

Transylvania Chronicles III[™]

III Omens



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



Transylvania Chronicles III

Ill Omens

BY REID SCHMADEKA WITH BRENDAN MORAN

CONTENTS

i



Transylvania Chronicles III

Ill Omens

BY REID SCHMADEKA WITH BRENDAN MORAN

CONTENTS

i



Transylvania Chronicles III

Ill Omens

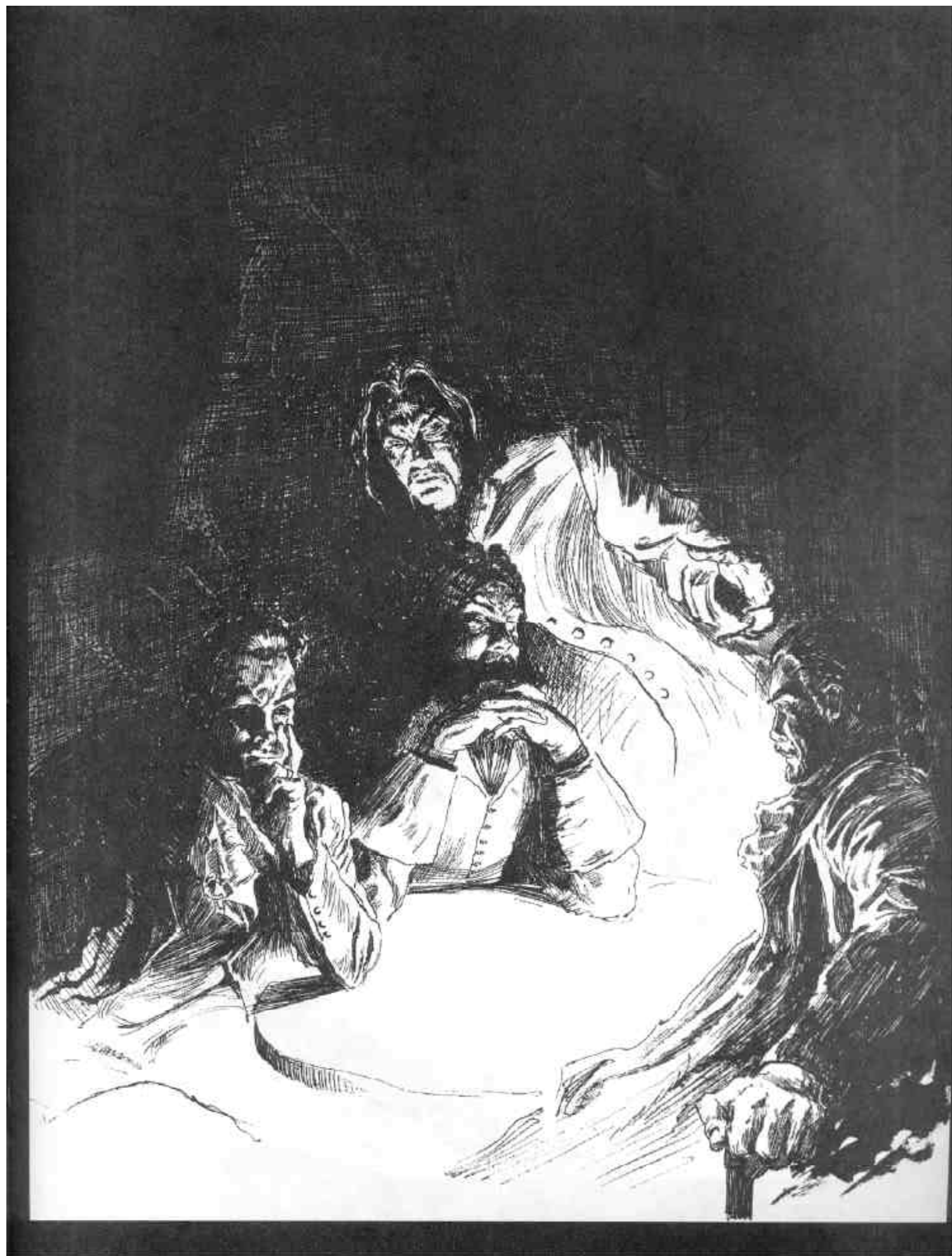


TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	6
CHAPTER ONE: FROM MEDIEVAL GLORY TO ENLIGHTENED DARKNESS	10
CHAPTER TWO: TWILIGHT OF THE GRAVEROBBER	24
CHAPTER THREE: ENTER THE DRAGON	44
CHAPTER FOUR: THE BLOOD OF TYRANTS	56
CHAPTER FIVE: CHARACTERS	78
CHAPTER SIX: STORYTELLING THE CHRONICLE OF AGES	92
APPENDIX: KNOWLEDGE OF THE AGES	100

...The saber left a sinuous cut,
and a terrible winding gash
gaped open like a mouth
uttering an incomprehensible
word, the scream of flesh.
— Milorad Pavic, *Dictionary
of the Khazars*

As the past fades from history into legend and new terrors arise to strike fear in the old, the Son of the Dragon returns. Ancient evil boils in the dead hearts of all Kindred and Behenna refuses to cease its approach — the worm has turned.







INTRODUCTION

Octavio had never thought of himself as mad. Even as he stood before the deep pit, with its black earth churned and peeled like a scar across the land, he was sure that he wasn't insane. Despite the blackness that crawled from the tainted ground, despite the evil that radiated from this place, he was sure that he was no madman.

And yet, a madness came from the dark spirit that shared his mind.

"O, long have I warned of this night," Octavio bellowed, his voice echoing from the walls of the pit. His words quickly faded in the harsh October winds of the Carpathians. The air always smelled of ash, of the burned, oily smell of the evil he felt, tasted and saw in everything here.

But no one listened, the voice, ever-present in his mind, answered. Each word twisted in his head like a discordant note, ringing and plucking and scraping at the matter of his brain. The darkness around him seemed to grow a little closer.

"No," Octavio answered. "Nay one did listen to my warnings. The signs go on, and five of the eight have come to be. Blessed be the night when one does listen, demon, for that is the night that your wretched curse will fade away, from prophecy to legend, and the scenes that curse my vision will scatter with the wind." He bowed his head, almost in reverence. "My crusade can end, and I will rest."

Why do you regard me with such animosity? Octavio gritted his fangs with each word, pressing his eyes shut to keep the insanity at bay. His head swam, light and aching, trying to detach itself from his control. Aren't I the one who gives you the visions of the signs, so you can warn others of the coming battle? You fight the very source of your power, young one.

"Your black heart has naught but evil!" Octavio snarled. "The same signs you let me see foretell of your own rise. Your taint pushed the hellish spawn to tear your minions from this ground, so they could continue your plans!"

The voice chuckled with the sound of breaking glass. My dear Octavio, we fight against the same thing. I've guided you for a very long time, given you a purpose. You can't deny that. Do you

even remember unlife before I came to you? Your acquaintances, your loved ones? Your name? You take Octavio from the eight signs I show you. What is one without a name, Octavio?

Octavio opened his mouth. "I have a name, demon! I am Flannor! I am..." His voice faded away. He was not Flannor, the god's name he used to draw his mortal followers. He tried to remember the name that burned at the back of his mind, tried to pull the memory from the muck that occluded his thoughts. The wind blew thick with ash.

"...Octavio," he finished, his shoulders slumping. "I am naught but Octavio."

You are the seer of prophecy, of the eight signs of the eternal night, are you not?

The Malkavian nodded slowly. "That I seem to be. But mark me, demon: I will pass this cup of suffering and escape beyond your reach. You will suffer as I have, at the claws of those who use your visions to chain you ever to your tomb."

The laugh returned, long and loud this time. My dear Octavio, even in your anger, you draw from the gifts I give you. Come, now. You must find those who can listen, and tell them of the signs to come.

"They don't listen," Octavio whispered. He could fight no longer. The madness, the darkness, was almost comforting as he lowered his defenses and let it grow. It seeped through him. "I tell the prophecies to the ones I see in all my visions, and nothing changes. The dark tide still rises."

They will listen. Three signs remain, and they must avoid them. The Last Daughter must be found, and the First Son of the Father must not rise. Tell them, Octavio.

"They don't listen...."

Tell them

The words ripped apart the last tethers of sanity that kept Octavio lucid. His mind twisted away in the wind, and the darkness filled him. In the darkness, he saw visions.

He remembered no more.

THE EPIC CONTINUES

It is a time of unprecedented change for Transylvania. Hidden in the dark forests and high plateaus of Eastern Europe, "the land beyond the forest" cannot avoid the wheels of progress grinding through the world. New religions, new technology, new lands and new ways of thinking appear throughout 16th- and 17th-century Europe. Words unknown in the previous century, like *Lutheranism*, *humanism* and *Renaissance*, become commonplace. The 18th century brings even more change, with the revolutionaries in America and France screaming for liberty and sweeping away old ways of thinking. In many ways, this time destroys the beliefs that hampered Europe in the Middle Ages and ushers in a new age for the Western world.

For the eternal residents of Transylvania, it is one of the most disconcerting times in their undead existence. Many Kindred have existed for centuries, and their rigid minds can no longer cope with the ever-changing flow of time, history and belief. Not only is mortal society transforming, but vampire society as well, and many times it changes just as quickly. The concepts of the Masquerade, the Camarilla, the Sabbat and even the word *Kindred* become mainstays of vampire unlife, and change the way things have been done since the beginning of civilization. Every vampire struggles with how to preserve herself, how to justify her existence, by protecting her humanity or following one of the horrific Paths of Enlightenment.

Young vampires who are able to adapt and understand mortal culture rise up and challenge their elders. The Camarilla and Sabbat wage a centuries-long war across the steppes of the Carpathians. The Ottoman Empire, with its Assassin advisors and holy warriors, constantly extends its influence into Transylvania. The Tremere move their headquarters to Vienna, a more stable and influential city, but still exert a powerful influence in Eastern Europe. The Ventrue consolidate their power in Transylvania, and the Tzimisce try to hold on to their lands while their Sabbat allies retreat to Scandinavia and the New World. And the demon Kupala still lies in wait, spreading its poisonous influence throughout the land, waiting for its time to return.

Nothing remains unchanged. Nothing escapes the passage of time. For vampires, who are eternal — static — this is upsetting indeed. And thus, the *Transylvania Chronicles* continue.

PLAYERS IN THE DRAMA OF AGES

The players' characters are now likely legends in their own right. At least 400 years old at the beginning of this book, as much as 600 by the end, they have witnessed and survived some of the greatest turning points in Kindred history. Their mind-sets have moved from the construction of a simple fortification, to guiding the operations of a city, to quite possibly deciding the fate of nations. They are powerful, influential and well entrenched in vampire society. And you, as the Storyteller, hold their fate in your hands.

This is the third installation of the *Transylvania Chronicles*. While we try to take every possibility into account, it is impossible to predict every permutation of events that players and Storytellers have created. This book presents three episodes, three moments plucked from a century-and-a-half timespan, and we have left those episodes open for different interpretations and modifications. The chronicle is designed to give you the flexibility to make your chronicle into

whatever you want. You should modify the events within to reflect the game you run, and add any episodes that you can imagine into the vast tracks of history that are left open. This becomes particularly important for characters of such advanced ages as the players'. Their vampires have literally awayed history — or at least observed it — by the time *Ill Omens* begins, and the future may well have been shaped by their actions in the past.

This is your game, and the course of history is yours to chart. Let your creativity run wild.

THEME

Two themes dominate *Ill Omens*. The most powerful theme is change; the world changes now like it never has before. Vampires, eternal and unaltering, must cope with this fact. Politics, manipulations and other Kindred pastimes serve as petty distractions, used to fill the dark void that time creates. Their minds fall into patterns and anachronisms, and both the mortal and immortal worlds force them to change or to be destroyed. They cannot think as they have thought, rule as they have ruled, or act as they have acted and hope to survive another night in Transylvania.

The second theme is the inherent monstrosity of the vampire. Kindred feed on other beings to survive, whether it be their blood, their money or their emotions. They are in many ways *übermenschen*, but this comes with a price. Every vampire faces events that call her humanity into doubt, force her to choose between keeping her human virtues intact or treading further down the road toward her inner Beast. Vampire's very natures pull them toward self-destruction.

Dismal, isn't it? No one ever said being a vampire was easy, and the longer one exists, the harder it gets....

THE MOOD OF EASTERN EUROPE

Transylvania, despite the changes and developments in society, still clutches its dark and brooding image. As the rest of the world moves into the Renaissance, Transylvania remains a demesne of craggy mountains, gray and shadowed forests, and wide-eyed peasantry who whisper of the things that lurk in the night. Although the Masquerade has eliminated most of the vampire-ruling-from-the-mountain-castle images that were commonplace in past centuries, the stories of such rulers still circulate among the common folk. Werewolves prowl the forest; vampires prey upon the cities, and other things flutter at the edges of vision. Any attempts at bringing outside culture and society to the Carpathians should feel out of place, forced and inappropriate. The aura of Transylvania refuses to bend to the times. Legend takes hold, darkness dwells in the soil, and the mystery of ages past remains a determined hold in the land beyond the forest.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book assumes that you have already played the first two chronicles in the series and that you are already familiar with the structure of *Ill Omens*.

Chapter One recaps the events in the previous installments. It covers the decades that separate the last act in *Son of the Dragon* and the first act of *Ill Omens*, presents the major characters, and reviews the historical background behind the events in this book.



Chapters Two, Three and Four provide the actual stories for the chronicle. First, the troupe is approached by a young woman of mysterious origin, begging for protection. Later, as hunters and representatives of various vampire factions begin offering the characters vast rewards and treasures for her, they discover that the woman is the last of the Cappadocian clan, and must choose between protecting her or using her for their own gain. Next, they will have an encounter with an old "friend" — none other than the Son of the Dragon. Dracula plans to sever the geomantic web that binds the demon Kupala below the soil of Transylvania, to bind the demon to his command. The characters must decide whether to help him or stop him, and the fate of Transylvania may hinge on their decision. Finally, the characters find themselves in France, where they are relentlessly swept up in the incandescence chaos of the French Revolution.

Chapter Five presents detailed histories of the important Kindred whom the characters encounter in *Ill Omens*. These are not just antagonists; many of them are the most influential indeed in Cainite history. It also gives ideas on how to use those vampires in your own stories. Chapter Six provides some helpful hints on how to run the *Transylvania Chronicles*, with information on how to motivate elder vampires to involve themselves in the events of *Ill Omens*, and how to cope with the problems that come with age, such as torpor and anachronism.

For even more exterior story ideas and for convenient reference, the Appendix contains a timeline of relevant Kindred and kine events. It also describes the history and other details of a powerful artifact the characters encounter in *Ill Omens*: the sword of Dracula.

TO LIGHT THE FLAMES OF INSPIRATION

The *Transylvania Chronicles* are structured so the Storyteller has a great deal of leeway in how she wants to present her troupe's chronicle. Whether rooted deeply in history, springing from legend or freely mixing both, a host of sources exists from which to draw inspiration and background. Research can give your chronicle the touch of authenticity, the air of mysticism or the untalting idea that it might have lacked before. We suggest the following sources:

- Dracula* by Bram Stoker
- A History of Transylvania* by Stephen Pascu
- A History of Hungary*, ed. by Peter F. Sugar, et al.
- History of Transylvania*, ed. by Lazlo Nikai, et al.
- The Three Musketeers* by Alexandre Dumas
- The Vampire Lestat* and other *Vampire Chronicles* by Anne Rice
- A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens
- The Scarlet Pimpernel* by Baroness de Orczy
- "Carmilla" by Sheridan LeFanu

OTHER RESOURCES

Of related interest to, and partly running concurrent with, the *Transylvania Chronicles* are parts one and two of the *Giovanni Chronicles*, *The Last Supper* and *Blood and Fire*. Both give excellent background on the Giovanni-Cappadocian pogrom, as well as the feel of other regions of Europe in the 17th century.

Also, the clanbooks can be invaluable aids to any chronicle. They present information and historical asides for every clan, and can be good springboards for stories involving individual members of your troupe, or to start inter-troupe roleplaying and development.





CHAPTER ONE: FROM MEDIEVAL GLORY TO ENLIGHTENED DARKNESS

...It was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity....
— Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

The 16th-18th centuries herald the dawning of a new age for humanity. Feudalism, monarchy and serfdom fall by the wayside, assaulted by ideas of enlightened dictators, democracy and liberty. New religions and new philosophies change the way people look at the world around them. Renaissance inventions revolutionize everything from art to warfare. The foundations for the Victorian Age and the Industrial Revolution are firmly set. The future holds much for humanity.

These same centuries also herald the end of the heyday of vampiric power. Pistol, rifle and cannon humble even the mightiest of Kindred, who were nigh-unstoppable in the Middle Ages. Feudalism's death and the rise of democracy destroy the sources of many a vampire's power and influence. The Masquerade yokes the Kindred of the Camarilla like nothing has before, yet its restraints cannot be broken, for the coals of the Inquisition need only a fanning breeze to burst into full flame again. The freedom sought by the Sabbat and the anarchists, seen as a bright hope just a century before, is brutally beaten down with wars or treaties of subservience, and the elders remain at the pinnacle of the vampire chain.

In Transylvania, however, the mystique and power of the vampyr survive. Even if a deadly count no longer rules from his castle through terror, the stories of his depredations

are still told, and the tellers glance about with fearfulness as they recount the legends. It is, perhaps, the last bastion of the old ways of the vampire. Surrounded by advancements, Transylvania remains as it has been for centuries, fighting against the forces that try to make it change.

CHRONICLES OF AGES PAST

Each episode of the *Transylvania Chronicles* builds on the books that precede it. Secrets long-ago forgotten come to the forefront; old allies become new enemies and heated rivalries cool. Ancient foes dog the heels of their prey century after century.

Before charging into the Machiavellian intrigues and thick details of *Ill Omens*, it may be helpful to review a short recap of the events that transpired in *Dark Tides Rising* and *Son of the Dragon*. If you are starting the series with this book and haven't played through the first two installments, this section reveals what has happened before and what secrets have been uncovered. For those who have played through the first two parts of the chronicle, the review clarifies past events and major themes... and may reveal a few new surprises.

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

CHRONICLE SUMMARY: THAT WHICH HAS COME TO PASS

Fixed between the Turks of the East and the Europeans of the West, Transylvania is a crossroads of culture, ideas, and conflict. After the fall of Constantinople, it becomes for a short time the buffer between Europe and the Middle East, and then the inroad for the Ottoman siege of Vienna. It is a very rich land, a prize to be won in the eyes of many — kine and Kindred alike.

For centuries, Transylvania played host to the vicious war between the Tremere and the Tzimisce. Both claimed Transylvania as their home soil, and neither could suffer the other's presence. The Tremere Gargoyles and the Tzimisce *szlachta* turned the Carpathians into a vast battlefield, and neither clan would be entirely successful in their conquest until the Camarilla-Sabbat wars of the 16th and 17th century.

The Ventrue also made inroads into Transylvania, seeking to usurp the Fiends' power in the East. The clan's short-lived Council of Ashes, a union of seven Ventrue princes in Transylvania, was the first abortive attempt at a Camarilla-like organization. Although it ultimately fell apart, it did give the Ventrue a foothold in the area. When they allied loosely with the Tremere and presented a united front against the Tzimisce, their place in Transylvania was secured.

Yet another faction, not very influential at this time, was destined to play a large role in the development of Transylvania. Clan Assamite, acting as a group of informants, spies, and guardians of the Turks, made subtle but powerful inroads into Transylvania. Although their efforts would take centuries to come to fruition, they paved the way for the slow Ottoman takeover of Transylvania in the later centuries. They also gained a fearful notoriety among the Western vampires for their open and accepted practice of diablerie; many Kindred treated any Assamite with unprecedented wariness simply from the fearful reputation the Middle Eastern vampires held.

THE ANARCH REVOLT

To escape the blood bonds forced upon them and to create greater unity among themselves, the youngest of Clan Tzimisce discovered a way to share their blood in a ritualistic ceremony. This sharing of vitae, later dubbed the Vaulderie by the Sabbat, broke the hold elder vampires possessed over their childer and created a bond of unity among the vampires who took part in the ceremony. With this potent new weapon, and with the seeds of rebellion already planted by the oppressiveness of the clans, vampires rose up to destroy their elders in what soon became the Anarch Revolt.

Led by a charismatic Brujah named Tyler, the revolt began in 1395. The vampires who followed Tyler's rally were quickly dubbed *antiribi*, and the full weight of the clans came to bear against them. The anarchs supposedly succeeded in destroying both the Lasombra and Tzimisce Antediluvians, killing the Ventrue proponent of the Camarilla, Hardestadt, and escaping the clutches of the local princes and *voivodes* of Transylvania. It was not until the Convention of Thorns, one full century after the beginning of the Anarch Revolt, that the war was resolved.

During this time, a group previously unknown in the West entered the lands of Transylvania: the Gypsies of the East, and with them Clan Ravnos. The Gypsies fled the prejudice and persecution they suffered in Russia and other Eastern lands, only to find it again in Transylvania. They tried to make their home in the steppes of the Carpathians, but found that life in Transylvania was just as hard as the life they had left behind.

THE CONVENTION OF THORNS

Determined not to let Hardestadt's destruction bring an end to the goal he had fought for, Hardestadt's childer assumed his sire's identity and pushed for the unification of all clans under an organization called the Camarilla. Helped by his fellow Founders, and by the threat of the Anarch Revolt and the fall of Constantinople, "Hardestadt's" idea took hold. The idea of the Camarilla was adopted by seven of the 13 clans in the late-15th century. The anarchs, now facing a united enemy, were forced to the bargaining table at a Convention near Silchester, England.

Hardestadt and the Founders of the Camarilla used this opportunity to tie up several loose ends facing the Kindred at the time. The anarchs were made a part of the Camarilla, and their revolt was put to an end. The Camarilla forced each anarch to drink the vitae of all the elders present at Thorns. The Assamites, although exempted from the dictates of the Camarilla, underwent a Tremere ritual that prevented them from committing diablerie.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SABBAT

Although the Convention of Thorns solved many pressing problems for the Camarilla, it helped give birth to its greatest foe, the Sabbat. Those anarchs who did not accept the surrender at Thorns, led by the Tzimisce and Lasombra, formed a new sect and called themselves the Sabbat. They continued their battle against the oppression of the elder vampires, sparking revolts throughout Transylvania and Europe.

The Camarilla, seeing the Sabbat as a continuation of the Anarch Revolt they had attempted to end at Thorns, put every effort into exterminating the new

sect. For two centuries after the Convention of Thorns, the Camarilla and Sabbat fought openly against each other in a war for supremacy among the Kindred. Finally, stunted by the superior numbers and organization of the Camarilla, the Sabbat fled to the Scandinavian provinces and to the New World to regroup and continue their fight on a smaller scale.

AND HISTORY CONTINUES...

Born in conflict and created to protect Kindred from the Inquisition and humanity, the Camarilla is still a relatively new but ever-present mainstay in Europe. The Sabbat still carries out its revolution, but has largely lost the battle against the Camarilla... for now. The anarchs wait inside the Camarilla, watching for a new cause to latch on to, a new revolution to sponsor, which they will soon find in France. The Ottomans, advised by the Assamites, turn Transylvania and parts of Hungary into vassals, and gaze longingly at the prize of Vienna lying just beyond their reach.

Kindred society pauses to survey its influence, standing at a calm moment amidst the storm of the past centuries. But unbeknownst to the players in the drama of vampire politics, the signs of Gehenna march on. Five signs have come to pass, and only three remain before Gehenna falls upon the land....

THE CLANS AND THEIR NOTABLE CAINITES

Kindred politics have been changed a great deal by the formation of the Camarilla and the Sabbat. Clan lines are much more pronounced, and the best delineation of Cainites is by their respective clans. Tension between individuals, however, exists just as it has since time immemorial, even after the Convention of Thorns, many vampires define themselves by their personal desires first and their clan or sect second. However, this is rapidly changing. Clan rivalries are set aside more and more often during partisan conflicts between the Camarilla, anarchs and Sabbat. Of course, even these are charades as often as not, constructed to hide the avarice and other motives of the vampires who enact them.

Vampires on each side of the Camarilla/Sabbat division still consort with members on the other, and call Kindred — the Camarilla's word — on the opposite side allies. Yet a gulf is rapidly forming between the sects. Elders on both sides teach their younger childer, Embraced after the Convention of Thorns, that the other side is flawed and must be destroyed. Older vampires do not always believe this, but they are all too often forced to pick between individual inclinations and their duty to their own sect. The Camarilla and Sabbat wars force almost every vampire over to one side or the other.

Despite the efforts of the anarchs and the Sabbat, the eldest of the Kindred still hold the true power among vampires, and often manage to remain outside the wars and conflicts between the two sects. The following list gives a short review of the eldest vampires in Transylvania, as well as their clan's status and dealings in the region.

Naturally, if any of the information below conflicts with developments in your own chronicle, or works counter to what you want to do, feel free to omit or change it. This is meant for background and plot ideas, to help flesh out your chronicle and provide opportunities for storytelling.

CLAN ASSAMITE

This clan of Middle Eastern vampires is very active in Transylvania in the 17th century, when the Turks control the small nation as a vassal. The Assamites' main voice in the region is **Husayn**. Summoned from Alamut for both his knowledge of Transylvania and his staunch opposition to the Assamite *antitribu*, he acts as an ambassador for the clan and the Turks. He supports the Turks' position in Transylvania, acting on their behalf in almost every major city in the land. When Sabbat raise their heads, he leads teams of fellow Assamites and ghouls against his brethren who joined the Black Hand. However, as Turkish control gives way to Habsburg might in the 1680s, Husayn again returns to Alamut, disenchanted by the failure of Middle Eastern civilization to take root in Transylvania and the continued existence of the traitorous *antitribu*.

Fariq is one such traitor. He refused to submit to the curse of the Tremere at Thorns, and now fully embraces the doctrine of the Sabbat. However, more than just Sabbat ideology has taken hold in his soul; while visiting the southeastern city of Deva, he stumbled upon the group of Baali that protected the Cathedral of Flesh. Under the tutelage of the Baali Ansen, he has been twisted to the Path of Evil Revelations. His soul plummets further from the lofty goals he once held. The traitorous **Karif al-Numair** has also left his old clan behind, joining the Sabbat and becoming an influential voice among the Assamite *antitribu*.

CLAN BRUJAH

The Brujah have very little real power in Transylvania. They have never held a principedom of note in Transylvania proper (unless a Brujah character in your coterie has managed to do so). Some have inspired or participated in the rebellions that have seized the land through the centuries. (The Brujah **Georghe Craciun**, claiming to be "God's representative on Earth" and inspiring a peasant revolt against the Turks in 1659, is the most noteworthy of these leaders.) However, France, England and Germany are the true centers for the clan, and their efforts to influence society have a much greater effect in these areas.

One disturbing note haunts the members of Clan Brujah in Transylvania. **Dominic**, the quasi-legendary



mercenary overlord who all believed had been destroyed by the Ventrue, has been seen in cities along the eastern rim of the Carpathians... or, at least, a Kindred with an uncanny resemblance to the Roman Brujah. He has made no formal contact with his clan, and none can confirm whether it is indeed Dominic. Very few know the truth of his vivisection into the Cathedral of Flesh centuries before, or the events since the cathedral's diablerie of Yorak and its possession by the demon Kupala. For those who do, Dominic's possible return bodes horribly for Transylvania.

THE FOLLOWERS OF SET

The Setites have little interest in Transylvania before the 1600s. They see it as a glorified battlefield for the Camarilla and Sabbat, and if the two sides want to kill each other there, that's their business and they're welcome to it. If the Setites knew the information that Transylvania holds, and of the demon that resides under its soil, then they might pay closer attention to it. Currently, however, they don't do much more than travel through with caravans of Middle Eastern goods or pass by it on trips to other regions of Europe.

This changes toward the end of the 17th century. Count Jocalo, a powerful and influential European Setite, recruits the Ventrue Roland, recently fallen from grace in his clan. The count thinks little of his Ventrue spy at first, intending to let Roland gain back prestige in his clan before using him. However, he hears from Roland of the strange happenings in Transylvania and the knowledge that certain of its residents hold on Gehenna. Coupled with information gained from the Nosferatu Zeliös in Egypt, Jocalo now turns to the small country with a newfound interest. The Setites will not overlook Transylvania for much longer.

CLAN GANGREL

Gangrel influence is on the decline in Transylvania. Arnulf, a hidden ally of the Turks and the most powerful Gangrel in the region, was destroyed in battle by the then-mortal Vlad Tepes. Mitru the Hunter, once the "prince" of the areas around Napoca and Klausenburg, is now the Dragon's faithful ally. Neither produced any childer capable of bringing the Gangrel back to strength in the Carpathians, though legends speak of their bestial descendants who still wander the forests. The only other Gangrel of note in the region, Tiberiu, has gone *antitribu* and is little more than a glorified spy and messenger for Count Radu and the few Trimisce still hanging on to their domains in Transylvania.

CLAN GIOVANNI

The clan of Italian merchants has exploded throughout Europe since Augustus Giovanni's diablerie of the founder of the Cappadocian clan. Their purpose for expanding is threefold: They wish to increase their trading empire even further from the confines of Italy, increase their arcane

knowledge and destroy the Cappadocians to the last vampire, erasing the Grave robbers from history. With the Promise of 1528, made to Hardestadt and Rafael de Corazon, the Giovanni have been able to remain outside the wars of the Camarilla and Sabbat, and are completely free to pursue both agendas without resistance.

Don Pietro Giovanni supervises Giovanni trading interests in Transylvania from the markets of Budapest. Transylvania is a rich source of trade goods from the Turks and an important producer of cannon and raw materials. Don Pietro's position is very important to his clan. Any massive trade or economic actions in the Carpathians draw his attention almost immediately, and he is as thorough as possible in keeping tabs on the economy of the area.

Ambrogino Giovanni, one of Augustus' trusted agents, participates fully in the latter two goals, hunting down information regarding the *Book of Nod* and other arcane texts. He has heard rumors of late that a coterie of vampires in Transylvania possesses a large body of knowledge, regarding this book and its contents, and has been planning to pay them a visit when time allows. This opportunity may come sooner than he ever dreamed possible.

CLAN LASOMBRA

As leaders of the Sabbat, the Lasombra have suffered just as their sect has in the wars against the Camarilla. Never a power to begin with in Transylvania, they have left most control of the area to their strange Trimisce bedfellows. By the late-17th century, most Lasombra have retreated to Spain, Scandinavia or the New World, and will never regain any mentionable power in Transylvania.

The one Lasombra who is extremely active in the area is Lucita. An *antitribu* and one of the most feared warriors in Eastern Europe, she has rejected both the Camarilla and the Sabbat, though rumors attribute her with working for both sides. She wanders in the company of the Malkavian Anatole, constantly warning of the oncoming portents of Gehenna. None seem to listen, but she refuses to be dissuaded from her goal, and continues pleading with those who will pay her heed.

CLAN MALKAVIAN

The Malkavian clan is both blessed and cursed by its madness, and nowhere is it more true than with the Malkavians that inhabit Transylvania. Octavio walks under the guise of Haynor, Magyar god of thunder and prophecy, gathering mortal followers and preaching of the visions that the demon Kupala gives him. He grows frustrated with his mission, seeing that his words have had no effect on the course of events. He willingly passes on his soul and duty to Anatole, the companion of Lucita. Anatole will continue in Octavio's stead, seeking to stop the advancement of Gehenna and undo the machinations of Kupala before Transylvania is destroyed by the demon.

The sire and childe partnership of Aristotle de Laurent and his adopted childe Beckett (who displays none of the characteristics of the Lunatics) also reaches Transylvania. The two researchers of the *Book of Nod* consort with the Gehenna cults forming in France and elsewhere, and will soon cross paths with Anatole, Lucita, and the Kindred from Transylvania who have participated in the signs of Gehenna from the very beginning.

CLAN NOSFERATU

The Nosferatu continue to maintain several powerful holdings in Transylvania, and several influential Cainites to secure those holdings. Marusca, originally a guiding force in Hermanstadt, has relocated to Cluj-Napoca, following the movement of Transylvania's Diet. She wields many secrets from her nights of tutelage under the Fiend Yorak, and conspires against the leadership of Nova Arpad and the Ventrue in the area. Ruxandra is still in the area, as well; Nova uncovered her masquerade as Prince Otto, and the Lextalionis against her has resumed with a renewed vigor. No one knows where she is, however. Given her talent and flair for disguise, she could be masquerading as literally anyone in Transylvania, Kindred or otherwise.

Another important Nosferatu is Zelios, one of the most respected Cainites in all Transylvania. He is beginning to realize that the geomantic web he has constructed to bind Kupala has not been as effective as he had hoped. He has made many trips to Egypt and other lands to study architecture, hoping to find secrets to improve his own binding rituals. In doing so, he has made a tentative pact with the Followers of Set. Realizing that any supernatural knowledge is at a premium in Transylvania, he hopes that the secrets the Setites can give him will aid him in his efforts. Deep within, however, Zelios wonders if he has made a Devil's deal...

CLAN RAVNOS

The Gypsies find no rest in Transylvania, and their Kindred brethren are no different. Vassily Taltos burns with fury as he sees his people oppressed under both the Turks and the Saxons, and creates a childe to take revenge against the princes of the area. Vladislav Taltos willingly acts the part of Vassily's instrument of vengeance, but not forever. Eventually he will choose his own path, but not until he has given Vassily sizable victories against the Transylvanian Ventrue. Many Ravnos of the area willingly follow the leadership of Vassily and Vladislav, and regard most other Kindred and kine with extreme distrust.

CLAN TOREADOR

The Toreador blatantly favor France, Italy and Spain over such a bleak and unsophisticated land as Transylvania. Arianne is the only notable representative of the clan. She joined the Sabbat at its inception, driven to the cause of the *antitribu* by her hatred of Bulacu.

Roland and her own clan. Arianne actively undermines all of the Ventrue princes in Transylvania, refusing to retreat as so many other Sabbat have done during the wars. She possesses a wealth of information on all the leaders in the region, and seeks more whenever she can.

CLAN TREMERE

Few clans have played such a major role in the history of Transylvania as the Kindred of Clan Tremere. Though Etrius has moved the main chantry from Ceoris to the more wealthy, influential and defensible city of Vienna, Tremere presence (and influence) in the Carpathians remains strong. Ardan of Golden Lane guides the activities at Ceoris, still a very important chantry and the center of Tremere power in Transylvania. Ardan's child Claas also resides in Ceoris, and often undertakes errands and missions for his sire.

All is not well in House Tremere, however. Virstania, named the Mistress of Gargoyles, has joined a large number of the Thaumaturgically created vampires in rebelling against the clan. It is rumored that she has discovered a way to "breed" them, using her knowledge of their creation to give them the ability to reproduce. She and her Gargoyle flock reside in the mountains of the Carpathians near Krondstadt, striking at random and without warning at Tremere settlements and strongholds.

It is also rumored that the rebel Tremere Goratrix still makes his haven somewhere in Transylvania with his coterie of *antitribu*. Soon the Tremere clan will discover a way to ritually mark them all as traitors; but for now Goratrix and his followers could be anywhere....

CLAN TZIMISCE

The once-powerful Tzimisce *voivodes* of Transylvania have fallen from their pedestals of power in their homeland. Disgraced by their defeat at the hands of the Tremere and the Ventrue, young Fiends have largely fled from Transylvania with their Sabbat brethren. Such powerful Tzimisce as Count Radu of Bistritz and Vladimir Rustovitch, the *voivode of voivodes*, have refused to yield their holdings despite Camarilla (and in Rustovitch's case, Lupine) pressure, leaving many areas of Transylvania open for new Kindred to move in. Radu, originally assaulted by the *antitribu* during the Anarch Revolt, decided against defying the general will of his clan. With reservations, he followed Vladimir Rustovitch's lead and became one of the founding members of the Sabbat.

There are still many Tzimisce present in the area, however. Sascha Vykos, through extensive Vicissitude, has altered her gender by way of disguise and has sworn to rid Transylvania of the accursed Tremere. She has learned a moderate level of Thaumaturgy through her interactions



with Tremere *antitribu*, and uses it to beat the Warlocks at their own game. Marelle also remains to fight for her homeland, roaming with her fleshcrafted pack of wolves to defend the area around Hermanstadt from the Camarilla.

Although a Tzimisce in blood only, Vlad Tepes still calls Transylvania home. Dracula presently sides with the Camarilla sect, but is growing disenchanted with its strictness and petty bickering. Currently he stays out of most politics, and hardly any Kindred know his whereabouts or his actions.

CLAN VENTRUE

Inarguably a powerful clan in Transylvania from the beginning, the might of Clan Ventrue has grown during the wars against the Sabbat. The legendary Cainite *Bulscu* rises from torpor in the 16th century and takes over the leadership mantle abandoned by Count Radu and Vladimir Rustovitch. Together with Vencel Rikard, Prince of Budapest, they present a united front against the Sabbat threat.

Nova Arpad has returned to her original domain of Mediasch, and works nightly with the Hungarian nobility to deliver Transylvania from the Turks. She succeeds in 1687 with the Habsburg takeover of the region. Nova actively supports closer ties between the Tremere and the Ventrue, seeing unity between the two clans as an avenue to securing complete domination of the Balkan country. She also champions the oppression brought by the Habsburg leadership, and will suffer the consequences for this in the 19th century, after 200 years of brutal rule.

The Ventrue armor, though, is not without its weak points. Roland, once *Bulscu*'s devoted servant, now works as a spy and informant to Count Jocalo of the Followers of Set. In the near future, the Setites exploit this to its fullest extent, as Roland becomes a very useful tool indeed against his former Ventrue masters.

