, religious Europeans began to concentrate more of their resources on converting the Aistans. Adalbert (the Bishop of Prague) and Bruno of Magdeburg are known as the first missionaries to the region. Adalbert entered the lands of the Old Prussians, but his efforts led to his martyrdom in 997. Bruno was appointed by Pope Sylvester II as the apostle to the pagans of the north, but he was put to death by the Yatvegians in 1009. Resolute in their beliefs, the Aistans did not welcome the proselytizing of the Christians.

Those who followed suffered the same fate as Adalbert and Bruno. Meinhard, from St. Augustine's Monastery at Sieberg, spent 12 years trying to Christianize the Livs and Letts, but he was killed in 1196. Bishop Berthold, his successor, declared that conquest should precede conversion. Although he will die in battle in 1198, this declaration demonstrates the prevailing attitude many Christians have toward Lithuanian pagans in the Dark Medieval era: If they will not convert of their own free will, they must be forced to do so.

The baptism of the Lithuanian pagans will be enacted through the sword at the turn of the century. Within a few scant years, German crusaders will establish a fortress in Lithuania, and one crusader, Albert, will establish the *Frates Militae Christi*, the "Brothers of Soldiery in Christ." They will wage war against the pagan peoples of the Eastern Baltic to subdue them and force their conversion. In the Dark Medieval world, the assault on Lithuania has just begun....

KIEVAN RUS

Occupied since Neolithic times, the site which would be known in medieval times as Kiev served as a center for trade along the Dnieper River. An ancient Slavic settlement flourished in this geographically central area as early as the second century B.C. The area's abundant grain and wood made it an agricultural paradise, while plentiful game and iron for making weapons provided everything the people needed to survive and prosper.

The actual date for the founding of a city known as "Kiev" (or Kyiv) is 482, according to legend. Kyi, the prince of the Eastern Slavic tribe known as the Polians, is considered the founder of the city. Three brothers — Kyi, Khorev, and Shchek — along with their sister Lybid brought their tribe to the area and settled there, raised a city on the spot and named it for the eldest brother, Kyi.

The town served as a waystop along the caravan routes from Central Asia and as a well-defended part of the "Varangian Road" — the waterways that Vikings passed either on their way to trade with or raid Byzantium. The area also became a crossing place for the many barbarian hordes that journeyed from East to West. Scythians, Huns, Avars, Magyars and Bulgarians all passed through the lands claimed by Kiev, moving westward to claim territories that would become Eastern Europe.

Allying with similar towns (such as Novgorod Smolensk, Suzdal and, later, Moscow) that stretched beside the Asian trade route and the Dnieper River route, Kiev became the center of a loose confederation of principalities, growing in prominence due to its strategic importance in maintaining the trade route to the Black Sea. Varangian traders, known to the Slavs as "Rus," utilized the river to transport goods (and booty).

Kiev had long been established as the center of a great state when the Varangian Dynasty took the throne in the ninth century. Recognizing Kiev's importance, the Vikings (led by Prince Rurik of South Jutland) conquered Novgorod in 862. Rurik's son, Oleg, then captured Smolensk and Kiev. According to legend, the Slavs of the area cried, "Our lands are rich and great, but there is no order in them. Come and rule over us." While it is doubtful that this actually happened, Oleg used it as his claim to the kingship, proclaiming Kiev his new capital and "the mother of all Russian cities." Thus was born the state of Kievan Rus. Evidence exists that even as far back as the ninth century, many of the Eastern Slavs of the area were called Ukrainians. Though that name would be subsumed by the name "Russians," the area would not only be called Kievan Rus, but would also remain known to many as the Ukraine.

The Varangians were few in number and quickly adopted many Slavic customs, merging with the people they now ruled. Among the customs were religious beliefs, especially the worship of the Slavs' pagan gods. Their cultures merged, with the Slavic one preeminent. The Russians benefited culturally and educationally from their later contact with Byzantium.

The people of Kiev have also been contacted by forces more sinister than Byzantium. Wild Gangrel roam through the deep forested portions of the country. Most Gangrel avoid

contact with mortals, but some unlucky travelers have fallen prey to them. Entire caravans often disappear as packs of Nosferatu, childer of the accursed hag Baba Yaga, fall on them in the wastelands. Tzimisce were attracted to Kievan Rus by the area's wealth and the possibility of adding to their domains; they have chosen some Rus to become ghoulish families or to receive the Embrace — mostly because of the Russians' growing sophistication and education (the result of contact with Constantinople).

UKRAINIAN EASTER EGGS

One popular practice among the Ukrainian pagans was the elaborate decoration of eggs via a wax-and-dye process. Part of the spring rituals of these sun worshippers, the eggs, called *pysanka*, were associated with the sun's chosen animal, the bird. Considered sources of life, eggs decorated with symbols from nature were believed to be endowed with the magic to bind a horrible "serpent of destruction" — preventing it from overturning the world. It was said the serpent would send out minions each year to see how many *pysanka* were created. If the number was low, the serpent's chains were loosened somewhat. Should there ever be no *pysanka* created or should all those created be found and destroyed by the serpent's minions, the serpent would be freed.

When Christianity came to Kievan Rus, the Church adopted the eggs as symbols of the eternity of Christ, translating the spring festival into its own celebration of Easter. The "Easter egg" hunt instituted by the serpent's minions became a game played by children. During the golden age of Kievan Rus, these fragile treasures become popular trading goods, with the nobles (and Cainites) of European lands paying outrageous sums for the most beautiful and elaborate eggs.

There is a darker side to this tale. Some say that the "serpent" spoken of in the story is none other than the terrible hag, Baba Yaga. She sleeps in torpor somewhere in the vast territories of the Slavs and is "chained" until she can awaken to wreak havoc in the world. Her vampiric nature makes the sun anathema to her; thus, the symbols of the sun's chosen animal have power over her. Those who whisper this tale in the safety of their homes say that through preparing and decorating the egg with ancient symbols, one can trap some of the sun's light and power inside it. The egg, therefore, becomes a potent magical item capable of inflicting pain and damage on the hag and her minions. Further, those in possession of *pysanka* must hide them and guard them carefully, for by their very existence, they keep the hag enchained by light. Some wise ones point to Baba Yaga's penchant for residing in a hut on chicken legs as an attempt to fool the sun's holy creatures, the birds, and to convince them to lay eggs only for her so the *pysanka* cannot be created each spring. Whether there is any truth to these tales, it is a certainty that Baba Yaga's childer haunt the lands of Kievan Rus, preying on any unfortunate enough to cross their path.

Utilizing the great river, the cities of Kievan Rus staged raids against Byzantium and Bulgaria. King Sviatoslav even set up his throne in the capital of the Danubian Bulgarians until he was routed out by John Tzimisces, the Byzantine emperor, in 970. Trade flourished between Kievan Rus and Constantinople, as each spring a flotilla loaded with honey, fur, iron, grain, amber and slaves sailed down the Dnieper River. In return, Russian merchants would bring home gold, wines, spices and silks. In 957, Princess Olga of Kiev, regent for her son Sviatoslav, accompanied the flotilla so she could see Constantinople. She learned of the Christian faith and was baptized in the Eastern Orthodox Church while there.

Although her son was too occupied by military conquests to bother with conversion, his son, Prince Vladimir, invited members of several religions to meet with him so he could determine which religion would be best for his people. Fond of "women and indulgence," Vladimir quickly rejected Islam because they required circumcision and forbade the eating of pork and the drinking of wine. Judaism was cast aside, too; even though they were flexible concerning wine, they, too, required circumcision and abstinence from pork. The Roman Catholic Church almost succeeded with the prince by assuring him that pork, wine and circumcision weren't part of their rites, but they failed when they told him that fasting was required. Finally, impressed by the richness and beauties of the churches of Constantinople, Vladimir accepted the Eastern Orthodox Church as the state religion for Kievan Rus in 988 (although he failed to tell the patriarch of his several wives and harem). His subjects were baptized in the river en masse. Construction of the Desyatynna Church (Church of the Tithes) began the next year.

In 1019, Prince Yaroslav the Wise ascended to the throne. His promotion of culture and education throughout Kievan Rus led to a golden age. Construction on St. Sophia's Cathedral started in 1037, a code of law known as Rus' Law was compiled and put into practice, and the Golden Gate of Kiev was constructed. The Monastery of the Caves was built in the hills south of the city in 1051. It developed into the most important religious center in Kievan Rus. Kiev's craftsmen were renowned for their delicate, tasteful works. Kiev became one of the richest and most sophisticated cities of Europe, far more cultured than most of its Eastern European neighbors. As the primary trading center between the Baltics, Western Europe and Constantinople, the city amassed vast treasures.

The city's grandeur brought it fame and esteem. Three of Yaroslav's daughters married the kings of Norway, France and Hungary. Yaroslav's successor married the daughter of King Harold of England.

The political climate was not stable, however. The region had always been beset by warfare among the many petty princes who claimed lands within Kievan Rus. Though the accepted form of succession was for elder brothers to inherit large shares and younger ones to be given smaller ones, such inequality was not appreciated by the younger sons of important families. Rather than await an elder brother's death so that his portion might pass to them, younger heirs began plotting assassinations, uniting to take elder brothers' portions and staging battles designed to oust current rulers. The crown was constantly embroiled in one petty dispute after another. While the Prince of Kievan Rus was occupied with putting down rebellions, the principalities surrounding Kiev began making inroads into the city's lucrative trade, amassing wealth of their own.

Jealousies between rival Lupine packs and frequent raids from Tzimisce also took their toll. Rival Tzimisce often "adopted" particular towns or principalities as their protectorates. They then unleashed their full fury on their rival's settlement, terrorizing the populace, committing atrocities and leaving the evidence fully displayed in gruesome "artworks," and looting whatever treasures their rival's protectorate owned.

This evidence of supernatural attention greatly frightened and unsettled the people. Some spoke of red-eyed demons flying in the night. Others whispered that the hag's children were taking their revenge. Indeed, mortals, Lupines and Cainites alike disappeared mysteriously often, brought by Baba Yaga's get.

The great Kingdom of Kievan Rus lasted only 150 years. Plagued with bickering princes, its attentions wholly taken up with trade interests, grandeur and cultural pursuits, Kiev was a ripe plum waiting to be picked. Andrey Bogolyubov, prince of a northeastern territory called Suzdal, sacked Kiev in 1169. Many Kievan citizens were murdered; others were sold into slavery. Prince Andrey removed everything of value he could carry with him, taking it northward, eventually to Moscow.

Kiev lay in ruins, her once proud gates twisted, her houses shattered and burnt. In 1197, Kiev is still trying to recover from the sacking. People are just beginning to repair what is left and build anew. In many places, all that remains of glorious Kiev are husks of houses left standing among fields of skulls and bones. The feel of a graveyard hangs over Kiev in this time. Though the residents of Kiev will make headway toward restoring some semblance of order to their city, there is no prince in Kiev now. No one truly rules except by force of arms. Most such robber-lords care little except to take what they want and to keep others from doing the same to them. Most of the Shadow Lords and Silver Fangs have moved westward. A few Tzimisce, reluctant to part with their sport, still raid denuded Kiev, but there is little left for them to take. The peasants continue as best they can, some of them becoming freemen farmers as their masters die or move away. And Baba Yaga's children haunt the night, waiting for lone travelers to pass by.







Chapter Three: Cities and Settlements of the East

*Fallen among these wolfish fools your
glory will be torn to shreds.*

*While all that is not understood will be
decied by voagging tongues...*

*They will not care for all the light
Your labour poured upon the world, but
for the sins and every slight*

*And human failing they can find, and
every petty thing that must*

*Beall the life of hapless days, of every
mortal child of dust.*

- Eminescu

Like rare jewels strung on a necklace, the cities of Central and Eastern Europe fan out across the breadth of the continent. Linking East to West with their drunken spiderweb pattern, they serve as bastions of civilization — and hence, as refuges for Cainites — in a vast wilderland of barbarity. Most began as outposts of Rome: garrisons or supply stations serving the soldiery of the far-flung empire, though they now evince the character of their Eastern conquerors. While they are accorded the courtesy of being named as cities, many are just emerging from their former states as barbarian encampments, villages and towns, and they are, consequently, in a condition of growth and change.

Beyond these enclaves lies wilderness: league upon league of steppes, plains, forests and mountains, broken here and there by crumbling relics of Rome's mighty, fallen empire. Remnants of old roads, bridges, and long-deserted outposts, a rusting weapon or a broken pot stand mute witness to Rome's withdrawal in the face of successive invasions. Some Cainites find themselves trapped within these ruins, besieged by Lupines who wait for them to step outside the confines of the walled fortresses.

A few hardy Cainites — mostly Gangrel, Nosferatu and Ravnos — brave the endless trek through Eastern Europe's perilous wastelands. Most vampires conducting business outside their circumscribed spheres send mortal agents in their stead. Even Cainites native to the region travel with great care and surround themselves with heavily armed retainers when they must leave their strongholds. The sensible ones stay within their cities' protective grasp.

In the cities' stony walls, mortals have begun throwing off the shackles of oppressive feudalism while Cainites wage age-old feuds. Eastern pride battles Western arrogance as each struggles to assert itself. Treaties are made and broken in a year — or a night — as once-staunch allies turn to enemies and former foes offer alliance. Old enmities die hard in these uncivilized lands, however, and anyone who trusts a newly made ally is a fool. Mortals battle one another on religious and ethnic grounds. The children of Caine's hearts burn with vengeance for wrongs committed centuries ago and ache from jealousy, greedily desiring the riches and power of their neighbors. Dark passions overrule enlightened thought.

Cainites who live beyond the embrace of the cities either band together for protection, as the Tremere do in their mighty chantry of Ceoris (see Chapter Six), or exist as many Tzimisce do — dominating several small settlements and villages as ironfisted overlords. Such Cainites find themselves battling even more fiercely for the limited resources available.

And so, while the veneer of civilization lies atop Eastern Europe, it never truly reaches within. Beneath the skin rests the true barbarian heart, a savage soul as yet untamed and, perhaps, untamable.

Like many other regions, the territories here fell beneath the onslaught of the Roman legions. Always a civilizing force, the Romans built roads and established settlements in Eastern Europe just as they had in every other land they conquered. Why, then, is Eastern Europe so unknowable and savage? The answer is within the land itself.

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

THE BLASTED REGIONS

Blessed with fertile plains, navigable rivers, abundant forests and majestic mountains, the lands of the East appear to be paradise. Beneath that rich beauty, however, lies a sickness that infects every inch of the land — even as it imbues the earth with a mystery and magic that drive successive waves of would-be conquerors to possess it at all costs. Those who inhabit the lands seem to prosper for a while, but even the strongest eventually succumb to the miasma of corruption cloaking the earth.

Somewhere beneath the Old Country's soil lies the midnight-black heart of the demon Kupala. Each beat of this mighty heart spews forth greater malignancy: hatred, bigotry,

LANGUAGES

Eastern Europe is an ethnically diverse region and an accompanying potpourri of languages has sprung up in the area. Characters in one region may have to learn the language of their fellows across the border if they wish to communicate. The following is an extremely simplified model of languages, created for ease of play rather than historical accuracy. Learning each of these languages requires a dot in the Linguistics Knowledge.

- **Slavonic:** The tongue most widely spoken across the region, it is in the process of metamorphosing into the family of languages spoken in much of modern Eastern Europe. Slavonic is divided into three dialects: West Slavonic (spoken in Bohemia and Poland), East Slavonic (spoken in the Russian regions), and South Slavonic (spoken in Bulgaria and Macedonia). A dialect must be chosen; understanding complicated messages in other dialects requires an Intelligence + Linguistics roll (difficulty 6). This can be treated as an automatic feat if the character's Dice Pool is above 6.

- **Hungarian:** The language of the Magyar conquerors. Spoken in Hungary proper.

- **Romanian:** The language of the inhabitants of the province of Pannonia. Spoken in the eastern reaches of what is currently the Kingdom of Hungary (and will one night be Romania).

- **Baltic:** A generic term for the language/s spoken by tribes along the Baltic Sea and the Kingdom of Lithuania. Again, several dialects exist, but for game play purposes it is easiest to simply treat them as one tongue, more or less. A Wits + Linguistics roll (difficulty 5-7) might be needed to avoid miscommunication when dealing with people from a region different from the area where the language was learned.

- **German:** The language of settlers and merchants from the Holy Roman Empire. A good "common tongue" for much of the region — though using it in areas inhabited by partisan Slavs (or *voivodes*) is a good way to get in a serious scrap.



terror, unnatural desire, rage, corruption and infection. As if the demon heart's presence alone did not subject the agonized earth to enough pollution, lesser minions (known as kupalas in honor of their master) overrun the region as well. Inhabiting certain trees, caves and natural formations, they reach out to strike at the unwary, infecting some, maiming others, gleefully killing when the mood takes them. It is not unknown for an entire village to fall prey to some unnamed plague or to simply disappear some dark night. Not all depredations are committed by the region's bloodsuckers; even Cainites fear what they don't understand and have no way to fight.

However, the Cainites feel safe within sheltering walls. Locked in secure havens, occupied with elaborate schemes and political maneuvering, consumed by thirst, Caine's childer play out their games of dominance. They simply prefer to ignore the creeping malignancy beyond the walls. It puts their minds to rest, and many believe it's safer that way.

BOHEMIA

Bite hungrily into the landscape and digest it, envelop it in every drop of its blood.

— Antonin Slavicek, an artist of Prague

Nestled within the outstretched arms of the Holy Roman Empire, Poland and Hungary, the tiny Kingdom of Bohemia is located within a central basin protected by

surrounding mountains. The peaks are steep and heavily wooded, though few reach higher than 4,000 feet. These primeval forests, home to savage Lupine packs and barbaric Gangrel, enclose Bohemia's few civilized enclaves.

Prague, the capital of Bohemia, defies the surrounding wilderness. This city forms a center for learning, trade, architecture, religion and magic that will someday earn it the title "city of a thousand spires" and the position as the Holy Roman Empire's capital.

PRAGUE

The brooding stone city of Prague incorporates five ancient towns. The Vltava River (pronounced *Valtava*), a tributary of the Elbe, bisects the city and provides Prague with transportation, food — including salmon and dozens of varieties of waterfowl — and water to power the city's grain mills. Frequent floods plague the low-lying areas. To combat them, construction of stone embankments has been an ongoing concern, intended to shield the city from yearly inundation.

The river separates Prague into five districts, each corresponding to an earlier settlement in the area and each contained in its own dark walls. Only one bridge crosses the Vltava, but the river freezes over during the three coldest winter months (December through February), allowing crossings by foot or on horseback.

CITIES AND SETTLEMENTS OF THE EAST

Prague Castle (Pražský Hrad) rises in dark grandeur from a promontory overlooking the western side of the Vltava. Hradčany township, which grew around it, sprawls to the north and northeast. Beneath the promontory, shadowed by the ominous castle and reached by winding, steep stairs, the Little Quarter (Malá Strana) — an area of craftsmen and agricultural workers — occupies the land that falls in hills down to the river's edge. On the opposite shore, to the south, stands the imposing edifice of Vysehrad, built on a rocky headland.

In the lowlands beneath Vysehrad sit three areas that have been incorporated into the city only as recently as 1160. The first is the northernmost portion of the city, known as the Jewish Quarter (Josefov), a labyrinthine maze occupying a corner formed by the river's curve eastward. Just south (upriver) of the Jewish Quarter is Old Town (Staré Město), a bustling market area that houses the city's recently constructed university. Furthest south is New Town (Nové Město), a site that lies beneath the shadow of Vysehrad and seeks to become the new center of trade. The stone fortifications of Old Town have currently taken shape, while New Town is still contesting its sovereignty. Each area boasts a distinctive feel, based on its residents, their occupations and religious beliefs. Each also supports a Cainite who claims the area and oversees its welfare, subject only to the approval of the Ventrue prince, Rudolf Brandl.

Following fires that devastated various parts of the city, all structures in Prague are now made of stone. Dank, dark hovels crowd narrow, cobblestone streets while larger dwellings huddle together in courtyards behind imposing archways. Ponderous Romanesque architecture dominates, with curved arches and heavy gates isolating various portions of the city from each other. Although houses often incorporate sconces into their outer walls, a few torches are lit to help those who travel the city's twisting streets by night. Dark pools of inky blackness give way to shadowy light near the castles and inns of both Old and New Towns.

The castle and the outer portions of the Little Quarter (to the west and south) are doubly fortified against incursions by wolves, bandits and would-be conquerors. Riverward, the walls are breached only at the crossings near Judith Bridge. Old Town and the Jewish Quarter rest within stone walls that are as strong, but not as high, as those around Prague Castle, though New Town has yet to complete its fortifications. Construction of the embankments has raised the city some three meters higher than the original Celtic settlements on which they rest.

In a small area of New Town, a new church, utilizing an entirely new style of architecture called "Gothic," is being built. Its pointed arches and flying buttresses allow its spire to soar heavenward. The style will become the city's most recognizable feature within the next few centuries, as thousands of airy spires rise overtop its gloomy walls.

DESCRIPTION

Prague is built on seven hills and straddles the Vltava like a great stone spider. Most of the city is encircled by high walls, including an imposing fortress on either side of the river. Judith Bridge, an arching construction of gray stone wide enough for six carts to travel abreast, links one side of the city with the other. Goods coming up- or downriver are offloaded or counted and taxed and hoisted up over the three-meter floodwalls for sale in Old Town's market. Whether climbing upward from the riverside or crossing over Judith Bridge, travelers must pass beneath the guarded entry gates, thus either entering Old Town (on the east bank) or the Little Quarter (on the west). Old Town lies on flatter land and her streets are broader than those of the Little Quarter. Gateways in Old Town lead to the mazelike streets of the Jewish Quarter to the northwest or out into the unfortified and open areas of New Town to the south.

PRAGUE CASTLE AND HRADČANY

Prague Castle is a sprawling, fabulously ornate fortress that incorporates dozens of separate buildings, which are connected by ill-lit, tiny passageways and staircases leading from one level to another. Rooms in the castle seem to tumble onto one another with no rhyme or reason — a trophy room backs onto a bedroom that, in turn, hosts a spiral staircase leading into a cellar below. Public rooms muddle against private family rooms. Only a few scattered insignias identify which labyrinthine hallways lead to the court or to the courtyard outside. Staircases wind downward from the main floor onto a landing where a separate stairwell rises to another level two stories above. A maze of rooms, apparently part of a larger apartment, ends in a neglected tower that looks out over battlements far below. And only those very familiar with the castle can negotiate the hidden passageways that riddle the walls, connecting one odd location with another.

Odd angles prevail throughout the structure. Strange artwork depicting anguished faces, twisted limbs and crouching, demonic figures adorns the walls alongside friezes of grotesqueries. Walls are hung with rugs intended to forestall the chill that pervades the castle. Grandly decorated fireplaces sit dark, no outlets for their smoke having been instituted, while small, enclosed stoves provide heat for most internal rooms in the castle.

The structure seems to have been designed and constructed by a madman. Yet, the Premysl family lives quite comfortably in its stronghold, its members secure in the knowledge that enemies must first find them inside before committing foul deeds upon them.

St. George's Basilica and Convent can also be found inside the forbidding stone walls that enclose the king's palace. The basilica's massive twin towers rise behind the castle. Its gloomy interior houses the tombs of several Premysl family members, including that of Boleslav II, which rests behind an ornate grille. Also within are the diminutive Church of Our Lady (a ninth-century chapel built by Prince Borivoj) and the Rotunda of St.

Vitus, which houses the gilded and jeweled reliquary of St. George's Arm. Once a year, at the feast of St. Vitus, "be-nighted souls" (including a few Malkavians) are allowed in the rotunda to attend the rites of madness.

Rows of tiny houses are built into the arches of the castle's walls, some with stories no higher than three-feet tall. Goldsmiths live in these diminutive places, working the riches produced by the mines of Bohemia's second city, Brunn. Golden Lane, as the street is known, is rumored to be filled with alchemists, all working to change lead into gold for the Premysl family. In actuality, the city's alchemists live and work in a quiet back alley in Hradcany. The Tremere maintain a small secret chantry on a street nearby. The castle and Golden Lane are patrolled at all hours by groups of soldiers. Other guards man the White Tower and the Black Tower, the entrances to the castle. Steep stairs run to the left and right of the castle, leading down through the Little Quarter to the river below.

A small town has grown up in the outer bailey of the castle. Named Hradcany, this town is home to many craft shops and those whose business is in the castle (minor nobles, servants and guards). Also in Hradcany is Strahov Monastery, founded in 1140 by the austere Premonstratensians. A center of learning, the extensive monastery houses a famous library, the finest in Bohemia (and many argue, in the world), in which theological and philosophical works are stored. The Strahov Gospel Book, a ninth-century manuscript covered with jewels and golden depictions of saints and a crucifix, is one of the most valuable books in the library. There are also rumored to be darker works in the library: ancient fragments of the *Book of Nod*, the *Lilith Cycle*, and *Revelations of the Dark Mother*. The truth behind these rumors is unknown and the Premysls refuse to comment.

Strahov Monastery shares orchard space with the Cappadocian monastery on Petrin Hill, though the monks of Strahov are blissfully unaware of the true nature of Abbot Garinol Cappadocius.

LITTLE QUARTER

The Little Quarter begins just beneath the battlements of Prague Castle, then spills down a series of hills to the Vltava River. Its steep, narrow streets host the houses of potters, jewelers, carpenters, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, vintners and the vineyard workers and gardeners who work the cultivated lands beneath Prague Castle. Because most of the populace is illiterate, houses and shops both here and in Old Town are identified with colored signs depicting either the trade being practiced within or a symbol of the family in residence. The Church of Our Lady Beneath the Chain is the oldest in the quarter, built by Vladislav II and given to the crusading order of the Knights of St. John. The heavily fortified monastery that surrounds the church guards the approach to Judith Bridge. Its name comes from the chain used to close the monastery's gatehouse.

Three mills are located on Kampa Island, a portion of the Little Quarter lying between the Vltava River and a smaller branch of the river known as the Devil's Stream. The largest of these mills is the Grand Prior's Mill, which grinds grain for the castle occupants and the Knights of St. John. Gardens flourish on the island, which is also used by the people of the city for washing their clothes and bleaching linen.

The most recognizable location in the Little Quarter is Little Quarter Square, originally a marketplace in the outer bailey of Prague Castle. The market was divided when merchants built shops in the center of the square. The lower section became a place of punishment, holding gallows and pillory. Bridge Street leads out of Little Quarter Square and down to Judith Bridge. The Bishop of Prague maintains a house on a quiet lane off Bridge Street with a view of Old Town across the river. Near the southern boundary of the Little Quarter, the Church of St. Lawrence rises on the site of a former pagan shrine. Some of the Little Quarter's residents whisper that secret pagan rites still occur in the church's bowels on nights of the full moon.

The Little Quarter is nominally under a Cappadocian's control, one reason so many churches flourish here. In actuality, it is ruled by the Knights of St. John, who patrol the streets and offer healing to those in need.

OLD TOWN

Old Town came into being around a great central square that has been used as a market since the 10th century. Old Town Square forms the heart of this quarter, with churches and houses radiating outward along a network of streets. Although fortified, Old Town boasts 13 entrances, most closed by towered gates when darkness falls. The southernmost gates now lead to the unfortified New Town, while one leads to Judith Bridge and another to the Jewish Quarter. Though not under the shadow of Prague Castle as the Little Quarter is, the dark stone of the high outer walls, coupled with crooked, random streets, gives visitors and residents of Old Town a feeling of claustrophobia. The structures tower over the small houses below, bathing them in perpetual shadow.

Celetna Street, one of the oldest lanes in Prague, runs from the eastern gate along the old trading route from eastern Bohemia. Celetna is the name given to plaited bread rolls that are baked on the street. Butchers can also be found on the street; it is said that the ghost of a butcher wielding a fiery ax can be encountered on Celetna Street on certain windy nights. Nocturnal wanderers unfortunate enough to meet this apparition are found headless in the morning. Celetna Street meets Karlova Street, a twisting way lined with houses and shops, the main route across Old Town. The Church of St. Nicholas, located near the wall that encloses the Jewish Quarter, serves as Old Town's meeting hall and parish church.

Newly constructed, the Great University of Prague promises intellectual stimuli long denied to the people of Eastern Europe. Courses in Latin, religion, philosophy and the classics

draw interested students from all over Europe, not just from the lands to the east. It stands as a shining beacon of hope in the dark, mysterious "city of magic."

JEWISH QUARTER

Two communities of Jews, one from the west, the other from the Byzantine Empire, settled in Prague and gradually merged into the northwest corner of the Vltava's right bank. Although originally allowed to build their shops along the roads leading down through Old Town and the Little Quarter, most Jews were pushed into the small, walled ghetto by the beginning of the 12th century. Walls were built to enclose the marketplace and the maze of streets radiating from it, cutting the Jews off from the rest of the city and crowding them together. Shops and houses spread outward from a central marketplace.

The Jews are forbidden to make purchases or sell anything in the marketplaces of Old Town and the Little Quarter. Further, the gates leading into the Jewish Quarter are sealed shut on Sundays. Some of the Jews work fields outside the walls, though many provide services ranging from smithing to moneylending. Unlike Christians, Jews are not forbidden to charge interest on the loans they make, and a few residents are quite wealthy.

Raised in a tradition that emphasizes learning and knowledge, many more Jews are literate than Christians. Several scribes set up stalls in the Jewish market and do a thriving business. Many scholars reside in the ghetto as well, a few of them emerging when the gates open in the morning to walk to the Great University where they teach. Most residents do not walk abroad by night, though they are not certain of what they fear. An air of mystery and melancholy hangs over the Jewish Quarter, affecting visitors and residents alike.

Two buildings form the heart of the Jewish Quarter. The first is the Old Synagogue, which rises from the center of the ghetto, towering over the nearby houses and shops. Constructed of pale cream-colored stone, its interior is decorated with carvings, bronze standing chandeliers and silver-gilt Torah shields. It provides a place of worship for Jews of the western rites, whose homes and shops surround it. A cozy home near the synagogue houses the western Jews' spiritual leader, Rabbi Mordecai ben Judah. Angered by the persecutions of Prague's Christians and the Cainites who feed on his people, Rabbi ben Judah, a great scholar, Kabbalist and talented magus, has created a golem and set it to patrol the ghetto by night. This mindless, living manikin is capable of prodigious feats of strength. Given life by the mystical clay tablets placed in its mouth, the golem obeys Rabbi ben Judah's commands — for now. Unknown to the rabbi, the golem is actually powered by a minion of Kupala, a demonic spirit that prompts the golem to murder any Christian unfortunate enough to enter the ghetto at night. The golem is barely under the rabbi's control and becomes more independent each night. Another force watches over the ghetto as well: Josef Zvi, the Nosferatu.

The second noted building is Prague's first synagogue, which is known as the Stara Skola or Old School. The Stara Skola forms the core of community for Jews of the eastern rite, who still live strictly apart from their western counterparts. The Old School is Moorish in appearance, somewhat like the Alhambra. Like the Old Synagogue, it stands out in the otherwise heavy, dark city.

On the boundary of the ghetto is the Jewish Cemetery. Weather-worn gravestones attest to its age. Garbled trees drape their branches over parts of the uneven ground, in some places touching the gravestones, which are mixed up together in an arrangement as labyrinthine as the streets of the Jewish Quarter. Because there is so little room for the cemetery, graves are placed one atop another. The graves may not be dug up due to religious law. Dirt is brought in and a new layer added as needed, creating an ever-growing mound of hillocks. Old gravestones are moved to the new height and placed as close as possible to their original sites, thus creating a confused, chaotic jumble.

Disguised as a forgotten grave near the eastern edge of the cemetery, a hidden stairway leads down into the haven of the Jewish Nosferatu, Josef Zvi.

VYSEHRAD ACROPOLIS

This wooded outcropping of stone drops along its western face to become a sheer rock wall lining the river. Atop it stands Vysehrad, Prague's second fortified castle. Defensive walls snake their way down the sheer cliff face, and the rock is riddled with caves that have been connected via carved tunnels and underground rooms. Originally built of brick, the castle has received an overlay of cut stone since its construction. Though used as a residence and court during the 11th century, parts of the old castle are now ruined, and most wisely leave it in peace. No Cainites are allowed in Vysehrad by decree of Prince Rudolf, a restriction that has quipped the interest of quite a few of them.

One branch of the Premysl family still lives there — those directly responsible for maintaining the Tzimisce Shaagra while she lies in torpor. Weird lights, sounds, moans and disappearances have all been reported in the vicinity, leading many citizens of Prague to believe Vysehrad is haunted. Others whisper that the "mad" family members have been locked away in Vysehrad so they can't harm the rest of Prague. Some say that the Premysls worship the Devil here in horrible rites — eating human flesh, drinking blood, and sacrificing children who have been kidnapped and sold to them by the Jews. People shudder in fear and revulsion when the shadow of the castle falls over them. It is said that the shadow alone can make one foam at the mouth and run mad.

Curiously, this castle of terror shares space with three holy places: the Basilica of St. Lawrence, the twin-spired Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, and the small Romanesque St. Martin's Rotunda.

NEW TOWN

Hardly deserving of the name "town," this area encompasses three market squares and the grand plans to expand around them. Little is currently here beyond a horse market, some blacksmiths, wheelwrights, tanners and brewers. A glassmaker has recently come to the area. His creations, known as Bohemian glassware, are in great demand. A few lonely houses brave the night outside the fortified city, but most who work in New Town retire to homes in Old Town before dark. Prince Rudolf Brandl hopes to make this area the new center for trade in Prague; he seeks to undercut both his Premysl masters and the Brujah Ecaterina, who is gaining more control of Old Town.

Architects and craftsmen from France (seeking new outlets for their talents) have recently moved to Prague. They are building a glorious church with King Otakar I's funding that will "reach Heaven itself." Utilizing new architectural techniques only recently invented, they are constructing the Church of the Holy Virgin in the new Gothic style. The church will occupy pride of place, along one whole side of the central marketplace. Flattered by Prince Rudolf's assertions that the city can be guided only by a strong and involved ruler, King Otakar himself has drawn up plans for wide, straight streets that fan outward in a circle from the central markets. If his plans are followed, New Town may one day become a center of art and beauty.

BEYOND THE WALLS

Gangrel lurk in the forest surrounding the city. Lupines infest the forests, tearing asunder any Cainite or hapless mortal they can catch. The Gangrel, angry at civilization's encroachment on lands they claim as theirs, hunt down any Cainite unlucky enough to be caught in the woods. While the Lupines kill Cainites outright, the Gangrel feed off Cainite vitae to make themselves stronger so they may one night tear down the city and retake the land.

To the west of the Little Quarter, Petrin Hill towers over Prague. Over 900 feet high, it was originally used as a place of sacrifice to the Slavonic god Perun. The rocky hill is deeply forested. The southern side of Petrin Hill is held by Garinol Cappadocius, who has built a monastery atop it. Surrounded by forests of hornbeam, oak, maple, beech and chestnut, the monastery houses several mortal brethren who have carved out vineyards and orchards below the simple chapter house. Many fungi grow in the dark forest there (providing the basis for medicines, poisons and potent narcotics).

Following savage Lupine raids on the monastery, the monks have planted large patches of wolfsbane in damp, shaded areas around their fields and dwelling. The wolfsbane's purple flowers, enhanced by the magic within the land itself, protect the area from Lupine incursions.



CITIES AND SETTLEMENTS OF THE EAST



POLITICS AND RELIGION

Bohemia struggles to retain its autonomy despite pressures from (and alliances with) the German Empire. Although a part of the Holy Roman Empire, Bohemia is still viewed as something of an outsider to European affairs. Suspicions that Bohemia still harbors a barbarian way of life beneath its facade of civility keep the realm from being completely accepted by Western Europe. It is ironic that Western Europe is right.

Dependent on trade with the West, Prague must attract and keep any merchants it can. Many German merchants have settled in Prague alongside the more numerous Slavonic traders. Jews are allowed to own shops and trade with anyone they choose as long as they keep their business inside the ghetto and pay their taxes to the crown. Though the Germans originally paid tithes for the privilege of trading in the city, the merchants staged a blockade in 1176, forcing concessions from the crown.

The Roman Catholic Church is the state religion, but despite the myriad of churches found throughout Prague, the city remains a hotbed of paganism. Various heretical sects hold their rites in hidden areas throughout (or just outside) the city. Missionaries who follow the eastern rites still secretly come to Prague, meeting with influential traders and hoping to win back the city for the Orthodox Church. Though the Jews are protected by order of the crown, frequent baitings and beatings take place near or just inside

the ghetto. Many otherwise intelligent people believe that Jews eat children or perform black rites dedicated to the Devil. These beliefs are unfortunately spurred on by the feeding practices of Josef Zvi, the Nosferatu who inhabits the Jewish Quarter. Even those who do not give credence to such stories think the Jews are responsible for killing Christ.

Despite the subversive influence of the Ventruue puppet prince, Prague's people are curiously independent and free thinkers. The university has attracted scholars who disseminate new philosophies (and will in the 15th century have as its rector Jan Hus, the reformist cleric and a religious free thinker revered throughout Bohemia). Nonetheless, when night falls and the dark streets are nearly deserted, the people of Prague think twice before setting foot outside the safety of their homes.

LIFE IN THE CITY

Like most cities, Prague awakens at dawn and closes at dusk. Shops open and wares are displayed in market squares soon after the sun rises. Farmers begin their trek to the fields outside the city just before sunrise, after a meal of boiled grain or a little bread and lard accompanied by new beer, sour wine or honeyed milk. Tales of nocturnal terror keep most residents from daring the streets alone even in the few minutes of false dawn that herald true sunrise. Craftsmen begin their

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

days almost as early, rising and preparing their day's work. Bakers have been up since the wee hours, stumbling downstairs in the dark to light their ovens and knead the dough, and the smell of their freshly baked bread greets the day. Housewives sweep and clean their houses while younger women take the laundry down to Kampa Island. Bells toll out across the city, summoning the faithful to Mass.

Wagons drawn by oxen or sturdy horses enter through the just-opened gates of Old Town. Some carry gold and silver sent to the capital from the city of Brunn. Plenty will be worked into fine jewelry and ornamentation; much more will be traded to the rest of Europe. Others hold low-grade iron. Merchant ships docked alongside the Little Quarter or Old Town unload their cargoes or stand ready for a customs official to collect the city's toll. Guards who stood watch through the dark hours breathe thankful sighs for surviving another night when their relief arrives at dawn. Ambassadors, merchants, traders, farmers, vintners, crafters, students, priests and children all crowd the streets, jostling together in the winding, narrow passageways between the more open squares. A man placed overnight in the pillory while awaiting the attention of the crown is found dead, his face chalk-white and a small drop of blood on his shirt. Some whisper that it's God's judgment; others say the Devil walks the streets of Prague by night.

The city closes down in midday when everyone eats their large meal for the day and rests for an hour or so. Most shops close and market vendors cover their stalls, paying children to watch over their goods or leaving apprentices to act as guards. When night falls, most folk retire to their homes. Lights are doused after a meager meal, and the people of the city sleep behind shuttered windows and stoutly barred doors.

The daily routine is broken by several religious festivals throughout the year, and several activities come to a halt during winter. People whose main livelihood depends on agriculture engage in other pursuits during these cold months, carving wooden chests or utensils or working in fine embroidery.

But, some areas remain awake during much of the night. Prague Castle keeps late hours, scheduling evening meetings with diplomats and petitioners. Elaborate feasts are occasionally held at the castle, and the flickering lights burn throughout the greater part of the night. Furthermore, many members of the Premysl family travel abroad during the dark hours, visiting places of ill repute (brothels, drinking houses and gambling dens). Some claim they attend heretical rites. Most people attribute this to the Premysl family's eccentricity; few believe the king himself might indulge in such pastimes.

Vysehrad has a particularly black reputation. Citizens have grown used to seeing and hearing strange things from the fortress at all hours. Other sites in the city have their share of reported noises and lights. Most folk believe these are cults meeting at an hour everyone else lies in bed. One building on

a small sidestreet in Hradcany keeps late hours as well, though this secretive Tremere chantry takes pains not to let the neighbors see light shining from the windows.

A few inns cater to late arrivals. The most notable is the Inn of the Four Stags, which lies near the city walls in Old Town. Travelers must assure the gate guards of their harmlessness before being allowed in, however. Otherwise, they must wait at the gate until morning. Some who must wait overnight are nowhere to be found when the morning mists evaporate. Whispers of *vampyr*, werewolves and demons follow such disappearances like storm crows.

PEOPLE

Prague is ostensibly a free city to both mortals and Cainites. All are welcome to its environs as long as they adhere to the laws of the king (and the prince). The city is a bustling center for trade and renowned for its newly constructed university — yet underneath it all, Prague harbors a reputation for evil. Whether the result of alchemists working in secret creating gold and elixirs of life or because of the nebulous, yet discernible, feeling of corruption engendered by the Premysl family, Prague attracts an odd assortment of mortals, Cainites and other denizens. Almost anyone could be met in Prague.

MORTALS

Otakar I: The most important mortal in Prague is arguably her ruler, King Otakar Premysl, who rules from Prague Castle. As the first acknowledged king of the Czechs, ruler of Bohemia and Prague, Otakar's decisions affect not only the city, but also other parts of the Holy Roman Empire. Although rumors proliferate concerning the eccentricities of the Premysl family, no one speaks openly against the king. Otakar's chief worries are to keep trade moving briskly in the kingdom and to guard against the avarice of the empire, which has tried to undermine Bohemia's independence — most recently by attempting to have the Archbishop of Prague (a member of the Premysl family) declared unfit for the position.

Otakar is ambitious — he wishes nothing less than for Prague to assume a position as the chief city of the Holy Roman Empire. Nothing — not even the perversions of his family or their Cainite masters — will come between the king and his goal. To this end, he wishes to minimize the involvement of Libussa and her torpid mistress. Otakar is clever and well aware of the city's nocturnal denizens; Cainites who dismiss the king as "merely another mortal" may well find themselves the victims of a rude awakening.

Libussa: Although she hardly counts as "mortal" anymore, Libussa, whose death was faked centuries ago, remains the Tzimisce Shaagra's attentive servant and ghoul. Unbelievably strong after centuries of feeding from the sleeping Methuselah, she is a major power behind the throne. The struggles between Libussa and the irritatingly strong-willed Otakar trickle down into the doings of the Premysls as a whole. Libussa believes, as does most of her family, that she could take on many Cainites

and win. Libussa occasionally walks the streets — sometimes by day, but more often by night. Pale as the moon, with waist-length wheat-straw hair, she might be found almost anywhere, watching and listening to the pulse of her city. Should anyone threaten Shaagra, Libussa would instantly know. The revenant Premysl, having recently received the command from Libussa, have been picking off any Tremere found in the city and feeding them to their Methuselah, who shows signs of awakening.

Rabbi Mordecai ben Judah: A community leader in the Jewish Quarter, Kabbalist and magus, Rabbi ben Judah is also the creator of the golem, a manlike creature of great strength. Though not affiliated with any magical tradition, the rabbi is aware that other mages visit and reside in the city. He is particularly concerned since his discovery that some members of the Order of Hermes' House Tremere have apparently become "undead." Primarily involved with the safety of the Jewish Quarter, he is considering speaking to the king regarding these *vampyrs*. Meanwhile, he guards his own home, placing garlic at the doors and windows and spreading salt on the window sills.

Grand Prior Pierre de Varreau: Leader of the Knights of St. John in Prague, this French knight has traveled to the Holy Land and throughout much of Western Europe. A grizzled veteran, the surprisingly well-educated de Varreau takes his monastery's duty seriously as guardians of Prague's left bank. He insists on regular arms practice to keep his men in shape and oversees patrols through the Little Quarter to keep the peace. A man of True Faith (as are a few others under his command), he has a knack for showing up wherever trouble is brewing. He has even been known to lead armed contingents through the streets after dark, in response to strange noises or screams. The knights under his command are the true rulers of the Little Quarter.

POLAND

*Awake! The day is coming now
That brings the sweat of anguish to the brow
Of Christians, Jews, and Pagans all!
...The sun no longer shows
His face; and treason sows
His secret seeds that no man can detect.*

— Sir Walter von der Vogelweide, "Awake!"

In Malopolska, or Lesser Poland, the city of Krakow has emerged as a focus for trade as well as the core of learning and religion. The landscape of rolling plains gives way to the Carpathian foothills southward from Krakow and culminates in the breathtaking Tatra Mountains. The Tatras form the border between Hungary and the lands of Poland. This is a land of severe winters and blazing summers.

KRAKOW

A great dragon once terrorized the village that sat atop Wawel Hill, north of the Tatra Mountains, according to the legend. In order to keep their lives and livelihood, the people who lived beneath the monster's shadow had to sacrifice a

maiden once a year to feed the beast's hunger. The king of the land promised his daughter in marriage and half of his kingdom to the one who could slay the dragon and end its threat. Answering the call, an enterprising cobbler named Krak filled a lambskin with a mixture of salt and sulfur and tricked the dragon into eating it. Crazed by thirst caused by the salt, the beast hurled itself into the waters of the Vistula, where the sulfur caused the dragon to explode. The cobbler received his reward and the village saved by his ingenuity called itself Krakow, in his honor.

From its beginnings as a trading settlement on the Vistula in the 10th century, Krakow grew into a bishopric by A.D. 1000. Krakow's consecration as the Polish capital in 1083 catapulted it to prominence and drew the attention of many rival Cainites. Within its protective walls, a Tzimisce prince seeks alliances that will help her unite Poland once again, while her Ventrue rivals, under the guise of encouraging trade with Western Europe, plan her downfall.

DESCRIPTION

Imposing stone walls, rising more than five meters in height, enclose the city of Krakow, serving as its chief protection from the dangers that lurk outside its boundaries. Inside its walls, however, other dangers threaten the mortal and immortal population.

WAWEL HILL

Wawel Castle, along with its adjoining cathedral, sits atop Wawel Hill, in the southernmost portion of Krakow. This enormous complex towers above the city and symbolizes both temporal and spiritual power. Erected on the site of fortifications from the eighth century, both castle and cathedral command the attention of all who enter the city. Wawel Castle is a rectangular structure that houses more than 70 halls arranged around a courtyard, framed on all sides by graceful arcades. The cathedral also reflects power in its ornate facade, to which stonemasons continually add more elaborate ornamentation. Castle and cathedral remain under constant construction, growing grander and more complex with each passing year.

A cave at the foot of Wawel Hill bears the name Smocza Jama, or "Dragon's Den," and reportedly marks the home of Krakow's legendary dragon. In fact, it serves as the secret haven for Razkoljna, the Cainite Prince of Krakow.

CENTRAL KRAKOW

The Rynek Glowny, in the center of the city, stands as medieval Europe's largest marketplace. As the nexus of daily life and trade, it bustles with booths where tradesmen ply their wares. Although most of the sellers close down at sunset, a few vendors — some of them ghouls — remain open into the evening, when the city's Cainite masters use this area for their own purposes.

Near the Rynek Glowny is Krakow's tavern district, where visitors to the city can find lodging during their stay and the locals can spend a few hours in relaxation at the end of their

daily routines. These establishments vary in quality from execrable (but affordable by even the poorest peasant) to expensive; each has its own clientele. A few serve a dual purpose as brothels. One tavern, The Sign of the Blooded Blade, is a gathering place for Krakow's Cainites and their ghouls. The inn features servants who offer their blood (and other services) to Cainite clients, as well as foreign slaves who are drained to create the inn's noted "specialty." Known as the blood cup, this heady drink combines blood and alcohol in a potent mixture. The innkeeper, himself one of the prince's ghouls, makes certain that no one enters his establishment who is ignorant of the nature of its regular patrons. Here, in a politically neutral environment, the Cainites meet to socialize and study one another in hopes of gaining an advantage over their rivals.

UNIVERSITY QUARTER

The Collegium Maius, an institution of learning that will eventually rival other such colleges in Western Europe, occupies a two-story building in the western portion of the city. A large brick chimney spirals upward from the structure. Construction is underway to expand the collegium into a university, a project expected to take well into the next century.

Krakow's Jewish population occupies a small portion of the city near what is already being referred to as the "University Quarter." In their tiny enclave, Talmudic and Kabbalistic scholars maintain their pursuit of wisdom under the watchful and distrusting eye of their Christian overlords.

RESIDENCES

The nobility live in fine houses just north of Wawel Hill. Tradesmen reside in small wooden dwellings, usually above or near their places of business, while the poorer inhabitants, including the families of those who labor in the Wieliczka salt mine (see below), crowd together in tinier, shabbier homes—little more than hovels. When the cold and snow preclude working in the mines, the salt miners return to Krakow to spend the harsh winter months with their families.

Five miles southeast of Krakow, the Wieliczka salt mine provides the city with a valuable trade commodity. The rights to the fossil salt are under the control of the Benedictine Abbey at Tyniec (see below), eight miles southwest of the city. Vast networks of underground caverns and tunnels form a crystalline netherworld where peasants labor at extracting the salt, hollowing out new portions of the earth continually in their progress. So extensive are the contours of the mine that many of the passages and chambers, particularly those that extend far, far under the earth, have disappeared from the memory of even the oldest miners. Krakow's Nosferatu dwells here; she has created her own domain, including a deep tunnel that stretches into the heart of the city.

A village has grown up around the mine to house the workers during their six-day work week so that they do not have to make the long trek to and from Krakow each day. They

return home instead on Saturday evenings to spend the Lord's Day with their families, returning to the mines on Monday morning. These workers often bring home stories of odd occurrences from deep within the mine — of the disappearances of coworkers and of the feeling that they are being watched by something unholy and evil.

CHURCH ON THE ROCK

Just south of the city's walls, atop a cliff overlooking the Vistula River, the Kosciol na Skalce (Church on the Rock) commemorates the martyrdom of St. Stanislaw. A small cult has formed around the murdered bishop, perpetuating the legend that a pair of eagles gathered and reassembled the parts of Stanislaw's dismembered body.

TYNIEC

Protected by its own garrison, Tyniec's Benedictine Abbey draws most of its annual income from the revenues of the Wieliczka salt mine, selling its valuable commodity to traders from Krakow who then profit in its resale. The Cappadocian Kazimierz maintains his haven within the cloistered halls and prays that the Cainite "dragon" who holds Krakow in thrall will one night release her stranglehold on the city.

POLITICS AND RELIGION

Krakow is both a devoutly Catholic city and one that considers itself to be the capital of the Kingdom of Poland, even though that political entity no longer exists. Many of her leading citizens, both mortal and Cainite, see the conjoining of Wawel Castle and Cathedral on Wawel Hill as evidence of the cooperation and harmony that characterizes a Christian country. Others view the juxtaposition of symbols of temporal and divine power in a different light: To these critics, castle and cathedral stand in competition with one another, each vying for supremacy over power in Krakow.

The presence of a synagogue in Catholic Krakow bears witness to the city's recognition of the services provided by its Jewish population more than to any real religious tolerance. The city's desire to create a university rivaling Prague's necessitates attracting qualified scholars, many of whom are Jews. Though confined to one section of the city, there are as yet no walls to restrict their movement as in some other cities in Europe. Nevertheless, pressure is mounting from many of Krakow's devout Christians to oust the Jews from the city proper.

A few Krakow residents still follow the old Slavic religion that pre-dated the arrival of Christianity. These stalwart pagans take great pains to hide their true practices, and many of them outwardly espouse the Catholic faith. The majority of Krakow's populace have little time for dreams of a better life or an afterlife; their lives and livelihood depend on too many factors beyond their control. While they go about their daily lives in the protective shadow of Krakow's walls, the

common folk also sense a sinister presence in their midst. They live a divided existence between the daylight hours, when the city bustles all around them as a trade center, and the dark of night, when those same crowded streets sit empty and silent except for the passing of "those who move by shadow" and their mortal servants.

LIFE IN THE CITY

The inhabitants of Krakow take pride in the history of their city and make up one of the strongest centers of Slavic culture in Poland. At the same time, they realize the need to protect themselves from both German and Hungarian interference.

Krakow boasts a thriving business in trade in addition to the routine that marks most cities of its day. German merchants make regular visits to the city and sell cloth, weapons and armor in return for valuable salt from the mines and other goods produced in the city. Krakow hosts a fair each fall that draws people from all over southern Poland and from even farther away. Some of those who participate in the festivities are followers of the old pagan religion and use the fair as a convenient cover for their own harvest festivals in honor of the Earth Mother and her Eternal Consort.

PEOPLE

Nobles occupy themselves with dreams of former glory, hoping for a future when Krakow again serves as the capital of a great Slavic power. The clergy strive to maintain their loyalty to the Latin Church despite their proximity to the Byzantine Empire. Scholars eagerly anticipate Krakow's ascendancy as a center of learning, and the merchant guilds revel in the city's location as a crossroads for trade. Meanwhile, the real powers of Krakow pursue their own plans for the city's future.

The Cainites of Krakow, though not numerous, spread their tangled skeins of intrigue throughout all facets of the city's life. Politics, religion, business, art and learning all are within their control. Unfortunately for them, however, there are as many visions for the city's future as there are envisions. This factor alone prevents the mortals of the city from falling totally under the domination of their hidden, immortal rulers.

MORTALS

Casmir Piast, Prince of Malopolska: As the latest scion of the Piast dynasty that has ruled Krakow since its elevation to a bishopric, "Prince" Casmir claims rulership over Malopolska in fact, but still considers himself King of Poland. In actuality, his control over the city is tenuous at best, contested often by his advisors and other nobles, who feel that he is not doing enough to reunite Poland and recover her former standing.

Bishop Stefan: Counted among Casmir's adversaries is the Bishop of Krakow, Stefan Stwosz, who sees the prince as a weakling unable to support his claim to the Polish crown. Mindful of the fate of outspoken bishops, however, Bishop

Stefan works quietly to undercut Casmir's authority without implicating himself. He serves as a useful tool for the Ventrue Konrad in his bid to overthrow the current Tzimisce ruler.

Ludmilla the Clever: Now in her late 60s, this elderly hedge wizard serves as the leader of Krakow's small, but ardent, pagan community. She is a priestess and healer to those who refuse both the Christian and Jewish faiths. Ludmilla divides her time between the city, where she lives with her son and daughter-in-law above their pottery shop, and the Niepolomice Forest, where she has a small cottage and herb garden. Here she conducts services to honor and propitiate the old gods of Poland. She has made alliances with the Cainite Jolanta and a pack of werewolves, believing them to be remnants of the old religion who have come to aid her in preserving the sanctity of the ancient traditions.

HUNGARY

Another thunder shook the ground and a third. After that came silence, so sudden and deep that it was more terrifying than the storm before. The wind ceased as suddenly as it had come and the smoke rose once more straight into the air. Only the path of the fire crept slowly westward, burning high and bright.

— Kate Seredy, *The White Stag* (tales of the Magyar people and old gods)

Located in the heart of Europe, Hungary holds four distinct regions in its borders. The Great Plain (also called the Alföld) extends to the east of the Danube River and is cut into two by the Tisza River. The western area is arable land, good for farming and usable as pasture for horses and herd animals. The land is drier beyond the Tisza, though still suitable for growing wheat. Transdanubia is in the western part of Hungary. Lying between the foothills of the Alps and the Danube River, this portion of Hungary was once the Roman province of Pannonia. Lake Balaton, the largest lake in Europe, occupies the center of the picturesque province, flanked to the north by weirdly shaped hills formed of lava and basalt. To the north of Transdanubia rises Kisalföld or Little Plain, another fertile farming region. The Northern Highlands are a range of hills that extend between the Danube, the Great Plain and the Kingdom of Bohemia.

Hungary lies in the middle section of the Danube, which Hungarians call the Duna River. Navigable throughout the country, the river succeeds as a main trade link to both West and East. The Tisza, Hungary's second great river, rises from the Carpathians in the east, flowing through the lowest part of the plains. Turbulent and quick, the Tisza floods the low-lying plains yearly. Great forests of oak and beech cover large areas of Transdanubia.

EAST AND WEST

From a Cainite point of view, Hungary can be seen as divided into two regions. Western Hungary, containing Budapest and Esztergom, is more settled, but riddled with intrigue from the Holy Roman Empire. Eastern Hungary — Transylvania — is savage frontier by contrast, inhabited by Tzimisce voivodes, feral Gangrel, and rage-filled Lupines.



WESTERN HUNGARY

BUDA-PEST

Three separate towns constitute the city that is often referred to as Buda-Pest. Two of them, Buda and Obuda (Old Buda), occupy the wooded hills to the west of the river; though the two have merged in architecture and character, they are quite different. Buda bears the name of the designer of her fortress-castle. Pest, on the lowland far side of the river, still claims its independence from the higher, better defended city — except in times of war and invasion, when her residents scurry across to take shelter there. Pest means “chimney,” a reference to the lime kilns that are found in it. The German word for Pest is even more direct: They call it “Ofen,” for “oven.”

The first town to rise here was built by the Celts along the slopes of Gellert Hill. Called Ak Ink (meaning “spring rich in water”), it was a trading center for pottery and bronze. Remnants of the Celts’ bronze foundries still survive. With the coming of the Romans, the fortress-town of Aquincum rose, matched by a sister fort (Contra-Aquincum) on the other side of the river. Aquincum became the capital of the province of Pannonia until the departure of the Romans.

Successive invasions changed little in the abandoned towns of Aquincum and Contra-Aquincum. Those who occupied the land surrounding the towns built separate dwellings

and worked small plots of land. The Magyars thought Obuda (which sat atop the ruins of Aquincum) was nothing less than the fabled capital of Attila the Hun when they arrived in the ninth century. They happily set about building upon the ruins.

The cities of Obuda, Buda and Pest have become the Dark Medieval city of Buda-Pest by the 12th century. Despite its outwardly Christian character, much of Buda remains pagan. Some insist on worshipping the old Magyar gods, secretly meeting and offering sacrifices.

BUDA

Although the last area to be “settled,” Buda is the fastest-growing section of Buda-Pest. Construction continues on the castle, churches and various noble homes.

VAR-HEGY

In the center of Buda rises a limestone plateau called Var-hegy (or Castle Hill), which is topped by the royal palace. Divided into quarters, the northern section of the plateau is given over to important nobles and burghers, while the southern portion is reserved for the king’s castle. To the west and above the castle are several churches, the most famous being the dark, Romanesque Church of Our Lady. Also in the church quarter are the town’s prison, a small market square and the town meeting hall. To the east rests Vizivaros, or Water Town, a narrow strip between the castle and the Danube occupied by tradesmen, fishermen and

craftsmen. The entire plateau is fortified with stone walls on all sides, though the castle has an inner wall as well. Because of an old superstition, bits of iron were embedded in the rocks of the fortifications, a practice intended to ward off evil supernatural things. In effect, it makes entering the town very difficult for the region's fae. This section is the oldest part of Buda, constructed on the highland as a defensive measure.