OTHER FACTIONS: THE BAALI

This bloodline has created a nest of havens near Deva, on the site where the Cathedral of Flesh exists. They worship the demon Kupala and enact rituals to weaken the web that binds his heart to the earth. Their leader, Ansen, claims sovereignty over Deva and keeps a wary eye on the political situation of the region. Ironically, the Camarilla and Sabbat preoccupation with destroying each other has made the idea of a Baali prince a somewhat minor annoyance that can be dealt with later. Ansen also protects the most devious secret of the Cathedral of Flesh: It is no longer there. Only a great pit remains where the Cathedral once was, and none of the Baali are telling what happened.

INTEGRATING THE SECTS

It is quite possible that your group of characters are members of different factions after the events in the previous two installments of the *Transylvania Chronicles*.

The coterie could be any imaginable combination of Camarilla, Sabbat, anarch and independent vampires. At this point, most Storytellers are thinking, "How the hell am I going to get these people to work together?" However, it is still possible (and likely) to integrate the sects and get your players' characters to hook up.

First, despite the Convention of Thorns and the formation of the Sabbat, older vampires still tend to maintain ties and work "above" sect lines. Two Kindred who have allied in centuries before do not cease to be allies simply because one is now Camarilla and the other Sabbat. Also, vampires of any sect will ally temporarily with vampires of another if necessity dictates it. These alliances are viewed in a different way than the same alliances would be in the present-night World of Darkness. Remember, the Camarilla and Sabbat are less than two centuries old at the beginning of *Ill Omens*. They're still newborn organizations in most elder vampires' minds, and they haven't built up the centuries of animosity they hold now. Independent vampires have no restrictions; they can work with anyone they choose. The anarchists can ally with the Camarilla or the Sabbat, as the anarchists are not necessarily enemies of either sect.

If all else fails, the characters can resort to the tried and true political weapon of any arena: the lie. Nobody knows what sect you are part of just by looking at you (the Tremere *antitribu* won't have to deal with that problem until the mid-1700s), and nobody is forcing you to tell them. If most of the group is Camarilla, for example, the remaining Sabbat vampires may choose to lie about their affiliations. What's wrong with a little spying among friends?

This does not mean that tension won't exist, or that the characters won't have to make tough choices at some point... that's all part of good storytelling. Sect differences can actually enhance the game in many situations. Look at this as an opportunity for some memorable story moments, not an insurmountable hurdle that threatens to derail your chronicle.

THE KINDRED HISTORY OF DARK TRANSYLVANIA

At the conclusion of *Son of the Dragon*, the year is 1495, in the twilight of the Late Medieval Ages and awaiting the dawn of the Renaissance. Almost two centuries pass before the first Act of *Ill Omens* in 1680. It's quite a jump in time period, and that jump covers some of the most tumultuous times in Kindred and kine history alike. What has changed in these two centuries? In one word: everything.

THE RIVALRY OF AGES

The feud between the Camarilla and the sect that will soon be known as the Sabbat begins immediately following the Convention of Thorns. The ideological differences between the two sects have divided them to such a point that each side cannot suffer the other's presence in the modern World of Darkness. The previous installment of the *Transylvania Chronicles* covered the formation of the Camarilla in great detail, so here we will present the development of the Sabbat and the conflict that followed.

Transylvania has always been a hotbed of conflict for the Tremere and the Tzimisce, and when those clans fall onto opposite sides of the Camarilla/Sabbat division, their war takes on a new importance. Both sects use the small Carpathian nation as the first battleground in a war that will last until the end of the 17th century.

PICKING UP THE BANNER

Many anarchs did not accept surrender to the Camarilla at the Convention of Thorns in 1493. Their revolt had ended in failure. Elders still held the real power, and the younger vampires' freedoms were still curtailed. Some even argued that the situation worsened under the strict Camarilla.

In two instances, this sentiment spread clanwide. The Lasombra had the added fear of harsh retribution. They had claimed to have succeeded in destroying their own Antediluvian and the elders of many other clans during the Anarch Revolt, and the Camarilla certainly would not let such a thing go unpunished. They knew the Toreador and Ventrue eyed their homeland of Spain hungrily, and would use any means to try to usurp Lasombra influence. Entrance into the Camarilla offered just such a means for them to do so, under the guise of "punishing" the Lasombra for their actions in the Anarch Revolt.

The Tzimisce also refused as a clan to join the Camarilla, but for an entirely different reason. They did not care about retribution for destroying their Antediluvian; indeed, unbeknownst to most of them, the Tzimisce Antediluvian survived the anarch attack and masqueraded as one of the revolt's leaders. Out of pride, the Tzimisce would never accept surrender of any sort to their hated enemies, the Tremere. Surrendering to the Ventrue was nearly as bad, adding insult to injury. Joining the Camarilla would cause the Tzimisce to lose the Transylvania they had defended for generations. The Fiends could never willingly give Transylvania to the very forces they had fought against. This was completely unacceptable to any Tzimisce worth the name, and the clan vowed to continue their fight. Additionally, many of the clan's vampires saw no need for a Camarilla, and returned to governing the night with eldritch power as they always had in the past.

The Lasombra and Tzimisce brought together as many of the remaining *antitribu* as possible to continue where the Anarch Revolt had left off. Ironically, the Camarilla gathering at Thorns brought together all the opponents of the Convention as well as its supporters, and served as the perfect initial meeting for the future Sabbat members. Both the Lasombra and Tzimisce realized that part of the failure of the revolt was due to its disorganization; it could not stand up to the unity of the Camarilla.

The dissidents met in secret in Spain and Transylvania, where the two leading clans could guarantee a certain level of security. During these meetings the details of what would soon be a new sect were hammered out. The Lasombra championed the move to bring the *antitribu* into a group that could defy the Camarilla in an organized fashion. The Tzimisce helped design the structure of the sect, twisting and warping the positions of the Church to strike a symbolic blow at the Inquisition (which was in full swing throughout Europe at this time). They soon came upon the name for the organization, taken from the witch's Sabbath: The sect would be called the Sabbat.

THE GREAT WAR BEGINS

The Camarilla dropped its defenses after the Convention of Thorns, thinking the matter of the anarchs closed. The Sabbat used this window to strike brutally and unexpectedly in Spain, Hungary and Transylvania. These were the only organized areas of resistance; groups that would later be affiliated with the Sabbat revolted on their own throughout Europe. Despite a severe numerical disadvantage, the Sabbat achieved success through planning, tactics and surprise. The Tzimisce used the *Vaulderie* to create unshakable morale in the packs that executed the attacks. They instituted the practice of Creation Rites, the inhuman feeding practices that distanced the Sabbat from the Camarilla and from mortals and the Embrace of mass fodder to throw against the Camarilla.

In trying to organize itself and keep itself secret from humanity, the Camarilla had created its own Achilles' heel, and the Sabbat exploited this to the fullest. Breaking the Masquerade and assassinating the elders of Camarilla cities became the primary goals of Sabbat incursions. Although the Sabbat held no love for the Inquisition, at times they used it to their advantage; if an attack on a Camarilla stronghold did not result in success, they insured that an Inquisitor would take notice and "clean up" the mess the Sabbat uncovered through breaking the Masquerade.

The Sabbat also sparked revolts, especially in Transylvania. In 1514, the peasants of Transylvania rose up against the tyranny of their mortal and Kindred masters. The Sabbat threw as much support as possible behind it. This unwittingly paved the way for Ottoman takeover of parts of Hungary, which worked to neither Camarilla nor Sabbat advantage. The conflicts with the Sabbat and the peasantry

weakened Transylvania to the point that the local princes had to accept Ottoman suzerainty (the vassalage of Transylvania to the Ottoman Empire) as the Turks gradually surrounded the Carpathian nation. Ottoman presence curtailed the power of the Camarilla princes in the region, and the Assamites who came with the Turks battled their traitorous *antitribu* brethren with religious furor.

For the first half-century of the conflict, the Sabbat enjoyed tremendous success. The Camarilla and its elders could not adapt quickly enough to the Sabbat's new methods of warfare. Hardestadt and Rafael de Corazon frantically planned with the other Founders and princes of powerful Camarilla cities, trying to formulate a strategy. If the Sabbat successes continued, their newly formed Camarilla might fall after less than a century of existence.

WE'LL ALWAYS HAVE VIENNA

During the chaos at the beginning of the Sabbat wars, Etrius decided to move the Tremere Chantry from Ceoris to Vienna. He had planned the move for quite some time, building a new chantry in the Austrian city over the past century. Now, however, the need to relocate was immediate. The Ottoman leaders who dominated Transylvania after 1526 followed the advice of the Assamites, who had free reign in the country during its vassalage. After the curse placed on them at Thorns, the Assamites made Ceoris a prime target for Ottoman and "anti-Sabbat" incursions.

If this weren't had enough for the Tremere, they suffered added pressure on other fronts. The Trimisce in Transylvania directed most of their fury at the Tremere, this time with the *antitribu* of other clans to back them up. Also, Gargoyles rebelled in unprecedented numbers during this time. Even those who remained loyal to the Tremere could not be trusted completely with defending Ceoris from attack.

Transylvania thus became a very unhealthy place for the Council of Seven. Etrius left his trusted lieutenant, Ardan of Golden Lane, in charge of Ceoris and moved everything of import to Vienna—including, it is said, the slumbering form of the clan founder. It was a dangerous journey to undertake, and many convoys to Austria suffered attacks by one or all of the Tremere enemies. (One legend of the journey recounts Tremere himself awakening when Gargoyles fell on the convoy transporting his body, and destroying them single-handedly with a massive storm of lightning.) But the move was worth the risk. Vienna was much better defended, more economically stable, and much more politically influential than Ceoris. Etrius saw it as the perfect base for the Tremere to watch the chaos and developments in their old homeland. Later, Vienna became the ideal site to watch Transylvania from afar through Hungary and the Habsburg leadership there.

THE TIDE TURNS

The Sabbat continued to fight viciously, but tactics and surprise could not give them an edge forever. Once the Camarilla realized it was dealing with a full-fledged war, and learned the way in which the Sabbat waged it, they began fighting back. They drew from the two advantages they had that could insure Camarilla victory: numbers and mortal influence.

Even with the mass fodder they created, the vast majority of which died during their assaults, the Sabbat simply did not have enough vampires to support a sustained conflict. As the war dragged on for a century and beyond, the Sabbat could not keep the level of engagement high enough to achieve new gains, or even to preserve old ones. They also had severe problems with the mortal governments and societies in the areas they claimed. When the right Camarilla elders spoke in the right mortal ears, the Sabbat quickly lost the support of local kine leaders. Few barons or princes gave Sabbat leaders support, either in gold or troops. Trade all but ceased in Sabbat cities, and guilds and artisans moved elsewhere. Although arguably more effective in open conflict, the Sabbat eventually had to withdraw under the less violent, but far more effective, counterattacks of the Camarilla.

The Sabbat quickly found that it had no safe haven. Mortal society crumbled in the areas it took from the Camarilla. Even the original domains of its most powerful archbishops came under political and economic assault. Many Sabbat also realized that the war, with its emphasis on taking cities and defeating the Camarilla, had lost track of the ideals and reasons behind the war, which was to defeat the Antediluvians that used Cainites as their pawns. The Sabbat needed to find somewhere to retreat to and bandage its wounds, a place to reevaluate its purpose and find what its goals really were. Eventually the Sabbat leadership decided on Scandinavia, the cold, remote and sparsely populated region in northern Europe. By the late 1600s the vast majority of the Sabbat had relocated to this region, although several outcroppings of Sabbat territory still remained in Europe. The Trimisce, led by Vladimir Rustovitch and Count Radu Bistri, regrettably but necessarily retreated from their homeland of Transylvania, folding under the Tremere and Ventruue onslaught. They retained close contact with the Trimisce who remained, and made a promise to the *voivodes* still there that one night the Sabbat would return to retake Transylvania.

Many Sabbat also saw another option. Across the Atlantic, a new, untamed world lay open, free of Camarilla corruption and repression. Lupine presence was rumored to be fairly high, but many Sabbat preferred to face an enemy that fought out in the open rather than the duplicitous treachery of the Camarilla. The Trimisce particularly saw the Americas as a welcome place; hadn't they cowed the werewolves in their own homeland? Thus began a mass exodus of Sabbat to the New World, and the conflict between Camarilla and Sabbat began anew on a different shore.

WHY NOT? EVERYBODY ELSE'S DOING IT!

At this point in history, some Sabbat members in your coterie may want to move with their *antitribu* friends to the New World. It may seem frustrating for them to see the Sabbat gradually get its collective ass handed to it, and the idea of being the first Bishop of New York or Boston can be quite tempting. It is also possible that the Camarilla members of the group might wish to do so, as well; not every Old World principdom is a crown jewel, and there are plenty of places to get a new start in the Americas.

If this choice comes up, you as a Storyteller have a tough decision. If you wish to continue with the *Transylvania Chronicles* and the story of Gehenna, then it is best if the characters stay geographically close to Transylvania. In modern nights, Kindred can jet around the globe in a few hours, but in the 1600s it takes weeks to get to the Atlantic coast, and then another two months to get to the Americas. If you take this option, stress the importance of "keeping up the good fight" for the Sabbat; it might be as easy as having a Sabbat archbishop ask them to stay. The characters might also find it interesting to remain as spies and infiltrate the cursed Camarilla. For Camarilla characters, prowling werewolves and uncivilized wild might be enough to convince them to stay home. In either case, the characters (assuming your troupe has played the *Transylvania Chronicles* from the first book) are

probably old and powerful, and likely have much they would be loath to leave behind.

If they do decide to relocate to Scandinavia or the New World, but want to keep with the stories in future installments of the *Transylvania Chronicles*, then most of the acts will need major reworking to fit into your new setting. This is perfectly fine; if you feel up to it, it's your game. Another option is taking your own story in a different direction. The first two chronicles have given your coterie's characters a hell of a start, and maybe now you want to tell the story of the Sabbat fighting for control of the harsh new environs in the New World. In your chronicle, they might even succeed. Discuss with your players and see what they want to do, and what story you want to tell. Once you decide, history is in your capable hands.

THAT WHICH DOES NOT KILL US....

In reality, the Camarilla had never been in danger of totally collapsing, but the Sabbat served as a much-needed wake-up call. Hardestadt's naïve notion that he could gather all the clans together under one organization was proven impossible time and again during the conflict. The Setites declined to join, to the relief of many a Camarilla Kindred, and the best that could be garnered from the Giovanni was a promise in 1528 to stay out of Kindred affairs (which at least guaranteed that they would not support the Sabbat).



The Camarilla became stronger in response. Princes learned the tactics of the Sabbat, and strengthened their leadership and protective measures against crusades. The overall structure of the Camarilla was solidified by the Founders; it is at this time that the practice of having Conclaves, justicars and archons develops. Positions such as seneschal, keeper of Elysium and sheriff were institutionalized in all Camarilla cities, and some princes even instituted the ancient office of the scourge. Many anarchs (and Sabbat) would argue that this made the Camarilla even more oppressive, but it did make the organization more capable of withstanding eternity, the vampire's greatest asset — and enemy.

UNLIFE IN TRANSYLVANIA

As the advantage swung from the Sabbat to the Camarilla in Transylvania toward the end of the 16th century, the princes in the region began working to end the Ottoman suzerainty that constrained both their Kindred and mortal influence. Unfortunately, the continuing Sabbat skirmishes, the chaos that the *antitribu* left in their wake, and the feuds between the Camarilla princes made those efforts largely futile.

Their first attempt was by far the most successful. Playing on the discontent brought by Ottoman rule in the peasantry, a mortal leader named Michael the Brave sought to unite the lands of Transylvania, Tara Romaneasca and Moldavia under one rule. His efforts did not gain Kindred notice at first, but when Michael brought the three regions together and won his first victories against the Turks in 1595, the Ventrue of Transylvania saw the mortal general as a possible solution to their Ottoman problems.

With the subtle backing of Ventrue capital and political support, Michael achieved what he sought with incredible swiftness. By 1599, he had solidly united the three regions under his rule and largely eliminated Turkish influence in Transylvania. The Ventrue princes admired their handiwork, bloated with the combined ego of defeating the Sabbat, expelling the Turks and uniting Transylvania under a powerful ruler whose ear they had. That is, they admired it until it almost immediately began to collapse.

The Assamites, furious at the Ventrue victory, began working to restore Turkish domination by undermining the princedoms of the Camarilla in the Carpathians. The Tremere saw the Ventrue actions as an attempt to shut them out of Transylvania, a treacherous move given the two clans' historical alliance in the area. The Warlocks spared no expense supporting the Habsburg kingdoms from Vienna as they attempted to take Transylvania for their own. Even the Ventrue in Transylvania began squabbling among themselves, and Ventrue princes as far

away as Germany and Poland tried to steal the rich, newly independent nation to add to their own demesnes.

Michael the Brave was assassinated by German agents in 1601, just two years after his historic achievement. The Ventrue spent the next 60 years vying among each other for influence, each sponsoring different mortals for the kine government of Transylvania. It became a game of prestige and power to see who backed the mortal who would ascend to the Transylvanian throne. Faced with Tremere-supported Habsburg aggression on one side and Assamite-supported Ottoman aggression on the other, these mortal rulers fought a losing battle to hold the princedom together. Wars and shifting alliances wracked the small nation, and finally, in 1659, Transylvania again fell under Ottoman suzerainty, this time stronger than it had been before Michael the Brave.

ATTACK, COUNTERATTACK AND REBELLION

Again in control of Transylvania, the Ottoman Empire turned its eyes toward the prize of Vienna. It had always been a goal of the Turks to take Vienna, the most powerful city in Eastern Europe, and the Assamites now had added incentive to urge the invasion on. From 1660 until 1683, Transylvania served as little more than the staging area for a massive Turkish attack on Vienna. In July of 1683, Sultan Mehmed IV himself led his troops from Transylvania to the walls of Vienna and sieged the city.

The Tremere were frantic. Etrius had moved the chantry to Vienna specifically because it was safer than Ceoris, and now the Turks were at the city's doorstep. Many Ventrue refused to send aid because of Tremere takeover attempts earlier in the century, and few other clans had enough political might in the area to do anything. In desperation, Etrius began making plans on how to escape from the city with the sleeping body of Tremere so he could preserve the clan.

Ultimately, the siege ended without the aid of any other Camarilla clan. The pope in Italy, seeing an Ottoman takeover of Vienna as a grave blow to an already schism-weakened Catholic Church, gathered a holy alliance of the papacy, Italy and Poland to come to Vienna's aid. The combined force defeated the Ottomans by September, and the sultan retreated with heavy losses. To this night, no Tremere knows (or will say) what Kindred, if any, came to their aid in the situation. If a specific Cainite, or even a clan, spurred the pope's assistance in the matter, the Tremere would owe them a great debt. The Ventrue whisper among themselves that the masterful Fabrizio Ulfila may have orchestrated the affair, but that august individual has yet to step forward and claim any laurels.

The Tremere took full advantage of their salvation, however, and spurred their Habsburg allies into action.

The Habsburgs chased the retreating Ottoman army through Hungary and into Transylvania. By 1687, the Turks had been completely expelled from the region, and the Habsburg dynasty was firmly in control. Finally the Tremere had regained a measure of control in their Eastern Europe.

The Habsburg dynasty rid Transylvania of any outside influence by stripping Transylvania of its autonomy and selling Transylvanian titles to loyal nobles (including a number of Tremere- and Ventrue-backed puppets). This decreased the personal power of the nobles already in the region, and sparked a series of rebellions in the 18th century. The most important one, begun in 1703, was led by a man named Ferencz Rakoczi II. Claiming that local leaders were working with "a secret *camarilla*" in Vienna, he fought to end Habsburg rule. His claims, cutting far too close to secrets the Camarilla Kindred wished to keep secret, convinced many Cainites that he was Sabbat, or had Sabbat support. The revolt was defeated in 1711, but it was not the last one; revolts again tore through Transylvania in 1737, 1744, 1759 and 1784.

THE WINDS OF CHANGE

Nearly everything has changed by the end of the 17th century. The Renaissance is history now, rather than a new way of thinking. Leonardo da Vinci, Shakespeare, Galileo, Copernicus and Machiavelli have already lived, changed how we look at the world, and died. Martin Luther nailed his theses to the cathedral door over a century ago, and the consequences of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation that followed still resound through Europe. The Inquisition has evolved from a reaction to an institution. Feudalism has collapsed, monarchies are going out of style, and the cannon has become the weapon of power in the Western world.

Not all of these changes directly affect Cainite unlife. However, a few undoubtedly do. The schism between the vampire sects is a major change that alters the course of Kindred history, but there are other products of that division that are more subtle but no less relevant. Also, shifts in kine society make unlife even more difficult for a vampire looking to make his mark in the world.

RULING WITH AN IRON FIST

Kindred of the 17th and 18th century are faced with a host of stumbling blocks to prominence. In the Middle Ages, "ruling" was simple. You defeated, killed or forced into vassalage a local ruler whose domain you wanted to usurp. You then waltzed into the surrounding towns, proclaimed yourself prince of the region, and threatened the very powers of hell upon anyone that did not pay taxes and submit to your rule. It was so... easy.

Not anymore. Now that the Camarilla yokes seven of the 13 clans, there are rules to play by. It's bad form to actively and openly undermine the authority of a prince in the same sect; such aggressions are better directed against the dreaded Sabbat. You have to be sly, tricky, and follow the complex advice of that bastard Machiavelli. With only the precarious veil of the Masquerade protecting the undead from the Inquisition's witch-fires, no longer can you play the trump card of "I'm a vampire; serve me or die" that worked so well in ages past.

It's no easier in the Sabbat, either. It's not that you don't want that Lasombra's bishopric for your own, it's just that you happen to have a Vinculum, with her and hell, you're practically in love with her because of it. And if you decide to crusade that nearby Camarilla city and take it for yourself, it's almost a guarantee that society itself will fall apart the minute you succeed, and the Inquisition will probably be close behind to clean up. The Camarilla doesn't like you, the Giovanni don't like you, the Setites don't like you, and you're retreating to Scandinavia and over the ocean to the New World. Times definitely could be better.

The feudal way of governing has largely disappeared in the last two centuries. Guilds, traders and artisans have taken a position of importance in the economy, and though agriculture is still a major commodity, it is no longer under the strict controls that feudalism was able to keep it under. Influence over money and trade is rapidly shifting from European leaders to European traders and guilds. The monarchic system of government still hangs on, which is the last bastion of old-style Kindred leadership, but it is besieged on all sides by constant peasant revolts and uprisings. Soon, with the French Revolution, the ideas of democracy and liberty will sweep away the monarchies of Europe.

Cainites of the Renaissance and post-Renaissance ages have to change the way they think in the very arenas that gives them the ability to weather the passage of eternity: politics and government. The whole system they are used to is unraveling, and by the 19th century will be all but gone. Storytellers are encouraged to make this change as difficult as possible; the Kindred who manage to remain in power through this period are adaptable and influential indeed. Gone are the nights of heavy-handed rulership from craggy castles — these are the nights of subtle influence and actions by catspaw — and they will be forever afterward.

THE ART OF WAR

Kindred are used to being the lords of the battlefield. No mortal weapon, save a well-aimed sword blow, can hope to end their unlife, and potent ghouls bolster their legions of mercenaries. An army fielded by an undead

leader sweeps through the medieval battlefield, and nothing can stop it.

War, as everything else, has changed drastically from this picture. Although Cainites are still formidable, rifles and cannon have made their existence much more tenuous. The same weapons dispatch a ghoul nearly as fast as a mortal soldier, and mercenaries have become more unreliable as time goes on. Now you have to command armies of loyal subjects and militias, which means you have to be popular with those mortals you influence. And you must do it from the shadows, lest the commoners learn your sanguinary secrets.

Armor has practically disappeared from the battlefield. Broad, slashing swords have given way to thrusting weapons, which can slip through the plates of any suit of armor. Rifle shot pierces most armor with ease, and armor of proof is so heavy and cumbersome that it is good for nothing but novelty. (In game terms, halve all medieval armor ratings when dealing with thrusting weapons or firearms.) Bow and arrow are gone, as well. Matchlocks, rapiers, muskets and cannon are the weapons of choice on the battlefield of the late-17th century and beyond. In fact, one of the only holdovers from ages past is the horse, still an effective instrument in post-medieval warfare. It will take the machine gun and tank in World War I — almost

200 years in the future — to end cavalry's use as an instrument of combat.

Below are the statistics for the common weapons of this area. Characters who wish to use these weapons must purchase the skills that correspond to them; archery will not aid in firing a gun, and someone with knowledge of how to use a broadsword will likely die in his next rapier duel.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The changing times emphasized in *Ill Omens* are the perfect opportunity to convert from *Vampire: The Dark Ages* to *Vampire: The Masquerade*, if you have not already done so. The new lexicon, Disciplines, abilities and mechanics bring the theme of change home just as directly as any story. The conflicts between elders and neonates, and the choices between Roads and Humanity or Paths of Enlightenment, all offer great storytelling opportunities for any troupe.

Finally, we have said it before, but we will end this chapter by saying it again: This is your story. Do with it what you see fit. This chapter is meant to start your imagination, and what follows is nothing more than a good guidebook. Tell the story you want to tell; hopefully, what we write here will help you tell the best story possible.

17TH AND 18TH-CENTURY WEAPONS

Weapon	Damage	Range	Reload Time	Conceal
Matchlock Pistol	4	30	1/5	C
Matchlock Musket	5	35	1/5	N
Rapier	Str+2	-	-	T
Cannon (small)	10*	500	1/6 (with crew)	N
Cannon (Large)	20*	400	1/6 (with crew)	N

Note: This chart takes into account the changes made by *Vampire: The Masquerade* revised edition. Remember that damage from firearms is halved for vampires, who treat it as bashing, rather than lethal, damage. These are also the nights before "spotting" rapiers — these rapiers do not have blunted tips and do lethal damage. Storytellers using *Vampire: The Dark Ages* or the second edition of *Vampire: The Masquerade* should adjust these weapons' Traits accordingly.

* Bystanders within 20 feet of the explosion take half damage from debris. Also, damage from cannons and cannon debris is not considered bashing damage for vampires.





CHAPTER TWO: TWILIGHT OF THE GRAVEROBBER

Mark these signs, they are coming! Gehenna will be on earth...

Mark the angel that dies.

— The Book of Nod

Transylvania has existed under varying degrees of Ottoman influence since the beginning of the 1500s. By 1659, however, the Ottoman Empire has nearly total control of the region, and uses it as a staging area for its imminent attack on Vienna. This has many effects on Transylvania, beyond the simple changes in who gets tax money and who fields the local armies. Transylvania is a haven of religious freedom (at least when compared to the rest of Europe), a font of learning and knowledge unheard of in the West, and a bastion of safety from the Inquisition. The Ottomans themselves are no more merciful or compassionate than the Western leaders they replace, but their culture does bring a few benefits to the residents of Transylvania.

When night falls, the struggles between East and West are replaced by the struggles of the Sabbat and Camarilla. Their war has raged for almost two centuries, and it is clear the Sabbat cannot defeat its larger, more organized and more influential enemy. Early on, the *Timisce voivodes* nearly swept the Ventrue and Tremere from their land, but gradually the Camarilla pushed back. Many of the Fiends who held Transylvania in their talons since its inception fled during the war, and only a handful of Sabbat now remains to carry on the fight. This has not made unlife easier for the victorious Camarilla princes, however; the Assamites influence the mandate of the Turks, and they make war with any Kindred whose goals come into conflict with the Ottoman Empire or Alamut.

ACT I: AN ANGEL'S PLEA (FALL 1680)

In 1680, both Kindred and kine pause. Everything balances on a threshold: The Sabbat-Camarilla wars wind down; the West braces for an Ottoman attack, and the Turks bide their time, waiting for the perfect moment to strike. It is at this moment that the characters receive missives from a young woman named Maria Asunción. Though they don't know it at first, Maria is at the center of one of the greatest hunts in Kindred history, begun in 1444 and finally closing in on its last victim over two centuries later. Maria Asunción is the last member of the original Cappadocian clan.

BUT I THOUGHT I WAS THE LAST CAPPADOCIAN!

If the characters have played the previous *Transylvania Chronicles*, it is possible that one of the characters is a Cappadocian. If this is the case in your chronicle, several items need to be taken into consideration.

The Giovanni are obsessive, ruthless and very thorough in their hunt for the remaining members of the Cappadocian clan. If the character in question has not taken extreme measures to hide his past (hiding

himself utterly from the world, destroying all records of himself, erasing the memories of everyone he ever came in contact with who knew he was a Cappadocian, etc.), he at the very least cannot exist openly in Cainite society. If the Giovanni have even the smallest shred of evidence to go on, they will hunt the character down and destroy him. If the player thinks this is unfair, remind him that he knew very well the history of the Cappadocians, and willingly created a member of a doomed clan. We recommend that you bring about the destruction of any Cappadocian characters in your chronicle, rather than letting them exist as "the last Cappadocian." This is not to be cruel, but to preserve the tragedy of the clan's destruction and the moral questions brought up by this act. The destruction should not be fickle or meaningless, and should provide great storytelling and deeper meaning for your chronicle.

If the character has gone to great lengths to hide his identity, or you decide that it is better to let him survive for chronicle reasons (or just to keep the player happy and avoid hard feelings), then this can lead to some interesting developments. Maria Asunción possibly knows that the character is a Cappadocian, and may take offense to him hiding his true self. That can result in additional dilemmas for the character who lies to survive, as he is offered untold riches and knowledge to hand a clanmate over to be destroyed.



The Storyteller may play the reception of these missives as a short prelude before the first scene of the story. The first letter is sent to one coterie member of the Storyteller's choice, preferably the one who best fits the following criteria. Maria sends it to the character with the most personal power or securest demesne, and ideally the one

geographically closest to Transylvania, and with the least ties to the Giovanni or the Sabbat. The most important consideration is that the character is not Giovanni, though the perfect choice is a character who fits most or all of the criteria. This character receives the following letter, modified to fit that character.

Dear Prince,

I bid you greetings. God has smiled favorably on you in times past, and you have persevered through the paynim occupation and the wars with the Sabbat. I pray that your influence may now help me in my time of need.

I wish to speak with you in two weeks' time, on the night of September the Second, the Year of Our Lord 1680, concerning a special arrangement. I know of your holdings and your areas of Elysium, and I am in no need of escort or directions. I am sending a similar invitation to several other Kindred of your acquaintance who share your interests, and they will be the only others whom I ask be present at our meeting.

I cannot tell you now what the special arrangement concerns, but I will reveal what I offer in exchange for your cooperation. Both you and your acquaintances share an interest in prophecies and fragments concerning the legendary time of Gehenna. I possess several such fragments, and I am willing to share them with you. The exact nature of these documents, as well as what I ask for their exchange, will be revealed in two weeks' time.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to meeting with you. May God bless you and keep you safe until we meet.

In His Name,

Maria Asunción

Capilla de la Santa Isabella

The remaining members of the coterie (excluding any members of the Giovanni clan) receive the following letter at their residences. The Storyteller should include the name of

the character who received the first letter, so the coterie knows where the meeting will take place.

Dear Fellows,

I bid you greetings. I pray God has smiled favorably on you in these hard times for our kind.

I am writing to invite you to a meeting in two weeks' time, on September the Second in the Year of Our Lord 1680, a few hours after nightfall, at the demesne of one of your colleagues. There, I wish to discuss a proposal with you. I cannot disclose the nature of my proposal in this letter, but I can reveal what I offer for your cooperation, which may interest you. I understand you have an interest in prophecies and fragments concerning the legendary time of Gehenna. I possess several such fragments, and am willing to share their contents with you, provided you attend and agree to my proposal.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to meeting you. May God bless you and keep you safe until we meet.

In His Name,

Maria Asunción

Capilla de la Santa Isabella

Spirit Touch reveals little about the letters, other than they carry an odd aura of hope mixed with doom. Any research into the Capilla de la Santa Isabella is fruitless, unless the characters have contacts in the Church or in Spain. In that case, they learn that the Capilla was a chapel near Barcelona that housed a small nunnery. The chapel was burned to the ground in the mid-1500s by the Inquisition on the grounds that it harbored witches. They cannot find any record of a Sister Maria Asunción... at least, not within the two weeks allotted to them before the meeting.

Brother,

Greetings. I hope that everything is proceeding well for you, despite the complications brought by Ottoman presence. If the family can be of any assistance to you, I urge you to let us know. We are enthusiastic to help any of our clan who need it.

I write this letter to you because a fellow family member and I will be attending you shortly. This is a very important visit. Our Giovanni brethren are extremely interested in any knowledge you may have of an ancient tome referred to as the *Book of Nod*, or of prophecies regarding what some call Gehenna. I wish to converse with you over these subjects, as well as about an unexpected complication that has arisen in the region of Transylvania. I can say no more of it in this letter, but it is sufficiently important to warrant my personal attention. I regret I cannot give you a time in which I will arrive; circumstances do not permit it. But it will be soon.

I look forward to seeing you.

Signed,

Don Pietro Giovanni

Budapest, 20 August, 1680

None of a Giovanni character's clan contacts know what "unexpected complication" Don Pietro is talking about, and no amount of searching reveals it. The first scene proceeds differently and independently for her, since she is visited by Don Pietro and one other member of Clan Giovanni on the night the rest of her coterie meets Maria Asunción. The coterie reunites in Scene Two.

SCENE ONE: A DANGEROUS GAMBLE

After two weeks, the night of September 2nd arrives. All the coterie members, except any Giovanni, should come to the selected character's manse (castles are becoming outmoded forms of residence, even in Transylvania) and await the arrival of the mysterious Maria Asunción. The wait may in itself offer some inter-

Any Giovanni characters receive a very different letter. This missive is not from Maria, but from Don Pietro Giovanni, a Necromancer in Budapest. Giovanni in Transylvania report to him at least indirectly, and it is possible that the character has met Don Pietro, if she is sufficiently important in Transylvania. The letter implies that the character resides in or near Transylvania; it can be changed if the character is in another area of Europe.

esting storytelling moments, especially if the characters no longer get along with one another. This may be a chance for some "catching up" between coterie members; their feelings on the Camarilla, Sabbat, Habsburgs and Turks can fuel interesting and lively conversation. Hopefully, the coterie works well together on some level, without truly major rivalries.

A Giovanni character, despite not receiving an invitation, may find out about the meeting if the coterie is close knit and communicates often. If she chooses to come to this meeting, the Storyteller should remind her that she was not invited, and Maria made it clear only those invited are to attend. Furthermore, Don Pietro has already mentioned that he will be visiting at some unspecified time, which may be that same night. If the Giovanni still wishes to go to the meeting with Maria,



then Don Pietro and his very important guest find the character not at home and are sorely disappointed (which they mention in Scene Two, when they meet with the coterie). If the character behaves like a loyal "brother" and stays home, then he is present when Don Pietro arrives.

THE ARRIVAL

At 11 P.M. that evening, several hours after nightfall and just long enough to make the characters start to feel restless, one of the hosting character's servants announces that a carriage has arrived at the manse. It is small and lightly loaded, with no passengers or heraldry, and carries only its driver. The character hosting the meeting may order the servant to help the driver with any of her baggage, but the servant reports that the woman refused any aid. The characters may also ask the servant to search the carriage (or an Obfuscated character may try it, as well) once Maria is away from it, hoping to steal the fragments she spoke of in the letter. The search reveals nothing other than a few changes of clothes, a rosary and an old copy of the Bible. Maria discovers what has happened when she returns to her carriage, making her distrust the characters immediately.

Moments later, Maria Asunción enters the room. She wears a dusty brown traveling cloak, a wooden crucifix, heavy breeches and leather boots. She brushes back the cloak's hood to reveal long black hair, green eyes and a smooth complexion. She is lithe and thin, moving with fluidity and possessing a plain, yet alluring, beauty. Maria bows to the character who owns the manor, and nods politely to the other Cainites present. Her aura appears calm to any characters with Auspex, but sparkles with a hint of controlled nervousness and anxiousness. She also has the unmistakable golden aura, faint but noticeable, of a possessor of True Faith. If any character asks her clan, she simply answers that she is clanless, and that is one of her reasons for seeking this audience. Camarilla characters may hear warning bells at having a Caitiff in their midst; go ahead and let them get nervous. A Caitiff isn't nearly as bad as what they're really getting.

Maria accepts any reasonable offers of blood or hospitality the characters make, though she is not willing to partake of another Kindred's vitae. She then politely asks that all servants and ghouls be dismissed from the chamber; she explains that what she is about to say is not meant for their ears. She also scowls at any Giovanni present (she knows which characters she invited, as well as which characters she specifically did not), and refuses to speak further if that character remains. If the Giovanni does not leave, Maria apologizes coldly for misjudging the characters so thoroughly, bids them good evening, and leaves. In that circumstance, you can skip to Scene Two, leaving the characters with the distinct impression that they may have acted poorly. Ideally, the situation should not devolve into a fight or an attempt to capture Maria.

(though the characters are free to do so if they really want...). Maria has little in the way of combat ability, though her Disciplines and True Faith should give the characters a few problems before they capture her. If they capture her, they find the two prophecies mentioned below in a satchel she carries, but do not find any of the fragments revealed in the later parts of the act.

As soon as any ghouls, servants and Giovanni leave the room, Maria takes a small satchel from her cloak and begins to speak. "I thank you all for heeding my request for your presence. As I said, I have a proposal to make. But first, as a token of good faith, I bring you a small item from the prophecies I mentioned in my letter. This should prove that I do have the fragments, as I said, and serve at least as a thanks for meeting with me."

She removes a small scroll from the satchel. It is made of a type of papyrus, extremely brittle and time-worn. The language is the same as that on the previous prophecies the characters translated with the plate they found at the Tihuta Pass. The characters may translate it immediately (especially if one of the characters has taken the time to learn the language in which the prophecies have all been recorded to date) or wait until after the meeting. The scroll contains only one completely legible fragment.

*And the warped and cursed hand reaches to
dig the demon's heart from the earth, clutching
and pulling it from the tainted soil, and guides
thus the demon to do its bidding and spread its
foulness to all corners. It is then that Gehenna
comes upon us all.*

If asked, Maria claims not to know the meaning of the prophecy. It is not her area of expertise, and thus why she is offering it as barter. After giving the scroll to the characters, she continues.

"I asked you all to meet me here for the following purpose: I wish sanctuary in your demesne for two months. All I require is your protection and a secluded place to stay, to continue my research. I have little in the way of resources or belongings, and not enough to provide for my own facilities. If you agree, I will give you one fragment upon your agreement, and another at the end of the two months. If I require more time, I will offer you other prophecies to continue your protection."

The characters may get suspicious at this point (and justifiably so). If they ask if Maria is running from anyone, or needs protection from a specific pursuer, she replies that she possesses many arcane texts and a great deal of knowledge that many Kindred seek. She has become paranoid over her unlife, and never takes unnecessary risks. The characters should be able to relate to this reasoning quite well....

Maria Asunción gives no further explanations, and the characters may discuss her offer among themselves. She invited them all to the meeting in case the ideal choice (the hosting character) refused; she could then ask for protection in one of the remaining characters' domains. If they all flatly refuse, she nods slightly, and her aura quickly shifts to fear and desperation. She leaves the manse, and the act proceeds to Scene Two.

If one or all of them agree, she thanks them and blesses them in the name of Saint Isabella. The characters may make whatever arrangements they wish; she asks little in the way of accommodations and takes almost any quarters offered her, though she is noticeably uncomfortable in a Nosferatu haven.

Upon the characters' agreement, she removes a surprisingly light stone tablet from the satchel, written in the same familiar script, which translates into the following.

*In the Crescent Moon does lie the Key,
On the skin so pearl, on the neck of her
Shines a hope of Salvation from Darkness, perhaps.
The only hope, all rests in the Last Daughter.*

It is clear the prophecies are from two very different locales and time periods, written by two very different authors. Maria claims not to know where they were originally found. They were part of the library of her chapel, and she took them so they would not be destroyed in the fire.

Maria resides quietly for several days, but speaks readily with any characters about biblical and scholarly subjects. She is especially fascinated by any discussion of Martin Luther, Calvin, the Inquisition and the Counter-Reformation. However, after two weeks, the most unique visitors begin arriving in the area and inquiring about her.

FAMILY AFFAIRS

That same night, any Giovanni characters receive a visit from Don Pietro Giovanni and his guest. The two arrive in a carriage clearly marked with the heraldry of the Giovanni, driven by two ghouls armed with rapiers and matchlock rifles. The ghouls leap down when the carriage stops and open the doors for the Giovanni. They then flank the two Kindred as they enter the character's manor.

Don Pietro is balding and portly, dressed in the latest Italian finery and sporting rings on each of his chubby fingers. His skin is pitted and scarred from childhood disease. He is a stark contrast to the Cainite he accompanies, who the character might possibly recognize. The second Kindred is Ambrogino Giovanni, the trusted enforcer and right hand of the clan's founder, Augustus. Ambrogino is tall and gaunt with long dark hair and a well-trimmed



beard. He wears the same style of clothing as Don Pietro, but with far less embellishment.

Don Pietro greets the character in a manner appropriate to their relationship; if they have met before, he states that it has been far too long since they've chatted and gives the character a warm embrace. If not, he introduces himself and apologizes that circumstances have not allowed him to visit the character before. He then introduces Ambrogino Giovanni, who simply nods to the character and says nothing. If the character didn't realize who Ambrogino was before, he now knows, and might be suitably nervous about what the visit concerns (assuming he knows anything of Ambrogino). Ambrogino is present because this is the culmination of two centuries of genocide, and he wishes to be the one remembered as the destroyer of the last Cappadocian.

The two Giovanni expect to be treated like honored guests. If they are brought to any room but the finest in the house, or offered victims of anything but the highest quality, they are disappointed at the character's hospitality. After feeding and making himself comfortable, Don Pietro chats with the character on such subjects as the Turks, the economic changes, how the character has fared... fairly mundane items. He then asks whether the character has an occult library (and asks to see it if the character does; their conversation continues there). He inquires about what the character has learned from the ghosts in the

area, carefully plumbing the character's ability level and knowledge. He is not upset if the character is ambiguous or evasive, but he does become less cordial to the character if he thinks the answers are outright lies. Throughout the conversation, Ambrogino hovers silently in the background, listening carefully while observing the décor nonchalantly, as if silently critiquing its quality.

Finally, Don Pietro comes to the point of the meeting. "Our visit is for two purposes. First, our family as of late has discovered a great deal of information on a tome called the *Book of Nod*. It contains numerous prophecies about a time called Gehenna, a great war or some inexplicable calamity that is to come. It is quite interesting, and we have heard you possess, or at least have seen, several fragments of Gehenna prophecy. How much do you know of this?"

Don Pietro listens very carefully to whatever the character says, again noting when the character is not truthful. He seems satisfied with whatever information the character divulges; if the character hides anything, Don Pietro calls up several wraiths later in the evening to subtly torment the character (both during his waking hours and in his dreams during the day) to teach him a "small lesson" on how to treat family members. After their discussion concludes, Don Pietro speaks of the second, and most important, point of his visit.

"How much do you know of the history of our clan?" Regardless of the intricacy of the answer, Don Pietro continues. "We gained the right to be a clan by taking it from Cappadocius, an unworthy and insane vampire who dreamed of becoming God himself — utter blasphemy. We have destroyed most of his brood, who fanatically devote themselves to the same cause. But a few... one, actually... still exists. We know she is in Transylvania, and we would like your help in tracking her down."

The character now may mention the meeting the other members of his coterie are having with a mysterious woman, if he knows about it. Don Pietro contemplates this for several moments. "It's possible she's the Cappadocian we hunt. She may be seeking sanctuary, bartering her knowledge for safety. But it won't help her."

If the character agrees to help them, Don Pietro smiles. "Good, good. We will remain here for the day, and then you can come with us tomorrow evening. We are going to chase her down and bring an end to the Cappadocian clan. You will have a place in history for your help." However, if the character refuses, Don Pietro becomes very agitated. "You wish no part in history? I can hardly believe what I am hearing. Not supporting in the greatest crusade of our clan? Sheer folly. Well, if it is not too much for you, brother, I would appreciate it if you could provide my colleague and I with a room for the day, so we can test our ghouls and horses. Then we can continue on with our hunt... without your help."

Whatever the outcome, Don Pietro and Ambrogino remain with the character for the day and set out the next evening, with or without the character, toward Transylvania (or toward the demesne that Maria chose, if they are already in Transylvania). In a few nights, they receive word of Maria's location through the Giovanni's contacts, or the character hears of it through his own sources if he did not join Don Pietro and Ambrogino.

SCENE TWO: PAWNS ON A CHESSBOARD

The act continues on the assumption that the characters accepted Maria's offer, and she is staying at one of the character's havens. If Maria walked out or the characters refused to give her sanctuary, the Storyteller needs to adapt the rest of the act to reflect this. The characters are the last Kindred to have seen her, and still receive all the following offers. They should be the ones who find her, if they actively hunt her down. If they want no part of the situation, they should hear of the climactic final scene through their contacts.

After two weeks have passed, the characters simultaneously receive a letter and a visit. The letter comes from France, and it should amaze the characters with its hastiness in delivery. After they read it, they should also be amazed at how quickly information travels in the Kindred community. It is written in French, addressed to the character who is sheltering Maria, and it reads as follows.

Fellow Kindred,

I bid you greetings from the lands of France. This letter precedes the arrival of one of my emissaries, who is en route to your principedom. We regret that we have not corresponded with you before; the Ottoman presence makes closer relations difficult, as I am sure you know firsthand. However, Turkish presence aside, the time for a visit is long overdue.

I am sending similar letters to other influential Kindred in the area, but I have chosen your demesne to receive the honor of my emissary's visit. He will arrive on September the Thirtieth. The other Kindred in the area know this as well, and accommodations should be made for my emissary, the local princes and their entourages. The festival for the meeting should last nights! It will be a fabulous start to a relationship that I hope will last the test of time. My emissary is also looking forward to meeting your intriguing guest, the young Maria. Word of her has reached even my court here in Paris, and everyone is fascinated by the possibilities even here.

I thank you for your time, brother Kindred, and look forward to closer ties with you.

Sincerely,

Francois Villon

September the Tenth, 1680

If the characters are members of the Sabbat, they may take offense to this letter (or see it as a wonderful opportunity to off some Camarilla stooges). In this situation, the prince of Paris also includes a list of people he sent invitations to; it contains a remarkable mix of both Camarilla and Sabbat vampires. All are at least elders, and are old enough to consider the sect division a very recent development that can be conveniently ignored. (The characters themselves are likely part of this age group of vampires.) When the characters discover just how much personal status they stand to gain from it they should see the value of going through with the festival and keeping things peaceful.

The other characters in the group receive a smaller letter, informing them of the festive arrival of Villon's representative on September 30, at the hosting character's demesne. They can deduce that every other influential Kindred in Transylvania received similar missives. Even as moderately powerful elders, there's always someone somewhere who can order them around at a whim; they realize that the Prince of Paris is one such potent Kindred. The next few weeks should be filled with frantic preparations for the emissary's arrival, and curiosity over their guest, Maria Asunción.

The unexpected visitors arrive on the same night the letter does, and all the characters should be present for the meeting if possible. It is Don Pietro Giovanni (along with any Giovanni characters). The rest of the act assumes that there are no Giovanni characters; if there are, Ambrogino and Don Pietro request those characters to conduct all negotiations, adhering to the same guidelines Don Pietro does in the following conversation. Of course, the characters may refuse, and such division between the characters' allegiance to their compatriots and to their notions of "clan duty" should make for intense storytelling.

The Giovanni carriage arrives in the same manner described in Scene One, and the Giovanni act and expect to be treated in the same way. There is one exception; Ambrogino does not come to this meeting. The presence of such an infamous Giovanni would tip the clan's hand too early; Ambrogino handles the later negotiations, after the true identity of Maria is revealed.

After introductions and refreshments, Don Pietro chats with the characters about the conflict between the Camarilla and Sabbat. He goes into it a great deal, mentioning the Paths of Enlightenment and rituals that the Sabbat has developed, and the rigid hierarchy the Camarilla adopted to survive the wars. He asks about the characters' views on the Antediluvians and Methuselahs, and plays devil's advocate by presenting the opposing sect's viewpoints. Divulging so much information to Don Pietro may make the characters uncomfortable, and the Giovanni stops just short of making anyone angry at his probing questions.

Before the conversation starts dragging, Don Pietro comes to his point. "I understand you have given sanctuary to a young Kindred named Sister Maria Asunción. Mischievous little girl. I imagine she told you she is Cairiff? Or perhaps Ventrue? This is untrue. Maria Giovanni stole several of our arcane texts and has been fleeing from us for quite some time. She uses her false name to hide her identity, and claims to be someone she is not. We wish her returned to us, as well as the texts she stole. Of course, the Giovanni family is prepared to compensate you for your troubles. I should remind you that, by your own arrangements, we Giovanni are part of neither the Camarilla nor the Sabbat.

Our matters of discipline are ours to handle. She needs to be punished, and it is not your responsibility to interfere."

The characters probably smell the lie in this, even if they don't, it is likely they will press for details. A simple Giovanni thief would not garner the interest of the prince of Paris, nor would such a thief warrant the attention of someone of Don Pietro's stature. Auspex also reveals that he is lying if the character achieves at least three successes against a difficulty 8.

The compensation Don Pietro speaks of is 1000 florins for each night the hosting character-protected Maria, and 500 per night for each of the remaining characters. Don Pietro also offers 1000 florins apiece for each arcane text returned. If the characters agree to this without investigating further, they miss out on the rest of



the act, Maria is easy enough to find in the room given to her, and can't put up much of a fight against Don Pietro and the characters combined. The characters may well find out later who Maria was and what she was really worth, after the Giovanni torture and destroy her in Venice. They should rightfully feel taken advantage of. This should crush any naiveté they still have, which they need to get rid of anyway if they want to survive as elders.

It is more likely, however, that the characters are suspicious of Don Pietro's explanation, or are possibly reluctant to break their promise to protect Maria. Don Pietro doesn't want to admit that Maria is a Cappadocian, because then the characters might immediately discern her true value to his clan. However, after enough inquiries as to why he cares about a minor thief and why the prince of Paris cares about her, too, Don Pietro admits what she really is.

"Maria Asunción is, as I said, a member of Clan Giovanni, but only indirectly. She is... a childe of the lineage of Cappadocius, the same lineage from which the Giovanni hail. She is Kindred to us in more ways than one. Yet she carries on Cappadocius's mad beliefs of diablerizing God to become God, the very insanity we tried to stop by destroying Cappadocius. We can't let her survive and bring the blasphemous practices of her clan back to power."

After he makes this revelation, Don Pietro knows the girl's price just rose considerably. It is doubtful the characters can seriously listen to his offer at this point, since he initially lied to them. He states that he will return soon, perhaps at the festival at the end of the month, and he urges the characters not to hastily decide on any offers that may come before then. He must consult his elders, but he makes it clear that Giovanni resources are immense, and that the clan is incredibly generous to those who help them.

After Don Pietro departs, the characters may confront Maria with their new knowledge. A representative of the prince of Paris is coming, as well as the Giovanni and every influential vampire in Transylvania, all apparently because of her. When they come to her room, she is either watching out her window at the departing carriage (or, if there are no windows, huddling in the corner). She starts raving when the characters enter.

"He was here, wasn't he? One of the cursed Giovanni! Why are you dealing with them? What did they offer you for me? They want nothing but my Final Death!"

The characters can react in many ways, ranging from robbing her in the dungeon for safekeeping to reiterating their vows to protect her. If they accuse her of lying to them, she shakes her head. "I never lied. I have no clan; my clan is gone because of the vile Necromancers! I am the last one, the only one left! My brothers, my sisters, all slaughtered without mercy. If I die, the Cappadocians are gone, and the Giovanni win. They will offer anything, say and do anything to see me destroyed! I only wish safety with you, as I have asked, for a short while. I have preparations I need

to finish, and then I will leave you in peace, with the fragments I promised. I pray you remain true to your word, though temptation will surely rise on all sides."

If the characters ask what preparations she makes, she simply states that it is a ritual that will help her avoid the Giovanni... possibly forever, if it is successful. Regardless of what the characters decide to do, the last thing she says before they leave her is, "All I have now is my faith... faith in what I do, and faith in the Lord. Whatever happens, it happens for the best." The last phrase sounds almost hollow.

After this, the characters have to keep Maria calm (or safely locked away somewhere) and prepare for the biggest festival they've ever had to throw. Let them sweat; September 30th comes all too soon.

SCENE III: DEALING WITH DEVILS

The preparations for a meeting of the scope Villon expects take considerable effort on the part of the characters. First, they need to find a sufficiently elegant (and large) structure to house the festival. It should be clear that nothing is too extravagant; even the finest palace in Transylvania would most likely draw criticism from the refined French emissary.

PLANNING THE ENTERTAINMENT

Typical festivals of this kind have several large rooms or separate areas, each dedicated to a type of *salon*. Salons are formal get-togethers, both for political and entertainment purposes. It is a mortal practice, from which the Kindred have followed the lead of the living world. The concept of salons transcends the division of Camarilla and Sabbat; elder Sabbat vampires socialize and play predatory word games just like their Camarilla counterparts.

There are several types of Cainite salons; the most common involve policy, culture and divertissement. Policy salons are almost a requirement of any get-together, serving as arenas to discuss current events, to plot against rivals and to forge alliances. A culture salon displays the finest in artwork or fashion, and is especially valued by the French emissary (who is bringing several of his own sculptures to show). The characters can plan anything from a Masquerade Ball to a museum collection. Divertissement salons showcase more... base... entertainment. The characters may have several ideas for these, but they shouldn't worry too much; the French emissary and the other elders bring their own objects of fun. Live chess games, violent sex acts and Dominated ghouls committing feats of debauchery are guaranteed attractions; the Storyteller is encouraged to come up with depraved spectacles for the jaded pleasures of her coterie and their elder guests.

For more information and ideas for elder salons, see the Vampire supplement *War of Ages*.

The most pressing problems facing the players' characters are housing, feeding and security. Around 20 elder vampires, along with their ghouls, are expected to attend the character's soiree, and 20 elder vampires can easily depopulate an entire village in a matter of nights. Havens need to be secure as well as luxurious; the characters may have to bolster the ranks of their own security with a few extra mercenaries or ghouls. The horses and servants of the elders need lodging and food, as well.

It is less difficult to find vessels to feed from in Transylvania than elsewhere in Europe, since the Inquisition suffers limited influence under the Ottoman presence. However, every Ventrue in attendance sends her "preferences" for feeding to the characters. (Imagine the difficulty finding a vessel in Transylvania for the Ventrue prince who can drink only from fair-skinned redhead nobles....) Everyone attending expects blood to be provided. Some vampires bring limited herds, but the vast majority of sustenance needs to be found in the villages and cities the characters know. There are other minor details, such as food for any mortal guests, music, and creating a public cover for the event, but the characters can arrange for these as they see fit.

Besides the guidelines given above, the characters are free to provide any extravagance (or lack thereof) they wish. All the requirements should be difficult, but not impossible, for the characters to fulfill. After all, the possible rewards for their diligence far outweigh any their efforts to make their festival a success. It is important to stress cooperation between the characters; the task is almost too much for the hosting character to take on alone. Remind the characters that whoever helps with the preparations, whether monetarily, with ghouls or with effort, also shares in any prestige gained from the festival's success, provided the host doesn't boorishly take all the credit.

Maria Asunción regards all the preparations with humiliation and anger. She knows very well why all these Kindred are now calling on the characters, and adamantly voices her opinion on becoming nothing more than a showpiece (assuming the characters haven't locked her up and gagged her). The Storyteller should play up her situation as she pleads with the characters not to betray her; they are her last hope for survival, and she has only faith to sustain her through the twilight darkness of her clan.

THE GUESTS ARRIVE

After the characters prepare whatever party they want to throw, the guests begin to arrive. A few show up on the 28th and 29th, and the rest come just after nightfall on the 30th. The French emissary enters with as much pomp and circumstance as his host of heralds can provide, wearing the latest in Parisian fashion and holding

himself aloof from the rest of the crowd. He brings an entire "chess set" of ghouls with him, and soon garners several opponents (ideally, one of the characters) with enough ghoul servants to play against him. He expects many things from the festival, and most will be disappointed; for starters, he expects the festival to last for a week at the very least, and despite his efforts, it only continues for two or three nights at most. They simply don't celebrate in Transylvania like they do in Paris.

The Storyteller should populate this ball with whatever Kindred she wishes, not just with the Storyteller characters listed below. Topics of discussion range from the supernatural to the mundane; mixed freely with the Camarilla/ Sabbat debates and undead plotting are the subjects of Puritanism, Enlightenment, the Turks and the New World. However, these discussions are simply window dressing for what's really going on at the festival. Tension runs rampant under the façade of amicability; after all, Sabbat and Camarilla are supping together, Tremere and Tzimisce are within earshot of each other, and the old rivals, invited so as not to seem gauche, bear the animosity and mistrust their attendant nemeses. The elders know to feign cordial relations, however, as it is clear what would happen if 20 august Cainites and their servants started a vulgar brawl.

Below are listed the factions that vie for the characters' ears at the festival. The Storyteller can use all the factions listed, or only a few if it looks too complex. Not all the factions need to be revealed for the first time at the festival; it is quite possible that several factions send representatives before the festival, trying to earn the characters' ears before anyone else does. This can lighten the load for the Storyteller, spreading out the offers over several weeks rather than cramming them all in to the party.

The only three vital factions are the Giovanni, the French emissary, and the Baali, though we recommend using as many factions as possible (and using the Tremere is strongly encouraged, as their offer deals indirectly with the events in Act II). The characters' choices at this point in the chronicle should be as morally and secularly difficult as possible. The Storyteller can also tailor each faction's offer to make them more enticing to the characters in the chronicle; sires, patrons and allies can be inserted as appropriate into each delegation. This is the best opportunity to pull out treacheries, boons and debts from the characters' past, and use them in the most cunning ways possible. The characters need to pay for past promises and misdeeds, and the factions are not above treachery and strong-arming to get what they want.

ADVANCED STORYTELLING: ESCAPING THE LANDSLIDE

After the first read-through, the festival scene looks daunting and immense — it is. Several separate interests ply the characters with offers, forcing them with owed boons or threatening them to give in, all done with a huge party going on in the backdrop. It may seem like too much for one Storyteller to handle, so we have several suggestions to help make it go more smoothly.

First, the factions don't have to meet with the characters as a group; it is often easier to approach them individually and make an offer. After all, the factions need only one or two Judases in the group to get what they want. The Storyteller may take characters aside individually or in pairs to meet with isolated factions, while the rest of the group enjoys the party.

Another possibility is letting a few of the players themselves take on the roles of selected factions. To keep everyone involved, the Storyteller can put half the group into the roles of Storyteller characters, giving each player a small card listing the individual's personality, motives and offers. After a few minutes, the Storyteller can switch the faction players back to their original characters, and give the other players a chance to portray different characters. The players can become devil's advocates by interacting with the characters, and can see the situation from many different perspectives. This takes a lot of the burden off the Storyteller, who only needs to referee and keep the story moving, while enriching the players' gaming experience at the same time.

The third (and most grandiose) option is to hold the event as a Live-Action gala. *Vampire* and its companion *Mind's Eye Theatre* sourcebooks contain information on transcending the tabletop, and no setting is quite so evocative for a memorable live-action game as a vampire social affair. With a bit of preparation, a resourceful Storyteller may be able to combine her *Vampire* game and a party into an event that won't soon be forgotten by anyone. This may be as simple as assembling a few friends who don't normally take part in the game to temporarily assume the roles of Storyteller characters or as elaborate as a full-scale, hundred-person full-costume ball, in which every guest assumes the role and motives of a specific character in the World of Darkness. Your only limits are your time and imagination.

THE GIOVANNI

The clan of Necromancers is represented by Ambrogino and Don Pietro Giovanni (or a Giovanni character, if there is one in the group). The Giovanni's motive is simple: destroy the Cappadocians. Maria Asunción is the last Cappadocian, and Ambrogino wants the crowning achievement of her capture to be his doing. Her occult knowledge is valuable, but it is secondary to taking her to Venice, presenting her to Augustus and witnessing her Final Death.

The Giovanni offer vast amounts of money (for a rough starting sum, twice as much as the characters spent on the festival, each), influence in trade and the European economy, and occult information. They also offer Necromancy in a pinch, but no more than one or two dots' worth of instruction. Ambrogino also makes it clear that the characters may find the Giovanni powerful allies in the future.

THE BAALI

Freeing a powerful demon like Kupala by fulfilling a sign of Gehenna with the last Cappadocian's death is a great deal for the Baali. Ansen, the representative of the Baali and the nominal "prince" of Deva, knows that the rise of Kupala is a step on the path to Gehenna, and he wants to help bring about the signs that lead up to it. They see this as an opportunity to bring the characters under Baali's sway and forge closer ties with them. They also want the knowledge the Cappadocian possesses, and capturing her gives them an opportunity to extricate that information.

Ansen dresses in fine, but not flashy, clothing. He has jet-black hair, a smooth face and dark eyes. He moves like a predator, but his voice is calm and nothing seems to break his lighthearted demeanor. Ansen's offers should be dark, yet tantalizing and powerful; he possesses the Dark Thaumaturgy Path of Secret Knowledge, and uses it to plumb the characters' deepest secrets and desires. He can offer money, but prefers to offer influence with the Baali, Dark Thaumaturgy, ritual information, and anything else the characters secretly covet.

THE FRENCH EMISSARY TO PRINCE VILLON OF PARIS

This shallow, foppish "associate" of the Sun King wants the Cappadocian for nothing more than prestige. The last Cappadocian would be quite a showcase for the Kindred of France, and she probably knows quite a bit, as well. He is allowed to offer several large estates in southern France (vineyards, mining areas, trade routes and the like), as well as vast amounts of money and influence with Villon's courts. The emissary constantly presses the issue if the characters seem reluctant, and becomes almost hostile toward them if they ultimately refuse his offer (which will become important in Act III of the chronicle). He did, after all, travel all the way from France to grace the characters with his presence; the least they can do is give him what he asks for.

THE TREMERE

The Tremere's presence at the festival is more to make a point to the Giovanni than to actually gain the Cappadocian for any benefit of the clan. The Cappadocian is a valuable storehouse of occult information, true, but the Giovanni rival the Tremere in more ways than one. The ascension of Augustus to the Third Generation too closely mimics Tremere's own diablerie of Saulot, and the Warlocks intend to make Maria an example to the Giovanni (and any other future usurpers). The Tremere want no one else to follow in their own footsteps.

Claas, on behalf of Ardan of Golden Lane, represents the Tremere. He is immediately conspicuous as a Warlock, wearing outdated robes and scholarly adornments from the High Middle Ages. He offers influence with Vienna (and with the Habsburgs, the only force seemingly capable of removing Ottoman domination from Transylvania), occult information, and one other item: the sword of Dracula. He states that it is a powerful artifact "recovered" from the Son of the Dragon, and is worth far more than gold or influence. The knowledge of who has Dracula's sword becomes invaluable for the characters in Act II. Actual statistics for Dracula's sword are given in the Appendix; no amount of study or research by the characters, however, should discover more than a hint of its abilities.

THE VENTRUE

No other clan puts up as powerful a showing as the Ventrue at the festival. Prince Bulscu, referred to in jest as the new *voivode* of *voivodes* (which brings strong words from the Tzimisce present), Vencel Rikard and Nova Arpad all attend the gathering. They wish to court the favor of the French emissary, as well as to keep an eye on the happenings in their region. In reality, they could care less about what happens to the Cappadocian; they are more concerned with regional stability. Vencel Rikard also wishes to take a cheap stab at Don Pietro, the Giovanni who resides in Vencel's principedom of Budapest.

The Ventrue offer the characters money and influence within their domains, but not to gain possession of Maria; in return, they want the characters to resolve the Cappadocian issue as quickly as possible. If the characters get the Cappadocian out of Transylvania (by giving her to anyone save the Giovanni), it would stop the unpleasant influx of Giovanni bounty hunters and other interested parties. They simply want the issue done and over with, and peace to return to their domains.

The Ventrue servant Roland also attends the festival, hovering near Rikard for much of the party. However, he is there on behalf of the Setites, and acts in secret as their representative.

THE FOLLOWERS OF SET

The Setites are a cocky group, and rightly so. The destruction of the last Cappadocian serves their purpose in numerous ways. They know her death is a sign of Gehenna, and they want to flush the Antediluvians out and destroy them. Mummies, werewolves, mages, vampires, no one could destroy Set.... What chance do 12 blood-thirsty little Antediluvians have against him? Besides, Gehenna in itself would bring unprecedented corruption to the world. It's already spawned rampant corruption right in this veiled auction festival for the last Cappadocian's soul.

Roland introduces the characters to the Setite present at the party, an Egyptian man named Bucaram. His skin still holds some of the dark complexion of his Eastern heritage, and he wears richly embroidered African robes. Both he and Roland offer the characters riches (whether in money or exotic goods) and information of nearly any type the characters desire. Ultimately, however, the Setites want the Cappadocian destroyed, preferably at the hands of another group. They prefer the blood be spilled by someone else, and the Setites withdraw if it is clear the dominant offers are from other groups that want Maria destroyed.

THE SABBAT

Camarilla characters may think the Sabbat is evil and depraved, and that they would clamor for Maria's unlife just as the rest of the factions do. However, it undoubtedly surprises the characters (and reaffirms Sabbat characters' faiths in their sect) when the Sabbat asks the group to protect the Cappadocian. The reason is twofold: Maria is doing an excellent job of sowing discord in Transylvania by her presence alone, and anything that can destabilize the area helps with the Sabbat's conquest efforts. The longer the situation drags on, the worse it will become. Furthermore, they wish to make a symbolic stand, trying to head off the Camarilla's portrayal of them as monsters and stopping what they see as an Antediluvian plot to destroy each clan, one by one.

Sascha Vykos, whom characters who have met through the previous *Transylvania Chronicles*, and Fariq, the Assamite *antitribu*, represent the Sabbat at the festival. The first meeting of Sascha and the characters should be awkward, since "she" now looks, acts and sounds like a different person in almost every respect. Fariq seems decidedly uncomfortable in the midst of so many infidels and Camarilla princes; Sascha appears quite at ease (though pointedly avoids any Ventrue and Tremere at the party).

Sascha openly snubs any known Tremere characters, but speaks openly with any other Kindred who take her fancy, or with whom she may have dealt before. The Sabbat offers influence and aid with their sect (even to Camarilla characters, whom Sascha hopes to sway or



indebt to the Sabbat's cause). This may seem like a dubious offer compared to the others, but Sascha has one potent weapon left, if the Storyteller has not already called it due: Each of the characters owes her a favor equal to a boon from *Dark Tides Rising*. This may not hold much weight for Camarilla characters who utterly despise the Sabbat, or may hold greater weight for Sabbat characters, simply from Sascha's sect affiliation. Indeed, Sascha herself regards it as laughable, but isn't above using the characters' pasts against them if it seems like leverage. But Sascha reminds them that she and Count Radu helped them when they most needed it. The characters may well infer that by not protecting Maria, and thereby not repaying their boons, they make Sascha their enemy.

LUCITA AND ANATOLE

Several attendees not so hostile toward the characters populate the festival. Lucita and Anatole, changing little in appearance or demeanor from previous acts, approach the characters as a group and plead for them to protect Maria Asunción.

"So much death!" Anatole cries, loud enough to be heard over the background noise, causing several nearby Kindred to stop and listen. "The signs hinge on death, and here they all barter for another to add to the graves. Listen to my words, as you have never listened before. It now rests in your hands; it brings you all from witnesses to perpetrators! No longer do portents come to pass before you, but flow from your very touch! If the incarnadine night is to be stayed or ushered in, it will be by your choice. Choose well!"

Lucita argues more levelheadedly for Maria's life, but ultimately does not offer anything monetarily or influential to entice the characters. Many nearby undead listening to the exchange chuckle at the pair's naiveté... trying to win the characters' favor through impassioned arguments alone, indeed!

OTHER FAMILIAR FACES

Almost every Kindred in the area may have reason to attend, and the Storyteller should provide appearances by other characters from her own chronicle (and, perhaps, have them bid for the last Cappadocian, as well). There are several other Cainites of note at the festival who do not approach the characters about Maria, but are nonetheless known (in some cases, known very well) by the characters.

Octavio, still wearing his ragtag Roman armor and carrying his spear (if the hosts allow him), lurks at the outskirts of the festival. A skillful observation of his behavior (Perception + Alertness, difficulty 8) deduces that he is watching someone in the crowd; three or more successes reveal it to be Anatole. If any of the characters approach Octavio, he simply mutters in Latin, "I have nothing to say to thee save what has already been said. He speaks well of things, doesn't he? Perhaps he will take my

cup. Promising, indeed." Octavio mumbles and stammers along with similar grim sentiments for the entire festival, not engaging in any further conversation with anyone.

Another familiar Kindred is Zelios, the master architect. The Nosferatu wanders through the festival, talking freely with virtually everyone there, regardless of sect affiliation or clan lines. He speaks to any characters he meets, but only in passing; he has heard of the last Cappadocian, and states very strongly that he thinks she should survive, but he does not involve himself in any dealmaking. Zelios also speaks of the geomantic web the characters helped to complete. He worries that it is not powerful enough to fulfill its larger purpose, and he is working on a way to strengthen it. If any characters watch him closely throughout the festivities, they notice he speaks a great deal and at length with both Roland and the Setite Bucaram. The characters may have heard of Zelios' travels to Egypt, and might become suspicious of the Nosferatu and his dealings with the Setites.

Husayn, the Assamite overseer of Transylvania and servant of the Ottoman forces, also attends the festival. He speaks to the characters only if they approach him, and his attitude depends on the characters' affiliations with the Sabbat and with the Ottoman Empire. He is at the festival only to observe the elders present, and to learn of nascent plots against the Turks. All Cainites give Husayn a wide berth, and Fariq keeps a generous distance (and crowd) between him and the loyal Assamite.

FURTHER EMBELLISHMENT

Other than what is listed above, the Storyteller has numerous ways to make the festival more interesting and exciting. Anarchs or a rabid *antitribu* may attack the town, trying to slay a certain elder. Virstania might make a strike against Claas with her Gargoyles as he approaches or leaves the festival. An overzealous Giovanni (or Baali, or Setite, or nearly anyone else) may try to assassinate Maria during the party. Maria herself stays well away from the festival, keeping herself secluded in her quarters, but if the Storyteller wants her to make a dramatic entrance for some purpose, it would *definitely* add gravity to the moment. Once again, Storytellers are heartily encouraged to involve characters unique to their own chronicles—tailoring events to the troupe's game makes it all the more personal.

Additionally, not every interesting event need involve a Cainite. With more than 100 guests, only a portion of whom are Kindred, the festival offers ample opportunity for memorable interaction with practically anyone. Feel free to mix in Turkish sympathizers, ghoul rabble-rousers, tantalizing romantic interests, wary priests—literally anyone who illustrates the importance or presence of the Masquerade. The world is populated by people—each one an individual—and the world does not turn at the

whim of vampires alone. Although not necessarily related to the immediate matters at hand, *this is very important* to Vampire's core theme, and should not be neglected.

Ultimately, the point of the festival is to make the characters wade through the moral dilemma of who to accept, who to trust and who to betray. No matter what they do, they anger someone by their actions; they have to choose what path they want to follow.

SCENE IV: A VIEW FROM THE GALLOWS

The festival begins to wane on the second night, and is all but over by the third. Most of the guests and their ghouls depart gradually each night, until the ballrooms and salons are nearly empty. The elders interested in Maria, however, remain in the area and constantly harass the characters for audiences. All the representatives stay until the characters make a clear choice, whether by stating they are protecting the last Cappadocian or accepting the offer of one of the factions. This should prompt the characters to make a decision and not drag out the debate on what they should do.

It is possible, even likely, that not all the characters are in agreement. Some may decide to protect the Cappadocian, while others choose to give her to one of the factions (and each character does not necessarily choose the same faction). This can lead to some heated debate, politicking and, perhaps, even some good, old-fashioned backstabbing. The Storyteller should use the elders' constant pressure for a resolution to keep the characters on track. By now, the characters should not be above treachery; one or two may sell out Maria while the others decide to protect her, or to give her to a different faction. It is impossible to predict exactly what happens, but the narrative below covers the most likely outcomes.

WHAT IS SHE, STUPID?

Maria knows precisely what is going on down there in that nasty little gathering of vampires. In her few nights in the characters' domain, however, she has come to accept her role in an as-yet untold prophecy.

Keep reading. She's not an ambivalent sacrificial lamb.

A BETRAYAL MOST FOUL

If one or more of the characters decides to give Maria away while the rest of the group either protects her or wants to give her to a different faction (or even if one of the characters wishes to protect her while the others sell her out), then let the character come up with a plan for how she wishes to go behind the rest of her group's back. Then, the Storyteller can dramatize the plan and see if it succeeds. If the characters unanimously decide to give her away, and agree on a faction, then they simply

need to set a time and place for the exchange and send the other representatives home.

Regardless of whether only one, a few, or all the characters decide to give Maria over to one of the factions, Ansen approaches each of those characters individually. It does not matter if they give Maria to the Baali or not, it only matters if they decide to sell the Cappadocian out. Ansen thanks the character for listening to his group's offer, and gives the character a small token for bringing the situation to a swift conclusion. He hands the character a leather bag and departs with an ornate bow. The bag holds 30 silver coins, each marked individually with what seems to be a letter from an unfamiliar alphabet.

PRAYING AT GETHSEMANE

Throughout the entire festival, Maria remains holed up in her room (or locked away somewhere by the characters). If any characters come to speak with her, she says nothing and reads her Bible or one of her other tomes in silence. She has no illusions about what is going on around her.

However, after a decision has been made on what to do with her, she summons any characters who decide to protect her to her room. She sits cross-legged as the characters enter, and speaks in a low, tired voice.

"I wonder if this is the way He felt in the garden, as the Romans came to take Him away. I thank you, my friends, for trying to save me from those who wish to... possess me. I have become little more than an object to be traded, bartered for power or riches. Yet you remain true to your word, and I thank you.

"Little time remains to me, I can feel that. You will not be able to give me sanctuary much longer, but for your loyalty, I can give you only this to show my appreciation." Maria then reaches out with her hand. The air seems to twist and puncture inward at her fingertips, until it splits just wide enough for her hand and forearm to disappear into nothingness. Any practitioners of Necromancy recognize her use of the Ash Path; she is reaching through the Shroud. A moment later she draws her arm back again, and a small stone tablet shimmers into existence in her grasp. "This is one of the last prophecies I possess. I wish you to have it."

The tablet, written in the familiar language of the translation plate, reads as follows.