THE HOUSE OF THE RED HEDGEHOG

Located between the castle and the church district, the Red Hedgehog is an inn catering to visiting nobles and people of wealth who wish to stay in the castle district of Buda rather than in the market area of Pest. Accommodations and food are said to be the best in the city, and the inn's division of its tavern portion into three smaller, linked areas makes each seem private without feeling closed in. Many of the city's elite, including Cainites, visit the Red Hedgehog after sunset.

BUDA CASTLE

The castle forms a horseshoe shape, with a north and south wing thrusting outward from a heavier (and original) central block. The central building is typical of 11th-century castles — thick stone walls and wooden interior floors and ceilings. It holds a great hall, parlor or meeting room, kitchen with its buttery (storeroom for beer, wine and candles) and pantry (for salt, bread and cutlery). Bedchambers, a chapel and a large open courtyard occupy the remainder. It is unfurnished but for several heavy wooden chairs, tables, beds and chests. Woolen rugs line interior walls in bedchambers (which are reserved for royalty, nobles and guests). The castle has arrow slits rather than windows. The castle is heated by an ingenious system of clay pipes connecting the building to the limestone caverns below it. The pipes lead upward from a mazelike cellar underneath the castle. The many thermal springs found in the caves (and outside them) produce steam that rises through the pipes, keeping the castle much warmer than most such edifices.

The other two wings are of later construction. The south wing holds an armory, barracks and a hall for knights. The northern one is massive, almost another separate castle, with more kitchens, storerooms, bedchambers and halls for accommodating court functionaries (or citizens of Buda and Pest in times of siege). Despite the commodious lodgings available in the royal palace, they are used infrequently. Buda-Pest is not the capital of Hungary; that honor is reserved for Esztergom, some miles to the north.

The caverns provide lime for use in Pest across the river, while the thermal springs provide water ranging from barely tepid to quite hot to suit the taste of those desiring baths. Although the Magyars did not originally appreciate the mineral-rich hot springs (most of which are found slightly to the south of the palace on Gellert Hill), upon discovering the Roman baths left from Aquincum, they soon became avid bathers — a custom far more in keeping with Eastern practices than current Western ones.

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

Deep beneath Buda Castle is the hidden resting place of Bulsu, the sybaritic sire of Buda-Pest's Cainite prince, Vencel Rikard. Carved from the caverns, yet adorned with costly draperies and carpets, golden candlesticks and sumptuous bedding, Bulsu's apartments house him in kingly splendor. Here he maintains a stable of attractive men and women who sate his appetite.

PORT TOWN

Below Castle Hill, on wide ramparts that stretch outward from the river, lies the port of Buda. Only a few buildings occupy this area. Most are no more than single stone rooms with stout doors. These warehouses are used for storing goods being held for river transport. Along the riverbanks are posts used for mooring ships. Buda receives regular shipments of timber and bricks from Vienna and sends back furs, amber and exotic goods from the East.

Upstream, where the river is not so wide, ferrymen use barges and rafts to carry people, livestock and goods back and forth across the river. There are no bridges. At one time a natural ford, the presence of the ferries makes a natural crossing difficult now. They occupy the best crossing place, forcing those who would cross on their own into the wider and deeper sections of the river. Most people find it more convenient to pay a small tithe to the ferryman than to risk crossing where the river's current might sweep them away.

The Taban, or tannery district, is below Castle Hill, somewhat further south than the port. Besides tanneries, the district is also home to vintners who use the gently sloping hill as vineyards. Though afflicted with the smell of tanning, the area has many small, but comfortable, houses occupied by merchants and ship owners. A street running up from the Taban provides the easiest ascent to Castle Hill. Rumors abound among the poor of Buda-Pest that one of the tanners makes his fortune supplying tanned human hides to the devil worshippers that "everyone" knows are abroad in the city. No proof of such horror has been found thus far.

GELLERT HILL

Just south of the castle lies Gellert Hill, named for the martyred St. Gellert, a Venetian who became a bishop of Hungary. During a pagan reaction after the reign of Istvan (later called St. Stephen, patron saint of Hungary), Gellert was nailed into a barrel and thrown from the hill into the river in 1046. On the hill is a monument to the saint. Further down, Celtic ruins and many of Buda's thermal pools can be found. Transient Cainites (particularly, those on the run from Cainite justice) occasionally use the ruins as convenient resting places.

HARE ISLAND

Just above Buda, almost opposite Obuda, sits a small island known as Hare Island, 2.5 kilometers long and 500 meters wide. It is covered with woods and boasts a hot spring in the northern end, and it is connected to the Buda side of the river by a pile bridge. A Roman tower and villa, which formerly

belonged to the garrison commander of Aquincum, is now the residence and court of Vencel Rikard, the Cainite Prince of Buda-Pest, and his ghoulish servants. The house is used perhaps once a year by the king, who comes to hunt rabbits there. Other residents know the island to be a royal hunting preserve. Recent rumors say that the king intends to deed the island to the Knights of St. John so they may build a fortified monastery on it — a rumor that greatly worries the prince.

OBUDA

The area's oldest settlement, that of the Celts, may lie on Gellert Hill, but the second oldest is in Obuda. The Roman provincial capital of Aquincum consisted of a large outpost and the civilian settlement that grew up around it. Ironically, the nobles of Buda believe that the younger settlement holds better residences. The lesser nobles, those who cannot afford or find suitable living quarters in Buda, have been relegated to the "less desirable" homes available in unfashionable Obuda. Although the lesser nobles smile knowingly from these despoiled residences, for they have inherited the best buildings in Buda-Pest.

THE NOBLE DISTRICT

Many classical Roman buildings and structures remain. A few nobles have constructed houses utilizing the remains of Roman walls and floors, some with beautiful and intact mosaics. Other remains include the *Thermae Maiores*, Roman baths that include pools, steam chambers, massage rooms, a decorated promenade and a temple in which statuary of the nymphs of healing still remains. Though they at first resisted bathing, the Magyar nobles who reside in Obuda learned the custom from natives who remained in the area, and they continued to use the facilities after the Romans left. As they have come to appreciate the benefits of bathing, the nobles have tried to keep these luxurious baths a secret from their counterparts in Buda, lest other, more powerful nobles drive them out and take their residences.

THE ROUND HOUSE

A military amphitheater near the old baths once held up to 16,000 people. Its arena is topped by a block of abandoned dwellings known as the Round House. Their cellar walls form part of the amphitheater. Below ground, under the arena, are cells where prisoners and wild beasts were once held. Secret passages lead from the arena's holding cells up into the Round House, which allows the building's chief resident, the Malkavian known as Octavio, to move about unseen. The nobles of Buda-Pest have recently begun looking into the possibility of holding festivals, games and contests in the old arena.

Octavio has discouraged this idea, upset that his haven might be compromised and his rituals in honor of Kupala stopped. Octavio, tortured by the demon's madness, captures mortals (and weaker Cainites, when possible), whom he then puts through elaborate games and cruel sports before sacrificing them to Kupala. Octavio isn't certain whether he makes

these offerings to glorify or to bind the demon so he cannot awaken and wreak destruction on Eastern Europe. To this end, the Malkavian alternately supports and opposes Vencel Rikard.

THE AMBER MARKET

When Aquincum was the capital of Pannonia, it was a major stopover on the Amber Road, the main trade route from Russia. The most important goods traded along the route were furs and amber, hence the name. Amber is still brought west along this ancient trade route and sold in bulk, and crushed to make scent or set into silver and gold as jewelry or other ornamentation. That work is all carried on in the Obuda Amber Market, where craftspeople and traders set up stalls when weather permits. On the fringes of the market can be found storytellers, wine sellers, meat vendors and the ubiquitous thieves looking to snatch a piece or two of amber from inattentive crafters. Failing that, their skill as cutpurses allows them to relieve customers of their excess coins. Though the market shuts down at midday, it remains open after dark, lit by torches placed throughout the square. Many amber merchants have found that the later hours often attract rich customers who never attend the market during daylight hours.

HERMIT'S HILL

This wooded hill rises above Obuda and provides a clear view of the town, Buda, the Danube and Pest. A watchtower was erected on the hill in ancient times. The ruins still remain. The Romans learned (after repeated disappearances) not to man the tower, and legends indicate that the hill is haunted. More recently, some residents of Obuda have seen a bearded, long-haired man moving about on the hill from time to time. The mysterious figure, who dresses in a dirty, tattered robe, occasionally comes down to the Obuda Amber Market and the central market in Pest. He can also be found at a quiet, shadowed table in the second tavern room of the Red Hedgehog. After watching him carefully, the guards no longer perceive him as a threat but think he is a holy hermit. Occasionally, kind-hearted individuals offer him meat, wine or other victuals. He merely nods, then turns away. Most believe he has taken a vow of silence and no longer bother him. Few, however, maintain that they have heard him speak — but only when he chooses.

PEST

Constructed on a layer of rubble and stone lying close to the river's edge, most of Pest's buildings are made of wood. Showing the Hungarian eye for fine decoration, many wealthy merchants have commissioned woodcrafters to adorn their houses with fine woodcarvings. Most popular are flower and vine designs, horses and eagles. A few depict trees or jagged lightning strokes, evidence that their inhabitants have not wholly embraced Christianity (or forgotten the old gods). All the streets of Pest circle outward from a central marketplace. The main street crosses from the port alongside the river, through the center of the market and on to the east, where it exits through Pest's main gate. Beyond the gate lie only endless plains.

CATTLE MARKET

Just inside the main gate is Pest's cattle market, a dusty square where cattle, sheep and horses are bought and sold. Usually referred to as "that den of thieves," the market is famous for the number (and cleverness) of the cutpurses who congregate about the market like flies. Any livestock not continually watched is likely to be missing within a few moments, as are buyers' purses — especially during the evening hours that the market remains open. Cainites who have lost livestock to these depredations blame the Ravnos known as Izidor; most often, they're right. Many of those selling beasts try to do so the first day they are brought into Pest rather than stabling them overnight, for they have noted that the longer the animals spend within the city gates, the more sickly and listless some become. It is believed that the river gives off bad vapors that affect the animals; others claim that devils torment the poor beasts by night. Blessings said over the animals seem to have no effect.

THE PARISH CHURCH

Lying in the lowest spot in Pest, the Romanesque parish church known as The Chapel of the Virgin is newly built atop the ruins of Contra-Aquincum. Only one outer wall of the fortress remains, and it was used to enclose half the church. The third-century tower still stands nearby and is used as a makeshift bell tower for the modest church.

ROYAL MARKET

Pest has grown up around mercantile interests. Nowhere is this more evident than in its Royal Market, the central square of the town. All roads lead into the market, which is surrounded by the lawmakers' hall; the custom house-treasury building; and the Golden Boar and the White Stag, two inns catering to travelers. Germans tend to frequent the Boar, while Hungarians prefer the Stag. The central market is filled with bright colors, lots of noise and just about any trade item available in Eastern Europe. Everything from practical blacksmith work to barrelmaking to bootmaking to delicate goldsmithing can be found for a price. Wine sellers, fortunetellers, and moneylenders rub shoulders with scribes, mercenary soldiers, pleasure peddlers, farmers and household servants. Hungary's main slave market is held here once a week. The city's Cainites (and few agents sent by Cainite masters from throughout Eastern Europe) attend the evening slave auctions, buying choice vessels. Although Istvan freed his own slaves, the practice is not yet illegal in all parts of the kingdom.

Goods from the West dominate most of the market, but two areas contain strikingly different wares. One section is run by Jews and features rare herbs, vellum, honey, beeswax candles, medicinal elixirs, and wares from Byzantium. The other area is manned by merchants from Pest's small Muslim community, who sell fine fabrics, rare scents and exotic weaponry. Rumor whispers that both the Jews and the Muslims have wondrous magical elixirs, weapons and other items that they hide and sell only to the very rich and powerful. Trade with the East is concentrated primarily in the hands of these few merchants.

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

ESZTERGOM

Traveling from Austria to Esztergom along the Danube is like sailing down a silvery ribbon through thick, forested slopes that line both sides of the river. Side channels and tributaries form midriver islands, havens for waterfowl and small game. An occasional hut or hovel, homes to hunters or other solitary folk, can be seen, but most of the area is untamed wilderness until the traveler reaches the Danube Bend. Just before the great river takes a wide turn southward, the forest is broken by the sight of Esztergom's domed Cathedral of St. Adalbert jutting upward from the rocky plateau that forms the city's Castle Hill. Named for the first Bohemian bishop of Prague, who converted Prince Geza and his family, the church was the first constructed on the hill. The plateau belonged to the church before the king erected his palace there. Istvan was crowned in the church in A.D. 1000 with an ornate crown sent to him by Pope Sylvester II.

Esztergom is perhaps the most Westernized area of Hungary; it maintains a close link to Germany for both political and economic reasons. As both the seat of Church power and the king's chosen capital, Esztergom receives many ambassadors and tradesmen seeking investments or favor. Though not without its own intrigues, the city (and its residents) is almost totally isolated and blissfully untouched by the rage and warfare that mark the easternmost of Hungary's claimed lands, Transylvania.

THE ROYAL PALACE

Grandier than the castle in Buda, the royal palace of Esztergom serves as the king's residence and court. It shares Castle Hill with the Archbishop's Palace and the Church of St. Adalbert. The three great stone structures give a sweeping grandeur to the town. With many archways and portals, the castle seems much lighter and more open than its counterpart in Buda. The Vaulted Hall is the most famous room in the castle, a vast room featuring beautiful carvings and Bohemian glass windows; it is used by the king as his royal court.

BISHOP'S PALACE

Built when Esztergom became an archbishopric, this Romanesque palace is as sumptuous and beautiful as the royal residence (if not more so). The citizens deem it fitting that this lovely estate be the property of the Archbishop of Esztergom, who as Primate of all Hungary is head of the Hungarian bishops' synod. The archbishop extends hospitality to several junior churchmen who make their homes within the palace. Most are the elite up-and-comers in the church; a few are noted for their learning or knowledge of canonical law. One among them, a younger priest named Janos who is marked for quick advancement, secretly keeps his mistress in his suite within the palace. Liseta Illuminada (Elizabeth the Luminous), a beautiful and ambitious Lasombra, uses her priestly lover as the means to regain the upper hand in Eastern European Church affairs. She is grooming Janos to become Archbishop of Esztergom, knowing she will rule him from the shadows. Liseta uses a little-used postern door whenever she needs to leave the palace and walks the city dressed in the habit of one of the nuns of St. Ann's Convent.

DISTRICTS

Directly below Castle Hill, between it and the Danube, is the Archiepiscopal Town, so called because it houses the clergy and the tradespeople and crafters who serve the Church. The port's revenues also belong to the Church, and justice is meted out according to canonical law for residents of (and lawbreakers who enter) this area. By custom, if a fugitive makes it to the district boundary, he is considered to be under Church protection and may make his way unhindered to the cathedral, where he may beg sanctuary. Such folk may be required to serve the Church or returned to the civic authorities at the archbishop's discretion. Town residents are immune to civic law even if caught committing a crime elsewhere in the city; they are turned over to the Church and where they often receive more stringent punishment than they would have received under civic law.

In this district is the Church of the Magdalen, the stronghold of Geza Arpad, Caimite Prince of Esztergom. Many holy men are buried in the catacombs beneath the church. Unknown to the mortal archbishop of Esztergom, Geza performs profane rituals in the church and catacombs, corrupting the area and dedicating it to Kupala.

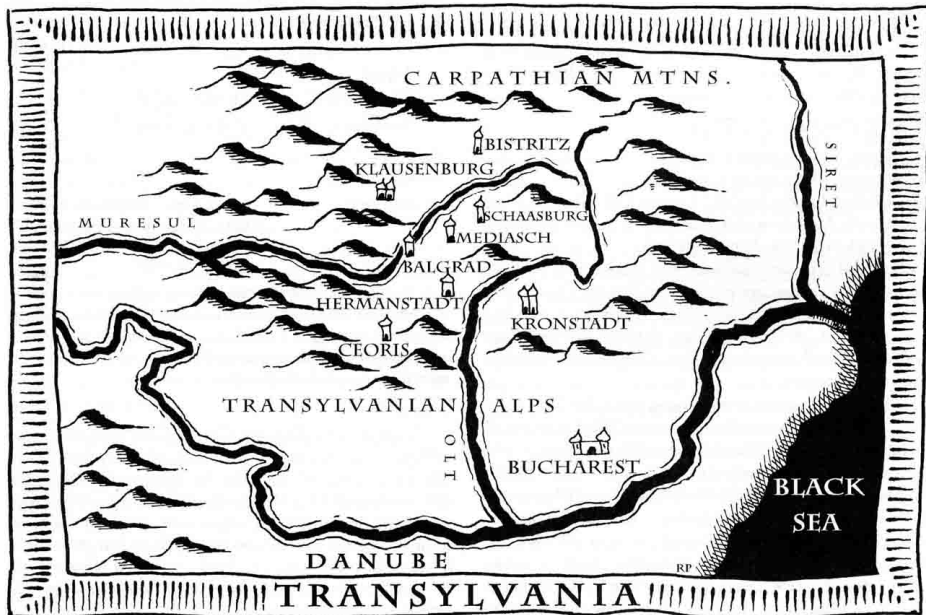
The king's people and retinue live in Royal Town, an expansive territory in the center of the city just beyond the marshy area beneath Castle Hill. The main market of Esztergom is found in Royal Town, as is the main port. Revenues from customs go to the king. St. Lawrence Parish Church marks the northern boundary of Royal Town, while the Jewish settlement abuts it in the south.

EASTERN HUNGARY: TRANSYLVANIA

The easternmost reaches of Hungary are known as Transylvania. Between the Prut River to the east, the Tisza River to the west and the Danube to the south lie over 39,000 square miles of land. In this region are lush sylvan forests, majestic mountain ranges, and the many tirsas, knezates and domains of Transylvania. Many cultures have prospered and died in this region, redefining the boundaries of this land in the process, but Transylvania's dark beauty endures.

While the borders of Transylvania change, the mountains surrounding them do not. To the south are the Transylvanian Alps, the Bihor Mountains are in the northwest, and the Carpathians are to the northeast. The Transylvanian Alps are often referred to as the southern Carpathians.

These three mountain ranges surround the Carpathian Basin and serve as a great aid to its defense. Several natural passes lead travelers through the mountains. Throughout the year in peaceful times, traders pass through them. When hostilities are in abeyance, sheep and other livestock graze as they are herded through the mountains. The passes become invasion routes in times of war and the feudal lords find them crucial in defending the Voivodate of Transylvania.



CITIES AND SETTLEMENTS OF THE EAST

In the northeast is Tihusa Pass, known as Borgo Pass in the Dark Medieval era. It forms the border between the Kingdom of Hungary and Russia. The territory to the east will be known as Bucovina centuries later. Oituz Pass is a route through the Carpathians along Transylvania's eastern border, joining the region with the area that will later be known as Moldavia. The most accessible route through the Transylvanian Alps is through Red Tower Pass to the south. This pass leads to what will one day become Wallachia.

From the Tisza plain to the Carpathians, the elevation ranges from low plains to high mountains. The western range of mountains averages under 3,000 feet, the eastern Moldavians average 4,000, and the southern Transylvanian Alps average 5,000. The peaks of these mountains are not entirely forbidding, but they instead hide beautiful alpine pastures.

The Iron Gates are located on the southwestern border of Transylvania. While this establishes the border between Hungary and Romania in modern times, all of Transylvania is part of the Kingdom of Hungary in the 12th century. The geography of other countries is quite straightforward: North of the Carpathians lie the Russian steppes, Lithuania and Poland (when traveling east to west); south of Hungary is Bulgaria; Russia stretches to the east, as does the Black Sea.

Beneath the imposing Carpathian peaks are rolling hills, verdant valleys, and several basins. To complicate geography, some regions are referred to by the names of these basins, ranging from the Birsá in the south to the Maramures in the north. In the west are the Sibiu and Secas. These help guide five rivers that flow from the eastern mountains to the west: the Olt, Mures, Tirnave, Cris and Somes. Most join the Tisza River and flow on toward the Danube.

TRANSYLVANIAN TOWNS

Some villages have been founded on the ruins of ancient Roman settlements, but most towns are just now being built. Nonetheless, hundreds of tiny hamlets and villages dot the countryside. Most are within a day's travel from one another. The people who live there are peasants, for the most part, with several necessary craftsmen who make barrels or repair plows. Many villages are too small to support a priest, and Orthodox clergy travel from village to village to conduct services. Most of the people are illiterate and few have concerns beyond doing their work and not falling afoul of the local *boyar*'s temper.

A few of the more remote villages, especially those nearer the Carpathians, are actually ghoulish towns, filled with several members of the revenant families created by the Tzimisce to be their servants. While residents of such towns might shelter Cainites willingly, they might also try to capture or kill strangers to the area, considering them threats to their fiendish masters.

Although there are many settlements in the territory, few cities of great size exist. Most villages are little more than dirt roads with a few houses on either side by the late 12th century. (Thankfully, this makes integrating them into

chronicles surprisingly easy.) There are less than a dozen cities of significant size, and these have grown largely because of the influence of Cainites.

THE CITIES OF TRANSYLVANIA

Many of the cities of Transylvania have recently taken shape and will grow considerably over the next century. Seven of them were rebuilt over ancient Roman or Dacian sites by Germanic Saxon colonists. Each of these cities forms the centerpiece of a separate domain and is nominally under the control of a Cainite prince. Nova Arpad ruled from Mediasch until her abduction; her double, Ruxandra, now rules in her stead.

Most Cainite princes here do not hold power here for long. Anyone with the temerity to impose order on a domain immediately becomes a target for the forces at work there. The Tzimisce kill fortunate princes; those who are not so lucky are abducted and punished for their trespasses. The Tremere are also rapidly gaining control in territories to the south, just as Gangrel vie for control of the wilderness surrounding the cities they despise. Competition for territory is fierce.

The remaining princes have begun to consult with Zelios of Clan Nosferatu to improve the defenses of their cities, and the growing population of Saxon settlers arriving from the north makes Zelios's task easier. Seven of these cities will form a system of defenses for Transylvania after the invasion of the Mongols in 1240. The seven cities will be known collectively as the Siebenburgen.

12th c. domain	Dark Medieval Prince (1197)
Balgrad	--
Klausenburg	Mitru, Gangrel
Hermanstadt	Maruska, Nosferatu
Schaasburg	--
Kronstadt	--
Mediasch	Nova Arpad, Ventrué (currently held by the impostor Ruxandra)
Bistritz	Radu, Tzimisce

Though the typical Transylvanian village has a population between 30 and 200 mortals, each of these seven cities has a population ranging from 3,000 to 5,000. For purposes of comparison, Transylvania as a whole contains about 90,000 mortals in the Dark Medieval world of 1197.

CEORIS

High in the Transylvanian Alps rises the Tremere chantry of Ceoris (see Chapter Six for additional information about this mighty chantry). Many in Transylvania have heard rumors of a "devil's school" where black sorcerers learn their dark arts. Few, however, know where such a school might be located. Though the Tremere once held several chantries in Transylvania, the war with the Tzimisce has taken its toll. Now only their greatest holding still exists — the dreaded fortress known as Ceoris.

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

THE SIEBENBURGEN

The growth of cities in Transylvania is largely the result of the Saxon settlers and the shadowy Cainites who support their efforts. Because the Siebenburgen are German in origin, they can be a source of some confusion: Some cities have both a German and a Romanian name. Furthermore, the names of some of these cities have changed many times over the last 800 years. We have taken a slight degree of liberty with the growth of these cities, assuming that they would have been populated more quickly in the Dark Medieval Era. For enthusiasts who would like to pursue further research, the following table will prove useful.

12th c. Saxon name	20th c. name	Other Historical Names
Bistritz	Bistria	--
Kronstadt	Brasov	--
Klausenburg	Cluj-Napoca	Kolosvar, Cluj, Napoca
Mediasch	Medias	--
Hermanstadt	Sibiu	--
Schaasburg	Sighisoara	Segesv
Balgrad	Alba Iulia	Weissenburg, Karlsburg

The faster growth of these cities is largely due to the Damned. They obtain greater herds for feeding by increasing the population of the cities. In addition, the fortification of these cities is very important to them, especially with the growing influence of marauding armies. The fortification of the Siebenburgen was minimal in our world before the Mongol invasion in 1241. Developments in fortifications evolved at the same rate in Dark Medieval Europe, but their use is somewhat more extensive. The Ventrue rulers of Hungary were insistent on developing these cities much earlier in Transylvania's history.

Storyteller Note: Only four of the cities currently hold princes; the other three are contested by petty factions of Ventrue opportunists, Tzimisce puppets, Gangrel marauders, and any other Cainites you'd like to seed in the region. In other words, these areas are plums ripe for the plucking, and a clever coterie could take great steps toward gaining a permanent fiefdom in one of these cities.

POLITICS AND RELIGION

Although acknowledged as a sovereign state and a part of Europe's Christian community, only in Hungary's western reaches do civilization and Catholicism prevail. Her eastern portions, including the ever-difficult territory of Transylvania, remain in a state of near-paganism. Despite the recent efforts of settling Germans in parts of Transylvania to build towns and bring Catholicism to the region, the Romanian population (who claim to be the original Dacian people) cling to Orthodoxy — or outright paganism and heresy. Traditional rulers, calling themselves *boyars*, rule their people through terror and barbarism. The Carpathian Mountains spawn ever more superstitious tales of werewolves, *vampyrs*, ghosts and black magicians locked in age-old battles. Unlike their neighbors in Buda-Pest or Esztergom, the people of eastern Hungary seem to have little use for the "civilization" that rule from the West purports to bring.

Several governments rule the lands beyond the forest, each touting its own authority and autonomy. The mortal government is at best a pretense. Acknowledging the divine right of the Kingdom of Hungary means accepting its version of feudalism. This is little more than the right of one race to repress and exploit another in the East.

Nowhere is the battle between Western Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy so fierce as in Transylvania. Fearing the strength of Transylvania's *boyars*, the king has sent Catholic

Magyars and German settlers into the area to build trading towns and to claim estates. The locals, most Romanians who espouse Orthodoxy — or follow pagan practices — have been ordered to convert or give up their lands to the Magyars. Soldiers sent with the occupying Magyars have enforced this edict, harshly pulling terrified families from their ancestral homes and forcing them into servitude as serfs on the newly acquired Magyar estates. Some *boyars* have refused, withdrawing into fortresses deep within the Carpathians and preparing for war.

Cainites in the region are divided along the same lines. Hungarians and Szeklers have been Embraced by the Fiends in a crude attempt to seize power. These "bastard childer" are hated by the Romanian Tzimisce even more than the ancient families of Tzimisce hate each other, for the Romanian Tzimisce find themselves threatened by members of their own clan in the heart of their stronghold — Transylvania. Ever a territorial and fractious clan, the most recent spate of fighting has left the Tzimisce potentially too weak to fight off the Shadow Lords and the upstart Clan Tremere. War rages throughout Transylvania during the dark hours, a war reflected by the daytime atrocities committed by each side's human pawns.

Westerners have made a feeble attempt to establish a network of princes in Transylvania. Since the cities of the region are hardly sufficient to sustain more than two or three vampires, each prince is recognized as the protector of a domain. Each domain is named for one of the major cities,

CASTLES OF TRANSYLVANIA

In our world, there were very few castles in 12th-century Transylvania. It will be a few centuries before Vlad Tepes will look out from the parapets of Bran Castle as vast fields of his enemies writhe in agony upon pikestaves. Until then, the Tzimisce will have to be content with torturing their enemies in the privacy of their own homes and behind the modest fortifications of their castles.

The castles that existed in 12th-century Eastern Europe were very simple, usually consisting of little more than a motte and bailey. For a game set in romantic Transylvania — the home of Tzimisce nobility, Ventrue overlords and Tremere sorcerers — would admittedly make for a very dull game. Thus, we have taken a few further liberties.

In the Dark Medieval Era, the proliferation of castles in Transylvania is in vogue throughout the 10th and 11th centuries. Zelios, the Master Mason of Clan Nosferatu, is respected in the fiefdoms of the Tzimisce. He oversees the construction of stone castles, and the occasional assistance of a monstrous ghoul makes this task much easier. Seven castles have been built under his masterful guidance over the last century. Fittingly, he knows the secret passages through all of them. Thus, it is not unusual for elaborate stone castles to be constructed in Dark Medieval Europe as early as the 10th century. We fully acknowledge the anachronism and endorse it to enhance Transylvanian chronicles.

present or past, to be found there. The Western Ventrue are eager to recognize the authority of the princes of these domains and their right to enforce the Six Traditions.

The Tzimisce care little for the formalities of the Western Hungarians. This is their land — it has always been and always will be. Tzimisce feudal lords set the borders of their fiefdoms regardless of where these princes (or “knezi”) hold court. Metamorphosists hold their rites and sacrifice whom they please, regardless of the opposition of Cainite monarchs. They do not need to ignore the protestations of princes because, quite simply, they do not care.

Further complicating matters are the region’s Gangrel and Nosferatu. Members of both clans tend to ally with the Tzimisce against the hated Tremere, who capture and use Cainites from all three clans in their magical workings and strange rites. Indeed, they have recently discovered that their clanmates are being turned into Gargoyle slaves by the Tremere. However, the Gangrel and Nosferatu sometimes have difficulty distinguishing one Tzimisce’s jealousies, territories and goals from another’s. Coupled with the Tzimisce penchant for changing sides whenever the wind blows from a new quarter, this makes their combined might against the Tremere much less than it might otherwise be.

The Tremere clan is exerting great force against the divided clans of Transylvania. The Usurper Tremere are formidable and their clan unity gives them a great edge over fractious feudal lords and bitter Cainite princes. Their influence already spreads over the territories surrounding southwestern Transylvania, and the wisest Cainites run for cover when the Gargoyles patrol.

The Shadow Lords, who might also wish to rid the area of the Tremere, are focused on wiping out their ancestral enemies. The Ventrue secretly support the Tremere with manpower, money and political favors, seeing the wizard clan as the best tool for ridding them of the annoying and uncontrollable Tzimisce. Ravnos move through the area selling information (usually a mix of truth and falsehood) to each side, telling false fortunes and stealing whatever isn’t nailed down or impaled. And underneath it all, the demon’s heart beats out a rhythm of madness and chaos to which they all dance.

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

DAILY LIFE

Buda-Pest and Esztergom are both centers for trade, crossroads for the merchandise that moves up and down the Danube. While Esztergom has become almost completely Westernized, however, Buda-Pest remains wed to many of the troubles brewing in the East. Citizens of Esztergom enjoy the privilege of life in a calm, well-ordered town similar to many in Germany. They look directly to the king or the archbishop for justice. Though the king visits occasionally, Buda-Pest has the feel of a frontier town, a settlement just on the edge of true wilderness — a short breath away from the terror and uproar that holds Transylvania in its grip.

Transylvania itself is an enigma. A few places in the territory are calm oases where little affects the people beyond the changing of the seasons. People are born, work, marry, raise children and die, all within a few tiny acres they recognize as their village. The folk of other towns struggle to survive, fearfully huddling in barred houses, listening with dread to the screams and cries from outside, too terrified to extend a helping hand to their friends and neighbors once night falls. By day, these same wretched souls move about hollowly, like old ghosts or broken dolls, going through the motions, but they are fearful of offending a powerful overlord or attracting the attention of a person of power. Such peasants remain dirty and ragged, not because they are too uncivilized to know better, but to deflect attention from themselves and their loved ones. Many cling to their Orthodox faith, fervently believing that if they pray enough, the horror will someday end.

PEOPLE

The true story of a city lies with the people who may be met within its walls — or on its battlefields.

— Anonymus, *Works in Progress*

Hungary and Transylvania are ethnic powderkegs. Whether a character is Saxon or Magyar, Szekler or Vlach, can drastically influence that character’s alliances and enmities. Even beyond the grave this holds true, as Vlach Gangrel savagely resist the incursions of Szekler Ventrue, and the German *Drang nach Osten* implacably rolls over the lands of the East.

MORTALS

Anonymous, the Chronicler: A humble scribe in the service of Bela III, Master P (popularly known as Anonymus) is the quintessential observer. Dressed in a simple, dark monk's robe, his face shadowed by the robe's cowl so that none may see it, he moves throughout Buda-Pest, Esztergom and even Transylvania's most dangerous territory, chronicling what he witnesses and hears. He has written the first history of the Hungarian people, the *Gesta Hungarorum*. By scribing in the Low (rather than the ecclesiastical) Latin, Anonymus makes his work accessible to all scholars rather than just to churchmen. Some Cainites claim that he writes in that language because it is his mother tongue, whispering that he has lived since the Roman Empire first rose to power. As he seems to fear nothing, quietly emerging from battles, captivity and other life-threatening situations unruffled and intact, many Cainites (and a few mortals) whisper that he is immortal — perhaps the Wandering Jew. At least a few Cainites believe him to be Caine. As his aura is as anonymous as his name, none can say for certain.

Bilal al-Hanbal: This Muslim trader owns a stall on the outskirts of Pest's Royal Market. Once a year he leaves the city to make the dangerous journey south and east, where he acquires trade goods and arranges for caravans to deliver whatever he cannot bring back personally. Bilal is a friendly and curious sort who enjoys talking with all the customers who frequent his market stall. Although he retains his Muslim faith, he seeks to learn all he can about Christianity, "to better know and understand his neighbors," so he says. Many citizens of Buda-Pest believe he is a spy; some say he is an assassin sent to murder their king. Most people discount such stories since King Bela entered the merchant's stall and emerged unharmed and in possession of a fine new blade some years back. In actuality, Bilal is the ghoul of Fariq the Assamite. He loyally does his master's bidding, including supplying Geza Arpad with potent Eastern drugs that the Prince of Esztergom feeds to his sire, Bulscu.

Delizbieta of the Dark Eyes: Some years ago a small group of dark-skinned, dark-haired people dressed in brightly colored clothes entered the city of Buda-Pest. Many folk claimed they looked like the depictions of ancient Egyptians shown on old scrolls. Clearly different from the Hungarians in dress, speech and customs, the group lives in a wagon in New Town, just outside the town walls. One of them is a tinsmith who works in the Royal Market; others in the group trade horses at the Cattle Market. However, a particularly striking young woman, has set up a small tent in the Royal Market. There she tells fortunes and predicts the future for any who will make her a gift of silver. It is rumored that those who have lost something valuable, and who are willing to pay to have it returned, may go to Delizbieta and tell her of the missing item. If "God is with her," she can "find" the item and return it to its owner — for an agreed-upon price. Delizbieta is one of the *kumpania* (traveling companions) of the Ravnos who calls himself Izidor (the reason many of the items in question are "missing").

BULGARIA

*He who falls fighting to be free
can never die: for him the sky
and earth, the trees and beasts shall keen,
to him the minstrel's song shall rise...*

— Hristo Botyov, "Hadzhi Dimitur"

Bordered on the north by the Danube and on the south by Greece, Bulgaria stands apart from its Slavic neighbors, separated from them by history, religion and reputation. Here, Tzimisce *voivodes* engage in brutal infighting (from which religion to espouse to which political faction to support). The countryside provides a haven for wandering Gangel and supports a sizable population of Shadow Lords, who delight in the lack of unity demonstrated by the land's Cainite population.

SOFIA (SERDICA)

The land around Sofia, the largest city in Bulgaria, sits high atop the Sofia Plain. Mountains surround it on four sides: the Balkan Mountains to the north, the Sredna Gora range to the south, the Lyulins to the west, and the granite peak of Mount Vitosh to the southwest. These natural defenses provide a strong deterrent to invasion.

Settled by the Serdi tribe of Thracians sometime during the seventh century B.C., the city then known as Serdica fell four centuries later to the Romans, who enclosed it in sturdy walls and made it the capital of Inner Dacia. Thus fortified, Serdica became a vital link along the Roman road that stretched between Naisus, on the Adriatic Sea, and Constantinople.

Under Constantine in the fourth century, the city (now known as Triaditsa) prospered as an important trade center. Large parts of the city were destroyed when the Huns invaded in 441, only to be rebuilt when the Byzantine Empire once again asserted control. In the ninth century, the Bulgars spread their influence to encompass the region around Triaditsa, and the city was renamed Sredets. Its location again gave the city a vital role in the First Bulgarian Empire. Subsequent reconquest by the Byzantines in 1018 did little to diminish the importance of Sredets (Triaditsa). Recently retaken by the victorious Asen brothers, Sredets continues to stand as a major center for trade, commerce and culture. Many residents of the city are already beginning to refer to it as Sofia, the city of wisdom.

DESCRIPTION

Although parts of the original Roman stone walls still surround Sofia, they have been strengthened and fortified by Byzantine and Bulgarian occupiers of the city. The Perlovet and Vladaya Rivers, both easily fordable and little more than broad streams, flank the city, providing easy access to water — an important factor in times of siege. Watchtowers at regular intervals along the walls and on both sides of the main gate provide the local garrison with a commanding view of the surrounding plain.

LM



TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

THE MARKET

The center of the city is a large marketplace, where peasants who farm the fertile Sofia Plain come to sell their produce and the city's craftsmen and artisans display their wares. The city's Cainite population keeps track of the daily goings-on through ghoulish servants who frequent the market.

SERDICA CASTLE

Dominating the city's western sector, Serdica Castle stands, built atop the original Roman fortress during the rule of Justinian and later rebuilt after the influx of the Bulgars in the ninth century. The underground levels of the castle serve as the home of the Lasombra Prince of Sofia, Basilio the Elder. The castle is the residence of Andras Tibor, brother-in-law to Peter and Ivan Asen. Awarded the title "Protector of Serdica," Andras privately hopes that his ambitious kinsmen will elevate him to a more royal status once they succeed in establishing a new Bulgarian Empire.

ST. SOFIA

The Church of St. Sofia, which stands near the eastern wall of the city, symbolizes the Byzantine influence of Bulgaria's capital. Erected in the late sixth century A.D., during the rule of the Emperor Justinian, St. Sofia (or "Blessed Wisdom") is a three-nave basilica formed in the shape of a cross, with an elaborate dome to mark the intersection. Built from brown bricks laid in intricate patterns that give the church a sense of depth and richness of texture, the church rests on the foundations of an even older predecessor destroyed by the Huns in the fifth century. Near the church stands an elaborate Romanesque villa that is the residence of the Archbishop of Serdica, Brenicis Vidor, a bitter cleric who aspires to restore the title of Patriarch to the position he occupies.

ROTUNDA OF ST. GEORGE

The fourth-century Rotunda of St. George originally housed a Roman temple. Beginning in the eighth century, local artists began decorating its interior walls and ceiling with frescoes, which form an ongoing act of devotion on the part of the city's faithful (and her wealthy patrons).

COUNCIL HALL

Between church and castle, overlooking the marketplace, stands the Council Hall, built on the site of the ancient Roman *buleferis*. Andras the Protector holds daily audiences here with the city's most prominent citizens and meets with his council of advisors once a week. On the first day of each month, the Protector's Council is open to all residents of the city, however insignificant. Andras then hears grievances and passes judgments concerning minor disputes. The Council Hall also serves as the evening court of the city's Cainite prince and his advisory council.

MINERAL BATHS

Located throughout the city are a number of thermal and cold baths, which take advantage of the underground mineral springs found within the confines of the city. Part of the city's Roman heritage, these baths (like the marketplace) serve as

gathering places for the citizenry, many of whom have preserved the ancient Roman custom of bathing regularly — a practice which fell out of favor long ago in much of Western Europe. The mineral springs also afford bathers with therapeutic advantages. Separate entrances and bathing chambers allow women to participate in the life of the bathhouse as well.

The House of the Eagle, the most luxurious of these baths, occupies a sumptuous Roman-style building north of the Council House. The wealthiest residents of Sofia/Serdica come to this lavishly accoutered establishment to gossip, socialize informally and soak themselves in its salubrious waters. Unknown to them, the proprietor of the baths — a portly, ingratiating man known as Jorgi the Bear — is the ghouléd servant of the Lasombra Basilio the Elder, who occasionally resides in the adjoining villa and is attended by ghoulish servants. The bathhouse and the villa are decorated with elaborate mosaics depicting Roman themes.

The House of the Eternal Mother, another mineral bath located in the southwestern part of the city, actually houses a pagan temple, where a good portion of the city's residents, despite giving nominal allegiance to the Church, still practice rites to honor the old gods. In times of plenty, sacrifices of wine, bread, fine oils and scents are made here; when evil times threaten, darker offerings are made instead, such as a young maiden's virginity or the blood of a newborn.

CHURCH OF THE HOLY LIGHT

Ironically, another secret sect occupies a nondescript building not far from the pagan temple. Known to its followers as the Church of the Holy Light, this unchurchlike structure houses a small, but fervent, branch of the Bulgarian Bogomil heresy. Led by a charismatic priest, Father Patryn, the faithful who worship here fully realize the extent to which light and darkness are at war in the confines of the city. Some suspect the true nature of the Cainites who walk the city's streets by night, but they dare not reveal their knowledge lest they bring persecution down upon themselves. Father Patryn holds an even closer secret — the presence of one of the Dark God's servants in a crypt far below the church.

OTHER SITES

Numerous inns and taverns dot the city, providing evening entertainment for the citizenry and offering room and board for travelers. The Sign of the Wing and Talon, located near the House of the Eagle, serves the upper-class locals as well as prestigious visitors. At the opposite end of the social scale, The Sign of the Crossed Knives caters to the city's less scrupulous elements — thieves, panderers, and common laborers.

Just inside the southern gate of the city, Cattle Square and its adjoining stockyards host a yearly cattle drive every autumn. Herdsmen from the surrounding lands bring their prime animals to Serdica to sell; during this time, the city's population swells to nearly half again its size.

A few Jews reside in Serdica, restricted to a small section of the city unpleasantly near the stockyards. A small synagogue serves the religious needs of this barely tolerated community.

POLITICS AND RELIGION

The city of Sofia hosts as many divergent political and religious factions as its checkered history might indicate. By far, most of the city's population look forward to the eventual victory of the Bulgarian independence movement. A smaller portion of the citizenry, however, fears that the severing of ties with Constantinople will open the land — and, in particular, the city of Serdica — to renewed invasions by the Turks or the Magyars. Others in Sofia favor establishing closer ties with the Turks, seeing them as the natural enemies of Constantinople. Still others believe that Sofia should seek alliances with Hungary and Romania.

Basilio fears all these movements. His power comes from his ties to Constantinople, and he is keenly aware of how vulnerable he is in this hostile territory. His fear of assassination makes him inordinately paranoid, one reason he frequently sleeps in the villa rather than in his usual, more well-known resting place.

Most citizens of Sofia subscribe to the eastern rite of the Church, due to the long reach of Constantinople, but other religious undercurrents exist within the city. The small Jewish population worships quietly, although the Jewish faith is openly acknowledged and tolerated for the present. Two secret sects, one pagan and one heretic, also have congregations in Sofia. The old religion, honoring the ancient deities, including the Dark and Light Gods, has a widespread following even among some of the so-called Byzantine Christians. The Bogomil heretics, though they would be horrified at being associated with pagans, also accept the duality of God and share many of the same beliefs as the pagans. Both pagans and Bogomils fear discovery by the ecclesiastical authorities in Sofia.

LIFE IN THE CITY

Although it is not a port city, Sofia serves as a focus for overland traders between Western Europe and the Byzantine Empire. It also acts as a market for all sorts of goods in Bulgaria. During festival times and on feast days, the city becomes a boisterous hive of activity, and the troubles that beset this part of an empire-to-be seem to vanish in the general air of celebration. At other times, a grimmer feeling permeates the city, as those whose lives depend entirely on the whims of their rulers realize just how precarious their existences are. Centuries of invasion, occupation and rebellion have imbued many of Sofia's citizens with a fatalistic attitude. Dreams of a Bulgarian Empire are for those who have the leisure to envision them.

The city's marketplace fills with purveyors of all manner of wares and produce during the daytime. Importers of goods from Constantinople and even Turkey do a thriving business among the wealthy, but the real patrons arrive in the evening after most sellers have closed down their shops and sought the safety of their homes or the conviviality of a well-lit tavern.

After sunset, most of the city's businesses close and bar their doors. Only the inns and baths remain open later in the evening, and even then, their proprietors walk quietly around the few individuals who linger long into nightfall. On certain nights, a few shops and stalls remain open, their owners knowing that they will

CITIES AND SETTLEMENTS OF THE EAST

THE BOGOMIL HERESY: PAGANISM CHRISTIANIZED

Imported into Bulgaria near the end of the 10th century by the Emperor John Tzimisce, the Christian variant known as Bogomilism or the Bogomil heresy attracted many followers among Bulgaria's population. Like the pagans who worshipped gods of darkness and light, the Bogomils believed that Satan, as the elder son of God, was the creator of the world; Jesus, God's younger son, was sent to save the world from its "evil" creator. Eschewing most Orthodox forms of worship and the major part of the Bible as being directed toward the "dark" son of God, they espoused ascetic forms of worship, fasting and chastity. They also preached avoidance of most worldly pleasures. Their extremes of belief and practice brought them under Church censure and acquired them the label of heretics. Bogomilism appealed to much of the Bulgarian peasantry, offering them an alternative to the Byzantine faith that symbolized the oppression of Constantinople. Faced with persecution by a Church that declared them anathema, many Bogomils met their deaths as martyrs, and their beliefs disappeared from Eastern Europe by the 13th century. Their dualistic Christianity, however, spread to the West, resurfacing among believers who called themselves Albigensians or Cathars.

receive an important visitor with money to spend and particular tastes to satisfy. Those few mortals who have encountered the Cainites of the city know in their hearts that the Dark God exists.

PEOPLE

The mortal population of Serdica faces an uncertain future. The prospect of imminent freedom from Constantinople brings with it the frightening reality of standing alone against their other enemies: the hostile tribes of Russia, the ambitious German Empire and the growing threat of the Turks. Those who are not concerned about these matters instead worry about the state of their souls. Only a few realize how little control they have over both temporal and spiritual matters.

Like the mortals, the Cainites of Sofia dwell extensively on their political future. Freedom from the rule of Constantinople's powerful Cainites may very well place them at the mercy of the warring Tzimisce *voivodes*, either those in Bulgaria or foreign Fiends from Transylvania. It might also leave them vulnerable to the upstart Tremere or the calculating Ventruie from Western Europe. Basilio plays upon these fears as best he can, striving to delay the night when a native Tzimisce overthrows him. At least one Cainite in the city contemplates more than power and advantage, however, while another questions his ability to discharge an unpleasant, but honorable, duty.

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

MORTALS

Andras Tibor, Protector of Serdica: In his late 20s, the Protector of Serdica (or Sofia) has linked his fortune with that of his brothers-in-law, Peter and Ivan Asen, the liberators of Bulgaria. Andras Tibor projects an air of utter confidence as he goes about his responsibilities as ruler of Bulgaria's largest city. Privately, however, he worries about the consequences he will suffer if the Asens fail in their rebellion. To this end, he is amassing a private hoard of valuables against the possibility of having to leave the city suddenly. In the meantime, he has encouraged the growth of his city, hoping that it will one day become the capital of a Bulgarian Empire.

Andras has begun to suspect that the odd sounds he sometimes hears late at night in his palace may be more than the wind blowing through the lower chambers. He often feels as if someone — or something — is watching him and whispering suggestions in the hours just before daylight.

Brencis Vidor, Patriarch-in-Waiting: In his early 50s, Archbishop Vidor epitomizes the bitterness of his people. Despite his devotion to the Church, he resents the relegation of Bulgaria's former patriarchy to a mere archbishopric. He hopes that if Bulgaria succeeds in shaking off the reins of Constantinople, the new Bulgarian Empire will regain the right to a patriarchy, with himself as Patriarch of the Bulgarian Church. He is considering beginning a concerted search for heretics, apostates, blasphemers and pagans, believing that purging Bulgaria of all nonbelievers (including Jews) will prove his worthiness to ascend in the hierarchy of the faithful.

Father Patryn, Guardian of the Purified: An austere man in his middle 30s, Father Patryn leads his flock of Bogomil Christians by his example. Given to lengthy fasts and many forms of self-denial, Father Patryn strives to lead the perfect life, rejecting the world and all its temptations and holding only to the spiritual. If he could live on air, he would do so, considering even the act of taking food or drink as a sin (albeit a minor one). The Dark God is all too real to him, for one of the Evil One's daughters has asked him for sanctuary and forgiveness, which he has granted, but he now wonders if he has given himself up to damnation. Although Patryn has learned much from Amalia about the creatures who call themselves Cainites, he fears that he has bought this knowledge at too great a cost. To this end, Patryn has recently convinced her that both their salvations depend on saving other Cainites from damnation — by any means possible. If it entails staking the unrepentant out in the sun so that their souls may be purified, so be it.

Jorgi the Bear, Proprietor of the House of the Eagle: Jorgi's father and his father before him managed the prestigious baths known as the House of the Eagle. After the Asens began their war against Constantinople ten years ago, Jorgi encountered a charming foreigner who offered him long life in return for the simple act of drinking the stranger's blood. Now, Jorgi serves the Cainite Prince of Sofia, Basilio the Elder, with all his heart. Although he does not understand the precise status of his master, he realizes that it is his duty to listen carefully to all that goes on in the "privacy" of the baths and report what he hears to Lord Basilio.

LITHUANIA

The pagan lands of Lithuania stretch along the Baltic Sea region. The region consists of forests, marshes, and other wilderness tracts. The people and land alike are riddled with remnants of the old ways, and it is wise to show respect for the elder denizens of the land in Lithuania.

PAGAN RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Many accounts of pagan practices in Lithuania are distorted because of the diversity of Lithuanian pagan beliefs in the 12th century. However, a few generalizations can be made. To begin with, many Lithuanians venerated a holy trinity of deities. Andai (or Andojas) ruled the heavens; Perkunas, similar to the Slavic god Perunas, was a god of Thunder; Telieval (or Kalevelis) allied with Thunder against the reign of Heaven. Interpretations of many of the ancient legends vary greatly from one region to another. Perkunas, for instance, was condemned by some tribes as often as he was praised by others.

Animism was a strong part of Lithuanian religion, and many pagans considered the ancient spirits of the Earth to be quite wise. Harvest sacrifices and sacred stones were used to encourage prosperity among farmers. Whether woods and trees were considered to be gods themselves is debatable, but they were definitely seen as holy. Some were vigilantly guarded so as to not be profaned. More than one tale exists of a Christian priest who encamped or, even worse, made plans to build a church in a sacred grove and was killed for his foolishness. The term "alka" is used to describe a grove that is holy enough for rituals, or a hill where sacrifice is practiced.

Communing with the natural world and showing reverence for the turning of the seasons were, of course, important parts of the Lithuanian faith. Truth was found in the natural world. The behavior of certain animals could be used to interpret the will of the gods in many regions. For instance, one variety of green snake, the *zaltys*, was not to be harmed because of its displays of good or bad omens. In a similar manner, pigs were symbolically associated with the underworld, and the horse was hallowed by its role as a servant of the gods.

Holy men lived in remote places in the wild. Their manors in the wilderness, called *sacrae villae*, were used as places of refuge during wars and as centers of religious activity in times of peace. One important type of holy man was the *blutekirl*, the priest of sacrifice. At proper times, the sacrifice of animals could be used as an offering to the gods to ensure victory. Although rare, it was also possible to sacrifice humans in more extreme circumstances.

Burial customs tell much about a culture, and the fact the Lithuania had such a variety of them tells of the region's diversity. Over time, however, cremation by means of a funeral pyre became the most common custom of burial. In some cases, a respected man would be cremated with his horses or items that would be useful in the afterlife. While inhumation was preferred in other areas, it is telling that in the 13th century, pagan apostates were known to exhume their loved ones from Christian graves and reverently consign them to the pyre to save their souls.

THE SUPERNATURAL IN LITHUANIA

One of the most curious legends concerning Lithuanian paganism comes not from within it, but from without. Westerners were certain that the country had some variety of "pagan Pope" hidden from outsiders, a figurehead who brought unity to the pagan cults. By their interpretation, a man called Krivė, who was supposedly revered much as the Western Catholics revered their Pope, held court in a place known as Romuva. Numerous stories supported this idea especially after the 1320s, including the aforementioned account of Peter of Dusburg.

While this idea has never been substantiated in our world, there is some degree of truth behind the rumor in the Dark Medieval era. There is a Krivė behind the extensive religions of Lithuania, but not in a place mortals would presume to look. The Cainites of Lithuania are not so desirous of feudal power or vast herds. Instead, the Krivė is an undead king overseeing many of the spiritual affairs of the night.

While the supernatural world is hidden from mortal eyes in many of the so-called "civilized" nations, there is little need for such a pretense in a land where belief in magic is so strong. Though far from blatant, Lithuanian Cainites do not actively avoid the mortal priests who seek their wisdom, nor are they shunned by the religious fear of Westerners.

Each of the major regions of Lithuania has its own Cainite "High Priest" to oversee supernatural concerns, and each, in turn, sends envoys and messengers to the Krivė. When he is safe within his *sacrae villae*, he is somewhat more difficult to petition, and with good reason. The various supernatural factions of this country are more open about cooperation, and, in fact, the Krivė is often intimately acquainted with the court of the fae, whose discussions are often held in realms that Hermetic mages know as *regio* — hidden places that are difficult for the unenlightened to enter. Although there is no set location called Romuva, the Krivė always establishes his sacred village not far from a faerie realm.

It has been documented that many Lithuanian pagans have an open belief in such creatures as vampires, shapeshifters and faeries. As such, they tend to be more enlightened as to how to approach these creatures best. Belief in astral travel of sorts is also common, and the Krivė may choose to oversee his lands by these means.

Werewolves in Lithuania are extremely devoted to the sacred groves and hills of their homelands, and their gallant defense of such places is one reason these caerns and glens will remain unsullied well into the 17th century. Mages of Lithuania hold great power, and many of them are of a particularly naturalistic bent. Shamanistic magi and the members of a small, yet devoted, order of shapeshifters known as the Bjornaer are prevalent here.

As for the domains of wraiths, the veil separating the world of the living from that of the dead is thinner here, as the fear of death is not as strong as in many places of Western Europe. The pagans of this land are already familiar with the custom of preparing items (that is, potential relics) that may be

of use in the afterlife. By some accounts, the Krivë can see portents concerning the deceased; by tradition, some pagans, many vampires and fae find it easier to converse with the lands of the dead during the rituals of Samhain.

The faeries of Lithuania are perhaps the most dangerous creatures of all; mortals would be wise to tread carefully in areas where the fae are strong. Even by Lithuanian standards, their culture is difficult to understand, and passions run strong among them. The vampiric Krivë himself must bow before the will of the fae.

Lithuanian Cainites care little for power or privilege. If they did, they could find far better opportunities in the West or the East. Lithuania remains something of an isolationist haven, as it will for centuries. Typically, far fewer clans are represented here. Generally speaking, Gangrel see to the preservation of the alki and other such natural places, while Nosferatu commune with the underfolk. Ancient Tzimisce and Malkavians are the most notable vampiric rulers of Lithuania.

In this land, Malkavians are not so troubled by insanity. There are several explanations for this. One being the Lithuanian Malkavians have a mortal fear of the demon Kupala, the lord of corruption, and they have worked actively to prevent his spiritual servants from spreading in these domains. As one would expect, Western Cainites consider this fanaticism to be a typical pagan delusion, and Cainites who ally with the Christian invaders are often a far more serious threat than they realize. As pagan Cainites are slain, the earth is fouled by the corruption of Kupala's children. The Malkavians of Lithuania will gradually succumb to insanity as a result, eventually collapsing the Cainite political structure of the nation.

KIEVAN RUS

*The capitals are rocked with thunder
Of orators in wordy feuds.
But in the depths of Russia, yonder
An age-old awful silence broods.
Only the wind in wayside willows,
Coming and going, does not cease.*

— Nickolai Nekrasov, "The Capitals Are Rocked"

Kievan Rus occupies the land from the Baltic to the Black Sea and from Transcarpathia to the Volga River. This vast area holds within it hundreds of small settlements and minor principalities, dozens of cities, and several different types of terrain. When viewed on a modern map of Europe, the territory claimed by Kievan Rus (roughly corresponding to today's Ukraine) is the geographic center of Europe. Blessed with hundreds of streams, four mighty rivers (including the Dnieper, which is the third-largest river in Europe) and links to the Danube, the Baltic and Black Seas, Kievan Rus occupies a unique position in which trade has flourished for centuries. The countryside boasts fields, meadows, rolling hills with deep, green forests, mountains

and valleys that spring to life with wildflowers after the winter thaw. Dense forests are home to deer, elk and pheasants, and the Carpathians play host to a myriad of crystalline waterfalls. The climate is temperate (unlike most of Russia) and pleasant. Vast steppes and black, fertile earth make Kievan Rus an agricultural oasis. Its chief city was Kiev for most of its existence as a state. That honor has now passed on to Novgorod.

"GOLDEN KIEV"

Built on the wooded area that rises above the west bank of the Dnieper River, Kiev is one of the oldest cities in Europe. Formerly called "Golden Kiev," the city's fortifications once included the so-called Golden Gate, the main gateway into the city during Yaroslav's rule. Kiev's glorious past is belied by its present state of disarray. Recovering from its sacking in 1169, Kiev is beginning only now to come to life again.

The city is divided into three main districts. Old Town or Upper Town is concentrated near the northern end of the hill, centered on St. Sophia Cathedral. The commercial district, historically occupied by the merchants' quarter and the river port, lies north of the old town and below it along the bottom of a valley. Called Podil or Lower Town, it plays host to the city's main square. Pechersk, the ecclesiastical center and site of the Monastery of the Caves, runs southeast along a ridge to the south of Kiev proper.

Across the river on the east bank are a series of wooded islands. Roving Gangrel and Nosferatu occasionally use them as havens and staging grounds for raids.

UPPER TOWN

Only a few of the fine houses and palaces that once graced the Upper Town remain. This city on the hill was once the residential area for Kiev's nobility and church officials. Most of the wooden structures burned during the Prince of Suzdal's sacking of the city. Among the rubble one can find a beautifully carved post or colorfully painted portion of a chair. Most have long since been carted away for use as firewood. The gutted remains stand as grim reminders of the savagery that destroyed the beauty and culture of Kiev.

A few buildings remain almost untouched, protected by faith or fortune. Some stone houses also remain; most of them have been claimed by remnants of the families who once lived within, by those seeking to elevate themselves beyond serfdom (mostly runaways from estates near Novgorod), or by bandits and criminals who find the solitude of the nearly deserted Upper Town to their liking. The leftover debris has been used in the construction of hovels, which are used by whatever vagrants and transients can claim them.

To put it bluntly, Upper Town is a den of thieves and murderers. Death stalks the ruined streets, sometimes looking for no more than a pair of boots, a warm cloak or a skin of wine. Cainites who don't mind drinking such vintage can find their fill among the dispossessed footpads of the Upper Town.