AS THE FATHER IS DESTROYED,
AND THE PRODIGALS BURIED, AND
THE COUSINS ROTTED AWAY, ONE
ANGEL SURVIVES TO HOLD THE LAST
LIGHT OF HER TRUE CLAN. AND
WHEN DARKNESS FALLS, AND

BLACKNESS SNUFFS THE ANGEL'S
LIGHT, SO PASSES ANOTHER
BARRIER, AND THE FINAL NIGHTS
DRAW EVER CLOSER.

The characters should deduce rather quickly that the angel is Maria Asunción. Maria nods silently. "It took me almost a century to translate those prophecies... and I have pored over that one for many nights. My destiny has already been set by God, and my fear and pride have made me flee from it. But nothing I can do will pass the cup of suffering to another." She kisses each character on the forehead and blesses them, thanking them again for their help. She then opens her Bible and asks to be left alone.

After reading the prophecy, the characters likely take extreme efforts to safeguard her from her seemingly imminent death. However, they have little chance of stopping what is to come.

SCENE V: ENDGAME

The final scene takes place whenever the Storyteller feels it is appropriate. Ideally, it is during Maria's exchange to one of the factions, or if the characters protect her, during the evening immediately following the night they receive the last prophecy. Maria does not resist the characters if they sell her to a faction, and accepts her fate silently, though the characters may choose to bind her anyway. As they lead her to the exchange they hear her praying in quiet whispers; anyone listening closely discovers that she is forgiving the characters for what they are about to do.

The Baali and the Giovanni are required factions in the festival because both resort to violence if they do not receive the last Cappadocian. Maria's death is their primary goal, and if either group is denied her, they attempt to kill her. Infuriating one of the two is inevitable. Any Giovanni character is not privy to her clan's attack, since Ambrogino and Don Pietro want the glory of Maria's kill to themselves. If the Giovanni character did not help his clan capture her through negotiation, that character has no more use to the two elder Giovanni.

Each group's attack is described below; if neither of them are given Maria, then both attack simultaneously. It is important to remember that this scene is not entirely about combat; it does give the Brujah or Gangrel of the coterie a chance to show off in something other than a political arena, but the scene is primarily about tragedy. The attack on Maria is outside the control of the characters, and they can do nothing but watch her prophesied destruction.

THE POWER OF THE INFERNAL

What the Baali bloodline lacks in vampiric numbers, it sometimes makes up for in unwholesome servants: As Maria is exchanged, or just as night falls, the ground, floors and walls begin to groan quietly. At first it is barely noticeable, sounding more like a slight breeze or sigh. Then the sound swells, a chorus of howls, screams and chants in an unfamiliar language, comes from the earth and the very air around the characters. Each syllable pulls at the characters' minds, twisting and piercing it like needles. Any mortals or ghouls in the area writhe in agony, collapsing to the ground and clamping their hands over their ears. Everyone present must make a Willpower roll versus a difficulty 7 or suffer +2 to all difficulties for the duration of the scene because of the noise and pain.

The wind picks up, gusting through the area, and the clouds above begin to shimmer with a reddish glow. Then the ground erupts with a roar around the characters, peeling up with tremendous gouts of fire and dust. This causes a great deal of damage if the characters are inside a manse or structure, causing the walls to buckle and crumble. If the characters have time to think while they make their Röttschreck rolls, they may notice that this eruption is very similar to the landslide that occurred when they tried to carve the geomantic symbol into Dragomir's castle earlier in the *Transylvania Chronicles*.

As the ground splits apart, shimmering forms pour out of the gashes and fiery pits. It is difficult for the characters to get a close look, but the forms appear to be translucent heat distortions... until each form bolts toward anyone still standing. Wicked grins and glowing eyes appear in the forms. *Auspex* reveals the forms to be black-veined, darkened, demonic shapes.

These minor demons have no statistics; no mortal weapons or Disciplines affect them. However, if the characters traded Dracula's sword for Maria, this weapon proves to be extremely effective. One swipe from the sword dispels any demons it touches. The demons try to slam into and pass through the characters; contact with a demon does three dice of aggravated heat damage, possibly catching clothing on fire, and subjects the character to horrifying visions of their darkest deeds and

fears. The character must make a Courage roll, difficulty 8, to avoid losing her next action after these visions.

When the demons attack, Maria begins to pray. The demons don't touch her, rebounding and flowing around her with screeches of pain. Any characters near her also become uncomfortable because of her True Faith, and must spend a point of Willpower to avoid scampering away from her.

After one or two turns, the air ripples around Maria. Behind and to each side of her, three Baali appear. Two of them immediately attack any nearby characters. They each have initiative ratings of five and six dice in their combat pools; their rapiers do 4 dice of damage. The Storyteller can modify their statistics to make them worthy foes of the characters, but they are not meant to be overwhelmingly powerful.

The third Baali is immediately recognizable as Ansen. His fangs are fully extended, and his eyes glow a bloody red. He hisses in pain as he looms behind Maria, his skin burning at her faith, but with a determined lunge he drives his fangs into her neck. Maria throws her head back as blood begins streaming from Ansen's bite, and extends her arms out to make the shape of a cross. Ansen screams as he recoils, her blood burning his throat and mouth. In anger, he draws his saber and swipes at

Maria. The blade passes cleanly through her neck. Immediately her body crumbles into ash, even before her head falls to the ground. A bright, searing light bursts from her disintegrating form, shooting upward like a bolt of lightning into the heavens. What remains of her body blasts apart in a cloud of ash and smoke, leaving nothing behind. Ansen roars in fury before disappearing in the same way he appeared, and suddenly everything ends. The demons fade away, the ground stops quaking, the wind dies and the fires extinguish. Deathly silence is all that remains.

CALLING ON THE RESTLESS DEAD

The Giovanni attack is very similar to the Baali attack. The sky begins to darken and swirl above the characters, and the wind picks up to a nearly gale force. Sickly greenish-black lightning blasts jaggedly across the

DIVERGING FROM CANON: LETTING THE LAST CAPPADOCIAN SURVIVE

If the inevitable death of Maria feels too heavy-handed, the Storyteller is free to break from vampire history and let the last Cappadocian survive. However, this should take nothing short of phenomenal planning, forethought and prudence from the characters. World of Darkness history considers the Cappadocians dead (conspiracy theories notwithstanding), so any other resolution should at all end with the Giovanni thinking (or pretending) Maria has been destroyed. The Gehenna prophecy is still intact, even if she survives; further study of the prophecy reveals that the sign only requires the illusion of her destruction, and the loss of hope that her destruction brings.

sky, and ghostly howls fill the air. Windows shatter as debris flies about, and shutters bang wildly. Mortals and ghouls cower in unnatural fear. Shadowy, pale images of wraiths float by in the gusting wind, through walls and down corridors, crying and groaning and grasping at the characters. These wraiths can physically impact the characters to a limited extent, delivering four dice of bashing damage if the character cannot dodge. If the Storyteller is familiar with *Wraith: the Oblivion*, other wraithly powers can be added to the ghosts' abilities for this scene.

Out of the darkness, shambling corpses trudge toward the characters. These are zombies; use the statistics from *Vampire: the Masquerade*, pg. 163. They are incredibly slow and awkward, but very difficult to destroy; send one zombie per Kindred present, both players' characters and Storytellers'. They easily rip through doors and smash furniture, stumbling forward toward their prey.

Again, after a few combat turns, Ambrogino and Don Pietro appear near Maria, stepping through the Shroud from the Underworld. Don Pietro attacks any nearby characters (except a fellow Giovanni, who he asks to help in the fight) with his one-shot musket and rapier. Ambrogino's attempt at diablerie transpires in exactly the same way as Ansen's, ending again with Maria's Final Death. Their attack immediately stops when the two Giovanni depart, the zombies collapse unceremoniously as the winds die and the wraiths fade away.

If both groups attack simultaneously, the minions of each side spend as much time combating each other as they do the characters. Both Ansen and Ambrogino appear at the same moment; Ambrogino attempts to diablerize Maria, and Ansen beheads her as described above to deny the Giovanni the opportunity. The two glare at each other for several seconds before disappearing and ending the attack. This same situation occurs if the characters give Maria to either the Giovanni or the Baali.... Ambrogino always tries to diablerize Maria at the first sign of trouble, and Ansen always slays her to thwart the attempt.

SCENE VI: PICKING UP THE PIECES

Not much remains for the characters to do but clean up whatever mess the attacks left. If it took place inside one of the character's manses, the property damage alone costs quite a bit to restore. Not all is lost, however; if the characters can convince whatever party they sold Maria to that it was not their fault the last Cappadocian died, that party honors their payment agreement, with one stipulation: The characters must aid in that party's efforts to punish the Baali and/or Giovanni for what they did. If the characters protected Maria, Sascha Vykos delivers the Sabbat's payment as promised, which most likely casts the Sabbat in a very different light for any Camarilla characters (which is exactly what Sascha

hopes it will do). Regardless of the outcome, the characters can argue that they brought a hasty conclusion to the Cappadocian situation, and try to garner the Ventrue princes' reward; they should gain it only with good roleplaying and well thought-out argument.

The only belongings Maria leaves behind are an empty carriage and horse, her Bible and a few changes of clothes. Several crinkling pages of parchment are folded neatly into the Bible, and it takes an Occult knowledge of at least three to attempt to understand their contents. If the characters achieve three successes on an Intelligence + Occult roll, difficulty 9 (8 for vampires skilled in Obfuscate), they discover that it is an Obfuscate-based Thaumaturgical ritual that takes almost a century to perform. The ritual erases the memory of the ritual's invoker from the world (see the sidebar). Maria could have completed the ritual and removed herself from the world's recognition, safeguarding her clan and her knowledge from those that wished to destroy her. The ritual itself garners a high price from any Giovanni or Tremere it is offered to, recouping some of the loss the characters may have suffered in the attack. However, most elders will recognize the benefit in possessing such a ritual; after all, a century is a fleeting moment to a being that is eternal.

THE NAME FORGOTTEN (LEVEL EIGHT THAUMATURGY RITUAL)

This little-known Thaumaturgical ritual eradicates the caster from the mind of any who knew her in life and undeath. Those who had met her find their memories completely devoid of the individual — they have no reason to believe she was ever there. Children and childer of the individual "don't know" who their parent or sire was; allies and enemies simply forget her and go about their business. Even those who held the caster dear to their hearts forget her utterly, bearing only an unknowable and dolorous nepenthe.

System: The caster must write her own name in the blood of her sire on a sheet of paper milled from wood grown only by moonlight. Over the course of 100 years, the caster must "invest" the paper with 100 points of Willpower, no more or less than one per year. Thereafter, when the caster meets Final Death, she vanishes from memory, as her name disappears from the paper and the scrap burns away to nothing.

This ritual has no known countermagic; once performed, the effect is unstoppable. Although the caster will not mysteriously vanish from video footage and her name does not blank itself from books (which would leave some fairly telling empty spaces...), the mere sight or mention of the character elicits no response to any who see it — the name or image has no emotional weight.

The characters most likely have some patching up to do within their own group, as well. The possibility of inter-group betrayal is very high in this act, and any characters who did so and were exposed have a lot of convincing to do for their peers. This may be especially difficult for any Giovanni (or, God forbid, Baali) characters, but it illustrates the elder dilemma of alliances versus ambition. The characters should learn a lot in this act: how other elders act, how politics work and what they and their companions are really like.

If that isn't enough, the characters also have some hefty enemies in the Baali and/or the Giovanni. Over the next two centuries, the economy of Transylvania takes a noticeable downturn; most of the factors are purely mundane, but the characters can be as suspicious as they want about the machinations of the Necromancers. It is nearly impossible to physically combat the Giovanni, as there are only a handful in Transylvania, and Italy should be a safe

stronghold well outside the characters' reaches. The Baali in and near Deva present a much more enticing target, but the coterie better have quite a military force to openly attack them (as well as excellent relations with the Ottoman forces in the area). Not only can the Baali call up infernal servants as the characters witnessed firsthand, they also have the Cathedral of Flesh, which is much more potent than the characters may remember. It is physically possessed by Kupala, and that demon has some impressive powers at his disposal. If the characters are foolish enough to take this course of action, the Storyteller should let her imagination run wild with what Kupala and the Baali can throw at the characters.

Overall, the act ends in tragedy; despite, or perhaps because of, the efforts of the characters, the last Cappadocian meets Final Death, and another sign of Gehenna comes to pass. They should see Maria as a pure soul, not deserving the end that was fated for her. The characters know the choices and events will only get more difficult in the future; now they are truly elder vampires.







CHAPTER THREE: ENTER THE DRAGON

*And thus I clothe my naked villainy
With odd old ends stolen forth of holy writ,
And seem I a saint, when most I play the Devil.*
—William Shakespeare, *Richard III*

In 1683, the Turkish war host retreated in failure after a three-month siege of Vienna. It was a terrible disaster for the Ottomans, who had prepared for the attack for decades, but Western leaders heralded it as a great victory over the heathens. The Ottoman advance had finally been stopped. Harried by Hungarian, German and Papal forces, the Ottomans retreated back to the Middle East, and by 1687 the West once again controlled the tiny nation of Transylvania. The ruling Habsburg family brought the jewel of Transylvania into their crown, and ruled the country for nearly two centuries.

The Tremere had long made inroads into the Habsburg ruling dynasty from Vienna, and now used their influence to regain the assets they lost in their homeland. The Ventrue of Transylvania also forged alliances with the

Habsburgs and other ruling families, and this led to some of the worst infighting the Camarilla had yet seen. Both clans pulled in boons and favors to help further their goals, destabilizing the Carpathian nation with their plays for power. The Habsburgs, to weaken the power of the local rulers they did not entirely trust, sold titles to loyal supporters from elsewhere, causing an influx of foreign nobility into Transylvania. Both the Tremere and Ventrue made bids for these appointments, either for themselves or for mortals they controlled, weakening the historic alliance the two clans had shared in the country.

Neither Kindred nor kine rulers gave any thought to the common populace during their efforts to conquer and consolidate. Taxes rose dramatically, the treatment of the peasantry worsened and the Habsburgs tightened their

control from Vienna. Forgotten behind the bids for rulership of Transylvania, the peasants buckled under increasing obligations until they could suffer the situation no longer. A revolution erupted in 1703, led by the noble Ferencz Rakoczi II, and sent the nation into seven years of bloodshed. The commoners fought not only to release themselves from serfdom, taxation and obligations, but also to free Transylvania from foreign rule. Rakoczi claimed the rulers of Transylvania conspired with the Hungarians, Habsburgs and a secret "Camarilla" of rulers from Vienna, and that this control led directly to the hardships the populace suffered.

The statement alarmed every Kindred prince in Transylvania. Had the Masquerade been breached by the Tremere or the Ventruer? Did Rakoczi have Sabbat support and advice? How much did the mortals know, and what part did that knowledge play in their rebellion? The paranoid Kindred scrambled to stop the uprising, but they reacted far too late. Transylvania vacillated between Habsburg and local leadership until 1711, when the rebellion was defeated not by supernatural intervention, but the greed of several of the revolt's leaders who wished to insure the safety of their lands and titles under the Habsburgs. The local Kindred princes had no chance to react to or channel the flow of the rebellion, and were lucky to survive with their domains intact. The Habsburgs quickly consolidated their power, stripping Transylvania of all autonomy. The Camarilla never learned what supernatural knowledge and backing, if any, the rebellion possessed.

Not all Kindred felt disadvantaged by the chaos of Rakoczi's rebellion. Many benefited from the disorganization and furthered their own ends, ends that might have been stopped if the local Cainite population had not fallen to infighting. Near the end of the rebellion, one such Cainite, growing disenchanted with the political intrigues and oppressive structure of the Camarilla, attempted to unearth one of Transylvania's greatest secrets, so once again the Son of the Dragon could rule the land of his birth.

ACT II: MACHINATIONS OF THE IMPALER (WINTER 1710)

No month seizes the Carpathians as bitterly as January. Snow and frost coat the ground, and chilling winds gust constantly across the steppes. Any kind of travel is difficult, and most luxury carriages are all but useless for navigating the snowed-in mountain roads. The Habsburgs winter their

troops in the major cities of Transylvania, both for the protection of their soldiers and to keep the local nobles in line. The Storyteller is encouraged to make sure that cities the characters claim as domains have Habsburg armies sheltering themselves through the cold months.

Western rule has changed Transylvania a great deal. In the years following 1687, the Habsburgs grant Transylvanian titles and lands to dozens of loyal nobles from elsewhere. Some of these nobles are well-placed Kindred, and the characters acutely feel the corresponding reduction in their personal power. Unless they can forge a few quick alliances with the Habsburgs or use some fairly cunning politics to keep their power secure, they risk losing quite a bit to this purposeful dilution of local influence.

Since the nominal end of the Sabbat wars and the expulsion of the Ottomans, the characters may wonder what has happened to their old acquaintance, Vlad Tepes. Depending on the condition of their relationship with Dracula, this interest may be of a romantic, social or vengeful nature. Camarilla characters, regardless of their personal opinion of the Impaler, may remember seeing him in many of the Kindred courts during the 16th and 17th centuries, playing the political game with consummate skill. If the characters mistreated or betrayed Dracula earlier, they may have experienced the backlash of his political maneuvering firsthand. Sabbat characters on good terms with Dracula might recall how the Impaler went out of his way to avoid harming them directly, even in the most heated moments of the wars; those Sabbat characters who made Dracula an enemy still bear the scars of his vicious attacks.

What piques the characters' interests, almost as a side observation, is that Vlad Tepes has gradually disappeared from the Cainite community over the past decades. Any contact he had with the characters has ended, and he no longer graces the local courts with his presence. He is all but impossible to find or contact... until he surprises the characters with an unexpected invitation.

SCENE I: DINNER AND A DRAGON

This scene can proceed in one of two ways, depending on the characters' relationships with Dracula. If some or all of them are his allies, or if they did not acquire Dracula's sword from the Tremere in Act I, he invites them to his castle as described below. If they traded the Cappadocian for his sword and he considers them his enemies, he simply confronts the character who possesses his sword and steals it back (see sidebar).

THE ANIMOSITY OF A LEGEND

Vlad Tepes is not a Kindred one wants to count as an enemy. The Impaler, the Dragon, the Demon... all these names describe the brutal lengths Dracula resorts to, simply to achieve what he wants. At this point, all he wants is his sword, and if the characters are his enemies, he has no qualms about stealing it.

Dracula is a skilled practitioner of koldunic sorcery, and can use his magics to reacquire the sword. The Storyteller should use her imagination for how his powers achieve this; no one knows the characters' blind spots better than the Storyteller, and she should exploit these to the fullest. Dracula also has allies among the Gypsies and the Turks still in the area; either of these groups can be employed for thievery if he needs. If the characters are his allies and they simply decide not to return the sword, he steals it as stealthily as possible. He wants the sword, but not badly enough to alienate possible compatriots. Characters who never were his allies to begin with, however, receive a very different reaction.

Mitru the Hunter, a Gangrel whom the characters may remember from earlier in the *Transylvania Chronicles*, is Dracula's ally. He leads Dracula's elite force of Axes, a group of ghoul men-at-arms whom the Impaler has groomed and fed vampiric blood since before his Embrace. Dracula wishes to make a point to the characters by stealing back his sword. While he uses his sorcery to acquire it, Mitru leads the Axes in a diversionary assault on whatever character's manse holds the sword. This should not result in any character's Final Death (unless a character acts in an unbelievably foolish manner), but it should cause plenty of collateral damage, including a healthy reduction in the characters' personal armies. Dracula wants the characters to know that he took back what was his, and that a price comes with being an enemy of the Dragon.

Dracula dispatches one of his Axes to each of the characters' domains in mid-December. The ghouls deliver a brief letter to each character, asking them to meet with Dracula at Castle Arghes in a few weeks' time. The date can be modified by how far the characters have to travel, but it should be a generous allotment; it is winter, after all, and his castle is high in the mountains. Each messenger also offers to guide the characters to the castle through the treacherous winter passes.

Some characters may decline the invitation; Dracula meets with those who do arrive, and notes which characters do not. If all the characters decide not to go, then Dracula resorts to stealing his sword as described above, if the characters have it. Characters who don't have the sword

and decline the invitation simply miss out on the meeting and the information revealed in it. Note that Dracula is not omniscient, however — if none of the characters attend, he will have to do a bit of research to determine where the sword lies, which is an excellent opportunity for espionage storytelling vignettes.

The voyage is difficult, but with the help of the Axes the characters should traverse the icy Carpathian passes successfully. Travel through the Bran Pass is relatively easy, even in winter, but once the characters turn off the trade route, the journey becomes more precarious. The entourage is forced to travel close together, and only hardy carriages and wagons manage to complete the journey without breaking axles or losing wheels. There is little upon which to slake the characters' thirsts in the winter mountains, and they may have to feed from herds or the peasants living in the few hamlets they pass. This is not as difficult as normal in the dead of winter, since most of the citizenry is preparing for winter festivals, and braving the cold and darkness more than usual.

When they reach either Curtea de Arghes or Arefu, the two towns nearest Dracula's domain, they see the familiar sight of Castle Arghes. It looks black and twisted even against the backdrop of the night sky, nestled among the snow-covered, jutting peaks of Wallachia. The 1400 steps to the front gates are even more treacherous than the characters remember from almost two centuries ago, with ice and snow crusted over the roughly cut staircase. The Axes light torches as they lead the characters up to the castle, as much to signal their presence to Dracula as to guide their way.

When they reach the summit, the Axes whisper a few words to the sentries guarding the gates. The sentries nod and rap on the gates, which open with a heavy, deep groan. Several servants wait in the candlelight within. They immediately take the characters' coats and belongings as they lead the characters to the main hall in the castle. There, with a roaring fireplace against one wall and rich tapestries gracing the others, stands Dracula. He stands in front of the fire, and appears as little more than a silhouette to the characters. The players should roll for Rösschreck. (It's a big fire.) The fact that Dracula seems completely at ease standing in front of a controlled bonfire should give the characters something to wonder about.

Dracula appears just the same as the last time the characters met him: His long black hair and mustache are impeccably combed and kept; his clothes are anachronistic but of the highest quality, and he carries an air of power and dominance that is even more pronounced now that he is Kindred. He welcomes the characters to his castle, and offers them refreshment for their long journey. He greets each character in a manner appropriate to their relationship; if one is his lover, Dracula's reactions should be reminiscent of the final act in the previous installment of the *Transylvania Chronicles*.



IV WANT TO SUCK YOUR BLOOD!

The Vlad Tepes presented in the *World of Darkness* is very different from the one popularized by Bram Stoker, Bela Lugosi and the countless variations since. However, since this is possibly the first time the characters have interacted with Dracula since his embrace two centuries before, some elements of the Dracula mythos can be used to heighten the romance and power of this act.

Though thick Romanian accents should be avoided like the plague, the Storyteller can use lines of dialogue directly from Bram Stoker's book to characterize the Wallachian count. Count Dracula's statement, "Welcome to my home, enter freely, go safely" is creepy enough as it is, and coming from the *World of Darkness* Dracula it should convey the horror that Stoker's work has lost in the vampire's media transformations. Reread the novel and bone up on the images and mannerisms of Count Dracula; in this setting, they'll just add to the suspense.

Dracula entertains his guests with games and debates once they have fed. He talks about any subject, though he becomes vocal in his criticism of the Camarilla. The organization has grown too strict in response to the Sabbat,

he claims, and such tyranny has no place in vampire existence. Along with discussion, he provides a small orchestra and presents ghouls that act out scenes from Shakespeare, Classical Greek, or any sordid displays the characters wish to see. He apologizes profusely for the meager diversions, explaining that winter prevents him from acquiring the finest entertainment. Dracula also pursues any love interest from before, although this time he acts primarily for an ulterior motive (unless the Storyteller wishes to treat the relationship otherwise).

After a few hours of entertaining the characters, Dracula comes to the point of his summons. He wishes to reacquire his sword. If the characters don't have it, Dracula's questions center around who does. His reasons for questioning them are twofold: He wants to find out whether the characters know anything he doesn't about the situation, and he needs to test their trustworthiness. It's unlikely the characters know any secrets that Dracula doesn't already; he knows the Tremere have his sword, and the characters don't know much more beyond that. He pretends to have no idea where the weapon is, however, and judges the characters the truthfulness and completeness of their answers. Dracula offers gold, minor occult books and works of art for the information, and after the characters tell him all they are

willing to, he retires for the rest of the evening. The characters can leave Castle Arghes when they wish, which largely depends on how close they are to the count. After they depart, Dracula employs his sorcery and Axes to successfully steal his sword back from the Tremere.

If the characters do have the sword, Dracula's tactics are much different. He tells them directly that the sword is his, and he would like it back. The Tremere stole it from him, believing it to be a valuable magical relic. He admits that it does possess certain abilities, but nothing warranting its theft. He discovered that the Tremere traded it to the characters, and now he implores them to return it. Dracula doesn't ask them to do this without reimbursement; he offers gold, tomes from his library, which contain numerous koldunic rituals and, perhaps, even one of his minor castles (offered to the entire group, of course) if the characters seem reluctant. He does not offer boons or related obligations, and refuses to even consider them as barter for the sword.

Dracula goes to great lengths to negotiate with the characters, especially if one is his lover. However, if their final word is no, he nods and thanks them for coming. He gives them fresh horses and provisions and sends them on their way (but not before sending several of his Axes ahead to steal the sword).

If the characters do give him the sword, he pays them the sum he promised and thanks them for their cooperation. He sends two of his Axes with the characters to recover the sword and bring it back to him.

If Dracula resorts to stealing the sword, the characters will likely assume that he is responsible, regardless of any evidence to the contrary. Attacking him in retaliation is foolish; he commands forces equal to any Kindred in the area, and an assault on his castle would cost the characters dearly. Either way, by the end of the scene Dracula should once again possess his sword, and the characters should spend a month in peace before they hear of him again.

SCENE II: THE FIRES OF FAITH

The holidays pass, the New Year's celebration comes and goes, and Transylvania settles in to await spring's arrival. The characters have either given Dracula his sword, had the sword stolen from them, or have told Dracula that the Tremere have it. Regardless, they are able to attend to the lesser details of their domains, supporting or hindering the revolution, and conducting their unives in relative normalcy... until strange things begin happening in their lands. This assumes, again, that the characters are all in, or close to, Transylvania; characters further away can be pulled in by their associates' pleas for aid.

The first indication of abnormality is a child's random disappearance in a city that one of the characters controls. The child disappears without a trace one January night, apparently stolen from her bed while the family slept.

Depending on how tightly the characters control their domains, they may hear of this either directly from the family or through the mortal sheriffs with whom they have contact. This is tragic, but probably does not overly alarm the characters... until they hear of exactly the same thing happening in each city in their domains and the domains of the other characters and Kindred in the area. Nearly every city suffers a child's kidnapping, on nearly the same night... and in towns with only a few hundred to at most a few thousand inhabitants, such things definitely do not go unnoticed. Regardless of how tyrannically the group silences its domains, word quickly spreads. Soon, everyone is speaking of the kidnappings that plague their *bergen*, and a few begin whispering that it is the work of the Devil.

The characters are free to investigate these disappearances both personally and through their contacts, but they discover little. Even Disciplines such as *Auspex* cannot detect any meaningful clues about the kidnappings. Searches turn up no bodies, and inquiries reveal no information. The characters should start to get frustrated with all the dead ends, just as another wave of disappearances hits Transylvania — this time, two or three children disappear from each city, in the same manner as before. The characters may have imposed curfews and watches in the cities, but the watches see nothing unusual on the nights of the kidnappings.

Families cry out for justice in distress and fury. Local priests and ministers preach that the Devil walks in Transylvania. Wild rumors of witches and demons float through the populace, who are desperate to find an answer for the random, widespread disappearances. The characters may intuit where this is all leading, but even influence in the Catholic Church can't stop the coming reaction. The Roman Inquisition quickly appoints a local bishop, Dmitri Idigo, as head Inquisitor in Transylvania, and charges him with finding and destroying the demonic influence in his land. A knee-jerk character reaction to this is to assassinate Idigo: this is among the stupidest courses of action the characters can take. After making the bishop a martyr, the Inquisition continues on with twice as much fervor. The Church must be on to something if the Devil's agents are killing their Inquisitors.

The bishop immediately departs for the largest city claimed as domain by one of the characters, and sends his own representatives to the other cities. The Habsburg troops wintering in the groups' cities do not have orders to help the Inquisitors in any way, but many lend their aid as witch hunters voluntarily, both to break up the boredom of winter and to destroy the heresy in Transylvania. Wild accusations fly, and as more children disappear it becomes harder for the characters to set foot in their own domains. Private witch hunters fall on the cities, hired by peasants and local churches. The Inquisition quickly changes into a sport. Greed, power and ambition become motives for the

accusations, and many witch hunters manufacture "evidence" to insure their payment by the townsfolk. A betrayal by a mistreated ally or an accusation from a greedy noble can pull any character into the fires of the Inquisition. For ideas on how treachery and personal vendettas play in to witch hunts, read or watch *The Crucible* for a look at the less wholesome side of stomping out heresy.

Unlucky or careless characters run the risk of being identified as a vampire (or a werewolf, heretic, witch or any other imaginable entity), and their ghouls live in constant fear of the witch's pyre. If the character is openly vampiric (a problem for obvious "vampire lords" or other subtly-impaired "rulers"), supported the Turks during their occupation, does not appear in church regularly or has made harsh or odd decrees in his reign, then he is a viable target for accusation and a subsequent trial... which should be scheduled during daylight hours. Of course, this only happens if a character is known to the public; careful characters (though not necessarily their ghouls or allies) should be able to avoid the worst of the chaos. It pays to expect the Inquisition.

THE HISTORICAL INQUISITION

The Inquisition referred to in this act is the Roman Inquisition, the same body that tried Galileo for heresy. The proceedings generally occur in a manner similar to a trial court; the Inquisitor presides like a judge to hear evidence and pass judgment on accused heretics. An accusation of heresy requires two witnesses, after which the accused individual can be tried and questioned. Almost anything may be permitted as "evidence": crop failure a year after someone refused to lend the suspected witch a pound of barley, deaths in the family after a small slight—virtually any coincidence can be weighed and considered by the Inquisitor. After he passes judgment, the Inquisitor hands the heretic over to the secular justice system, and the sheriff imposes whatever punishment the laws called for. Torture is used only to garner a confession from the accused heretic, which, by Catholic dogma, cleanses the heretic's soul. If this fails, the heretic is usually burned, though not alive; most are executed before their bodies meet the pyre.

Historical purists may note that the Inquisition was well past its heyday by 1710, and that the only periods of widespread witch hunts and tortures took place centuries before. This is largely true; torture had lost favor as a useful tool because of its tendency to extract false confessions, and the Roman Inquisition was not nearly as brutal or obvious as the Medieval or Spanish Inquisitions. However, this is the *World of Darkness*... everything is a little darker, a little more corrupt and a whole lot worse. This is a horror story, not a historical treatise. If you can believe in vampires influencing mortal society and demons bound under the land, then you can certainly swallow a few historical embellishments.



As if the group needs more to deal with, they have other signs that things are not going well in Transylvania. The weather takes a distinct downturn. Bitter winds and blizzards blast across the land, and every manner of calamity starts to fall on the Carpathians. The populace attributes it to the demonic influence building in Transylvania, which spurs the Inquisition even further. The characters may remember the last time the weather got so bad; it was almost four centuries before, when Zelios claimed that the demon Kupala poisoned the land with his presence.

This section of the act is purposely less structured than the rest; much of it depends on the characters' previous actions and what mood and flavor the Storyteller wants her chronicle to have. Play up the Inquisition if frantic danger and desperation work well for the players; if the group prefers subtler themes, then capitalize on their manipulations and schemes to avoid detection and to expel the witch hunters from their cities. It is easy, however, for the characters to get distracted at this point in the act. They may become so concerned with fending off the Inquisition that they grow oblivious to the sinister nature of the children's disappearance. The Storyteller should use one or two incidents to illustrate the gravity of the situation, but shouldn't drag the Inquisition theme out. The crux of the act still lies ahead. The story needs to keep moving or the players will get bored with seeing holy warriors slay their servants and burn their manes.

ONE LAST MEETING

On a particularly dark and stormy night, after a particularly bad week of dodging the Inquisition, the characters receive a familiar visitor. Preferably, this takes place when most or all of the characters are together; if no such opportunity is available, then the visitor can meet with a few of the characters individually.

It is likely the characters have become rather paranoid, which means they have stepped up their personal defenses. They receive word from one of their guards that one lone man, looking unkempt and wearing a piecemeal combination of furs and armor, is approaching the manor. The man seems able to brave the wind and snow quite well, and is armed only with a sword and spear. The characters may be able to guess, just from the description, that this is Octavio, and he arrives at the manor a few minutes later. Icicles dangle from his armor and frozen snow sparkles in his beard and hair. He immediately falls to his knees upon seeing the characters.

"At last have I made it to your open arms, my Kindred," Octavio croons. "Though weather slowed me and fatigue clawed at me and the very forces of Hell itself stood in my way, I have come!"

Octavio readily accepts any hospitality the characters give; he is hungry and exhausted, and the characters might be amazed he was able to come this far on foot with so little

vitae. Once he is fed and rested, he begins to speak again. His voice sounds tired and weak, without the passion the characters experienced during other encounters with him.

"I have one last duty to perform, one last missive to deliver. God's duties burden me, and I fear that He picked a servant who cannot survive to stop the coming darkness. But I can fulfill this last duty, and then I may finally rest.

"The Dragon again claws for power. He takes his sword, the sword of Dracula, which makes his machinations possible. He seeks to wrest the heart of the demon from Transylvania's soil and bend it to his will. The land cries out as his ritual begins, and the Dragon knows not what power he truly unleashes! One hundred souls it takes, 100 lives of the pure and innocent to bring forth Kupala, and even now he collects them. He still is short but a few, and soon he will have them. The demon will walk again!"

The characters should realize this is why the children have been disappearing, and it seems to be by Dracula's hand. They may also surmise that this is the incident one of the Gehenna prophecies speaks of; this is an incorrect assumption, but they are free to speculate. If they ask what powers Dracula's sword has, Octavio shakes his head. "I know not. The Warlocks know, as they stole it for their own purposes, but the humble servant before you does not."

Octavio can't answer anything in more detail, no matter how many questions the characters ask. He does say that the characters are at the center of his visions, and that they are the ones whom fate places in the path of the Dragon, but has no more information. After he delivers his message, Octavio rises and says that his duty is done, and now he must go. He departs, disappearing into the dark snowstorm outside.

SCENE III: DESPERATE TIMES

The group may investigate Octavio's claims before it leaps headlong into following his prophecies. The only evidence the characters can find to back Octavio is that the only two towns that have not suffered any kidnappings, and the subsequent visits from the Inquisition, are Curtea de Arghes and Arefu, the two towns closest to Dracula's castle. They also might compare Octavio's speech with one of the prophecies recovered from Maria Asunción; the statements about digging the demon's heart from the land are only coincidentally similar, but the characters may be convinced that if Dracula carries out his ritual, he will fulfill a sign of Gehenna.

The characters have two choices: They can seek out the Tremere (specifically, Claas, the Tremere who offered the sword as barter in Act I), or they can go straight to Dracula's castle to confront him. Either course of action is acceptable, but not going to the Tremere deprives the characters of a very potent weapon they can use to stop Dracula. The characters may also think the Tremere still have Dracula's sword, though the Impaler stole it from them before the

kidnappings started. Characters who are not on good terms with the Tremere, such as any Sabbat or Tzimisce, likely know that visiting the Tremere is not the healthiest course of action, and may simply have to make their fortune without the Warlocks' knowledge.

FINDING A WARLOCK WHEN YOU NEED ONE

It is doubtful any of the characters knows the location of Ceoris, the chantry where Claas and the rest of the powerful Tremere in Transylvania reside. If one of the characters is Tremere (and a very influential one), he may know the route, but also knows the punishment the other members of the group would receive for learning it (and what punishment he would receive for revealing it). In either instance, it is easier and safer for the characters to travel to Alceditz, a small village near Ceoris. Tremere characters may recognize this as a Tremere-dominated town that the clan uses for many meetings with other Cainites; other characters remember it as the village where they brought Goratrix... and met Tremere... centuries before.

The voyage is difficult in the storms, reminiscent of the difficulties the characters had in their first trip to Alceditz. If the group has close contact with any Tremere, it can send word ahead and set up a meeting. If not, they must likely wait in the village for a few nights before Claas hears of their arrival and visits them.

Claas keeps the meeting short and to the point. He is noticeably uncomfortable outside Ceoris, since Alceditz is heavily plagued with the Church's forces. The characters have to convince him that the sword is dangerous in Dracula's hands, and that Dracula is the cause of the disappearances and Inquisition. After learning this, Claas grudgingly explains what he knows about the sword.

Dracula's sword absorbs blood from those it wounds, but that is not its only effect. If it slays someone, the sword commits a type of soul-trapping — not complete, but enough to consume part of its victim's essence. Claas surmises that Dracula needs either the blood or the essence of the children, and the sword is the best way to store them until he is ready to enact the ritual.

The only way to stop the sword's ability is a ward Claas himself wove into the sword as a safety device. The ward discharges everything the sword contains if it hears a single command word. The ward's power is limited; it must be able to "hear" the command word, which means the sword must be in earshot and the command word must be spoken loud enough to be heard. Characters who traded the Cappadocian for the sword may be furious that the Tremere safety-warded their offer, but there is little they can do to change the fact now.

Claas teaches the characters the command word, which sounds like utter gibberish to them; the Storyteller can make up whatever collection of sounds she wishes. The



exact pronunciation of the command word can play a tense (and desperate) part of the final scene of the act, if the Storyteller wishes. It must be pronounced exactly, after all... mispronunciation won't work.

After revealing this, Claas wishes the characters luck. The characters now have only one place to go: Dracula's castle.

WELCOME TO MY HOME

The journey to Castle Arghes is a disaster. The characters can remember the difficult trip from the first part of the act; in the blizzard, it is far worse. Snowdrifts cover the passes, blinding snow whips through the air, and chilling winds send the temperature plummeting. Carriages and wagons have absolutely no chance of traversing the mountain roads. The only way to cross is by horse, and a very sturdy one at that (perhaps only steeds fed vampiric blood). Taking more than one or two retainers is also impossible in the cold, unless the characters don't mind sacrificing a few ghouls to exposure. There is almost nothing to feed from, and the characters may have to gain vitae from their own retainers and pack animals. Daylight also poses a problem without wagons; the horses have to be protected by trees or caves each day, and the group may have to go so far as to bury itself in the snowdrifts to stay out of the storm-diffused sun. The trip should be difficult and miserable, as if nature itself is keeping the characters at bay.

When the group finally reaches Curtea de Arghes or Arefu, it can feed, but again with difficulty. Almost no one is out in the snowstorm. Then, they can begin the treacherous ascent to Castle Arghes. They cannot see the castle from the base, only the rough staircase leading into the billowing darkness. Torches and lanterns illuminate only a few feet at best, and must be constantly tended to prevent them from blowing out.

The wind, ice and snow make the stairs incredibly precarious. Each character must make several Dexterity + Athletics rolls (difficulty 8) to keep from slipping. The stairs drop off in a sheer cliff on each side; a botch on the Athletics roll sends the character over the edge and into torpor somewhere in the snow below. Sadistic Storytellers can add an avalanche, wind gusts and even lightning bursts to make the journey worse. (And yes, agree with the players when they say lightning does not occur in a blizzard. This is a less than wholesome storm.)

TALKING WITH DRACULA

Once the characters reach the summit, several options are open to them. The most straightforward, and easiest, option is simply to talk with Dracula. When the characters arrive at the gates to the castle, no guards are braving the weather; banging on the gates is the only way to get the attention of the sentries inside. If the characters give their names and ask to speak with Dracula, the guard disappears for several minutes, then returns and allows the group inside.

The castle is exactly the same as the characters' first visit. Dracula welcomes them as before, but looks suspiciously at his guests. Most Kindred would not brave the weather outside for anything but a very important visit. He offers mortals to slake the characters' thirsts, then invites them to talk in the main hall of the castle. The characters notice that he wears his sword in a scabbard at his side. If they listen closely, they can hear the whispers of children's voices coming from its sheathed blade.

The main hall, just as the group remembers, is lit and warmed by the large fireplace, but this time there is an elegant table set in the center of the room. Around the table sit six children, clean and dressed in fine noble clothing. Dracula takes a seat at the head of the table and offers the remaining chairs to the characters. The children are talking quietly and giggling, and each is dining on large saucers of steaming soup. The characters can smell the potent aroma of Kindred vitae in each bowl. Dracula apologizes for the children's manners; he was able to clean them up and clothe them properly, but he couldn't do away with their commoner attitudes in so short a time. He then asks why the characters have journeyed to his manse.

When the characters speak of the ritual or the disappearances, Dracula motions for his guards to take the children away. After they have departed, he speaks freely. The children are the last six he needs to complete the sacrifices he must make for his *koldunic* ritual. He has removed the geomantic symbol the characters placed on his castle, weakening the web that entraps the spirit Kupala, and his ritual will pierce what remains to gain control of it. He sees Kupala as a potent spirit of the land, and thinks that once he controls it, he can use it to calm the mystically blighted weather and cleanse the tainted land. Kupala to him is a possible cure, not the cause, of Transylvania's ailments, and he claims that he can restore Transylvania by controlling the demon. He also wants to command its power for his own ends, but does not mention this to the characters.

At this point, the characters may argue from several different angles. They may be able to convince Dracula of Kupala's malevolence by revealing most of their Gehenna knowledge and their personal experiences, but this requires giving Dracula a lot of information. Many characters will be uncomfortable with freely giving so much lore to the Impaler. Characters in a love relationship with Dracula can simply ask him to give up the ritual, accentuating their arguments with emotional pleas. They can also argue from the point of view that the children's disappearances are making Transylvania an unliving hell for Kindred with the presence of the Inquisition. This does not hold much water for Dracula, however. He mentions that he has already captured the last six children he needs, and no more will disappear. Needless to say, arguments about the morality of sacrificing children also do not impress him.

None of these arguments completely dispel Dracula's desire to control Kupala. Malevolent or not, it's powerful, and he is still convinced he can bend the demon to his will. The characters may get the impression that Dracula is going to go ahead with the ritual even as he says he won't; this largely depends on his relationship with the characters and how well they argue their side. At best, the characters are able to convince him not to carry out the ritual at this time. It should be clear to the characters whether Dracula intends to heed their warnings or not; making him give up the ritual should be a reward for good characterization and well-reasoned arguments. If he agrees, he thanks the characters for their concern and promises to not continue with the ritual. He asks them to stay for a night or two; they can agree or decline. Dracula treats them with all the hospitality he can, and asks more questions about Gehenna and their knowledge of Kupala during their stay.

Intrepid characters may ask to learn about the ritual itself. If they do, Dracula takes them down a winding staircase to what appears to be an ancient dungeon, lit by torches and candles. It is a wide open space with strange markings drawn upon the ground. Concentric circles inscribed with runes dominate the center of the room, and on each circle stand the heads of the small children Dracula has captured and sacrificed. Their bodies are scattered along the walls in heaps, with only the cold keeping the bodies from decomposing. The smallest circle in the center of the ring is the only one that is not filled, awaiting the heads of the final six children. In the dungeon, the characters can more clearly hear the soft cries emanating from the sword. Dracula does not show the group the tome containing the ritual. All he says is that once he beheads the final six children and places their heads on the circle, he can discharge their blood and souls into the center of the circle. This will pierce the geomantic web, and the demon will be freed... into his control.

Out of paranoia or distrust, and especially if the characters gain the impression that Dracula is going to go ahead with the ritual, one of the characters may utter the command word, either loudly or subtly, near the sword. Regardless of how they do it, no amount of subtlety can hide what happens to the sword. Once the command word is spoken, all the voices in the sword let out a united shriek. The absorbed blood explodes from the blade in a shower (over 200 blood points worth, after slaying so many children). It is quite a noticeable effect, bathing the entire room in crimson. Dracula reacts to this in absolute rage, baring his fangs and screaming at the characters. He does not attack or harm them, however; after berating them for their impudence and mistrust, he demands that they leave immediately, and never interfere in his business again. He throws characters who are particularly on his bad side into one of the dungeons in his castle, which may

prompt a (probably losing) fight against Dracula, Mitru and the Axes, but he releases them in a few nights with the same warning. The characters have made Dracula an enemy, and he never forgives them for this slight. This course of action, however, does force him to discard the ritual for the time being. He cannot gather 100 more children with the Inquisition in the area, and he will have to wait for a great while to begin the ritual again.

If the characters are Dracula's enemies, they may not want to talk to (or even be seen by) Dracula at all. Two alternative options exist: sneaking into the castle, and attacking the castle. An attack is ludicrous; weather conditions are hideous, and the characters have a handful of people, compared to the army of revenants Dracula employs. However, this may work, to a limited extent, if they can draw Dracula into the fight just long enough to see the sword and yell the command word. Regardless, this is a terrible option, and characters that choose it should receive a large dose of Final Death (or at least torpor) at the hands of Dracula's assembled mercenaries for their stupidity.

Sneaking into the castle is much more viable. Because of the weather, very few guards are outside, so the characters can make it to the castle walls easily. Precipices border each side of the castle, and the characters must make more Athletics rolls to climb around to one of the stained-glass windows. After breaking in, they can see many of the scenes described above (from hiding, of course), and after dodging a few Axes, they should be able to find Dracula. Depending on how merciful the Storyteller wants to be, Dracula can either momentarily leave his sword in a room where the characters can get to it, or he can keep it with him, forcing them to speak the command word while he has it at his side. If they have an escape route planned, they should have little trouble getting away; if not, let them feel the wrath of the count. Ultimately, however, the characters should succeed, since they are meant to stop the rise of Kupala. (Who isn't ready to rise just yet....)

When the characters leave Castle Arghes (regardless of how they leave), the scene is much different. If Dracula agrees to discontinue the ritual, he removes the ritual lines as the characters leave, dispelling the sorcery; if the characters discharge the sword, then the ritual is thwarted by default. Once the ritual ends, the storm stops. The characters step out of the castle to see a crystal clear, star-filled sky above, with a full moon bathing the sparkling white Carpathian mountains in soft light. A calm silence falls over the area. The characters can head home, finding their voyage much easier this time, and eagerly await the arrival of spring.

EPILOGUE

After the disappearances stop, the Inquisition rapidly loses steam. Each town or village pins the responsibility for

the kidnappings on one or two of the "witches" that they execute, and consider the issue done. Eventually, unlife for the characters returns to normal, and they can go about repairing what damage the Inquisition caused.

A few months after the encounters with Dracula, just as spring begins to turn into summer, the characters each

receive letters from Lucita and Anatole. This may not seem abnormal, until they read the contents of the letter. Each letter contains two sheets, a small one written in flowing script and another in jagged print. The first reads as follows:

Fellows,

I apologize for not coming in person to deliver this message. Anatole and I have met many Kindred who share our concerns, and we have learned much. Soon we will speak of these things... but now is not the time. Anatole insisted on sending this missive to you. I hope you take it in the right way.

I pray to see you soon,

Lucita

Champagne, France

2 March 1710

The second letter is written on dirty parchment, with writing that is barely legible at times.

**Thou hath thwarted the machinations of the Dragon!
Praise God that Kindred with such mettle as thee stand
against the darkness! I have taken in the vision and
soul of he of the Eight to see a thousandfold more
clearly, and I see thee in each vision Nexus! Center!
Come, ye, and fight on the side of the light for Gehenna
comes and few can stop it but thee. I have inherited the
voice and the signs and the vision, and I tell thee now
what I see so that ye may be prepared for the duties
ahead. Six pass three remain... Mark the signs!**

Anatole

The characters may figure out that Anatole is referring to his diablerie of Octavio. Octavio's statements take on a few new meanings, and the characters possibly see Anatole in a completely different light... especially

Camarilla characters, who may be inclined to regard diablerie with horror. Regardless, Octavio has passed his cup on, and the group knows that it is firmly destined to play a part in Gehenna.





CHAPTER FOUR: THE BLOOD OF TYRANTS

Make terror the order of the day.

— M. Barere de Vieuzac, of the Committee of Public Safety

The year is 1789 and revolution is imminent. Europe is poised on the brink of cataclysmic upheaval, but few can comprehend the scope and scale of the changes brewing or the dizzying speed with which they will occur. The characters are now centuries-old Cainites of great power, but in all likelihood they too will be swept along on the tides of history like children, grappling with the power of the masses and of history as they pursue fragments of the Gehenna prophecies and try to survive amidst the tumult of Revolutionary France. This chapter is mainly concerned with the dislocating effects of the passage of time on the elder characters, and the conflict between young and old, that perennial aspect of Cainite (Kindred, to the fledglings) existence, reappears from a new perspective. This is also an opportunity for the Storyteller to remind the characters to respect the power of the "kine" whom they so often treat as vessels, or, at best, as potential ghouls or

childer, and of their own status as antiquated relics of nights past.

The first challenge is getting the characters to Paris. Fortunately, this should not be too difficult. Paris is important not only in the mortal world, but also in the world of the Kindred. The strongest and most stable nation in Western Europe is the heart of the relatively new Camarilla. Under the strong rule of Prince Francois Villon, Paris since the Convention of Thorns has suffered few, if any, serious crises from without. The Sabbat has never made its presence felt in its galleries and salons, the Lupines have long since been relegated to more rural areas, the Inquisition has faded into the background, and the prince's influence is uncontested. It has evolved into a very elaborate and formal society of the most polite and genteel Kindred, who have been very successful at blending in with mortal society, largely aping the ways of the aristocrats and the



wealthy bourgeois. Less refined Kindred have been shunned, or worse, and most have now made their way to other locales. Prince Villon has become the model prince many others seek to emulate, and his court is regularly attended by visiting Kindred from other lands, currying favor, hobnobbing with the new Camarilla elite, or simply observing and learning. The rumors that the pitiful remnant of the anarchs calling themselves the Sabbat is beginning to gather in Paris, and is finding allies among the disaffected younger Kindred effectively shut out of court life by their youth and their blood, are, of course, pure drivel, fantasies and deceptions spun by those envious of the prince. And unbeknownst to its inhabitants, threads of an ancient drama run through the Parisian nights as well....

It is up to the Storyteller and the players to determine exactly why the characters will be in Paris in 1789. It will depend on the characters' expressed interests, political and philosophical leanings, friendships and alliances might be at this point. It is important, however, that arrangements are made for a fairly long stay, since events in this chapter occur over a five-year span of time. Characters need to have a compelling reason to stay in France for a few years, or at least be frequent visitors, given the age and probable power of the characters. Having a random elder pop up out of the woodwork saying, "Go to Paris and stay there" will probably be ineffective

(and certainly not very fun). Keep in mind that it is a very good idea to consult with the players about this. It's okay to say, "The next major event in the storyline will take place in Paris in 1789. I can think of many reasons why Gustav and Julianna would be there at that time, but I'd like to hear some of yours." Brainstorming like this usually produces better results than Storyteller fiat. A few of the many possibilities are given below; most Storytellers will find some combination that works best for the characters in the chronicle.

MORTAL SOCIETY

Characters who have chosen to remain somewhat involved in the mortal world and maintain their human aspects have every reason to want to spend some time in Paris. The hubbub and tumult of the city, the explosion of new ideas, the vibrant life of it all should be very appealing to an elder who is beginning to feel the weight of the years and of the Beast. For a character who has, in all likelihood, been through a number of horrific experiences, watching the flow of life of a new place for a few years might seem like an opportunity to regain a semblance of normalcy. Scholarly characters might find the new ideas being voiced there fascinating or repulsive, but certainly worth investigating. If the characters are on good terms with Lucita, she might, on a visit, suggest it to a character who seems like she's losing her human side. Additionally, the Storyteller might suggest that any player for whom it seems

appropriate start working a storyline like this into his bluebooking during downtime, and let him arrive a little early so it doesn't seem too contrived.

Alternatively, Kindred who rule over their serfs with iron fists as lords and masters of the Transylvanian night might be concerned with the veritable flood of liberal thought that threatens the borders of their holdings. The Austrians and even the Russians are experimenting with liberal ideas; might the characters own chattel become infected with poisonous ideas such as "liberty" and "democracy?" These characters might set out to Paris to learn ways to combat the spread of such dangerous concepts. It could certainly provoke some interesting storytelling sessions to remember that the characters are products of far less enlightened times, and, despite any sympathies players may harbor for them, the ideas developing now encountered a great deal of hostility. This applies equally well to vampires on all sides of the political spectrum, on all Paths.

CLAN AND SECT AFFAIRS

Characters who have become strongly involved in the Camarilla have fairly obvious reasons for wanting to go to Paris. Paris is the heart of the sect at this time. Merely spending time there will enable characters to keep tabs on political developments and build more connections with the elite. It's also worth considering that the characters are, in all likelihood, among the elite themselves, and are going to seek out their peers with whom to spend the endless nights. Toreador characters in particular might seek out the center of their clan's activities in this time, while members of other clans could seek to build alliances with them. The Tremere hierarchy in particular is becoming concerned with the possible threats of insurrection and Sabbat activity, even if the Parisian Kindred themselves are not.

Characters with stronger affiliations with the remaining anarchs or the Sabbat also have reasons to move to Paris for a time. To them, it is a haven of complacent oppressors that practically cries out to be destroyed. The most radical Sabbat consider the "Kindred" of Paris to be weak, pathetic creatures following mortals around like dogs begging for scraps and adhering blindly to antiquated traditions, and see that their arrogance makes them extremely vulnerable. There are also other motivations for those who hold power in the Sabbat — less idealistic ones to be sure. Many of the European elders who founded the sect, and powerful recent initiates like Count Radu Bistri and Vladimir Rustovich, are becoming concerned that many of the neonates embraced into the sect recently, especially after the sect's recent successes in the New World, are having trouble shedding some of the ridiculous mortal principles of "justice" and "equality" they held in life. They are foolishly interpreting the Sabbat's professed standards as applying to the sect's own elders as well as those of the opposition. They are troubled by the possibilities of what might happen if events in France get out of control, and would like to see a strong

controlling hand on the rudder (i.e. the characters) should the Sabbat make strong gains there.

On the other hand, if Radu or Rustovich has had less than friendly relations with Sabbat-sympathetic characters, he might ask them to go under similar pretenses, hoping that events will get out of control in a way that will conveniently eliminate the characters. Radu can also make a pitch to a single character strongly associated with the Camarilla, especially if he had been on good terms with him at some point in the past. Radu could explain that he regrets making concessions to the Sabbat out of necessity, but he fears the growing radicalism of the young, and he gives the characters false information about Sabbat plots in France. If the character takes the bait, Radu helps him plan against the sect, then gives information about its movements and plans to Gerard de Chatelle (see below) via messenger, setting them up and possibly even planning for their assassination. In this way he will help erase the taint of his early opposition to the Sabbat by using the prominent Camarilla character as a sacrificial offering.

Characters who are not strongly affiliated with any sect, including, but not limited to, most members of the independent clans, have many reasons to be in Paris, both personal and political. Ambitious independents will find ample opportunities to profit from the trouble that is brewing at least for a time. If their true natures are known, they will be seen largely as novelties, potentially dangerous, but also fascinating. If they are undercover, any of the sect agendas might function as cover stories.

OLD FRIENDS

This is probably best used for obstinate or particularly dense players, as it smacks a little too much of overt manipulation and, quite frankly, for most troupes it will have gotten stale a long time ago — have someone the characters love or hate encourage them to go. Anatole and Lucita are the old standbys in this category, which is why they should probably be used only as a last resort (or if your players really like them and have good storytelling experiences with them). Please note also that any friendship they may have had with the pair in the past will have cooled dramatically if the characters have made a strong stand in favor of the Sabbat in the past. Many other possibilities exist, however. Perhaps the characters receive word that an old rival of theirs is spreading vile slander about them in the French court, slander that may find fertile ground if the characters rejected Prince Villon's offer in Act I. Old friends or foes from major events like the Convention of Thorns might invite them to spend some time with them. The possibility that the Camarilla might censure them (or worse), may motivate some characters to make haste for Paris in order to defend their honor. The character's sire might be in Paris (a possibility explored further below), and may send messages to them, asking them to bury old grudges or, if they are less than forgiving sorts, settle old scores once and for all. A character's childer might have begun playing Kindred games, and may need to be bailed out of a sticky

situation, or they may have been preparing for their illustrious sire's appearance on the stage. Any number of valid reasons can be established, but remember: Wherever possible, entice the characters with things of personal value, and avoid attempts at coercion.

ACT III: VIRTUE AND TERROR (1789-1794)

SCENE I: ILL OMENS

As Gehenna approaches, and the cold arms of torpor become a more compelling option for the aging characters, they begin to find that dreams of the coming apocalypse trouble their daytime slumber. Storytellers can mention this in very vague terms to the players; the dreams are mostly batrages of unintelligible imagery (flocks of ravens, corpse-strewn battlefields, screams, blood, etc.) coupled with an overpowering sense of dread that lingers upon waking. Chances are, this dread will begin to wear on the characters. (The Storyteller may choose to add one to the difficulties of resisting frenzy rolls on particularly bad evenings.) On one particular night in the early spring of 1789, the dreams become more vivid and the characters will remember more details upon waking. Each sees the following scene individually. Though they will sense each other's presence hovering about, they cannot communicate with

each other. The Storyteller might wish to run this scene individually with each character alone in a separate room.

Each character finds herself at the entrance to a small fortress, as the setting sun turns the sky crimson overhead. The door opens, the character enters, and it shuts behind them with a loud clang. The interior of the fortress is a maze of interconnecting hallways and chambers, laid out with no rhyme or reason. The mutterings and gibberings of the mad, the demands of prisoners to be released, the sounds of flogging, and inarticulate screams and sobbing echo through the halls, though all the cells the character passes are empty. Let the characters wander around, as you describe the halls, empty cells, and doors in a frustrating sequence of choices that get the characters nowhere, but be careful not to let the players get too agitated. When it seems like that's a danger, move on.

Skittish footsteps come from behind the character. If she turns to look, she sees a waifish young man, malnourished, skin bruised and covered with sores, dressed in rags, with broken shackles around his wrists. (Although there is no way the characters will know this at this point, this is Georg von Neumann). As he sees the character, he turns and runs. If the character pursues, she finds that she cannot catch up to him as they run through the same labyrinth of passages, doors, and empty chambers. Requests or demands that he stop have no effect, unless they are in German, in which case he falters for a moment, looks back in confusion, and then darts off again with renewed speed.



Almost immediately after the young man is sighted, several things happen simultaneously. First, the sounds of the mad are broken by the sounds of an unruly mob and the report of guns. Remark offhandedly that it seems strangely reminiscent of the mob that chased the characters through the streets of Budapest when they first met Octavio centuries ago. They also hear a soft, but strong and familiar voice reading aloud in an unfamiliar language, a voice they recognize as that of Anatole. As time passes, note that they hear the mob getting louder, beginning to drown out all other sound except that of Anatole's reading, and soon it is accompanied by the sounds of many heavy footfalls echoing through the hallways.

If the character continues to follow the young man, he leads her around a corner as the sound of stomping feet grows to the point of being deafening, and screams. A mob surges down the hall toward him (and the character), most of them dressed in the garb of the French working class, though scattered among the crowd are people from many different times and places — the character's victims. If the character has killed anyone specific (like a major storyteller character), that individual is present as well; if not, simply the masses of mortals they have fed upon over the centuries, intermingled with the French crowd. If the character does not follow the young man, she chances upon him at the moment before he turns the corner and meets the crowd.

The young man runs away from the mob, pushing past the character (using alarming strength if need be) to run toward the voice of Anatole. If the character chooses not to follow the young man, she finds every doorway, every exit obstructed by the mob. If the character persists, the mob sweeps her up, helpless, for what seems like an eternity of grabbing hands, sweaty bodies, halls, and doors, until the first rays of sunlight begin to seep in through the cracks, and the character is dragged, screaming madly, into the bright rays of the sun.

If the character follows the young man, she is led deeper and deeper into the bowels of the fortress as the human tide clamors from behind. Finally, they come to an oaken door, which is locked. Anatole is heard reading on the other side, almost chanting now. The young man reaches into his tattered garment and draws out a handsome leather pouch, with a family crest tooled into it. (Wits + Heraldry or Area Knowledge, difficulty 8; identifies the crest as Austrian, with multiple successes identifying it as that of the house of von Neumann, a minor noble family related tenuously to the ruling Habsburg dynasty). As the mob closes, the young man pulls a brass key from the pouch, and opens the door into a prison cell. In the cell, Anatole faces away from them, leaning over a large tome, which rests on a wooden podium. Octavio lies on the floor, hands crossed over his chest, rapidly turning to ash. The roar of the mob becomes deafening as the crowd overtakes them from behind. Anatole stops reading, turns and faces the character. His broad, maniacal grin is covered in blood, and as he looks deep into the character's eyes, she sees that they

are dark, hollow sockets, in which she sees the battlefield from her nightmares. Anatole's laugh echoes through the character's head as the crowd pushes her forward with its weight and rays of the sun burst in the window.

The character wakes with a jolt that evening, still screaming, glistening with blood-sweat.

SCENE II: TO PARIS

Now is the time to finish getting everyone to Paris. If the Storyteller has decided that missing characters should receive invitations from their sires or old friends to do so, those invitations arrive now. If Anatole and Lucita are needed to do the inviting, a messenger will arrive with a letter from Lucita. (Note to Storytellers: The text and tone of this letter assume that the character receiving it has become a confidant or an earnest acquaintance of Lucita and Anatole over the years. Feel free to alter it if necessary to reflect the actual relationship.)

Hopefully, this will convince most players that Paris is the place to be. Those who refuse to cooperate can simply be left out of this act. (Anatole may later make obscure statements about the dire consequences of the character's refusal of his or her fate.) A curmudgeonly character who cannot, in all honesty, conceive of leaving his Transylvanian demesne does have one other option that will enable the player to participate, if not the character. The player can assume the role of a childer or vassal of the primary character, sent to investigate the goings-on in Paris on behalf of her sire, or, preferably, the childer or vassal of one of the other player's characters, accompanying them on their trek. Chances are that after nearly six centuries, most of the characters have Embraced someone (quite possibly several people), especially if they've served as a prince for even part of that time. Even if all the original players have decided to come along, detailing the characters' childer and working them into the chronicle's history will add more of an epic, historical feel to the game and fully integrate the main characters into the fabric of your own World of Darkness. It is recommended, however, that most players do not play the childer of their own characters, as such an approach tends to reduce the childer to the status of mere minions, or extensions of the sire, rather than three-dimensional characters with needs, desires, and plans of their own. Most elders are not so lucky as to have a stable of ultra-loyal childer, and having another player take control of them can be a good way of giving the elder character the "stubborn, unruly, conniving, ungrateful, backstabbing little wretches with atrocious fashion sense" that truly make unlife worth living for most elders.

The journey should be handled in short vignettes, occasional noteworthy encounters, and questions about the characters' plans, both for taking care of necessities like feeding and shelter and for the long stretches of waiting that characterize long term travel in this era. Excellent advice for running a cross-European journey is available in *Transylvania*

Salutations, My Kindred,

It has been too long since last we saw each other. My best wishes and prayers are, as always, with you. At the time of this writing we have arrived in Paris, and we expect to spend some time here before leaving again. The atmosphere here is invigorating, and I confess I find the ideas being voiced fascinating. Much is made of the men from the New World, from America. We have not yet visited that land, though to hear of it is as if the world is being made anew there. It often feels like the same could be said for Paris, now. I have known you for many years to be one who appreciates the subtler pleasures of undeath, and many here have asked about you, having heard much of your noble character. It would be our honor and pleasure to have you here as our guest, if you were so inclined to visit and stay for a season or two. Our accommodations are humble, but adequate to our needs. Anatole has been speaking of you with great frequency of late, and he insists that I tell you that "the shattering of the temple is at hand." Though I know nothing of which he speaks, I find that it does indeed seem that something, or, rather, many things, are changing.

I hope you take us up on our invitation. We simply didn't have the time for personal conversation at your festival. Anatole and I both look forward to your arrival, and hold best wishes for your journey.

Lucita

Chronicles II: Son of the Dragon, and for the sake of brevity will not be repeated here. The trip will not be much faster in this era than in previous ones (the revolutionary effects of the railroad are still decades away). In general, though, the journey will be a bit safer, with fewer highwaymen, more and better accommodations such as inns, and roads of slightly higher quality. It is also likely that the Kindred will have something of an entourage for protection: mortal and ghoul retainers, childer, etc., possibly in addition to the protection of anonymity afforded by traveling among mortal travelers.

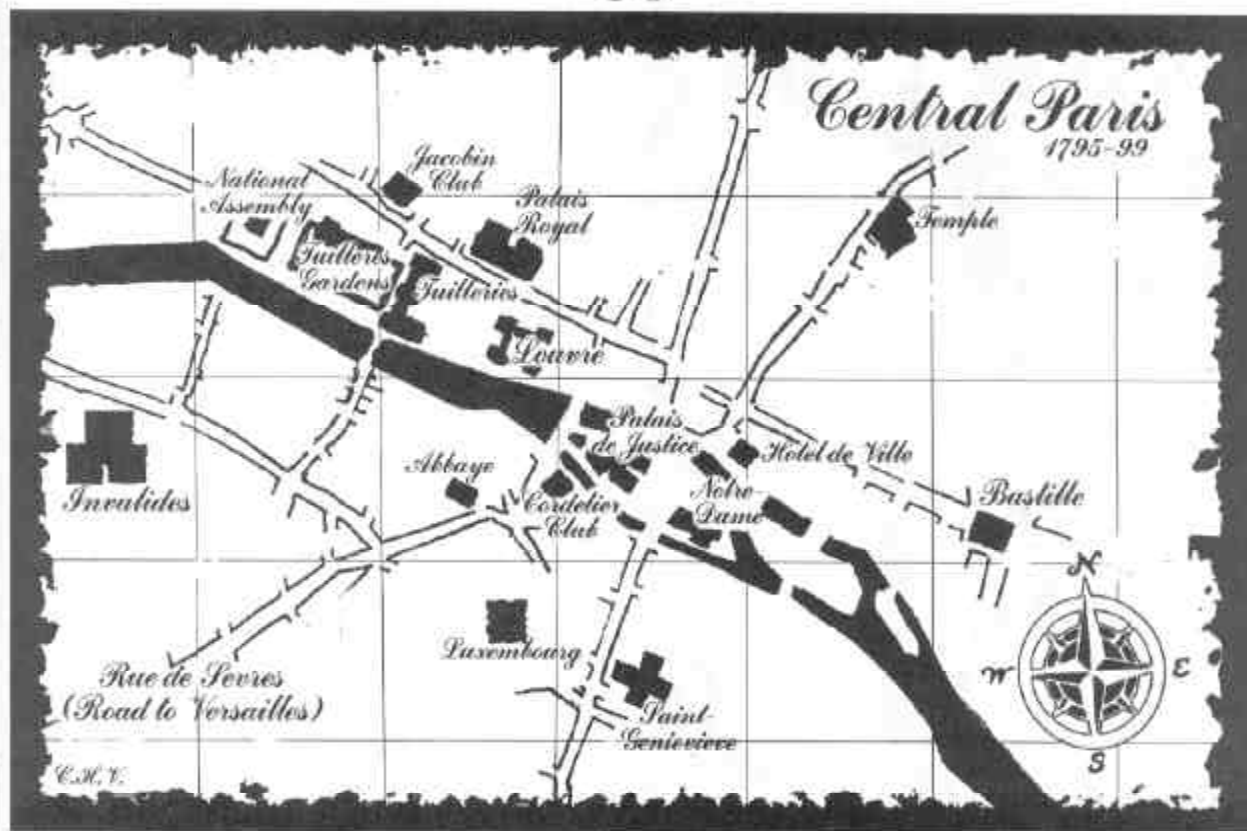
Other changes will be very noticeable, however. Chief among them will be the growth of cities and trade, especially the further west they go. Tiny hamlets they remember from previous journeys will now be bustling towns; towns will be small cities, and cities will be packed to the walls with people, people, and more people. Moreover, the most striking figures on the streets will no longer be the lords and ladies of the medieval era, but rather the most powerful merchants, some of whom are dressed in finery the kings of old could only have dreamt of. Although they ape the manners of the nobility in many ways, the *bourgeoisie* have a certain pride and entrepreneurial flair that their social betters lack. To the eyes of many nobles, including elder vampires raised as nobles in their mortal lives, they may appear vulgar, perhaps offensive. The growth of the urban centers and the middle class comes at the expense of the rural manors of the old nobility. Castles and fortresses that anchored medieval society are of little practical use in this brave new age of the cannon, and the fortunes of the lesser nobility have waned considerably. Many castles the characters may have passed or sought refuge at in the past, castles they may remember as stately and imposing, are now

quiet, sad, dilapidated places. The mighty lords of old have, in many places, been replaced by poor men with little to their names but a title, a scraggly bit of land and nostalgic pride. Many have to swallow that pride and marry their daughters off to coarse, wealthy commoners to restore the family fortunes. The more powerful or wealthy lords have gone to the major cities and courts of absolutist kings, to curry favor from the powerful, and run up mountains of debt with extravagant living. Their fiefs are maintained by relatives and seneschals who are little more than glorified tax collectors.

The stark contrasts between the rural world of the medieval nobility and the urban one of the *bourgeoisie*, and the massive changes that have been wrought in the landscape that passes by outside the carriage windows should be jarring for the characters, who are essentially products of an earlier time. The Storyteller is encouraged to emphasize the bombastic and seemingly venal nature of the new society, and contrast it sharply with characters' memories, in order to remind the players that things like capitalism and urban life, which seem like second nature to us in the 20th century, would be shocking and discomfiting to their characters. A few lonely castles in states of disrepair, arrogant cloth merchants, bustling marketplaces booming with the shouts of hagglers and the entertainment of traveling performers, and aging barons stoically maintaining their dignity can go a long way in making an otherwise tedious journey sequence a valuable Storytelling tool for conveying the effects of time.

SCENE III: CITY OF LIGHT

When everyone is finally in Paris, they are introduced into the whirlwind of Parisian Kindred society. Those



expecting the bright lights and broad avenues of the modern Paris of postcards will be disappointed. Paris before the Revolution is still laid out very much like a medieval city, and its infrastructure is inadequate to meet the demands of its population. It is overcrowded, dotted with ramshackle slums and twisting, narrow streets; basic sanitation is far in the future. The ostentatious carriages of the wealthy plow through the decrepit city on the way to exclusive fêtes and salons as the poor scuffle to make enough money for the week's supply of bread, the basic staple food. Taverns and cafes are overflowing with the boisterous *sans-culottes* (the men of the working class), and radical republican political clubs, such as the Jacobins, meet to discuss politics. Court life is centered at nearby Versailles (Louis XVI, like the Sun King, loathes Paris), but many of the most powerful nobles and most of the wealthy *bourgeois* maintain residences here.

Central to the social life here among the elite is the salon, with which the characters are familiar. Patrons, generally aristocratic women, host intimate gatherings where men of learning are invited to speak on the issues of the day as well as deeper questions about natural philosophy and the order of things. Here the elite and the literati are free to carry on with a certain freedom from the watchful eyes of the pious king, and hence Paris is a center for all manner of radical philosophies. Novels and pamphlets that range from the scandalous to the seditious circulate widely. The writings

and thoughts of people here are read, debated, and emulated as far away as Moscow, Vienna, and Philadelphia.

The nobility, both here and at Versailles, is also notorious for their indulgent ways. Every vice and lewd behavior imaginable to the 18th-century mind — adultery, rape, incest, gambling, drunkenness, gluttony, even bestiality — is attributed to the decadent upper classes, and though the stories are in many cases exaggerated, they aren't by much. The nobility is increasingly seen by the laborers and merchants alike as useless parasites who contribute nothing but consume everything in their idle hedonism, and the fact that many of the victims of their depredations are the daughters and wives of those same commoners makes things little better. Indeed, some members of the lesser classes describe the nobles as vampires.... Despite this, two major forces rule the country — the central power of the monarch and an elaborate code of courtly etiquette, coupled with the tyranny of fashion and gossip. Elaborate styles come and go, though they all share a complexity unmatched by almost any other time or place. Women's clothes, for example, are not only adorned with innumerable jewels and held together with corsets and laces of Byzantine complexity, but the women are also topped with enormous hairstyles that have been known to incorporate complex dioramas, and even live animals such as brightly plumed birds.



The Kindred are naturally drawn to this nest of vipers like moths to flame. The rampant licentiousness and excess of the nobility serve to conceal their feeding habits; the social competition, politicking, and backstabbing is second nature to them; the shiny trinkets and baubles of worldly excess and massive numbers of feeding stock serve to distract them from their own decay and to sate the needs of the Beast. Here they do not rule openly, or even covertly (controlling the lives of mortals is dreadfully tedious); rather, they blend in seamlessly, like predators camouflaged among their prey. Kindred have developed a system of ranks, titles, and ceremonial functions that serve to arbitrate status in mimicry of the mortals around them, though unlike mortals, even the barest minimum of actual work or responsibility is removed from the posts doled out — it is simply a matter of the gratification of vanity. Actual advancement in status here is extremely difficult. The prince has had centuries to perfect his grasp on power, and many of the most august elders here have wielded influence since the time of Charlemagne, but competition among the lower ranks for the favor of the elders is intense nonetheless. When overlapped with the equally convoluted mortal etiquette, rank, and title observed by the Kindred (many of whom were noble in life themselves), navigating the social scene of the Parisian Kindred without causing offense is horrendously difficult.

The characters, most likely, are going to need a guide, and they will need one very quickly, as the moment their arrival becomes publicly known, they are likely to be inundated with invitations to a wide array of social events. If certain members of the group arrived earlier than others, they can serve to introduce the newer arrivals to polite Kindred society. In this case, the Storyteller should take the early arrivals aside and give them a few tips, perhaps letting them in on some of the likely events they will encounter. If some of the characters were invited to France, their gracious hosts humbly offer to help them navigate the social landscape (quite possibly this will be Lucita). Those with powerful connections in the Camarilla elite will be greeted by Noel de Artois, now assistant to the deputy minister for Elysium and fellow of the Chamber, who will certainly have a strong opinion of the characters. If they turned Maria Asunción over to him in Act I, his lofty position at court will be the result of his successful endeavor. If they did not, he will be stuck with the degrading position he holds because of his failure. The characters have either a tremendous asset or a colossal burden. Those traveling on Sabbat business will be given the name of Gerard de Chatelle as a contact. Those who decided to go on their own initiative will find that such a guide appears for them.