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

ST. SOPHIA CATHEDRAL

The largest intact area of Upper Town, St. Sophia Cathedral and Monastery is the city's oldest church. Built between 1017 and 1031 to honor Prince Yaroslav's victory over the Pechenegs, it was named after Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) Cathedral in Constantinople. Byzantine in structure, the church originally had a central nave and two side aisles with semicircular apses at its eastern end. Two arcades were added to the north and two to the south in the 11th century, nearly doubling the church's width. Another was added to the western end soon after.

The exterior walls are constructed from patterned pink brick. The roof holds 13 cupolas (symbolic of Christ and the 12 apostles). Inside, the church is dominated by hundreds of mosaics in the Byzantine style. Walls and domed ceilings are awash with color, gleaming with the tons of gold and silver used in their construction. Most notable of the figures is the glorious mosaic of Christ Pantokrator ("all ruler"), which occupies the central dome. Patterns on floors and altars alone would command the attention of any Toreador for a month.

Formerly, St. Sophia Cathedral also served as a center of culture and learning. The church housed the city's first school and library. Its proximity to the Royal Palace (it is adjacent) and its importance as the seat of the metropolitan (the most important religious figure in Kiev) thrust the church into a position as host to all royal ceremonies, including the welcoming of diplomats, coronation of kings and signing of treaties. Perhaps because of these secondary functions, the southwestern gate tower depicts more secular pursuits in its frescoes, including chariot races, musicians and hunting scenes.

No mortal in Kiev (except a few priests who live here still) can explain why the church was not looted during the sacking of Kiev. The restraint of the Prince of Suzdal's soldiers is understandable only if the role of Darvag Grozny (Darvag the Awesome or Terrible) is known. This notoriously pagan Kievan Tzimisce once boasted that he would one night personally tear down St. Sophia Cathedral "stone by stone, mosaic by mosaic" to show the pitiful mortals how pathetic their "new" god was. Enraged that mortals might beat him to it and destroy something he thought of as "his to obliterate," he and his ghouls surrounded the church as the prince's men sacked Kiev, tearing apart anyone foolish enough to challenge him. After two such incidents, the rest learned to keep their distance. When the grateful priests emerged from the church to thank Darvag Grozny, he spat blood on them and vanished into the growing dawn. He has yet to fulfill his vow.

GOLDEN GATE

Constructed in 1037, the Golden Gate marked the center of Kiev. It served as the main entryway to the city and as a watchtower. The gate still stands, in a fashion. Made of brick and stone, the gateway consists of a vaulted passageway that runs beneath a platform where guards stand. Also on the platform is a small chapel, the Church of the Annunciation.

Known as a gate-church, the structure's cupola and doors were covered in gilded copper sheets. This flashing golden array gave it its name. Kiev's arched entryway, inspired by Constantinople's Golden Gate, once served to anchor the city's fortifications. Broken ramparts still stretch outward from the gate. A "robber-prince" will occasionally lay claim to the Upper Town and station guards on the gate to exact tolls and watch who enters the city.

LOWER TOWN (PODIL)

A winding, cobblestone street leads down from Upper Town to the Podil or Lower Town below. The long, steep street traditionally housed artists, stonemasons and small inns. Beginning at the foot of Volodymyr (Vladimir) Hill, the Lower Town stretches north alongside the river's flatlands. One of the city's oldest sections, the Podil is home to the few fishermen, merchants and artisans left in Kiev. Since its near-destruction, this section of Kiev has become the refuge of pirates, thieves, murderers, mercenaries and the people who gravitate to their company: prostitutes, caravan owners who care little where they obtain their goods, and slavers. Barely civilized during the day, the Podil falls entirely to the mercy of these dangerous mortals after dark.

MAIN SQUARE

This open area is central to the district and plays host to caravans as well as local craftsmen's booths and tables. The marketplace swarms with activity during the day, when artisans sell their crafts, merchants strike deals, farmers bring their produce to sell, and fishermen auction their catches to the highest bidder. A few beggars creep through the market, taking care not to brush against or antagonize any of the pirates or mercenaries who bully better prices from those with something to sell.

After dark, the market attracts a different crowd. Inns on all sides of the market sell alcoholic drinks to the mercenaries and toughs who frequent the night market. Slave auctions bring interested buyers from as far away as Poland and Hungary. Women and young men are auctioned to the highest bidder for the night as well. Arguments turn into brawls at the slightest provocation. The decent folk of the Podil avoid the market at night at all costs, lest they too end up on the auction block.

ST. CYRIL'S CHURCH

Northwest of the main square, St. Cyril's Church rises above a block of demolished buildings. The church was built in the 12th century and commissioned by the wife of the Prince of Chernivihiv to become the cathedral of a monastery. The church's cruciform construction is the basis for extensive painted murals. Stripped of its gold and silver during the sacking of Kiev, the church now makes do with plain wooden replacements in the service. Extensive crypts, the resting places of royalty, lie beneath the building. Rumor suggests that these crypts might house unholy entities — ghosts whose resting places were disturbed by looters.



RIVER PORT

Just beyond the main square is the river port of Kiev. Once a thriving mercantile hub crowded with more ships than it could comfortably dock, the port is now almost as deserted as the outlying portions of the ravaged city. Fishermen dock at the port and haul their catch to the main square, and occasionally ships from upriver will briefly put in at Kiev, but her glory days as the center of trade on the Dnieper are over. The docks themselves are neglected, and the portmaster spends his time sleeping off the effects of the previous night's drinking bouts. A few well-kept crafts moor at the port. These sleek vessels are always guarded and belong to the river pirates who plague the other ports along the Dnieper, then retreat to Kiev, where the lawless can celebrate without being disturbed.

THE SIGN OF THE SKULL

This large inn caters to the lowlives of Kiev. It is just about the only place in the city where travelers can get a decently cooked meal and a bed, but they must be willing to pay exorbitant prices. Further, those without sufficient guards or enough obvious power may awaken after a drugged meal to find themselves chained in line with other unfortunates and headed for a life of slavery.

Owned and operated by the self-styled "queen of Kiev," a cruel and lovely woman called Galatia Karlanova, The Sign of the Skull caters to exotic tastes. Anything can be had for a price; drugs, drink, thieves, assassins, bedslaves and bloodslaves are only a few of the inn's offerings. Galatia herself is the ghoulid servitor of Darvag Grozny, a Tzimisce who resides in Kiev. The

Fiend keeps a secret haven below the cellars of the inn. Galatia recognizes Cainites when she sees them and might play up to them while telling her master they are in town.

PECHERSK

This entire district is given over to a series of monasteries and churches. A few fields are tilled by the monks, but their chief support comes making icons and from writing and copying historical and religious chronicles.

MONASTERY OF THE CAVES

Built in 1051, Pechersk Lavra ("senior monastery of the caves") was Kievan Rus's first monastery. It has long been the area's most famous religious center as well. Built by the monks, who dug out cells for themselves in the caves along the ridge and tunneled under the river, the monastery also served as their resting places after death, with each monk's body preserved and sealed into his cell or into a wall niche. The underground passages that connect the various caves and cells are low and narrow; travelers gain the impression of being trapped under tons of rock and dirt. Parts of the labyrinth are lined with the monks' mummified bodies, enclosing the space further.

Despite these rough accommodations, the monastery flourished. Atop the ridge above the caves, the Dormition Cathedral was built in 1073 and completed in 1089. Kiev's second great Byzantine-inspired church, its facade is beautifully worked with elaborate mosaics and friezes.

After the Dormition Cathedral was built, the caves became an entire complex of churches, among them the 11th-century Assumption Cathedral. The Church of the Redeemer of Beretovo, just outside the complex proper, was built on the orders of Prince Vladimir Monomakh (who married King Harold of England's daughter). Intended as the burial place for Kievan princes, it contains the tomb of Vladimir's son Yuri Dolgoruki, the founder of Moscow.

Untouched by the madness that prevailed when Kiev itself was sacked, the monastery continues its daily routine. An entire hoard of Scythian gold, though prominently displayed as one of the church treasures, has thus far failed to tempt the pirates and other scum who now frequent Kiev — perhaps because legend has it that its theft would unleash a potent curse.

POLITICS AND RELIGION

Kiev has no political clout or agenda in her current battered state. There is no prince of any kind in Kiev, either Cainite or mortal. Although the undead occasionally pass through the city on their way elsewhere, the only Cainite who currently makes his home in Kiev is Darvag Grozny, who cares little for politics or titles. As long as no one else infringes on what he considers "his," he is content to feast among the ruins of Kiev. One night, he tells himself, he will emerge from his self-imposed inaction long enough to destroy St. Sophia.

Churches that still remain in Kiev continue to hold services and uphold the Orthodox faith. Those unbelievers who currently hold the upper hand in the shattered city are ignored as long as they, in turn, do not disturb the Church. While the monks and priests, as well as the common people of Kiev, feel powerless before the seasoned mercenaries and pirates, were they inspired to battle those folk (perhaps in response to actions against one of the churches), they could eventually overcome the unsavory element by sheer weight of numbers.

Some merchants hope that by continuing trade, they can restore Kiev to a position of prominence. They attempt to maintain good relations with caravans from both east and west. If there is a political faction in Kiev, the merchants are it.

LIFE IN THE CITY

Life for most residents goes on much as it always has. The main difference is that the city is much poorer, wares bring far less money, and many of the former serfs now act as independent farmers. Little is left of the culture and riches Kiev once boasted. Once highly educated, most of the populace has fallen into illiteracy. Few have much time to spare in the appreciation of art and beauty; Kiev's fine craftsmen were sold into slavery, or killed, or have long since gravitated to richer areas.

No one is really in charge, though several groups of pirates and mercenaries vie for top position within their districts. Lawlessness reigns; there are no soldiers to guard against theft, murder or rape. The entire city has the feel of rampant anarchy that will later infect the pirate towns of the Caribbean.

The city rarely sleeps. The more honest citizens are abroad during the day, trying to work and maintain some sort of normal life. The night belongs to the strong. Once the lambs are abed and trembling behind locked doors, anyone abroad had best be able to defend himself if he wishes to walk freely among the lions.

PEOPLE

The mortal population of Kiev is a curious mix. Some are members of old families who have resided in Kiev for a century or more. Many priests have also returned to their duties in the city's churches; they escaped the Prince of Suzdal's attack. More of the current residents have only recently arrived. Opportunists abound in Kiev, each one willing to prove he is strongest or most cunning, and each looking to profit from the city's downfall. Each side vies for control, with the city gradually recovering over the next few decades and returning to a semblance of order — just in time for its destruction at the hands of the Mongols.

MORTALS

Father Sergeyeve: This elderly Orthodox priest acts as the city's metropolitan, though Kiev no longer has such a position. He was present the night that Darvag Grozny defended St. Sophia from the Prince of Suzdal's soldiers. When he tried to thank the hero who had defended the church through the dark night of the sacking, Father Sergeyeve discovered that the holy cathedral had been saved by a monster. Since that time, he has lived in the cathedral and watched each night to see if the "devil" will return. He has spent long hours in prayer and contemplation wondering what it means. He has yet to determine whether he believes that the Church (and his faith) is now corrupted or whether he is supposed to save the soul of the monster whom God called to his service (if only for a night).

Galatia Karlanova, "Queen of Kiev": Long red hair and blue eyes betray Galatia's Varangian ancestry. She has been the ghoul of Darvag Grozny for over 60 years, though she appears to be little more than 20. Galatia is the owner of The Sign of the Skull, a disreputable inn where anyone can find anything — for a price. Most of the bandits and pirates of Kiev find her inn highly useful and support her "reign" as queen. They would certainly defend her from outsiders. Galatia is one of Darvag's favorites, a pet he has trained to revel in inflicting mental and physical pain on others. She is quite intelligent and a talented actress; most Cainites would never know she meant them anything but goodwill. Galatia would rejoice at the chance to help Darvag capture traveling Cainites (through supplying them with drugged vessels) and watching them writhe under her master's mercies.





Chapter Four: The Cainites of Eastern Europe

Is it a wonder that we are a conquering race; that we were proud; that when the Magyar, the Lombard, the Avar, the Bulgar or the Turk poured his thousands upon our frontiers, we drove him back?

— Count Dracula, Bram Stoker's Dracula

Although many lesser Cainites have come and gone during the turbulent history of Eastern Europe, a number of powerful vampires have remained there throughout the centuries. In this chapter you'll find mighty vampires and their childer, unliving motivators of history itself who will one night look down upon idealistic princes of the modern age. Herein are members of most of the clans, save for the Tzimisce and Tremere — the members of those societies are detailed in Chapters five and six.

Certain of these characters' Natures and Demanors are found in *The Vampire Players Guide for Vampires: The Masquerade*.

WHERE THE DAMNED ARE: A LISTING OF CAINITES BY AREA

Because this book covers such a widespread area, the Cainites in the following three chapters often dwell hundreds of miles from each other. While we have chosen to group Eastern Europe's vampires by clan rather than by area, we include this guide detailing which Cainites inhabit which areas so that you may readily see who routinely interacts with whom.

BOHEMIA

The Cainites of Prague:

Ecaterina the Wise, Brujah
Garinol Cappadocius, Cappadocian
Josef Zvi, Nosferatu
Prince Rudolf Brandt, Ventrue
Ardan of Golden Lane, Tremere (see Chapter Six)
Shaagra, Tzimisce Methuselah (see Chapter Five)

BULGARIA

The Cainites of Sofia:

Husayn al Fatin, Assamite
Amalia of Thrace, Cappadocian
Basilio the Elder, Lasombra

HUNGARY

The Cainites of Esztergom:

Liseta Illuminada, Lasombra
Arianne, Toreador
Geza Arpad, Prince of Esztergom, Ventrue

The Cainites of Buda-Pest:

Fariq, Assamite
Octavio, Malkavian
Izydor Torenu, Ravnos
Vassily Taltos, Ravnos
Bulscu, Ventrue
Prince Vencel Rikard, Ventrue
Roland, Ventrue

The Cainites of Transylvania:

Dominic, Brujah
Mitru the Hunter, Gangrel
Tiberiu, Gangrel
Mariusca, Nosferatu
Ruxandra, Nosferatu

Nova Arpad, Ventrue

The Tremere of Transylvania (see Chapter Six):

Malgorzata
Celestyn, Master Librarian of Ceoris
Virstania, Mistress of Gargoyles

The Tzimisce of Transylvania (see Chapter Five):

Yorak, High Priest of the Cathedral of Flesh
Noriz, The Corrupter of Legions
Radu, Prince of the Domain of Bistritz
Marelle, Sculptor of Wolves
Vladimir Rustovitch, Voivode Among Voivodes

KIEVAN RUS

The Cainites of Kiev:

Darvag Grozny ("The Terrible"), Tzimisce (see Chapter Five)

LITHUANIA

The Cainites of the Pagan Lands:

Adrojai, Malkavian

POLAND

The Cainites of Krakow:

Kazimierz the Silent, Cappadocian
Jolanta of Niepolomice, Gangrel
Gutka, the Salt Queen, Nosferatu
Konrad von Aupfholm, Ventrue
Claas Drescher, Tremere (see Chapter Six)
Prince Razkoljna, Tzimisce (see Chapter Five)

WANDERERS (NO FIXED ABODE)

Arnulf, Gangrel
Lucita, Lasombra
Anatole, Malkavian
Zelios, Nosferatu

ASSAMITE

FARIQ, CONSPIRATOR AND HOLY WARRIOR

Background: Fariq did not accept the Muslim faith until long after his death. He followed a primitive tribe that worshipped the power and glory of Dagon in early Mesopotamia. He gladly participated in cruel rites and vicious sacrifices. He would have been considered a criminal of the worst sort in any other society, yet his talents were useful to the priests of the elder god. Fariq's religious fervor was such that he would eagerly capture women and children of other tribes and deliver them to the priests for sacrifice. The holy men of his tribe had a strong hold over him.

An ancient Assamite worshipped by one of these rival tribes lost several of his most treasured ghouls to Fariq's machinations, and his people prayed to him for revenge. Fariq could easily have been destroyed by the rival cult, yet the devious Methuselah knew the value of turning his enemy against the priests of Dagon. Fariq was captured by the Ancient's ghouls, lured into the Embrace and sent to act against his own tribe. No longer would he serve Dagon; now his crimes would serve a cult of Baal.

Fariq was made to practice all manner of horrors in the name of the Ancient. Thoroughly conditioned, he would have gladly, as the saying goes, "strung up his innards as harpstrings unto Baal." As an agent of corruption, he stealthily abducted innocents to satiate the lusts of the Assamite Methuselah.

Fariq was at last captured by mortals and received punishment for his blasphemous crimes. Tribesmen singed body parts from his flesh, wailing women showered him with stones, and his crippled form was dragged to a grave to be buried alive. Gibbering in fear at what would become of him, Fariq drove a wooden shaft into his own heart and forced himself into a torpid state that lasted for a millennium.

Fariq finally awoke 1000 years later, consumed with remorse. Nightmares of his cruel deeds had tormented him over the long centuries. He had been freed from torpor by Assamites who recovered his body, and he owed a great debt to them. The world had changed, however. The old gods were dead and the Assamites of his new world spoke of the teachings of Mohammed. Through Islam, Fariq found civility...and salvation. Finding his humanity again was an arduous task, but the five pillars of Islam showed him the way.

Some things had not changed. Again, his rescuers spoke of the evil of another tribe. They railed about the threat of the Christians. He was once more to become a weapon in a religious war. He held his tongue cautiously and hid his true feelings.

Now it is the 12th century, and conflict between Christians and Muslims has reached new depths of zealotry. Over the last few decades, the Seljuk Turks have done more than retake the Holy Land — they have also denied Christian pilgrims the opportunity to travel freely through it. Christian knights in search of false glory, stolen wealth and absolution from bloodshed assault the armies of the East. Muslims strike back with any means at their disposal, and atrocities are committed on both sides of the battle. Fariq reverently serves his masters, yet harbors growing doubts over what will result from further crusades.



The Old Man of the Mountain has considered using his assassins to turn the tide of battle. Should the threat of another crusade emerge, carefully planted Assassins are in position to strike. Fariq is among them. Fariq slowly spreads his web of influence in service to the Ancient Ones. His most trusted *ghul* is a merchant named Bilal al-Hanbal, who trades in the bazaar in Buda. Other Islamic *ghuls* have assumed trusted positions in the city through him. Bilal al-Hanbal is a great asset, for he not only commands great respect among the merchants, but he also regularly travels to the East to acquire valuable goods. Though tensions flare between Christians and Muslims, the trade routes between their countries are important to both cultures.

As a resident of Buda-Pest, Fariq has made a secret alliance with the city's prince, Vencel Rikard. Fariq and Vencel secretly entertain hope for peace between Christians and Muslims. Trade is the beginning. Perhaps, understanding may follow. Should Alamut discover Fariq's secret alliance with Vencel, Fariq may be disavowed by his own people; thus, he continues to oversee the cabal of conspirators who plot to overthrow the Ventruue. These cabalists may one night have to choose between loyalty to Fariq and loyalty to the Assassins.

Fariq has also made an alliance with the Prince of Esztergom — one that is far more sinister. Geza of Clan Ventruue is concerned about the threat of his sire, Bulscu. Although Bulscu is Hungary's oldest Ventruue, he is also a slave to addictive drugs smuggled by Bilal al-Hanbal and Fariq. Bulscu's addiction taxes his constitution heavily, and his secretive "conferences" with Fariq and Geza are often excuses to sate Bulscu's ravenous hunger. Should Fariq's agents be delayed or Geza's conspiracy be uncovered, Bulscu could be unleashed, but his madness would result in great tragedy. Perhaps it is better that the Beast has been chained.

Religious fervor has brought bloodshed, hatred and despair once again. Through desperate alliances, Fariq hopes to heal the wounds of the past and keep the humanity he has fought so hard to regain. No doubt he will either secure his freedom or be destroyed in the process.

Image: Humility is Fariq's shield against the intolerant. Cultured and polite, Fariq is recognized and greeted with civility by many of Buda-Pest's merchants. Time has changed him. Simple robes and a modest *keffiyah* downplay his wealth. His dark hair and beard are always well kept, and his dark gaze can shift from inscrutability to affability quite easily. His eyes do not carry the blank gaze of the dead, but instead show the intensity of a man who has lived through much pain and intends to survive.

Roleplaying Hints: Treat all with respect — you need all the allies you can get. It is important to maintain one's priorities. First, you must speak of peace and the value of trade. Then you must pay your dues to Alamut and the Assassins who support you. Finally, you must prepare to betray them, for one night they will rise up against your Ventruue allies.

Haven: There is a Muslim priest in the merchant section of Buda, and Fariq has become quite fond of him. Fariq slumbers beneath this priest's simple home. Should this refuge fall, it would be an insult to all the Muslims in the city. The fragile peace would be shattered.

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

Secrets: Fariq has gained another valuable weapon: His child, Ismail, controls a small cabal of corrupted Templars. These mortal warriors have forsaken their fervor for the worship of dark powers. They falsely believe that their actions will gain the favor of the demon Baphomet, to whom they fervently pray. The cabal members do not realize that their actions do not really serve ancient demons. In truth, they enact the will of Ismail.

This arrangement allows the Assassins to call upon these warriors in a time of crisis. The cabal of Templars may travel freely on both sides of the conflict, serving only themselves for the sake of power. Sadly, Fariq's child has been corrupted as well. What began as a clever use of his vampiric powers has become an exercise in egomania. Always desirous of further power, Ismail hungers for Fariq's very soul. The mortal Templars are the agents of his vengeance. By day, Ismail dreams of diabolizing Fariq. By night, he furthers his preparations. Although Ismail rarely leaves his home in the East, his Templar allies are preparing a journey to the cities of Hungary. Fariq's conspirators will find out soon.

Influence: Ostensibly, Fariq is present in Hungary to oversee the Muslims who trade there. Secretly, he waits for orders from Alamut. With the assistance of his network of mortals, he could easily position himself to assassinate the Ventruue rulers of Hungary. This is an influence he hopes he will never have to use.

Destiny: Unfortunately, Fariq's noble goal will not come to fruition. The atrocities committed by both Christians and Muslims will destroy his idealism and fill his soul with bitterness. Muslims will be driven from the Kingdom of Hungary in the mid-13th century. Age will taint Fariq's mistrust. This will result in his refusal to attend the Convention of Thorns in the 15th century, his eventual indoctrination into the ranks of the Assassin *antitribu* and, from there, his initiation into the Path of Evil Revelations. Fariq will fall from grace, and he has a very long way to fall...

Clan: Assassin

Sire: Azif

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Survivor

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 4th c. B.C.

Apparent Age: early 30s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 6, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 4, Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 1, Leadership 3

Skills: Etiquette 3, Melee 3, Ride 2, Stealth 5, Survival 3

Knowledge: Investigation 3, Linguistics 3, Politics 3

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 2, Obfuscate 3, Presence 3, Quietude 5

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Contacts 4, Influence 3, Resources 3, Status 2

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

Road: Humanity 8

Willpower: 7

HUSAYN AL FATIN, AMBASSADOR FROM THE SARACENS

Background: Second son of a wealthy merchant, Husayn grew up in and around the marketplaces. Though he was never one of the ragged children who swarmed to such places, Husayn learned many skills from them — stealth, how to lighten a rich man's purse, and, most importantly, how to talk his way out of trouble. A hidden observer watched Husayn's maneuverings during one nighttime foray, noting his quickness and grace as well as his gift for words. As Husayn started home that night, the Assamite who had watched him kidnapped him and claimed him as his apprentice.

Husayn rebelled against his enforced training at first, but as he realized the skills he was perfecting, he began to revel in his abilities. After a seven-year apprenticeship, Husayn was inducted into the Assamite clan as a full member. Where he had once been a brash boy, he now adopted order and structure as the keys to personal power and stability.

Husayn's gift for diplomacy led to his current assignment. He has presented himself to Prince Basilio of Sofia as an ambassador from the Turks, claiming to share a common enemy — the Transylvanian and Bulgarian Tzimisce — with the Lasombra leader of Sofia. In actuality, Husayn has come from Constantinople at the request of an old enemy of Basilio's, a Tzimisce named Gabor. This Gabor feels he deserves to be Prince of Sofia and overlord of all Bulgaria. Husayn is charged with the assassination of Prince Basilio.

Even Gabor does not know the full story, however. While it is true that Husayn is ostensibly working for Gabor, Husayn is actually carrying out the orders of the Saracens, who requested that he accept Gabor's assignment. His masters wish for him to spy on Sofia and assassinate the prince of the city when it is most convenient for their plans of conquest. Whether they actually want Bulgaria or not, destabilizing the rebellious country at the proper moment could seriously weaken Constantinople and draw off a number of her armies. Besides, if Bulgaria suffers as a result of the assassination, the native Cainites will blame one of their own — Gabor — for causing the trouble.

The Assamite has resided in Sofia for nearly two years, and Gabor is beginning to wonder why Husayn has not made his move. Husayn claims that he is merely taking his time, waiting for the moment of greatest effect in the larger scheme of things. He is actually waiting for orders from Alamut. Further, he has grown fond of the prince, seeing in the Lasombra a desire for civilization and order that Husayn finds intriguing when compared to the arcane and convoluted maneuverings of the Cainites he has known. Husayn hopes to delay fulfilling his contract as long as possible, but he realizes that sooner or later he is honor bound to obey its terms. He knows, unfortunately, that the Lasombra is no match for him. Though he cannot hope to avenge his friend's death, Husayn has sworn to himself that Basilio's final night on Earth would soon be followed by Gabor's end as well.

Image: Dark as a moonless night, Husayn has brown eyes and a curiously effeminate face. He looks more like a romantic lover than a killer. The Assamite prefers dark, jewel-toned colors and dresses in the Turkish fashion. He wears his one weapon, a curved dagger, thrust through his sash. Although he is quiet, Husayn almost always has a slight smile on his face. His eyes convey a lively intelligence and interest in all that he sees.

Roleplaying Hints: You know that eventually you must fulfill your contract. Though it pains you, your own honor and that of your clan depend on satisfying the terms set forth. Until that time, you plan to learn as much as possible about the Bulgarians, their lust for rebellion



and their client relationship with Constantinople. Find out more about the Christian religion and why those who practice it are unwilling to let others worship differently. See how far you can actually extend the idea that you are an ambassador from the Turks. If the two lands can reach an accommodation, perhaps the Turks will cancel your assignment; you have no qualms about cancelling the job from Gabor. He's nothing more than a pig and deserves no respect. His assignment was never the real one in any case.

Haven: Husayn has been assigned quarters near the palace. He occasionally visits them to keep up the illusion that he resides there. His real haven lies beneath the marketplace, shielded from casual passersby by a permanent market stall that sells leather goods.

Secrets: The Assamite knows that the Turks will eventually lay claim to Constantinople and probably Bulgaria as well. Whenever Husayn receives word that his assignment should be carried out, he will know that Turkish armies cannot be far away. He is aware that Basilio keeps a haven in a villa near the popular House of the Eagle bath house.

Influence: Husayn has a great deal of influence with Basilio. The Lasombra needs all the friends he can get and welcomes Husayn's counsel and overtures of peaceful trade. Though Husayn has garnered some respect among a few of Bulgaria's Tzimisces, most dismiss him as a sycophantic foreigner.

Destiny: When the Assamite finally strikes against Basilio, agents that Husayn secretly hired to guard the prince counterattack and send him into torpor. He is placed in a crypt beneath the House of the Eagle, where he sleeps until Constantinople's conquest by the Turks. When he awakens, he learns if he failed or succeeded in basilio (he is misinformed and told he succeeded). Husayn eventually returns to Alamut, where he becomes a staunch foe to those Assamites who support the Sabbat.

Clan: Assamite

Sire: Ahmal

Nature: Innovator

Demeanor: Gallant

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1086

Apparent Age: 20

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 3, Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 1, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Archery 2, Etiquette 3, Melee 4, Music 1, Ride 2, Stealth 3, Survival 1

Knowledge: Academics 2, Investigation 2, Law 1, Linguistics (Slavonic, Greek) 2, Medicine 1, Politics 2

Disciplines: Celerity 2, Obfuscate 3, Presence 1, Quietude 4

Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Mentor 3, Resources 2, Status 2

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

Road: Chivalry 6

Willpower: 8

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

BRUJAH

DOMINIC, MERCENARY OVERLORD

Background: Like many Brujah, Dominic still burns with hatred when he hears of the accomplishments of Clan Ventruue. Despite the passing of over a millennium, he still seeks revenge against them for their destruction of the city of Carthage. His fury is even stronger because he was Embraced in that very city. In epic grief, many of the oldest Carthaginian Brujah sired trusted mortals to pass on a legacy of revenge against the Roman Ventruue. Dominic was a general in the Carthaginian army and on a fateful night long ago, he came before his vampiric master, a Brujah Methuselah, to report that his army had been routed.

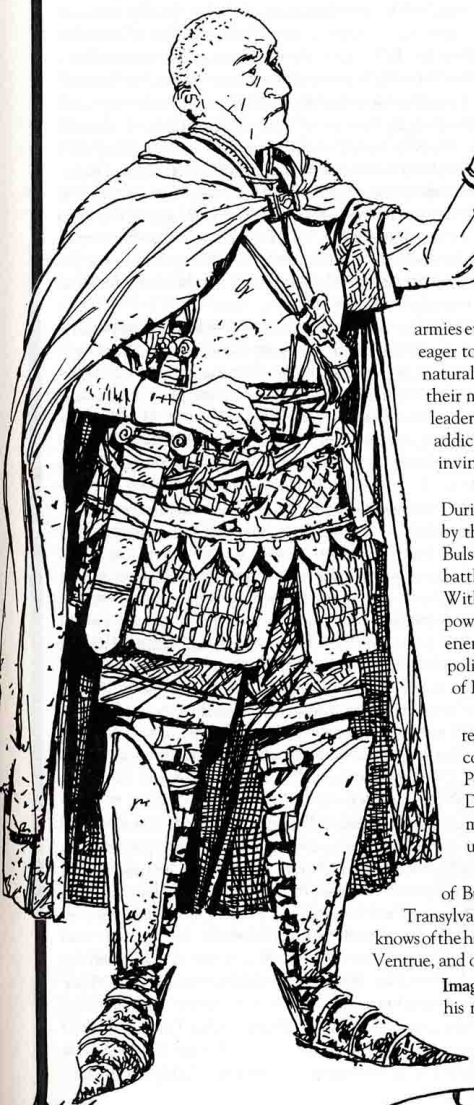
From the balcony of a stately palace, Dominic's sire blankly watched the Roman armies as they ravaged his city. The world as the Brujah knew it was ending. The impassioned Methuselah threw Dominic against the marmorean walls of his bedchamber as conflagrations consumed the city. Dominic had served the Ancient One well as his slave, and on that night, their union was violently consummated in blood. Dominic received his Dark Gift, a thirst for revenge against the Ventruue, and a burning hatred that would reside in his breast forever. Mourning, his sire lacked the will to survive and threw himself from the balcony into the destroying fires. Dominic suffered through the rest of that night alone.

The flames sent Dominic into a spree of destruction that lasted for days. Like many deranged Brujah childer, he wantonly slaughtered Roman soldiers, but even these violent acts could not quiet his grief. For Dominic, the epic carnage ended in his violent impalement on the *pila* of Roman centurions. He descended into torpor and his body was carried to a tomb by Carthaginian soldiers, where it remained for several centuries.

Dominic awakened in the fifth century with a thirst for the blood of the living and a stronger thirst for revenge against the Ventruue. He slowly gained a subtle influence over a small force of mercenaries; this handful of soldiers would be the agents for his vengeance. Following the example of the barbarians, he drove his warriors to Rome.

The opportunists sailed across the Mediterranean and pressed to the north. The glory of destroying Rome, however, would belong to Odoacer, the leader of a stronger barbarian force. Within a few years, Dominic's mercenaries witnessed what Odoacer's troops had done to the city. Rome had been sacked, but many Roman Ventruue had survived. Dominic's quest for revenge had merely begun.

Dominic became a master of military exploitation over the centuries. He sought out Ventruue with power over civilized nations and guided small units of mercenary scum to wealth. Living the life of a renegade, he set the strong against the weak, and he profited by exacting his rage. He had led private campaigns throughout Eastern Europe by the 10th century.



Still, he yearned for a larger triumph. So, the ambitious warlord traveled to Constantinople to gauge the threat of the Ventrue there.

The Patriarch of Constantinople, Michael of Clan Toreador, realized the threat that Dominic posed, yet he did not want to dismiss such a useful tool. While the Ventrue of his city were an integral part of its growth, the Methuselah bore an ancient grudge with a Ventrue far to the north. The Holy Roman Empire was becoming too powerful, so Michael made an alliance with Dominic to strike against this rival of Byzantium.

Dominic traveled north, gathering mortals and setting them against the empire. He had already learned of the fate of Hungary, a kingdom where barbarians had settled in the Carpathian Basin after rampaging across the steppes of Russia. They had reached a stalemate against the Holy Roman Empire, and Dominic could sense the barbarians' hunger for further conquest.

Through direct intervention, Dominic made the Hungarian armies even more formidable. He enlisted several Brujah to aid him, as they were eager to Embrace the most promising warriors. Ghoul soldiers gained preternatural prowess in battle by consuming Brujah vitae, and their fervor terrified their mortal enemies. Dominic planned to Embrace the Hungarians' mortal leader, Bulscu. His chosen one was a willing ghoul who rapidly gained a fierce addiction to Cainite blood and seemed eager to become one of the seemingly invincible undead.

Bulscu was ready to accept the Embrace — but not from Dominic. During one of Dominic's absences, Bulscu had been Dominated and seduced by the very Methuselah who bore such hatred for the Patriarch Michael. Bulscu drove a wooden spike through Dominic's heart on the eve of a great battle, again sending him into torpor. The betrayal was expertly timed. With his thorough knowledge of the Arpad family, Bulscu rapidly gained power in Hungary, respect among his clanmates and hatred from his Brujah enemies. Bulscu became a means for the northern Ventrue to infiltrate the political struggles to the south and turn Hungary away from the influence of Byzantium. Michael's plan had failed.

Two hundred years later, Dominic has arisen again, eager to enact the revenge of his clan. The Hungarians of the 12th century do not suspect, of course, that the immortal traitor Bulscu is hidden far beneath one of Budapest's castles, but certain Brujah know this fact quite well. They have rescued Dominic from torpor and invoke his name to muster support among members of their clan. Several are active throughout the kingdom, stirring up dissent against the Arpad rulers of the kingdom.

Dominic is eager to find allies against the Ventrue, especially enemies of Bulscu. There is no shortage of opportunity. He has begun to travel in Transylvania, where he hears many tales of Ventrue-instigated oppression. Dominic knows of the hatred several Transylvanian Cainites harbor toward the western Hungarian Ventrue, and once again, he seeks to exploit any opportunity to further his revenge.

Image: Although Dominic would never admit it, he was not recruited solely for his martial prowess. Many consider his handsome demeanor overpowering. Even death has not robbed him of his olive skin, soulful eyes and impressive physique. Success on the battlefield resulted in many statues sculpted

in his honor. The Patriarch Michael seized several of them from a Roman Ventrué general centuries ago, and he treasures them. Dominic is oblivious to this effect he has on others, as he considers himself a warrior first and foremost.

Roleplaying Hints: Command is so ingrained in you that you are cavalier, even nonchalant, about it. Most people who deal with you really think that they follow your lead entirely of their own volition. You despise the Hungarian Ventrué, but even this hatred is understated until you actually meet them on the battlefield.

Haven: No fixed haven.

Secrets: Over a millennium, Dominic's command of the Auspex Discipline has become truly astounding. Dominic can hear the carnage inflicted by his warriors in the chaos of battle, even as he sleeps leagues away. Through Dominate, he carefully instructs his lieutenants on military strategy, and he has been known to seize the thoughts of enemy generals. Time has increased his abilities.

Influence: Brujah insurrectionists contemptuously travel through the Kingdom of Hungary, looking for opportunities for exploitation. Dominic's name carries great weight with them.

Destiny: Vassily of Clan Ravnos will sell a great deal of information to the Brujah and will suggest that Yorak, the Tzimisce Methuselah, would be a worthy conspirator. Dominic will travel to Yorak's refuge, the Cathedral of Flesh, and thus fall into his trap. The Brujah will be vivisected and held captive in the Cathedral of Flesh. Through Vassily's network of information, the Ventrué will be blamed for Dominic's disappearance, making him a martyr. The truth will not be revealed until the turn of the millennium, when Dominic is at last rescued. One of the few remaining survivors of Carthage will then prepare for the Final Days. His martial prowess will be truly awesome.

Clan: Brujah

Sire: Samal

Nature: Barbarian

Demeanor: Rogue

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 3rd c. B.C.

Apparent Age: early 30s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 6, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Intimidation 4, Leadership 5

Skills: Archery 2, Melee 6, Ride 4, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Knowledge: Linguistics 3, Occult 2

Disciplines: Auspex 7, Celerity 4, Dominate 5, Fortitude 4, Obfuscate 3, Potence 4, Presence 4

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Herd 4, Resources 3, Retainers 4, Status (Brujah) 5

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

Road: Humanity 2

Willpower: 8

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

ECATERINA THE WISE, AGITATOR OF PRAGUE

Background: A native of Prague, Ecaterina spent her early years selling her father's bread in the marketplace of the Little Quarter. Irresistibly attracted to learning and martial skills that no one would teach a woman directly, she hid on the edge of crowds while storytellers told great tales. Alone, after darkness released her from her daily chores, she would practice swordplay with a wooden blade she had carved herself and hid near her home.

Even after her father died and she was forced to take over the business, Ecaterina never ceased her whimsical fantasies. This refusal to accept reality led to her undoing. She heard drunken laughter from behind her while practicing one night. Two hardened mercenaries moved forward menacingly to show her the "proper duties of a woman." Realizing she faced rape, if not death, Ecaterina wielded her makeshift sword as best she could to defend herself. She managed to thrust her blade through one attacker's stomach, but the blade broke and she was struck down by the other man.

As he tore her clothing from her, his heavy body pressing her to the ground, Ecaterina finally called for help. She fought desperately, though her jaw ached and she could taste blood where the man had struck her — then the man's weight was suddenly lifted from her. Looking up, she could barely make out a tall figure holding her assailant aloft. Hot blood splattered onto Ecaterina. As a shaft of moonlight lit the alley for a moment, she saw that both rapists' throats had been torn out.

The stranger held a hand out to her, urging her to leave the scene before anyone found them there. Notwithstanding that she had seen him tear apart two men with his teeth, Ecaterina took his hand and followed him to his haven beneath an unused church. There he tended to her broken jaw and slashed face as best he could, giving her some of his blood to strengthen her. In the following nights, Marhuel, her benefactor, explained that he was a Cainite from a clan known as Brujah. The Brujah sought redemption for their curse by overturning injustice and establishing a different kind of society. Women were not safe, he claimed, because the Ventrué, greedy leeches who cared nothing for those lower than themselves, had hired mercenaries to help keep themselves in power.

Impressed by her indomitable spirit, Marhuel taught Ecaterina real swordplay and introduced her to philosophies she had never considered before. He spoke of Carthage and the ruin the Ventrué had made of it. When Marhuel left to join his sire, Dominic, in Hungary, he left behind him a newly Embraced Zealot, determined to undermine the Ventrué who claimed Prague for his own. Her beauty ruined by cuts and the lopsidedness of her jaw, Ecaterina began wearing a veil. Aside from covering her wounds, it gave her a measure of anonymity.

She currently controls Prague's Old Town — to the consternation of the Ventrué prince, Rudolf Brandl, whose markets she is systematically ruining. Highly intelligent,

Ecaterina tacitly supports rumors that she is a survivor of Carthage. Few care to quarrel with a Cainite who must therefore be quite old, powerful and very dangerous. She supports the university as a means of spreading her philosophies and also secretly backs several heresies, hoping to prove that the prince has no control over the city. When German merchants blockaded the city in 1176, forcing the crown to grant concessions to them, Ecaterina joined them. These concessions have drastically reduced Prince Rudolf's revenues and have damaged the Premysl family's fortunes as well.

Ecaterina seeks pawns she can use to throw suspicion on Prince Rudolf. If she can trick the Premysls into thinking Rudolf lied about the concessions and used the excess money he withheld to build up New Town, she just might be able to overthrow the prince and destroy the influence (at least in Bohemia) of all Ventrue.

Image: Ecaterina has long chestnut hair and piercing green eyes. Her lower face is hidden by a veil, which covers the deformity of her jawline and several deep, jagged scars along her chin. She dresses more soberly than a merchant, sometimes adopting the robes of a scholar rather than women's garb. Though she appears to have kept the bloom of youth, her upright posture and keen gaze hint that she is far older than she seems.

Roleplaying Hints: You are in charge of Old Town and the university. Use that to garner allies for yourself. Treat scholars with the utmost respect, the working people with an acknowledgment of their value, and nobles (especially Ventrue and their toadies) with the contempt they deserve.

Haven: Ecaterina's haven lies in one of the lower crypts of the university.

Secrets: Ecaterina became concerned with the many beatings and deaths taking place in Old Town and set out to discover what was happening. Watching from the shadows, she caught sight of Josef Zvi sneaking under the wall from the Jewish Quarter. Although she has not yet confronted him, she now knows he is the one responsible. She may require Josef to assist her at some point in a scheme against the prince in return for continuing to look the other way.

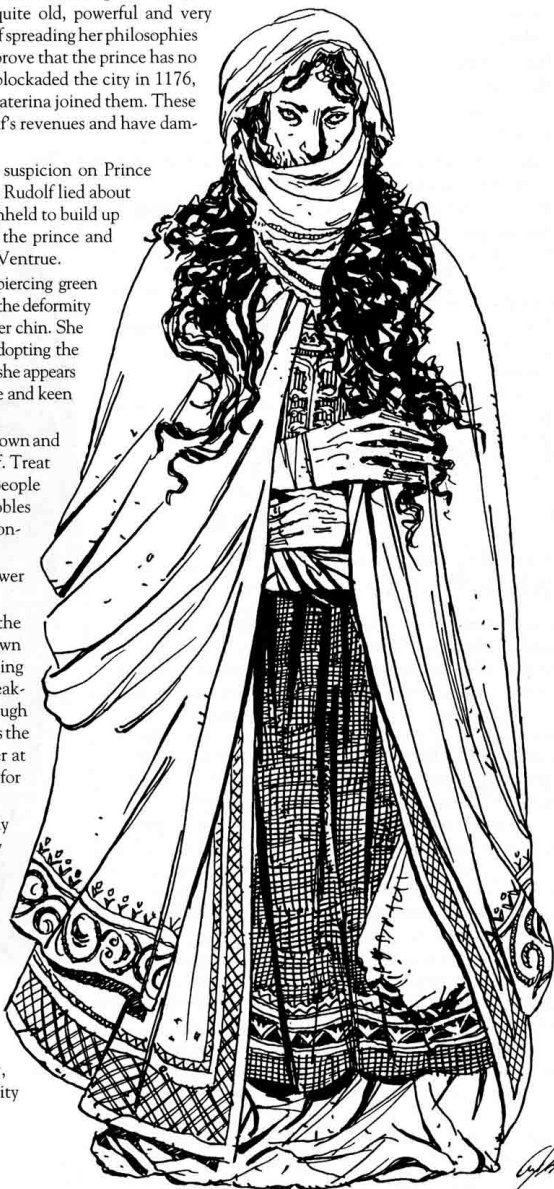
Influence: Ecaterina's influence extends mostly over those at the university. She can occasionally call in assistance from the merchants in the marketplace to further her schemes. She has a negative status as far as the prince is concerned, though Garinol Cappadocius seems quite fond of her.

Destiny: Ecaterina survives several attempts on her life (she was warned by both Josef and Garinol). When the Anarch Revolt occurs, Ecaterina jumps right into the middle of it, relishing every moment. Having diablerized her way to seventh generation in the late 20th century, Ecaterina serves as a bishop of the New York City Sabbat.

Clan: Brujah

Sire: Marhuel

Nature: Fanatic



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Demeanor: Innovator

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1150

Apparent Age: 16

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3/1 (without veil)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

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

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

Knowledge: Academics 4, Hearth Wisdom 2, Law 1, Linguistics (German, Greek) 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Philosophy 3, Politics 2, Seneschal 1, Theology 1

Disciplines: Celerity 2, Potence 2, Presence 3

Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Herd 2, Influence 3, Resources 2, Retainers 1

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

Road: Humanity 7

Willpower: 7

CAPPADOCIAN

GARINOL CAPPADOCIUS, ABBOT OF PETRIN HILL MONASTERY

Background: Garinol was raised a firm believer in the dualistic theology of Mithras, god of light. Though Garinol originally hoped to become a priest of Mithras, his dreams died along with his parents when he was seven. His entire family fell to a disease which curiously failed to infect him, and it took him several days to sway superstitious neighbors to help remove the rotting corpses from his house. During those days, Garinol spent an abnormally long time watching corruption invade his relatives' bodies, spreading putrefaction in its wake.

Garinol, with nowhere else to go, accepted a priest's invitation to stay at Petrin Hill Monastery in Prague. The harsh routine there paradoxically soothed his soul, and he had become a Christian within a year. The monks taught him well, gifting him with an education and a thirst for knowledge he could never have achieved had his parents survived.

One thing the monks did not teach him was to kill small things in order to observe what happened at the moment of death. Nor did they know about his version of the Mass, which he held over his victims, attempting to make them rise up like Lazarus at his call.

The young man prospered in the monastery, eventually becoming a postulant, then a monk. Seeming both penitent and kind, Garinol made many friends among the monks. None guessed his true nature.

Garinol sensed another presence enter his cell one night as he performed his rituals. Brother Jervais joined Garinol in his prayers, then asked the younger monk if he truly wished to learn what lay beyond the grave. Revealing that he was a priest of an unknown sect called the

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT



Cappadocians, Brother Jervais Embraced Garinol, then took him to the ossuary where the monks' bones were laid to rest. Unlike many newly Embraced Cappadocians, Garinol had no fear of the bones that were all around him.

As he gained stature in the monastery, Garinol achieved a reputation for holiness due to his stated aim of keeping a nightly vigil, watching lest evil spirits assault the brethren. Garinol was eventually elected abbot by younger members, who often marvel that the abbot's piety seems to keep the years from marring his pale flesh.

Garinol Cappadocius (he took the name to honor his clan's founder) is an ally of Rudolf Brandl, Prince of Prague, but takes little notice of political maneuverings and trade. He is more concerned with contemplation and exploration. Although supposedly responsible for overseeing the Little Quarter, Garinol lets it go its own way while fencing with the Jewish Nosferatu Josef, seeking freedom to wrest secrets from Jewish scholars.

Having encountered the golem during a surreptitious visit to the Jewish Quarter, Garinol has become obsessed with creating a similar servant of his own—a fleshly creature, but one more durable than the *zombu* most of his clan make. He has made nocturnal visits to various houses in the Little Quarter and Hradcany, kidnapping mortals for his experiments. His goal is to reanimate a body of such strength that it can tell him of the secrets that lie beyond death. Thus far, he has succeeded only in torturing and killing a number of innocent people. If Garinol continues much longer, the shortage of vineyard workers will become noticeable.

Image: Garinol is medium height and always dresses in monk's robes. He has black hair and wide, black eyes. His skin is so pale it looks translucent and he hardly seems old enough to be a monk, much less the abbot of the monastery. The abbot has an almost sorrowful air about him, as though suffering from a great burden.

Roleplaying Hints: You have become an adherent of the Cainite heresy, believing that the founder of your clan will arise and diablerize God, thereby becoming God. When that happens, he will open the gate of Heaven to damned creatures such as you. Until that time, you must continue your experiments (one might prove of use to the clan) and beseech God to forgive you and keep you from destruction.

Haven: Petrin Hill Monastery.

Secrets: Garinol knows that Rudolf Brandl is no more than the Premysl family's puppet. He knows that Josef Zvi has a haven somewhere near the Jewish Cemetery in the Jewish Quarter.

Influence: The abbot's influence lies mostly with church affairs in Prague. Prelates visiting the city consult with the learned and holy leader of the monastery on the hill often, sometimes coming away physically drained by the conversation, yet strangely elated by the abbot's keen insights. He could probably call on Ecaterina for assistance in an emergency.

Destiny: Garinol attempts to flee to the New World in the wake of the Giovanni takeover of the Cappadocian clan. His ship is lost at sea and he sinks into the depths of the ocean, where he enters torpor as the fish of the deep waters consume his flesh.

Clan: Cappadocian

Sire: Brother Jervais

Nature: Monster

Demeanor: Penitent

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1099

Apparent Age: 22

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 4, Herbalism 3, Melee 1, Music 2, Stealth 3

Knowledge: Academics 3, Astrology 1, Hearth Wisdom 1, Investigation 3, Linguistics (Latin, Hebrew) 2, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Science (Biology) 4, Theology 2

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Fortitude 2, Mortis 3

Backgrounds: Contacts 1, Herd 2, Influence 3, Retainers 2

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

Road: Heaven 5

Willpower: 7

KAZIMIERZ THE SILENT, WATCHER OF KRAKOW

Background: Kazimierz was born in the early part of the 10th century and grew up in a small village in southern Poland, not far from the trading post of Krakow. His family was among the first in his village to adopt Christianity, and he became fascinated with the idea of eternal life as portrayed by the priest who converted them. Expressing his desire to devote himself to God, Kazimierz sought entry into the priesthood.

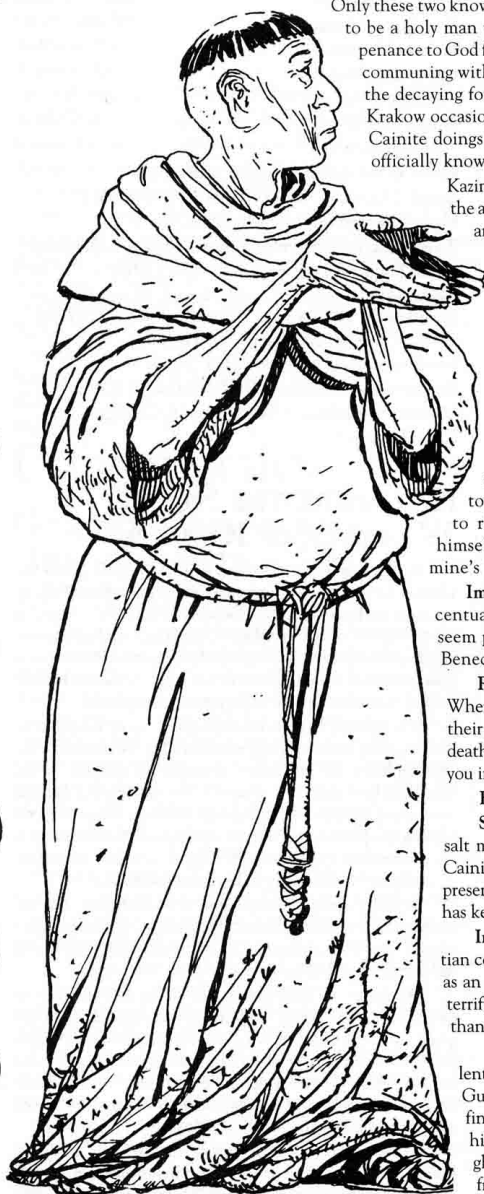
A wandering Benedictine monk convinced Kazimierz to join his order, and the young man joyfully gave himself to the contemplative life. Kazimierz retained his interest in the transition from mortality to divine immortality and became conversant with philosophical and theological teachings regarding the phenomenon of earthly death. His interest drew the attention of a Cappadocian scholar, who took advantage of a visit to the monastery to Embrace Kazimierz.

At first, the newly made Cainite was horrified at what had happened to him, but his sire convinced him that immortality offered untold opportunities for continuing his studies and dedicating his existence to prayer and penitence.

On the advice of his sire, Kazimierz created ghouls from two of his fellow monks, convincing them that he had been given a powerful gift from God. In this manner, he accompanied his Benedictine brothers to Tyniec, where they founded an abbey. Kazimierz took up residence in the crypts beneath the cloister, claiming that a place dedicated to the dead would serve as a fitting reminder of mortality.

In the century since he has resided at Tyniec Abbey, Kazimierz has seen the demise of all his contemporaries—with the exception of Brothers Feliks and Jakub, his ghouls.

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Only these two know of Kazimierz's existence; both of them believe the vampire to be a holy man who has vowed to subsist on the blood of the faithful as a penance to God for the sins of the world. Kazimierz tends to the abbey's dead, communing with the ghosts of the deceased brothers and keeping vigil over the decaying forms entombed in the crypt's stone walls. He ventures into Krakow occasionally, visiting the churches there and keeping track of the Cainite doings in the city. He has never bothered to make his presence officially known to Razkoljna.

Kazimierz suspects that the old salt mines that provide revenue for the abbey were once used to store relics and scrolls relating to death and the afterlife. Supposedly brought to the area by travelers from the Holy Land, at least one such relic is rumored to hold the mystical key to understanding — and repeating the ritual of — Christ's resurrection. He convinced a couple of the monks to explore the deeper areas of the mine in search of the "holy" treasure. They failed to return, so he has decided to investigate the mines more closely.

Although he is unaware of Gutka's presence in the salt mines, Kazimierz senses something dark and malevolent preying upon the miners. He blames the Cainites of Krakow for the miners' and the monks' disappearances; for this reason, he has not made his concern known to any of them. He hopes to arouse the Christian community to rise up against the "demons" in their midst (excluding himself, of course). Soon, however, Kazimierz may explore the mine's lightless depths himself.

Image: Kazimierz's deathly pallor and emaciated figure accentuate his ascetic features. His heavy-lidded eyes make him seem perpetually in prayer (or asleep). He wears the habit of a Benedictine monk.

Roleplaying Hints: Speak only when absolutely necessary. Whenever possible, remind any Cainites you meet that, despite their seeming immortality, they will have a final encounter with death and God's judgment. Seek alliances with those who might aid you in cleansing the mine of the evil that dwells within it.

Haven: The crypts beneath the Benedictine Abbey at Tyniec.

Secrets: Kazimierz knows that something very evil resides in the salt mines. He falsely believes that this entity is linked with the Cainites of Krakow — particularly, Razkoljna. He also knows of the presence of a Tremere within the city, but his antipathy for Razkoljna has kept him from betraying Claas's presence to her.

Influence: Kazimierz exercises some influence over the Christian community in the Krakow area, where he occasionally appears as an itinerant monk whose sermons on death are instructive, yet terrifying. His influence over the Cainites is greater in its potential than in its actuality.

Destiny: Kazimierz's desire to cleanse the mine of its malevolent presence eventually leads him into a confrontation with Gutka. His power is no match for Gutka's, and he becomes her finest sculpture. He remains entombed in salt (and in torpor) until his eventual discovery in the 17th century by a team of Giovanni ghouls. Recognizing him for what he is, the ghouls bring him from darkness into the light.

Clan: Cappadocian
Sire: Ungol
Nature: Penitent
Demeanor: Penitent
Generation: 7th
Embrace: 965
Apparent Age: 40
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Leadership 2, Search 2, Subterfuge 2
Skills: Animal Ken 1, Etiquette 2, Herbalism 3, Melee 1, Music 2, Stealth 2
Knowledges: Academics 2, Hearth Wisdom 2, History 1, Investigation 2, Linguistics (Arabic, Greek) 2, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Science 2, Theology 2
Disciplines: Auspex 3, Fortitude 2, Mortis 4, Quietus 1
Backgrounds: Herd 4, Influence 1, Retainers 2
Virtues: Conscience 5, Self-Control 3, Courage 3
Road: Heaven 8
Willpower: 6

AMALIA OF THRACE, PENITENT

Background: One of the oldest Cainites in Serdica, this Cappadocian is a firm believer in the ancient struggle between light and darkness. Furthermore, she knows that as a daughter of darkness, she is one of the damned. When the Bogomils arrived in Bulgaria, she carefully studied the small congregation that based itself in Serdica. Amalia has become convinced that she can save herself from perdition through their teachings.

She gathered up her courage a few years ago and approached Father Patryn, seeing him as a truly holy man, firm in faith and generous in spirit. She confessed her nature to him and begged him to help her find salvation. Father Patryn at first urged Amalia to deliver herself to Final Death — and Final Judgment — but she pleaded with him to help her secure her soul first.

Father Patryn has visited her nightly since that time in her sanctuary beneath the Bogomils' house of worship. Here he counsels and teaches her and prescribes harsh penances and deprivations in order to purge her of vileness. In return, Amalia has opened up the secret world of the Cainites to Father Patryn. She does not realize that she has started this holy man on the road to Hell.

Together, the two have embarked on a holy crusade to "cleanse" Sofia of its corruption and save all its Cainites from damnation. Amalia hopes that the other Damned of the city (indeed, all those in Bulgaria) will freely confess their sins once they are caught — but, being Damned herself, she knows that persuasion may be necessary. Her knowledge of Cainite strengths



and weaknesses provides her with countless means of inflicting agony on vampires reluctant to repent voluntarily. Furthermore, she knows how to destroy those too evil to be saved. In the cleansing fires of the sun, the Children of Caine will know the agonizing joy of release from eternal torment.

Image: Amalia's pallid face exudes the beauty of a marble statue: cold, austere and implacable. Only her dark eyes betray her zealous pursuit of "salvation." She has her black hair coiled on top of her head. She wears the simple, draped robes of her Thracian girlhood.

Roleplaying Hints: The Cainite curse has made you intimately aware of your damnation. It has also provided you with an almost limitless time in which to seek to reverse your fate. When speaking on matters of faith, you are patient, even gentle, at first. Once your patience expires, you are tight-lipped, unappeasable and terrifying.

Haven: Amalia dwells in a crypt beneath the Church of the Holy Light.

Secrets: As one who has seen Serdica grow up around her and watched the influx of Cainites, Amalia knows most of the dealings among the community of immortals. She is aware of Husayn's true purpose for being in Serdica but does not believe that exposing him will serve any purpose. She is more concerned with bringing him — along with Serdica's other Cainites — to salvation.

Influence: Through her contact with Father Patryn, Amalia extends her influence over the small but fervent community of Bogomils.

Destiny: Amalia's alliance with Father Patryn will grow stronger over the coming centuries, and she will make him a ghoul so that he might carry on his good works. Unfortunately, her teachings corrupt the priest, drawing him into an acceptance of the triumph of darkness over light. Amalia eventually takes her place as a goddess of a cruel death cult that excels in bizarre tortures. Father Patryn is her eager ghoul and high priest. Both "goddess" and priest meet their deaths at the hands of the Giovanni in the 15th century.