The Storyteller should arrange so that all major parties assemble in Paris, have meet their guide, and prepare to make their debut in Parisian society on a certain hot July night in 1789. If the characters have no other guide and have been supporters of the Camarilla, or are not generally

known to have supported or participated in the worst excesses of the Sabbat, Lucita and Anatole pay them a social call and offer to introduce them to high society. Characters stuck with a vengeful Artois may also seek out their old friends, but the Storyteller should not make it easy for them to find Lucita and Anatole in this case. Additionally, in so doing they offend Artois further, and they will arrive at social events to subtle snickers, raised eyebrows, as Artois has already told everyone about the lack of social graces the characters displayed to him. Lucita and Anatole greet the characters warmly, and the former speaks excitedly about the new movements in philosophy, asserting the natural rights and dignity of man and the power of reason. The events of the past two decades of the American colonies will be related with great interest, mingled with concern over rumors of Sabbat involvement. Anatole stays strangely silent during the whole conversation.

Lucita introduces a Kindred named Beckett to the characters as a scholar of Kindred lore, who expresses interest in the tablets the characters found upon meeting Lucita and Anatole at the castle in the Tihum Pass. If the discussion turns to ancient Cainite lore, he explains that he has been coming into conflict with his sometime mentor, the Kindred historian Aristotle de Laurent, due to his growing conviction that *The Book of Nod* itself may be an allegorical tale. He credits the mortal *philosophes* with whom he's spoken to in the salons with giving him new inspiration and perspective in this regard, teaching him the value of skepticism. It is also possible that he has heard of the incident with Maria Asunción, and if so, his enthusiasm and that of his companions is tempered with a certain wariness.

Vampires who are not interested in polite society are approached later by Gerard de Chatelle, as are those who have supported the anarchy or Sabbat cause openly in the past. Chatelle attempts to have his spies and contacts keep an eye on them, until a suitable opportunity to make his appearance arrives, such as a time when a character is in a neutral public venue. He approaches them amiably and respectfully, using informal but not overly affectionate words. He seems to know that they are Cainites, and displays knowledge of their general stature if not the specifics of their background. If the character has strong ties to the Sabbat, he will attempt to use a secret sign of mutual recognition the Sabbat has been developing — a subtle display of a purple piece of cloth. He notes that they are new in town, and offers to show them around. If they show no interest or inclination whatsoever in dealing with the nobility, he will take them around Paris, in which case you can skip to Scene IV. If they are active Sabbat or strong sympathizers, or if Radu has set up their assassination, he will invite them to ball.

THE GRAND BALL

The characters' guide, whoever he or she may be, invites them to the night's social event, a gala ball held by a prominent countess. (We've given her no specific name

for two reasons: First, Storytellers are encouraged to make her up to fit the rest of the coterie's history — an ideal character, perhaps, has involved herself with the players' characters in the past. Second, in the precarious world of high-fashion noble soirées, it doesn't matter who she is — she's simply the host for the *fête du jour*, and you probably won't remember her tomorrow, anyway. Leaving her anonymous highlights the ephemeral, transitory nature of being part of the "in" crowd.) If they have no interest whatsoever in high society, and are not active Sabbat, the Storyteller may wish to skip ahead to Scene IV: Bastille Night.

The guide will have arranged for tailors, who work quickly and ask few questions, to visit the characters in the previous nights to outfit them with appropriate attire. Then, just after sundown on July 14, 1789, the guide sends a carriage around to each of their temporary havens or hosts' residences, which whisks them through the streets of Paris. The sights and sounds of Paris bombard them from every side, even after dark, and more sensitive Kindred (those with high scores in *Auspex*, many highly instinctual characters), find it difficult to concentrate and focus on things as they fly by amid the hustle and bustle. Additionally, there is an undercurrent of agitation among the mortal throngs that is nearly palpable, though most native Parisian Kindred ignore it. Men are arguing, moving about, forming groups, though most of the Kindred they meet are oblivious to it. If it is pointed out to them, they laugh it off as simple foolishness.

The coterie arrives at a large mansion on spacious grounds just outside Paris on the road to Versailles. Great crowds of extravagantly dressed people, with makeup and powdered wigs, are being helped out of carriages by servants and valets. The characters are escorted quickly inside, to find a home lavishly decorated, and crowded with people. There is a central ballroom, with a huge chandelier overhead. A massive fireplace provides light, but also casts deep shadows where lovers arrange for secret trysts and conspirators pass notes. Musicians — a pianist, violinist and flautist — and a singer perform in the corner, as elegant lords and ladies dance with precision born of understated rivalry. Staircases sweep up to a second-floor balcony, where a loud discussion over the natural state of man is interrupted by laughter over the occasional jest. In an adjoining chamber, men play at whist and dice, gambling, drinking, cursing and laughing over bawdy jokes, as the ladies gather and gossip in clusters, waiting for the fatal misstep, the gaffe, that will enable them to cut down a rival. The house around the main ballroom is a massive complex of interconnected rooms, where the characters are equally likely to stumble across quiet conversations or a group of noblemen violating a gagged chambermaid. The hostess, a mortal countess, makes her rounds in a huge, elaborate costume bedecked with a ransom's worth of jewels, and many whispers are heard in her wake. Her oldest grandchildren are dressed up like perfect little dolls and standing up straight, on display for the guests. A huge feast is being prepared in the adjoining dining



hall. The overall opulence is stunning, though there are uneasy murmurs and occasional angry outbursts about the dangers of the upstart commoners, which are quickly hushed and mollified by more sensible folk.

The characters turn heads as they arrive, as everyone assesses the new blood while bowing and curtsying politely. With their sharpened vampiric senses, they may make snippets of catty comments about their attire, as well as speculations about the desirability of a romp with the characters. Storytellers should ideally turn the tables and make the characters feel like prey being sized up for the kill. Those blessed with the ability to perceive auras also notice quite a few pale ones darting about, back and forth, mingling freely and openly with the guests. Unlike many events the characters may have attended before, the Kindred are not grouped together as centers of their own worlds, with mortal attendants, but rather flit about the edges of mortal society, aping their habits and their dress, often drunk on vitae laced with wine, going unnoticed and yielding the spotlight to the mortals. Rarely do two or more Kindred gather together in one place, except privately in back rooms, and yet they, too, watch each other, communicating silently with facial expressions and subtle gestures. The character's arrival stirs up a great deal of interest among their brethren, and they will be approached individually or in groups for the rest of the night.

The characters' perception of this scene depends largely on their social skills and their desires. Those with the desire and talent to do so find this party to be an ideal environment in which to lose themselves in hedonistic excess, and the socially awkward will find it a nightmare situation where they are constantly and silently (or not so silently) judged. For everyone, the underlying tension, the unending scrutiny, and the vicious social environment make controlling the Beast difficult, and the struggle to maintain a cool demeanor with hungers running wild could easily drive many Kindred mad. Storytellers are encouraged to create scenarios that fit the temperaments of the individual characters, centering on the struggle to maintain the Masquerade, to control the Beast, and to gain status and respect among the watchful Kindred here. The following scenarios can be used to emphasize these themes, but equally enjoyable storytelling can be found in playing out characters dealing with simple tasks, like dancing and pretending to eat. It is also important to note that unless the characters seek privacy, there will constantly be mortals within earshot. It is an interesting measure of a vampire's connection to humanity to see how well he or she can maintain a conversation without being able to discuss Cainite affairs.

FAURPAS

A particularly powerful but socially inept character inadvertently offends a mortal, perhaps stepping on a nobleman's foot while dancing or knocking over someone's drink onto a well-bred lady, or with a misspoken word in mangled French. The outraged mortal insults and mocks the character, prompting uproarious laughter from nearby men and demure giggles from the ladies. As the Beast rages, the Kindred nearby fix all their attention on the character. As he deals with the outraged mortal, he must also fight to keep from losing composure. Any sign of losing his grip in the slightest to frenzy will provoke a disappointed response from the local Kindred, who will then be seen and heard mocking him. By contrast, a suitably witty response may allow the character to regain face not only among mortals but also Kindred. This scenario could also be used when dealing with the other Kindred at the ball. Note: Storytellers unfamiliar with the grave impact of minor gaffes are encouraged to turn to literature and the cinema: *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and *Dangerous Liaisons* (and its parent *Valmont*) all contain predatory social settings perhaps far more dangerous than any brawl with another Kindred or the Inquisition. Perhaps no movie better illustrates the cataclysmic repercussions of the most inconsequential of social blunders — a single missed dance step! — and the importance of "wit" than the French film *Ridicule*. Consider these titles as important to the Kindred social machine as Machiavelli's *The Prince* has been to the myriad plots and schemes of the Kindred.

MEETING THE PRINCE

Prince Francois Villon has become something of a legend, and the Storyteller should drop his name constantly when other Cainites mention France. He is attributed with no end of bold deeds — a chivalrous warrior from the time of Charlemagne, a scholar, a patron of the arts and sciences. He is larger than life, well respected by those who uphold the Masquerade and the traditions of the Camarilla, and feared by those who would oppose it. Indeed, even those who have a clue as to the existence of the Masquerade — mortals — know the name of Monsieur Villon, and he is revered among the kine as well as the Kindred.

The character's guide may bring them to a private chamber upstairs to be presented to the prince according to the Traditions. The doors open to reveal a sitting room, with several Cainites sitting in silence as one rants. Francois Villon is pacing and casting nervous glances out the window. He will nod politely in the characters' direction, but will not speak to them unless spoken to, and then only in brief, polite, answers. His attention is focused on other things (see "Mortal Problems" below). The Chevalier d'Eglantine watches the characters intently as they enter from a position near the hearth. In two large chairs near the fireplace sit Joachim von Neumann and Prince Villon. Prince Villon is staring off blankly, though as the characters enter he will visibly come to his senses, straighten his jacket

and adjust his posture, and begin to look around the room suspiciously. The Storyteller should emphasize his regal and intensely magnetic appearance (see his description in Chapter Five). Audric St. Thierry is standing in the middle of the room, with his back to the door, apparently shouting at von Neumann.

"Preposterous! The Malkavian is no threat! You're growing paranoid." At this point St. Thierry turns, sees the characters and falls into an abrupt silence as von Neumann casts him a menacing look. St. Thierry tries to hide his irritation under a smile. "Good evening," he says, proceeding to introduce himself, the others and the prince last, then moving behind the characters as they enter to close the door. "Paris is graced by the presence of personages such as yourselves. I assume you have come to perform your duty before the prince, in accordance with our ancient traditions!" Villon stares at the first character to speak, looking almost like a hungry wolf about to devour its prey. If he detects even the slightest hostile intent he will smile wickedly, as if daring them to challenge him. In any case he will tell d'Eglantine to have the characters watched. After the characters present themselves, the assembled Cainites will wait in awkward silence until the characters leave, answering questions politely, with St. Thierry doing most of the talking. If the question is raised, the mortal uprisings will be brushed off as meaningless. If they are especially dense or graceless, d'Eglantine will take advantage of any moment of silence to open the doors politely and stand waiting for the characters to leave.

CELEBRITY AND INFAMY

It is very possible, even likely, that the characters are, by this point, somewhat famous among Kindred. They have been present at a number of pivotal events, some of which are unlikely to be widely known, though some of them (especially the Convention of Thorns) are a little more public and better understood, though obviously distorted by time and propaganda. One or two Kindred courtiers approach them, in private, asking if they really are who they think they are. (They may confuse two or more of the characters for comic effect.) If the characters answer in the affirmative, they become, for a moment, the center of attention of a small group of Kindred, mostly Ventrue, Brujah and Toreador neonates and younger ancillae, who pester them with questions. Depending on the characters' "performances" so far at the festivities, these may be asked with idle curiosity, intense fascination or subtle mockery. In any case, their perspective on the characters will be highly exaggerated, romanticized (for better or for worse), inflated, and otherwise distorted. They may know some facts about their history, but these will be mixed in with highly melodramatic elements and bits of outright fantasy. It will also be heavily biased to favor the Camarilla perspective on the events in question. Characters who claimed domain over regions that became prosperous will be por-

trayed as heroic visionaries bringing civilization and enlightenment to the strange lands to the east, while notorious Sabbat will be dastardly rogues who steal away with beautiful virgins into the night. The courtiers may even attempt to quote notable speeches of the characters, or recite soliloquies that have been attributed to them.

Keep in mind that the gadfly Kindred, while they have been Embraced since the formation of the Camarilla, and consequently, accept its ideals as second nature, are highly apolitical, and hence they will not attempt to destroy or otherwise oppose members of divergent sects. Nor will they have any fear or trepidation unless the character gets physically violent. (It really doesn't occur to them that these scandalous and wicked creatures do actually hurt people.) Rather, since most of them have never seen an actual member of the dreaded Black Hand in the flesh, they are more likely, strangely, to react positively to a Sabbat supporter or someone with a "bad" reputation than someone known for upholding the traditions passionately. Notoriety has a strong appeal, especially for the jaded. Characters who are both charismatic and infamous almost certainly find themselves approached afterward by a striking neonate asking to be the character's blood slave if they would only be willing to "initiate them into the mysteries of their dark mastery" (or something equally melodramatic).

Also, remember that most of the Kindred at the ball have never seen members of a few clans (primarily Toreador, some Ventrue and Brujah) in their entire unlives, though they certainly have their ideas about what the other clans are like, and will apply these stereotypes vigorously to any Kindred who profess membership in those clans. Admiration for the "primitive wisdom" of the Gangrel is currently in vogue, and any Gangrel who are known as such will be treated as "noble savages" straight out of Rousseau. Their "simplicity" will be praised in the most patronizing terms possible, and they will discuss the character in glowing terms in the third person right in front of them. Trimisce, on the other hand, even seemingly pleasant ones, will be given a wide berth: Trimisce are strange and terrifying beings from a poorly understood land who are said to have many horrific and sorcerous powers. While politesse and decorum are a must, and while the dark stranger may be intensely fascinating, he is also dangerous.

FEEDING

Characters wandering through the maze of interconnected back rooms will often catch the distinctive odor of blood in the air. Many of the couples sneaking off to torrid rendezvous here are actually Kindred and their victims; some of them aware and willing, some not. Feeding is relatively easy, especially if done under the auspices of a romantic liaison. However, nearly everyone here has been drinking (even servants have been sneaking swigs of the good wine while their masters are drunk), and it will be very difficult to avoid getting intoxicated if one feeds extensively here (admittedly, this may be a bonus for many of the characters...).

None of the Paris Kindred here will ever feed to the point of killing one of the guests. (Servants, however, are another matter — accidents do happen...) They may also chance upon Kindred couples in the act of sharing blood with each other, something that has become fashionable among the neonates especially. At least one (locked) room is hosting a Kindred blood orgy, with vampires feeding on decadent mortal aristocrats who have come to enjoy being vessels and each other. Characters who display the inclination to do so may be invited to participate.

MORTAL PROBLEMS

The characters who are smart enough to pay attention will notice that, underneath the public displays, the mortals are apparently terribly worried about something. Those listening will hear a lot of conversation about outrageous demands and the need for the king to "make an example of some of these people." If they inquire further, they will learn that the representatives of the Third Estate have gathered in a tennis court ("A tennis court!"), and have demanded that the traditional method of voting in the Estates-General (in which each Estate gets an equal say) be replaced with representation proportional to the population of the Estate. The apparent intent is for the commoners to have representation fitting their numbers "or some other such nonsense." They demand that the king submit to ruling under a constitution. There are even rumors that a mob is besieging the prison at the Bastille, which is frightening even though it obviously isn't going to come too much. The character won't learn much else, except for various impractical plans and complains that His Highness has let things deteriorate too far.

CHATELLE

The debate upstairs seems to be the perfect counterpoint to the debauchery elsewhere, but the issues here are being argued as yet another form of competition for status. If the characters arrive with Gerard de Chatelle, he eventually gravitates toward the discussion, quickly dominating it with his quick wit and eloquent manners. If not, any who pass will notice him already there, engaged in debate. The other debaters are familiar with him, as he is the guest at many salons, and is greeted with mixed reactions. Many women (and men), mortal and otherwise, swoon at his charismatic presence, and he earns the respect of many and the resentment of many more. The debate moves to the topic of the dignity of Man, and a nobleman argues, "Virtue is the product first of birth, for are not those who are born to good and just parents seem to be good and just themselves? Any man can see the virtues of the father mirrored in the son, and the faults as well."

Chatelle counters, "Ah, 'tis true that such things are seen every ni—er, day. However, if I may be so bold, I confess I see much that argues for the inherent and noble virtue of all at their birth. Such virtue is encouraged by those virtuous parents who raise their offspring with the lights of truth and justice as their guide. It is snuffed out by those who dwell in

the darkness of deceit, treachery, and vile superstition and ignorance. Since reason is obviously beneficial, and bestows her bounty on those who seek her, only the ignorant would choose its opposite. Those who are taught Truth at the earliest times know her, and seek her above all else. But those — even some we are all familiar with who are of noble birth — present company excepted of course [laughter from the parlor guests], are often of no higher virtue than those raised among simple, honest, folk. They choose to make idols of deceit and all manners of simulation [serious, thoughtful nods, and some objections quickly hushed]. When I visited that strange and bold land called America, I saw many brave men who fought and died for the belief that all men were inherently virtuous and entitled to seek their happiness. We have much we can learn from such simple men. If we are to preserve virtue, my friends, it behooves us to encourage the natural and inherent virtue of all men, and to shine the harsh light of truth on those who, regardless of Estate, would make a false god of deceit."

This is applauded, with shouts of "Well spoken, Monsieur de Chatelle!" Perceptive characters will notice that the wife of the nobleman Chatelle spoke to slips him a folded note as she passes. Beckett is also seen at the edge of the group, and he gives Chatelle an approving nod. Chatelle speaks to any characters who approach him with a bright smile and friendly conversation. Shortly afterward, the circle dissipates, and Chatelle excuses himself, feigning swoon. He asks if the characters want to accompany him back to Paris (in which case the story moves to Scene IV).

If the characters came with Chatelle in the first place, he begins to make the social rounds, introducing the characters to various mortal and Cainite revelers, even bringing them to the prince (see above). At some point, if he trusts the characters harbor no sympathy for tyrants (meaning, to his mind, that they are supporters of the Sabbat or are otherwise dissidents within the Kindred social order), he will mutter, "Poor fools. They invite those of my ilk to bring the light of truth into their little world, but they don't realize yet that what is happening in Paris this very night will be their downfall." If they ask him what he means, he will offer to show them. He makes his farewells, and offers to take the characters back to Paris (leading, of course, to Scene IV).

ANATOLE

Anatole is not suitably attired for the evening. (His travel-worn clothes and tangles hair make him look like a vagabond among the socialites....) Therefore, he lurks around the fringes of the party hidden by his powers of Obfuscate. Many of the Toreador can see him and wrinkle their noses in disgust or shiver in fear and move away if he comes too near. His lurking presence is disturbing to those who can see him, especially to those characters who remember the nightmare from Scene I. He seems stranger, if that's possible, since the last time they saw him, and anyone who can sense his aura notices that his black veins are getting disturbingly thick.

Late in the evening, he approaches any of the characters who can see him with sudden manic energy. If none of the characters have sufficient Auspex, he comes out of Obfuscate at an inopportune moment when the characters are out of the public eye, possibly while they're feeding. If he is still friendly to the character, he grabs them forcibly (if they resist, he backs away immediately, but continues speaking) and says, "My friend, the time is at hand! We must return to Paris at once! A child bears a key to revelation, and every moment we delay we risk losing it."

If the characters are supporters of the Sabbat, sometime before Chatelle departs, he corners one of the characters when she is alone (this time, preferably one who cannot see him) and takes on a more dire tone: "You should have listened. I warned you that the young must bow down before their elders. Now, things have been set into motion that will destroy all that we know, and the Final Nights loom ever closer. You will have the chance to repent your ways, but be warned — the world will not tolerate our corruption forever, and you will face a reckoning in the light of the fire you unleash."

In either case, he suddenly gets a faraway look in his eyes, and as he speaks his voice sounds strange, like several voices overlapping (Perception + Alertness roll with difficulty 8 reveals one of the voices as Octavio's, while the other can't be recognized). "The temples will be broken. All that is holy will be rent asunder: webs of smoke and steel will smother the heart of the land amidst flames as the people cry out in their labors, and the road will be paved for the return of." His prophecy becomes inarticulate mumbling, and he cries out, a look of mixed terror and wonder on his face, and slumps.

If he is working with the characters, then hopefully, the character talking to Octavio will gather the others together and head toward Paris and Scene IV. If he came, instead, to warn the character to repent, he will regain his composure and hurry off suddenly, finding Lucita and Beckett and returning by carriage to Paris.

THE PARTY'S OVER

If the characters do not leave under their own will, with Anatole or with Chatelle, the revelry will continue for several more hours. Almost everyone will be uproariously drunk and several of the guests are doing things they will be embarrassed about in the morning, should they remember. Decorum is starting to slip; the ribald play is getting more blatant, etc.

The party will be interrupted by a young rake with ripped clothing of exceedingly high quality, a nose that is smashed to a bloody pulp on his face, mud spattered on his clothes, and a pistol in his hand. His hat and wig are off, and he is bald. He is cursing, sputtering and shaking with rage, and his servants are in little better shape. Gasps are heard at his shocking appearance. Someone near the crowd murmurs that it's the hostess' youngest son. He brushes off attempts to minister to his wounds angrily. The room is deathly silent. Francois Villon comes rushing to the front of the crowd.

"Bastards! These arrogant... impertinent bastards! The mob... attacked me... the Bastille has fallen, and they've armed themselves. Where are His Highness' troops? Who will put these upstarts in their place?"

He is soon drowned out by angry shouting. The room is in a commotion. The characters who remain can practically smell the fear in the air. Everyone is shouting, people begin rushing back and forth with no particular aim. A child somewhere is crying. Everything is in chaos. The characters may remain here, or they may yet return to Paris before daybreak.

SCENE IV: BASTILLE NIGHT

Paris is in tumult all night. Rumors flew during the day that the king was planning to order his troops against the representatives of the Third Estate. Mobs coalesced, preparing to defend the Assembly, and armed themselves with rude weapons like scythes, pitchforks and cudgels. They moved against the Bastille, a small prison in Paris maintained by a light garrison where a few prisoners and a small armory were kept, and now it has fallen. Characters who see the Bastille will be struck immediately with recognition: It is the fortress from their dream.

Any characters who stayed behind will find Paris a madhouse of sorts. Most of the populace is in the streets, and rumors fly wildly. After the fall of the Bastille, a mood of

celebration spreads through the streets, as do pikes bearing the heads of the garrison. Those dressed in an aristocratic fashion are often attacked in the streets. Storytellers should throw a few ruffians in the character's paths if they are so attired, but they will not stick around for a serious fight. However, the fear of a royal reprisal runs rampant. Characters who are in the streets on this night are immersed in the crowd, and for the most part their activities, in a practical sense, are limited to figuring out what's going on or finding a safe place to wait out the storm. As part of that, they can talk to the mortals, try to find Kindred allies, or investigate the Bastille itself. Characters with Sabbat ties can find compatriots through Chatelle, as described under "The Sabbat Fellowship," below.

Characters who went to the ball were probably unaware of the current state of affairs, though they will return as the popular agitation reaches a frenzied pitch. As their carriage returns to Paris, it is surrounded by jeering crowds, who pelt it with rocks, impede its progress, and begin to rock it back and forth, while reaching inside to snatch jewels and other valuables from the occupants. Emphasize a feeling of helplessness as the ghoul coachman is flung into the gutter, the horses panic and the carriage is tipped over. The characters are attacked and beaten. Frenzy rolls should be frequent, and though the characters can obviously handle rampaging mortals, doing so without breaking the Masquerade is difficult. If some players decide to ignore the Masquerade, let them succeed, but they



will be targeted later in Scene V. Other Kindred in the carriage may react differently. Most other characters (Lucita, Anatole, Beckett, Chatelle) will be able to keep their resistance limited to acts that don't overtly threaten the Masquerade. They will get away as quickly as possible. Anatole insists on heading to the Bastille, while Chatelle seeks to find his followers (both options are described below).

It is very hard, before the 20th-century electronic media, to get the facts of an event while it is happening. Men and women run through the streets, spreading bits and fragments of news, rumor and speculation. No one knows exactly what is going on at any time, and some people are inevitably misled. The characters are at special disadvantages. First of all, the riot started while they (and their Kindred guide) were asleep, so it will be some time before they catch up on the basic facts. Second, they probably don't know too many Parisian mortals, and may well have a language barrier. At a time when people are worried about retaliation from the authorities, pale foreigners asking a lot of questions are going to have a lot of trouble getting cooperation. Most importantly, they aren't part of human society. They don't live, eat, breathe or work with these people, so they are perpetual onlookers. Describe the scene in such a way that the characters are basically spectators to events they don't fully understand, events that lash out, almost randomly, to overturn their world (or their carriage). Although disciplines like Dominate and Presence could certainly help, it will be difficult to use them subtly enough to avoid threatening the Masquerade, and language barriers still apply. Those who follow Paths of Enlightenment also unsettle the crowds — they simply "feel" unnatural and the crowd grows (perhaps justifiably) hostile with them. Clever and subtle players should be rewarded by letting their characters get a reasonably coherent picture of events.

Kindred allies will be hard to come by. Most of the characters know very few, if any, Kindred in Paris, and most of those are happily debauching themselves at the party. Other Kindred, including the characters' sires or companions, if they are in the city, are going to spend the evening looking for safe havens:

THE BASTILLE

The Bastille is a compelling option for safety, and chances are that at least some of the characters head there. As they reach the fortress, after working their way through a seeming ocean of agitated humanity, it will be largely deserted, like a storm has blown through the very halls, overturning everything in its path. Furniture is smashed, doors lie hanging on broken hinges. A few bodies lie crumpled in corners, and bloodstains lick the floors and splatter the walls in some places. A few isolated groups pick through the rooms and chambers, looting, but for the most part the action has moved to other fronts — no one wants to remain at the scene of the crime. The characters will find little of value left here, though the mortals remaining will be relatively friendly and jovial.

If they are in Anatole's company, he attempts to lead them there. If not, the characters will run into him in the company of Lucita and Beckett. Storytellers are advised that even if the characters are on hostile terms with this latter group, they will attempt to resolve any disputes without resorting to violence, though they can expect no quarter if they persist in antagonizing them. Otherwise, they will welcome the characters' presence. Anatole is on a binge of near-frenzied searching and will not stop to explain his actions. Beckett is also consumed with the thrill of the search, though he clearly follows Anatole's lead in this. Lucita is the most likely to speak extensively with the characters, though she simply knows that Anatole has of late been tormented by visions of a young man imprisoned here.

Finally, Anatole comes upon what he seeks. He stops searching and runs his hands along the straw-covered floor of an empty cell. Astute characters may deduce that he is using the Level-Three *Auspex* power, *The Spirit's Touch*. Any characters present who are likewise gifted may join him, and if so, depending on the number of successes they get, describe the following scene to them. If not, toll for Anatole (he has a dice pool of six; the difficulty is 7), or choose a number of successes, and he will relate what he knows.

One Success: The character gets the overwhelming impression of hunger and cold, of a strange young man in an unfamiliar place lost in thought. After an interminably long period, a strange mob bursts through his door, cheering and wailing in a foreign language, and pulls him out of the room with warm embraces and laughter.

Two Successes: The character is the young man from their dream. He has been locked away because "they" are after him. After what he's seen, it's not surprising. He is not a murderer, however; it's "their" fault he did what he did.

Three Successes: Vague haunting memories of a secret passage, a dark crypt. A strange parchment, with its haunting words, and a tablet lie on a table. It rises from its slumber! Its wicked hand reaches out to drag him to his doom! Grab the tablet — run, run!

Four Successes: The passage is at home, a castle in the Alps, in the lowest depths of a cellar. The thing in the crypt is somewhat visible — clearly humanoid, with hard, gray skin, lying sleeping on an elaborate bier dressed in white robes.

Five or More Successes: The boy learned the way to open the passage by spying on Father, as he made the secret signs and pressed on the sign of the square and the compass carved into the stone. A tablet — carved with the same cuneiform writing the character has probably seen before — rests on a table. The boy takes the tablet and a scrap of parchment and hides it where no one will find it. The thing in the crypt stirs at the boy's movements, and its face is clearly visible. It is Zelios, the Nosferatu master mason.

Whatever he gleams from the walls, Anatole has a fit of frustration. Lucita and Beckett restrain him. After a long

silence, Lucita suggests that they begin to look for the freed boy on the following night, but that they must now find shelter for the day. Dawn is still a few hours away, but the chaos in the city will make finding a secure haven relatively difficult.

As the characters leave, they may, at Storyteller's discretion, notice a figure standing in heavy shadow across the street: Joachim von Neumann. As soon as the characters notice him, he makes a quick exit and is lost in the crowd.

THE SABBAT FELLOWSHIP

Chatelle takes any characters with strong Sabbat sympathies, or anyone Radu has asked him to kill, to a place where they will be "safe among friends." He leads them through crowds, patting the occasional man on the back, making idle chat with the locals, etc., and into a small, darkened butcher's shop, of all places. Once inside, the characters see sides of meat hanging from hooks. As the carcasses swing on the creaking hooks, the bodies of the butcher and his family hanging from meathooks become visible, drained and pale with throats gaping open. Muffled screams and barking are heard from the back room, where the light of a fire can be seen.

If the character is a target of an assassination attempt, three Sabbat wearing the clothes of the *sans-culottes* are outside in the crowd, and they enter behind the character, two carrying hatchets and one is carrying a sharp wooden stake. Four more come from the back room, two bearing red-hot fireplace poker, and the other two wielding meat cleavers. Chatelle bares his fangs and uses his Level-Two Presence power, Dread Gaze, as he and his fellows take care to stay out of reach of potentially lethal elders like the characters. Instead, they surround the characters, circling and worrying them like a pack of dogs, attacking from behind whenever possible as others lure the characters into lashing out, then backing away. They attempt to cripple or immobilize the characters and commit diablerie upon them, and the Storyteller may wish to give Chatelle's Sabbat a reasonable chance to succeed. In any case, despite a probable advantage in terms of age and power, the characters might be hard pressed to defeat the Sabbat in such circumstances. If they escape, the Sabbat chases them, whooping merrily, and shouting to passersby to stop the fleeing *aristos*, the vile rapists, the spies of the king, or whatever seems appropriate to the characters' image. After a time, they tire of the chase and stop running, though they will taunt the characters loudly and pelt them with rotten fruit. (In so doing they will inspire mortal onlookers, including some foul-mouthed children, to do the same.)

If, on the other hand, the characters are proven or potential comrades, all seven Sabbat are in the back room, enthusiastically torturing a young "Kindred" hung from meathooks piercing the very bones of his ankles, which have healed over already. He is covered with multiple burns. His shouts lack articulation, as his tongue has been

ripped out, cauterized, and fed to the massive ghoulish mastiff the fellowship keeps as a pet.

Chatelle leans over and speaks to him, "How are you, tonight, Claude? I hope you are not too forlorn about missing the ball. Fear not, brave thespian, for your little friends will be joining you soon enough... unless what they say about the Amaranth and the soul of its victim is true, of course...." Claude screams and thrashes until the fellowship decides to stake him. Chatelle offers the neonate to the character as a courtesy. If the character shows any signs of repulsion at the Sabbat's behavior, this is noted, and eventually the fellowship will try to make a victim of the character in Scene V. If they actually try to stop them, they are treated as the attempted assassination victim above. They may take the offer, or defer to Chatelle or one of the other Sabbat with no ill effect. In any event, someone will diablerize poor Claude unless the characters manage to incapacitate the entire pack.

Afterward, the fellowship will go seeking blood and mayhem amidst the riots, robbing aristocrats, feeding with abandon, etc. Chatelle will ask the characters to stay with him to help him organize more resistance against the nobles. He sees which way the wind is blowing among the mortals and plans on using the chaos to chase the powerful elders of Paris and the surrounding area out of hiding and destroy them. "Think of it!" he raves, "a chance to strike at the very heart of tyranny! There are many of our kind in France; we've been gathering in secret for some time. I've ridden through the countryside, from Bordeaux to Normandy, meeting secret covens and circles of brave, noble Cairites, companions in our great struggle! We've been preparing for many nights, and now it is time to strike!" He rants along these lines whether or not the characters are listening. Any who doubt that revolution is in the making are chided for their lack of vision. Characters who argue against him are warned that the few can never stand against the righteous fury of the masses overcoming tyranny. He reminds them that no one expected the ragtag American militias to overcome British rule. (He ignores anyone who points out the invaluable assistance of the French armies in that endeavor.) He appeals to past support for the anarch or Sabbat causes, possibly using the character's own words at an event like Thorns. It is obvious that he admires any Sabbat character greatly, and any resistance or opposition from such characters confuses, hurts and possibly angers him. Should any join him, they are welcomed joyously and Chatelle will begin to make plans including them.

This scene ends the "immediate" affairs of Act III.

SCENE V: REVOLUTION AND FAITH (1789-1793)

The years of the early Revolution and the Terror are extremely turbulent, to say the least, and fraught with danger.

Ideally, the characters should stay in France despite the dangers the situation poses. A number of events play out over these years that can keep them there and involved. However,



a straight chronology of events and scenes undoubtedly would not be appropriate for the vast majority of troupes, and so what follows is a description of the major plot threads and character hooks, intended to be used as the basis for separate scenes and incidents designed by individual storytellers with a specific troupe in mind, separated by months or even years of downtime. They can be used separately, in parts, or, ideally, overlapped. In other words, characters who seek Zelios' tablet and parchment in Paris in 1789 may run afoul of the scourge; those canvassing the countryside for the Camarilla may find their childer joining the Sabbat. All of these events are occurring simultaneously, and having plotlines overlap and tangle is actually very appropriate to the confusion of the time. Nothing happens in a vacuum—fiendish, resourceful or clever Storytellers are encouraged to interweave as many of these subplots as they wish.

SHELTER FROM THE STORM

Although the Kindred of Paris, and elsewhere in France, defiantly try to maintain the routines and forms of their existences, the events in the daylight mortal world rock the very foundations of their society. Beginning almost immediately after the fall of the Bastille, and building to a fever pitch in the fall of 1789, Paris witnesses first a trickle, then a torrent, of Kindred fleeing the provinces for the perceived safety of the legendary Prince Villon's court. Soon, he turns away many of those presenting themselves to him as the

Kindred population grows out of bounds. He shows blatant and unabashed favoritism in accepting and declining presentations, favoring acquaintances and co-conspirators over others, elders and those of station over neonates and rabble. At the height of the crisis in the fall, he resurrects the ancient position of the scourge, charging d'Eglantine with the duty of driving away or destroying any unsuitable Kindred seeking shelter in Paris. With Francois Villon's blessing, the scourge learns more toward summary execution and less to simple rebuffs, and even leads parties of press-ganged vampire and ghoul thugs through the streets of Paris each night, looking for politically acceptable ways to "thin out" Paris' Kindred population. Villon also appeals to the Camarilla for assistance, and soon receives it: Archons of the sect stalk the streets of Paris and the French countryside destroying violators of the Masquerade, anarch and Sabbat sympathizers, or any hapless neonate with no friends who is unfortunate enough to be caught alone at night. Vampires eager to secure the prince's favor gladly turn over anyone they can to the scourge's party, and if the Kindred in question has no one willing to stand up for him, he will almost assuredly be slain. Any characters dwelling in Paris who have offended too many of their kind are in real trouble, though manipulative and utterly ruthless characters may find ways to turn this to their advantage as well. If they seem helpful enough, d'Eglantine approaches them for assistance in his endeavor, and characters who do so will find favor with the prince and

the Camarilla. Alternatively, if they have strong social standing, they can shelter others, and thereby acquire boons for them, though it should be noted that characters who abuse this notion and take in anyone and everyone will certainly be moved to the head of the list of targets.

THEY GOT THE PRINCE?

Of course not.

Think about it. If you were a fifth-generation vampire with over six centuries beneath your belt, would you let a bunch of punk-ass upstart commoners destroy you? Hell, no, but it might do some good to let them think they did.

Villon faked his own destruction, imposing a rough self-exile amid the turbulence of the Revolution. With the aid of ghouls, he escaped Paris under cover of disguise and weathered the storm in Florence and London.

Naturally, the rumormongers veritably exploded — the prince had been destroyed! One of the most powerful Kindred of the Camarilla had fallen to the mob! Obviously, it wasn't true, but Villon's ruse served two purposes: It threw enemies off his trail and it reinforced the value of the Masquerade. D'Eglantine continued his duties as the scourge with someone's sanction, after all...

Twenty years later, when Villon returned to France, he had the sense to adapt to the world the mortals had rebuilt around him. Gone was the ribald excess of the aristocrat's unlife — survival meant blending in, and that he did. Although he was still as potent as ever, Villon had learned the value of subtlety, and rebuilt his domain under those tenets.

Hubris had almost proven his downfall, and he swore it never would again.

This attempt to maintain order falls apart on August 10, 1792, when mobs storm the Tuileries palace to bring the king to justice. In the mad rioting, the Paris townhouse of a minor nobleman is burned to the ground, and it is soon learned that Prince Villon had been using it as his haven, and is no more. The last remnants of order in the Kindred world fall away from Paris, and it is suddenly every vampire for himself. Soon, many people try to flee France altogether, and many Kindred try to go with them. But sharp-eyed and patriotic French citizens are looking out for secretive people with eccentric habits and aristocratic or foreign mannerisms, trying to flee the country, as every man and child knows the aristos are trying to join their émigré cousins and co-conspirators to lead the armies of the counter-revolution!