Clan: Cappadocian

Sire: Kyros of Antioch

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Penitent

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 400

Apparent Age: Early 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 1, Alertness 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Crafts 2, Etiquette 2, Herbalism 1, Melee 2, Music 4, Stealth 2

Knowledge: Hearth Wisdom 3, Medicine 3, Occult 1, Seneschal 2, Theology 2

Disciplines: Auspex 5, Fortitude 2, Mortis 5, Potence 3, Presence 4

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

Backgrounds: Herd 3, Resources 2, Retainers 3

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

Road: Heaven 6

Willpower: 9

GANGREL

ARNULF, BESTIAL FORCE OF NATURE

Background: Arnulf dimly remembers his days in sunlight. As a humble soldier in a Goth army, Arnulf's life was mindlessly simple: To eat, to sleep, to lie with women, to kill — these were his sole joys. He still does not understand why his sire chose him instead of a warrior renowned in battle or a leader triumphant in conquest. Perhaps it was the kindness with which Arnulf treated the pack's hunting dogs, or the savagery with which he slew his rivals in battle. His baptism of blood was enacted by a Methuselah who has since interfered only minimally in his child's life, yet Arnulf is still aware that he owes a great debt to the one who created him, and he fears the night when that debt must be repaid.

Answerable to no authority but his own, Arnulf roamed the dark plains of Eastern Europe. The world he knew gradually disappeared, as tribes struggled for territory and empires rose and fell. As he lost himself in the life of a true predator, the tainted lands of the East brought out his Beast. His communion with the nocturnal world became a religious experience. His unlife was reduced to its component elements: By night, he needed only to overcome a few straggling warriors to sustain himself, and by day, he slept within the soil of the forest.

There was no shortage of victims on which to feed and he reveled in bloodshed. In those days, he also sired freely. Arnulf has since Embraced children throughout the Balkan kingdoms, including Mitru and Jolanta. Freedom is very important to Arnulf, so he has granted it to his sons and daughters, who have some measure of respect for him. Unfortunately, they have little for each other. Especially in the dark forests of Transylvania, they have become increasingly territorial.

This does not concern him much. As a shadowy observer of the many mortal tribes of the East, he has learned much from their cultures. Arnulf is able to assimilate himself quickly into any primitive culture through his quick wits. Beneath the facade, however, lies the Beast. He knows he is powerful, almost godlike; his appetite is rapacious and the death of mortal victims means little to him.

He fears no law, and thus, he has many enemies. The Lupines, in particular, know of him and tell tales of what they consider great crimes. Barbarian raids are epic amusements to him, and all too often, the victims of such raids have been Garou Kinfolk, which has furthered the enmity between the Gangrel and the Shadow Lords. Too many Kinfolk have been slain by errant Gangrel and too many promising tribes have been scavenged by feral Cainites. Arnulf does not care. He has always considered these lands to be his.

Now the Shadow Lords have retreated to the Carpathians, and a new threat has emerged in its place: Western feudal civilization. The ascendancy of the Hungarian Kingdom fills him with wrath. Farmers live like grazing cattle, content with the same fields year after year. Organized villagers set up elaborate defenses, waiting to kill the beasts that stalk in the night. The days of tribal glory are gone. Arnulf constantly seeks information about surviving barbarian tribes for this reason. He longs for the night when the kingdom falls and the villages burn. Then the old ways would return, and the simple life of predator and prey would be possible once again.

To this end, Arnulf is beginning to stir up his fractious childer. His message is simple: Prevent the cities from becoming too complacent. Although raising armies is difficult, Arnulf commands great influence over the members of his clan. If the cities are allowed to grow too fast, they will pose a threat to the territories of the Gangrel. One night, the humans may become the predators and the Cainites their prey. Thus, the Gangrel must hunt or be hunted. Let the hunt begin.

Image: Arnulf's feral disposition is hidden behind a worn cloak and matted fur. His long black hair is contrasted by his cold blue eyes. Although the Beast has left its mark in the form of razor teeth, tufted ears, and a furred torso, he can conceal these things if he must. He is in the very peak of health and his musculature is impressive. When he must act civilized, the facade is very carefully constructed, as though he must use great effort to rely on words. His years are displayed in his cautious patience, yet poorly chosen words can rouse the anger that sleeps within him. Though he still appears as a 30-year-old man, Arnulf has hunted in the woods of the Balkan kingdoms for centuries.

Roleplaying Hints: Trust no one, especially the spawn of the cities and villages. Outside of your clan, speak to others grudgingly, yet keep your distance. Any pack you run with is temporary. Any opportunity to destroy the order of the Hungarian Kingdom attracts your interest. Among your clan, you command the respect you deserve.

Speak as though you are choosing your words very cautiously. You display a talent for languages, including several dialects that no longer exist, but you consider words to be tools of deception. When words fail, do not be afraid to unleash the Beast. In battle, your rage is like a force of nature: indomitable, inhuman and implacable.

Haven: Anywhere deep in the woods will suffice as a temporary home. Finding a safe place to sleep is becoming harder, though. Villages are better protected than they once were, and hunters are learning their territories better. Fortunately, Arnulf has always excelled at hunting the hunters.

Secrets: The Embrace has not denied Arnulf his lust for mortal women. The objects of his desire are severe and impassioned young women who are reluctant to accept simple lives of drudgery and servitude. Recently, near the docks of Buda, he



has started meeting secretly with a young woman who wishes to learn from his dark wisdom. Arnulf has taken her as an apprentice and taught her the way of the hunter, despite her family's suspicions that she has made a pact with unnatural forces. He will release her to the call of the night before long.

Influence: None personally, but many of his childer have attained positions of importance in Cainite society. A word from him and half the Gangrel of the East would rise for battle.

Destiny: Arnulf and his most trusted childer will later ally with the Mongols in attacking the eastern territories. Several vicious Gangrel will oppose him. Arnulf will be a shadowy ally to Turks assaulting the fiefdoms of Wallachia within 300 years. His legend will grow and eventually he will meet Vlad Tepes in battle.

Although Tepes will emerge victorious, Arnulf's valor and skill will be praised even by that prince of evil. Even into the 1990s, the name and lineage of Arnulf will still inspire respect from those Gangrel who remember.



Clan: Gangrel

Sire: Pard

Nature: Monster

Demeanor: Barbarian

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 446

Apparent Age: early 30s

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 5, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 6

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 5, Brawl 6, Dodge 6, Leadership 4, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Melee 6, Ride 3, Survival 6, Stealth 4

Knowledge: Linguistics 5, Medicine 3

Disciplines: Animalism 5, Celerity 4, Fortitude 5, Potence 3, Protean 7

Backgrounds: Status (Gangrel) 5

Virtues: Conviction 4, Instinct 4, Courage 5

Road: Beast 7

Willpower: 7

JOLANTA OF NIEPOLMICE

Background: The child of cattle raisers living on the plains north of Krakow, Jolanta grew up attached to the simple rhythms of life. Counting time by the seasons, the waxing and waning of the moon and the breeding cycles of the animals under her care, she knew little of anything outside her circumscribed life. When she reached marriageable age, her parents took her with them to the annual fair in Krakow.

Jolanta was repelled rather than enthralled by her first real city. The stench of too many bodies packed too closely together sickened her, while the constant clamor of voices made her feel trapped. All around her loomed the stone walls of the city, enclosing her in a vise.

Her parents could not understand her obvious discomfort. Their attempts to draw her into the festivities only heightened her distaste.

Thus, Jolanta failed to notice that they were actively soliciting a husband for her, bartering for her hand as if she were just another commodity for sale.

When Jolanta's father introduced her to the beefy shopkeeper's son who was to be her future husband, she had a moment of panic. Only then she thought that the marriage would not take place until next year, when the family returned to Krakow for the fair, prevented Jolanta from succumbing to despair. Anything could happen in a year.

But nothing did. The marriage took place as scheduled and Jolanta's family abandoned her to her new life as the wife of a cobbler in Krakow. Her husband Tomasz soon proved to be a tyrant, ridiculing his country-bred wife for her lack of civility and beating her on the slightest pretext. The Church offered her no comfort; her confessor counseled resignation to the fate God had chosen for her. Jolanta found support from another source instead. She began to attend the rites of a small group of pagan women devoted to the worship of Zorya, the triple goddess.

Her mysterious comings and goings eventually aroused Tomasz's suspicions. He followed Jolanta one night to her meeting place outside the city walls. The next evening, he confronted her, beat her severely and threatened to expose her to the Church if she continued to practice heathen rites and demon worship.

Driven to the edge of madness, Jolanta groped blindly for a weapon to use against her husband. Her hand seized his cobbler's augur and she thrust the sharp tool into Tomasz's chest. Her blow was a lucky one, puncturing his lung. Tomasz collapsed, mortally wounded.

Realizing what she had done, Jolanta fled into the night. Two evenings later, Arnulf came upon her during his wandering in the forest of Niepolomice. He observed her for several more nights before deciding to gift her with the Embrace. Although he stayed only long enough to teach her the rudiments of Cainite existence, Jolanta reveled in her newfound freedom.

Jolanta has made her haven within the dense forest of Niepolomice near Krakow for nearly a century. Like her sire, she detests cities and all they represent. Jolanta's particular hatred, however, is reserved for Krakow. She has completely rejected her Christian upbringing, becoming even more attuned to her pagan faith. She sees herself as the instrument of the Goddess, a predator who feasts on the blood of Christian men in retaliation for their persecution of those who worship the Mother.

She has formed an alliance with Ludmilla, a hedge wizard who dwells within the forest and shares her disgust with the growth of Christianity. Both women fear that the city will eventually expand beyond its walls, a fact made all too probable by the increasing number of small settlements rising up within a short distance of the city. So, Jolanta has begun a nocturnal war of terror against those foolish enough to live outside the shadow of Wawel Castle and its stone barricades. In this endeavor, she has the assistance of Ludmilla.

Image: Jolanta has dark brown hair, which falls in tangles and is frequently matted with leaves and twigs. She dresses in simple peasant's clothing, eschewing the fancier garb of city folk. Her fingernails resemble claws and her ears are tufted like the feral creature she has become.

Roleplaying Hints: You have been removed from the natural order to serve your goddess as a supernatural creature. Your only regret in murdering your husband is that it was done so quickly, before you had a chance to savor his fear. Humans in general, and men in particular, are your prey: Hunt them down without mercy.

Haven: Jolanta sleeps within the earth of the forest of Niepolomice.

Secrets: Caring little for Cainite politics (or for mortal concerns, for that matter), Jolanta's only secret is her knowledge of the existence of pagans within and outside Krakow.

Influence: Jolanta enjoys the veneration (and the blood) of Krakow's pagan population.

Destiny: Krakow continues to flourish as a city despite her efforts. Jolanta grows more feral until, by the mid-16th century, she barely resembles anything human. In the midst of one of her frenzies, Jolanta falls prey to a roving Sabbat pack, who put her down in self-defense and then feast on her potent blood.

Clan: Gangrel

Sire: Arnulf

Discipline: Defender

Demeanor: Survivor

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1002

Apparent Age: 18

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

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

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

Knowledges: Hearth Wisdom 2, Investigation 1, Occult 2

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Celerity 1, Fortitude 2, Protean 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 1, Herd 2

Virtues: Conviction 3, Instinct 3, Courage 4

Road: Beast 5

Willpower: 6

MITRU THE HUNTER, SILENT AVENGER

Background: Ventrue lords have solidified their control of western Hungary, which leads them to believe they are entitled to eastern Hungary as well. In the mortal realm, the two countries are allied, politically at the very least. Hungarians have also sent Szekler overlords to the east to use the Slavs as their serfs. One race has been propped up to subjugate another. By day, Transylvania is a country that has been tamed.

The illusion is dispelled by night. Nova Arpad, the Ventrue proxy ruler of the eastern kingdom, has ruthlessly exploited the mortals of her realm even more thoroughly than the Szeklers have by day. Taxation and slavery have bled the Voivodate dry. In response, a conspiracy plots to destroy her influence. Nova Arpad has been abducted and replaced by an impostor, allowing the Transylvanian conspirators to falsify her reports to the West and buy themselves some time.

Mitru is proud to be working in this conspiracy, especially since he is the one who captured Nova. Mitru was a Vlach peasant before his Embrace who saw too much of Magyar oppression. True Romanians had settled in the shadow of the Carpathians over a millennium before the Szeklers arrived. Then the Westerners came to lay claim to their lands, their people and the fruit of their labor.

Like many Transylvanian cities, Mitru's mortal home in Napoca was little more than a dirt road, a few lanes with houses and a stone church. One of the best hunters in the village, Mitru spent most of his time in the wild forests that frightened Roman soldiers a thousand years before. Mitru knew that the real threat wasn't in the woods—it came from the West, where arrogant nobles schemed against his homelands. Mitru would walk to the edge of the forests near his home and pray to the old gods for redemption late at night.

Mitru fostered a fierce hatred for the Szekler overlords. His family had been driven to poverty by the overlords' dues. The taxation was never in the form of money — many of the serfs conducted trade through barter and never sold their goods for coin. The dues entitled the local overlord to two-thirds of what Mitru's family produced instead. In the West, this feudal arrangement would have been in exchange for military protection. However, the Szeklers' martial power was questionable at best. Mitru always suspected that if trouble came, the Szeklers would be among the first to flee.

The troubles he witnessed by night unnerved him even more. No one in Transylvania dared to not bar their windows or doors after sundown. Despite the arrogance of the seneschals who collected their dues, nothing was done to stop the fearful sounds of battle enacted by moonlight. Mitru decided, for the sake of his village, to investigate the whispered rumors of monsters. If the Szeklers couldn't protect his people, he would. Young and overconfident, Mitru prepared for battle.

Armed only with a bow and hunting axe, he attempted the unthinkable: exploring the wilds of Transylvania after sundown. It was worse than he imagined. His hunter's prowess kept him from being discovered, as armies of *szlachta* and swooping Gargoyles passed him by. As he became bolder, he learned darker truths. Through careful spying on a Szekler household, he found the source of his people's suffering. The Szeklers were naught but tools used by an undead ruler: Nova Arpad of Clan Ventrue.

The hunter crafted 13 fine arrows to hunt the beast that enslaved his people. Slaying her revenant slave lord was easy, but his first attempt to assassinate Nova was a failure. The three arrows in her chest forced her into torpor, but Mitru didn't suspect her true powers. He also didn't know of his potential allies. Nova's torpid body was recovered by Arnulf, who rewarded Mitru with his Dark Gift and extensive training in the powers of Caine. The conspiracy against the Western Ventrue was born.

Napoca has already spun legends of Mitru's accomplishment. Although the Gangrel is rarely seen, the villagers know that Mitru the Hunter stalks the night to protect the Vlachs. The legend is becoming more elaborate over time...and Mitru has come to believe it all.

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT



In fact, Mitru has become so confident in his heroic nature that he believes himself superior to the Tzimisce knez of his domain. He believes that his virtue will win over a potential enemy. Mitru has begun to parley for an alliance with the Fiend, hoping that he can dissuade him from troubling Napoca and encourage him to seek conquest elsewhere. The Tzimisce thinks that Mitru is a fool, and he plays him for one. Their alliance is tenuous, but Mitru seems willing to charge at any alleged enemy that troubles the Fiend.

The legend speaks of other things. The mortals of Napoca are willing to side with anyone who can save them, and they recognize that their savior is sometimes cruel. He must feed, and many villagers sacrifice portions of their blood, leaving it in stone jugs near the forest. Moreover, men who come of age in Napoca may choose to travel alone into the darkest forests to offer aid as his servant. Many mortals are tested, but only a few survive. Nonetheless, the villagers of Napoca pray for their deliverance and Mitru hears and answers their call.

Image: Mitru is a very direct man with simple tastes and straightforward logic. He has developed feline eyes and a feral snout. He usually wears a rough, dark long woolen coat and a faded shirt and breeches. His boots carry the earth from lands throughout Transylvania. Though he prefers to hunt with fang and claw, he still carries a bow and arrows. His legendary status is beginning to make him somewhat arrogant, but his confidence is essential: Without it, he would perish.

Roleplaying Hints: Who cares about wealth, privilege or Western culture? This is your land, the land of your people. It has been since the nights of Dacia and the empire. You have naught but contempt for the overlords of Transylvania. As you did not fight them in life, you must fight them in death. Idealism drives you.

Haven: Any spot of earth that suits you is yours. Sleep well and await the chance to defend your homeland by night.

Secrets: As concern for the troubles ahead consumes him, Mitru pursues sport to relieve his tension. He does not want to lose his edge, so he occasionally tests himself against mortal prey. These tests involve hunting prospective childer through the dark forests. If a candidate is worthy, he is returned and protected — if unworthy, he is devoured. The legends surrounding Mitru would become considerably darker should this fact ever be revealed to the mortals of Napoca.

Influence: Mitru trusts himself and awaits his sire's decisions. He cannot reveal himself openly in Napoca, but he has been watching the most promising mortals of his domain. A few have proved themselves worthy of the Blood, and one has become his steadfast ghoul.

Mitru is the Prince of Napoca only in the sense that he protects it from supernatural threats. The treachery of politics has little meaning in his domain. In fact, Mitru is too honest and far too trusting, especially of the Fiend with whom he has begun an alliance.

Destiny: Arnulf, Mitru's sire, will become contemptuous of Napoca as it grows larger. As Arnulf becomes more vitriolic about the threat of the cities, Mitru will feel a stronger obligation to defend them. Mitru's arrogance will become overbearing and he will attempt to muster Cainite allies against the threat of Arnulf. Three hundred years later, Arnulf will aid the Ottoman Turks as they move toward Transylvania; Mitru will then be forced to turn against his sire and ally fully with Vlad Tepes and his Tzimisce vassals.

Clan: Gangrel

Sire: Arnulf

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Defender

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1190

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

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

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Archery 4, Melee 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Knowledge: Investigation 2, Occult 2

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Celerity 3, Fortitude 3, Protean 3

Backgrounds: Herd 3, Influence 1, Mentor 4, Retainers 1, Status 2

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 3, Courage 5

Road: Humanity 4

Willpower: 8

OTHER GANGREL OF NOTE

TIBERIU, CORRUPTED MESSENGER

10th generation, sire unknown

Nature: Traditionalist

Demeanor: Conformist

Embrace: 1050

Apparent Age: 30s

Aside from the Tzimisce *voivodes* and knezi, only a few Cainites oversee most of Transylvania. Each controls a vast stretch of territory and has a small network of vampires to assist in governing their domains. They are united in a common purpose: defending the cities they control. Yet, it is nearly impossible for more than two or three of these "elders" to gather together in one place. Tiberiu is the wanderer who carries messages between these rulers.

As a faithful messenger, Tiberiu knows all of the secrets passed openly between the four remaining princes and is trusted by all of them. Unfortunately, he has also pledged a Blood Oath to Radu, the Tzimisce who claims Bistritz as his domain.

LASOMBRA

BASILIO THE ELDER, PRINCE OF SOFIA

Background: The Lasombra Basilio the Elder has ruled Serdica since Bulgaria came under Byzantine rule. Originally attracted to the area by his interest in the Eastern Church, Basilio left his comfortable surroundings in Rome and traveled to Constantinople. There he established close ties with its Cainite rulers, allying himself with the Magnus family of Lasombra and gaining their favor. When the Byzantine Empire established itself in Bulgaria, Basilio was given the city of Serdica in return for his services.

In order to claim his prize, however, Basilio had to overcome the opposition of Gabor the Bulgar, a Tzimisce *voivode* who, with his brood, claimed the area as his own. Gabor did not count on Basilio's inherent cunning or political skill. Basilio managed to rally other Tzimisce in the region to his side, playing on their fears of Gabor's ambitions. A savage battle ensued, which resulted in the death of Gabor's brood. Gabor fled to Constantinople, where he sought to lose himself in the vastness of the greatest city in the empire.

The Tzimisce who had driven Gabor from Serdica returned to their own fiefdoms, leaving the city in Basilio's hands. Although he has shown himself to be a capable leader of Serdica's small Cainite community, he has not fared well under the resurgence of Bulgarian nationalism. He feels particularly vulnerable as a Lasombra prince whose power comes from his association with Constantinople. In the volatile political climate of Bulgaria, Basilio could find himself ousted or facing Final Death at any moment, simply because he fails to support Bulgaria's independence from the Byzantine Empire.

In an attempt to create other alliances for himself, Basilio has welcomed an Assamite known as Husayn al Fatim. He has found much in common with this polished and cultured Cainite. Both Basilio and Husayn support order and work toward civilizing the rowdy Bulgarians. Basilio has considered the fact that, should events force him from his position of leadership, he will need a place of refuge. He doubts that he will receive a warm welcome in Constantinople if Bulgaria and Sofia (as Serdica is now called) break away from the empire. His Byzantine masters have no love for failure.

Image: Basilio's aquiline nose and delicate jawline mark him as an aristocrat. He also dresses the part, appearing only in the finest clothing — appropriate to his status as prince.

Roleplaying Hints: Everyone is watching you — your masters in Constantinople, the Tzimisce whose holdings lie uncomfortably close to Sofia, and the other Cainites in the city. Despite all this, you must assume an air of confidence and approach everyone from a position of strength. You look for allies among newcomers to the city without seeming to be weak. Aside from Husayn, there is no one you really trust. Assert your authority from the beginning; you can then afford to be magnanimous.

Haven: Basilio dwells within a complex of secret apartments beneath Serdica Castle. He also has a secret haven in a villa near the House of the Eagle baths.

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT



Secrets: Basilio keeps himself up on the current trends in mortal politics, largely through the efforts of his ghoul, Jorgi the Bear. He is working toward establishing amicable trading ties to the Turks. Basilio knows the havens of two of the region's most violently patriotic Tzimisce *voivodes*, a secret he will use should they threaten him.

Influence: Basilio's primary sphere of influence lies in his connection with Constantinople. He holds some power over the Eastern Church in Sofia.

Destiny: Basilio will escape Husayn's eventual assassination attempt and will flee Sofia when Bulgaria finally overthrows Byzantine rule. Giving up on Eastern Europe, he will return to his native Spain, where he will meet his Final Death in the fires of the Inquisition.

Clan: Lasombra

Sire: Erasmo Casimiro Alonso de Curcio

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Autocrat

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 920

Apparent Age: 30s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

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

Empathy 2, Intimidation 1, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 2

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

Knowledges: Academics 1, Law 2, Linguistics (Arabic, Greek, Slavonic) 3, Occult 1, Politics 2

Disciplines: Dominate 4, Fortitude 1, Obtenebration 3, Potence 3, Presence 3

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

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

Road: Humanity 6

Willpower: 6

LISETA ILUMINADA, THE LUMINOUS

Background: Originally from the Kingdom of Aragon, Liseta was the eldest daughter of a minor noble family. Her rare beauty became apparent as she grew. Nobles far beyond her own station vied for her hand in marriage, including Juan Antonio Ramirez y Alvarez de Santiago, a mysterious man with dark, unfathomable eyes. He differed from the others: He seemed to wear power like a cloak, and he visited her only at night. Meeting with Liseta in her family's night-blooming garden, accompanied only by her old *doena*, Juan Antonio charmed her and won her heart. Their marriage was quickly arranged.

Juan Antonio took his new wife to his manor, where he tutored her in the arts of seduction and politics. Ghoulng her, he explained that he was a Cainite and wished to preserve her beauty forever. The rest of Liseta's family perished within a few months, struck down by a mysterious wasting disease. She was sole heir to the family fortune, which made her husband, Juan Antonio, the actual owner of the property.



THE CAINITES OF EASTERN EUROPE

With her family out of the way, Juan Antonio groomed Liseta for the role he wished her to play: seductress of a local bishop who had been charged with choosing a new lord to oversee a rich estate nearby. Infatuated by Liseta's youth, beauty and skills, the bishop gladly awarded the estate to Juan Antonio. Juan Antonio Embraced Liseta in gratitude for her accomplishment and began her new tutelage in Cainite society and arts.

Seeing the control she had over men, Liseta became intoxicated on her own power. Soon she began playing lovers against one another, taking whatever she could persuade them to give her. Liseta and Juan Antonio became some of the richest and most politically powerful nobles in Santiago. But Liseta went too far. Women whose husbands had strayed into her orbit began speaking of her "unnatural beauty and charm," claiming that her appeal came from the Devil. Although most of Liseta's lovers worked to quiet her detractors, enough good Catholics listened and investigated. They were appalled to discover that they harbored demons in their midst.

A large party of Christian knights attacked Juan Antonio's estate just before dawn. Forcing their way into the manor, they slew the couple's retainers and found the vampires' haven in the lowest level of the house. Juan Antonio had just enough time to awaken his sluggish wife and pushed her into a secret passageway that led underground and exited through a nearby cave. Then the knights fell on him. Though Juan Antonio slew many of them, they at last overpowered him, chained him and dragged the struggling Cainite into the sunlight. Beneath the courtyard, Liseta cowered, forcing herself to stay awake as his screams of agony finally died.

When she woke up that evening, she slipped out through the cave and found her former home gutted. Turning away, she made her way to Toledo, where she managed to enter a convent. She spent several nights there planning her revenge.

The Church had taken everything from her; it would be made to suffer for its arrogance and cruelty. She would corrupt the Church from within, poison its holiness and feed on its self-righteous priests. Knowing she might be recognized too easily in Iberia, she decided to go elsewhere to put her plans into motion. Western Europe was her home, but the Church was already too entrenched. She needed a place where the Church could still be molded to her design. She chose Esztergom in the Kingdom of Hungary, since the city had been granted an archbishopric not too far in the past. Furthermore, it lay so far from her homeland she was certain no one there would recognize her.

Liseta has been living in Esztergom ever since, spending her days (supposedly in prayer) in the crypts beneath St. Ann's Convent. Here she is guarded by three of the sisters, whom she has taken for her ghouls. At night, she is the mistress of Janos, a young priest who has been marked for

quick advancement. Liseta hopes that through her machinations, he will rise to become archbishop of Esztergom. Once he does, her influence will spread throughout the Church in Hungary. Meanwhile, she enjoys the riches of the archbishop's palace and satisfies her lust for revenge by feeding from and slowly killing other young priests who might threaten Janos's eventual promotion. She is aware that Geza Arpad, prince of the city, seeks the archbishopric for himself, but believes a Cainite could never live so openly in that position. She is willing to compromise with Geza so long as Janos becomes archbishop.

Image: Liseta is one of the most beautiful women most people have ever seen. Her blue-black hair falls in waves to her waist and her violet eyes are heavy-lidded and seductive. Her face is heart-shaped and her features exhibit both nobility and voluptuousness. Though in public she typically wears the habit of a nun of St. Ann's, in private, she prefers silks and velvets, or a soft cloak of ermine.

Roleplaying Hints: You are beautiful beyond belief. Use it to your best advantage. You are also highly intelligent and skilled. Used to getting what you want, you can be imperious and demanding if your standards are not met. Play the hard-to-please mistress to the hilt, but always give in and surrender to your lover's "irresistible" urges. Your position depends on pleasing him — for now.

Haven: The crypts beneath St. Ann's Convent.

Secrets: Liseta knows the shameful secrets of just about every priest in Esztergom. Further, she knows Geza Arpad's most ardent desire — and how he is corrupting those around him. She has recently discovered that Geza has an alliance with an Islamic merchant who brings him rare Eastern drugs, which he uses to control his sire, Bulscu. She does not know where Bulscu is.

Influence: Liseta's influence can be felt throughout the ecclesiastical circles of Esztergom and most of Hungary.

Destiny: Liseta will eventually be betrayed and accused of witchcraft by Geza. Taken as she sleeps (despite the pitiful protection of the ghoulled nuns), she will be chained and questioned. Quickly convicted, she will be sentenced to the stake. As they drag her out to her execution, Liseta will burst into flames beneath the blazing sun, just as her husband once did. Her beauty will be destroyed. Surprised by her sudden immolation, her captors will release their hold on her. Flames streaming behind her, she will disappear into a nearby building, crawling into a secret bolthole. Whether because of a deep fear engendered by her experience or some flaw in her original Embrace, she will never be able to restore her beauty. Her wounds will eventually heal, but her mind will not. She will masquerade as a Nosferatu, skulking about Esztergom, plotting her revenge on Geza. After the Anarch Revolt, Liseta will join the Sabbat, becoming one of their most proficient templars.



Clan: Lasombra

Sire: Juan Antonio Ramirez y Alvarez de Santiago

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Gallant

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 960

Apparent Age: 16

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Acting 3, Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Dodge 1, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Leadership 2, Seduction 4, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 3, Herbalism 1, Melee 2, Music 3, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Academics 2, Linguistics (Hungarian, Arabic) 2, Politics 3, Seneschal 1

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

Backgrounds: Herd 3, Influence 2, Resources 2, Retainers 3

Virtues: Conviction 2, Instinct 4, Courage 3

Road: Typhon 5

Willpower: 7

LUCITA

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

Monçada recognized an 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. Although she serves Monçada dutifully as a diplomat and a noble (she is rumored to be the power behind the throne of the current King of Aragon, Peter II), she is more at home on the road with her traveling companion Anatole, who inspires in Lucita more faith in God than the degenerate Monçada ever could.

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

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

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

Haven: Wherever is convenient along the road.

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

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

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

Clan: Lasombra

Sire: Ambrosio Luis Monçada

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Defender

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1190

Apparent Age: 17

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

Road: Humanity 6

Willpower: 9

THE SPAWN OF KUPALA

Since time immemorial, a festering taint of corruption has infested the lands of Eastern Europe, especially in the shadow of the Carpathian Mountains. As a balancing force in the pantheon of the ancient Slavic gods, the dark lord Kupala rejoices in the corruption of the land. His servants, a legion of spirits known as the kupala, infest the soil and destroy natural things. Ruined crops, blasted heaths, tainted food, aborted fetuses — these are the results of their handiwork.

The Tzimisce know this evil well and have known of it since the early days of the Metamorphosists. While barbarians succumbed to its seductive call, the Fiends isolated themselves from the mortal world to maintain their purity as they meditated on their inner horror. Later, when the *voivodes* dominated the land and swore to protect it, their pact with their homelands doomed them to madness. It is said that a ruler becomes grim as his land suffers; in the case of the Tzimisce, this is doubly true. Their pact with the earth is so strong that a Tzimisce must rest by day near the soil of his homeland. If the kupala have drained it of its energies, the cold earth offers no comfort and the Fiend sleeps restlessly.

Some Malkavians also know of Kupala, and small, Malkavian-led cults devoted to the god dot Eastern Europe. As these vampires impinge victimization, suffering and abuse upon the innocent, the power of the kupala grows stronger, and their presence in the natural world increases. Worshippers enact rituals of torture and are rewarded by growing "enlightenment."

When they manifest physically, the spawn of Kupala are horrific, gibbering, mocking creatures. Werewolves who find and slay the kupala unwittingly enrich the lands that support the Tzimisce in the process. Moreover, feudal lords who allow the mortals of their domains to suffer, Tzimisce who practice torture and abuse, and cultists who sacrifice for pleasure all increase the power of Kupala's spawn. They, too, are rewarded with a growing madness. Some Tzimisce have become so tainted that their very flesh can be poisoned by the kupala, destroying them from within as they alter their bodies into nightmarish shapes.

Most outsiders consider the entire legend to be little more than pagan superstition. What evidence is there to support this folklore? No doubt this is little more than another aspect of Satan, they reason, or another primitive spirit waiting to be slain. Those who do not understand often act in ways that increase Kupala's influence. Ever deceptive and misleading, the demon's cancerous presence gnaws at the heart of the world....

For more information on the kupala, see the Appendix.

MALKAVIAN

OCTAVIO, THE VOICE OF KUPALA

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

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

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

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



THE CAINITES OF EASTERN EUROPE

ANATOLE

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

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

Haven: Beneath the Round House and Arena in Obuda.

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

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

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

Clan: Malkavian

Sire: Marcus

Nature: Prophet

Demeanor: Prophet

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 134

Apparent Age: 30s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

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

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

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

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

Backgrounds: Herd 3, Influence 3, Retainers 1

Virtues: Conviction 3, Instinct 2, Courage 5

Road: Devil 8

Willpower: 7

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Clan: Malkavian

Sire: Pierre l'Imbecile

Nature: Defender

Demeanor: Penitent

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1193

Apparent Age: 20

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

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

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

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

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

Backgrounds: Herd 3, Mentor 2, Retainers 4

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

Road: Heaven 6

Willpower: 6

True Faith: 1



THE CAINITES OF EASTERN EUROPE

ADROJAI, HIGH PRIEST OF KRETUVA

Background: As a child in Lithuania, Adrojai always had a fierce streak of mischief in him. Always getting into trouble, he was not only a genius at composing elaborate practical jokes, but also a mastermind when it came to blaming others for their results. By the time he was seven, he could find a convenient scapegoat for all of his pranks. If any evidence pointed to him, he would proudly proclaim that "the faeries did it." Little did he know how badly he was tempting fate....

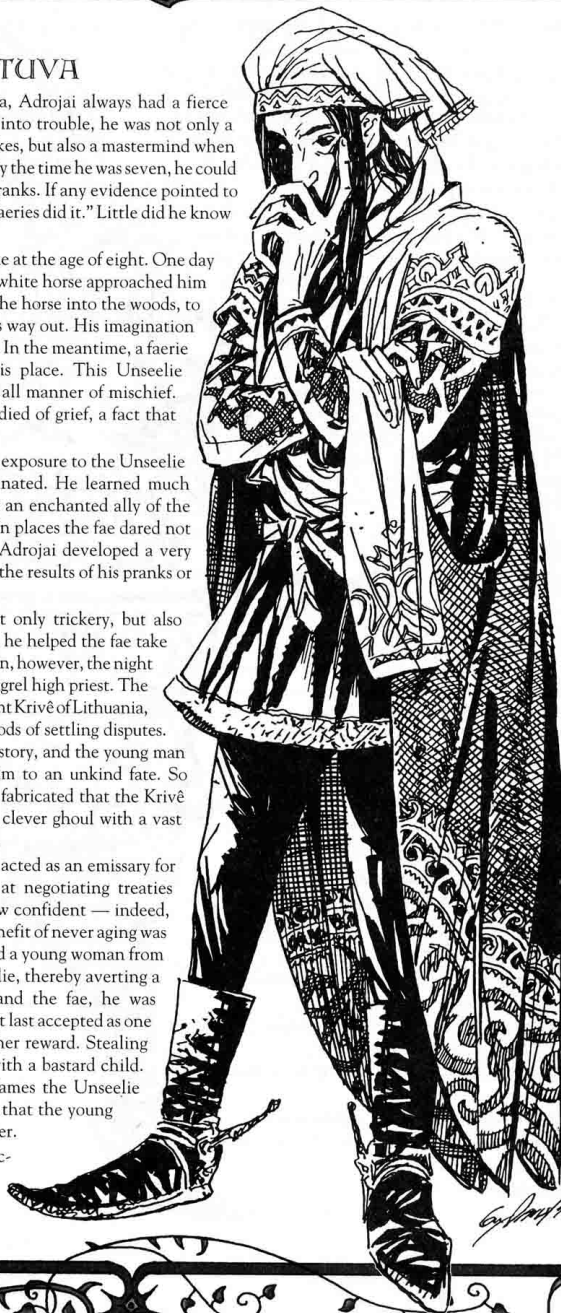
He was enlisted in a great practical joke at the age of eight. One day as he was gathering apples in the woods, a white horse approached him and stole the biggest one. Adrojai chased the horse into the woods, to a patch of forest where he couldn't find his way out. His imagination had driven him straight into a faerie realm. In the meantime, a faerie skilled at impersonating mortals took his place. This Unseelie changeling, using Adrojai's form, pursued all manner of mischief. The prank ended when Adrojai's mother died of grief, a fact that Adrojai has never discovered.

Any other child would have found his exposure to the Unseelie Court nightmarish, but Adrojai was fascinated. He learned much under the tutelage of master tricksters. As an enchanted ally of the Unseelie, he was to be their eyes and ears in places the fae dared not tread. From this point onward, however, Adrojai developed a very Unseelie outlook, never fully caring about the results of his pranks or realizing how cruel they were.

By the age of 13, he had learned not only trickery, but also thievery. Venturing from his unseen home, he helped the fae take what they desired. His life was to change again, however, the night that he chose to steal a wolf cub from a Gangrel high priest. The thief was caught and brought before the current Krivė of Lithuania, a Malkavian known for his ingenious methods of settling disputes. The Krivė sat and listened to the boy's life story, and the young man tried to blame the Unseelie for driving him to an unkind fate. So exquisite and imaginative was the story he fabricated that the Krivė decided to take him as his own servant. A clever ghoul with a vast knowledge of the fae would be a useful tool.

Ten years of service followed. Adrojai acted as an emissary for the Krivė, and he was especially skilled at negotiating treaties between the Unseelie and mortals. He grew confident — indeed, overconfident — in his abilities, and the benefit of never aging was a great reward. On the night that he rescued a young woman from the clutches of a marauding band of Unseelie, thereby averting a violent war between her parent's tribe and the fae, he was rewarded with the Embrace. Before he was at last accepted as one of the undead, however, he received another reward. Stealing the young woman's virginity, he left her with a bastard child. The child has grown up bitter, and he blames the Unseelie Court for his fate. Adrojai does not realize that the young man is searching for his black-hearted father.

Within a year, another major event occurred in his life. A caravan of merchants made an encampment not far from the



TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

sacrae villae where the Krivê made his home. In the middle of a holy glen of oak, they celebrated their good fortune in the last village by quaffing their way through a cask of mead. The drunken Westerners were unknowingly committing great blasphemy, and the Krivê himself decided to intervene. Four crossbow bolts later, the villagers had defended themselves against an allegedly premeditated attack from an unarmed diplomat.

The following night, Adrojai sought revenge. The caravan had moved on another league to the south, and they encamped by a seemingly tranquil glade. Four beautiful young nymphs ran out of the forest into the waiting arms of the merchants, crying that they were being pursued by a terrible monster. Adrojai moved silently through the woods and, aided by the fae, he led the merchants on a Nightmare Ride that would last until they were slain by the Unseelie at dawn.

The story of Adrojai's revenge spread throughout the domains of Lithuania, and the Cainite high priests were so impressed that they accepted Adrojai into their order. He is now the high priest of the terra of Kretuva. His alliance with the fae is so strong that tension between Cainites and Unseelie has abated for a time, and his quick wit has assisted him in mediating countless other disputes. The remaining high priests are debating who will be the next Krivê. If he's as clever as he thinks he is, Adrojai just might seize the opportunity. If he exhibits his usual lack of caution, however, his more thoughtless acts will have very grave consequences.

Image: Though physically still 16, Adrojai is wise beyond his years. His demented grin and gleaming green eyes show when he has caught on to a brilliant plan. Long red hair, a thin angular face, and lanky long arms and legs increase the image of a young man who loves to be consumed with the madness of a young man who loves to be consumed with the madness of a brilliant scheme.

Roleplaying Hints: Life is an eternal jest to you, and you are confident in your ability to outwit anyone. Your preternatural gifts also give you powers over young women, whom you seduce and mislead just as often. All that you do, however, is tinged with a sliver of darkness, resulting in a wake of tragedy when your handiwork is at its best.

Haven: A sacrae villae in the terra of Kretuva.

Secrets: Adrojai knows he is wise, but he knows the fae are even craftier. Though his word is valued among the creatures of the night, he knows he can't stand up to the ancient lords of the Unseelie. He must never let this fear show.

Influence: He does not rule by force, but rather charms his way into getting others to believe him. When that fails, a gentle use of his Disciplines tips the balance in his favor. His word is highly respected among the fae, although he is reluctant to exploit this advantage.

Destiny: His fate will seem somewhat more tragic when he is at last faced with a problem he cannot easily handle. Teutonic Knights will begin to build a fortress in his domain, and their resolve is strong enough that simple tricks will not dissuade them. Mortals will be victimized, and Adrojai will

become even more vengeful. As his anger grows, madness will possess him fully, and his war against the Christians will become brutal and violent.

Clan: Malkavian

Sire: Yislei

Nature: Jester

Demeanor: Celebrant

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1130

Apparent Age: 16

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Subterfuge 4, Leadership 1

Skills: Etiquette (Fae) 3, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Investigation 2, Law (Lithuanian Cainites) 3, Occult 4

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Dementation 3, Dominate 2, Obfuscate 3

Backgrounds: Herd 4, Resources 1, Status (High Priest) 4

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

Road: Paradox 7

Willpower: 7

NOSFERATU

ZELIOS, THE MASTER MASON

Background: Throughout Eastern Europe, Zelios has gained great renown. After being raised by wealthy merchant parents in the 11th century, Zelios turned away from pursuing a life of comfortable privilege in favor of developing a useful craft. He traveled Europe and beyond, learning the art and science of architecture. At first, his passion was more of an avocation than a vocation. His insight displayed his talent, for with a few words of advice to an architect or engineer, he could improve both the safety and aesthetics of any design. Soon he was knowledgeable enough to serve as an advisor to wealthy nobles and expert architects.

Unfortunately, Zelios's insight was a little too good. Much of his revelation came from an intuitive understanding of principles typically unrecognized by mortals. The layout and location of his best designs often took advantage of nearby ley lines, and his feel for design corresponded to elementary principles of geomancy. This in turn attracted the attention of a few enlightened Cainites who realized the potential in the young architect.

In particular, Zelios's acumen attracted the notice of a Nosferatu with an appreciation for his art. Many Nosferatu lairs were sorely in need of improvements, and the thought

of employing an architectural genius to assist the clan was irresistible. The Embrace affected Zelios in a most peculiar way. To begin with, he gained a talent for subtly influencing the designs employed by mortals, elevating their achievements from mere competency to brilliance. With eternity set before him, Zelios expanded his travels to learn from the greatest architectural artists of the age.

Through his influence, a great many castles have been built, and a great many have been drastically improved. Zelios has traveled all over Europe, building fortresses for Cainites whose wealth or whims appealed to him. Moreover, Zelios specializes in constructing hidden rooms, allowing Cainites to remain in torpor by day and avoid the few places frequented by mortals at night. This gives him unexpected advantages over powerful Cainites. He is always aware of weaknesses, secret passages and hidden places, ones of which even the castles' owners remain oblivious.

For the last few decades, he has been traveling throughout Eastern Europe, undertaking several projects in Hungary and Transylvania. There is seemingly never enough time to fully realize his passion for creation, yet Zelios is indefatigable in his efforts. Slowly, the walls of the greatest Transylvanian castles rise.

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

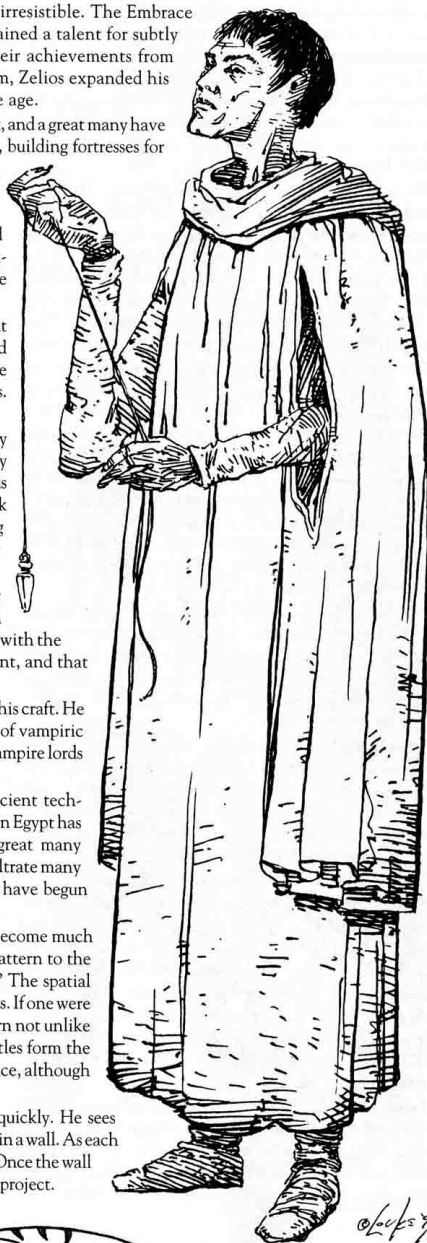
Roleplaying Hints: Scrutinize everyone as if searching for structural flaws. You are polite, yet distracted, and project an air of unworldliness. When necessary, however, you can barter with the best of Cainites. Your fellow vampires have little that you want, and that makes you doubly dangerous.

Haven: Zelios is always studying, perfecting and critiquing his craft. He has no shortage of castles to visit. He is welcome in the homes of vampiric nobility throughout the East, for his fame precedes him. Many vampire lords are eager to hear his critiques of their local defenses.

Secrets: Recently, he has become interested in more ancient techniques of manufacture. A recent trip to the Temple of Solomon in Egypt has given him many ideas. The Setites have also uncovered a great many insights, such as the usefulness of a genius who knows how to infiltrate many of the great castles of Europe. A few spies of the Sand-Snakes have begun plotting to enlist him in their schemes.

Over the last few decades, Zelios's personal projects have become much more elaborate. Though no one has noticed as yet, there is a pattern to the location of the last seven castles on which he has "consulted." The spatial relationships between the castles correspond to a series of ley lines. If one were to join these ley lines and divert their energies, a complex pattern not unlike that of a pattern of warding would be formed. Five of these castles form the points of a pentagram. Zelios is unaware of this greater significance, although his insight is always growing.

Influence: Zelios has a habit of gathering influence very quickly. He sees building organizations of mortals as similar to the placing of bricks in a wall. As each brick falls into place, the construction becomes more impressive. Once the wall is built, he admires his handiwork before proceeding to his next project.



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Destiny: By the year 1450, Clan Nosferatu will have a keen interest in the potential of several secret societies, but they will have to compete with other supernatural factions to gain control. Zelios will try to make a pact with the Setites to gain an edge, though the pact will turn against him. He will also have an awakening of sorts, as he begins to realize the greater significance of what he is building. Has he enacted his scheme of his own free will, or has some greater power guided his hand? Finding the answer will not be easy for him. Eventually, he will leave Europe for the New World, becoming a powerful Camarilla primogen counselor and a respected elder of his clan.

Clan: Nosferatu

Sire: Hannibal

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Innovator

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1020

Apparent Age: early 30s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

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

Skills: Crafts (Architecture) 6, Stealth 3

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

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

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

Road: Humanity 6

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

Willpower: 6

JOSEF ZVI, DEFENDER OF THE GHETTO OF PRAGUE

Background: The son of a rabbi, Josef devoted his early life to study. Spurred on by the sporadic violence against his people, however, Josef also began training himself to fight. Soon after Josef reached the age of manhood (12), his father became ill and died. Josef's dreams of becoming a noted scholar died with him. The young man apprenticed himself to the kosher butcher in the Jewish ghetto, seeking to earn enough money to support his aging mother.

By his journeyman year, Josef had grown into a tall, strapping youth. His love of learning was still a great part of him; he met with the scholars who taught at the university, and they provided him with lessons for him to absorb at night before he slept. Many mothers of eligible daughters consulted matchmakers regarding Josef as a potential husband. As an aspiring rabbi, he was an attractive prospect.

That changed the night a group of Christians rampaged through the ghetto, beating and killing the Jews they found on the streets. Josef, caught returning from a session with one of his teachers, was savagely beaten and kicked. Half of Josef's head was crushed inward, his nose was flattened against his right cheek, and part of his jaw



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was torn away. His hands were crushed beneath his assailants' boots, and his spine was almost broken. When he finally lost consciousness, the Christian gang turned elsewhere for more sport, leaving the dying boy in a darkened alleyway.

Josef's sire found him raggedly breathing his last. He asked Josef if he wanted revenge, but the boy managed to whisper "no" through his broken teeth. "Would you defend others from such, then?" the stranger asked, and felt Josef squeeze his hand. Quickly, he embraced Josef and took him to his lair beneath the Jewish Cemetery. When Josef awoke, he was a Cainite, his looks and body forever twisted into the form of his "death." His sire captured two of the men who had beaten Josef, and they became the neonate's first meal.

Taught what he needed to know about Cainite existence, Josef began to hunt on his own and took an interest in defending the ghetto from further incursions. When Josef became self-sufficient, his sire moved on, wishing to investigate rumors of persecution against Jews further to the East.

Though nodding to the Prince of Prague's title, Josef has gained status among Prague's Cainites because of his insistence on his own territory. The secretive and solitary Nosferatu does not like other Cainites to enter the Jewish Quarter. Those doing so face either his wrath or Rabbi ben Judah's golem (see Chapter Three). Josef personally protects the rabbi, for whom he has the greatest respect. If Jews are mistreated and Josef hears of it, he visits the perpetrators the next night, exacting upon them the same treatment they inflicted on their victims. If such folk also seem a little more pale and weak than usual, who notices?

Sadly, Josef himself is the cause of some of this mistreatment. His Embrace cursed him with an overwhelming desire for the blood of children, and he feeds almost exclusively from the Christian and pagan youth of Prague. In some cases, the Nosferatu's thirst has led him to kill his prey when he feeds too deeply. In a few instances, Josef has grown careless, and certain evidence has linked the murderer to the Jewish ghetto. Many people in Prague now believe that the ghetto's Jews murder Christian children, drinking their blood or using it in unholy rites. As others interact with them, the story spreads further, taking hold as a popular myth concerning the Jews. Though Josef bitterly regrets the death of children, he cannot stop himself from feeding from them.

Image: Josef is of medium height and build. His head is lopsided, crushed in on the left side, and part of his jaw is missing, revealing rotten teeth on the right side. His nose is little more than a flattened blob, and his whole body is bent forward and twisted. Josef's skin hangs loosely on his frame and has a peculiar yellow-gray coloration with splotches of brown on it. Ironically, his hair remains dark and wavy and his eyes are a translucent green. He prefers to wear long cloaks and hoods that conceal as much of him as possible.

Roleplaying Hints: You are the avenger. As the hope for your people's survival in the face of Christian persecution, you are charged with protecting the ghetto and exacting punish-

ment on those who harm your charges. Despite your noble intentions, however, you are addicted to the blood of Christian children. You must satisfy that thirst, even though you realize that Christians are beginning to blame the Jews for your depredations. Somehow, you must find a way to stop yourself. Until you do, you comfort yourself by rationalizing that the ones you kill will not grow up to victimize your people.

Haven: Josef's haven is beneath the Jewish Cemetery in an unmarked, forgotten grave.

Secrets: Josef knows that Rabbi ben Judah is the creator of the golem that patrols the Jewish Quarter. He also knows how to destroy the golem. He has moved unseen through the lower reaches of Vysehrad and knows that a Methuselah sleeps somewhere within the cave system. Furthermore, he has spent much time seeking out and memorizing the secret passages in Prague Castle.

Influence: Josef has great influence in the ghetto and among the university teachers, though most of this influence is wielded through correspondence. He spends many hours writing long letters (as if from a scholar living elsewhere) to teachers, letters in which he postulates theories and discusses the Torah, the Kabbalah and other esoteric knowledge.

Destiny: Rudolf Brandl tires of Josef's isolationist stance, ordering the Nosferatu to open the ghetto and allow Brandl's allies to feed there. Josef refuses. Brandl sends a chosen group of ghouls to rout Josef from his hiding place during the day, but they arrive to find Josef gone. That evening Josef attacks Brandl in his chambers in Prague Castle, having gained entry through the secret passageways the Nosferatu long ago memorized. Killing Brandl, he reaches an accommodation with the Premysls and becomes the new Prince of Prague. He falls to Nazi flamethrowers as a member of a local resistance group in the late 1930s.

Clan: Nosferatu

Sire: Yehuda

Nature: Defender

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1160

Apparent Age: 18

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

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

Intimidation 2, Larceny 1, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Crafts 2, Etiquette 1, Herbalism 1, Melee 3, Stealth 3

Knowledge: Academics 4, Investigation 2, Law 1, Linguistics (Hebrew, Greek) 2, Medicine 1, Occult 2

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Obfuscate 3, Potence 3

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Resources 1, Status 3

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 1, Courage 4

Road: Humanity 5

Willpower: 5

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

GUTKA , THE SALT QUEEN

Background: Deep within the bowels of the Wieliczka salt mines near the city of Krakow, the ancient Nosferatu who calls herself "Gutka" (the Good) has carved out her own domain, unbeknownst to Krakow's Cainites. Although Razkoljna believes herself to be the oldest Cainite in Malopolska, she is wrong; Gutka counts her age in millennia rather than in centuries.

Although she barely remembers her life before the Embrace, Gutka does retain the memory of her transformation. She had served her tribe as priestess of the Dark Goddess all her life. Near its end, her body wrinkled with age and crippled by arthritis, Gutka wandered into the forest on a moonless night. As she prayed to the Dark Goddess for release from her body's constant torment, she heard a rustling in the underbrush. Before she knew what was happening, she found herself face to face with the Eternal Crone. Prostrating herself to the force she had served all her life, she waited joyously for death.

Instead, she received the Embrace. The ensuing torture of her further disfigurement affected her mind, convincing her that she had become an avatar of the goddess. From that time on, the earliest people to inhabit the area which would become Lesser Poland worshiped her as an earth goddess, paying tribute to her in blood and salt.

Gutka fell into torpor long ago, before the rise of villages on Poland's plains. In the ninth century, the noise of humanity woke her and she became aware of the founding of a city atop Wawel Hill (though to her it had no name). Secure in the salt caverns which had once housed sacrifices to her, she roused herself and began to explore the strange new environs. Sensing the presence of a kindred spirit who dwelt within a cave at the foot of Wawel Hill, Gutka proceeded with caution, reluctant to announce her arrival until she had acquired the knowledge she needed to ensure her survival. Patiently, she delved through the salty undercrust of the earth, tunneling her way into the heart of Krakow. From her secret passageway, she has explored the city to her heart's content, an invisible presence among both Cainites and mortals.

Although she is aware of what is going on within Krakow, Gutka has chosen to remain hidden from the new Cainites. Her need for Cainite blood makes this preference a necessity. The presence of mining operations in the caverns and tunnels above her provides her with the means to sustain herself. When she feels the need to feed, Gutka abducts and Embraces one of the miners, who enjoys his unlife only long enough to sate her hunger. A large chamber in Gutka's salt crystal "palace," filled with the preserved bodies of her victims, serves as a shrine to her murdered childer.

Occasionally, Gutka still journeys to Krakow through her secret tunnel. Once in Krakow, she wanders the streets unseen, listening to all that goes on among Krakow's immortals. She is aware of every Cainite plot and cares nothing for any of them.

Image: Gutka's form is a grotesque parody of her mortal self. Her wizened, stooped body, twisted by arthritis and covered with thousands of wrinkles, is a sickly greenish-gray. A few strands of long, white hair hang from her scalp. Although her eyes are rheumy, she retains her keen eyesight. Long centuries of torpor within the salt caverns have left her permanently encrusted with salt crystals.



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Roleplaying Hints: As an earthly incarnation of the Crone, the Goddess who oversees the passage from life to death, you take sacrifices of blood and salt when it pleases you. The spirits of your dead "children" surround you, keeping you company in your isolation. You desire nothing more than what you have, but you know that anything you truly want is yours for the taking.

Haven: The lowest levels of the Wieliczka salt mines serve as Gutka's haven.

Secrets: Gutka knows everything of any importance that takes place within a 10-mile radius of Krakow.

Influence: Despite her incredible age and considerable power, Gutka exercises little real influence. Should she choose, however, she could control Krakow's Cainites and mortals with ease.

Destiny: Gutka rules her salt kingdom until the 16th century, when she grows weary of the continued spread of civilization. She abandons her beloved realm and travels to Russia, where she disappears from recorded history.

Clan: Nosferatu

Sire: Baba Yaga

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Survivor

Generation: 5th

Embrace: 2000 B.C.

Apparent Age: 70

Physical: Strength 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 8

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 5, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 5, Brawl 6, Dodge 4, Intimidation 6, Leadership 1

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Etiquette 1, Herbalism 3, Melee 5, Stealth 4, Survival 4

Knowledge: Hearth Wisdom 3, History (Poland) 4, Investigation 2, Linguistics (Slavonic) 1, Medicine 2, Occult 4

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

Backgrounds: Herd 5

Virtues: Conscience 0, Self-Control 4, Courage 5

Road: Humanity 1

Willpower: 9

MARUSCA, WILD WOMAN OF HERMANSTADT

Background: Many Transylvanian cities of this time are large enough to support a mere four or five Cainites. The fortunate few who rule them often consider huge tracts of land to be their domain, becoming troubled by any undead who pass through without their knowledge. This is not a problem for Marusca, the elder who makes the woods outside Hermanstadt her home. Packs of wolves patrol her domain and report to her in the dark forests.

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In the youth of her mortal life, Marusca was raised near a glen on the outskirts of Hermanstadt town. Her mother was well versed in the legends of the Old Country, and her hearth wisdom included an extensive knowledge of herbary and other forms of healing. Marusca was often asked to gather plants for her mother's work.

By her 16th year, Marusca's village had undergone several changes. A monastery was being built not far from the city, and Christian missionaries held simple services in a stone church that had fallen into disrepair. The townsfolk were wary, however; they knew that the Catholic services performed were a cultural extension of the Western Hungarians. Openly, they participated in some of the services; secretly, many continued to hold their traditional beliefs.

When the power of the local Szekler overlord grew stronger, the importance of religious devotion was emphasized. Practicing as a devout Catholic was taken as a sign of accepting the Szekler rule, and those who defied the Western ways received a little less courtesy when the dues were collected for the lord of the town. Within a few years, such recalcitrants also suffered harassment and abuse. Some were even driven to the brink of poverty through heavy taxes allegedly levied "for their own protection." Marusca's mother in particular was held in great disfavor, as she never attended the local services. The monks began to whisper of her "pagan" background. She never suffered, however; so long as the woods were nearby, she had all she needed.

Marusca was never afraid of the woods, despite the fact that the Westerners regarded them with apprehension. The howling of the wolves at the edge of town comforted her, and she often sneaked into the woods to observe their society. She envied them. The alpha of a pack asserted his dominance, but did not exploit his lessers. He took the greatest share of the kill, but his packmates never starved. She secretly gave names to the wolves of the forest, and she learned much from them.

One night, while she was gathering herbs, Marusca saw smoke rising from the edge of town. Hurrying back, she caught a glimpse of flames. Her home was burning, and she ran into the house to see if her mother was there. Though she had no proof of misdoings, she came to the conclusion that the fire was no accident. Running to the front steps of the church, she howled for justice.

She found neither justice nor pity. Disgusted at this turn of events, she resolved to leave her village and seek a place where her skills would be appreciated. She decided to follow an old road to the east, and for many leagues she tried to bury the pain of her loss by wandering ever onward. Soon, in the distance, Marusca spied a great, unfinished stone castle standing high on a hill. While the berries she found along the way were enough to sustain her, albeit marginally, she considered visiting the terrible castle. The howling of the wolves late at night — so different from their calls during daylight — convinced her of the need for safer shelter.

Famished from hunger, she approached the fortress. This outpost was a project undertaken by Zelios, the Master Mason of Clan Nosferatu, on behalf of the Arpad Ventrue. The construction was going poorly. While the location was considered ideal, wolves were beginning to gather around the encampments of the workers. Already, three had been killed by marauding lupines, and two had been wounded. Upon arriving at the encampment, Marusca saw that the workers were poorly equipped to deal with the men's injuries, and she began to tend to them. Watching from the shadows, Zelios was touched by Marusca's kindness. Through his subtle influence, he found a home for her among the workers and found employment for her as a churgeon.

Over the next few months, construction continued, but the threat of the wolves did not end. Traps, patrols, fires — no precautions could hold them at bay. It was as if the woods themselves were taking revenge.

In fact, they were. A Tzimisce from another knezate knew the danger this castle presented, and a Gangrel in his service was harrying the mortal workers.

Late one night, Marusca was searching for supplies in the woods when she realized she had traveled too far. She could hear the wolves surrounding her, but she could also see something else. A feral creature ran with the pack, an unnatural presence in their midst. Fearful of being discovered, the Gangrel commanded the wolves to attack this innocent witness. Marusca, violently mauled, stumbling and bleeding, ran for the encampment. From the parapets, Zelios watched her escape, and he crawled down the side of the castle to save her. In the shadow of Castle Hermanstadt, he rescued her from death by accepting her into the ranks of the undead.

The disfigurement the wolves had inflicted on her was exaggerated by the Embrace. At first Marusca was horrified by the change, but the threat of the Gangrel in the woods distracted her from her pain. With her newly found abilities, she stalked the Gangrel as he had stalked her. As she did so, she saw the forest through the eyes of a vampire. Once again, she called to the wolves, and this time, they answered. Her communion with the woods was now stronger than ever before. While the Gangrel commanded the lupines through fear, they found Marusca's leadership far more sympathetic.

For a fortnight, a terrible war was waged by moonlight. Marusca summoned up packs of wolves to patrol around the castle, and the packs she had watched near her mother's home answered her call. The Gangrel commanded an army of lupines as well, and the servants of Zelios were terrified by their battle cries. The conflict was a lengthy one, but Marusca eventually turned the wolves against their cruel master.

When at last the castle was complete, Zelios instructed Marusca in the location of the hidden passageways and chambers. The fortress had been commissioned for a Hungarian Ventrue, and a Szekler overlord was already traveling to Hermanstadt, but Zelios thought of Marusca as a much wiser caretaker. Over the past weeks, the castle had developed a series of legends, and when the Szekler lord was mauled to death by beasts in the middle of the night, the castle's reputation was at last assured.

Over the next 10 years, Marusca grew familiar with both the town of Hermanstadt and the woods surrounding it. When the Western Ventrue tried to establish the town as the center of a domain, they had no choice but to ally with Marusca. These lands and this town are hers, and the wolves are as vigilant as ever in protecting it.



Image: A wild woman of the woods, Marusca wanders the deep forests wearing a black robe that conceals her violently deformed body. What she lacks in appearance, she more than makes up for in pride among her own kind.

Roleplaying Hints: Direct confrontation is not your way of dealing with enemies. You prefer to stalk in dimly lit places and hide your face. When confronted, you take a different facade each time. Though secure in your self-esteem, you see little reason to flaunt it.

Haven: Her current haven is a brothel in Hermanstadt. She torments herself by listening to the sounds of pleasure she can never attain. Other tasks must become her pleasure.

Secrets: As the concerns of her domain increasingly trouble her, she has begun to spend more free time in her lupine form (through the use of Protean). While this was once a way to escape her human concerns, it has since become an excuse to unleash her bestial desires. As the moon waxes toward full, she finds it harder to remember her activities among the wolves. Some evenings, she awakens deep within the soil, and retains no memory of the previous night. Oddly enough, while gathering herbs, she has discovered that she has a curious aversion to wolfsbane. She is reluctant to tell anyone of this strange behavior, and so it remains her darkest secret.

There are a few other facts Marusca does not realize. Her village was burned not by the Szeklers, but by a Gangrel acting on Arnulf's behalf — namely Tiberiu, who had begun his harassment of the city. He has never confessed this for fear of retribution. The Gangrel she destroyed was a grandchild of Arnulf, one who was acting according to his wishes. This has earned her Arnulf's enmity. And the Tzimisce who originally wanted to destroy Castle Hermanstadt was none other than Radu, acting on behalf of Vladimir Rustovitch. This secret has also remained buried for some time.

Influence: It is no secret that Marusca commands hundreds of wolves. It is also known that when a problem perplexes her, she will shift into the shape of a black wolf and roam through her lands. Few know the privileges she takes as an alpha female. Human suitors hold no interest for her. She may seduce any male in her pack, and she adds a certain human inventiveness to these liaisons. As she cannot consummate these relationships in the conventional way, exsanguination has to suffice.

Destiny: Hermanstadt will one day become the capital of Transylvania. When its Diet is moved to Cluj, Marusca and her swiftest pack will travel to Cluj-Napoca, where she will hold greater power. Collectively, they will oppose the Saxon Cainites who attempt to seize power with the assistance of the Hungarians. While Nova will rule the council with an iron fist, the Transylvanian Cainites will secretly recognize Marusca as a fellow conspirator.

Clan: Nosferatu

Sire: Zelios

Generation: 8th

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Autocrat

Embrace: 1110

Apparent Age: late 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

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

Skills: Animal Ken 5, Herbalism 4, Stealth 4, Survival 4

Knowledge: Hearth Wisdom 3, Investigation 3, Linguistics 2, Medicine 4, Seneschal 3

Disciplines: Animalism 4, Auspex 4, Obfuscate 3, Protean 5

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Resources 3, Status 2

Virtues: Conviction 3, Instinct 4, Courage 4

Road: Beast 8

Willpower: 8

RUXANDRA, DEVIOUS CONSPIRATOR

Background: Ruxandra began working in her father's tavern at the age of 15. Though her father had taught her the value of hard work, he was rarely thankful for what she did. Ruxandra's mother had been a servant to none other than Nova Arpad, the local overlord. She died mysteriously while serving the Arpads, and no explanation was ever given. Despair destroyed her father's spirit, and after the death of her mother, Ruxandra felt abandoned and unloved.

Nonetheless, she was the recipient of other interest. Working in the tavern, she knew how often the gaze of drunken old men lingered over her body. At first she was ashamed, but soon she became amused by how she could use this gift to her advantage. As the most beautiful girl in her village, she entertained many young suitors and learned to stir the lust of many old men.

Another frequent visitor to the inn, Marusca of Clan Nosferatu, also learned of her talents. Many a time, Marusca would enter the inn in disguise. Through her mastery of Obfuscate, she would always disguise herself as a traveler in search of stories and information. Each time, the facade would be different, but these travelers were, of course, always men. Ruxandra sensed something strange about these visitors. Their immunity to her charm piqued her interest.

This interest intensified when Ruxandra gained the ability to sense intuitively when Marusca entered her inn. On these occasions, she considered herself faced with a challenge. A few well-chosen words and a few gentle touches allowed her to gauge the stranger's reactions. The more often Marusca visited, the more often Ruxandra tested her. Marusca was intrigued. Ruxandra knew she was being watched, and she came to consider her visitor as a supernatural force. Lacking a savior in the mortal world, she fervently hoped this unseen presence could act as her guardian angel.



Within a few months, Ruxandra's charm and beauty impressed another visitor to the tavern. Olithio Szantovich was a lackey to Nova Arpad, one with an eye for beautiful women. He offered her a position in the Arpad household, one that would bring her better wages than what she received in the inn. Ruxandra was curious, for she had always wondered about the circumstances of her mother's disappearance. Willingly, she left her father to work in Nova's household.

What she experienced scarred her for life and beyond. Within the private chambers of the Arpad household, the revenant slave lord conditioned Ruxandra to submit fully to her master. Through careful Domination, her memories of these nights were eradicated from her mind, but the scars and bruises were not so easy to hide. She had inherited her mother's beauty, and soon, she reasoned, she would inherit her mother's fate.

No mortal could fully learn what Ruxandra experienced, but a few Cainites were aware of the threat that Nova's household posed. Marusca had not forgotten that beautiful maiden in the inn. On moonlit nights, she would often lurk around the estate, not only to learn more about the Arpad overlord, but also to discover Ruxandra's fate. When at last she entered Ruxandra's chambers, careful use of her powers of Auspex assisted her in unlocking Ruxandra's terrible memories. The Nosferatu was consumed with rage.

Intent on freeing the young woman from servitude, Marusca abducted and Embraced the girl. To Marusca, Ruxandra's liberation was a blessing. To Ruxandra, the hideous transformation she underwent was a curse. Abuse had destroyed her self-esteem, psychic torment had destroyed her mind, and the Embrace of her Nosferatu guardian angel had destroyed her beauty. There were only two condolences from her Dark Gift: the ability to Obfuscate and the opportunity for revenge.

The more horrified she grew from her disfigurement, the more she studied various tactics of manipulation. She learned methods of seduction and all the different stratagems involved. Over time, memories of her abuse began to resurface, and the Beast within her harnessed that pain.

Once her craft at impersonation was well developed, she began to study the Cainite she would eventually replace: Nova Arpad. She now seeks vengeance, not only for what she has suffered, but also for what happened to her mother. Ruxandra has now taken Nova's place, and the Ventrue are none the wiser.

Image: Ruxandra is never truly what she seems. Each female guise she adopts is...distinctive...in one way or another. Taking on a form that is plain or unattractive is very hard for her. Most of her time is spent in the form of Nova.

Roleplaying Hints: Become whatever viewers want you to be. Right now, they want Nova, so you adopt her mannerisms to the hilt. When alone with prey, indulge your pent-up need for playfulness. When alone with Nova, indulge your pent-up need for revenge.

Haven: She sleeps on silken sheets in Nova's estate, enjoying the luxury Nova once possessed. Her days are still tormented, however, by dreams of her suffering. She also dreams elaborate fantasies of what she could have accomplished with the young men of the village had she not been robbed of her beauty.

Secrets: Ruxandra cannot escape her weakness for taverns. Now that the first stage of her revenge has brought some success to her suffering, she dreams of exploiting the men of the inn where she once worked. Her favorite method of hunting is seducing a man and discarding him as an empty vessel after she has slaked her lust in a particularly violent manner. She was Embraced as a virgin, and that fact, coupled with Olithio's attentions, has given her a very distorted view of how physical lust should be satisfied. Her careless method of feeding may be her undoing.

Influence: In her other life as a predator, she commands only one or two mortals at a time. Her suitors are most ardent. She also wishes to secure enough influence to cover up her careless hobby. As Nova, she does not possess the talent to exploit fully the power of the overlord; instead, Marusca acts behind the scenes to rule the domain.

Destiny: After Nova's liberation, Ruxandra will not disclose her fellow conspirators, but will be formally declared as the object of one of Nova's Blood Hunts. This will make her unlife even more exciting.

Clan: Nosferatu

Sire: Marusca

Nature: Celebrant

Demeanor: Autocrat

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1175

Apparent Age: 17

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Acting 5, Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Larceny 3, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Herbalism 2, Melee 3, Stealth 3, Survival 2

Knowledge: Hearth Wisdom 2, Investigation 3, Occult 2

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Auspex 2, Obfuscate 3

Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Herd 2, Influence 3, Mentor 3, Resources 3, Status 1

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

Road: Humanity 4

Willpower: 8

RAVNOS

VASSILY TALTO, DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR AND SPYMASTER

Background: In the 12th century, most Rom were content to live in Asia Minor. Though they had wandered far from their homelands, their curse had not yet driven them to the tumultuous lands of Europe. Only a few families were so consumed by wanderlust that they yearned to see the fabled spires of Byzantium. The Taltos was one such Gypsy family. In 1172, the *kumpania* of Vassily Taltos arrived at the gates of Constantinople.

Vassily was an outsider to Byzantine society, mistrusted and reviled. His kind were not welcome in the city, and soon the authorities found pretexts to imprison members of his family. The young man sought allies who would assist him in liberating his kin. He found them. The Ravnos of the West eagerly awaited the day when their mortal children would be able to roam throughout Europe. To free his *kumpania*, Vassily drank the vitae of a Ravnos elder and swore his loyalty.

Although half his *kumpania* was killed by mortal "justice," the remainder were liberated by Cainites. They turned back toward their homelands, but Vassily's curiosity ran unabated. Succumbing to the Embrace, he began a journey to seek his fortune. Unlike his elders, however, he chose a different route. Instead of the Road of Paradox, he chose the Road of Humanity.

Vassily learned to play the game of politics, ensuring his survival by telling just the right lies to both sides in any struggle. He soon served as advisor to several Ventrue rulers of the Western Balkans, all the while



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sending information to his clanmates in the East. His glib tongue assisted him in negotiating peace between the rampaging Gangrel, the proud Brujah and the elitist Ventruue. By 1180, he hovered around the undead court of Bulgaria. By 1190, he took up residence near the court of the Hungarian king.

There is a method to Vassily's designs. By gathering information about the West, he anticipates the day when his people will spread across the Balkans. Through diplomacy, he has earned a place of respect as an expert negotiator. Moreover, he has slowly developed a network of spies and informers. Through his occult discipline and his cunning, he finds ingenious methods of motivating them.

It is only a matter of time until he betrays his Ventruue masters or is in turn betrayed. In the year 1197, he is trying to make peace between East and West, and his latest goal is to end hostilities between the Ventruue and Tzimisce. He is gathering a coterie to travel across the Voivodate of Transylvania, in hopes of opening negotiations with Radu, the Prince of the Domain of Bistritz; Noriz, the tyrannical overlord of Moldavia; and Yorak, the godlike Tzimisce Ancient.

Vassily feels that he can speak for the Gypsies as a whole, but his idealism is not always shared by others. In fact, his willingness to speak with princes and other vampire lords has gained him mistrust among many of his own kind. Delizbieta of the Dark Eyes, companion to the Ravnos Izydor Torenu, is one such enemy. Delizbieta and Izydor reside in the city of Buda-Pest, where Delizbieta works as a fortuneteller, and would much rather exploit the weaknesses of the city's rulers than attempt to strengthen them. This is further complicated by a rivalry between their two families. The Taltos family and the Torenu are old enemies; both Delizbieta and Izydor consider Vassily a traitor of the worst kind. The mortal members of their respective *kumpaniyi* scheme against each other incessantly.

In fact, Vassily's motivations are far from altruistic. The fact that his position as an advisor to princes brings him personal wealth and privilege amuses him greatly. He is rewarded well for what he does, and he considers this his just reward for what he has done for others. Despite this, Vassily is still idealistic enough to believe that there is a place for the Rom in the Kingdom of Hungary. His news to the Ravnos of Byzantium is encouraging, and perhaps within a few centuries, they may be able to enjoy...or suffer...the results of Vassily's negotiations, depending on how well he succeeds.

Image: Vassily is a staunch individualist who refuses to abandon his Gypsy heritage. This makes him a complete outsider in Western society. His clothes are always gaudy, but he does not openly display wealth. His words are always carefully chosen, but there is laughter in his eyes.

Roleplaying Hints: Treat everyone as a potential friend; consider everyone as a potential enemy. Though others may see you as a coward, you know the value of your infrequent reports to the Ravnos elders. The scam pays off every night you feed well and sleep safely.

Haven: When advising in Western Hungary, Vassily retreats to a haven not far from the markets of Buda-Pest. Each dawn, his mortal entourage buries him in the basement of a local house of prostitution. Vassily's talent at Auspex allows him to glean information from the troubled potential pawns who visit there.

Secrets: Though he is a trusted member of the Ravnos, his reputation is allowing a few members of his clan to make great profits in the East. Many act as scouts and spies, freely selling information to all sides of the conflicts there. Though he himself controls a great deal of respect among those in power, he is gaining a reputation as a traitor among other members of his clan.

Influence: Vassily maintains a mortal entourage of schemers and thieves. Only a few of them are Gypsies, but all are exceptionally talented at spying. The network is not extensive, but it is slowly growing.

Destiny: In the year 1200, the Ventruue will use Vassily as a pawn in a power struggle against the Tzimisce. In return for his years of service, he will be sent to Transylvania, not as a diplomat, but as a sacrifice. Messengers have already traveled to Yorak's Cathedral of Flesh and informed him that a fresh tribute is on its way. Vassily, however, will be guileful enough to strike an alliance with Yorak. In return for allowing a few Gypsy families to live in Transylvania, Vassily will offer the Tzimisce a wealth of information about the cities of Eastern Europe. He will also be tricked into luring Dominic of Clan Brujah into the spider's web.

While Vassily is in Transylvania, many of his mortal allies in Buda-Pest will be killed. Upon his return, he will flee in grief and seek to strengthen his alliances in the East. Within 200 years, however, the relationship will sour. The Gypsies who come to Western Hungary and Transylvania will be treated as little more than slaves, and Vassily will suffer the Ravnos' blame for this turn of events.

By 1348, the descendants of the Taltos family will rejoin Vassily outside the city of Kossovo. There he will witness another horror—the depredations of the Ottoman Turks. By 1450, he will see his descendants work as slaves for the Tzimisce lords of Wallachia. Vassily's idealism will turn to failure. His anger will be passed to his child, Vanislav, and he will instruct his child to enact vengeance against the Balkan princes. In disgrace, he will thus find an opportunity for his greatest triumph.

Clan: Ravnos
Sire: Sanser
Nature: Fanatic
Demeanor: Innovator
Generation: 8th
Embrace: 1145
Apparent Age: late 20s
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

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Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 3, Alertness 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 1, Empathy 2, Larceny 4, Leadership 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 3, Melee 3, Stealth 3

Knowledge: Linguistics 3, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Politics 3

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 2, Chimerstry 3, Dominate 3, Fortitude 3, Obfuscate 3

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 5, Mentor 3, Resources 3

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

Road: Humanity 7

Willpower: 7

IZYDOR TORENU, KING OF THIEVES

Background: Learning thievery and swindling at an early age, Izydor became one of his family's chief providers by the age of 10. Always on the move and persecuted by the settled folk among whom his family passed, Izydor also managed to pick up useful fighting techniques. Throughout his youth, Izydor heard tales of his uncle, a great hero who could bamboozle the most careful miser into surrendering his money, talk a lady right out of her clothing, dance to a lively tune and steal six horses — all at the same time. Izydor swore that someday he would rival his Uncle Irendo in the wonderful things he could do.

When he was 15, Izydor joined with other children from his extended family clan, forming a *kumpania* (group of traveling companions). As they traveled, the companions learned to complement one another's skills. If one of them thought of a clever ruse to pull on a fat-pursed merchant, the others would fall in with the scheme, playing their parts to perfection. One such scheme involved stealing a nobleman's ring to give to a merchant's daughter so she might claim her illegitimate child was his. The scheme was ruined by the intervention of another group of *kumpania* from the rival Taltos family. One of Izydor's companions was caught in the act and executed. Izydor swore vengeance on the other *kumpania*'s leader, Vassily Taltos.

This was not a difficult thing to swear. A feud had existed between the two families for generations, though few could remember why. Because the younger members kept up the feud, pouring oil on the fire each generation, the feud refused to die. Now Izydor swore to uphold his family's honor and see Vassily paid back tenfold.

Izydor and his remaining companions came to Byzantium just days before Vassily and his *kumpania* arrived. Quickly discovering who held power in the city, Izydor approached the commander of the city's guard and told him of his enemy's imminent arrival. Describing Vassily and his *kumpania* as a group of thieves and assassins sent to spread chaos throughout Constantinople, Izydor convinced the commander to trump up charges against them before they could actually cause harm to anyone in the city. (The jeweled ring Izydor presented to the commander might have swayed his judgment as well.)

Having provided for his rival's downfall, the Torenu prepared to depart Constantinople, intending to head toward Kiev (which they didn't know had fallen). Before they could leave, however, Izydor was confronted by his uncle, the famous Irendo. His uncle congratulated Izydor on his cleverness and asked if he would like to enjoy an eternity in which to perfect his skills. With Izydor's heartfelt agreement (although he half-way expected some sort of trick), Irendo embraced him. Watching from the shadows, Izydor saw Vassily's entry into Constantinople — and the swift "justice" that fell on his rival's companions.

Released from his uncle's tutoring and laughing at his own cleverness, Izydor led his group from Constantinople. He would not learn for several years that Vassily did not die, but was embraced into the Ravnos clan.

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Izdyor has now traveled throughout much of Eastern Europe with his *kumpania*. Wherever the group stops, its members ply their trades as tinsmiths, horse traders and fortunetellers. Izdyor himself is a master thief who specializes in robbing folk while their attention is distracted by one of his *kumpania*. Izdyor and his family are rarities, and certainly remarkable in the area. They act as scouts for those who will one day be known as Romani or Gypsies, moving in advance of their migrating people and evaluating different areas for their suitability as new homelands.

Though Izdyor considers Vassily to have been paid back, he hates his rival fiercely still. He sneers at Taltos's attempts to prop up princes and considers Vassily a traitor to his own people. For now, Izdyor is content to move about Buda-Pest, committing robberies and keeping an eye on his old rival.

Image: Izdyor is small and slender, with flashing dark eyes, white teeth, dark skin and shoulder-length curly black hair which he wears beneath a dark silk hat. Unlike many Gypsies, he wears relatively drab clothing, seeking to avoid undue attention.

Roleplaying Hints: You are king of thieves, with a quickness and cleverness that keep anyone from catching you in the act. You are also very charming and can talk your way out of most situations if you are caught. Unlike many of your people, you possess a decided mean streak, and nothing pleases you so much as tricking an opponent into a dire fate.

Haven: A false floor beneath his *kumpania*'s wagon provides a haven for Izdyor during the day. Because it is left so obviously in the open and unguarded, Izdyor feels certain no one suspects him of resting there.

Secrets: Izdyor knows that Vassily Taltos is playing various Cainites off against one another. He is also aware that a particular Islamic merchant brings potent Eastern drugs into the bazaar in Pest. Though he does not know to whom the drugs are given, he has overheard the merchant speaking of Geza Arpad and the payment the merchant expects in return for his "special" goods. The Ravnos has seen the "god" Havnor and knows that it is actually a Cainite masquerading as a god.

Influence: The main influence Izdyor exerts over mortals comes through his companion, Delizbieta. If Izdyor manages to steal something of significance from important people in Buda-Pest, he has Delizbieta offer to "find" it for them — at a price. Sometimes the price is a favor rather than money.

Destiny: Izdyor manages to escape serious harm until the mid-14th century, when he leads a number of his people (now called Gypsies) to the beautiful land of Transylvania. Once there, half the Romani tribes are enslaved and brutalized. The others become wanderers reviled throughout Europe. Despised by his own people for his part in bringing them to this land of sorrow, Izdyor Embraces Delizbieta, thus destroying her magick, then leaps to his death in a Samhain bonfire.

Clan: Ravnos

Sire: Irendo

Nature: Rogue

Demeanor: Jester

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1145

Apparent Age: 20

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

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

Empathy 1, Guile 3, Larceny 5, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 1, Herbalism 1, Melee 3,

Music 2, Ride 2, Stealth 4, Survival 1

Knowledge: Hearth Wisdom 2, Investigation 1, Linguistics

(Greek, Hungarian) 2, Navigation 2, Occult 1

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Celerity 2, Chimerstry 4, Fortitude 2

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 2, Resources 2, Mentor 3

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

Road: Paradox 6

Willpower: 6

TOREADOR ARIANNE, INSTIGATOR OF TRAGIC ROMANCE

Background: A woman of distinction, Arianne was always fascinated with the hidden side of courtly life. At the turn of the century, the Arpads wanted to emulate the culture of the Westerners, but still did not fully understand it. Through careful diplomacy, Arianne gained the opportunity to travel to the West and learn the ways of the Parisian courts. What she saw changed her forever.

Arianne was turned in the year 1120 in Paris by an unliving lover. Though she fell madly in love, her sire saw her as a mere amusement. He began to school her in the ways of courtly love, educating her in its intricacies. From there, the couple critiqued the failings of many mortal romances, fascinated by the mysteries of the heart. When her sire rejected her for a mortal who had engaged his interest, she sought revenge. At first she acted jealous, playing fully into the rules of courtly love. Then she became curiously complacent and even offered to arrange a secret tryst between her sire and his lover to show her respect.

One evening, her sire's beautiful young mortal lover awaited him in an elegant bedroom. The elder stormed the room to take his lover, body and soul. As he savored the mortal's blood, he found it heady and intoxicating. But, just as ardor burned in his breast, the young woman's blood burned

on his lips. The poisons Arianne had steeped in the mortal's blood infected his bloodstream, and he fell into a tortuously painful torpor. Love and death, after all, are often intertwined.

No one in the court of Paris suspected Arianne's involvement in the poisoning of the two lovers. She had learned two of the most important rules of courtly love: "jealously increases love" and "love revealed is love diminished." Her jealousy brought her great passion, and no one discovered her love's consummation. Her sire's unsolved murder was the bleak resolution of a tragic romance, one that was never destroyed by the revelation of the truth.

Returning to the Kingdom of Hungary, Arianne quickly became an important addition to the Hungarian Cainites. She is quite willing to travel, and she regularly visits the courts of Buda-Pest and Esztergom. As an expert on Western culture and fashion, she helps to raise the standards of Hungary, bringing the court to a cultural par with the West.

She has retained one vice: an amusement with courtly love. She has taught the 22 rules of this mortal enterprise to many members of the nobility, including mortals, revenants and Cainites. When she plays this game, however, she does so with a vicious edge. The rules are always twisted to her advantage. The loss of her first love forces her to see flaws in any budding romance, and driving such alliances to destruction fulfills her. Thus is her taste for romance consummated. As the Romans have said, all is fair in love and war.

As time has passed, Arianne's courtly love has become far from fair. Her jaded sensibilities have turned her so-called love into bestial depredation. As she falls further from noble ideas of romance, her suitors are made to suffer more. A lover eats little, sleeps little and, when Arianne is involved, suffers greatly. The greater the love, she reasons, the greater the suffering. Her latest tryst involves playing two revenants of the Szantovich family against each other. She has been disappearing for months at a time to continue her cruel game, and both she and her lovers are learning more and more each night they play. Through her cunning and intellect, Arianne is certain that love will conquer all. If love won't, she will.

Image: Innocent blue eyes light up Arianne's face. Her white skin adds to the image of fragility. Long dark tresses and a demure demeanor add to the gesture. When her cruelty shows, however, she is even more compelling. Arianne may appear gentle, but she is the consummate "predator who attacks through sudden surrenders."

Roleplaying Hints: Be gentle, gracious, demure and solicitous, particularly when commiserating with the lovelorn. Hang on their every word, here and there driving in an artfully chosen verbal dagger disguised as sympathy.

Haven: Arianne often resides in her current lover's home; she also maintains several luxurious havens in Buda-Pest and Esztergom.

Secrets: Bulscu of Clan Ventrue repulses her. By her reasoning, he knows the crude eroticism of physical degeneration but cares not a whit for love. She also knows about the activities of Roland, a Ventrue lackey who has gained a position of authority by delivering mortal slaves to slake Bulscu's undying lust. She dares not voice her disgust at this practice, as it may turn the Arpad Ventrue against her, but she anxiously awaits an opportunity to strike against Bulscu and Roland. She is paying handsomely to gather information on the two of them, and any scheme to destroy them would attract her interest.

Influence: Her influence extends not only through the court of the unliving, but through the mortal kingdoms as well. She can easily raise or lower the reputation of a promising manipulator with but a few well-placed rumors.

Destiny: The Szantoviches will learn a great deal from her tutelage. Her schemes against Bulscu will enjoy only modest success, but her infamy and rejection from her own clan will one night make her one of the first Toreador *antitribu*.

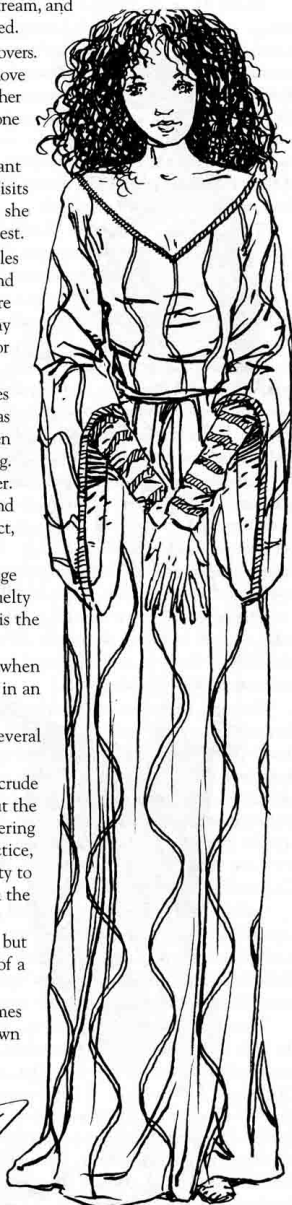
Clan: Toreador

Sire: Oliver

Nature: Loner

Demeanor: Romantic

Generation: 7th



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Embrace: 1120

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 4, Alertness 4, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Larceny 2, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Crafts 3, Etiquette 3, Herbalism 3, Melee 2, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Academics 3, Investigation 3, Medicine 2, Politics 2

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 2, Dominate 4, Presence 4

Background: Contacts 2, Influence 3, Resources 4, Status 2

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 2, Courage 4

Road: Humanity 3

Willpower: 8

VENTRUE

BULSCU, SYBARITIC MASTERMIND

Background: Bulscu is revered by some for his heroism and reviled by others for his cowardice. As the founder of the Magyar Ventrue, he has built a family of kingmakers. In his early days overseeing Hungary, he ensured that his domain would enjoy independence from the Ventrue who created him. Despite this, he has slowly been ensnared by others.

In his mortal life, the Man of Blood was a charismatic chieftain who rallied Hungarian warriors against their enemies to the north. His appetite for life was fierce, but after he learned of the existence of the undead, his taste for vitae became even fiercer. In a communion with the unliving, he knelt before the Brujah who instructed him. In reverence, he drank of their blood and was intoxicated by the strength it brought him. Bulscu realized the power these creatures could give him, and he religiously submitted to them. He was chosen to receive the honor of serving Dominic, a Brujah held in great esteem for his role in the clan's revenge against the Ventrue.

Beyond the veil of sleep, though, another Cainite called to the depths of his mind. Bulscu dreamed of power. The triumph of a strong warrior was not enough for him. He desired the absolute power and influence a true king could command. Heady with the thought of such a fate, Bulscu drove his warriors westward to a fortress he had seen only in his dreams. Dominic's prone body was carried with them to witness the storming of the castle firsthand.

On the eve of battle, Dominic sluggishly arose from his well-secured and heavily guarded coffin. Before he could fully come to his senses, Bulscu drove a spike through Dominic's heart, plunging him into torpor. The Brujah's body was buried in a glen in the shadow of the fortress. Within the castle later that night, Bulscu knelt before his new Ventrue master. His taste for blood became more refined, and his thirst for power grew even stronger. When he at last left the castle, he did so as one of the Damned. The betrayal of Dominic was complete.

The armies of Hungary traveled onward without Bulscu. Lacking the guidance of either their mortal or Cainite leader, they were defeated within a fortnight. Bulscu's body was returned to Buda-Pest via a separate route, and he took



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up residence deep within the castle of Buda. He rapidly infiltrated the politics of the Arpad family, and the kingdom's collusion with the West was at last assured. In the centuries to come, Western Hungary would no longer acknowledge the authority of Byzantium, but would instead become a Western nation.

Since then, Bulscu has carefully maintained control over the mortal Arpads. Each week, a mortal of the Arpad family is brought before him. After a lively discussion of politics and a delightful evening of psychic abuse, Bulscu dines on aristocratic blood. This is the central act of his existence. He is content to have his childer support him and uses his power over them sparingly so long as his hunger is appeased.

Unfortunately, Bulscu has gained other hungers. His chambers are home to an entourage of beautiful men and women kept for his amusement. Also, as part of his private orgies, he has gained an appreciation for addictive substances brought from the East. His slaves hunger both for his blood and for the overpowering drugs that infect it. Though Bulscu is clever, his willpower and control are not so strong as they once were. His monstrous depredations are becoming legendary among the Cainites of his kingdom.

Since his betrayal of Dominic, Bulscu has created three childer. His careful involvement in politics gives him opportunities to watch the aristocracy very closely. Bulscu had one mortal child prior to his Embrace. Zombar Arpad was a cunning diplomat to the court of Byzantium and a promising king. Bulscu rewarded him for his long life of accomplishment by baptizing him in blood. For Zombar, however, the thought of serving his father for eternity was too great a burden to him. After manipulating the mortal Arpads for 100 years, he ended his unlfe in a violent suicide.

Geza Arpad was an even greater failure. The formerly devout king was instrumental in influencing the religious outlook of the kingdom, but he saw his Embrace as eternal damnation. From Geza's mindset, he is forever banned from the Kingdom of God. Corrupted by despair, he now rules Esztergom as its self-proclaimed "archbishop." Geza has used the rapidly growing Church in Hungary as a means for him to exploit the mortal populace. He has also spread his Cainite servants throughout the land. He schemes against his sire incessantly, and he has made an alliance with an Assamite to supply Bulscu with addictive drugs.

Bulscu's third child is not of the Arpad family, but, curiously enough, is the most loyal. Vencel Rikard was a Bavarian knight in life and is now a devoted childer in death. He regularly seeks audience with his sire for advice, even as he watches Bulscu's degeneracy increase. Though he knows his sire lives a tortured life, he holds a great love for him and would struggle until Final Death to save him. Vencel does not suspect Geza's conspiracy, but he is fully aware of Bulscu's growing peril.

In the long nights of the 12th century, Bulscu's humanity has faded away. He is increasingly aware of how much free will he gave up to his sire, and his only escape from his helplessness, despair and remorse is his epic debauchery. His exploitation of his mortal slaves becomes increasingly grotesque by the night. The Beast

Within devises ingenious tortures for them, and he has begun to employ vivisection as an aid to his feeding. (He thus possesses one of the most odious habits of this era: atrocious table manners.) His abuse of drugs from the East reduces him to little more than an animal by the end of each night, and his addiction is so fierce that he will do anything to ensure that his hunger is sated.

Geza and his ally Fariq are the sole suppliers of these exotic substances, and this arrangement gives them leverage for manipulating Bulscu. Bulscu's Beast has been chained, and Geza holds the key. If Bulscu could gain the willpower to forsake pleasure, he would be a power to be reckoned with. For now, however, the giant has been tamed, content in the pleasures of flesh and blood. If the chains of addiction are ever broken, Bulscu's revenge will be epic, both in its scope and in its cruelty.

Image: Though ferocious in the youth of his breathing days, Bulscu has become somewhat sedentary and sluggish of late. He still wakes each evening in the peak of physical condition, just as he was on the night he was turned. His luxurious depredations, however, heavily tax his constitution. He continually pushes himself to new limits of indulgence. Among the undead, he can be a commanding presence, but his increasing addictions dissuade him from fully displaying his authority.

Roleplaying Hints: Basking in pleasure helps you forget that your days of conquest are over. Your lessers entertain you with respect, but you know it is a sham. Now the only focus of life is diversion. The Ventrue control you, your childer control you, the Brujah revile you, and few would stand by your side save for the chance to exploit you. Your power has become a burden far beyond what you expected.

Haven: There are a series of secretive chambers beneath the castle of Buda. In the deepest of these, Bulscu maintains his blood cult. A lackey provides him with a steady supply of mortal victims, yet Bulscu's appetites have become so ferocious that keeping his nocturnal activities secret has become rather difficult.

Secrets: As Bulscu's addiction grows, so does his tolerance. He is poisoning himself slowly, but his resistance to toxins is becoming significant. In addition, he is learning to freshen his blood by flushing his system through his healthier Blood Dolls. They in turn acquire his addiction, and so he must destroy them through an overdose of his drugged blood. His lackey possesses the skill to dispose of them, but lacks the scientific acumen to determine their cause of death.

Influence: A great deal of Bulscu's influence is over the nobility of the House of Arpad. He is well informed, but he rarely exerts his power. Over the next 40 years, machinations within the House of Arpad will unintentionally drive it to the brink of annihilation.

Destiny: Over the next century, Bulscu's influence over Hungary will fade. By his own hand, he will drive himself into torpor, and Vencel will loyally watch over his body. By the 16th century, Bulscu will arise, his body purged of the chemicals that furthered his madness. The Beast will shatter its chains, and Bulscu will exact his revenge with the aid of an unexpected ally.

Clan: Ventruue
Sire: Heinrich of Volstag
Nature: Monster
Demeanor: Celebrant
Generation: 6th
Embrace: 955
Apparent Age: late 40s
Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2
Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2, Leadership 5
Skills: Archery 2, Herbalism 3, Melee 4, Stealth 2
Knowledge: Law 3, Politics 5
Disciplines: Auspex 4, Dominate 3, Fortitude 5, Potence 3, Presence 3
Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 5, Herd 4, Influence 5, Mentor 5, Resources 5, Retainers 5, Status 5
Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 1, Courage 1
Road: Humanity 1
Willpower: 3

GEZA ARPAD, ARCHBISHOP OF ESZTERGOM

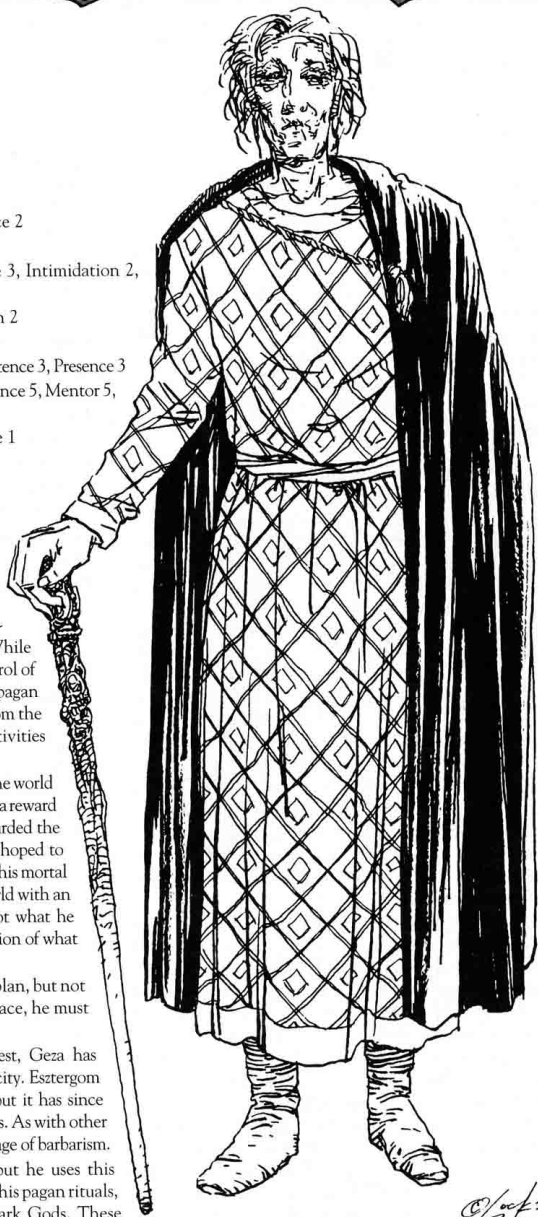
Background: In his mortal days, Geza engineered a brilliant deception as King of Hungary. While helping to spread Christianity and break the control of rural shamans in his kingdom, he also practiced pagan rituals in secret. When he at last stepped down from the throne and into the shadows, his secretive activities became more elaborate.

In old age, Geza was recruited by Bulscu into the world of the undead. Bulscu considered the Embrace to be a reward for a lifetime of service to the kingdom. Geza regarded the Dark Gift differently. As a religious man, he had hoped to receive the reward of the afterlife after shuffling off his mortal coil. Spending eternity trapped in the physical world with an undying thirst for the blood of the living was not what he expected. His God had forsaken him. The realization of what he had become destroyed his sanity.

Now Geza still sees himself as part of God's plan, but not as God's servant. Now that he has fallen from grace, he must test the faith of the holy.

While Bulscu and Vencel control Buda-Pest, Geza has retreated to Esztergom, where he reigns over the city. Esztergom was once the center of Hungary's government, but it has since become a religious capital controlling 10 bishoprics. As with other cities in the East, the mask of civility hides the visage of barbarism.

Geza still considers himself a Christian, but he uses this facade to hide darker practices. He still practices his pagan rituals, and he has become fascinated with the old Dark Gods. These



THE CHAINITES OF EASTERN EUROPE

infernal forces do not seek to corrupt souls, but instead work to taint the land. Desecration of holy places increases their presence in the physical world. Torture and sacrifice of the innocent are high ritual to these foul spirits. By worshipping these infernal forces, Geza gains great power.

Geza's agents have spread throughout the bishoprics to do his bidding. Defilement and desecration, victimization and exploitation are their agenda. While this unholy crusade has achieved only modest success in Western Hungary, the eastern lands of the kingdom are falling further into darkness.

Geza realizes that many sites occupied by Christian churches in Transylvania were once used by Tzimisce in their primitive rituals. Beneath the temples of the Nailed God lie the labyrinths of the Black Churches. Numerous Black Churches have been reclaimed to further the worship of the Western God, yet the lands that surround them have never been consecrated.

Geza's power grows nightly. With each passing year, Geza retreats further from the light. Just as God condemned Lucifer as part of His plan, the infernal forces of the Old Country have accepted this holy man into their army of darkness.

Image: Geza is the very image of control, even when despair consumes him. Eminently polite and diplomatic, he has learned to pass himself off as the very model of Christian civility. His fashion is always current with the latest trends in the West, although his appearance is unkempt. He is a haggard old man who will suffer for an eternity, and nothing in his mind can change that.

Roleplaying Hints: The more controlled you are, the fewer people will doubt you. Emulate the etiquette of Westerners. Be polite to everyone in power. Make sure none of the bloodstains show. You have been cast from Heaven to act as an adversary to all that is holy, so work cautiously. Perhaps if you play your role well, on Judgment Day God will release you from your curse. Or maybe, if you are truly unfortunate, the darkness will win....

Haven: The Church of the Magdelane is not large, but it suffices. In the catacombs below it, holy men are buried. Geza considers his very presence there to be an act of desecration. Countless rituals have brought the power of the old gods closer to the catacombs, and while they do not reply, he decries his horrific fate in their presence.

Secrets: Geza's rituals are slowly becoming more elaborate. Murder is not tolerated, especially by a prince, so he must keep his victims alive until he can destroy their memories. His ghoul's are becoming quite effective at gathering the young mortals he requires, but if their activities become too frequent, they will attract attention.

One important mortal threatens Geza's actions. Janos is a devout priest who is being groomed for the position of archbishop by the Lasombra Liseta Iluminada. Geza does not realize his competition, and if Liseta acts quickly, he won't until it's too late.

Influence: Geza has a great deal of influence in religious and occult circles. As prince of the city, he has far-ranging influence over the city of Esztergom, but the somewhat unstable nature of his cronies limits the areas in which they can

bring influence to bear. Even during his meetings with advisors, the subjects discussed veer toward the religious and philosophical rather than the temporal. The city will suffer accordingly.

Geza is respected among a religious order of Malkavians that furthers the power of the demon Kupala. In return for their desecration of the land, they are rewarded with growing insanity. A few Tremere have also become interested in this religious movement, and they seek to harness this power in their rituals.

Destiny: Esztergom's role in Hungary will fade, just as Budapest will grow stronger. The Catholic Church will secure power over more and more of the city, but several of Esztergom's churches will still be profaned and used by the Black Church. One night, Geza will simply disappear, never to be seen again. Centuries later, Sabbat *antitribu* will maintain the facade Geza erected.

Clan: Ventrue

Sire: Bulscu

Nature: Celebrant

Demeanor: Penitent

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 992

Apparent Age: late 50s

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 4, Leadership 4

Skills: Etiquette 3, Stealth 3

Knowledge: Academics 2, Investigation 2, Linguistics 3, Occult 4, Politics 3

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Auspex 4, Dementation 1, Dominate 5, Presence 3, Vicissitude 1

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 5, Herd 3, Influence 4, Resources 4, Retainers 3, Status 3

Road: Devil 4

Virtues: Conviction 4, Instinct 2, Courage 2

Willpower: 7

ROLAND, MASTER OF SLAVES

Background: In breathing days, Roland was content to live a life of pleasure. The consequences of his actions never disturbed him, for the moment was everything. Handsome and commanding, he took what he pleased and never feared the consequences. His arrogance attracted the interest of a Parisian sybarite, a Setite who admired his flair. At first, feeding on Cainite blood was merely an exotic perversion, one he eagerly cultivated. Soon he came to savor the wine of his master's veins, and he found the life of a Setite ghoul to be much to his liking.

Roland's sire tired of the thrill of the hunt, and thus employed his ghoul in the enterprise of finding mortals for his entertainment. Each week, Roland was to outdo himself in securing a new liaison. Thus did he learn the means of seducing the noblewoman at the courtly ball, the value of insouciance when slumming among the taverns of the poor, and the intercourse of slavers and blackmailers.

Once his skill had developed, the Parisian Setite presented his servant as a gift to a Ventrue with whom he wanted to gain favor. Roland was a valuable present indeed. These elegant Ventrue required the satiation of their particular tastes while desiring variety in their diet. The cities of the Holy Roman Empire offered a wide assortment of mortals to entertain the degenerate undead.

When the Ventrue of the Holy Roman Empire began to play at politics in the Kingdom of Hungary to the south, they considered the many rivals for the throne to be their playthings as well. Despite this, many of the most likely candidates for the Hungarian nobility were carefully groomed by Bulscu. As the child of a Germanic Ventrue Methuselah, Bulscu was off limits. This coterie of Ventrue also knew that spying on Bulscu would give them an edge over their competition. To infiltrate his household, they gifted him with Roland. The ghoul was Embraced, and a Blood Oath ensured that the spy would remain loyal.

For the nonce, Roland's employment is profitable. The Slavs in particular are easy to buy and trade. Despite this, Roland's task is becoming more difficult. He has had to travel further to obtain the variety his master requires. Bulscu's toys get broken quite frequently, and disposing of the bodies is becoming more difficult. Many of them appear to have died from exotic poisons, though Roland does not understand why. He would very much like to leave Buda-Pest before he is caught disposing of the bodies, but the Holy Roman Ventrue have other plans. For the time being, they are leaving their pawn in place.

Image: A man of wealth and privilege, Roland is worldly enough to integrate himself into any society. He dresses ostentatiously when among the courts of nobles; when slumming, his dress is far more subdued. He is fanatical about keeping himself attractive, and he is most comfortable when he is able to use Parisian cosmetics. When he cannot, he is quite willing to adapt disguises.

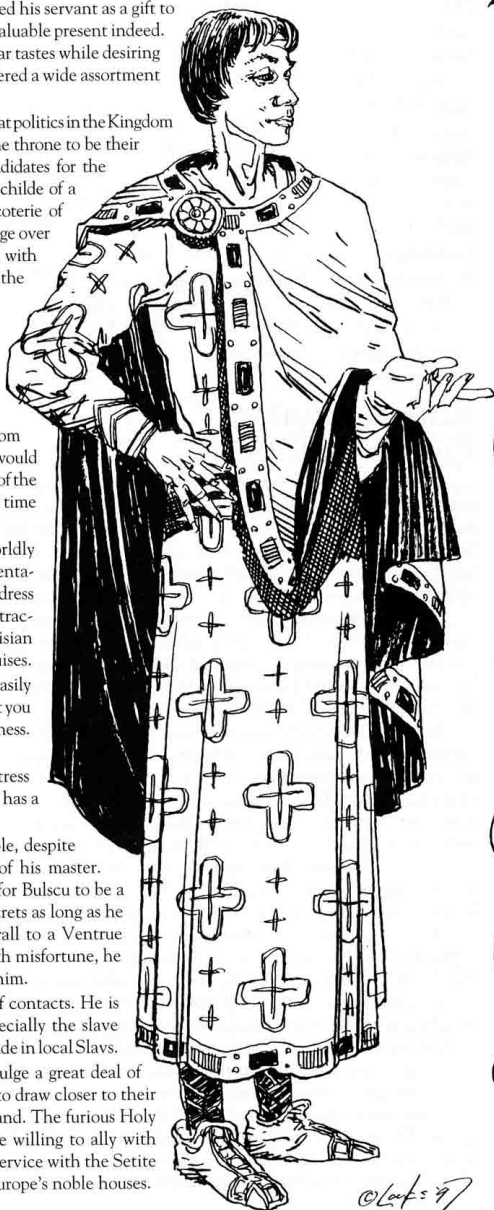
Roleplaying Hints: You hide your revulsion for Bulscu as easily as you hide your disgust at the tasks he assigns you. The idea that you are in over your head is just beginning to gnaw at your consciousness. Therefore, smile and preen all the more.

Haven: Elaborate chambers are maintained under a fortress in Buda. Vencel does not care for Roland, but the lackey still has a private chamber within his castle.

Secrets: Roland is becoming increasingly uncomfortable, despite the fact that he would do anything to follow the orders of his master. Indirectly, however, he would not consider making trouble for Bulscu to be a violation of his pledge. He can be coerced into divulging secrets as long as he does not put himself in any immediate danger. He is a thrall to a Ventrue Inconnu, but not directly to Bulscu. Should Bulscu meet with misfortune, he reasons, Bulscu's odious presence would no longer torment him.

Influence: Most of Roland's influence is in the form of contacts. He is familiar with much of the kingdom's criminal activity, especially the slave trade. He is intimately acquainted with the rapidly growing trade in local Slavs.

Destiny: When Roland is at last captured, he will divulge a great deal of information about Bulscu. This will allow Bulscu's enemies to draw closer to their quarry, eventually driving him to enter torpor by his own hand. The furious Holy Roman Ventrue will reject Roland. Despondent, he will be willing to ally with anyone who can afford his services. Eventually he will take service with the Setite mastermind Count Jocalo, helping him infiltrate many of Europe's noble houses.



THE CAINITES OF EASTERN EUROPE

Clan: Ventrué
Sire: Otto
Nature: Deviant
Demeanor: Gallant
Generation: 10th
Embrace: 1103
Apparent Age: late 20s
Talents: Acting 3, Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Disguise 4, Dodge 2, Larceny 4, Subterfuge 3
Skills: Etiquette 3, Stealth 3
Knowledge: Investigation 2, Linguistics 3, Medicine 3, Occult 1
Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 3, Obfuscate 2, Presence 3
Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Herd 3, Resources 4, Status 2
Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 3, Courage 3
Road: Humanity 4
Willpower: 6

RUDOLF BRANDL, PRINCE OF PRAGUE

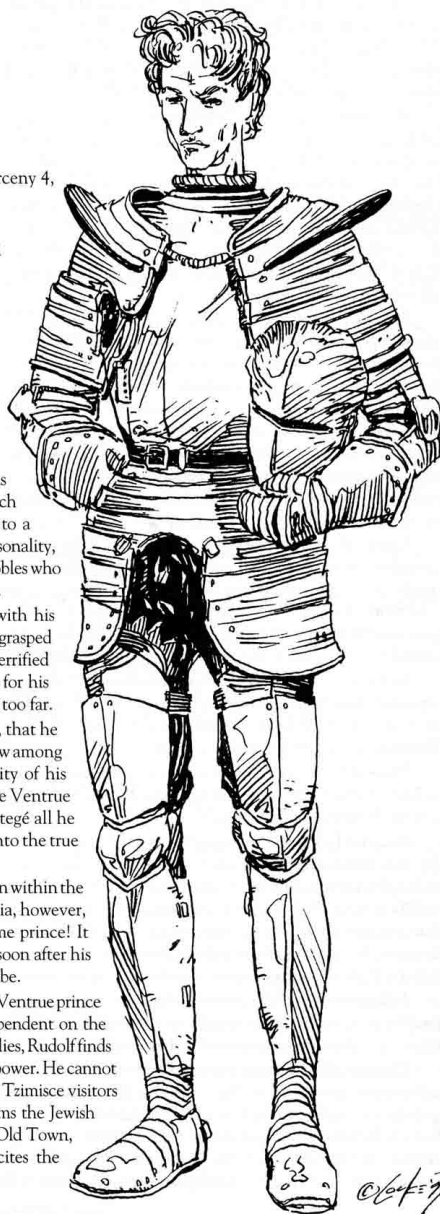
Background: The third son of a noble German family, Rudolf was given a knightly education, but also prepared to go into the Church should suitable lands not become available (through his marriage to a landed heiress) for him to rule. With his good looks and obsequious personality, Rudolf managed to insinuate himself among a group of knights and nobles who outranked him, but allowed him to accompany (and fawn on) them.

One night as young Rudolf returned from a drinking bout with his friends, he was set upon by what he thought was a brigand. The man grasped him with hands as strong as steel, then sank his fangs into the terrified knight's throat. When he awakened later, his assailant apologized for his lack of control and told Rudolf that things had unfortunately gone too far.

Baron Hredel then explained to Rudolf that he was a Cainite, that he had frenzied and attacked the young knight, and that Rudolf was now among the undead. Hredel said that as soon as he recognized the quality of his victim's clothing and weapons, he decided to Embrace him into the Ventrué clan. Over the next few years, Baron Hredel taught his young protégé all he could of Cainite society. Grateful that Hredel had Embraced him into the true elite of the world, Rudolf did all he could to please his sire.

Over the next decades, Hredel groomed Rudolf for a high position within the Holy Roman Empire. When the Germans were invited into Bohemia, however, Rudolf's sire encouraged the young Cainite to go — and to become prince! It surprised both of them when he did so, becoming Prince of Prague soon after his arrival. Little did he realize how difficult retaining that title would be.

Occupying a sumptuous suite in the interior of Prague Castle, the Ventrué prince rules the area's Cainites, though his leadership is hardly secure. Dependent on the goodwill of the Premysl family and burdened with weak, inattentive allies, Rudolf finds himself forced more and more into a position as a puppet with no real power. He cannot afford to antagonize either the Premysls (the true rulers of the city) or Tzimisce visitors to the city. Nor can he interfere with Josef, the Nosferatu who claims the Jewish Quarter. The Brujah, Ecaterina the Wise, makes inroads nightly in Old Town, proselytizing to those who attend the university. Further, she incites the merchants, undercutting Prince Rudolf's lucrative trade contacts.



TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

To combat the Brujah's support of heretical sects in the city, Rudolf not only supports Christian churches, but has instituted the cult worship of Mithras among soldiery stationed in Old Town. He propagates the worship of the Ventrue known as Mithras rather than the real rites of the ancient deity, which greatly annoys those who worship the god.

Rudolf has no real friends, nor does he actually exert any influence over the Cainites in the city. He spends most of his time pleasing the Premysls. His continued reign is secure only so long as he can hold off his enemies while presenting a false front of absolute power and assurance.

Image: Rudolf's blond hair is elaborately coifed in a short curly style made popular by the Romans. His blue eyes appear frank and forthright, if a little puzzled sometimes. The prince wears only the finest robes and furs and keeps a suit of magnificent armor in his dressing chamber. His voice, which could be commanding, is rarely raised above a quiet, oily tone meant to flatter whomever he speaks with — except servants. Those are to be ordered about with great authority.

Roleplaying Hints: You are Prince of Prague, a position that allows you great luxury and a facade of power. You favor certain merchants and award lucrative trade to them through your agreements with the ruling Premysl family. Though it is frustrating not to hold the reins of real power, the illusion is enough for now — so long as no one unseats you.

Haven: Rudolf has a sumptuous retreat beneath Prague Castle.

Secrets: The prince knows that the Premysls are hiding an ancient Cainite, presumably one of their ancestors, somewhere in Prague. As they have asked that he decree Vysehrad off limits to Cainites, he suspects the ancient one is hidden there. He also knows that the Holy Roman Emperor lusts after the land of Bohemia, wishing to add it to his territories.

Influence: Brandl's influence is felt in the marketplace, where German merchants (particularly those who offer him expensive gifts) receive the most lucrative trade agreements.

Destiny: A few years from now, Brandl will demand that Josef open the ghetto so the prince's cronies can feed there. Upon Josef's refusal, the prince will send several ghouls to kill the recalcitrant Nosferatu. They will arrive at Josef's haven just before dawn, but discover that Josef is missing. That night, Josef will make his way to Rudolf's private chambers and slay the lazy prince before he arises for the evening.

Clan: Ventrue

Sire: Baron Hredel

Nature: Sycophant

Demeanor: Autocrat

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 899

Apparent Age: 21

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

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

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

Knowledge: Academics 2, Hearth Wisdom 1, Law 2, Linguistics (Slavonic) 1, Politics 3, Seneschal 1, Theology 1

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 3, Fortitude 2, Presence 3

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Contacts 2, Influence 3, Resources 4, Status 4

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

Road: Humanity 5

Willpower: 4

NOVA ARPAD, HUNGARIAN OVERLORD

Background: The feudal system that brought peace and prosperity to Western Hungary has taken a darker tone in Eastern Hungary. Szekler settlers act as the nobility of Transylvania, while Vlachs and other Romanians who settled the lands over a thousand years ago now live as their serfs. The Hungarian Ventrue have sent a brilliant member of their family to oversee this system. While the mortal aristocracy holds power by day, the sinister hierarchy of the night emerges after doors and windows are barred at sundown.

Nova Arpad hasn't developed that system alone; if anything, she echoes the cruelty mortal Szeklers have visited upon the Vlachs. When she first arrived in Transylvania, she was an idealist. By her mind, the actions of the Hungarians were perfectly understandable. Hungary was a Christian kingdom, and mortals who followed the dictates of the Pope possessed a humanity that surpassed what even the Ventrue could hope to accomplish. The western lands of the kingdom were a challenge to the civilized nation. Transylvania was a land of barbaric pagans, and the very earth was tainted with a primitive evil. Only the civilized could tame it.

As a mortal woman, Nova was the daughter of an Arpad noble. Her education was exquisite, consisting not only of languages and literature, but also of music and horsemanship. Despite her sharp mind, however, she was at best destined to be the mastermind behind a powerful husband. No matter how benevolent the union might seem, her husband would always possess the power. That would never be enough for Nova.

The Embrace allowed her unparalleled opportunity. Politics fascinated her, and her acumen attracted the attention of her elders. Stories of Hungarian and Transylvanian history fascinated her. As a strong-willed and ambitious politician, she believed that she could bring civility to the land. As a Ventrue, she knew it was her right to bring order to the realm, and the mortals would have to be taught their place in the scheme of things. This wasn't a matter of arrogance — it was one of Divine Right. Her ambition and eloquence won the respect of her elders, and soon she was honored with the chance to serve them in the untamed lands of Transylvania.

The Tzimisce also learned of this brilliant woman, and they countered her ambition with their own treachery. Any powerful leader needs strong servants, and the Fiends had bred one who was ideally suited to such an impressive leader. Olithio Szantovich knew much about the treatment of servants and slaves, and as a member of his infamous family, he had powers unknown to the West. Once Nova's estate had been built in Mediasch, he traveled there and humbly petitioned to serve her. After securing a position in the household, he cleverly evaluated Nova. Under her strong will was a need for sympathy, one that Olithio worked to his advantage. Nova found him compelling, and her attraction for him was undeniable. This, too, he worked to his advantage.