As the Terror begins, simply securing a haven for the day is the primary vocation of most of France's Kindred, though a number of them roam the land, smuggling otherwise helpless vampires out of the country, clashing with the

Sabbat in a shadow war fought outside the prying eyes of mortals, or hunting violators of the Masquerade. The characters can find more than adequate need for their services, as well as opportunities to increase their status with the Camarilla and gain boons from those they save. Lucita, Beckett, and Anatole engage in such activities as they search for Georg von Neumann, and they are willing to forget old conflicts in all but the most extreme cases and put the survival of the Cainite race and the preservation of the Masquerade above previous squabbles. Francois Villon has secretly declared himself Prince-in-Exile of Paris, and from his temporary havens in Florence and London coordinates attempts to help potential followers escape. Others are not so kind; the archons of the Camarilla are known to destroy Kindred of questionable loyalty (e.g. anyone thought to be a member of one of the independent clans or those affiliated with the Sabbat, many Brujah, those who make smart-mouthed comments, etc.) rather than risk their joining the Sabbat or having some outraged mob inadvertently discover their aversion to sunlight. Others use the chaos to conceal the settling of old scores. Characters who themselves take up this cause will soon find that mortal authorities seek them as well, partially because they seem to be helping aristocrats escape the guillotine and partially for other reasons (see below). This is an ideal opportunity for the Storyteller to allow the characters to participate in a mini-chronicle of dashing outlaws and swashbucklers in Revolutionary France, against a background of death, upheaval, and terror.

Storytellers are advised to start bringing this element of the story in slowly. If it all happens at once, the characters may be hard pressed to find reasons to stay. In the beginning, the vampires try to carry on as before, though they notice that the parties they are attending are more sparsely attended and listless each time. They may begin to notice more and more of their own kind around them, possibly by being forced to compete with another vampire from the provinces for a chosen vessel, stumbling on an aristocratic Toreador they recognize from the ball reduced to feeding on a sickly beggar, or noticing an alarming number of poorly concealed bodies drained of blood. Let it seem like the Revolution is settling down occasionally, while over time, the instability grows more and more noticeable, until a session begins after a period of several months of downtime with the characters running for their unlives from archons or the scourge's parties, or trying to escape a burning mansion while evading the wrath of the mob. Put the characters in situations where they can only survive by betraying others, or where they may protect themselves only by allowing friends, allies or childer to be abandoned or destroyed. For example, on a night of rioting in Paris, a character may find that her wounded childer comes to her, begging for shelter. D'Eglantine and a small group of followers arrive just behind the childer, and explain that the childer has been denied sanctuary by the prince and is required by tradition to leave Paris. If the character allows her childer to be driven out or killed, she will preserve her status with the prince (for the moment), though the childer will most assuredly turn against her if he survives. If the character defies the scourge, he

LE FEU DE VERITE

Eventually, it's inevitable.

With all the mobs ransacking chateaux, and nobles being imprisoned and Sabbat fellowships slaying the hated oppressors of the Camarilla, it's only a matter of time before some mob somewhere notices that the duke, who always seemed a bit eccentric anyway, though he always did look really good for his age, spontaneously combusts when exposed to sunlight. It may not be long, under these circumstances, before some cornered Cainite in a frenzy bares teeth and fangs to her opponents and a crowd of mortals, without heed to the consequences. Despite the best efforts of the agents of the prince and of the Camarilla, the Masquerade is simply not going to hold everywhere. Many of these outbreaks are dismissed as the superstitious ranting of peasants, though reports do persist in coming in. By 1793, as the Committee of Public Safety plans to eliminate the Church entirely and the Terror is in full swing, certain members (reports vary as to whom) had long been receiving an alarming series of reports from credible sources about noblemen burning to ash at sunrise as they sit in their cells awaiting the guillotine, bodies found drained of all their blood, nocturnal battles between "creatures of darkness," and so on.

As they investigated further, without revealing their activities even to their fellow committee members (lest they go mad and find themselves on the block), they discovered more and more evidence that some among the nobility were not only figuratively, but literally, sucking the populace dry. Although enlightened men such as themselves would not dream of torturing their fellow man, they were left with little recourse against such foes. A few of the creatures were captured, and soon the august men of *Le Feu de Verite* (The Fire of Truth), as they called themselves, began to piece together a reasonable picture of the creatures and their nature, at least as they understood it themselves. Though no reasonable man could credit their stories of Caine and curses and such, many of the more gullible among the populace would.

may try to exile her as well. At the very least, the prince will be infuriated and rumors about the character's defiance of tradition will spread and continue to haunt him. Additionally, there is no guarantee that the child will survive exile, as the cagey guards of the Revolution watch the Paris gates carefully for nobles attempting escape.

By the apex of the Terror in the summer of 1794, the characters should be running ragged, fearing enemies on all sides, having trouble keeping out of the sun, much less maintaining the opulence of the pre-Revolutionary nights. This should hammer home the lesson that, while the Cainites may fancy themselves masters of their own desti-

This could not come at a worse time for defenders of the Revolution. Stories of the Damned walking the Earth feasting on the blood of the people would only convince many to turn back to superstition, to the Church, when those institutions were becoming obstacles to republicanism, and with counter-revolutionary rebellion in the Vendee, this was a fearsome prospect. And so *Le Feu de Verite* began to search for a rational explanation for these creatures, recruiting doctors and men of learning whose republican virtue was unquestioned, while simultaneously seeking to keep the creatures' secrets for them. Individuals reporting encounters with such creatures are discredited, sent to the guillotine on whatever grounds can be trumped up, recruited, or assassinated; while the creatures themselves are hunted down and captured to be interrogated or studied wherever possible, destroyed otherwise. All records of their existence are destroyed.

In the course of the characters' stay in Revolutionary France, any flagrant violations of the Masquerade may result in being hunted by this organization. Keep in mind that these are not people who study vampires out of intellectual curiosity—they simply need to come up with a plausible explanation of their existence before the Masquerade cracks and the people return to the Church for protection. They want the Kindred dead every bit as much as any Inquisitor, but they are unwilling to sacrifice their vision of a revolutionary secular society in that pursuit.

In later nights, *Le Feu de Verite* loses some key members during the Thermidorean Reaction that marks the end of the Terror, but survives underground and spreads to the rest of Europe under Napoleon. In modern nights, they have a small number of members in the sciences and in law enforcement and intelligence agencies, largely in Europe, but also throughout the world. Although some among the Camarilla secretly know and approve of the group, many of the more scholarly Sabbat (Noddists and the like) have come into conflict with them as they have tried to eradicate written records of the existence and history of the Kindred.

nies, they are in reality completely dependent on the mortal world, and upheavals in that world make the seemingly safe routines of sleeping and feeding extremely difficult.

THE REVOLUTIONARIES

The Sabbat is gleefully taking advantage of the upheaval wrought by the insurgents. Feeding and finding shelter is easy if one doesn't mind getting rough with the mortals or breaking the Masquerade, and not staying in one place for long. They replace their losses easily with members of the revolutionary populace, and find several converts by those alienated by the increasingly draconian policies of the princes and the Camarilla. Moreover, the revolution

provides ample opportunities to wage war against the Camarilla. Many elders made homeless by mobs are diablerized by the packs that often follow the revolutionaries like carrion birds. They are even able to disguise themselves as mortal mobs or scouring parties and raid the manor houses and chateaux themselves.

For independent characters and vampires loyal to the Camarilla, the Sabbat is another danger in a world turned upside-down. They will hear rumors of a charismatic Sabbat leader (Gerard la Chatelle), who has built a vast network of Sabbat beneath the very nose of the late lamented prince. Chatelle's Sabbat even now ride the countryside and stalk the alleys seeking the blood of elders to quench their thirst for diablerie and revolution. Characters may simply fear him, or they may hunt him actively. Characters focusing on other plotlines can run into him as a recurring nemesis. They may also find their own childer joining him, especially if the characters have mistreated them in any way. This is especially appropriate for any characters who had extreme conflicts with their own sires in *Dark Tides Rising*. However, it is most likely that his ultimate downfall will come from his own followers, as explained below.

Cainites who joined Chatelle's crusade find conditions as favorable in the early nights, as their opposition finds it unfavorable. The mortals are doing all the difficult work of rooting the prey out from their secure little burrows, and it simply remains for the hunters to take them down. Opportunities for diablerie abound. However, the revolution is not kind to its children. Ideally, the characters will travel with *Les Fils de la Revolution*, Chatelle's fellowship (the term pack is considered derogatory by many in these enlightened nights), which will follow the characters wherever they lead. If the characters choose to lead, and they lead well, Chatelle will actively collaborate with them as long as they treat him with respect, and they will have access to his vast network of followers. In fact, he will sing their praises to the others, help them overcome any suspicion generated by foreign mannerisms, etc. and he will never show any signs of betraying them. Encourage the players to revel in the thrill of the hunt, the thrill of victory, the intoxication of leadership and power. Although they should always have a challenge, make things a little too easy for them at first.

After a few years as lords of the night, by about 1792, things will get tougher for them. The inconveniences generated by the mortal upheavals become more serious, the opposition becomes stiffer and more frequent. Many of the fellows seem to be disappearing (see *Le Feu de la Verite* above). More of the new recruits are Embraced from ardently republican French revolutionary patriots and *sans-culottes*, who take a dim view of anyone dressing or acting in aristocratic or foreign fashions, and are slow to abandon their mortal beliefs despite Sabbat ideology. More grumbling is heard that the kills aren't being shared adequately, and that certain vampires (namely anyone in charge) are acting like the enemy. Rumors are circulating that the Sabbat in America has turned on each other or that the elders of the sect have betrayed it. Desertion and disobedience becomes common,

and several attacks will become routs because of lack of coordination. It becomes harder and harder to keep control. Every action the characters take is scrutinized, and every possible fault is found and criticized openly. The elders, no matter how hard they try, can do nothing right in the eyes of the Sabbat revolutionaries. Any attempts to suppress such criticism only hastens the inevitable.

By the winter of 1793-94, the Sabbat neonates clamor for a change of leadership, and look to Chatelle. Chatelle grows distant from the characters, questioning their judgment, at first privately, and then in front of the entire group. Finally, after a particularly disastrous raid he calls on them to step down. If they resist, they are not challenged to Monomacy, but become the subjects of a Wild Hunt. They are hunted as they themselves have hunted others, and word soon spreads to the other Sabbat in the land. If, in the process, they kill Chatelle, he becomes a martyr to the cause, as Sabbat across France (and possibly elsewhere) will curse the characters' names. If they submit and allow Chatelle to take charge, the situation calms for a month or two, and then another challenge arises as the situation worsens further. Chatelle offers up the characters as one last scapegoat, and the hunt is on.

The characters are pursued constantly. The Storyteller should make it seem like every tavern, every alley, and every barn hosts either a Sabbat pack, a mortal mob, or vengeful Camarilla archons. They should ultimately find themselves in the same position as the characters in the previous section, though they may take some small delight if they ever learn that Chatelle himself is slain by his own fellowship in early summer.

SEARCHING FOR THE TABLET

Some of the characters may have gone searching for the young man imprisoned in the Bastille immediately after learning of his disappearance. Unfortunately, he is not easy to find. France is a big place, and he's only one boy. Most of the people who may have seen him are preoccupied with having a revolution, and he is somewhat unremarkable in appearance. Georg leaves Paris on foot early in the morning on July 15, 1789, and works in a variety of menial tasks in stables, taverns, and army encampments for the next five years. The Storyteller should feel free to give the characters all sorts of rumors about the boy's location, and use it as an excuse to send them on all sorts of wild goose chases around France where they can partake in various other Storytelling vignettes, such as tracking down groups of Sabbat or helping Cainites escape France. Anatole will also certainly be looking for him, though it is likely that he and his companions will travel separately from the characters to avoid drawing too much attention and cover more ground.

Joachim von Neumann may be of interest to these characters, as they may make the connection between the crest from their dream and the Cainite in the prince's audience chamber. If they seek him out, he initially denies knowing anything about any members of his mortal family in Paris, though he shows curiosity in an effort to learn

everything the characters are willing to tell him. If pressed, he tells them privately that he's heard that Georg has been said to be headed for London in the care of an Italian physician and hypnotist of the Giovanni family. This is a complete fabrication, but he's hoping it will get them out of the country. In any case, he marks them for death, and uses every possible means he has to accomplish that end without risking direct confrontation, acting as a persistent nemesis.

As the Terror draws to its height in the summer of 1794, the trail leads the characters to the owner of a seedy working-class tavern in Paris. The owner (if heavily bribed, Dominated or similarly convinced) will reveal in private that he nearly lost his head over a young lad, who seemed to be an imbecile at first, but shortly began speaking bastardized French. He put the boy to work cleaning, until the city watch came in and seized him, claiming he was really a German spy and a relative of Marie Antoinette. It was only that he was ignorant of his crime and able to cough up a hefty bribe that he survived, but the boy is even now awaiting execution at dawn.

The characters have several hours to plan and execute an escape from a French prison. This shouldn't be too difficult, but the eventual pursuit will be more immediate and heavy if the players are not subtle. Moreover, an agent of Joachim von Neumann watches the characters, and will attempt to steal the boy during the day as the characters slumber outside Paris. Georg von Neumann, for his part, once freed, will not under any circumstances want to tell them where he's hidden the tablet, and his insanity makes it difficult to Dominate it out of him (difficulty 9, three successes, and he will be as evasive as possible, giving vague half-answers and playing semantic games). The characters need to earn his trust, probably over the course of the long journey, as they dodge the agent of Joachim von Neumann and of the Committee of Public Safety. It is a harrowing journey out of France by whichever route they choose, though they will need to get to Innsbruck, to a cemetery there. There, inside a locked chest under a false floorboard, they find a small stack of parchment and a tablet, which they can decode with the translation key from *Dark Tides Rising*.

The parchment is in Latin, and has been damaged by water. Most of it is illegible, though a few bits remain.

... since my experience in that most holy Sanctuary so long ago. I fear their plans, and yet, more, I fear they ways in which I may have helped them. Bindusara spoke of a Great Jyhad that occurs behind the veils of secrecy, and I wonder how my own actions have been influenced by others. My own kind speak of Nictuku, the minions of our progenitor, and....

... and all this ignores the revelations of the tablet. Could they be the temple of which he speaks? Or perhaps...

The tablet is only a small fragment, densely written, and pitted with age. Again, only one large segment is legible.

... IN THOSE NIGHTS, THE TEMPLE OF THE BASTARDS WILL BE TWICE SHATTERED: THE THIEF'S CHILDREN WILL STAND, BURNED TO CINDERS: THE DAUGHTERS OF MY MOTHER WILL BE SCATTERED, AND THE FINAL NIGHTS WILL COME UPON THEM LIKE A THIEF. ALL MANNER OF BLASPHEMY WILL ABOUND, AND ALL MANNER OF VICES AND CORRUPTION WILL INFEST THE CHILDREN OF SETH. MY NAME WILL BE WHISPERED AND VENERATED IN SECRET IN ALL CORNERS OF THE CITIES, AND THEY WILL MAKE WAR AND SACRIFICE FOR ME. THOSE OF MY BROOD WHO HAVE FAILED ME SHALL BE ALL BUT SWIFT FROM THE FIELD, AND THOSE OF MY BROOD WHO HAVE PLEASED ME WILL PROSPER, AND THOSE WHOM I BETRAYED WILL HOWL IN IMPOTENT FURY. I ALONE WILL HOLD THE KEY TO THE RISING AND SETTING SUN, AND I ALONE WILL HAVE WALKED THE PATHS OF THE DRAGON. SETH'S MOST RIGHTEOUS WILL FIND THEIR TOOLS CRUMBLE TO DUST IN MY RISING, AND ONLY THEN WILL THE ASURAS RISE TO....

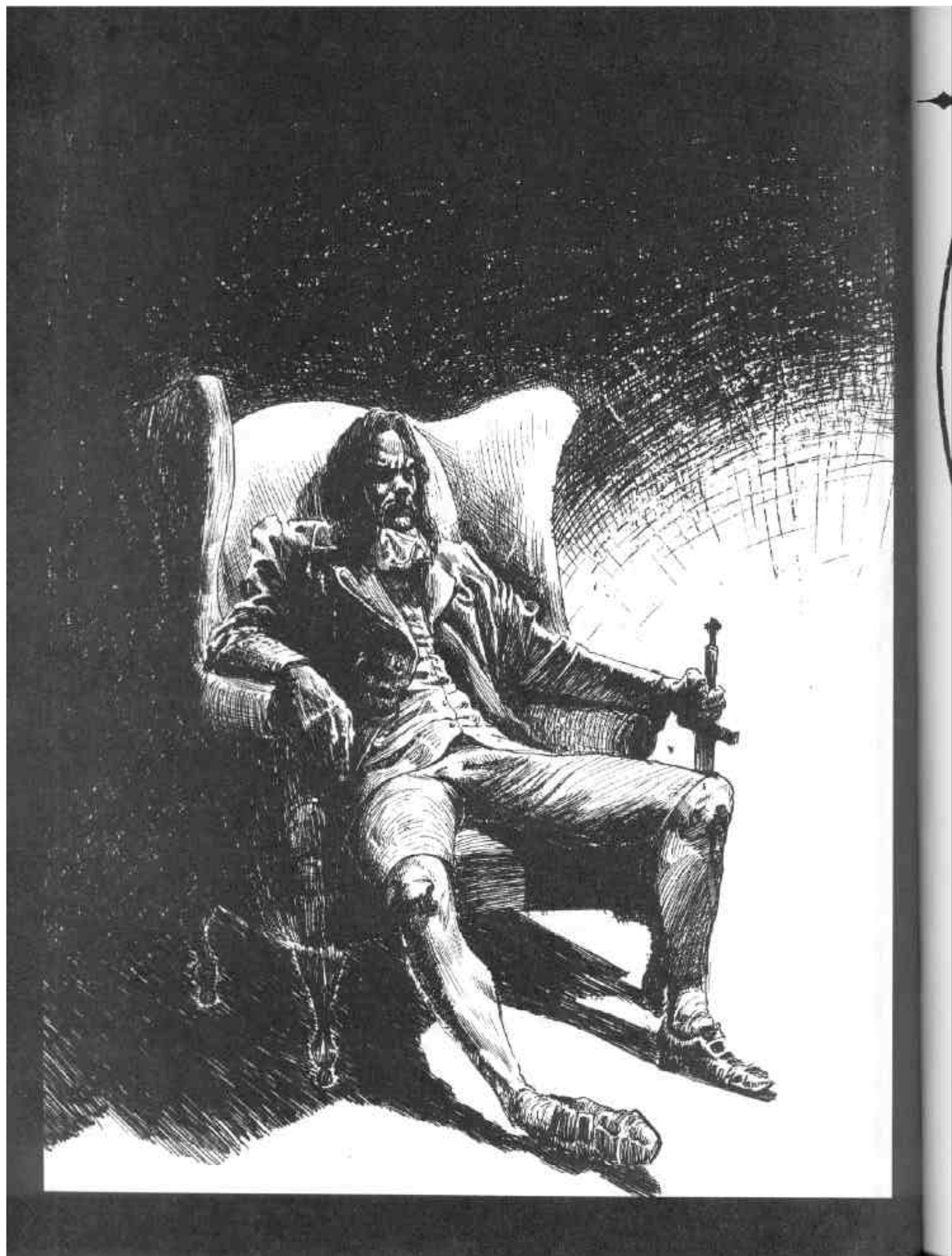
Epilogue

The characters have (hopefully) survived through the upheaval of the French Revolution, and seen the final nails driven into the coffin of the medieval world in which they were dragged. While monarchy will be restored in France and the ideals of the revolution will spread slowly and unevenly across Europe, the characters will watch mortals remake the world they live in. They may have prospered or they may have escaped with their skins barely intact, but either way they have surely made allies and enemies.

Cainites committed to the cause of the Sabbat will find, to their sorrow, that their sect has followed the example of those in France and America and has turned upon each itself. Internecine strife builds as the elders of the Sabbat try to impose their will upon an increasingly fractured mass.

Kindred who support the Camarilla will find that as the sect reorganizes itself in the wake of the revolution, it becomes less the grand coalition originally envisioned. The ivory tower becomes more a mask to cover the increasing dominance of the elders of certain clans, infringing on the unives of neonates and dissident princes alike.

Lines once hazy between the two sects become sharper; those who refused to cooperate fully with one sect or the other will find their options limited. The lure of torpor may become stronger as the world has suddenly become very unfamiliar....





CHAPTER FIVE: CHARACTERS

*I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
Morn came, and went—and came, and brought no day,
And men forgot their passions in the dread
Of this their desolation; and all hearts
Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light:
And they did live by watchfires.
— Lord Byron, "Darkness"*

This chapter details both the primary and secondary Storyteller characters who populate the stage of *Ill Omens*. Most of them contain little more than a name and a few paragraphs of history; this should be more than enough to give them the spark of unlife needed to make them interesting and believable characters. At this point in the chronicles, few characters need actual Traits; if your troupe comes to blows or dice-rolling frenzies with more than one or two characters, something is probably wrong. These characters are here to interact with, not to fight or be bested by the players' characters.

If the Storyteller needs Traits for one of the characters below, then she can extrapolate them to suit her chronicle or take the information from a similar character in another *White Wolf* book. Also, if you don't like something that's listed here, or if it doesn't fit with your troupe or their characters' power level, change it or throw it out. It's better to alter or discard something than to ruin a chronicle just for the sake of sticking with what's written here.

ASSAMITES

FARIQ, FALLEN HOLY WARRIOR

6th Generation Assamite *antiribu*, childe of Azif

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Judge

Embrace: 4th-century B.C.

Apparent Age: Early 30s

Fariq received the Embrace long before the prophet he briefly but staunchly followed was born. His mortal tribe in Mesopotamia worshipped Dagon, and Fariq gladly sacrificed the members of other tribes to his vengeful god. He gained the notice of an ancient Assamite, who was worshipped as a deity by one of those rival tribes, when one of Fariq's raids destroyed several of the Methuseleh's most prized ghouls. Deciding to turn Fariq toward his own ends, the Assamite had him captured and Embraced. The Assamite used Fariq against his own tribe, bringing the young vampire fully into his own cult of Baal. Fariq's work did not substantially change, only for whom he did it; if anything, his acts of sadism worsened.

Finally, the innocents who had suffered Fariq's horrors captured him, and visited upon him every torture they could think of to gain retribution. His limbs were burned and torn, and stones crushed his bones to splinters. As he was tossed in a grave to be buried "alive," Fariq managed to drive a shaft of wood through his own heart, staking himself to avoid the agony of a millennium-long burial.

During his sleep, nightmares and visions of his acts haunted him. He dragged himself from the grave, consumed with shame for what he had become. When he found his fellow clanmates, they taught him of Mohammed and Islam. With a new system of beliefs, Fariq fought to regain his humanity, while joining the cry against another modern-night rival tribe, one called Christianity.

Fariq fought to defeat the Europeans who brought Christianity, but made shady alliances with many western Kindred, and began to envision both Muslims and Christians working together. When these alliances were uncovered by Husayn and his other clansmen, Fariq was brutally punished for his close associations with the infidels. They told him he had failed Allah and his clan.

Furious at his clan, Fariq refused to attend the Convention of Thorns. Without having received the Tremere's curse, he was immediately dubbed *antiribu*. He found solace only with his other outcast brethren as the Assamites turned against them... until a fellow *antiribu* mentioned a name Fariq had not heard in over a thousand years.

The Baali Ansen used Fariq's secrets and inner desires to lead him from the path the Assamite followed. His religion was a worthless sham, his clan weak and deluded. Only Baal had given him any sort of comfort, and to this he returned. His earlier monstrosities slowly began to return. Now he is a complete *antiribu*, but also secretly an eye, ear and knife for the Baali.

HUSAYN AL FATIN, DESTROYER OF OUTCASTS

8th Generation Assamite, childe of Ahmal

Nature: Innovator

Demeanor: Fanatic

Embrace: 1086

Apparent Age: 20

The son of a wealthy merchant, Husayn was noticed by the Assamites while still relatively young. Although he lived in the upper class, his associations with the common people quickly taught him the skills of the street. His stealth, fleetness of hand and quickness of tongue earned him a place among the clan of assassins as a ghoul, and his quick learning and enthusiasm earned him the Embrace.

Husayn rapidly climbed the ranks of his clan, becoming a noted diplomat and spokesman for the Saracens and, when appropriate, for the Assamites. He networked in Transylvania for years, spying and making contacts in both the mortal and Kindred worlds. His ultimate goal was to facilitate a Saracen invasion of the East and the conquest of Vienna... a goal that ultimately collapsed when the Arabs were turned back by mortal forces in the 17th century.

Husayn has found another dream, however. He has taken part in the holy war against the *antiribu* of his clan, and now hunts for them throughout the Middle East and Eastern Europe. The new infidels keep him thoroughly occupied, and his skills of diplomacy still prove useful to clan Assamite, dealing with the Western princes of the area.

BAALI

ANSEN, THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

Background: Ansen was born a low but very promising noble in England. His father, one of the knights who accompanied William the Conqueror, owned land, possessed a title and gave his son all that he could. Of course, this meant that Ansen, who had just turned 20, was sent in his aging father's stead when the pope called the First Crusade. He didn't believe in the cause, preferring his relatively easy life in England, but he could not disobey the call.

The Crusade awakened in him something that neither he nor the Church that sent him expected: a true thirst for violence and plunder, and a penchant for sadism. His noble life had shielded him from such things, and his first taste of them in the Holy Land proved far too seductive. He took full advantage of the blanket remission of sins for Crusaders, and killed, plundered and raped with a viciousness that defied his normally calm and uncaring visage.

During the siege and conquering of Jerusalem (for more information on the conquest of Jerusalem, see *The Book of Storyteller's Secrets*), his bloodthirsty actions caught the eye of a Baali who was helping to orchestrate the chaos. The Baali's group of infernalists was attempting to unleash a demon with help from the heightened emotional craze of the Crusaders, but Ansen's actions seemed unforced,



almost as if he were willing. They quickly subdued and Embraced Ansen into the sect.

He awakened to his new state with a mix of terror and fascination. Vampirism was beyond his realm of belief, and the demonic acts of the Baali even further. However, the sect of infernalists had chosen their child well. Ansen quickly saw the power that the perversions led to, and accepted it completely.

His sanity quickly began to suffer. His sadism waxed, and he reveled in the blarney of the Baali. He also began obsessing over secrets, the unknown names in the world that hid the truth from even him. He was a vampire, with the powers of demons behind him, and yet he knew little more about the world than what he had when he was mortal.

Ansen has fashioned a decent cover as a merchant and diplomat over the centuries, offering his services to many mortals (and sometimes Kindred) in Europe. He has gained a considerable ability to plumb others' hidden thoughts and desires through his Thaumaturgical studies. Ansen uses this knowledge to indebted and bind others. When he knows exactly what someone wants or holds secret, little is outside his grasp.

Image: Ansen cultivates the image of politeness and civility. His dress is fine, like that of a well-to-do trader, though not enough to be considered flashy or flamboyant. He keeps his short, dark hair well groomed, but his eyes deepen with an unnerving, penetrating shadow. His expression remains stoic whether he is speaking to an ancient friend or disemboweling a hated enemy.

Roleplaying Hints: Facades always fool those around you... especially facades they expect. Outwardly, you give them exactly what they want to see, while your eyes search their very souls. Watch, wait and learn, for the time is drawing closer.

Haven: As with most Baali, Ansen keeps no set haven, preferring many safehouses scattered throughout Eastern Europe. When he is not travelling, Ansen has a semi-permanent haven in Deva, under a ghoul and subservient astrologist's shop. Here he helps coordinate and lead the defense of the Cathedral of Flesh. Few know of its existence, and those who do tell no one. The methods of silencing that Ansen and his fellow Baali have at their disposal insure total complicity.

Secrets: Ansen keeps his true alliance and clan a closely guarded secret, preferring to pose as a Sabbat or Ventrue. As for knowing secrets, Ansen can know nearly anything the Storyteller deems necessary or appropriate.

Influence: Having worked as a diplomat or trade partner with most of the nobles of Eastern Europe, Ansen is known to many rich and powerful Kindred and kine, and knows something dark or sinister about each one.

Destiny: After destroying the last Cappadocian, Ansen continues to guard the Cathedral of Flesh. He knows full well about the demon Kupala, having plucked information from the characters' minds to fill in what he doesn't know. He and his sect have not decided what to do with the Cathedral or with the demon, but Ansen knows time is short; how short, even he has no idea. Before long, Kupala grows bored with Ansen and his simplistic Baali, and consumes them outright.

Clan: Baali

Sire: Al-Harim

Nature: Conformist

Demeanor: Sadist

Generation: 9th

Apparent Age: 30

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Empathy 5, Intimidation 2, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Ride 3, Melee 4

Knowledges: Academics 2, Investigation 4, Linguistics (Arabic, German, Romanian) 3, Medicine 2, Occult 4, Politics 4

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Daimonion 5, Fortitude 2, Presence 3, Dark Thaumaturgy 5 (Video Nefas 4, Rego Dolor 3)

Demonic Investments: Flame, Poison

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 5, Resources 4

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 1, Courage 4

Morality: Humanity 3

Willpower: 6

Note: Ansen's more esoteric Traits (Demonic Investments, Dark Thaumaturgy paths) are covered in the Dark Ages Companion.

BRUJAH

GERARD DE CHATTELLE, THE AGITATOR

Background: In Gerard de Chatelle's mortal life, he knew nothing but the existence of a serf. Born to a landless peasant without a trade, Gerard grew up working a small plot of land for the local baroness, Lady Hautmont. Lady Hautmont resided in a splendid castle several leagues away, and Gerard never saw her while he was young. He only knew that his father and mother... and the other serfs in the area, as well... shuddered in fear whenever the woman's name was mentioned, or when her fearsome men-at-arms marched by. The same fear gripped them, but even more so, when they all traveled to the town meetings every fortnight. The young Gerard would cower in the dark corner of their small cottage until his parents returned from the meeting, looking tired, shaken and terrified. It was not until Gerard became of age that he went to one of the meetings... and finally understood.

There was no way to resist the vile demon that held sway over the peasants; Hautmont's mercenaries were everywhere, and many said even they had the strength of the devil in them. Every so often Lady Hautmont would force someone at the town meetings to drink of her blood, just as she drank regularly from every one of them. Gerard didn't trust his neighbors, or even his parents, because he knew they had lost their souls. He tried to keep himself ensconced from Hautmont's notice, and had for many years been able to avoid partaking of the demon's cup.

One evening it all changed. Chatelle awoke to sounds of fighting and the smell of burning houses. He rushed outside in time to see an orgy of violence surging around him; bodies flailed madly as flames engulfed them, inhuman howls filled the air, and mercenaries leapt upon black-cloaked attackers with maddening speed. Before he could make sense of it, a man he recognized as Hautmont's Captain of the Guard seized him by the back of the neck. The Captain hauled him up one-handed, and Gerard stared in horror at the man's glowing red eyes and dripping fangs. Then, his memory faded in a sea of ecstasy as fangs ripped through the tender flesh of his chest... until the hunger overwhelmed him and the Captain's parting words echoed in his ear: "Now, whelp, fight for your mistress!"

As a fledgling vampire, Gerard was easily subdued by the attacking anarchs, and they immediately recognized why he had been Embraced. Seeing a possible convert, they allowed him to recover from his wounds and began teaching him about his existence. At first, he was terrified and disgusted at the thought of being a vampire, but the more his captors spoke to him, the more he began to see it as an opportunity. He had been given incredible power with which to fight back against the Devil Hautmont — and others. It did not take long for him to become a full-fledged member of the movement.



Gerard spent the next several decades wholly immersed in the resistance to authority, both in kine and Kindred society. He completely rejected the Convention of Thorns and was one of the first to aid the Spanish Lasombra in their battles in southern France. He never hesitated to bring his fights into the open against the new Camarilla.

However, the faults with open conflict quickly became apparent. After the first century of the Sabbat wars, Gerard realized that he had to change his tactics. Fighting was getting them nowhere; now that the Camarilla knew their tactics, they achieved little in their raiding strikes, and areas they seized in Crusades quickly destabilized and became too difficult to hang on to. For the next 200 years, he began developing a new method of attack: espionage. Gerard gradually erased his history, altered his appearance as much as he could, and learned from every master of spying and manipulation he could find. He also educated himself with political and philosophical thought, believing that it would help him better fit any role he might need to play as a spy. Gerard gradually became the perfect mole, a vampire without a past, and from this vantage began integrating himself into the court life of France to await an opportunity....

Image: Of average height and build, Gerard still retains a shadow of the callused hands and hard, beaten features of the peasant he was so long ago. However, years of conditioning (and occasional Vicissitude) have erased enough of these signs that he can easily pass for a noble with a little makeup. He wears the current Parisian fashions, though not as flamboyant or cutting edge as the Toreador.

Roleplaying Hints: Speak in a smooth, cultured voice; it keeps everyone off-guard. They definitely don't expect such eloquence from a Brujah. This allows you to better

hide among them, and sway them to your cause. Seek out anyone you think might be sympathetic, and ply them with your arguments as subtly as you can. If they accept, the Sabbath grows stronger. And if not, in this society of cut-throat debauchery, it's easy enough to eliminate them, and again, the Sabbath grows stronger. Soon you will be strong enough to deal in larger game than simple neonates.

Destiny: Gerard de Chatelle becomes a major force in Revolutionary France, but after helping incite such chaos, he realizes (too late) that the revolution he thought was under his sway was really completely beyond his dictates. As the Camarilla gradually retakes France through various means, Gerard finds himself sharing the fate of so many of the Revolution's leaders—murdered by his own followers. The Revolution eats its children.

Clan: Brujah *antitribu*

Sire: Marie Guylaine

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Autocrat

Generation: 10th

Embrace: 1453

Apparent Age: early 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

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

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

Knowledges: Academics 2, Investigation 2, Law 2, Linguistics 3, Politics 3

Disciplines: Celerity 3, Fortitude 1, Potence 3, Presence 4, Protean 2

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

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

Morality: Humanity 4

Derangements: Gluttony, Hysteria

Willpower: 6

CAPPADOCIANS

MARIA ASUNCIÓN, FATE'S PAWN

Background: Maria Asunción lived as a nun in a small convent called the Chapel of St. Isabelle in Spain. Born into a peasant family with no money or livestock for a dowry, she went to the convent before she had even reached puberty. In her mortal life, she knew nothing but the chaste and proper life of a nun, and thoroughly enjoyed it. She thirsted for religious knowledge, and devoured any text she could obtain. Faith at first flickered faintly, then blazed to life within her as she dedicated herself, body and soul, to the service and veneration of the Church.

An influential Cappadocian traveling in Spain, Lord Camden, noticed her for all these reasons when he saw her returning from work in a nearby village. Her True Faith intrigued him, and her religious knowledge enticed him. It did not take long for him to decide to Embrace her into the clan of Graverobbers. He did so carefully, however, not wishing to harm her True Faith or natural intelligence and cravings with the shock of a sudden, unexpected transformation. A few late confessions and Socratic lessons were all that were needed to get her attention.

Camden met with Maria for many nights before her Embrace, just outside the grounds of the chapel to stay clear of its faith. When she first found out what he was, she was curious rather than fearful. They debated religion, the occult, the value of being Kindred and the state of a vampire's soul. He offered her eternal life in this world, so she could better prepare herself and others for eternal life in the next. Maria prayed after each of their discussions as Lord Camden left and the first rays of sunlight fell upon the chapel, asking God for guidance. Finally, after numerous months of such night meetings, she decided quite calmly and logically to accept his offer.

With her newfound powers and in her new state, Maria set out as a fervent missionary throughout countryside, trying to bring as many new believers as she could to the Church in the then Moor-controlled Spain. She gained a fascination with occult texts, religious and otherwise. Death became a favored subject of her study, as it did with most Cappadocians, and she learned very quickly the powers of Mortis. She elected to stay near the Chapel of St. Isabelle, but promised to remain in contact with the local members of the clan as well as her sire.

When Cappadocius chose to Embrace the Giovanni family into the clan, Maria was originally one of the



Cappadocians who supported their entry. She believed the Necromancers held knowledge that the religious Cappadocians could never find. She wanted to "save" them in a way by bringing them into the clan. When the Giovanni traveled through Spain, she met with them, and began learning their art of Necromancy to augment her knowledge of death and what lay after.

The news of the diablerie of Cappadocius took Maria completely by surprise. Before she or most other Cappadocians could react, the Giovanni had declared a pogrom against them throughout Europe. She was spared the worst of their hunt since she made her haven in a secluded area of Spain, but it proved to be the Spanish Inquisition, formed on the heels of the *Reconquista* by Christian Spaniards, that would do her the most harm. Several local townsfolk claimed the chapel harbored demons and witches, and soon her haven was put to the flames. Her sisters died around her in the blaze and at the pitchforks of the Inquisitors. In horror, she gathered up what manuscripts she could and fled, first from the chapel and soon after from Spain.

No matter where she went, all Maria could find was destruction. Her sire had been destroyed, and her clanmates were either hunted down or scared away. The Giovanni now scoured Europe for any word of Cappadocians. In the burgeoning Sabbat wars, she was suspected in every city, and her claims of being Cairiff and her True Faith further augmented the local Cainites' mistrust. She was not skilled in concealment or stealth, and someone always seemed to find out her true origin. Her unlife for nearly two centuries was spent on the run from Giovanni hunters, and the only things she could hold on to were the pile of texts she had saved from the fire and her undying faith.

Appearance: Maria Asunción is a thin, lithe woman in her late 20s. She has a plain yet alluring beauty about her. Her long black hair is usually worn back in a ponytail, and her eyes sparkle with the color of emeralds. She no longer dresses as a nun, but in dusty brown traveling clothes, men's breeches and boots.