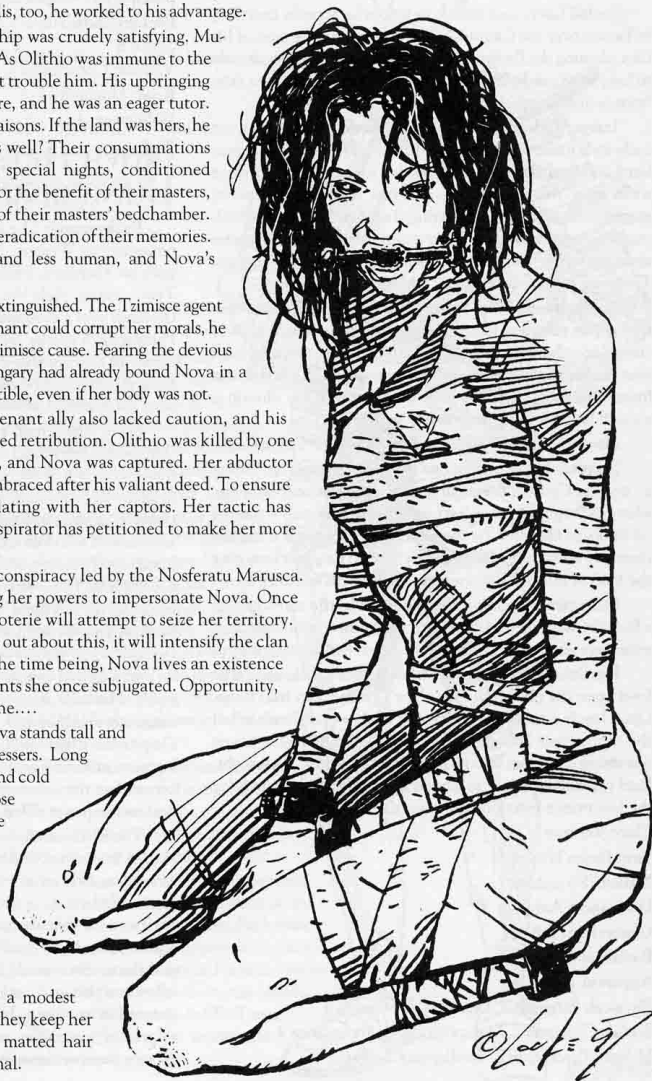
At first, their physical relationship was crudely satisfying. Mutual feeding was only the beginning. As Olithio was immune to the effects of the Blood Oath, this did not trouble him. His upbringing had taught him many ways of pleasure, and he was an eager tutor. Soon he lured her into more exotic liaisons. If the land was hers, he argued, were not the mortals hers as well? Their consummations began to involve the servants. On special nights, conditioned slaves performed elaborate tableaux for the benefit of their masters, and orgies of blood stained the walls of their masters' bedchamber. The servants were rewarded with the eradication of their memories. Slowly, they were treated as less and less human, and Nova's humanity began to erode.

Nova's idealism was completely extinguished. The Tzimisce agent had won. Nonetheless, while the revenant could corrupt her morals, he could not fully win her over to the Tzimisce cause. Fearing the devious tactics of the Tzimisce, Bulscu of Hungary had already bound Nova in a Blood Oath. Her loyalty was incorruptible, even if her body was not.

Nova became reckless. Her revenant ally also lacked caution, and his cruel treatment of the servants invited retribution. Olithio was killed by one night by a mortal exacting revenge, and Nova was captured. Her abductor was Mitru, a simple man who was Embraced after his valiant deed. To ensure her survival, Nova has tried negotiating with her captors. Her tactic has failed so far; already, a Tzimisce conspirator has petitioned to make her more "receptive" to the Easterners' ideas.

Her cruel fate is the result of a conspiracy led by the Nosferatu Marusca. Marusca's child, Ruxandra, is using her powers to impersonate Nova. Once her domain has been crippled, the coterie will attempt to seize her territory. Should the Hungarian Cainites find out about this, it will intensify the clan wars throughout the kingdom. For the time being, Nova lives an existence scarcely better than that of the servants she once subjugated. Opportunity, perhaps, could reverse her misfortune....

Image: Imperious and regal, Nova stands tall and proud when confronted with her lessers. Long raven hair cascades down her back, and cold blue eyes confront those who oppose her in court. At least, they would if she weren't held captive. Now, leather straps wear away portions of her skin every night, she chokes on a metal bar between her teeth, and the fury in her eyes is fading. She constantly hungers for proper vitae (that of Romanian serfs, of course). Though the conspirators bring her a modest amount of proper blood each night, they keep her starved for it. Her disheveled and matted hair makes her look like a desperate animal.



TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

Roleplaying Hints: If you ever get out of here, your hatred of the Transylvanian Cainites will be boundless. You are justified in everything you have done, and your abductors must be shown the price of betraying a scion of the Ventruue.

Haven: Her domain is now a five-by-five-foot cell. It's not so spacious as the estate she once had in the West.

Secrets: The Transylvanian Cainites feel safe now that they have taken the time to force her into a Blood Oath to Marusca. Marusca, in turn, has united with Mitru against a common enemy. Their plan has one flaw. They do not know that Nova is already in thrall to Bulscu, and thus cannot be placed in a Blood Oath with another Cainite. She feigns her lack of will as she considers her strategies.

Influence: Nova can move her left leg without assistance. Were she to be set free, she would lead the Arpad Ventruue in a war against Transylvania.

Destiny: Nova will be freed within a year. This will in turn intensify Hungarian oppression of Transylvania. After 1240, she will force several Transylvanian princes to accede to Bela IV's strengthening of the Siebenburgen. Then she will urge the Hungarian Cainites and the Holy Roman Empire to bring in Saxon princes. By 1288, she will help establish the Diet, a mortal council of Transylvanian nobles. In the mortal realm, feudal lords will demand increased crop yields from the Romanian serfs. Many of these peasants will flee to nearby Wallachia and Moldavia.

In 1437, the Romanians will revolt. In response, the Union of Three Nations will insist that Magyars, Germans and Szeklers are the only recognized nationalities within Transylvania, and thus, the only races with privileges. Seven Saxon princes will attempt to seize power. The actions taken now will result in Nova supporting over two centuries of Hungarian oppression. That, however, is another story waiting to be told....

Clan: Ventruue

Sire: Gregor

Generation: 7th

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Celebrant

Apparent Age: early 30s

Embrace: 1050

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

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

Skills: Etiquette 3, Music 2, Ride 2

Knowledge: Academics 2, Investigation 2, Law 3, Linguistics 3, Medicine 2, Politics 4, Seneschal 5

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

Backgrounds: Influence 5 (now 0), Resources 5 (now 0)

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 2, Courage 4

Road: Humanity 3

Willpower: 9

VENCEL RIKARD, PRINCE OF BUDA-PEST

Background: The product of a Christian knightly education, Vencel Rikard came to the city when King Geza invited a contingent of Bavarian knights to become his personal bodyguard. Embraced by Bulscu as a reward for his excellent service, Vencel is most concerned with retaining his position, maximizing the profits he reaps from his mercantile interests, and keeping the peace in a city that is potentially a battleground for warring clans. He believes that the best way to do so is to make Buda-Pest the largest, most important city in Hungary (thereby attracting the king back and making it the capital of the kingdom). Vencel uses his natural charisma and princely prerogatives to attract new Cainites to the city — Cainites whose first loyalty will be to him.

His brother in undeath, Prince Geza of Esztergom, hates both Vencel and their sire, Bulscu. Vencel has turned a series of large caverns underneath Buda Castle into a haven for Bulscu, a place where his unfortunate sire may indulge himself in whatever way he sees fit. Though he realizes that Bulscu is afflicted with a terrible and degenerative addiction, Vencel dares not directly oppose his sire by attempting to cut off his source of potent drugs. He fears that the sudden withdrawal might send Bulscu into frenzy, with truly disastrous and deadly results.

Vencel is aware that Geza has somehow fostered this addiction in the hope of weakening Bulscu; rather than fighting his fellow prince, Vencel instead chooses to protect their mutual sire. So long as Vencel rules Buda-Pest, Geza will never have the opportunity to harm Bulscu through physical threat. While saddened by the ever-deepening spiral of depravity Bulscu embraces, Vencel still honors him for the man he once was.

Beset on one side by Tremere demands for supplies and on the other by pressure from Tzimisce *voivodes* to join in the war effort, Vencel feels a keen need for enough power (through commanding the loyalty of many Cainites) to say "no" to both sides. Though he tepidly supports the Tremere for their ability to keep the Tzimisce occupied, he sees the war in Transylvania as destructive, unnecessary and ultimately stupid.

Image: Though of only medium stature and build, Vencel projects an image of greater height and power. His light brown hair is offset by pale blue eyes that can crinkle with good humor or impale an enemy with their coldness. He wears finely made, though not ostentatious, clothing; his sole adornment is a jeweled ring that was given to him by his sire on the night of Vencel's Embrace.

Roleplaying Hints: The way to rule a city is through honor and intelligent management. There is no real need to prove your prowess or status; no one challenges your right

to rule. You must discover how Geza is obtaining his drugs, then gradually wean Bulscu away from them before he is destroyed. Balance things as well as you can. Do not become embroiled in the foolish warfare that tears apart Transylvania and interferes with the orderly progress of trade. Exchanges of trade with both East and West is the lifeblood of Buda-Pest. Encourage it however you can.

Haven: Vencel has a haven in the lower recesses of Buda Castle, where he can keep an eye on Bulscu.

Secrets: Vencel has a secret trade agreement and alliance with Fariq, an Assamite who promotes trade between Christians and Turks. The two hope that trade will in turn promote understanding between the two cultures, an understanding that may end hostilities between them. Vencel knows the secret havens of all the Cainites in Buda-Pest, with the notable exception of Octavio's lair. He believes he has uncovered a secret Tremere chantry in Obuda (actually this is Octavio's cult at work).

Influence: Vencel's influence extends to all levels of society in Buda-Pest. Although he concentrates on trade, he also promotes the growth of crafters and supports the Church.

Destiny: Vencel will remain Prince of Buda-Pest through the coming centuries, seeing the city rise in prominence just as he dreamed it would. When Bulscu enters torpor, Vencel keeps guard over him as a dutiful son. He is by his potent sire's side when the great one awakens again in the 16th century.

Clan: Ventrue

Sire: Bulscu

Nature: Caretaker

Demeanor: Architect

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1013

Apparent Age: mid-20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

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

Intimidation 2, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 1

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

Knowledge: Academics 1, History 1, Law 2, Linguistics (Hungarian) 1, Politics 4

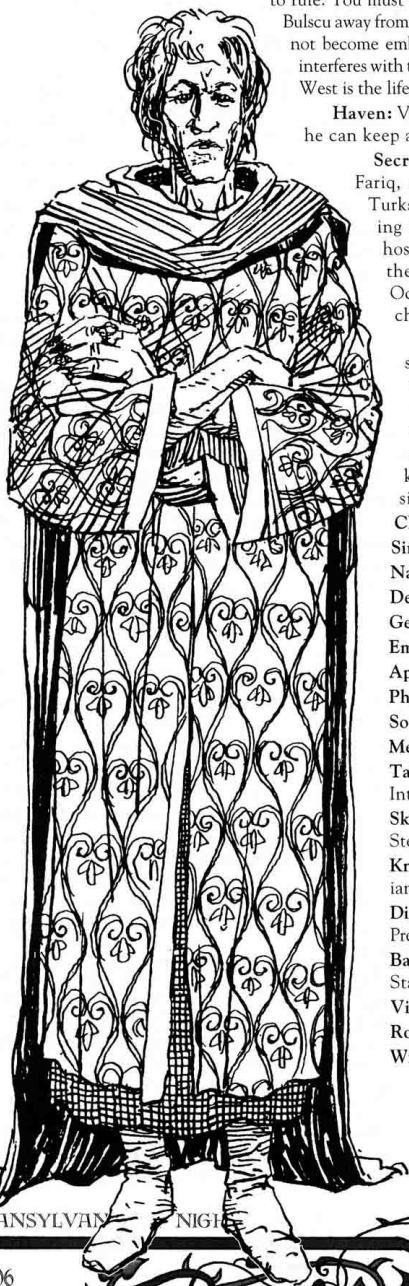
Disciplines: Auspex 1, Celerity 2, Dominate 3, Fortitude 3, Potence 1, Presence 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Influence 3, Resources 4, Retainers 3, Status 4

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

Road: Chivalry 8

Willpower: 8



OTHER VENTRUE OF NOTE

KONRAD VON AUPFHOLM

10th generation, childe of Walther von Torsten

Nature: Conniver

Demeanor: Autocrat

Embrace: 1022

Apparent Age: late 30s

The presence of Ventrue Konrad von Aupfholm in Krakow exemplifies the growing influence of German trade within the city. Arriving soon after Krakow's elevation to a bishopric, Konrad spent several decades publicly ingratiating himself with Prince Razkoljna while secretly plotting how best to gain greater power for himself and his clanmates in the Holy Roman Empire. His grasp of both Cainite and mortal politics has aided him in his endeavor. He works quietly to undermine Razkoljna's authority while appearing to support her.

Konrad actively encouraged Claas Drescher to come secretly to Krakow. Although Drescher belongs to the upstart Tremere, he is a fellow German and, therefore, a better ally than any of the Slavic Cainites. He has assisted the Tremere spy in keeping his true identity hidden from Razkoljna, allowing Drescher to pose as a Ventrue.

Currently, Konrad exercises control over the marketplace and oversees most of the business interests within the city. In addition, he has maneuvered Bishop Stefan into his corner, serving as an "advisor" to the city's religious leader. He hopes to use his growing influence over Church affairs to tighten his grip over Krakow. Unlike the Tzimisce prince, Konrad believes that mortals, by their sheer numbers, can sway the balance of power in Cainite affairs. His hope is that one night he will be able to deliver the city of Krakow into the hands of his sire.







Chapter Five: The Children of the Night

From the earliest nights of Transylvania, dark forces have contested for control of the land. Arising from their ancestral labyrinths beneath the earth, the fiendish Tzimisce have laid claim to vast kingdoms, rejecting the authority of all other Cainites. Any gentle words of truce between them are little more than a cessation of hostilities as they prepare for war. The battle cries of the living and the undead echo through the hills of Transylvania, endlessly repeating the dire cacophony of the children of the night.

TZIMISCE'S CHILDER

Tzimisce are not just the most numerous Cainites in Transylvania — they are arguably the most diverse as well. Between 20 and 30 members of this profane clan stake out their territory at any given time in 12th-century Transylvania.

This is surprising — or indicative of the clan's current straits — for most Fiends are quite reluctant to Embrace new childer. Breeding revenants is far more efficacious. After revenant families have been dominated and exploited for centuries, their children are born with an inherent loyalty to their masters, which removes the need for the whole messy enterprise of gradually raising and educating a vampiric childer.

An entire estate of revenants can slave away in the shadow of a *voivode's* fortress for generations. This makes them promising candidates for the Embrace. However, a revenant servant typically does not receive his baptism of blood until it is evident that he desperately requires the Dark Gift. Defeating the most treacherous of their masters' foes sometimes requires enhanced powers and vampiric ingenuity. Only when this added edge is required is the servant buried alive to await rebirth.

Even more telling on the Tzimisce populace is the shocking warfare conducted between *knezi* (lesser landholders) and rival *voivodes*. Arrogant and power-hungry, *voivodes* make and break alliances as their passions seize them. Transylvanian *knezi*, in particular, are extremely territorial — each considers himself to be the rightful master of his lands. Feudal Tzimisce typically enlist few allies, generally relying on Oath-bound childer, horrific creations and legions of fleshcrafted servants. War is brutal and primitive in Transylvania.

Their treatment of their mortal "serfs" is overly brutal as well, contrary to what the Fiends may believe. Tzimisce have always considered their human subjects to be little more than cattle. While the Fiends harbor a conceit that the mortals would perish without them, humans have begun to revolt against their hidden masters. Likewise, many Transylvanian Cainites of other clans have come to believe that the prosperous Teutonic Ventruë, arrogant and insufferable as they are, would be preferable to the ruthless autocracy of the Tzimisce.

Frankly, the Tzimisce care little for such plotting. They are more concerned with stronger enemies — in particular, the Usurper Tremere. Where the Tzimisce are numerous but divisive, the Tremere are few yet unified. The Usurpers exploit their fanatic loyalty, innovative magics, and bestial Gargoyles as they stage an overwhelming assault on the Fiends.

The increasing tide of battle has necessitated a strengthening of the Tzimisce feudal system. Tzimisce lords have become more assertive in their rights to exploit the mortal populace of their domains as decade follows bloody decade. Despite appearances, however, the feudal system they created was not fully in place until the eighth century. Prior to those dark times, the most prosperous Fiends were more contemplative and introspective in nature.

THE METAMORPHOSISTS

The earliest Tzimisce of Transylvania were spiritualists who practiced secret rituals. They meditated on the true nature of abomination in darkness, having long abandoned the ways of humans (a lesser race that seemed quite alien to them). The Fiends enacted their rites in stone sanctums, and the most elaborate temples were entrances to twisted labyrinthine shrines beneath the earth. These "Black Churches" are still extant in many portions of Transylvania and are a testament to the horrors of the past.

By day, the dark priests' servants would construct stone buildings above the soil. By night, massive multi-armed *things* would burrow tunnels beneath the ground. Vampire artisans completed what their servants began within these darkened shrines. Safe from the rays of the sun, master craftsmen erected asymmetrical stone walls. Sacrificial victims were crafted into walls of flesh in more elaborate temples. The Cathedral of Flesh near the Red Tower Pass is an excellent example of this aesthetic.

The ceremonies suited the environments well in which they were staged. Long before the cult of the Nailed God, long before warrior tribes invoked the names of Dagon and Baal, the most accomplished Tzimisce attempted to transcend the limitations of mortal clay. Reworking the structure of their bodies, they reshaped themselves to conform to their visions — or nightmares — of perfection. Those who were most impressive became objects of worship, and servile ghouls carved their likenesses into statues, which were later venerated as images of pagan gods.

THE OLD CLAN TZIMISCE

It should be noted that not all ancient Tzimisce shared the same beliefs. One isolated sect, for instance, never accepted the practice of Vicissitude. Fleshcrafting was a method of painting the soul to them. Centuries later, their descendants were eager to follow the philosophies of the feudal Tzimisce, yet they still preached against the dangers of body alteration. They typically distinguished themselves from their contemporaries by displaying curious anachronisms in attire and attitude.

For this reason, they were mockingly dubbed the "Old Clan Tzimisce." Even after Transylvania ceased to be a feudal country, this small, shrill sect still insisted on the old tradition of overseeing huge domains. As their isolationism and fanaticism increased, they manufactured elaborate legends to justify their extreme orthodoxy, such as the ludicrous tale of alien viruses infecting the rest of the clan. To this night, they are shunned by the remainder of the clan and considered a delusional atavism. It is no wonder that only the Black Hand tolerates them.

Metamorphosists adopted more subtle methods of practicing their idolatry and defending their territories as the clan advanced. Constructing shrines beneath the earth was too primitive, a habit too similar to the ways of the Nosferatu. Elaborate stone churches served as cathedrals for Metamorphosist worship, and after monastic orders began to spread further into Transylvania, defiled Christian churches proved especially useful to the fiendish priests. In civilized portions of the Voivodate, Black Churches have since been reclaimed by the Christians, who generally remain unaware of what lurks beneath their surface. Although Christian services are practiced in these places, the land surrounding them is difficult to consecrate.

Some of the lesser shrines have fallen into disrepair, and the most primitive ones have been abandoned by the Tzimisce entirely. Other horrid things have taken the Fiends' place: Cults of slough, exiled Lupines who have succumbed to the madness of the Black Spiral, and escaped *szlachta* war ghouls all spawn in such places.

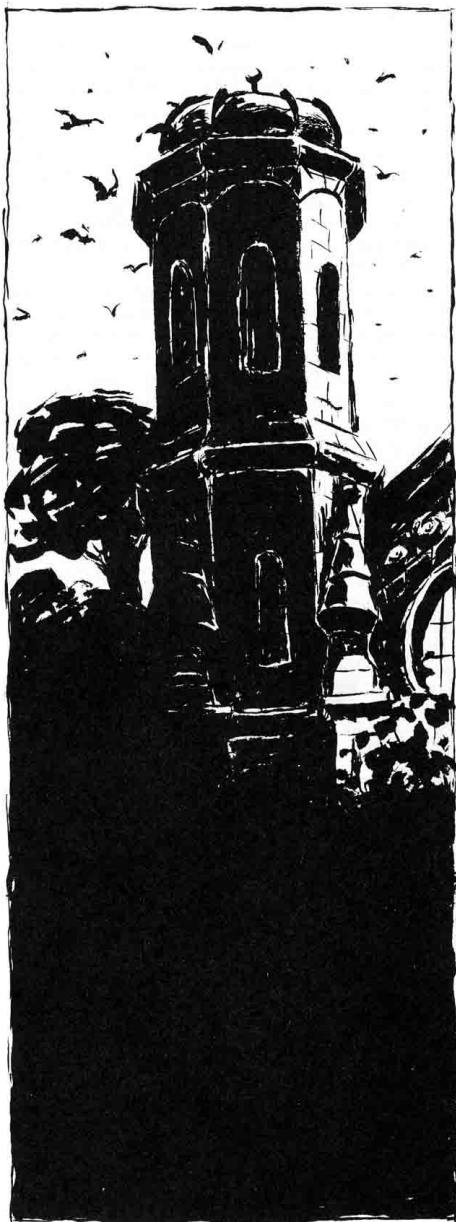
Rituals take the form of demented sorceries for more modern Metamorphosists. Dependence on a feudal estate is not so essential to them. They revile the primitivists who insist on using caves and churches. The most civilized seek out alchemical and mystical laboratories. Such sorcerers might control a small gathering ground resonant with tainted *vis* or other magical energies. Many are deeply obsessed with mystical pursuits, insisting that their studies are motivated by pure intellect.

In their modest domains, these Fiends avidly pursue insight, collecting vast libraries of knowledge and amassing occult lore. The morality of humans means nothing to them, except as a limitation to be overcome.

Other mystics quest in search of knowledge. As of late, more Tzimisce mystics have begun traveling from *tirsa* to *tirsa* to further their studies. Exchanging blood or favors for their services, they have become quite useful to the feudal lords of the clan. While their fanaticism garners them a certain degree of respect from any *knezi* they encounter, only a fool would fully trust them. Trust, after all, is a human weakness.

Mystics have a strong sense of where the land is tainted and they know the names of the spirits that corrupt the earth — the true names invoked by those who seek power. Calling to the ancient spirits of the soil, they can help or hinder the lords ruling over a domain. Crops wither and die at their bidding. The cattle and sheep of the fields give tainted milk and meat. Children and animals are born with hideous deformities. Thus, they command respect from the lords they encounter.

Therefore, as times change and the Black Churches crumble, Metamorphosists evolve as well; one can expect no less from them.



THE CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT

KUPALA'S NIGHT

The pagan ways are the old ways of the Earth, and sometimes Christians fear them with good reason. Just as there is light in the world, there is darkness, and during the festival of Kupala's Night, the force of darkness is undeniably strong. Tzimisce mystics and feudal lords often travel to the knezates of other respected rulers at this time, setting aside their feuds long enough to commune with the ancient spirits of corruption: the kupala. These spirits are the offspring of an ancient Slavic god of the same name — although Kupala's influence will be broken long before the 20th century, he is a force to be reckoned with in the 12th century.

Mortal pagans practice Kupala's Night on June 22nd. They also revere Kupala as a benevolent god. Tzimisce, of course, know both suppositions for the lies they are. The true rituals of Kupala's Night are performed on a different night each year. Only Tzimisce astrologers can discern the most efficacious day for performing the violent ceremony. The veil between the land of flesh and the realm of spirit is easier to rend on this night, and those who revere the old ways can see the very taint of the earth. Horrible apparitions infect the land, and where the soil has been corrupted, the hideous forms of the kupala can be seen by moonlight. They thrash and gibber, contorting their bodies into impossible displays of physiological degeneration.

The land and the ruler are ever one, and so the Transylvanian Tzimisce show their reverence for the land by sharing their blood with each other and the earth. With the assistance of mystics, participants enact an ancient rite involving the sharing of blood. A silver cup containing the vitae of all in the ceremony is passed around to be consumed and the last few drops are poured on the ground. This not only demonstrates their alliance, but it also fortifies them for the task at hand. The screams of the kupala stop as terror seizes the spirits.

Then the slaying begins. Vengeful Tzimisce distend their bodies and sharpen bloody claws. The spirits cry for mercy, yet none is given. Freely killing the maddening evil in the soil, the Fiends purify the land in obeisance to their ancient pact to protect it. Their fervor escalates into all-consuming frenzy much too often, and nothing in the vicinity is safe. By dawn, the madness fades and the evil of Kupala is weakened once again.

Hospitality is extended to guests who assisted in the revealing the following night. The truce between collaborators lasts long enough for travelers to return to their fiefdoms. In a week or two, the fierce fighting for control of the land renews, but by then, the greatest of the clan's enemies has been grievously wounded.

(For Storytellers using the spirit systems of **Werewolf** and **Mage**: On Kupala's Night, the Gauntlet in areas infected by the kupala drops to 2. Tzimisce *koldun* enact a Level Five Thaumaturgy or Koldunic Sorcery [see **Libellus Sanguinis I: Masters of the State**] ritual allowing the Tzimisce to enter the Penumbra and battle the spirits. Statistics for the kupala are provided in the Appendix.)

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VOIVODES

More sophisticated Tzimisce disclaim the primitive activities of the Metamorphosists. Why cower and creep in ancient crumbling temples like damned Nosferatu? Leave the caves to the lesser races — there's a world to be conquered. The churches and alchemical laboratories of the most advanced Metamorphosists are intriguing, to say the least, but there are more sacred (and profane) tasks to pursue. The feudal lords see their goal in unlife as far more noble: They protect and enrich the land itself.

By the dawn of the seventh century, Tzimisce nobles developed an extensive aristocracy throughout the Voivodate of Transylvania. By custom, the most esteemed Tzimisce *voivode* gained exclusive privileges over the human ruler of the region. Wherever a fortress could be built and maintained, a *voivode* would declare himself the master of the land and all who lived there. Lesser rulers maintained autonomy over smaller regions, still insisting on absolute rule and hunting rights. These overlords took the name of "knezi." In some regions, the Fiends employed different names for their rulers (as is the case in the territories of the margraves), but overall, the rulers of the largest fiefdoms saw themselves as princes.

As the seventh century gave way to the eighth, traditional territories were defined, and the names of their tirsas were established. This arrogant claim to land fostered the ferocious dispute between the Tzimisce and their Lupine antagonists, the Shadow Lords. The migration of tribes, which persisted long after the adoption of feudalism, was halted by the formation of the tirsas. The werewolves then unified to reassert their hunting rights.

By the account of the Tzimisce, humans followed the example of their masters. The boundaries of their domains (that is, knezates and tirsas) were far more open to dispute in the early nights. Even established territories could be challenged by upstart would-be *voivodes*. When two princes declared war, terrible battles were waged by moonlight. Trial by War was an accepted practice. *Szlachta* war ghouls and belligerent revenants settled the disputes of their masters. Thus, the local peasants learned the tradition of barring all doors and windows at sundown and not venturing forth until the crowing of the cock at dawn.

Epic stories of territorial disputes have become matters of family pride over the last two centuries. In the 12th century, *voivodes* often keep small armies or the means to produce one in case of dispute. Like chivalrous knights in their honorable duels, they often define the parameters and "weapons" of a Trial by War beforehand. Smaller trials might require the destruction of one creature, while larger battles might mandate the decimation of an army, or even the *voivode* himself.

The strengthening of the revenant families also increased the dependence on fiefdoms. Breeding an entire family of revenant ghouls can take centuries, and once a family estate has been established, it becomes a valuable resource to those who maintain it. Many families have become extended enough that they serve several knezi, though a family's inbred loyalty to its lord and master prevents many members from leaving the shadow of the ancestral castle.

While the Tzimisce itself is exceedingly divisive, there is still a measure of respect between *voivodes* and *knezi*. The prince of a *tirsa* must also have the support of his *voivode*. He is nothing without his master's notice. He must swear fealty to his ruler. In exchange for his rights over the land, he must be willing to muster troops in times of war. There are additional conditions as well, such as the exquisite hospitality one *knez* extends to another and a *knez's* need to acquiesce to the will of his *voivode* in settling disputes.

There is also a pact between the ruler and his land. Some vampires say that if the mortals of a fiefdom suffer, the pact is fulfilled. Others say that as the taint of corruption in the land grows stronger, the countenance of the *voivode* grows darker. Either way, an undeniable bond exists between a Tzimisce and his domain. If a Tzimisce travels abroad, he must bring with him a small sample of the soil from his fiefdom. While he rests by day, he will thus be closer to the essence of the land he has pledged to protect. If he does not, he will grow restless and slowly weaken.

While the *voivodes* grow in power, some neonates realize that times are changing. Just as the Christian West threatens the dark places of the Earth, many peasants are on the verge of revolting against their unseen masters as they accept the religion of the Nailed God. Likewise, some young Fiends do not seek positions of feudal responsibility. These Cainite failures become bitter prophets of doom, insisting that the nights of the *voivodes* are near their end. They roam the dark woods in packs, preying on anything they can catch, inflicting their hatred on anything they can destroy, and hiding from the *voivodes'* justice.

Packs display curiously strong bonds of loyalty, and some have been known to form communal bonds of blood during the festival of Kupala's Night. Many packs have begun to pervert the rituals of this night, reserving their greatest atrocities and displays of rebellion for it against their elders. The worst of the packs speaks Kupala's name in reverence, and perhaps one night they will spread their corruption to the rest of the clan. They reject the old ways and revile the old traditions.

This is an insult of the worst kind, as tradition is paramount to the elders. Despite the dissent of the embittered young, many of the beliefs of the 12th century will persevere into the 19th and 20th. The land lives or dies by the devotion of its protectors. The soil must be preserved at all costs, and the Tzimisce consider themselves the rightful defenders of the lands beyond the forest.

TZIMISCE OF RENOWN

Despite the depredations of Westerners and Tremere, the Tzimisce still form the largest vampiric population in the Old Country. As they consider all of Eastern Europe to be their domain, they do not acknowledge the domains of other clans. Princes formally recognized by the Western clans are often a trifle more than nuisances, and some become the victims of sinister Tzimisce conspiracies. Away from the villages of the humans and the hunting grounds of other Cainites, the Fiends hold undisputed sway over their fiefdoms. Some of the more notable Tzimisce are listed below.

SHADOWY MASTERMINDS

YORAK, HIGH PRIEST OF THE CATHEDRAL OF FLESH

4th generation, child of the Eldest

Nature: Inscrutable

Demeanor: Visionary

Embrace: Millennia ago, at the very least

Apparent Age: Anything he wishes

Yorak, one of Transylvania's eldest Tzimisce, dwells in his labyrinth in the Carpathians. He has become the center of an elaborate cult of Metamorphosists. His Cathedral of Flesh, a mosaic of sinew and bone formed from legions of sacrifices, is one of the most important Metamorphosist shrines in the Old Country.

Yorak stalks his caves freely. Never will he leave his tunnels; instead, he slowly distends his body into forms more suited to darkness. It is said that forgotten things seek his audience, pledging their devotion and praying for his assistance. Yorak expects to be treated like a god because, in a way, he is. His supernal prowess has reached such heights that the fearful whisper of his omniscience.



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Although he often assumes the form of a feeble old man, his appearance is exceedingly deceptive. He can channel the energies in his blood to augment his endurance, agility, and potency in mere moments. His superlative command of Vicissitude allows him to take exotic forms at will. Coupled with his mastery of Auspex, he can rend the minds of those who invoke his displeasure and discern the physical forms that terrify them the most.

Yorak's intellectual Disciplines are even more formidable. He has no need to travel outside his labyrinth; his powers of astral travel and psychic numina allow him to sense activities many leagues distant. His spirit roams the twisted forests as he sits in rapt meditation. It is rumored that he can psychically affect events countless leagues from the Cathedral, although such stories are difficult to substantiate.

Even the sacrifices torn asunder to form his unholy shrine worship him. Many of the victims in the Cathedral are kept alive to suffer for centuries through Vicissitude. Several have formed gestalts and group minds, desperately attempting to erect crude defenses against Yorak's psychic rape. A wealth of information is stored in this abominable temple, although trying to retrieve it would drive a lesser mind insane.

Yorak's cult is devout and well defended, and he carries enormous influence among his clan. Vampires may come and go in Transylvania, but Yorak remains. The Cathedral of Flesh will claim more victims, the labyrinth within it will grow, and his legend of evil will prosper as well. Time will only magnify his psychic powers, and his dark tendrils will spread farther and farther into the realms of Cainites throughout Eastern Europe.

The coming of Vlad Tepes will change all this, of course.

NORIZ, THE CORRUPTER OF LEGIONS

5th generation, sire unknown

Nature: Competitor

Demeanor: Plotter

Embrace: Centuries ago

Apparent Age: 30s

Noriz foresees the struggle his clan will have in the centuries to come. Evolution is a religion to him, and he has turned dozens of childer and set them loose upon the night. Many die, but the strong survive. All are instilled with the same motive: consume the souls of as many Cainites as possible. In this manner, Noriz has declared war against any who threaten his rampant paranoia. What he lacks in sanity, he compensates for with brilliant intrigue.

Spawned in the somber hallways of his castle in Moldavia, the childer of Noriz infiltrate and infect the smaller cities that harbor Cainites. Every soul reclaimed by these Tzimisce furthers their sire's crusade against all other Cainites. More importantly, this legion spawned by Noriz is part of his maniacal bid for power over lesser vampires. He is maneuvering for position until his childer can help him destroy and devour the souls of the Ancient Ones. Noriz wants no less than a place at the right hand of Caine.

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There is no mistaking his consanguineous heritage, with his long black hair and jet-black eyes, elegant nose and cruel mouth, delicate features and resolute cruelty. His demeanor is the perfect combination of aristocratic barbarism. He is both a mastermind and a master adversary. Noriz's weakest childer become his tools; his strongest childer become his enemies. Forging them in the fires of political conflict, he prepares to engage in the greatest of all struggles. Once he drives one of the Methuselahs to the brink of destruction, he will destroy him and assume his place in the eternal struggle for power. All goals must further this cause.

He tests the defenses of other Tzimisce even now. His childer scout the territories of Yorak, sacrificing themselves as pawns here and there as they position themselves around the squares in the center of the chessboard. Were he to overtake Yorak, his power would be supreme. Then again, there are other threats. The Western Cainites insist that Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia should be part of their laughable Christian Kingdom of Hungary. Should he exert his influence against Bulacu, using him to weaken the Methuselahs of the Holy Roman Empire? So many choices, and so many opportunities for misdirection.

Noriz has a tendency to spread his resources too thin. Overconfidence, egomania and dementia undermine his devious plans. By spawning too many childer, he must sacrifice control of much of them. The chaos he spreads is always almost beyond his control...almost. Moldavia is in turmoil as legions of his childer prey on mortals, and Cainites for many leagues have come to curse his name.

SHAAGRA, METHUSELAH OF PRAGUE

5th generation, sire unknown

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Autocrat

Embrace: 152

Apparent Age: 50ish

Great mother goddess, warleader and shaman of the Slavic tribe known as the Vroi, Shaagra drove them west, freeing them from their servitude to a greater clan and elevating her favorite granddaughter, Libussa, to the position of tribal leader. As the tribe passed through the territory of an ancient Tzimisce, they stopped to serve that lord for a time. Appreciating Shaagra's intelligence and determination as well as her tribe's loyal service, the Tzimisce Embraced her, bound her to him with a Blood Oath and sent her forth to claim new territories in his name.

Shaagra ghouléd Libussa so that the tribe would never lack a strong leader. The Vroi moved westward slowly, following the path taken by other barbarian hordes before them. They always stopped just long enough for Shaagra to accustom herself to the new lands and gather some of the soil before moving on. Her Blood Oath long since fallen to a distant memory in the sixth century, Shaagra nevertheless mystically sensed her sire's demise. She helped Libussa settle the tribe in Bohemia, choosing as her haven the location where Prague would one day rise.



Shaagra fell into torpor soon after her arrival and acclimation to the area. Although she sleeps, her will is carried out by Libussa and select members of the Premysl family. She has recently fed on the blood of several lesser Cainites (most notably, two Tremere). Though she only dimly perceives the world around her, she is slowly beginning to awaken.

Like many of her fellow Tzimisce, Shaagra's long sleep in ground tainted by the demon Kupala has left her subject to fits of madness. When she does awaken, she might be capable of almost any action, from the most vile to the most sublime.

MONSTERS OF TRANSYLVANIA

RADU, PRINCE OF THE DOMAIN OF BISTRITZ

Background: Radu's diplomatic relations with the Cainites of other clans give them hope. The Hungarian Ventrue do not recognize the authority of most Transylvanian Tzimisce. They have instead made an elaborate attempt over the last two centuries to establish seven domains within the Voivodate. Saxon settlers have been encouraged to rebuild seven cities in Transylvania, and the nocturnal rulers of these cities were to form a coterie known as the Council of Ashes. Though this plan was a tragic failure for the Arpad Ventrue, it has worked greatly to Radu's advantage.

Radu's family has served the Tzimisce clan since the nights of peaceful Dacia. He was born as a revenant in 1100. Radu gained the favor of a feudal lord through guile and wit and was especially favored for his accurate analysis of the Hungarian threat. He warned that Transylvania was doomed to serve a Christian kingdom, one in which the system of feudalism would serve the West. Although the mortal Voivodate of Transylvania retained some measure of independence, it was clear that the local populace would one day be oppressed more than the Fiends had ever intended.

This was a bold statement — not only because it spoke poorly of his clan's ambition, but also because Radu's master was not, as they say, a True Romanian. The original Dacian masters of Radu's fiefdom were defeated in a Trial by War by an ambitious Tzimisce of Szekler stock. Romanian Tzimisce harbor a great hatred for the Szekler and Hungarian Fiends, considering them bastard childer of their great and glorious line. Nonetheless, Radu's quick grasp of Szekler and Hungarian culture offered him an opportunity.

Radu became an ambassador to the West, ostensibly for the purpose of diplomatic relations, secretly to gather information. When the Hungarian Ventrue proposed the plan of instituting seven domains and a coterie of Cainites to rule, Radu was in a prime position to exploit them. The Ventrue referred to this Council of Ashes as a way to "resurrect the glory of ancient Dacia from the ashes of a barbarous land." Though none but the

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Ventruie truly believed in this idealistic plan, Radu was given the Embrace by his Szekler master so he could infiltrate the council. The arrogant Hungarians, swayed by Radu's politicking, ultimately granted him the title of Prince of Bistritz.

Radu regularly conversed with the rulers of the other six domains. He quickly gained a reputation for diplomacy and civility, and he reassured the recognized rulers of Transylvania that certain factions in his clan wished to maintain diplomatic relations with the rest of Europe. At the same time, he knew that communication among the members of this coterie would be its greatest weakness. Thus, he bound the messenger of the seven princes, a Gangrel named Tiberiu, into a Blood Oath. The information allowed Radu and his secretive Tzimisce allies to scheme against the council's princes.

Betrayed by treachery, the Council of Ashes was dissolved within a few decades. Though Saxon settlers are still building the seven cities desired by the Holy Roman Ventruie, only four out of seven princes remain. Radu is still on good terms with the other three, and he is secure within his domain. Until the Ventruie decide to abandon their diplomatic relations with the Tzimisce, Radu's authority will be recognized by Westerners and Tzimisce alike.

Image: Radu appears weak, almost foppish. It is the perfect deception. His blond hair is unusual, and his blue eyes turn red when he angers. His fists clench, allowing him to show his potent strength. His rage passes and the deception returns in an instant. Because he so loves to participate in mortal

culture, he has learned to age his appearance over time. Every 25 years, he returns to the visage of a 25-year-old man and assumes a new identity for dealing with mortals.

Roleplaying Hints: How eminently civilized you are! The Westerners are so puzzled by your curious orientalism. They find you so amusing, and your hospitality is considered charming. You are exceedingly loyal to your ties of blood and possess the diplomacy to maintain good relations with contentious feudal lords. You are an absolute and unquestionable tyrant when you deal with mortals within your domain. Let no one interfere with that.

Haven: A castle on the outskirts of Bistritz.

Secrets: After practicing his elegant cruelty for centuries, he has also become fascinated by innocence. Every 25 years, he commemorates the death of his mortal wife by assuming a young new mortal identity as a member of the aristocracy. He then seduces a young woman no older than 16, romances her and savors her slow and elegant death.

Influence: Radu is gathering counselors to advise him on how to relate to the other clans. His position in Bistritz is very secure through them. He is one of the few Tzimisce who can converse freely with the Western Ventruie, and he commands enough local influence to defend his lands against rival *voivodes*.

Destiny: As Prince of Bistritz, Radu will become a staunch ally of Vlad Tepes. When Vlad's burial is at last faked, the prince will mourn his passing. The Transylvanian princes will actually regret having to break their alliance with Radu after the Convention of Thorns. He will flee with his clanmates and become a cardinal in the New World. Count Radu's power will endure.

Clan: Tzimisce

Sire: Visya

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Gallant

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1125

Apparent Age: mid-30s

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Leadership 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Archery 1, Etiquette 3, Music 2, Ride 2, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Academics 2, Investigation 2, Law 4, Linguistics 3, Politics 2, Seneschal 2

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 4, Dominate 4, Fortitude 3, Presence 3, Vicissitude 2

Backgrounds: Influence 2, Status 3, Resources 3

Virtues: Conviction 4, Instincts 3, Courage 3

Road: Chivalry 4 (This is a Tzimisce version of the Road, thus the Conviction and Instincts Virtues.)

Willpower: 7

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VLADIMIR RUSTOVITCH, VOIVODE AMONG VOIVODES

Background: Formerly a Bratovitch revenant, Vladimir has assumed both the mantle of Cainite and his sire's estate through diligence, might, and a modicum of treachery. He has conquered jealous siblings and rival voivodes in Trials by War, and his ever-expanding fiefdom defies the depredations of the Tremere. Positioned between intrigue-ridden western Hungary and war-racked Transylvania, and with sufficient power to defy the Cainites of both regions, Rustovitch exists according to the old traditions, in a fashion that many of his beleaguered clanmates can only dream about.

Rustovitch maintains tenuous alliances with Radu currently; he has entertained envoys from Geza Arpad and Vencel Rikard. He would never actually consider debasing himself with such allies, but because they came to him respectfully and with full acknowledgment of his power, he will deal with them for a decade or two. This should give his clanmates time to muster their forces and strike against the Western Ventruue. If not, well, there will be more fiefdom to claim, more villages to dominate, and more power to take.

For more information on Rustovitch's modern incarnation, see the Werewolf supplement **Rage: Warriors of the Apocalypse**.

Image: Rustovitch is the epitome of nobility. His face is saturnine and sardonic; a slight smile forever graces his countenance. He is tall and well built, bedecked in finery that conveys nobility without foppishness.

Roleplaying Hints: Graciousness is the mark of aristocracy. The anger in your heart should never reach your face. Smile pleasingly, yet enigmatically. Should it be necessary to strike, do it swiftly and surely, letting your rage express itself in one perfect, telling blow.

Haven: His castle.

Secrets: Vladimir knows many of the intrigues besetting his clanmates. His spies range from Bohemia to Byzantium and provide him with at least cursory information on most of Eastern Europe's known Cainites. He maintains regular discourse with Myca Vykos of Constantinople, who gives him with invaluable information on the court politics of the New Rome.

Influence: Rustovitch maintains a fiefdom in central Hungary, right on the Transylvanian border. Radu courts his favor and placates him with tribute. Most Transylvanian voivodes offer at least passing courtesy.

Destiny: Rustovitch's fiefdom will be brought down by Shadow Lords and intraclan treachery. He will join the Sabbat, but membership will not bring him solace. Werewolves will tremble at his name for centuries.

Clan: Tzimisce

Sire: Koszczyku

Nature: Plotter

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 876

Apparent Age: late 30s



Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Intimidation 4, Leadership 5, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Crafts (Body) 3, Etiquette 4, Melee 5, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Knowledge: Academics 3, Linguistics 4, Medicine 2, Occult 3

Disciplines: Animalism 5, Auspex 4, Dominate 3, Fortitude 1, Potence 2, Presence 2, Protean 3, Vicissitude 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Influence 3, Resources 5, Retainers 5

Virtues: Conviction 3, Instincts 3, Courage 5

Road: Chivalry (to clan, thus the different Virtues) 7

Willpower: 8

MARELLE, SCULPTOR OF WOLVES

Background: While many Tzimisce prefer to maintain their "relations" with humans, Marelle performs her experiments on the wolves of her domain. They serve as her ghouls and she crafts bizarre deformities for them, often combining the skeletons and organs of several at once. Lupine kinfolk are treasured above all, for the torment of transformation instills the taint of corruption in them. The most loyal of her re-creations become her servants, and the most accomplished journey to the Cathedral of Flesh to meditate on the darkness at the core of the world.

THE CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT



Marelle has made a shocking transformation over the last century. She began her life as a Danislav revenant in northeastern Transylvania. Political strife was a courtly amusement to her; by cautiously playing knezi against each other, she gained a reputation for sage counsel. At last, she was invited to the court of Prince Radu to advise him concerning a dispute with an arrogant Gangrel.

The wolves that served this Gangrel beast as bodyguards had begun to prey on humans not far from Bistritz. A number of infants had been stolen from their mothers' cribs, and the most daring of the packs would run through the streets of the city, causing mayhem. The situation worsened as they began to seek out Radu's haven. When Radu was at last roused from his daily slumber by the troublesome Lupines, the prince took this offense as a declaration of war.

Marelle stalked this Gangrel in the forest outside Bistritz to ascertain the cause of his grievance. What she discovered alarmed her. The Cainite was found conferring with Arnulf—a powerful Inconnu known for his hatred of the larger cities of Transylvania and the Cainites who encourage their growth. The situation became obvious: The wolves were scouts for some larger campaign against the city. Fearful of this threat, Radu Embraced Marelle as his child. Certain that she would be staunchly against the enemies of his domain, he set her against the Inconnu's servant.

Her ruthless response to the Gangrel assault was impressive. Marelle was fanatical about destroying the Gangrel that threatened her sire from the moment she clawed her way from

the grave. She began with simple warnings: Canine servants were found grafted together in twos and threes around towering pine trees. As the warnings continued, her "messages" became grislier. The Gangrel relented, but Marelle did not. When she at last hunted down the Gangrel, she fleshcrafted him into a monster and caused him to be devoured by his own Lupine servants.

Marelle became so bestial that Radu could no longer stand the sight of her. She enjoyed tormenting other living things, and when she abducted a human infant for one of her studies, Radu at last released her from his service. The most diplomatic of Tzimisce had sired a primitive, brutish and vengeful child. Undaunted, she traveled south to form her own fiefdom, paying her respects to mighty Yorak in the process.

She finally found a realm where Prince Marusca, a powerful Nosferatu, guarded her territory with legions of wolves. Lupine scouts warned her of impending danger. The opportunity to practice her craft had returned for Marelle.

Marelle dwells near Marusca's territory still, acting according to her nature and instincts. Once she makes an enemy, she is utterly ruthless in her pursuit of her quarry. Marelle has developed a fanatical hatred for Marusca and will soon begin a sinister hunt.

Image: Flowing red hair extends beyond her waist, and her fingernails are sharpened to points. Her features are accentuated by her race: slightly pointed ears, ruddy lips, and a mouth that can be both inviting and cruel. Beauty is the perfect mask for cruelty.

Roleplaying Hints: You are arrogant, completely in control. You are the Beast triumphant, corrupted by your talent and power. No one gets in your way, and if your enemies resist your will, you find it a challenge to respond with surmounting atrocity.

Haven: A cave in the wilderness, spruced up with (figurative and literal) creature comforts.

Secrets: Although she delights in sculpting the flesh of her "children," she has a mortal fear of altering her own flesh. She has made a few aesthetic improvements, but she is deathly afraid of losing the object of her vanity. Any who dare to mar her porcelain beauty will invite ruthless retribution.

Influence: She is resolved to secure control of her fiefdom and contemptuous of any who would challenge it. Thus, she does not care that the lands she has claimed are technically within the boundaries of Hermanstadt. Disavowed by her kinsman Radu, she is now a dire enemy of Prince Marusca of Clan Nosferatu, a moralistic weakling who knows far more of herbs and healing than the ways of war.

Destiny: Marelle will strengthen her hold over her fiefdom. The domains of Marusca and the fiefdom of Marelle will eventually overlap more and more, and the increasing warfare between them will span a century. Marusca will flinch first and eventually flee to another city. Shadow Lord Galliards will sing epic ballads about Marelle's cruelty forever after.

Clan: Tzimisce
Sire: Radu
Nature: Monster
Demeanor: Fanatic
Generation: 8th
Embrace: 1150
Apparent Age: late 20s
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4
Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Leadership 3
Skills: Animal Ken 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3
Knowledge: Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Occult 2
Disciplines: Animalism 5, Auspex 2, Vicissitude 3
Backgrounds: Herd 3
Virtues: Conviction 5, Instincts 4, Courage 3
Road: Beast 3
Willpower: 6

FIENDS OF SURROUNDING LANDS

RAZKOLJNA, PRINCE OF KRAKOW

Background: Born the only daughter of a Slavic chieftain, Razkoljna led a pampered life. When she came of age, she knew she would be wedded to the strongest warrior so her tribe would benefit from having a strong leader. She would sit in the place of honor and bear him many sons. Indeed, her betrothal at 14 to Jedrik the Dark, the son of her father's aging war-leader, seemed full of promise. By the time she was 17, Razkoljna had borne Jedrik three sons — all of them stillborn.

Though he claimed he did not blame her for failing to produce living children, Jedrik brooded and drew away from Razkoljna. He began to spend more time away from the tribal camp, hunting and raiding. The women of the tribe muttered that Razkoljna was cursed and shunned her.

Jedrik returned unexpectedly from a hunting trip one night. Razkoljna rose from her bed to greet her husband, hoping that he would not spurn her as he had in the past. To her joy, Jedrik greeted her warmly and told her that he no longer cared whether she provided him with sons. He had come to bring her a gift that would free her, as it had him, from the fear of dying without heirs.

That gift was the Embrace.

Razkoljna adapted quickly to her new life as one of the undying. She and Jedrik soon established themselves as the true leaders of the tribe and fed on the strongest warriors and slayed any who dared to oppose them.

The coming of Christian missionaries to Polish lands brought an end to their rule. Rumors of "demons" had spread far and wide. One morning just before dawn, Jedrik and Razkoljna found themselves under attack by a group of sword-wielding warriors led by priests armed with holy water and other symbols of their faith.

The fight was bitter. All of the warriors fell, but not before they struck Jedrik's head from his body. Razkoljna, badly wounded and on the verge of frenzy, dealt a death blow to the last of the attackers. As the first rays of the sun appeared above the horizon, Razkoljna fled the scene of slaughter, desperately seeking shelter from the burning light. She found refuge in a cave beneath Wawel Hill and fell into torpor.

When she awoke many years later, Razkoljna discovered that a bustling trade center had grown up above her, atop Wawel Hill.

Claiming the city as her domain, she set about to learn all she could about what had transpired during her slumber. Realizing the town's usefulness, Razkoljna encouraged Krakow's further growth. By the time Krakow achieved prominence as the capitol of Poland in 1083, Razkoljna had established herself as the ranking Cainite in the city, believing herself to be the oldest and most powerful immortal in the area.

Razkoljna exercises power over Krakow's small nocturnal community and, through her ghouls and mortal servants (including Prince Casmir himself), extends her rule into the daytime hours. The intrusion of the Ventrue, Konrad von Aupfholm, into her territory disturbs her, although he claims his



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interests are only to establish profitable trade between his native Germany and Poland. Razkoljna claims the distinction of being the oldest "living" Cainite in Malopolska, having come from the earliest settlers of Wawel Hill. Krakow has become the premier city in southern Poland through her efforts, and it has retained its Slavic identity despite pressures from the German Empire to the west and the fierce Hungarians to the south.

Image: Tall and big-boned, Razkoljna projects the aura of a warrior-princess. Her high cheekbones and pale blue eyes give her face a stern and regal appearance. She wears her long, dark, golden hair in a single braid wound with gold thread and dresses in a wine-colored, woolen gown edged with gold braiding. A heavy cloak conceals her abnormally pale complexion during her nocturnal promenades through Krakow.

Roleplaying Hints: The earth upon which Krakow stands is a part of you. You identify with the city you have helped to make great. You despise the Christians who slaughtered your beloved sire, but they are too numerous and too petty to bother with. Your concerns lie in keeping control of your home—and your lifeblood.

Haven: Razkoljna dwells in a cave within Wawel Hill. Here she has accumulated a few treasures and comforts.

Secrets: Razkoljna knows of the clandestine meetings of the pagan community in Krakow and occasionally graces their rites with her presence.

Influence: Razkoljna has a number of ghouls and Dominated mortals who represent her concerns in the human community of Krakow. She takes little direct interest in mortal politics, although she deplores the increasing Germanic influence in Poland.

Destiny: Razkoljna manages to hold onto her position, eventually siring childer to assist her in her attempt to fend off the Ventruer. This proves to be her undoing, for she falls to the hands of her own progeny during the height of the Anarch Revolt.

Clan: Tzimisce

Sire: Jedrik

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Defender

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 930

Apparent Age: 20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

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

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

Knowledge: Hearth Wisdom 1, Law 2, Linguistics (German) 1, Occult 1, Politics 2, Seneschal 2

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 3, Dominate 4, Fortitude 2, Vicissitude 4

Backgrounds: Herd 4, Influence 3, Retainers 4

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

Road: Humanity 4

Willpower: 7

DARVAG GROZNY, THE TERRIBLE; BUTCHER OF RUSS

Background: In breathing days, Darvag Grozny was a noble of an eastern Slavic tribe who lived near Kiev during the reign of the Varangian kings. As a noted hunter, he provided much wealth for his tribe, trading his furs for the goods brought by passing caravans. Devout in his devotion to the old gods, particularly the patron god of the hunt, Darvag was convinced that his luck was due to the many sacrifices he made for their favor. His prowess as a hunter even earned him a petty princedom, granted to him by the Kievan king himself.

Then the king brought the Orthodox Christian Church to Kiev and ordered all his subjects to convert. Darvag refused and was dragged to the river, where he was forcibly baptized and required to pay a hefty fine that was used to build the first Orthodox church in Kiev. Enraged and humiliated, Darvag watched as St. Sophia Cathedral was erected, a visible symbol of the hated new religion. Standing impotently before the church doors one night, he swore an oath that he would personally tear the church down "stone by stone, mosaic by mosaic."

Watching from the shadows was a Tzimisce named Vidor who delighted in raiding nearby Kiev and drinking some of her citizens dry. Chuckling, he leaped upon Darvag and Embraced him. Dragging the confused and weakened noble back to his haven, Vidor instructed his childer and exacted a promise that Darvag continue to serve the pagan cause in Kiev. After using his powers to twist Darvag's face into a permanent mask of fury, he released the young Cainite.

The deformed Tzimisce has lived in Kiev ever since, making his home on a wooded estate between the Lower Town and the Monastery of the Caves. Despite his ability to change his face back to its original shape, Darvag prefers to keep the twisted countenance his sire bestowed him. He revels in the terror it inspires on those who fall victim to his bloodlust.

Darvag has ghoulled a number of men-at-arms and about a dozen wolves. He keeps all on his estate; they guard him while he sleeps and accompany him on his hunts. The scattered werewolves who remain near Kiev hate Darvag for ghouling the wolves and corrupting the forest with his midnight hunts. They are too few to risk a frontal assault, though. So they wait, watching Darvag's movements and preparing a trap for him.

Darvag is fiercely territorial and still unrepentantly pagan. Ironically, when the Prince of Suzdal led his forces in sacking Kiev, Darvag had his men-at-arms surround St. Sophia Cathedral, protecting the church from those who would despoil it. He has sworn an oath to destroy the structure personally and refuses to let anyone strip him of that right.

Though there is no one remaining over whom to rule, Darvag occasionally acts as if he is prince of the city (when he remembers or bothers). He sometimes disputes Cainites who set foot in Kiev, considering them trespassers on his territory. Other times he ignores them entirely. He has no contact with the Gangrel, but leaves sacrifices for the Nosferatu who haunt the wilderness. Every once in a while, Kiev comes under attack from raiding Tzimisce looking for sport. So long as they make no move toward St. Sophia, Darvag leaves them strictly alone.

Nonetheless, Darvag has never lost his lust for the hunt, and those who annoy him or earn his displeasure may find themselves as quarry. He also indulges in gruesome taxidermy on those he feels have threatened him. He is helped in this by his one female ghoul, Galatia Karlanova, the self-styled Queen of Kiev. His prowess needs no more proof than the collection of skins hanging in his haven — among them human, Lupine, and (so it is rumored) Cainite. These last he preserves through a variation of the Vicissitude Discipline.

Image: Darvag is of medium height, with a broad chest and well-muscled arms and legs. He prefers to wear tunic, trousers and boots topped with a fur cloak and hat. His shoulder-length hair is light brown and hangs in greasy snarls. His beard is slightly darker, with a slight red tint to it, and is equally unkempt. In many ways, he looks more like a Gangrel than a Tzimisce. His face is pulled upward on one side, resembling a snarling mask, while the other side hangs loosely as though he has suffered a stroke.

Roleplaying Hints: Unlike many Tzimisce, you have little taste for intellectual pursuits or the contemplation of your own dark soul. You live for the hunt and still give a portion of it to your pagan gods. Allow no one to compromise your territory, but make certain you have the upper hand before starting a confrontation. You care little what happens to Kiev so long as St. Sophia Cathedral is left unharmed. One of your chief enjoyments is picturing the church in your mind and meditating on the exact ways in which you will eventually destroy it. Meanwhile, you have your ghouls, and the Lupines are too cowed to bother you. Enjoy it.

Haven: Darvag lives on the estate he earned in his breathing days. Should anyone challenge him here, Darvag or his servants will kill them as quickly and efficiently as possible. He keeps another haven beneath The Sign of the Skull Inn.

Secrets: Baba Yaga's brood wander through the lands around Kiev. They don't bother the city since Darvag makes sacrifice to the "little grandmother" as part of his propitiation of the pagan gods. Once a month, he stalks a mortal, captures him or her, and leaves the unfortunate victim for the Hag's childer.

Influence: None.

Destiny: Darvag once again defends St. Sophia from despoilers when the Mongols destroy Kiev in 1240. Hacked into many pieces, he still retains his head. One of his ghouls manages to escape with his injured master. Darvag lies in torpor under his old estate until Baba Yaga awakens. When he rises, he seeks her out, pledging his service to his dark goddess's cause.



Clan: Tzimisce

Sire: Vidor

Nature: Tyrant

Demeanor: Survivor

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1037

Apparent Age: Late 20s

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

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

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Archery 2, Crafts (Body) 4, Crafts (preparing furs) 4, Herbalism 1, Hunting 4, Melee 4, Ride 3, Stealth 4, Survival 3, Trapping 3

Knowledges: Hearth Wisdom 3, Occult 1, Seneschal 1

Disciplines: Animalism 4, Auspex 2, Potence 2, Protean 2, Vicissitude 4

Backgrounds: Herd 2, Resources 3, Retainers 5

Virtues: Conviction 1, Instincts 3, Courage 4

Road: Beast 4

Willpower: 6





Chapter Six: Born of Magick: The Tremere

Atop a craggy peak high in the Transylvanian Alps stands the sinister castle known as Ceoris. Mightiest eastern fortress of the Tremere, its stark face rises from the very ribs of the gray mountain, sweeping upward into contorted spires. Carved from the rock itself, Ceoris's northward-facing towers cast long shadows over the lands below. Once home to a covenant of House Tremere, magi of the Order of Hermes, Ceoris now houses the archmagi who embraced immortality by transforming themselves into Cainites. Where mortals once whispered fearfully of the "devil's school," few now dare to speak its name at all.

Within Ceoris's dread halls walk the most puissant collection of Cainites in western Hungary. The castle's dark reputation imparts to it the title of the deadliest fortification in Dark Medieval Europe, even among those who merely suppose that it exists. If the fortress itself can be likened to a web of death for the uninvited, the Usurper Cainites themselves are the poisonous spiders who have spun that web. Ceoris seems formed wholly of lethal traps and unnameable dangers. Imagination makes it seem even more perilous and dire than it is. Few come to Ceoris uninvited - no one leaves once he has trespassed.

HISTORY

Ceoris was once a simple chantry held by House Tremere of the Order of Hermes. Existing under a common set of laws, but divided into various groups (or Houses), the magi wielded great power and extended their life spans through imbibing magical elixirs. Their studies and magical workings took them all over Europe, and wherever they found access to large amounts of magical essences (called *vis*), they built chantries to house their covens. Due to the highly magical nature of many spots throughout Transylvania, several Tremere chantries were founded there — including Ceoris. The magi realized that they shared the land with supernatural creatures such as werewolves and faeries, but most chantries weren't too close to such creatures' lairs, so they felt secure from attack. Rather than building castles, they constructed houses of learning, more like universities than fortresses. Most relied on their magic to protect themselves.

Lack of central authority in the region allowed the magi to locate their chantries near several small villages, offering the folk there protection and assistance in return for supplies, guards and the right to search for apprentices. Many folk readily agreed, glad for any protection against supernatural threats and human marauders. Others were too apprehensive of the magi themselves to deny them, fearful that the "agents of evil" would harm their loved ones or raze their villages if they refused.

Ceoris, too, encompassed several villages under its dominion, but in all else, this singular covenant house proved the exception.

This main chantry of the Tremere was constructed as a fortress meant to defend against the werewolves and *vampyrs* who frequented the area. The magical emanations near Ceoris made founding the chantry there worthwhile, despite the threat. In fact, the whole of the region known as Transylvania throbbed with mighty magic, as if the land itself was a nucleus for power. Although Ceoris fell nominally under the control of the powerful magus Tremere, a founder of the Order of Hermes and head of the House, actual leadership and much of the daily work fell to two trusted lieutenants: Goratrix and Etrius.

Goratrix, the senior mage in charge of Ceoris's defense, recruited experienced fighting men to guard the exterior fortifications. Furthermore, he oversaw extensive tunneling into the peak on which the fortress rested, opening new rooms and caverns for the chantry's use. Indeed, most of the edifice was built inside the core of the mountain itself.

More elaborate precautions were suggested by Etrius, a cautious and conservative young magus from Sweden. At his command, magical workings created a cleft hundreds of feet deep in the ground before the gates — a cleft spanned only by the fortress's drawbridge. Towers carved from rock served as lookout posts to give warning of impending danger. Goratrix, acknowledged as chief architect for the chantry's defenses, became the butt of snide comments from the magi of other chantries, who accused him of lacking faith in his powers to defend his covenant.

THE TREMERE-TZIMISCE WAR

Still, such defensive measures proved prudent. Certain Transylvanians were less than pleased with the magi's encroachment on lands and villages they considered their own. The Tzimisce resented the chantries and punished the arrogance of House Tremere by making raids on their villages, on their supplies, and occasionally on the chantries themselves.

Although annoyed and at times frightened by the attacks, the magi were not unduly worried. Their magick held off the worst depredations without great harm to themselves or their chantries. They were able to ward the whole area in some cases, denying access to the Tzimisce and their ghoulish servants. Embittered by their inability to drive House Tremere away, the Tzimisce vowed to find some way around the wizards' magic.

They finally got their chance. The Order of Hermes, in the year 1000, noted that reality itself was changing, disturbing the workings of magic as it did so. Investigation indicated that magic was dying, making the casting of great enchantments far more difficult (if at all possible) and destroying much of the *vis* on which the mages depended to help power their spells. With such a lack of power looming on the immediate horizon, mages were faced with the loss of their greatest gift — their immortality.

Tremere and his followers began experiments immediately, searching for some way to halt the inevitable change or at least to preserve their immortality. They tried rare herbs, parts of mythic beasts, virgins and even infant's blood, but were unsuccessful. Then Goratrix, reasoning that they had evidence of other immortal creatures in their midst, began studying the undead. He discovered the haven of a Tzimisce elder and, with Tremere's blessing, captured the creature. Bound with strong chains and spells of binding, tortured with fire, threatened with an even more dire fate, but promised its freedom if it cooperated, the Tzimisce answered the questions Goratrix asked of him. When he believed he had learned enough, Goratrix forced the Cainite to Embrace two young, unsuspecting apprentices. Once changed, Goratrix made them prisoner and carried them back to Ceoris. He slew the Tzimisce.

THE BECOMING

Many experiments later, Goratrix told Tremere he had discovered the secret of the *vampyr's* immortality. Tremere and six of his closest followers joined Goratrix at Ceoris, where they performed exhausting rituals. At the close of these rituals, the magi slaughtered the apprentices and drank their blood. They collapsed in agony as the magical transformation occurred. When they regained consciousness, they were immortal. They were also Cainites.

Some were shocked; and some, like Etrius, were appalled. Tremere, however, philosophically accepted the change. Sending his followers back to their chantries, Tremere commanded them to begin slowly changing the rest of the House while

keeping their natures hidden from the majority. Tremere, Goratrix and Etrius remained at Ceoris, learning what they could of Cainites, to better fit in with their new society. Etrius began to doubt Tremere. The pious mage was convinced that they had made a dreadful bargain in gaining immortality at the cost of their souls, and that Tremere had known it would happen. Nevertheless, as Tremere's most faithful disciple, Etrius continued to support him.

The Tzimisce soon discovered that the hated Tremere had become Cainites. The Fiends allied with the Gangrel and Nosferatu, fearing that the wizards would move to gain complete control of Transylvania, and outraged that mere humans dared steal the Embrace rather than earn it. Together they attacked House Tremere's Transylvanian chantries, determined to destroy them. Magic was becoming unstable and un dependable. Chantries that had thrown off attacks with ease now fell before the fleshcrafted servants of the Tzimisce. As more and more covenants disappeared, the few survivors fled to the fastness of Ceoris — their one fortified chantry.

Reeling from their losses, House Tremere faced another crisis from within. The Cainite members of the House were slowly spreading their curse throughout the covenants, yet certain magi suspected that something evil was happening. Goratrix, ever impatient, argued for the immediate Embrace of all members of the House; Etrius, concerned with learning the limits of his powers and the extent of his magical abilities, counseled stealth and slow change. Opposition erupted into hatred and Etrius became the target of numerous magical attacks. Magi took sides, and war within the House threatened to erupt. Such animosities attracted the attention of other Houses in the Order, and House Tremere soon had to defend itself from charges of diabolism. Tremere called the seven together to end the quarrels. Although they have vehemently denied it since that time, Tremere forced his seven followers to accept Blood Bonds to him, the first step in creating what would come to be known as the Tremere pyramid.

With the internal disputes put aside, if not solved, Etrius left with Tremere to try to discover more about Cainite society. The magi within Ceoris, alone and under siege, turned their attention to war with the Tzimisce. Frantically searching for some way to protect the chantry, Goratrix sent out suicide squads to capture Tzimisce, Gangrel and Nosferatu. His research was again fruitful. He learned how to craft a new type of creature from the captive Cainites after feverish experimentation. The tide of war began to turn after the unleashing of Goratrix's creations — the Gargoyles (for more information on Gargoyles, see the *Book of Storyteller Secrets for Vampire: The Dark Ages*).

Hideously ugly and imbued with hatred for the Cainites from whom they had been created, the Gargoyles proved fierce and able servitors. The siege was broken, but the war continued, as each side made lightning raids by night and sent servants to battle one another by day. No quarter was asked or given, and the mortals caught piny in between.



BORN OF MAGICK: THE TREMERE

AMARANTH: THE SLAYING OF SAULOT

Seeing the Gargoyles' success in dealing with the Tzimisce threat, Tremere and Etrius studied the beginnings of the Cainites. They discovered that each of the clans claimed descent from a progenitor, an ancient Cainite known as an Antediluvian. Further research revealed that drinking the blood of a vampire closer to Caine gave the imbibers the victim's strength and powers. Despite his misgivings about further blackening their souls, Etrius assisted Tremere in his research, miraculously uncovering the resting places of several of these sleeping ancients. In a series of adventures, Tremere and his disciples attacked and slew several resting Methuselahs, ancient Cainites that had existed since the world was young. In this manner, the fledgling vampires became close to Caine, and their newly developed blood magic increased in potency.

This was not enough for Tremere. He believed that assuming the powers of an Antediluvian (and thus, becoming one himself) would put his new clan of Cainites on an equal footing with the other clans, therefore, allowing them to take their place in Cainite society.

Accordingly, he chose Saulot — enigmatic founder of the strange and mysterious Salubri — as his victim in 1133. Though the elder seemed lightly guarded, Tremere gathered his seven assistants together and brought them to Saulot's tomb. Surprised by the lack of real resistance to their attack, they found Saulot's sleeping form within a great sarcophagus. Tremere leapt on him and began to drink. The Salubri founder barely fought, soon surrendering to the Amaranth and dying, apparently peacefully. When Tremere pulled away from the body, however, he saw that a third eye had opened on Saulot's forehead, an eye that peacefully gazed at the Antediluvian's murderer. Although none spoke of the third eye, Etrius found himself trembling with fear, for it had long represented the seat of all magical power.

Tremere began slipping into long periods of slumber soon after this. Knowing he might be trapped in torpor in the near future, Tremere split his seven disciples and assigned each a portion of the world to oversee. They were to be the guides and overseers of the new Clan Tremere, their first duty being the Embrace of the remaining House Tremere magi.

Goratrix went to France, Meerlinda to the British Isles, and the rest spread throughout Europe. Etrius, the cautious and trustworthy one, was put in charge of the administration of Ceoris and Transylvanian affairs. Further, he was to become the guardian of the sleeping Tremere. Ever faithful, Etrius holds that position against the Tzimisce and their allies, even as the other members of the Order of Hermes begin to realize what their fellow magi have become.

That discovery lies just over the horizon. House Tremere's rise will be over in 1201. The other Houses in the Order of Hermes will discover House Tremere's Cainite nature, and war with their former fellows will begin. It will not end for almost 80 years, when attrition from the Inquisition (whose attention is attracted due to the ongoing warfare) forces the cessation of hostilities.

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

THE KEY TO POWER

Magi are inquisitive and scholarly folk who might stumble upon almost any information in the course of their studies. Therefore, no one has thought to question how Goratrix discovered a ritual that would grant mortals immortality by drinking Cainite blood. Drinking Cainite blood merely turns mortals into ghouls in most cases. Drinking from the same Cainite three times enslaves the ghoul via the Blood Oath. How, then, did Goratrix invent a ritual that went so far beyond the usual effect? Furthermore, how did Tremere and his followers power such a ritual when magic was dying all around them?

When Tremere and Etrius discovered the resting places of various Antediluvians, how did they do so? Why had no other Cainites ever felt upon such knowledge and used it to their advantage?

The answer to both questions may lie with the source of Transylvania's powerful magic, the heart of the demon Kupala. The influence of the demon has spread madness and chaos throughout the region for centuries. Madness is sometimes accompanied by incisive thought and penetrating insight. Perhaps Kupala's heart triggered such revelations, gifting Tremere and Goratrix with knowledge they could have discovered nowhere else.

Are the Tremere mad, then, just as the Malkavians are? Or is the demon content that the Tremere's existence alone has spread chaos and warfare over the whole of Transylvania? Do the Tremere ultimately serve Kupala? Or is Clan Tremere ultimately destined to destroy the demon and assume its power for themselves? How many members of the Usurper Clan even know of the demon's existence? And if most members know nothing about it, who will tell them?

CEORIS

The fortress of Ceoris serves as one of House Tremere's main chantries. Maintained under the pretense that the magi within are still human, the Cainites of Ceoris slowly carry out Tremere's commands and infect those still unchanged. Meanwhile, the war with the Tzimisce drags on and Ceoris must maintain itself. Ceoris has assumed an importance far beyond its original purpose in the wake of the war. Even now, enlargement of the mighty fortress and improvements to its defenses continue.

Ceoris must somehow accommodate the influx of magi fleeing destroyed chantries in the region while providing secure resting places for its Cainite inhabitants. Other improvements are also being made, such as turning Ceoris's caves into lairs for the Gargoyles; creating new laboratories for experimentation deep in the mountain, where the "turned" will not stumble upon them; and providing a secure and warded area to hold Tremere's helpless form as it lies in torpor.

Although much of the chantry is finished, ongoing work makes it an ever-changing environment, one that few of the residents have fully explored. Interestingly, because most of the chantry lies underground, few of the magi ever have the chance to spend much time in the open air. This lends them a pallor that the Cainites among them take full advantage. Their pale faces don't stand out quite so much in this environment.

Aside from their Cainite enemies (and the occasional foray by misguided Church emissaries who seek to destroy the "demon sorcerers"), the magi of Ceoriss must keep an eye trained on Bulgaria and Constantinople, watching for attempts to conquer them and their highly strategic stronghold. Additionally, though their main focus is on Cainite foes, the Lupine Sept of the Night Sky can prove to be a nuisance. Thankfully, the wizards' defenses have taught the werewolves to keep their distance.

THE OUTER FACE

Often concealed by gusting gray fog, Ceoriss's external facade is nonetheless imposing and awe-inspiring. Built up along the rock of the mountain, turrets and towers thrust outward from the sheer cliff face, slashed with dark, narrow windows that emit no light. Set between these shadowy protuberances, the main entryway into the castle squats in a natural cave opening. Iron-banded double doors, covered with arcane symbols and glowing with a pallid phosphorescence, are framed by an iron portcullis whose sharp, jagged spikes rise from the ground and close from above like predatory fangs. Cold wind blows through the teeth of the portcullis, plucking them like harpstrings. Just loud enough to be a constant irritant, the wind sometimes carries whispering voices with it. Some visitors attempt to make out what the voices say, straining to hear their dreadful messages. A few of the more successful ones go mad from the effort.

A strong wooden drawbridge, raised by massive chains that disappear inside the walls to either side of the great door, provides the only entry across a chasm whose dizzying depth instills fear even in those not usually afraid of great heights. The bridge itself is studded with iron and silver to deter entry by fae and werewolves. Drifting upward from the 20-foot-wide chasm, tendrils of fog carry the acrid, bitter scent of rotting meat — from bodies hidden in the mist far below, legacies of earlier attempts to storm the fortress.

A small courtyard lies before the castle, empty except for bare rock and a few green patches planted with wolfsbane. A faint trail leads off to the left, curving around the mountain and becoming little more than a track. Barely wide enough for one person at a time to inch his way along while clinging to precarious handholds, the path ends abruptly where it has crumbled away, leaving a gap some 20 meters wide before showing evidence of a trail further on. Below the path lies sheer cliff face for several thousand feet. Should someone make it across the gap and continue on, the path leads to a small, hidden door on the mountainside. Cunningly constructed by a master craftsman, the door refuses to open. It is actually a false door. Its

purpose is to draw attackers off on a wild goose chase assaulting what they think is a weak spot. Many have lost their lives just reaching it along the treacherous path.

Although a wide roadway once snaked up the mountainside and led to the chantry, it has been allowed to fall into disrepair. Great boulders (moved into place by magic) block strategic portions, preventing foes from bringing siege engines up the mountain. Mounted troops may pass these areas one at a time, either to be ambushed from above or buried in magic-triggered avalanches.

DEFENSES

Tired of the ongoing war, the magi's focus has recently been on hiding the chantry rather than on building more defenses. Etrius supports this decision, since most of the chantry's potent defenses (magical and mundane) are already in place. He has split the magi into two groups: those who guard by day and those responsible for night defenses. This conveniently allows him to excuse the nocturnal habits of the Cainites, even as the unchanged magi unwittingly serve as guardians by day. Also, Etrius still feels pangs of conscience about Embracing fellow magi without their foreknowledge and consent. Dividing the inhabitants means that fewer humans are awake and meeting with the Cainites among them. Etrius hopes to delay their change, though he knows that Embracing all within the House is Tremere's wish.

Various defenses the Tremere count on to defeat their foes:

- The usually dry, windswept Transylvanian Alps are now daily assaulted with spells calling fog, rain and dark clouds down upon their peaks. While the wind still howls around the dour gray rock, it seems incapable of blowing away the mist that conceals the castle from casual view.
- The great double doors that lead into the castle have been sealed shut with molten lead and wound about with spells to prevent their opening. A dangerous pathway that leads to a false door (after a huge, almost unscalable gap) has been carved out of the left side of the rockface. The real entry lies at the end of a path rendered invisible through illusionary arts. This path leads to the right and to a postern door set much further around the other side of the mountain. This doorway can be opened by those with the proper password and key; only those knowing the proper words can bypass the trap which guards the door. Saying the wrong words causes tons of rock, held in suspension above, to tumble down and crush whomever is on the trail — or knock them off the ledge to fall hundreds of feet.
- The turrets and towers that jut outward from the mountain appear to be Ceoriss's most obvious weaknesses. Like much else about the chantry, this is deceptive. Many towers are designed to crumble away when entered, falling several hundred feet into the chasm below. Others have been trapped to burst into flame when anyone enters. None are actual rooms in the structure, merely targets meant to waste an enemy's time and troops.
- Protective spells have been inlaid into the walls and floor throughout the chantry. The placement of these spells is known to all masters of the chantry. People who belong are given a special brooch that identifies them as a part of the covenant; those without brooches are considered to be intruders.



- Mortal magi and guards watch during the day. Some magi are still capable of casting potent spells, though most must perform elaborate rituals to help with them, requiring a lot of time. A few spells are held in readiness, awaiting use; once those are expended, however, the magical threat of Ceoris is greatly reduced until they can be renewed (if they ever can). Magic is, after all, growing weaker.

- Gargoyles guard all approaches at night, including entry from above. Likewise, the Cainites are awake and able to defend the structure. Though it is unspoken, the vampires know that in case of dire need, their fellow magi can be Embraced and sent to fight in the front lines while the elders cast spells or make their way out of the chantry and to freedom. If truly threatened, Etrius has a plan in place for removing himself and Tremere from danger, teleporting out and to Vienna, where he is engaged in the building of a new chantry.

SUPPLIES

While water is supplied by the artesian well in the fortress, the mortals of the chantry need food. Other human needs are clothing, fuel, writing implements and materials for casting spells. These needs are provided both from other House Tremere chantries located in more secure areas and from the villages under the chantry's dominion.

Villages provide basics from their farms — sending the wizards grain, lentils, tubers and the occasional hare or lamb. The chantry also pays the villagers to grow certain herbs for them.

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

Firewood is hewn and brought to the chantry, along with foodstuffs, homespun cloth and thread. Wagons bearing provisions make the journey up the mountainside perhaps once a month.

Materials for spells and experiments are sent from fellow chantries. These include rare essences, alchemical mixtures and elixirs needed by the magi of Ceoris. Such materials are brought to Transylvania by merchants who deliver them to the villagers. They are kept in the village (rather nervously) until time to make the next delivery.

The Cainites have different needs and problems. Though captive humans are used as herds by the masters, they eventually weaken and die. Some feeding on the servants and guards is allowed, but the other magi (including apprentices) are strictly off limits. Feeding from those with magical power produces a strange euphoria in the Cainites, one they cannot afford if they are to protect themselves and infect the rest of the chantry as Tremere commands. Because blood is difficult to come by, the Cainites organize hunts, sweeping into Tzimisce-controlled villages and kidnapping as many mortals as they can find. They are then taken to Ceoris and used as herds until they are bled dry or, worse, used in bizarre, inhuman experiments. Many mortals taken to Ceoris believe they have been taken to Hell.

This practice has two advantages: First, it gives the Tremere new sources of blood; second, it weakens their enemies by stealing their blood supplies and destroying their sources of income. The Tremere always provide extra security after making raids (including Gargoyles) around their own villages for some weeks. Nonetheless, several smaller settlements have been wiped out by Tzimisce ghouls during the day.

MAGICAL SUPPLIES

Once a major source of *vis*, the stones from the caverns of Ceoris are losing their magic. To the human magi, this loss is a disaster, and they wish Etrius would pay more attention when they try to discuss it with him. To the Cainites, who no longer need such things, loss of the stones merely means the inconvenience of having to use more mundane sources of illumination. Nevertheless, a dozen or so stones are harvested each year. Perhaps three of those are sent to other chantries in return for supplies.

While Ceoris's *vis* is becoming more scarce, that is not necessarily the case throughout Transylvania. The Tremere maintain a secret chantry, known as the Wooded Vale, deep in the forested eastern Carpathians. This special chantry is responsible for reaping the potent *vis* that is found so abundantly in those grim, gray mountains. The Wooded Vale's residents bring a few loads of the important magical substance to Ceoris every few months.

Etrius and his fellow Cainites, concerned as they are with discovering what sorts of magic they can perform within the restraints of their new forms, have little time to worry about *vis*. They have found that though they can learn many paths of magic, each path has certain limits. To go beyond those limits requires the casting of rituals — rituals that must be discovered and codified as soon as possible.

POPULATION

All men deserve to be saved, but he above all deserves immortality who desires it passionately and even in the face of reason.

— Miguel de Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life*

The residents of Ceoris include mortal servants, guards, apprentices and, ghouled servants, Gargoyles (though they are hardly considered anything more than animated defenses) and Cainite magi. Both human and Cainite prisoners inhabit the dungeons below. Most of the mortals move about only by day, retiring to their rooms and to bed soon after sunset, while the night belongs to the Cainites.

Although the two groups don't often meet one another, they occasionally cross paths. A mortal master occasionally takes it upon himself to awaken Etrius when there is an emergency during the day. In desperate need, other Cainites can be summoned to defend the interior sections of the chantry while the mortals are sent to the front line of defense.

As is true throughout the Order of Hermes, not everyone agrees on all policies. Seeing the effects of the Blood Oath on his seven disciples, Tremere realized that bonding every member of House Tremere to himself would result in his having to make every major decision as the ultimate head of the clan. He opted for a pyramid instead, an inherently stable form of command. While he remains the ultimate head, most responsibilities are spread outward to his seven disciples, who, in turn, order others under themselves and so on, until the bottom of the pyramid is reached. Tremere insisted that newly Embraced vampires drink a mixture of their sire's blood and that of the seven disciples to create this pyramid. Childer are, therefore, on the way to being bound, but they still

have free will. Forbidding the Blood Oath also ensured that each elder or sire will not amass an army of hidden and bound childer.

Three factions currently work in the chantry, each led by a different individual.

THE CONSERVATIVES

Led by Etrius, these cautious Cainites insist that the chantry move slowly in Embracing the remaining mortal magi. They build Ceoris's defenses but pay more attention to hiding it and creating illusions around it than to ringing it with fire or causing lightning strikes among foes who reach the castle. Etrius and the Conservatives are concerned with discovering the limits of Cainite Thaumaturgy and with building a chantry in Vienna they can escape to if things go badly. Most instinctively opt to masquerade as human, attempting to keep the mortals among them from discovering their true nature. They deplore the raids that bring captive humans to the chantry, but they currently have no better ideas for how to feed Ceoris's Cainite population. Although Etrius is one of Tremere's chosen, he is disobeying him by failing to Embrace the mortal magi quickly enough. Nonetheless, he feels that Tremere supports his decisions. While the war continues, mortal magi are still needed to defend the chantry, and adding more Cainite appetites would overwhelm Ceoris's current resources.

THE CONSPIRATORS

Led by Malgorzata, a former student of Goratrix, the Conspirators still push for the earliest possible Embrace of the humans among them. They take any opportunity to reveal themselves to remaining mortal masters, so they might be "forced" to bring them into the clan as new-made Cainites. Though Goratrix has departed, Malgorzata hopes to help him achieve his goal of full conversion within the next year. Her ultimate plan is to oust "that weakling Etrius" and replace him at Tremere's side as one of the Council of Seven. She believes that when Tremere awakens he will see her worth and reward her. The Conspirators are the Cainites who indulge themselves by raiding villages for fresh blood, though they rarely help defend their own villages in return.

THE MORTALS

Most of the unchanged human magi remaining are unaware that their fellows have become *vampyr*. Few, however, are so stupid that they don't think something dreadful has happened to them. Many suspect demonic possession, and a few have made tentative approaches to a priest. Led by Tosia, once head of her own chantry but now a refugee in Ceoris, the group seeks to discover what is really going on. Meanwhile, they quietly make plans for escaping Ceoris and fleeing to another chantry should their fears prove true.

THE HELP

Several kitchen workers, cooks, guards and other servants reside in Ceoris. None of them has any real say in the governance of the chantry; most are blood sources for the hungry Cainites who share their domicile. Though the Cainites have thus far restrained themselves from taking more than a little bit of blood every once in a while, a prolonged siege might prove dangerous for these mortal residents.

BORN OF MAGICK: THE TREMERE

THAUMATURGY

While the Tremere gave up the unlimited possibilities of True Magick when they became Cainites, Thaumaturgy in the Dark Medieval world is not so limited as in the modern age. Some effects have been lost over time or have fallen into disuse because they have been superseded by modern technology. Before the advent of electrical lighting and central heating (not to mention surveillance cameras, lasers and motion detectors), the Tremere utilized many more Paths and rituals to ensure their comfort and security. Just about any common effect of 20th-century technology can be duplicated by a 12th-century Thaumaturgical ritual. Thus, clairvoyance (seeing at a distance, as through a videocamera left in a distant location) or clairaudience (hearing at a distance, as if from a directional microphone trained on the spot) is possible. Although spying on another magus is forbidden by the Order of Hermes, the Tremere routinely break this rule at need.

While Rego Vitae allows a Cainite to enhance herself using blood, a path for enhancing living things or inanimate objects also exists during this time. Thus, the Tremere can make a wall stronger or enhance the properties of wolfsbane to do real harm to a Lupine — or at least repel the beast. A favorite use for this path is to combine it with an elemental effect, allowing a statue to shoot flames from its mouth or a stone floor to entrap the feet of those walking across it.

AGENTS AND INFILTRATORS

ARDAN OF GOLDEN LANE

Background: A native of Prague, Ardan was apprenticed to a local alchemist at an early age. When he discovered his talent for magic, Ardan journeyed to a chantry house of the Order of Hermes, a society of wizards known to his master. The magi whose group he felt most comfortable with were those of House Tremere. He was well through his studies on the way to mastery when he was abruptly summoned to Ceoriss.

When he arrived, Ardan was called into a council with some of the elders of the House. He had known that the House was at war with local Transylvanians rumored to be *vampyrs*. He never expected to be Embraced and turned into one himself. Swiftly instructed in the ways of the undead, Ardan was told to return to Prague, where he was to found a secret chantry.

The chantry would serve as a main conduit for supplies and funds needed by the Transylvanian Tremere. Its secondary function would be to act as a safe house for Tremere traveling through the area. Bolstered by the trust of his Cainite brethren, and honored that he himself had been Embraced by the noted scholar Celestyn, Ardan returned to Hradcany, the castle district of Prague, where he bought a small house to serve as the chantry.

Although Ardan has been very discreet, his presence has

become known to another chantry in Prague. A few magi of House Tylalus live there. The Tremere interact with their mortal brethren occasionally, but the mortals have begun to suspect that the Tremere “magi” are not what they appear to be.

Ardan has been very successful in funneling goods and gold to Ceoriss at regular intervals. He has opened his chantry to visiting Tremere almost monthly since building the lower levels to House Cainites. Currently, Ardan is investigating the recent disappearance of two Tremere visitors to the city.

Image: Ardan has dark auburn hair and brown eyes. Though his face is pleasant, even handsome, he is somewhat unremarkable, allowing him to blend in with crowds. He wears the work clothes of an alchemist when moving through Prague's streets, but prefers the robes of a magus within the chantry.

Roleplaying Hints: You have been granted the gift of immortality — if you can keep it. You are responsible for making certain your fellow Tremere receive whatever they need to wage war against the Tzimisce in Transylvania. Should you prove your worth, you have no doubt that you will be promoted to a position of greater authority. Responsibility doesn't frighten you. Indeed, you relish challenges. Your greatest regret is that you have not had enough time to study the new Thaumaturgy properly; you still feel like an apprentice when using it.

Haven: Ardan has his haven in the lower levels tunneled under the hidden chantry in Hradcany.

Secrets: Ardan tries to learn as much as he can about the Cainites of Prague. He knows that Rudolf Brandl is a weakling and a fool who is controlled by the Premysls, and he realizes that Josef Zvi and Ecaterina the Wise are far more important allies to gain. His greatest secret involves Krakow rather than Prague. At the request of Meerlinda, one of Tremere's chosen, Ardan Embraced a German spy named Claas Drescher, who was also a mortal magus of House Tremere. He instructed Drescher to infiltrate the city of Krakow and establish a Tremere presence there.

Influence: Ardan has no real influence in Prague, as he seeks to remain undiscovered and quietly do his job. He does command the respect of many merchants, whose wares he buys in bulk for shipment to Ceoriss.

Destiny: Ardan will be rewarded for faithful service by being given command of Ceoriss when Etrius moves Tremere to Vienna. During the following centuries, Ardan will work to make the chantry as impregnable as possible. Under the reign of the Communists, Ardan will still manage to keep his chantry strong, and in the late 20th century, he will be entrusted with the greatest treasure of the Tremere.

Clan: Tremere

Sire: Celestyn

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Architect

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1107

Apparent Age: late 20s



Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3
Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Intimidation 1, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 2
Skills: Crafts 2, Etiquette 2, Herbalism 2, Melee 3, Ride 1, Stealth 2
Knowledges: Academics 2, Alchemy 4, Astrology 1, Investigation 2, Law 1, Linguistics (Hebrew, Hungarian) 2, Mage Lore 2, Medicine 1, Occult 3, Seneschal 3
Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 2, Obfuscate 3, Presence 2, Thaumaturgy 3
Thaumaturgical Paths: Rego Elementum 3, Rego Vitae 2
Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Resources 4, Retainers 2, Status 2 (among Tremere only)
Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 5, Courage 3
Road: Humanity 8
Willpower: 7

CLAAS DRESCHER

Background: As the son of an apothecary in Zeitz, near the Bohemian border, Claas Drescher aspired to rise above his humble beginnings. His intelligence and desire for knowledge attracted the attention of the local bishop, who sponsored Drescher's attendance at the cathedral school. There, Claas proved to be an avid student of linguistics, mastering Latin,

Greek and Hebrew with ease. His studies also led him down more esoteric paths, and he developed a fascination with occult learning. His studies of alchemy and the Kabbalah resulted in his approach by the wizards of House Tremere. Recognizing his potential for magic, they initiated him into their Order and began teaching him their wizardry. Although he suspected something odd about some of his mentors, Claas remained ignorant of the *vampyr* nature of many members of his Order.

His connections with these powerful magi boosted Claas's standing in society and catapulted him into the political arena. Here, his knowledge of both ancient and modern languages made him invaluable as a translator and, more importantly, as a spy. As the German Empire sought to expand its influence into Polish lands, Claas found himself chosen to travel throughout the divided lands of Greater and Lesser Poland, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of each region he visited. His wizardly skills added to his effectiveness as an agent for German mercantile interests.

Realizing that Claas would make a capable spy for the Tremere, the Cainite leaders of the clan decided that it was time for Claas to learn the great secret of the Order. His mentor, Ardan of Golden Lane, summoned the young wizard-spy to Prague. There he Embraced him and oversaw his transition from wizard to Cainite. After instructing him in the rudiments of Thaumaturgy, Ardan ordered Claas to go to Krakow and act as the Tremere's clandestine agent in that Tzimisce-controlled city.

BORN OF MAGIC: THE TREMERE



TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

Fulfilling a boon owed to Ardan, the Ventrue Konrad von Aufpholm agreed to "invite" Claas to Prague and facilitate his insinuation into the Cainite community. The arrangement suited both the Tremere and the Ventrue.

A recent arrival in Krakow, Claas has secretly infiltrated the city in the guise of a clansmate of Konrad von Aufpholm. Making his home in the Jewish Quarter, Claas has used his knowledge of Kabbalistic lore to establish a reputation as a recluse, thus ensuring his privacy and protection. He is careful to avoid feeding from Jews, preferring to seek his sustenance elsewhere. Naturally, Claas seeks access to magical tomes and knowledge unavailable elsewhere and serves von Aufpholm only so long as it furthers Tremere plans for the city.

The arrangement between Claas and von Aufpholm has proved fortuitous. Their common nationality draws them together despite their difference in clan. Indeed, Claas hopes that his helpfulness to von Aufpholm (and the German Ventrue) will help the Tremere gain acceptance among the leaders of Europe's Cainites.

Image: Small and wiry, with the pale skin (even before his Embrace) of a scholar, Claas has passed his physical prime, though he has just come into his full mental capacities. Sharp-featured, with narrow, squinting eyes and a perpetual scowl on his face, he gives the impression of aloof, though courteous, disdain. Most people dismiss him after a few minutes — just as he prefers. He dresses in somber colors, as befits a scholar and a recluse.

Roleplaying Hints: Do not call attention to yourself needlessly. Observe everything that goes on around you and strive to connect all the bits and pieces of information that come your way. Your primary loyalty is to your clan, but you must also fulfill your duties to your Ventrue ally and to the German Empire. Keep your focus on your enemy — the Tzimisce Prince of Krakow — and everything else will fall into its proper place.

Haven: Claas makes his home in the cellar of an apothecary's shop in the Jewish Quarter of Krakow.

Secrets: Claas's biggest secrets are his own. In addition to being a Tremere masquerading as a Ventrue in a land where the Tremere are universally hated as rivals, he is a spy for the German Empire. Claas also knows that von Aufpholm is working to overthrow Razkoljna.

Influence: Claas has some influence within the Jewish Quarter of Krakow and in scholarly circles. He also has influence with von Aufpholm, who often listens to his counsel while serving as Claas's "mentor."

Destiny: Claas succeeds in forming a Tremere chantry in Krakow, unknown to Razkoljna. In the late 15th century, he receives a summons to Ceoris to meet with his sire, Ardan of Golden Lane, now head of the secluded chantry. Claas supports Ardan throughout the coming centuries.

Clan: Tremere

Sire: Ardan of Golden Lane

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1170

Apparent Age: early 40s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Dodge 2, Larceny 1, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 2, Herbalism 3, Melee 2, Ride 1, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Academics 4, Investigation 3, Law 2, Linguistics (Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Slavonic, Arabic) 5, Occult (Kabbalah) 4, Politics 3, Science 1

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Dominate 2, Obfuscate 2, Thaumaturgy 3

Thaumaturgical Paths: Rego Elementum 2, Rego Motus 2, Rego Vitae 3

Backgrounds: Contacts (Klaus von Aupfholm) 2, Mentor (Ardan of Golden Lane) 2, Resources 3

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

Road: Humanity 7

Willpower: 8

SOME TREMERE OF CEORIS

MALGORZATA, LEADER OF THE CONSPIRATOR FACTION

Background: The sixth child of Romanian nobles forced into serfdom, Malana grew up hearing of what her parents had lost because they refused to abandon their Orthodox religion. As she worked in the fields of the Magyar overlords, Malana grew to hate both the Church and her low status. She knew she was born for loftier things. Her faith in her own worth was rewarded when an important, scholarly-looking man came to her parents' hut one evening and purchased her from them.

Her mentor was the wizard Goratrix of House Tremere. Sensing her raw magical potential, he uprooted her from her home and brought her to Ceoris to be his apprentice. She proved an apt and voracious pupil. Soon after puberty, she attained enough magical skill to move beyond apprenticeship. For her name in magic, she took the word "Malgorzata," an amalgam composed of her own name, the name of her mentor Goratrix, and the name of the Slavic goddess of dark magic.

When Goratrix discovered the means whereby the magi of house Tremere could become immortal, she was one of the first to beg the Embrace of him, promising to serve him faithfully in return. Though Tremere forbade the use of the Blood Oath among the lesser members of the Usurper clan, Goratrix secretly bound Malgorzata to himself through his blood.

Along with Goratrix's other assistant Virstania, Malgorzata helped her mentor create the first Gargoyles. She

was also responsible for helping construct one of the tower traps at the front facing of the chantry, using her knowledge of Creo Ignem to make it a fiery deathtrap.

Since Goratrix has left Ceoris, Malgorzata has carried on his work, though her most recent actions involve trying to hasten the Embrace of all the magi of Ceoris. She believes she is doing Tremere's will and that she will be rewarded by being appointed to replace Etrius when Tremere awakens. To that end, she has become the leader of a group known as the Conspirators. The group seeks every opportunity to Embrace magi and constantly undermines Etrius's authority over Ceoris.

Image: Malgorzata's rich chestnut hair is offset by her sky-blue eyes. Though quite lovely, the pallor and coldness of her features intimidate rather than invite. She usually dresses in the robes of a magus, though she dons the apparel of a Hungarian noblewoman when she must travel outside the chantry. She delights in fine gold jewelry set with colored gemstones.

Roleplaying Hints: You have always known you were better than those around you. First as a magus and now as a Cainite, you have moved far beyond your pathetic parents. Power is the key to happiness, and you are an expert in the acquisition of might and influence among your fellows. You care little for what mortals think. Revel in your role as one of the "demons" of Ceoris. Embrace as many magi of House Tremere as you can get away with. Don't listen to anything Etrius says; he's a cowardly fool. You know what is best for the Tremere; it is a vision Goratrix shared with you before he left.

Haven: Malgorzata dwells in her sanctum within Ceoris.

Secrets: Malgorzata knows that Etrius is afraid of Tremere and of what he has become. She knows Etrius is dragging his feet and delaying full Embrace of House Tremere, despite orders to the contrary from the Master himself. She is aware of most of Ceoris's secret passageways and most of the unsavory practices of the magi themselves. Finally, Goratrix confided a secret in her before he left: namely, that he had discovered a way to greater power, and that he would share it with her when he attained it.

Influence: Malgorzata has a negative influence on nearby mortals. She and her cronies terrorize the mortal magi left within the chantry and raid villages near Ceoris to feast on their inhabitants' blood.

Destiny: During the height of the Anarch Revolt, Malgorzata is captured by rebel Tzimisce while raiding a village. She is taken to a dungeon in a captured castle, where she is forced to reveal all she knows of the Tremere and of Ceoris's defenses. Her jailer keeps her for centuries, bound in heated iron bands and twisted into a writhing, mindless thing. In the early 20th century, her captor is slain by the coterie of Lucita, Anatole and Beckett, who come upon the horribly deformed, insane, thirst-crazed Cainite. They do the right thing. After three tries, they succeed in finding her head and cutting it off.

Clan: Tremere

Sire: Goratrix

Nature: Tyrant

BORN OF MAGICK: THE TREMERE

Demeanor: Autocrat

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1097

Apparent Age: 19

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Dodge 1, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Etiquette 2, Herbalism 2, Melee 2, Stealth 2

Knowledge: Academics 2, Investigation 3, Linguistics (Greek) 1, Occult 4, Politics 3, Science 1, Seneschal 1

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Dominate 4, Fortitude 1, Potence 2, Thaumaturgy 6

Thaumaturgical Paths: Creo Ignem 5, Rego Vitae 4

Backgrounds: Mentor 4, Resources 1, Retainers 2, Status 3 (among Tremere)

Virtues: Conviction 4, Instinct 3, Courage 3

Road: Devil 6

Willpower: 7

CELESTYN, MASTER LIBRARIAN OF CEORIS

Background: Son of the seneschal for an eccentric English lord, Calnor grew up alongside the lord's own children, receiving the same education they did, including tutoring in several languages. Calnor's love of learning led him to explore both the occult and history. From his reading and questioning of elders in the area, Calnor deduced that magi had a chantry nearby and guessed where it might be. Arriving on their doorstep one autumn afternoon, he asked to be admitted as a student. Sensing his as-yet-untapped magical potential, they agreed, and Calnor became a member of House Tremere.

Aside from his magical studies, Calnor (now called Celestyn for his love of stars and abilities at navigation) proved adept at ferreting out bits of information, putting those pieces together and making remarkably accurate guesses about where old treasures or forgotten information might be found. When possible, he began traveling throughout Western Europe, unearthing long-lost wonders and bringing them back to the chantry near London. Between times, he devoted himself to his studies, as well as the copying of ancient magical texts in danger of fading beyond use.

His abilities did not go unnoticed. Summoned to Ceoris, Celestyn accepted the task of organizing and updating the chantry's great library. Whenever he could take a rest from his work, he traveled the countryside, searching for magical and mundane objects. He garnered much praise for his treatises on many of the items he found. Furthermore, his fearless treks into hostile Tzimisce territory gained Celestyn a reputation

for both bravery and madness. Because of his value to the chantry, Celestyn was one of the first magi at Ceoris to undergo the Embrace. He looked upon it as a wonderful chance to obtain new insight into folktales of *vampyrs*. Since his Embrace, Celestyn has remained happily settled at Ceoris. His only regret is that digging at night sometimes makes it hard to see what he's actually unearthed.

Image: Hearty and well-muscled from his adventures throughout Europe, Celestyn has dark blond hair and brown eyes. His face is better described as pleasing than handsome. When in the library, Celestyn dresses as a scholarly magus. While on adventures, he favors loose peasant clothing that allows ease of movement.

Roleplaying Hints: Sometimes you feel torn in two by conflicting desires. You are happy reading and copying in the library or discussing various topics with your fellow magi. You are equally happy tramping over Europe in search of lost treasures, especially if they hold esoteric value. Anyone willing to work hard and do the proper research could discover what you find. You are an enthusiastic proponent of what will eventually come to be known as archaeology. Enjoy whatever you do. It's all learning, and that's where you excel. Help others discover the joy of knowledge.

Haven: Celestyn occupies a simple room in Ceoris that is stuffed with discoveries he has had no time to unravel as yet.

Secrets: With his abilities, Celestyn could uncover any secret he cares to know — or at least make an educated guess concerning it. In his quests he has gained allies and enemies among many clans. Celestyn is close friends with a French Gargrel named Aristotle de Laurent, who shares his interests; he is dire enemies with many Tzimisce, particularly the Byzantine Fiend Myca Vykos (see *Constantinople by Night*).

Influence: Celestyn's writings have trickled down into the mortal realm, where he is noted as a scholar. A few of his ideas (combined with many mortal scholars') will eventually lead others like him to develop the science of archaeology.

Destiny: After long service to Ceoris, Celestyn leaves the chantry one night, never to return. Some rumors place him in South America, while others hint that he met his death at the hands of the Tzimisce. Some Cainites claim that he joined the Inconnu, others say that the noted sage reached Golconda and resides somewhere in Asia. His closest allies, the Cainites Beckett and Aristotle de Laurent, remain strangely silent on the topic.

Clan: Tremere

Sire: Etrius

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1139

Apparent Age: late 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 4
Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Larceny 3, Subterfuge 1
Skills: Animal Ken 1, Archery 1, Etiquette 3, Herbalism 2, Melee 3, Ride 3, Stealth 2, Survival 4
Knowledge: Academics (Metaphysics) 5, Astrology 1, Cartography 2, Hearth Wisdom 3, History 3, Investigation 3, Law 1, Linguistics (Arabic, French, Greek, Hungarian) 4, Navigation 2, Occult 3, Science 2
Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 2, Dominate 1, Fortitude 1, Thaumaturgy 4
Thaumaturgical Paths: Rego Aquam 2, Rego Motus 3, Rego Vitae 1
Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Influence 2, Resources 2, Retainers 1, Status 3 (among Tremere)
Virtues: Conscience 4, Self-Control 3, Courage 4
Road: Humanity 7
Willpower: 7

OTHER TREMERE OF NOTE

VIRSTANIA, MISTRESS OF GARGOYLES

8th generation, child of Brunavog

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Innovator

Embrace: 1111

Apparent Age: mid-30s

Virstania acted as one of Goratrix's assistants in creating the Gargoyles. She became so enthralled with the creatures that she moved into a cave system near Ceoris, where she could watch over them. Virstania is responsible for making certain that Gargoyles guard all the approaches to Ceoris; it is she who chooses which ones will be sent out on forays against the Tzimisce. The Gargoyles have come to look upon Virstania as a mother figure of sorts.

Though highly trusted now because she fulfills her duties so well, Virstania will eventually encourage her "children" to become more independent. When the Gargoyles go rogue, they take Virstania with them to teach them Thaumaturgy and care for their needs.







Chapter Seven: Storytelling

Eastern Europe during the Dark Medieval period provides Storytellers with a wide range of story possibilities. This chapter offers some suggestions and hooks for involving characters in Cainite politics and supernatural conflicts.

A basic understanding of religion in the various regions is vital to running a successful story set in the lands bordering the Transylvanian and Carpathian Mountains. Christianity is not the unified faith it once was, and paganism, though driven into the background, persists in most parts of this region. The interplay of conflicting faiths not only colors the attitudes of both nobles and peasants in Eastern Europe, but also affects their views toward the supernatural dangers that threaten to overwhelm their lives.

The modern mind too often downplays the importance of religion in a Dark Ages chronicle; religion assumes as much emphasis for a character as her Nature and Temperament, clan or strongest Attributes and Abilities. Most Cainites were once believers in some religion, and many of them retain aspects of their mortal faith, regardless of whether or not they view themselves as Damned. Storytellers should encourage their players to choose some branch of Christianity (Latin or Orthodox), Judaism, Islam, or some form of paganism for their characters. Religious differences and similarities play a vital role in local politics and society in every region of Eastern Europe. Making these differences and similarities a part of a chronicle can only enhance the storytelling experience.

RELIGION AND EASTERN EUROPE

Both Christianity and paganism exercise strong influence over the people of Eastern Europe. Living as closely as they do to the supernatural terrors that lurk within the forbidding mountains, dark forests and desolate, windswept plains, nobles and peasants both know that only faith in a greater power (or powers) can afford them even the slightest protection against the evil that assails them.

CHRISTIANITY: EAST VS. WEST

As early as the fourth century, Christianity began to diverge in two major directions: the Latin Church, following dictates from Rome; and the Byzantine (or Orthodox) Church, which obeyed the Patriarch of Constantinople. Three other patriarchies, located in Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria, exercised regional control over the spread of Christianity in their respective areas. A series of councils held between the fourth and eighth centuries argued over doctrinal and theological differences among the various patriarchies, resolving issues concerning the nature of Christ, the relationship of the members of the Trinity, and other fine points of faith. These councils ensured that, for the most part, Christians held the same beliefs. Certain branches of Christianity, among them Arianism, Pelagianism and Monophysitism, were denounced as heretical.

The advent of Islam and its conquest in the lands east of Constantinople forced the three Asian patriarchies into abeyance, leaving Rome and Constantinople locked in a battle for religious supremacy. Although still one church, the split between the two centers of power continued to widen.

The final break between the churches of Rome and Constantinople came in 1054, when a disagreement between Pope Leo IX and the Byzantine Patriarch, Michael Kerullarios, ended in mutual excommunication. Eastern and Western Christianity went their separate ways from that time on.

The Latin and Byzantine Churches sent missionaries throughout the pagan lands of Europe. Thus, Bohemia and Poland accepted Latin Christianity. The Romanians adopted Orthodox (or Eastern) Christianity, refusing to convert when they were conquered by the Hungarian Magyars, who were Latin Catholics. Bulgaria, nearest of the Eastern European lands to Constantinople, followed the Orthodox Church. Heresies such as Bogomilism were common throughout Eastern Europe.

THE OLD RELIGION AND ANCIENT PAGANISM

Although Christianity had become the "official" religion (i.e., the religion of the rulers) throughout most of Eastern Europe by the ninth century, paganism still remained a strong undercurrent in the lives of the common people. Generalization about the differences between the pagan and Christian mindsets would do

both a great disservice. Nonetheless, such broad distinctions are necessary to understand the conflicts that underlie much of the political, social and spiritual unrest in the region.

The old religion, for the most part, recognized the divinity inherent in the natural world and saw humanity as part of the gods' manifestations. To ancient pagans, every aspect of life, every force of nature, every object and all people possessed a spirit or ruling deity. Religion consisted of the veneration and propitiation of the many gods and spirits as a means of recognizing humanity's place in the natural and supernatural worlds.

Most pagan faiths recognized the polarity of nature and accepted the pairing of opposites such as day and night, life and death, planting and harvest, summer and winter, and darkness and light. Good and evil existed as part of this natural duality. The gods of evil were acknowledged as equal to the gods of good; likewise, their existence was seen as necessary for the overall balance.

The Christian world-view emphasized the separation of man from nature. Humanity's sins had condemned the natural world, making redemption through Christ necessary for the salvation of man. Good and evil existed in hostile opposition to one another for Christians, rather than in necessary counterbalance.

Many different pagan religions proliferated throughout Eastern Europe, but in many cases, the pagans worshipped very similar pantheons of deities, who differed from region to region only through the filter of language. Although the pagans of the Balkan regions called their sun and earth deities by different names than did the pagans of the Ugric peoples who would settle in Bulgaria, they still worshipped the sun and the earth. Shifting religions was relatively easy for many pagans; they simply changed the names of the gods they revered to suit whichever power currently ruled them.

This recognition of the universality of the gods made the apparent conversion of pagans to Christianity deceptively simple. To many pagans, the Christian missionaries who baptized and preached to them were merely the latest in a long procession of holy men with new names for the same gods. Even Christianity's insistence on the existence of only one God did not fade most pagans; they, too, believed in a supreme deity. Besides, the Church venerated the Mother of God as well as numerous saints. To pagans, this proliferation of holy beings resembled their own pantheon of greater and lesser deities.

MITHRAICISM AND THE CAPPADOCIAN CONNECTION

The cult of Mithras, the sun-god of the Persians, achieved a following among many officers of the Roman army. Its importation into Romania and other Romanized parts of Eastern Europe had a profound effect on the religious development of the region. Mithraicism acknowledged the duality of light and darkness, like the indigenous pagan faiths. Mithraic beliefs included the ritual slaying of the god (symbolized by a bull) and the drinking of the god's blood to imbue his followers with divine power.

The Cappadocian clan seat's proximity to the birthplace of the Mithraic cult undoubtedly influenced the spiritual leanings of Cappadocius himself. While many Cappadocians held prominent

positions in both the Latin and Orthodox churches, their beliefs also reflected strong Mithraic tendencies, which would culminate in the ritual death of the Cappadocian Antediluvian in the 15th century and the rebirth of that clan as the Giovanni. During the 12th century, the latent Mithraicism of many Cappadocians finds its outlet in various forms of Christian Gnosticism and obscure Christian sects (such as the Bogomils).

HOW TO RUN A TRANSYLVANIAN CHRONICLE

This section provides a primer for Storytellers wishing to create a chronicle set in the darkness of Transylvania. The following suggestions can help establish the mood and feel of the region. Transylvania's long, bloody history of invasions, ethnic strife, and social stratification imparts a sense of doom and fatalism to all who journey there. Beneath it all lies the sleeping cancer that eats away at the land and those who dwell within it.

THEME

Eternal war dominates the land. Transylvania and Eastern Europe have served as battlegrounds for an unending procession of conflicts from the earliest beginnings. In the 12th century, the displacement of native tribes by invaders from the steppes gives way to battles between pagans and Christians. Opposing factions vie for ascendancy within Christianity itself as Constantinople clashes with Rome time and time again. The Turkish threat looms ever nearer. Indeed, the invasions and ethnic conflict plant seeds that bloom into the brutal wars rocking Eastern Europe in the modern world.

For Cainites, the battles include the war between the Tremere and the Tzimisce, the incursion of Ventrué opportunists from their base in Germany, and the internal bickering and faction fighting among Tzimisce *voivodes*.

The war between light and darkness becomes a nightly struggle for the region's Cainites, as those who serve the sleeping demon Kupala battle those who seek to cleanse the land.

The lines between peasant and noble are strictly drawn throughout Europe, but nowhere is the value of a human life worth less than in Transylvania. Just as most Cainites consider mortals little better than animals, so do the mortal rulers of Transylvania look upon the peasants who labor under their harsh predations. This is a land without mercy, without compassion and without forgiveness.

MOOD

Transylvania embodies the darkness of the Dark Medieval World. An aura of gloom and despair, both physical and emotional, permeates the region. Terror is palpable; visible on the faces of mortals, its presence manifests even among Cainites, although the immortals conceal their fear behind elaborate facades.



STORYTELLING

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Sickness infects the earth of Transylvania. Deep in its resting place, Kupala's icy heart pulsates slowly, sending tendrils of magical corruption flowing through the soil. Whatever its emanations touch (and they touch everything) is slowly corrupted by the demon's perverted magic.

The malevolent, lingering influence of this demon's heart forms one of the threads of contention between the Tzimisce of Transylvania and the upstart Tremere of Ceoris. Drawn to the Carpathian Mountains by the magic that emanates from the stones themselves, the Tremere hunger for the source of the immense power present in their new home. This puts them in direct conflict with the local Tzimisce, who either serve the evil which has made its home in their beloved earth or seek to cleanse the land of the demon's presence.

Those *voivodes* who have knowingly or unknowingly allied themselves with Kupala see the Tremere as competitors for, and potential usurpers of, the power that they desire for themselves. Those who wish to purify Transylvanian earth and rid it of its taint fear that the Tremere will become pawns of the demon, making their task all the more difficult.

This overwhelming permeation of the land will influence any stories set in Transylvania. To a certain extent, the radiations of Kupala's heart reach beyond the borders of the Carpathians into the entirety of Eastern Europe. The demon's minions range far and wide, doing his bidding and preparing the way for his eventual awakening. Storytellers should not feel compelled to leave Kupala behind when their stories take characters outside the confines of Transylvania proper.

STORIES

Each region of Eastern Europe has its own peculiarities — of culture, religion, history and Cainite influence. The undercurrents that add depth to a story set in Bohemia differ radically from those of Poland. The following story ideas emphasize the “character” of the land in which they are set. Characters native to the area will have different reactions from outsiders, and Storytellers should adapt these ideas as necessary to reflect the makeup of their troupes.

Story hints can be found throughout the sections on history, the cities, Ceoris, the Tzimisce and the other Cainites. Aside from those, Storytellers might wish to use the ideas below to introduce characters to the region or to make their travels more interesting. While the story seeds are set in particular geographic areas and utilize nonplayer characters specific to those regions, part or all of the plots can be reworked to fit any situation the Storyteller wishes. Some of the stories can also be connected or plugged into a larger chronicle that encompasses the entire region.

BOHEMIAN STORIES

The conflict between Ventrue and Tzimisce underlies Bohemian politics, as the German Empire seeks to assert its influence over the land. In addition, the influence of Shaagra and her ghoul protectors permeates the area, radiating from her haven in Prague. **TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT**

A MATTER OF UTMOST DELICACY

An envoy from the Holy Roman Emperor arrives in Prague to meet with the city's ruler, Otakar I. Prague's Cainite Prince Rudolf fears that the envoy may meet with foul play at the hands of one of his many enemies. Moreover, there are rumors that the envoy has come to remove Prague's archbishop, a Premysl, thus arousing the enmity of the city's ruling family. Native characters are summoned to the prince and charged with (or coerced into) ensuring the envoy's safety during his stay in the city. While they may personally shadow their charge during the evenings, the characters will need to arrange for mortal (or ghoul) assistants to keep an eye on the envoy during daylight hours.

The plot may be complicated further if Prince Rudolf himself wishes to assassinate the envoy, thus ingratiating himself with the Premysls at the expense of the characters, who obviously failed in their task. If the characters are not native to Bohemia, they may still serve as guardians for the envoy at the “request” of the prince (who reasons that strangers are easily blamed for any mistakes) or another Cainite to whom they owe allegiance. Regardless of how they are drawn into the situation, the characters will realize, sooner or later, that they are mere tools in the hands of their superiors.

THE NIGHT MESSENGER

A Cainite ally of the characters possesses information vital to their current task or that concerns their well-being. The characters arrange to meet in Prague, but the contact does not appear at the rendezvous. The characters hear of a disturbance in the city's Jewish Quarter later in the evening. The bloodless corpse of the contact's ghoul retainer has been discovered, thus implicating the Nosferatu Josef Zvi. In order to find their contact, the characters must enter the winding streets of the Jewish Quarter and seek out the elusive Cainite protector of that section of Prague. The presence of Rabbi ben Judah's golem may prove a problem, as will Josef's distrust of Cainite intruders into his domain.

In actuality, the Tremere agent Ardan has been attempting to kidnap Rabbi ben Judah, hoping to make the learned man into his personal ghoul and font of occult information. Ardan has intercepted the contact and her ghoul (whom he killed), hoping to draw the characters into a conflict with Josef, thus occupying the Nosferatu and — with luck — the golem long enough for him to snatch the rabbi. If Ardan succeeds in capturing Rabbi ben Judah and the characters (and Zvi) survive their encounter, they may become involved — either through their own volition or by request/demand from Zvi — in rescuing the rabbi (and their contact, as well) from the clutches of the Tremere. Meanwhile, without the rabbi's presence to restrain it, the golem goes berserk, mindlessly slaying all who come near it. The characters should, of course, be prime targets.

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

A group of characters (preferably, but not necessarily, one containing a Tremere player character) receives a request from Ardan of Golden Lane. That worthy wishes the characters to investigate the disappearance of two previous Tremere visitors to the city. Investigations lead them to the discovery of Libussa's plan to bring Shaagra fully out of torpor. One of the missing Tremere is currently being held in Vysehrad Castle.

If the characters cannot breach the castle's defenses to rescue the Tremere, they will have to find some means of bargaining with Libussa for the captives' release — perhaps by offering her a supply of some other potent vitae (such as Lupine, faerie or wizard's blood). Failure to make the attempt at a rescue will incur the wrath of Ardan and the local Tremere. Yet, if Shaagra awakens and attempts to usurp control of the city, the Tremere may find themselves at a distinct disadvantage in Prague.

HUNGARIAN AND TRANSYLVANIAN STORIES

Hungary is the nexus of the Tzimisce-Tremere war. The strength of Kupala's heart draws to it all those who crave sorcerous power for themselves. Add the pervasive influence of the Shadow Lord werewolves, and the stage is ripe for drama and danger in the shadow of the Carpathians.

The Tzimisce-Tremere war takes many forms, from subtle manipulations and sorceries to degenerate practices and savage barbarity. Few characters journeying to Transylvania can avoid getting caught up in the vicious duel for power between these powerful and ruthless clans. Characters native to the region have no option but to take one side or the other. Either choice may prove fatal.

THE LURE OF THE LAND (A STORY FOR TZIMISCE CHARACTERS AND THEIR ALLIES)

The characters receive an invitation from the local *voivode* to participate in the dark rites of Kupala's Night. Setting aside any enmities that exist between themselves and their host, the characters travel to the site where the ritual sacrifice is to take place. Unfortunately, the Tzimisce suffer a surprise attack from a coterie of Tremere (and one or two Gargoyles) before they can complete the ceremonies. The ritual goes awry while the Fiends are thus distracted, and the kupala demons manifest themselves physically. The resulting three-way battle proves to be horrific and deadly.

DANGEROUS GROUND (A STORY FOR TREMERE CHARACTERS AND THEIR ALLIES)

Celestyn asks the characters to accompany him to a site where he proposes to mount an excavation attempt. His object is to unearth the remains of a pagan temple that, according to his research, might contain important clues about the Tzimisce's ancient sorceries. Accompanied by several ghoulish retainers (who are charged to protect them throughout the daylight hours), the group travels to a hilltop overlooking the city of Sighisoara and begins the task of searching for the ruined temple. They are trespassing unknowingly on the domain of Rostog, a Tzimisce *voivode*.

Unless the characters and Celestyn take precautions to keep their presence a secret, they will attract the attention of Rostog. The enraged *voivode* will send a horde of disfigured ghouls (both human and animal) against the characters and their retainers. The attackers hope to kill the retainers, thus making it more

difficult for the characters to keep themselves safe during the day. If the characters are still there the next evening, Rostog, accompanied by his brood, will descend upon them.

Should the characters survive the assault, they may continue their excavation, either uncovering the ruin and the treasure it contains or freeing some minor malevolent being (not Kupala) from its long confinement.

BETWEEN DEVILS (A STORY FOR UNALLIED CHARACTERS)

The characters fall upon an all-out battle, seemingly between a pair of warring Cainites and their ghouls. Drawn into the battle despite their attempts to avoid it, the characters must join one side or another to survive.

Unwittingly, they have stepped into the midst of a deadly duel between a local Tzimisce and a Tremere intruder. Characters siding with one will gain the undying enmity of the other, a stigma that will accompany the characters throughout their sojourn in the region. Storytellers may use this to set up a web of duplicity, manipulation and savage conflict that will enmesh the characters in the Tzimisce-Tremere war. The resulting alliances and vendettas may take centuries to resolve.

INTO THE MOUNTAINS

A local Tzimisce *voivode* enlists the assistance of the characters to secure a castle for his new haven. He has already selected the fortress, an apparently abandoned tower in the Transylvanian Alps. He does not tell the characters of the rumors that the castle is haunted, but he hopes that they can eliminate whatever impediments might exist.

The castle is haunted by the ghosts of its former inhabitants, all murdered by the Tremere from nearby Ceoris, who wished to get rid of unwanted neighbors. Depending on the characters' reactions to the strange noises, unexpected cold places, and other wraithly manifestations, the wraiths may reveal themselves to the characters. In doing so, the characters may learn more than is healthy about Ceoris, though the ghosts know nothing about its exact location or defenses.

If the Tremere from Ceoris learn of the presence of Cainites in the ruined castle, they may decide to take matters into their own hands. An alliance between dead and undead may be necessary to forestall disaster for the characters.

UNWANTED ATTENTION

Anonymous, the Chronicler, attaches himself to the characters, appearing at their side in the evening as they go about Buda-Pest. Although he does not seem to be aware that the characters are Cainites, he does not question any of their actions or the fact that they are strictly nocturnal beings; he simply follows them about and makes suggestions to them from time to time. If his presence begins to annoy the characters or if they attempt to feed from him, Anonymous withdraws from their sight, only to resurface at the next opportunity. Those attempting to feed from him simply find themselves unable to approach closer than normal conversational range (just beyond the reach of their fangs). Whenever Anonymous appears, the characters are soon blessed by one fortuitous event or another.

The Storytellers should emphasize Anonymus's harmlessness, as well as his effect as a good luck charm. Hopefully, the characters will eventually accept him as a mascot of sorts. Once this has happened, the Storyteller can use Anonymus to lead the characters into any number of potentially fatal situations, including — but not limited to — the war between the Tzimisce and the Tremere, captivity by the Shadow Lords, or involvement in Ventruue schemes to gain control of the region. In this way, the characters can become witnesses to the advance of Cainite history in Hungary with minimal risk to their unives (so long as they remain close to Anonymus).

TRANSYLVANIAN STORY SKETCHES

The two summaries below present two very different adventures. The first contains enough information to play out a classic tragic romance, no doubt in the same style as Lucy Westerna's seduction in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. The second is an example of a five-act adventure, one that allows a coterie to hear both the Tzimisce and Tremere perspectives on Eastern conflict.

THE RITUAL OF DEATH'S EMBRACE (LEVEL ONE RITUAL)

This Transylvanian ritual (requires a level of either Thaumaturgy or Kolchunic Sorcery; see *Libellus Sanguinis I: Masters of the State*) allows a vampiric master to savor the Embrace of a child over a prolonged period of time. Instead of having to hurry through a quick killing, or a complete draining of a vessel of blood, the act of the Embrace can be extended over several days. Each night, the Cainite drains one to three points of human blood, replacing it with one to three Blood Points of vitae. Each time this consummation occurs, the sire brings his potential child closer to death.

A mortal victim slowly dies as she is seduced by Death's Embrace. Her skin becomes pallid, her breathing shallows, and her heart rate slows. Even the most talented mortal physicians will merely suspect that she has contracted some disease of the blood. Bloodletting forestalls the process, but the taint of evil still remains. For every two pints (that's pints, not points) of blood drained or leeches, a Blood Point of vitae can be removed.

If the vampire transfers 10 Blood Points of vitae to the victim, the mortal undergoes the final transformation of the Embrace. If the body is then cremated, all is lost, but if the body is buried, the final stages of the transformation can occur. It is then possible for the sire or his servants to dig up the body and free the child, although it is just as common for the newly created child to earn the respect of her master by clawing her way to the surface. The result is a devotion that even death cannot destroy.

There is, of course, one other method of interceding for the poor victim. If the sire is killed before the ritual is complete, the victim will be restored completely within a day. Failing that, the body must be staked and dismembered before the unfortunate soul resurrects as a vampiric servant of the Damned.

SEDUCTION OF THE DARK EMBRACE

Radu, the Tzimisce Prince of Bistritz, has recently been introduced to a woman who intrigues him as few have. Arianne, a stunning Toreador from the West, decided long ago that her liberation from the light would mean her complete freedom. While traveling from Paris to the courts of Russia, she entered the domain of Radu, introduced herself most hospitably, and found herself strangely attracted to this savage nobleman. She has decided to delay her journey, having appraised Radu as a fitting conquest. It is Arianne's desire to seduce him and place him under a Blood Oath. She is not sure of the result she desires but thinks that it might involve the consummation of her passion or Radu's eventual enslavement.

Contrary to Arianne's plans, Radu has begun the seduction of another woman — a beautiful young lady of 16 winters who is the daughter of a local merchant. He enters her bedchamber each night and brings her the gift of his vitae. Radu slowly gifts her with the Embrace. Through an ancient Tzimisce ritual, she is gradually dying, and each dying day brings her closer to her baptism into darkness.

Radu does not wish to forestall the Parisian Toreador too much. No ally should be discounted, and thus, he remains aloof to encourage her. This is where events take a more tragic turn. There is no point in fooling a Toreador in the ways of love, especially Arianne. She is aware of Radu's nocturnal activities and she wants to use it to her advantage.

Arianne is bitter and jealous enough to gain pleasure from shattering the fragile romance, and Radu's tragic plight is an opportunity for her to inflict great pain. Radu will be unable to endure another night without Arianne's sympathy and lustful exploitation once his morale has been broken. Nonetheless, he is very attracted to the young woman as well, and while Radu is away, Arianne has become another of the ingenue's nocturnal companions. Their affair was little more than friendship at first, but they grow closer every night. Should Radu find out about this, he would grow insanely jealous.

This intrigue has advanced to the point where each of the undead lovers, in true vampiric style, is eager to enlist the clandestine assistance of other Cainites and set them against his or her adversary. This courtly amusement is a dangerous game; if the emotional wounds one courtier inflicts on the other cut too deeply, any who ally with one of the lovers will earn the disfavor of the other. Both sides have much to lose. The torment of a failed romance could be more torturous than what even Radu could suspect, and Arianne has a malice streak when playing the game of courtly love. When the chance for romance presents itself, however, true romantics will risk everything...including the fates of those who help them.

ENTER FREELY, GO SAFELY...

This is a miniature chronicle set in five acts. Choices made in early acts affect the outcome of subsequent ones.

Act One: The coterie receives an elegantly written invitation from a Tzimisce *voivode* in southern Transylvania. The parchment is hand-delivered by a Nosferatu messenger, a tortured brute who implores the heroic coterie to help his master. The Tzimisce *voivode* has heard of the coterie's skillful handling of a



difficult situation. (This story may be real, grossly distorted, or entirely false.) The *voivode* would like to see their capability firsthand, for he would like to enlist them in solving a most perplexing problem. The servile Nosferatu has already brought horses, and he is eager to lead them to his master's estate.

Act Two: The journey by horseback to the Fiend's knezate takes up most of the night. (If the journey is farther, the characters spend the evening in a typically atmospheric Transylvanian inn.) The characters arrive about an hour before dawn and have no choice but to rely upon the mercy...er, hospitality, of their host. The *voivode*'s lifestyle is somewhat more eccentric than the characters expected, even for a Tzimisce. He slits the throat of a weak-willed Slav in his dining room for their refreshment; before dawn, he leads them to a series of coffins in a nearby room where they may rest; at the first crowing of the cock, he warns them that the grounds are patrolled by feral wolves and then vanishes into a cloud of mist. Once in the estate of the *voivode*, the members of the coterie must be extremely careful not to insult him or reject his hospitality.

Act Three: The next evening, the *voivode* tells them of his harassment by the local Tremere. Most of his stories are exaggerations or fabrications. Tremere spies allegedly drained all the blood from the body of his only Gangrel bodyguard five years ago. Gargoyles abducted a beautiful young mortal woman he loved, but now she is gone. Someone has been lurking outside his estate, and it's obviously a Tremere spy. He is always the victim in these stories, and he is obviously

lying each time. However, he has gained information about a small renegade chantry hidden in the nearby hills, and the sounds most earnest when he states that his wolf servants have picked up the scent of his loved one nearby. The wolves then howl in response, as if by design.

Oh, if he could but regain his lost love! Who knows what they might have done to her! He loves to tell terrible stories about the Usurper Tremere — he even performs a suitably dramatic retelling of the fate of Saulot. Never mind that he gets many of the details wrong; the need for vengeance consumes him!

He then leads the coterie to an opulent room, where they receive a present: Strapped to a stone table in one of the more luxurious rooms is a member of the renegade chantry. Should the coterie begin to refuse his hospitality, the shadow of a hulking *voyzd* is seen, dimly illuminated by moonlight through the crude glass of a window, and the wolves continue their "music of the night." Perhaps it would be wise not to anger him...

Act Four (First Choice): The coterie has several ways they can negotiate their way through this predicament. The first is to side wholeheartedly with the Tzimisce. Interrogating (or torturing) the Tremere reveals that the chantry is poorly guarded. (The Tzimisce gives them advice throughout the questioning on how to better "motivate" their captive.)

Once they have ascertained the location of the chantry, the coterie can travel there. After the players describe their journey and their stealthy approach, they'll discover that it's little more

than a hut. The threat has been greatly exaggerated, as only two Gargoyles are defending the young woman. Sadly, she has already been Embraced by the renegade Tremere, and worse, she has fallen in love with him.

Act Five (First Choice): Where should the heroes take the young woman now? Returning her to the *voivode* means condemning her to a life of torment. If she is at last returned, the outraged *voivode* will whip her for her disobedience, and the characters will be forced to either act like utter bastards and enjoy the spectacle or join with her in deposing of the *voivode*. Of course, defeating him in a melee is difficult (he is seventh generation and has Dominate 3, Potence 3, Vicissitude 5), but then again, grabbing a poker from the fireplace and setting the tapestries ablaze would be most efficacious. In this case, the *voivode* escapes as his terrible castle is consumed in flame.

If the coterie decides not to return the woman, she will ask for them to escort her to a nearby chantry where she can find protection. In this case, the events proceed in much the same manner as **Act Five (Second Choice)**.

Act Four (Second Choice): If the players side with the Tremere, they must first liberate him from the castle. Monstrous creations stalk them through the forest, wolves snap at their heels and the *voivode* becomes a powerful and relentless enemy. The Tremere, however, is little more than an errant neonate who now regrets defying his clan. He tells great stories about the ruthlessness of the Tzimisce, including how they have gained wealth and privilege by oppressing the weak mortals of their domains. As with the *voivode*, he grossly exaggerates the crimes of his enemies.

Act Five (Second Choice): Nonetheless, the Tremere neonate speaks of wanting to rejoin his family and asks the coterie to accompany him to another nearby chantry to accept a reward. It is merely a trap, of course. Should our heroes accompany the Tremere to his destination and go inside, they see the Nosferatu who first delivered the message they received. He is chained in irons that display mysterious glowing sigils. His body is already beginning to transform into the crude physiognomy of a primitive Gargoyle. Right on cue, the hulking brute breaks his chains as leathery wings erupt from his back. He screams in pain, but he shows no malice to his abductors. Instead, he assaults the coterie as his masters steal away, forcing our heroes to destroy him.

In other words, the coterie must choose which vile, underhanded villain to ally with in this adventure. Either way, they will gain some degree of hatred for either the Tremere or the Tzimisce...providing a hook for next week's story.

POLAND STORIES

The Kingdom of Poland no longer exists; in its place are numerous small principalities and duchies. Nevertheless, there are those who long to reunite the land, and those who desire just as strongly to prevent its reunification. Here, Tzimisce and Ventruie struggle for supremacy. Here, too, the city of Krakow attempts to assert itself as a rival to Prague in learning and culture.

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

THE LIFELOOD OF KRAKOW

At the instigation of Ludmilla, the pagan population outside Krakow has begun a concerted effort to halt trade coming to and going out of the city. Caravans have been ambushed, goods stolen, and guards slain or frightened off. Tales of bestial monsters among the attackers have discouraged many traders from approaching the city. The Ventruie Konrad von Aufpohlm fears that his interests in Krakow will be harmed if the assault on commerce continues. He asks the characters — particularly, Ventruie ones — to deal with the matter.

Characters must venture outside the walls of the city to discover what is going on. Ludmilla has enlisted the assistance of the Gargel Jolanta in forestalling trade between Krakow and the rest of Europe. At the heart of the matter is the pagans' resentment over Krakow's continued growth and potential expansion. Pagan characters may find themselves siding with the rebellious peasants despite orders to break the economic siege.

More than just the commercial life of the city is at stake. The city's Cainite prince would love to see von Aufpohlm's mercantile hold over Krakow broken, but Ludmilla cannot afford to have a general uprising threaten her own authority or subvert her plans for Krakow's future greatness.

PILLARS OF SALT

The Cappadocian Kazimierz has noticed that workers in Tyniec Abbey's salt mines have been disappearing with alarming frequency. He enlists the assistance of the characters, promising future favors in exchange for discovering what is at the root of this disturbance. Realizing that the city of Krakow is attempting to gain control of the mine's considerable revenues, Kazimierz initially suspects that one of the city's Cainite population is behind the plot. Therefore, he tells the characters to ascertain as much information as they can within the city before venturing into the mines. When (or if) the characters finally realize that none of Krakow's known Cainites is involved, they may begin to suspect that they are dealing with someone as yet unknown.

Krakow will succeed in acquiring rights to the salt mines in a few years, and the characters' actions may provide the impetus for the change in ownership. Should they assist the city's Cainites in acquiring the rights, they gain valuable allies, but alienate Kazimierz. Yet, if they survive an encounter with the Salt Queen, they're already ahead of the game.

BULGARIA STORIES

Bulgaria is involved in an ongoing struggle for independence from Byzantine rule. On the verge of winning its battle, this determined nation must soon consider how it will defend itself from other enemies once it can no longer rely on assistance from Constantinople.

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

As the Bulgarians begin their final push for independence, Tzimisce *voivodes* convene to discuss how freedom from Byzantine rule will affect the fate of their lands. The meeting is held at an abandoned castle near Sofia, a place previously agreed upon as

"neutral" territory. The characters arrive here as part of the retinue of one of the attendees; if one of the characters is a *voivode*, the other characters may be allied with her. High on the list of topics to be covered is the continued presence of Sofia's Prince Basilio, whose strong ties to Constantinople are a constant concern to the *voivodes*. Some of the *Tzimisce* believe it is time to depose him and replace him with Gabor the Bulgar, now in hiding in Constantinople. However, others feel that any action against Basilio must wait until after Bulgaria severs her connections with the Byzantine Empire.

Unbeknownst to the characters (or to any of the attendees, for that matter), Prince Basilio has learned of the gathering and (through intermediaries) has apprised the local werewolves of the *Tzimisce* meeting. Their attack, intended to destroy the Leeches, may serve as the impetus to unite the rival *Tzimisce* against an outside threat. The characters will have the opportunity to play politics with the local *Tzimisce* as well as exercise their combat skills when the werewolves launch their attack.

ASSASSIN'S HONOR

Husayn, the Assamite, is under pressure from Gabor the Bulgar to assassinate the Prince of Sofia, Basilio the Elder. In his attempt to avoid having to kill someone he has come to admire, Husayn has decided on a scheme that may allow him to keep the letter of his contract while simultaneously giving his victim a chance of survival. The Assamite is bound to make only a single attempt on Basilio's life because of the terms of his agreement; if the prince survives his attack, the terms of the contract are fulfilled and Husayn has discharged his duty. Husayn realizes that he may not survive an unsuccessful attempt on the prince's life, but his honor demands that he give Basilio every chance.

To this end, the characters receive information from a reliable source that an assassination attempt will be made on Prince Basilio within the next few evenings. If the characters approach the prince with this knowledge, he will immediately put them in charge of preventing any harm from coming to him (on penalty of their unlivings). If the characters have no interest in protecting the prince and don't reveal what they have discovered, they will receive an offer from an "interested party," who promises them great rewards should they circumvent the assassination attempt.

With careful investigation, characters may discover who is actually behind the assassination and even learn the identity of the potential assassin. If they unearth Husayn's involvement, they may ascertain that the Assamite himself is the source of their information. The characters may or may not prevent the assassination; saving Basilio could involve slaying Husayn or at least sending him into torpor. If they succeed, they will earn the prince's (and Constantinople's) friendship and Gabor's (and possibly other Bulgarian *Tzimisce*'s) enmity. If Husayn somehow survives, he, too, will owe the characters a debt.

FAIR GAME

Travelers from Eastern Europe throng the streets and fill the taverns of Sofia during the annual fall cattle drive. A festive air (among other odors) pervades the city, even during the evenings. The presence of so many visitors provides a false sense of safety in

numbers; thus, shops that normally close their doors at sunset remain open, while townspeople, who rarely walk about after dark, take advantage of the late hours to roam the streets (usually in groups).

Cainite characters may notice the presence of a minstrel whose lyrics contain passages implying knowledge of their secrets — allusions to the *Book of Nod* or the destruction of Carthage. If they confront the minstrel, they may uncover the existence of a small group of Brujah who, working with local pagans, hope to gain control of Sofia during the coming political tumult and establish that city as Carthage reborn.

Any moves in that direction would, of necessity, incite the wrath of both prince and *voivodes*.

KIEVAN RUS STORIES

PREDATORS AT THE GATES

Having traveled to the ruins of Kievan Rus, perhaps lured by the thought of valuable plunder or simply to satisfy their curiosity, the characters experience the sensation of someone stalking them. Since they are far from "civilization," they may assume they have attracted the attention of a pack of Lupines or wandering Gangrel. The truth is worse than either possibility.

Desperate to find Cainite blood to feed their sleeping mistress, members of Baba Yaga's brood have been following the characters, looking for an opportunity to attack and slay them for their vitae. The ensuing flight through the nocturnal ruins should be horrifying and action-packed.

A MISSION OF DUBIOUS MERCY

Rumors abound that a powerful Cainite lies trapped in torpor within the ruins of Kievan Rus. The characters may choose to investigate on their own or they may travel there at the request of one of their sires. Their journey will be fraught with danger from packs of hostile Silver Fangs, territorial Gangrel, and rival Cainites.

LITHUANIAN STORIES

THE DEATHLESS

Desperate for a scrap of ancient lore, the characters discover that the only possessor of the knowledge they seek is an ancient Lithuanian *Tzimisce* of ill repute. Characters must journey to this hoary old Fiend's stronghold in the Baltic marshes. The vampire dwells in an ancient pagan temple on an island in the midst of a swift-flowing river. Local pagans, having been conditioned and Dominated over generations, frequently bring human sacrifices to their "goddess."

The Methuselah is not averse to parting with the information... for a price. She enjoys riddle games and contests of various sorts. She may use her connections with local fae to set up elaborate magical contests in which the characters must participate. Either refusal or failure brings a hideous death. Should characters seek to storm the temple by force, they will find it guarded by legions of animal ghouls, including ferocious, needle-toothed pikes that cruise beneath the river's surface.

STORYTELLING





Chapter Eight: Denizens of Darkness

*It is the part of men to fear and tremble,
When the most mighty gods by tokens send
Such dreadful heralds to astonish us.*
- Shakespeare, Julius Caesar

Cairnites are not the only supernatural or magical inhabitants of Eastern Europe. The forests and mountains of Transylvania, Poland, and the Balkan regions are the ancient territories of Lupines, while the fair folk (or faeries) still abound wherever true believers honor the old ways and nature has not yet seen the heavy hand of human progress. The dead hover just out of sight, as always, while malevolent spirits seek to corrupt mortals and Cairnites alike with promises of power.

Mortals, too, bear the mark of the supernatural upon them. Human mages practice their rituals and rites in hidden chantries or among tribal people who accept them as voodoo workers or shamans. Strangest of all are the ghoul families of Eastern Europe, servants of their Tzimisce masters who have grown less human with each passing generation.

THE CHANGING

Eastern Europe's dense forests and mountain ranges give succor to packs of Lupines. Most Transylvanian Cainites see werewolves as enemies and rivals. Most werewolves, in turn, take offense at even the modest cities and towns that serve as trading centers and fortified enclaves. The mere scent of a noble hunting party invading the forests to track and destroy a pack of wolves (either for their luxurious pelts or for the sheer sport of the kill) is enough to drive nearby Lupines into a furious rampage. Even the small villages and isolated huts nestling just inside the forests' edges provide targets for werewolf wrath.

Werewolves exercised strict control over the growth of human populations in ages past via the Impergium, or the practice of culling (i.e., killing) excess members of a village or tribe when its numbers exceeded acceptable thresholds. The Lupines still invoke this harsh regimen in some areas of Eastern Europe. Some villages deliver their old or infirm members, criminals and, occasionally, sickly infants to the mercies of "nature." These offerings are either simply abandoned in the wilderness (if they are babies) or staked out/chained on a hill. The end results are the same: They are left to die of starvation or they fall prey to wolves or other predators. While Christian settlements decry this practice, pagan enclaves often accept it as part of the compact with nature under which they live.

SHADOW LORDS

Although many tribes of werewolves make Eastern Europe their home, by far the most important is the tribe known as the Shadow Lords. Transylvanian Shadow Lord tyrants eagerly exerted their dominance over humans in the days of the Impergium, waging terrible wars to test their mettle against others.

Alas, those days are long gone. The Shadow Lords realize humanity has failed in Transylvania. Men have behaved little better than beasts: They have conquered and subjugated opposing tribes, oppressed the weak for their own wealth and fallen prey to the devious Cainites.

Despite the changing times, the threat of Thunder's Children has not passed from the world. The Shadow Lords see the struggles of the world as opportunities to strengthen themselves. Though humanity is failing in its evolution, arrogant Shadow Lords are convinced that they are purifying their tribe and that one night they will dominate the Garou.

THE SEPT OF THE NIGHT SKY

Almost all of Transylvania's Garou defer to their sept in the southern Carpathians. Although packs roam throughout Transylvania, most return to their caern in Wallachia several times a year. There are great deeds to be done and greater challenges awaiting the guardians of Gaia. The Lords, in particular, are eager to secure honor and glory to further their rise to power.



TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

The sept's caern can be found high in the peaks of the southern Carpathians. Werewolves can look down on the lands of Transylvania and Wallachia from the summit. For aspiring cubs, reaching the summit is a perilous adventure in itself. The path is treacherous and more than one werewolf has fallen from a road he thought was secure. Ravens and crows circle around the summit. Occasionally, a Stormcrow spirit descends to meet an arriving werewolf, offering assistance in finding the right path in exchange for knowledge. Of course, many of these spirits already serve other Lords, ensuring that those in power gain information about travelers long before they meet with the sept.

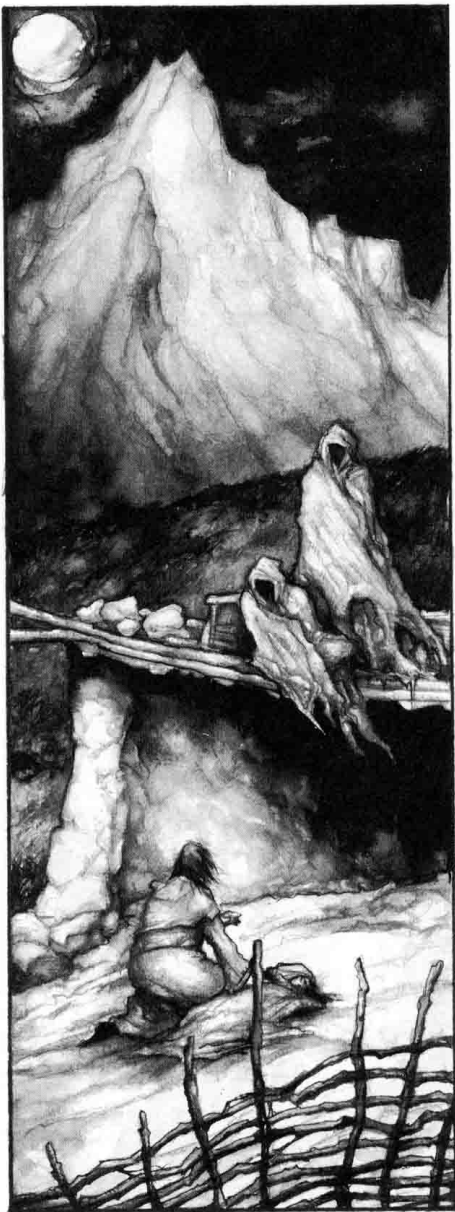
HISTORY

In the days when Rome ruled over the peaceful lands of Dacia, this caern was one of understanding, a place where werewolves of different tribes could negotiate. Political concerns were discussed here by master diplomats and negotiators. While human tribes and their shadowy protectors fought for territory in the lands below, Lords would set aside their warfare long enough to unify within their caerns. This ensured that, regardless of the tribe that dominated the Carpathian Basin, the werewolves would be able to hold their center of power. Though their homids spoke a vast array of dialects and languages, the language of the Lupines established a common tongue for settling disputes.

The fall of the Roman Empire changed all that. Goth Shadow Lords dominated the leadership of the sept by demonstrating their supremacy over all other human tribes. Their conspiracy was broken by a lineage that is still revered in the Silver Record. One Kinfolk family was blessed with werewolf children for four generations through the beneficence of Gaia. Their heritage was Slavic, not Gothic, and the Danislavs earned the respect of all tribes. Later, they would again play a major role in the tribe's history.

By the fifth century, Lords found that the surest way to secure power was to lead a mortal tribe successfully into battle. Whether they were raised as Goths, Ostrogoths, Avars or Gepids, running with a victorious tribe reflected well on aspiring Lupines. Some members of other tribes argued against this practice, quoting the Litany and insisting that such actions violated the strictures of the Concordat. Humans, they said, were entitled to their own civilizations, and it was not the concern of the werewolves to meddle in human politics. This was a difficult argument to pose to the Philodoxes of the Shadow Lords.

The caern later became one of war, and understanding became less of a priority. Victorious warriors would carry the heads of their foes to the summit and howl their triumph in Grandfather's name. Pandering Theurges would then bind Spirits of War and Pain into the klaives of the warlords. Philodoxes would walk in homid form among the tribal leaders, waiting for any opportunity to maneuver for war while promising peace.



DENIZENS OF DARKNESS



TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

Such conflict was difficult to set aside within the meetings of the sept and the Lords' unity fractured. Other tribes began to gather at the sept, hoping to seize it from these madmen and dedicate it once more to the ideals of Gaia instead of the bloodshed that aggrandized Grandfather Thunder. The Lords lost their footing for a century. The final disgrace came when a pack of Get of Fenris claimed the caern as their own in the seventh century.

The Get reviled the pettiness of the Lords and set them against the Garou's common enemies to the north. Instead of encouraging fierce competitions for personal honor, Hammer-of-Night—a brilliant Ahroun tactician—coordinated assaults against selected targets. This growing strength, however, became a threat to the balance of power in Transylvania, and several Tzimisce likewise set aside their differences to raise an army against the Night Sky.

Hammer-of-Night then organized a strike against the strongest of the Tzimisce fiefdoms, which was the beginning of one of the most celebrated Trials by War in the history of Transylvania. Peasants of this tirs were afraid to leave their homes, even during the day, for a full year. Fearing the light of the full moon, they fervently prayed for deliverance from the horrors of the night. The force of Delirium became more powerful than ever as Gaia sought to purge the terror from their minds. Epic battles between Tzimisce and Shadow Lords bred epic heroes and villains.

The Get Sept Leader felt victory close at hand, and his grasp on the sept was stronger than ever...or so he thought. A Ragabash assassin plunged a klaive into Hammer-of-Night's back on the eve of one of his largest battles. The traitor tossed him from the summit where the battle was being directed, and Stormcrows fed on Hammer's flesh. The werewolf armies mysteriously retreated to Wallachia, secure in the victory they desired. By their own standards, the Shadow Lords had won.

This prompted the Tzimisce to become better organized. They further defined the boundaries of their fiefdoms and became secure in their power over the next 150 years. In return for their martial prowess, the Cainites and other creatures of the night had no choice but to bow before the authority of the Fiends.

The Fiends' increasing dependence on revenant families also angered the Lords. They knew of the Bratovitches, the cunning werewolf hunters the Tzimisce had bred over generations. They did not know, however, that members of the Danislav family of Kinfolk had also been bred in a fiefdom far to the north. Once a far-ranging pack uncovered this plot, they spared no effort in returning the news to the Night Sky. A wounded Ahroun, bones gnarled into spiked knots, collapsed before the sept leader after informing him. Hostilities between the Tzimisce and the Lords simmered over the next two centuries.

The creation of a few Danislav Shadow Lords was encouraging, but it was overshadowed by a greater tactical triumph. In nearby Russia, Lords had also watched over the people of the steppes—the peasants who supported the corrupt nobility revered by the Silver Fangs. Under the

shadowy assistance of the Lords, 10 human tribes on the Russian steppes unified into one, led by Kinfolk of the Shadow Lords: the Arpad family. The Lords had a vision of re-forming the ancient territories of Dacia and Pannonia, and their political acumen supported the Arpads. Their light cavalry tactics took them as far as the Danube.

The Shadow Lords have since lost touch with many of their Hungarian Kinfolk. The Arpad Kinfolk, in particular, have fallen prey to Cainites. Teutonic Venture from the Holy Roman Empire have infiltrated the Hungarian aristocracy, and mortal Arpads now speak of taming the mortal populace of Transylvania. Brujah have Embraced Hungarian warriors, and one has even directed them in battle against the Teutonic Venture. Hatred between East and West has grown. Nonetheless, several Kinfolk families are still extant in Transylvania. The Danislavs, for instance, are settled in Wallachia, although rumors persist of their subjugation by the local Tzimisce.

The Shadow Lords have many enemies now in Transylvania and there is no shortage of opportunities for seizing honor and glory. Some even choose to pit themselves against other Lords or meddle in Cainite disputes. A few remain close to the caern, addicted to the thrill of political conflict. Most are content to hunt in packs in their homelands and wait for the day when the land will be theirs again.

THE DEPARTED

Eastern Europe abounds with tales of ghostly manifestations, and the Shroud separating the world of the living from the domain of the dead weans therein throughout much of this region. Pagans' strong belief in the ongoing presence of the dead perpetuates the ability of the deceased to interact with mortals and other supernaturals.

Many castles and fortresses hidden in the Transylvanian Alps, the Carpathians and other mountain ranges within Eastern Europe host "family" ghosts — the restless spirits of murdered rulers or their rival kin. Some Tzimisce *voivodes* find their havens plagued by unexplained sounds and various calamities, all punctuated by unearthly screams and dreadful visions. These phenomena are the work of their mangled and impaled victims, who find freedom in death to express their horror and anger without fear of repercussions (or so they believe). These unfortunate souls retain the twisted, grotesque forms imposed on them by their Tzimisce torturers, using their deformities to invoke feelings of horror in those to whom they appear.

Naturally, the Fiends find such manifestations remarkably entertaining.

Atop old battle sites, ghostly armies arise on certain evenings to reenact the battles in which they fell. Other ghosts haunt the countryside and villages of Eastern Europe. Death from starvation occurs frequently among the peasants and serfs, most of these deaths are due to the cruel deprivations of the local lords.

THE RUSALKA

The *rusalka*, one of the most common — and feared — spirits of the region, takes its name from its similarity in form to the faerie race of *rusalki* (see below). A *rusalka* is the wraith of a suicide, often a drowning victim, who haunts the site of her death, be it river, mountain cliff or other lonely spot. Possessed in death by an unearthly allure, the *rusalka* uses her powers of attraction to lure victims into her embrace. Many young men foolish or desperate enough to travel alone have been entrapped by the wiles of the local *rusalka*. Usually, one encounter with this ghost is not fatal; the *rusalka* longs for company and attention and often contents herself with flirtations and casual caresses. These do little more than drain the victim of emotion and will, leaving him listless and possessed with a longing to remain near his newfound beloved. The *rusalka* grows tired of such limited contact eventually and wishes to bring her mortal consort across the Shroud into her realm of existence. Unable to resist, her victim plunges into a river, jumps off a cliff or commits some other act to join her in death. Oddly, a *rusalka*'s victims rarely become *rusalkas* themselves.

While most mortals and Cainites cannot enter the world of the dead, a few individuals possess the ability to do so under certain circumstances. Others, particularly those born with cauls over their faces or marked in some other fashion, are able to catch glimpses of the "other side." These remarkable individuals have brought back information about their visions or journeys.

As a rule, mortals, as well as Cainites, fear and avoid contact with the dead, but there are exceptions. In places where the old religion thrives, pagan priests, wisewomen and sami (or shamans) recognize the connections between the living and the dead. Many of them act as conduits for the spirits of the deceased or offer rites to honor ancestral ghosts and propitiate restless spirits. Cappadocians, likewise, seek to penetrate the barrier between the worlds in order to gain insight into the afterlife denied to them by their existence as Cainites.

THE DEPRAVED

In tandem with the spread of Christianity in Eastern Europe, the practice of demon worship also made itself known as a distinct religion (or antireligion). Before the coming of the followers of Christ, adherents of the old pagan religions accepted the existence of two types of deities: the benevolent gods of light and the destructive gods of darkness. Although only a few actively served the malevolent dark gods, all pagans recognized their existence and accepted their presence as a part of the dual nature of the world.

DENIZENS OF DARKNESS



In response to Christian persecution, or as a means of gaining power to free themselves from foreign masters, some Eastern Europeans have begun the active worship of infernal beings. Seen by some as servitors of Hell or as the personifications of the "dark gods," these entities from the netherworld respond to the sacrifices made to them.

Most powerful Cainites who indulge in infernal practices have entered into pacts with one of the powers of Hell. Many of them view demons as equals (or, as in the case of the Tzimisce, near-equals); few suspect, until it is too late, their "partners'" true hold over them. The lure of infernal investments, powers gained through successive bargaining with demons, often proves difficult for some Cainites to resist.

Some heretics, such as the Bogomils, suffer a reputation for devil worship through their belief in the prevalence of Satan in the world of the flesh. Their insistence that Satan created the world leads many in the Church to believe that these variant Christians actually worship the Devil. In actuality, nothing could be further from the truth. Nevertheless, both the Latin and Orthodox Churches levy accusations of diabolism against the Bogomils, while the heretics, in turn, view their persecutors as true followers of Satan.

Pagan cults that serve infernal powers under the auspice of worshipping the "dark gods" form yet another type of demonic religion. More accurately, the deities venerated by

such groups belong to the unfathomable class of spirits known as the Umbrood, inhabitants of the spirit world. Thus, they fall entirely outside the parameters of Christianity. The Church, however, does not make such nice distinctions. Anyone who serves someone other than Christ, by definition, worships "the Devil."

THE FAIR

As ancient as the Cainites, the fair folk (or faeries) of Eastern Europe embody the dreams and fears of the region's mortal population. Closely tied to the land, these creatures' disposition grows darker in response to the mortal and supernatural events impinging on their reality.

Although each region has its own local name for faeries, the practice of referring to them as fair folk, good folk or some other complimentary term is almost universal. Locals believe that by doing so, one might avoid incurring the displeasure of these fickle, sometimes incomprehensible, creatures.

Forests and mountain fastnesses, in particular, retain an aura of enchantment. Fantastic creatures long ago relegated to myth still inhabit secluded glens or hidden lairs in Poland's Bialowieza Forest. Other forests in parts of Bohemia and Hungary seem to move about, subtly changing their location and giving rise to legends of creeping woodlands and walking trees. Some mountains are believed to shift their position, as

if stirring in their profound slumber. In these places, where nature has not yet lost her enchantment, the fair folk gather in relative safety from a world that is gradually growing more hostile toward them.

Faeries do not interact with Cainites for the most part, finding no attraction in the vampires' obsession with mundane and temporal power. Only those Cainites who descend from Malkav retain the ability to converse and interact intimately with the fae. Their madness imbues them with a childlike sense of wonder that attracts faeries to them.

Some Cainites, conversely, have developed an avid interest in the faerie races. Both Tzimisce and Tremere use captured faeries in their foul experiments. Tzimisce desire to find ways to introduce faerie blood and powers into some of their revenant families, while the Tremere seek to use potent faerie blood in their Thaumaturgic rituals.

THE MYSTICKS

The presence of powerful mortal magick-workers in Eastern Europe acts as a curb (albeit, a minor one) on the otherwise absolute domination of Cainites and other inhuman creatures. With the defection of House Tremere, the Order of Hermes received a resounding warning of the dangers posed by Cainites. Although the truth about the Tremere apostasy has not yet permeated throughout the Order, a few magi suspect what has happened and have begun to take steps to ensure that no other Houses follow the Tremere.

Among the followers of the old religion, practitioners of magick have always been revered as wisdom keepers. Most pagan magi excel in one or two major types of magick; some deal almost exclusively with the spirit realm. These shamans serve as links between the seen and unseen worlds, bridging the gap between the living and the dead. Other pagan willworkers draw their power from an understanding of the natural cycles of life and death. Known as witches or "the wise," these nature mages

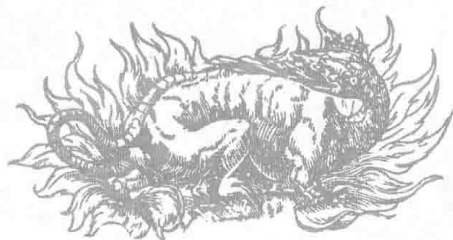
practice healing and weather magic for their communities. Like the spirit mages, witches most often operate on the behalf of a tribe or village, although some of them dwell apart from humanity in isolated forest cottages or solitary caves.

Christianity also has its workers of magick, individuals whose understanding of the essence of raw power enables them to work "miracles" of healing and other forms of magick. They draw their ability to shape reality from their devotion to God and their willingness to act as a channel for His divine grace.

Relations between Cainites and mages are tenuous at best, hostile at worst, yet fraught with tension at all times. The Tremere, while attempting to intimate themselves in Cainite society, are rigidly mistrusted by most of the undead clans. Those Cainites with strong ties and influence over the Church view Christian mysticks as nothing short of rivals, particularly in cases where these holy men and women command a devoted following. Tzimisce *voivodes* often seek out such popular mages as victims, delighting in the torments they can inflict in the guise of demons-in-the-flesh.

Some mages seek out Cainites for their potent blood, which is useful in certain rituals or as a source of magical energy. Those magi foolish enough to imbibe Cainite blood sometimes find themselves inadvertently transformed into servants of the undead. The process whereby ghouls are created and bonded to their masters is not commonly known, and only the most assiduous and knowledgeable mages are aware of the dangers inherent in ingesting the blood of Caine's children. While most witches view vampires as unnatural creatures, a few respect them nevertheless.

Some Cainites deliberately court known mages in search of wizards' vitae. Others, particularly the Tzimisce and the Tremere, desire captive mages for their experiments or for the pleasure of subjecting them to cruelties devised expressly for these mortal rivals. Underestimation of a magus's power, however, can easily lead to unforeseen, and sometimes fatal, results for the uninformed vampire.







Appendix:
Slaves of the
Voivodes and
Other Miscellany

REVENANTS

Just as the Tzimisce have laid claim to entire tirsas as lands under their rule, they have also chosen entire families to work as their slaves. Conditioned to expect absolute obedience in their underlings, the Tzimisce find it convenient to create the servants and retainers they need, as opposed to impaling those who fail to live up to their lords' expectations and having to train new ones every few years.

Tzimisce naturally chose the aristocracy for their retainers. As all Fiends know, blood will tell. Peasants, after all, are barely human, similar to fodder and to be used and cast away as needed. Yet, a good servant is a commodity to be treasured. Thus, the Tzimisce turned to the same noble families generation after generation, creating ghouls from those worthy of their attention. In return for hard work, sacrifice and abasement, a member of one of these families may be Embraced. Most never attain this honor.

As ghouls bred with distant relatives or ghouls from other noble families over time, they found that Cainite vitae was no longer necessary to sustain their powers. Many began demonstrating ghoul-like powers at birth, with Cainite Disciplines and extended lifespan becoming hereditary characteristics of those born in the families.

While any Cainite can create a ghoul, only members of the ghoul families (or revenants, as they are usually called) come into the world with Cainite blood already in their veins. These individuals age at a slow rate, but they eventually grow old and die. Only regular infusions of Cainite blood can sustain them agelessly. Revenants have hereditary Cainite Disciplines, which they power with their own potent blood.

Additionally, revenants who have imbibed Cainite blood can use it to power their Disciplines, but they cannot exceed the maximum number of Blood Points their bodies will hold. This means a revenant could expend some of her own blood to use a Discipline, then drink Cainite blood and use it to power further expenditures, but she couldn't be perfectly healthy and conserve her own blood while drinking Cainite blood to power her Disciplines. The cup has to be at least partially empty to hold any more fluid.

Revenants' bodies replace blood at the rate of one Blood Point per day. Revenants' blood is so potent that their Blood Pools may exceed the 10 points most humans have. She adds one Blood Point to her body's maximum capacity for every 100 years a revenant lives. Thus, a revenant that is 202 years old would have 12 rather than 10 Blood Points in her body. Few revenants have lived so long, however. Most of the ghoul families are too new to have such ancient members, and those small number who are ancient enough often live violent lives. Potent blood doesn't mean the ghoul is any more likely to survive beheading.

Unlike Cainites, revenants are fertile and produce children, usually through mating with members of their own or another ghoul family. For the sake of broadening the families' breeding stock or for political reasons, another bloodline is occasionally

introduced. Children produced from these unions are often relegated to lesser tasks, as most revenants feel that the "human" blood is weaker and inferior until several generations have passed.

Coming into the world with Cainite blood in their veins living extremely long lifespans in virtual isolation, revenants often reject their own humanity in favor of strange practices and Cainite sensibilities. Indeed, some are far less human than the Cainites they serve. Many indulge in torture, murder, orgies, dark occultism, drugs from the East, and heretical or grotesque rituals. Aside from their noble status, most revenants consider the Cainite blood within them to raise them above the level of mere humans. Few have even the remotest understanding of human morals or ethics; virtually all revenants consider themselves superior to humans in every way. Since this attitude does not differ too greatly from that of most nobles during this period, revenants don't seem as strange as they will someday be.

However, many peasants seem to instinctively know that there is something different about revenants. A taint hovers about them, marking them for what they are. Additionally, those who use Vicissitude to reshape their bodies sometimes appear scarcely human. This gives rise to the legend of *dhampir*—beings who are the result of matings between *vampyrs* and human women.

ORIGINS

The ghoul families consist of noble ones who have faithfully served the Tzimisce. Chosen by the Tzimisce as favored "pets," revenant families have become very rich and powerful. Their Cainite protectors have allowed them to expand without fear of destruction by their neighbors, and their saturation with Cainite vitae gives them the edge in battle. That blood comes at the price of absolute loyalty to their Tzimisce masters, but this is a bargain the revenants make happily.

Blood Bound to the clan, ghouls from the revenant families infiltrate noble courts and strongholds of the Church throughout Europe, acting as eyes and ears for their masters. Others provide the Tzimisce with ghouled warriors for their battles against their foes. Whatever use they are put to, several particular and separate ghoul families have emerged over time. Although the families interbreed, each remains distinct and specializes in a different pursuit that is of particular use to the Tzimisce.

THE FAMILIES

Thus far, several families have become revenants. Spread across Eastern Europe (and into Western European families as well), their influence is considerable. Many hold valuable lands for Tzimisce *voivodes*, acting as seneschals, or overseers of estates. Due to the war with the Tremere, many Tzimisce have "gone underground," leaving their ghouls to manage things in their absence. For more information on revenants, see *Ghouls: Fatal Addiction*, *Libellus Sanguinus I: Masters of the State*, and *The Storytellers Guide to the Sabbat*. The Bratovitch, Grimaldi, Obertus, Szantovich (Zantosa), Vlaszy, Krevcheski (Duchski), and Khavi families are profiled in those works. Two other families of note are given here.

BASARAB

Nickname: Warlords

Background: Romanian nobles living in Transylvania near the eastern Carpathians, the Basarab family traces its lineage back to Dacian princes and Roman legionnaires. One of the oldest ghoul families, the Basarab line swore Blood Oaths to the Tzimisce before the coming of Attila. Some Basarab women, realizing the strength and aggressiveness of the Huns, managed to seduce these conquerors and bear their children among the safety of hidden family holdings. Szekler blood (from some of the original Szekler tribes in Transylvania) was also introduced into the family's bloodline before Germans were invited to settle the territory by the Hungarian king. The most noble or noted outsiders were chosen to share their blood with the family in each case. Thus, the Basarab line grew immensely strong and unusually resistant to some of the deformities and weaknesses that plague the other ghoul families.

Basarab are noted for their fierce warriors and clever strategies and are among the most loyal and terrifying of the Tzimisce's soldiers. Many are almost the equals of weaker Cainites. They indubitably unnerve human opponents, who find them exceedingly difficult to defeat or kill. Basarab also excel in political maneuvering, playing one enemy off against another while promising a third enemy the heads of the first two in exchange for an alliance. Such affiliations and agreements are, of course, worth only as much as the ally's current value. Nonetheless, members of the Basarab family have an undeniable charisma and natural leadership ability. They are able to fascinate even those who hate them, much like a snake hypnotizes its prey before devouring it.

One of the few families of Romanian nobles who retain their holdings and noble status, the Basarab are staunch defenders of the Orthodox Church. Rival families believe this to be a political decision aimed at inducing holy fervor in the Romanian peasantry, who must sometimes fight alongside their Basarab masters.

Members of the family will move south and east in the 1300s, taking their peasants with them to farm new lands. They are among the *boyars* and *voivodes* who establish the new Kingdoms of Moldavia and Wallachia. The first ruler of Wallachia takes the title Prince Basarab, founding the Basarabian dynasty. The family splits into the Danesti and Draculesti branches; the Draculesti branch of the family will birth the Prince of Wallachia who is later Embraced as Tzimisce, the man known as Dracula.

The Fiends, appalled by Dracula's actions, will blame the entire Basarab line for his impious presence. The Tzimisce will slowly and inventively avenge themselves on the Basarab, and none will survive by the 16th century — this may prove to be a mistake in later nights.

Appearance: The Basarab is a striking family. Members dress in barbarian splendor, accented by furs and polished jewels. Most have dark, curly hair and large, intense eyes. Emerald pupils and hawklike noses predominate. The men favor long moustaches and shoulder-length hair, disdaining to cut it and so deny their enemies the pleasure of taking it as a trophy of war.



Family Estates: The Basarab hold several small manors throughout Transylvania, acting as *boyars* or landholding nobles. As they rise to greater prominence over the next centuries, they will begin building a series of border fortresses along the eastern and southern passes into Transylvania. Later, their holdings will spread throughout Wallachia and parts of Moldavia.

Backgrounds: The family enjoys a degree of autonomy from its Tzimisce masters, for its members willingly serve in return for power. Because of their noble blood and unwillingness to bow to Hungarian conquerors, they have many allies among the other Romanians. Most Basarab have the Influence Background, and many have Resources. What they lack at inception, many later take through force of arms.

Character Creation: Physical or Social Attributes are primary, though the Basarab are by no means mental weaklings. The Secondary Skill of Diplomacy is sometimes useful to them, though they generally accomplish their aims through strength of arms, intimidation and subterfuge.

Disciplines: Dominate, Protean, Vicissitude

Weaknesses: A blood disorder in the family line makes all members highly allergic to garlic. No Basarab can long tolerate the smell or taste of the potent plant. This allergy makes them highly suspect among those whose everyday diet includes garlic as a matter of course. When Basarabs are Embraced, they carry the allergy into their afterlives. Many Cainites of Basarabian

lineage also have an aversion to holy symbols; perhaps because they defended the Church when mortal, they now fear its power over the damned things they have become.

Preferred Paths: Curiously, the Basarab usually follow either the Road of Heaven or the Via Diabolis.

Family Organization: The Basarab is a sprawling, multi-generational family settled throughout Transylvania. Each individual family head oversees his immediate kin. A loosely organized family council occasionally meets, but vicious infighting over who should be overall clan leader prevents the Basarab from fully uniting.

Gaining Family Recognition: Recognition is gained through clever diplomacy, military prowess, or service to a powerful overlord.

DANISLAV

Nickname: Justiciars

Background: The Danislavs had reputations for longevity and sagacity for many generations. A few even knew of their heritage as Kinfolk to the Garou. The most respected Danislav Kinfolk had raised triumphant Lupines, and their offspring created a Danislav dynasty in the fourth and fifth centuries. As these Lupines became more powerful, their pride grew as well. Little did they know that their esteem would be their undoing.

Three families of Danislavs had settled far to the north of the Voivodate of Transylvania. There they lived under the watchful eye of a Tzimisce lord, Count Florescu. It greatly

amused him that the Shadow Lords to the south did not know that a prince to the north held members of their family in his domain. Of course, they'd had to be chained in the dungeon of his castle for the first 10 years, but by the time they saw the light of day again, they had been conditioned to servitude. When the first revenants at last were bred, the count rejoiced in his accomplishment.

A pack of Garou ventured beyond the patrols of Borgo Pass a generation later. They were appalled to uncover the disgrace inflicted on their Kinfolk. They peremptorily launched an attack on the count, but they were soundly defeated. Only one member of the pack escaped alive. He returned to tell his horrible tale, but by then, the Danislav revenants had forsaken their ancestors.

Count Florescu was eager to display his triumph and sent his revenants as ambassadors and diplomats to the domains of other Tzimisce. He gained great prestige as his cultured family gained a reputation for their services. Soon it was all the rage to have a Danislav mediate a Trial by War or other similar dispute. The Justiciars always found inventive solutions for settling matters of disagreement.

As their fame increased, the Danislav revenants also began to dream of overthrowing their masters. The father of their family often ventured into the dark woods to pray for deliverance from the cruel Tzimisce that bred his family like animals. Spirits of the night answered his call of distress. He learned to distinguish the many occult forces waiting to aid him by means of his vampiric sight. Many had sworn fealty to an even more powerful force — Grandfather Thunder himself.

By the mid-14th century, the Danislavs will use Thunder's Dark Gifts to overthrow Count Florescu. The count's mansion will be shattered by thunder and lightning from the heavens, and the Danislavs will claim his fiefdom as their own. Their triumph will be short-lived. In 1399, several Tzimisce will unite to destroy them. One member of the family will betray the entire line and, as the treacherous Fiend Count Danislav, will ascend to the princedom of the domain.

Appearance: A diplomat must dress tastefully, but never too ostentatiously. Her manner enhances her aristocratic demeanor. No matter how cultured a Danislav becomes, however, she still retains a bestial streak. A Danislav's eyes are dark, her hair is jet black, and, in keeping with superstition, her eyebrows meet over the bridge of her nose.

Family Estate: The family estate of the Danislavs adjoins the mansion of Count Florescu. The estate will grow after the mansion is destroyed.

Backgrounds: The family enjoys a degree of fame among the Tzimisce, being something of a *cause célèbre*. All members of the family have the Enemies Flaw, for all of them are hated by the Shadow Lords. The Silver Fangs, conversely, find them hilarious.

Character Creation: Social Attributes, as well as the Etiquette Ability, are crucial. The Secondary Skill of Diplomacy is most useful.



TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT

Disciplines: Auspex, Protean, Vicissitude. From the Tzimisce, they have learned to use Vicissitude to help craft *szlachta* for the defense of their estates. From their association with hidden forces, the eldest have developed Auspex to detect spirits within the Umbra. The eldest Danislavs, those who drink the blood of the mightiest Tzimisce *voivodes*, have learned Protean to such a degree that they may shapeshift into wolves (never bats).

The Danislavs also have another mystic power, though it is treated as an out-of-clan Discipline for purposes of experience-point expenditure. From the servants of Grandfather Thunder, members of this family are able to learn Shadow Lord Gifts up to Level Three, though they refrain from demonstrating these abilities openly. They must learn these Gifts by making pacts with spirits in the Umbra. Using these Gifts requires the expenditure of Blood Points in place of Gnosis. There are five Gifts listed for this tribe in **Werewolf: The Apocalypse** — treat each one as one level of this Discipline, in ascending order.

Weaknesses: All Danislavs take aggravated damage from silver and have an aversion to wolfsbane. In addition, certain revenants become violent if touched by the light of the full moon. On any given night, when a Danislav is first bathed in the full moon's light, he must make a Self-Control roll (difficulty 6). If he attains fewer than three successes, he gives into bestial impulses for the duration of the night. Hair grows on his face and palms and a great rage possesses him until he kills a mortal. Power has its price.

Preferred Paths: The Road of the Beast is preferred, although the Via Equitatus is followed by weaker Danislavs.

Family Organization: The eldest Danislavs prefer to travel alone to an estate, where they seek patronage as mediators or diplomats. If this occurs, they may bring lovers along so that they might raise a family and therefore, continue their lineage. One woman may take many lovers and thus bear children for several fathers on family estates. This makes the practice of courtly love somewhat elaborate. During the full moon, however, this civility is abandoned, and orgiastic Danislav celebrations are legendary.

Gaining Family Recognition: Recognition is gained either by serving a very powerful lord or by siring many children (preferably by multiple mothers or fathers).

KUPALA

The servants of the demon Kupala — these spirits bedevil mortal, vampire, and werewolf alike. They lurk in the spirit world adjoining the lands of Eastern Europe, but they can occasionally manifest themselves in rocks, trees, animals, or even people. They can create bodies from Eastern Europe's tainted soil, shaping them into whatever they desire. When Materialized, kupala take



any number of horrid shapes, often grotesque caricatures of the entities or objects through which they manifest. While Materialized, kupala attempt to lure travelers off safe paths and into the dark caves and groves to which they are bound. Kupala are considered Bane spirits (see **Werewolf: The Apocalypse**).

Statistics for kupala's spirit forms are given here, though vampires will rarely interact with such ephemeral beings. Kupala demons can Materialize, creating bodies in the physical world. Vampires, particularly Tzimisce enacting the rituals of Kupala's Night, may have to battle the kupala physically. Use the "When Materialized" stats for this purpose.

Willpower 4, Rage 7, Gnosis 5, Power 30

Charms: Airt Sense, Corruption, Materialize, Possession, Shapeshift

When Materialized: Physical Attributes 3 each, Mental Attributes 2 each, seven Health Levels (no wound penalties), Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Celerity 1 (may automatically take an extra action per turn, without spending Blood Points), attack is bite or claw for Str + 1 aggravated damage, no Blood Pool (vampires cannot drink the foul demonic ichor), Willpower 4



APPENDIX

Transylvania by Night

WHEN FIENDS AND WARLOCKS GO TO WAR...

Good evening, childer. Welcome to our old and blood-drenched soil. We have known the tread of the Hun, the Roman, the Magyar, yet we stand defiant, as we always have.

Now, after sunset, cries of war and horror pierce the night. As the old ways crumble and Usurpers receive their bloody baptism, limitless power awaits those clever and brutal enough to take it. But beware: The Old Country is a harsh mistress, and those who fail greet the dawn on impaling stakes. So come, my friends. Enter freely and of your own will.

After all...you may never leave.

THE BLUE DANCIBE RUNS RED WITH GORE!

Transylvania by Night is a sourcebook depicting the classic "vampire country" of Eastern Europe, as it is in the Dark Medieval world. One part history, one part Hammer Horror, this book will delight **Vampire** aficionados and genre fans alike.

TRANSYLVANIA BY NIGHT INCLUDES:

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- Descriptions of legendary Eastern Europe, including the mighty Carpathian chantry of Ceoris.
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