Roleplaying Hints: You are suspicious and frightened, but beneath it all you know that whatever happens is God's will, and it will be for the best. You also know that you are running out of options; by now, most Giovanni have heard of the wandering Cappadocian with True Faith, and pay attention to any rumors that hint to that. You also suspect (rightly) that you are the last of your clan — you used to encounter one or two every decade or so, but for the longest time you have found none.

Secrets: Maria guards the secret of her clan affiliation with her unlife. She also holds a small collection of occult documents, with several fragments she has just recently learned how to translate. The implications of these prophecies horrify her; she knows one refers to the death of the mythical last daughter of Eve, and another to her own.

Destiny: Assured of her role in God's greater plan, Maria reluctantly yields her unlife in Act I of *III Omens*.

Clan: Cappadocian

Sire: Lord Camden

Nature: Penitent

Demeanor: Survivor

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 920

Apparent Age: Late 20s

Note: Maria only has one important Trait rating: her True Faith of 5. She can possess any other abilities the Storyteller wants, though it is unlikely physical altercations will conclude favorably for her.

GANGREL

MITRU THE HUNTER

Background: As a mortal, Mitru was one of the few men brave enough to risk traveling through the Transylvanian countryside at night. In this way he discovered the true masters of his village of Napoca and his land. To free them from the yoke of the *vampyr*, he attempted to slay the Ventrue leader Nova Arpad, and drove her into torpor with three arrows to her heart. The Gangrel Arnulf rewarded his courage with the Embrace. Mitru quickly became known as the defender of Napoca.

After Arnulf turned against the cities, and Mitru became more adamant in defending them, the two found themselves on different sides of the East-West conflict. Arnulf came to the aid of the Ottomans, and Mitru, honor-bound to protect Napoca from any invader, fought his own sire for control of the land. In desperation, and after his attempts to band other Cainites together to stop his sire



failed, he allied himself with the mortal ruler Vlad Tepes. After fighting under Dracula's banner and leading his sire to his Final Death, Mitru remained in the Impaler's service.

Mitru has since degenerated ever more into the clutches of the Beast. Having broken himself over the betrayal of his sire and his unwilling servitude to Vlad Dracula, Mitru seeks nothing so much as a just end to the centuries of his cursed unlife.

Image: Little has changed of Mitru over the ages. He is very direct, choosing not to embellish or mince his words. Animalistic features have slowly crept over him; his eyes reflect like a cat's in the darkness, and his hairy hands curl into permanent claws. He still wears anachronistic leathers and battles with bow and arrow, shunning more modern armaments... and is still as fierce and effective a warrior as ever.

Roleplaying Hints: Dracula is your master now. You are still protecting your land, Transylvania.... You're simply doing it through the most powerful Kindred in the area. If anyone crosses Dracula, he crosses the land... and you. You must not let such a transgression go unpunished. Your true allegiance does not lie with Dracula, but rather with the sire you led to his own doom. Thus, you attend to Dracula reluctantly, always looking for the light of salvation.

Destiny: Mitru is soon forced to split from Dracula as his master becomes more eccentric in his alliances and actions. Dracula insures that Mitru does not survive the departure, though stories of Mitru's resistance to Dracula's attacks are still circulated throughout Europe.

Clan: Gangrel

Sire: Arnulf

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Defender

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1190

Apparent Age: early 20s, when distinctly visible

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

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

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

Knowledges: Investigation 2, Linguistics 2, Occult 3

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

Background: Herd 3, Influence 2, Retainers 3, Status 3

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

Morality: Humanity 3

Willpower: 8

TIBERIU, SABBAT MESSENGER AND SPY
10th Generation, child of Harnuth

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Loner

Embrace Date: 1190

Apparent Age: early 20s

Originally a Gangrel of some note in Transylvania, Tiberiu possessed one of the most extensive networks of contacts throughout Eastern Europe. Though under the blood oath to Count Radu, Tiberiu still relayed secrets and news to his clanmates and former allies as he rode through the Carpathians in his coach, driven by Vicissitude-sculpted and blood-bound steeds. Not all of those he associated with were allies of his Tzimisce master, but it seemed that not even Radu's blood could break him completely. When Radu discovered this, he corrected his mistake in ways that would break his Gangrel thrall.

Tiberiu still rides through the countryside with his demonic horses, but where his face was once merely scarred, it now twists inhumanly. His limbs no longer move quite as they should, and his spine curves and bends awkwardly. Radu's lesson in obedience worked; what Tiberiu sees and learns is now only for his master. When Radu left Transylvania as the Sabbat wars reached a fevered height, he bade Tiberiu stay to keep an eye on his homeland. To this night, Tiberiu obeys without question.

GIOVANNI

AMBROGINO GIOVANNI

Fifth Generation, child of Constanca

Nature: Conniver

Demeanor: Celebrant

Embrace: 1045

Apparent Age: mid-30s

Embraced during the Cappadocian debate of the Giovanni polemic, Ambrogino's transition to vampirism left a bad taste in the mouths of many Kindred. Seen as a traitor by many Giovanni and an unpredictable megalomaniac by the Cappadocians, Ambrogino was damned if he did or didn't. Ultimately, he cast his lot in with the Giovanni, who seemed the most likely candidates to survive the inevitable clash. Naturally, this proved to be the case, and Ambrogino made himself an invaluable ally of Augustus Giovanni, both through his powers of Necromancy and his devotion to himself, which he always managed to disguise as the clan's best interest. Ambrogino is an intense Kindred, lending himself wholeheartedly to his cause. He has severed his own hand and replaced it with a powerful necromantic artifact—and he's not above taking other dire steps if he believes the effort warrants it.

DON PIETRO GIOVANNI

Background: Pietro Giovanni was Embraced late in life because his middling talents did not shine forth until the Venetian merchant had nearly reached 50. He truly wanted to study Necromancy but never showed any real skill in it. He also never learned of the true nature of the "family elders" until his business savvy took off. On the cusp of being relegated to the status of a merchant who never rose above mediocrity, Pietro made several well-placed investments and trading deals in quick succession, as much from luck as skill. His gambling on several trade routes traveling from the Middle East through Eastern Europe paid off handsomely, to everyone in the family's surprise. It was just enough to gain the notice of the Kindred members of the family.

At first he was extended the Proxy Kiss so he could more accurately be studied by the Giovanni Kindred. Whether it was from the mystical qualities of the Cainite blood he imbibed or a simple opening of his mind to the possibilities of the supernatural, Pietro's interest and ability in Necromancy piqued. His economic successes continued, though not at as high a level as before. Both of these factors, his business knowledge and his occult interest, convinced the Giovanni to fully Embrace Pietro.

Pietro handled a great deal of the family trade through Eastern Europe, and as Giovanni interest rose in the region, he was the natural choice to handle Hungary and Transylvania when the Giovanni became a clan in 1444. The honorary don was added to his name, and he relocated to Budapest. Although he mainly spent time in business affairs, he also kept an eye on the local Tremere and Trismisce, and also on the Sabbat war in the region.

Don Pietro never held a very high rank in the Giovanni family; Eastern Europe was never especially lucrative, other than being a waypoint for goods from the Middle and Far East, goods that could just as easily be obtained by water routes. His cooling business success and disinterest in the espionage games with the other clans gradually earned him the disfavor of his elders. Rather than bothering to remove him from his post, however, they found it much more economical just to leave him there and forget about him. Until the fabled last Cappadocian, the mysterious woman with phenomenal Faith, appeared in his region....

Image: Don Pietro Giovanni is balding and portly, despite the gauntness usually brought by the Embrace. His pale, white skin is pockmarked with scars from childhood disease, deformities accented by a distinct, but not directly identifiable, oddity of his features brought by the close familial relations of his parents. He wears the latest in Italian finery, with every frill, ornamentation and embellishment possible. His chubby fingers drip with gold rings; necklaces adorn his neck and earrings dangle from his ears.

Roleplaying Hints: You fully know your shortcomings. Your post is largely unimportant, and you have little to offer



the family anymore. But by God, you are a *don*, and you will act like one! Who cares if some upstart has more skill or knowledge than you, or will some night be above you... for now, you are his *don*, and you'll make sure he knows it. And now that the last Cappadocian has shown up in your territory, you might be able to ride this Graverobber to a still higher position in the family.

Secrets: Don Pietro knows almost everything economic that happens in Hungary and Transylvania but precious little beyond that. He can discover which Cainites have control of trade routes or natural resources, but knows nothing of their political status or territories.

Haven: A very richly decorated manse in Budapest.

Influence: Don Pietro can affect nearly any economic or trade situation in Eastern Europe. The only thing that mitigates this massive influence is his inability to fully capitalize on it; he often makes miscalculations or mistakes, and wastes the power he could wield.

Destiny: Pietro's one and only claim to fame was the last Cappadocian's presence in his region of control. Pietro proves unable to escape Ambrogino's shadow in the situation, and fades into obscurity over the next century. During the revolutions and tumult in Eastern Europe, he falls in disfavor with the clan, and disappears mysteriously during World War I, never to be seen again.

Clan: Giovanni

Sire: Vincenzo Giovanni

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1043

Apparent Age: late 50s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 1, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 1, Brawl 1, Dodge 3, Empathy 1, Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 1
Skills: Melee 2, Ride 2
Knowledges: Academics 2, Investigation 1, Law 2, Linguistics 3, Occult 2, Politics 1, Seneschal 3
Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 3, Fortitude 1, Necromancy 4, Potence 1, Presence 1
Necromantic Paths: Sepulchre Path 4, Bone Path 1
Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Influence 4, Resources 5, Status 1
Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 3
Morality: Humanity 4
Derangements: Fugue
Willpower: 7

LASOMBRA

LUCITA

Seventh Generation, childe of Ambrosio Luis Monçada
Nature: Rebel
Demeanor: Defender
Embrace: 1190
Apparent Age: early 20s

A rebellious spirit even in her mortal days in the courts of Aragon, Lucita's forced embrace by Ambrosio Luis Monçada did not quell her desire for freedom. When her clan destroyed its own Antideluvian, she shed her identification with the Lasombra, becoming an archon for the new Camarilla. Then, as the anarch revolts wound to a close and the Sabbat wars erupted, she actively and staunchly became *antitribu*.

Lucita is a warrior in every sense of the word, a master of all forms of martialry, espionage and even diplomacy. Although she supports the Camarilla and opposes the Sabbat, her true loyalties lie with neither sect. She is one of the few Kindred who can see the darkness that is coming, and knows the prophecies that herald it. Because of this, she lends her aid to the Malkavian Anatole and the enigmatic Beckett, who both seem to have keen insights into mystical secrets of Gehenna. Although Anatole's appetites — and penchant for diablerie — worry her, she sees in him one of the only hopes for surviving the future.

MALKAVIAN

BECKETT

Seventh Generation, reputed childe of Aristotle de Laurent
Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Judge

Embrace: unknown

Apparent Age: late 20s/ early 30s

An aura of mystery surrounds the vampire known as Beckett. Those who know him have heard him claim that he is the childe of noted Malkavian scholar Aristotle de Laurent, but Kindred with whom he is close suspect that Beckett's relationship with de Laurent is more like that of a mentor and protégé, as Beckett betrays no characteristics of the Malkavian clan. Indeed, many suspect that Aristotle de Laurent does not belong to the Malkavian clan, but rather something else entirely.

Whatever the case, Beckett surpasses even Anatole and Lucira in his fervent search for historical documentation of the "Kindred condition." He has caused a recent uproar among the vampire society with his claims that *The Book of Nod* is not a journal, but is, in fact, an allegory or fable.

An itinerant wanderer, Beckett rarely stays in one place for too long before his wanderlust and thirst for knowledge command him to move on. His genuine passion lies in unraveling the secrets of Cainite history, and Beckett has demonstrated that he will go to almost any length to obtain an answer.

OCTAVIO, HERALD OF THE DEMON

Sixth Generation, childe of Marcus
Nature: Prophet
Demeanor: Prophet
Embrace: 134

Apparent Age: early 30s

Octavio sees with the eyes of the demon Kupala. Embraced in the nights of Rome, he has through time been fused with the taint of the demon buried in Transylvania's soil. Although he believes he fights against Kupala, and tells the eight signs of Gehenna he sees to everyone he thinks can stop it, he has recently discovered that, in his periods of lunacy, he often commits acts that actually strengthen the demon. He cannot understand his purpose, he does not comprehend what he sees, and he cannot control himself. Despite his drive and his will, he knows he has failed.

Octavio now searches for someone to give his divine vision to, letting the poison it brings suffer a Final Death with him and passing his mantle untainted to another herald. Far and long he has hunted, and now he finally has found the one who can receive his gift: the Malkavian Holy Harbinger, Anatole. Once Octavio fulfills his last duties, Anatole will carry his visions to prevent the Final Nights... or perish trying.

ANATOLE, HOLY HARBINGER

Eighth Generation, Childe of Pierre l'Imbecile

Nature: Defender

Demeanor: Penitent

Embrace: 1193

Apparent Age: 20

Anatole has always seen visions, but until now they have made no sense to him. He knew they were divinely inspired messages from God and his angels. The visions even gave him powers akin to True Faith, with the ability to repel other Kindred and see through Cainite powers. He obeyed the visions and messages without question, even though they vexed him. He could see no underlying meaning, no overriding purpose in any of them. When they commanded him to commit diablerie, he did so; now many Cainites mistrust him, and he still does not know why he brought those Kindred to Final Death. He gradually began to believe that the visions were not from God, but from whom they really came he couldn't imagine. Accompanied by the Lasombra warrior Lucita and his entourage of monastic ghoul pilgrims, Anatole hunted for the key that would make sense of the images he saw, and find who delivered them.

As it turned out, the key found him. Octavio himself pleaded for Anatole to diablerize him, telling him that both their visions could combine to present in full the picture Anatole desperately wanted to see. Anatole readily agreed, and diablerized his fellow Malkavian. In one fell swoop, everything became clear... at least, as clear as it could ever be for a Malkavian. He could never explain it to anyone else, in any terms they would understand, but he knew.

Anatole now has a mission. He sees the signs, and understands them as Octavio never could. Joined by Lucita and now Beckett — the Kindred who Anatole is convinced will find the true answers to the fabled Book of Nod — he hunts for many things. He searches for the remaining signs of Gehenna, to stop or alter them before they happen. Only

a scarce few are left, and even with his gifts, he does not know if he can stop them in time.

NOSFERATU

ZELIOS, MASTER MASON

Seventh Generation, childe of Hannibal

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Innovator

Embrace: 1020

Apparent Age: Early 30s

The Nosferatu Zelios is nearly legendary in Transylvania. Many of the castles and other major architectural works in Eastern Europe (and even North Africa) were designed, if not supervised, by the master mason. A mansion of his design is a prized possession of Cainites; with Kindred needs in mind, Zelios constructs marvels of architecture, complete with secret rooms, passageways and escape routes that vampires find invaluable.

Architecture and the metaphysical study of structure have become the Nosferatu's obsession. He travels to influence architectural works, turning mediocre edifices into impressive ones and impressive ones into marvels, and to learn. He has studied every type of design, and knows the properties of every building material intimately. Transylvania is covered by a network of castles in Zelios' design, each haven touched by his architectural brilliance.

In the past few centuries, he has discovered that his designs incorporate something else, as well — something he hadn't intended. The patterns he creates have properties of warding symbols, and of Eastern *feng shui* rituals that promote the unobstructed flow of power, but are at the same time different from these. His castles naturally lie at the nexuses of the ley lines crossing Transylvania, reinforcing a mystical web with their geomantic designs.

Zelios has scoured the globe trying to decipher what he intuitively does in his designs. Not even the Followers of Set, with whom he has made several yet-uncollected boons in exchange for information, could give him enough occult

ALTERNATE RESOLUTION

Enterprising Storytellers may wish to change the written course of the *Transylvania Chronicles* by having another character become the vehicle for Octavio's quest. To that, we say: Kick ass!

The *Transylvania Chronicles* are not written in stone, and if the Storyteller wishes to impart more gravity on his troupe's characters, he's welcome to have Octavio allow one of them to diablerize him in Anatole's stead. This will require some significant work on the part of the Storyteller, but the end result may well be a more intense chronicle, and one in which the characters are tied even more closely to the fate of the world.

Octavio's "heir" need not be a Malkavian, though he is more likely to recognize the potential for insight in another Lunatic. If a character has demonstrated an inclination toward the mystical, if she possesses uncanny uniqueness, or if the player's just a damn fine role-player, any of these may make for a suitable story replacement.

With a bit of planning and forethought, a clever Storyteller can involve his players' character in the upcoming Gehenna with more gravity than they ever thought possible.

knowledge to completely reveal what he does. Unbeknownst to him, however, his actions are subtly dictated by a Nosferatu Methuselah, whose sleeping presence influences every work of architecture Zelios makes. Try as he might, Zelios has yet to discover this, and continues to search for the meaning behind his subconscious designs. He knows that the demon Kupala lies bound by his magic, but he has yet to comprehend the greater effect beyond this.

TOREADOR

FRANCOIS VILLON, PRINCE OF PARIS

Fifth Generation, child of Helena

Nature: Bravo

Demeanor: Gallant

Embrace: 1230

Apparent Age: late 30s

Although his name has changed several times throughout his long unlife, Francois Villon has rarely changed how he believes or operates. Embraced centuries after the collapse of the Roman Empire, Villon learned many valuable lessons from his sire, not the least of which was the benefit of constructing a legendary past. Villon also learned strong rule, and the necessity of a strict order to bring prosperity.

To that end, Francois Villon has carefully crafted a litany of contradictory origins. Claiming any number of heroic (and unverifiable) deeds as his own, Villon elevated himself above the rank and file of the Kindred, leaving behind those with no ambition or vision. Whether the tale involves slaying the Dragon at the side of St. George, crossing the Alps with Hannibal or watching Christ turn water to wine, Villon claims to have been there.

Villon is not, however, a pointlessly vain Kindred. Indeed, while many Kindred would have rested on the laurels established by their fictitious pasts, Villon used the power of his legend to amass power. So effective was he at turning others to his cause, he is considered the preeminent prince among the Camarilla to this very night. Villon's actual power, however, pales in comparison to his perceived power, and thus, his influence. He knows that a vampire can never truly "control" an aspect of mortal life, but he has no qualms about appearing as if he does. Thus, Francois Villon is a master of the game, able to outmaneuver an opponent many times his (actual) age or wealth.

And so, Francois Villon's eye fell on Paris, the natural home for those gifted in the art of social martialry. He entered the city at the end of the 16th century and immediately set about securing his dominant position, claiming Paris as his exclusive domain through a series of cunning exposes and courtly scandals. No Kindred had the ability or will to oppose him, and Francois soon became prince of Paris, wresting the position from one whom modern nights have unsurprisingly failed to remember.

Over time, his vision has altered. He is the embodiment of modern France. His strict control keeps every Kindred in line, and no younger Cainite can undertake a noteworthy event without his knowledge and blessing. Every vampire's herd in Paris is considered his as well, and every boon or blessing is partly owned by him. However, his regime of primogen has become parasites, leeching off human society and the lower ranks of Kindred and occupying its time with meaningless politicking and acts of debauchery. Francois has become blind to the underlying anger this breeds; he sees the strong ruling, and his leadership bringing order and structure to society. He can find no reason to change it, not even when the French Revolution explodes for Kindred and kine alike.

He will not make the same mistake twice.

NOEL DE ARTOIS

Ninth Generation, child of Sevacora

Nature: Innovator

Demeanor: Autocrat

Embrace: 1436

Apparent Age: 20s

In an age when nearly all men of importance, whether children of Cain or Seth, have titles, Noel de Artois' title of assistant to the deputy minister for Elysium and fellow of the chamber is a mocking tag that does him little good. Embraced by an influential Toreador of Paris, Noel initially found himself launched into the highest levels of the Kindred in France. He was even dispatched as a representative to Transylvania to try to acquire the last Cappadocian for the Sun King's court. With his small stature, his young face, and his innocent visage, everyone thought he could convince even the most stalwart Kindred to accept his offers.

However, this one and only failure cursed him for the rest of his unlife. Regardless of whether the characters turned over custody of Maria Asunción to him or not, in the final analysis he came back empty-handed to a court that gave him nothing but humiliation for his failure (exacerbated if the characters managed to keep whatever Noel offered them... he lost out even more, in that case). His sire also disappeared mysteriously during his travels, leaving him with no one to defend or protect him. Losing one of the most (in)famous figures in vampire history was quite a burden for one person to bear, and Noel had the responsibility heaped solely on his small shoulders by the merciless harpies. Over a century later, the stigma still hangs with him, and he holds his ludicrous titles.

CHEVALIER D'EGLANTINE, THE SHERIFF

Seventh Generation, child of Bernard

Nature: Gallant

Demeanor: Defender

Embrace: 1454

Apparent Age: early 30s

Chevalier d'Eglantine is the quintessential Toreador... and the quintessential sheriff. When observed, he holds himself with as much regal bearing as any other member of the prince's court, and if anyone challenges the establishment or breaks the order, his sword flies with the fury of a hardened soldier.

D'Eglantine's art, learned from the finest Toledan weaponsmiths, is the crafting of bladed weapons. His swords are works of art, deadly in both their beauty and accuracy; in the streets of Paris, more than one neonate has met Final Death standing stupidly with his enthralled eyes fixed on the gorgeous blade that severs his head from his neck. D'Eglantine is as skilled with his weapons' use as he is in their construction, as well, and he seldom hesitates to demonstrate this. His loyalty is beyond reproach; many whisper that he is secretly the thrall of the prince with his nearly blind devotion. Francois Villon decrees, and d'Eglantine executes without question.

AUDRIC ST. THIERRY, MASTER OF THE GAME

Eighth Generation, childe of Versancia

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Celebrant

Embrace: 1221

Apparent Age: early 40s

Audric's public façade of joyous flamboyance and affected topknots fools most, but not all, of the Kindred of France. In public, he plays the rôle of harpy perfectly, and though this gains him status in the eyes of the other Cainites, it also removes him from their suspicion. Can he critique other vampires? Indubitably. Does he act well in public? Impeccably. Can he play the political game? Well, let's not push it...

But this is exactly what Audric St. Thierry does. A fierce political rival of the Ventrue Joachim von Neumann (though both keep their shadowy feuds quietly out of the public eye), Audric is one of the financial powers in France. He has interests that delve in to every aspect of the French government and economy, and he conducts commerce through so many (and such well placed) intermediaries that few can trace his actions back to him. In the meantime, he plays his part in public as he privately watches the courts for his next targets... or partners.

TREMERE

CLAAS DRESCHER, THE AGENT

Eighth Generation, childe of Ardan of Golden Lane

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Embrace: 1170

Apparent Age: Early 40s

Claas' experiences encompass dozens of subjects, and in the time of the wars against the Tzimisce and Sabbat, he

has become one of the most invaluable Tremere residing in Ceoris. He has worked as a spy, masqueraded as a Ventrue, and has a powerful knowledge of the occult, knows numerous languages. He has connections with Germany and the Jewish community... virtually everything that the Tremere could possibly need in someone working in so many important areas for the clan.

His current duties encompass several momentous fronts. In mortal society, Claas participates in numerous diplomatic dealings between Hungary, Transylvania, and the Holy Roman Empire, employing his numerous contacts in the region of Germany. In Kindred society, he not only keeps track of the whereabouts of the known Tzimisce in Transylvania and helps conduct any attacks on them (and through this, he manages to acquire Dracula's sword from its legendary owner), but he also holds careful vigil for any news of the renegade Tremere Goratrix. He has many suspicions of Goratrix' whereabouts, and even the *antitribu* who are helping him, but so far he has been forbidden to interfere by Etrius in Vienna. He needs only to listen, watch and record. This has confused him in the past, but he obeys Vienna without question. Besides, he has been receiving a great deal of information about Goratrix and his brood from an unnamed informant, information that could convince Vienna to move on the rebel Tremere....

TZIMISCE

SASCHA VVKOS, THE CHAMELEON

Seventh Generation, childe of Symeon

Nature: Monster

Demeanor: Architect

Embrace: 1002

Apparent Age: mid 20s

Few elements of the "original" Myca are gone in her latest incarnation. Gradually sculpting her body over time, both out of vanity and necessity (the Tremere consider her one of their deadliest enemies), Sascha has changed more than just her appearance. She looks almost androgynous with her thin, smooth body and inhumanly graceful movements. Her face is impossibly beautiful, without a single deformity or asymmetry, and she engenders lust equally in both sexes with her almost irresistible aura. She is as deadly as she is ravishing; even in battle, her movements and attacks are erotically smooth and flawless, just like an angel of death.

Sascha has become an important leader in the Sabbat, first in Transylvania and then in Europe. She still harbors an ancient animosity, however; she refused to accept Goratrix, her historic foe, into the fold of the Sabbat even as her comrades did. However, she has found a way to kill two birds with one stone: Goratrix and the cursed Tremere both hate each other, and she can use that to destroy both of them. By covertly feeding information about Goratrix

and his followers to the Tremere in Vienna and Transylvania, Sascha is convinced that the clan will soon attack the group of *antitribu*. Goratrix' powers rival that of Tremere, and Sascha can see only bloodshed and severe loss for both sides. Little does she know how the Tremere will really use the information she provides... and how they will end the renegade problem in the centuries to come.

VLAD TEPEȘ, DRACULA

Fifth Generation, childe of Lambach

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Tyrant

Embrace: 1495

Apparent Age: mid 30s (although he was actually 43 at the time of his Embrace, Cainite vitae sustained a youthful appearance)

Dracula goes through many changes throughout the Sabbat wars, still centuries before his name becomes household and his legend sweeps through popular mortal literature. Although nominally allied with the Camarilla during the wars, he grew disenchanted with their strict regime and draconian tactics. He soon will become a powerful member of the Sabbat, then will tire of that sect as well and will remove himself from Kindred politics (at least, the open politics) by becoming Inconnu. Some say he is an enlightened vampire seeking Golconda; others say that is all a ruse, and he is truly as evil as the popular myths claim.

For more information on Dracula, see the Vampire supplements *Children of the Inquisition* (available for free download at the White Wolf website), *Transylvania Chronicles II: Son of the Dragon* and *Children of the Night*.

VENTRUE

ROLAND

Tenth Generation, childe of Otto

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Gallant

Embrace: 1103

Apparent Age: late 20s

Roland once devotedly served the Ventrue of Transylvania. Originally a gift from a Setite, Roland possessed ample abilities both to spy on rivals and to procure virtually any type of mortal to satiate the jaded Kindred Bulscu's ravenous thirsts. The Holy Roman Ventrue who truly commanded his allegiance used him to keep an eye on Bulscu. Roland was a toy at every level to his clan.

During the chaos of the anarch revolt, Roland was captured. He never learned the names of his *antitribu* captors, but they forced him to divulge everything he knew about Bulscu, the Holy Roman Ventrue, and the other elders in the area. He was discarded as soon as his torture was over. (They didn't even diablerize him! Wasn't

that what the anarchists did to their prisoners?) When he heard of Bulscu's self-induced torpor, he was sure that it was a result of his information. The Holy Roman Ventrue agreed, and when they found Roland they punished him with profound censure.

Without allies, Roland found the anarch revolt and the Sabbat wars very dangerous. No one trusted him, least of all Ventrue. However, he finally found a home with the clan of his original lords, the Setites. Count Jocalo took him in, and soon Roland gave the Serpent his undivided loyalty. He has recently won back the (limited) trust of the Ventrue Vencel Rikard, but as he reported to the Holy Roman Ventrue in the past while serving Bulscu, he now reports to Count Jocalo as he attempts to regain his status in the Ventrue clan.

JOACHIM VON NEUMANN

Ninth Generation, childe of Cartagio

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Autocrat

Embrace: 1502

Apparent Age: mid 30s

Although Joachim von Neumann places a great deal of emphasis on control, as many Ventrue do, he in truth has very little of it. Nothing of his known unlife reveals this, however. Despite the Toreador stranglehold on France, Joachim has managed to survive and flourish in the courts of Paris and Versailles. He has amassed a small fortune and a prestigious political powerbase in the land of Enlightenment, and enjoys the status and influence his position brings.

However, his secrets gnaw at him every night. His family, a line of ghouls and retainers for many powerful Ventrue down the years, is overshadowed by many dark promises. In reality, Joachim knows little about those promises; his great-grandfather/sire has never seen fit to tell him, and Joachim has not seen him in over a century. All he knows is that his sire, or his sire's sire, or *someone* made an oath long ago to a very old and very, very powerful Nosferatu. The boon has passed to him and his entire family, and he only knows a small part of what it entails: He must protect certain Nosferatu when they ask him in the correct way, and he must safeguard several ancient tomes and tablets. He can't even decipher them, but he is expected to protect them with his unlife.

And now, of all people, the young son of one of his descendants accidentally *stole* some of the tomes! He even killed a man while fleeing, and somehow ended up in the Bastille during the riots... and now Joachim has no idea where he is. He only knows that such a failure will not sit well with his masters... whoever they truly are.



CHAPTER SIX: STORYTELLING THE CHRONICLE OF AGES

Old age is not so bad when you consider the alternatives.
—Maurice Chevalier

For *Dark Tides Rising* and *Son of the Dragon*, the storytelling information was structured for younger, developing characters who were still considered fledglings in Kindred society. However, in *Ill Omens*, the characters are significantly older... and far less likely to do anything outside their personal interests without a damn good reason. This can give any Storyteller untold headaches when developing stories. On the other hand, elder Kindred cannot develop and learn with the ease of their juniors. Vampires at the characters' ages experience many side effects of eternal life that are not necessarily advantageous or beneficial. This chapter gives several systems and guidelines to reflect these changes in the characters, and make the Storyteller's job a little easier.

GETTING ELDERS INVOLVED

The characters have worked their entire unives to reach this pinnacle of vampiric existence. At nearly 500 years of age, they are elders of their sects. They likely influence cities, perhaps even countries. Princes and nobles are their bedfellows, and untold ghouls and childer do their bidding. Few things could hope to harm, let alone destroy, them.

With this status, however, elder characters tend to go their own ways. The group's Ventrue may want to stay in his city to mold it into a hub of international trade, while the Tremere is determined to plumb the mysteries of the forbidden East. The Brujah *antiribu* wants to stake his claim in North

ADVANCING TIME: CHANGING SYSTEMS

There is no hard and fast rule for when *Vampire: the Dark Ages* is "officially" superseded by *Vampire: the Masquerade*, revised edition. However, as game time marches on and new questions arise, it is obvious that many of the *Dark Ages*' rules no longer apply. How many guards still wear full suits of armor in the 18th century? Who still studies Archery or Hearth Wisdom (except in extremely rural areas)? When does True Faith noticeably begin to weaken? Some mention of this was made in *Son of the Dragon*, but Storytellers who have not yet made the crossover are encouraged to do so.

The Storyteller should be the ultimate arbiter of when and how she wants to replace the rules by which her troupe plays. Will it be an abrupt transformation? The players may find all the rules have changed when their characters wake up from torpor and themselves find that the world has altered around them. Or will it be a gradual meshing so the players hardly notice until one realizes that all the mechanics are different? Regardless of the decision, however, this installment of *Transylvania Chronicles* is the time to make it. The last installment will bring the characters to the modern World of Darkness, and the characters (and players) need to start preparing for it.

America, and it's unlikely the Gangrel will do anything beyond defending his domain from encroaching civilization. In short, no one may give a rat's ass about the plot the Storyteller has labored to create... it will take time out of the players' own machinations for their characters.

Storytellers have several weapons in their arsenals to keep a chronicle going despite the arrogance and self-centeredness of elders. The first, and undoubtedly best, approach is to talk to the players. Ask them where they want to go with their characters, and request that they stay within a few broad guidelines to keep them from wandering too far away from the storyline. Also, a Storyteller should be open to changing her plans to accommodate the players. Nothing says that a Storyteller has to sacrifice her entire story, but the best path to a satisfying chronicle resolution doesn't necessarily involve whacking the players' characters in the head with sticks to keep them on a linear story track. A player's ideas just might reveal a better way to get there. With a little compromise from both sides, elders can be kept "in the loop" of a Storyteller's Chronicle without sacrificing their sense of freedom.

However, things aren't always that easy. In situations where simple discussion just won't cut it, the Storyteller may have to pull out a few tricks to keep an elder from derailing the storyline. Done right, the following tactics will help the players stay interested (and their characters involved) without making them feel fenced in.

When the advancing shadow of Gehenna and the oncoming Final Nights are not enough to pique the characters' interest alone, a very effective gambit is to "make it personal." Take a Storyteller character in *III Omens* and have her make a move on one of the character's holdings, or kill one of the character's childer when he gets too close to some secret. Or, better yet, tailor a Storyteller character of your own to drop into your chronicle — one who does something particularly nefarious to the character or coterie. Giving the characters an enemy, one who is their equivalent age and power level (or just a bit stronger), can drag just about any wayward elder into the fray. This can also humble an arrogant character; they aren't the only old Kindred around, and there's always someone out there that can play the game a little better. (That said, be wary of constantly escalating the power level of "archvillains" who serve no purpose other than to foil the characters' endeavors. These characters cannot exist in a vacuum; their motivations should sometimes bring them into conflict with the coterie. Do not resort to the comic-book tactic of creating a legion of anti-characters — such plot devices lack credibility and result in the loss of a player's emotional investment in her character.) Even if a character couldn't care less about visiting France to gain knowledge of Gehenna or to destroy the old regime, he'll be overjoyed to head there if his immortal enemy is cowering there.

Conversely, allies such as childer and ghouls can also steer an elder into a story. Most elders do very little to actively promote their plans, preferring to manipulate through proxies and pawns. Ironically, this gives the Storyteller a good tool to get them involved. The character's childer may have had aspirations of hammering out his own domain, but has made a supreme mess out of it... dragging not only her reputation down, but that of her sire as well. The character needs to get involved just to clean up the mess his underling has made. Forgotten boons or favors can also be used as leverage tactics to motivate an uncooperative elder.

If none of these methods seem viable, the Storyteller can always send an uninvolved character into torpor so she will "sleep" through the portion of the Chronicle that does not concern her. There are benefits as well as drawbacks to this; they are explained more fully in the section on torpor below.

In some extreme cases, nothing may seem to work... or, worse still, more than one or two characters may not want to cooperate. At this point, the Storyteller needs to step back and re-examine her chronicle. A story needs to be entertaining to the players; if they enjoy it, they'll make their characters get involved on their own.

THE LEARNING CURVE

Over even the short span of human existence, it is the young who tend to produce and embrace new ideas, while the old try to cling to time-tested ideas. For vampires, this is compounded by an eternal existence. Elders find it harder and harder to accept, or even understand, anything new. Learning new skills or knowledges, and improving existing ones, becomes increasingly difficult.

This change in an elder's ability to learn is reflected by increased costs for increasing traits. Below is a chart that shows how much it costs, based on the age of the character, to raise Attributes, Abilities and Disciplines. This increase applies to both experience and maturation point expenditures. (See below for more information on maturation points.)

For example, *Aerthies*, a 400-year-old Ventrue wants to learn the fourth level of Fortitude. It costs him his current rating, 4, times 6, per the modifier for his age on the table, experience points for a total of 24. A younger Ventrue may have learned the Discipline for only 20 points, but a younger Ventrue would not have been undead and static for so long.

VOLUNTARY TORPOR

As Kindred approach more advanced ages, the cold slumber of the earth becomes nearly commanding in its tenacity, and it can't be ignored indefinitely. Older vampires disappear into a form of torpor that lasts anywhere from decades to centuries, rejuvenating and regaining a small bit of the fascination with existence that they lost over the years.

Age	Up to 200 years	201-350 years	351-500 years	501-750 years	751+ years
New Ability	3	4	5	6	7
New Thaumaturgy Path	7	8	9	10	11
New Discipline	10	11	12	13	14
Humanity/Road	CRx2	CRx3	CRx3	CRx4	CRx5
Virtue	CRx2	CRx3	CRx3	CRx4	CRx4
Ability	CRx2	CRx3	CRx4	CRx4	CRx5
Attribute	CRx4	CRx4	CRx5	CRx5	CRx6
Thaumaturgy Path	CRx4	CRx4	CRx4	CRx5	CRx5
Clan Discipline	CRx5	CRx5	CRx6	CRx6	CRx7
Other Discipline	CRx7	CRx8	CRx8	CRx9	CRx10

* CR=Current Rating

Age torpor, sometimes called "voluntary" torpor, should ideally be used as a storytelling element. If the characters are members of different sects, or one or two characters have no good reason to take part in a series of stories, then the Storyteller may suggest that the uninvolved characters fall into torpor. This is not a reason to exclude those *players* from the game; they can play ghouls or childer of the active characters.

For a more mechanics-oriented approach to age torpor, the Storyteller can have the players roll their Humanity (or Road, or Path) ratings against a difficulty of 8 at every half-millennium age, or at some other story-appropriate point. Each success allows the characters to hold off the call of the earth for 50 years... no one can avoid the call forever. At the end of this time period, they must make the Humanity roll again.



Humanity (or Road/Path)	Length of Torpor
10	One year
9	Two years
7-8	Five years
5-6	One decade
3-4	Two decades
2	Five decades
1	One century
0	Indefinitely

Those who fail or botch the roll enter age torpor. The length of torpor is determined by a character's Humanity rating, though the duration is different than damage-caused torpor. The vampire is not recuperating from wounds; her supernatural body is simply replenishing itself. Kindred do not need to spend blood nightly while in age torpor; they are considered in hibernation for the duration.

A character may spend Willpower to shorten the amount of time spent in age torpor; each point spent upon entering torpor halves its duration. Characters should be cautioned against spending the majority (or all) of their Willpower to reduce their time in torpor as much as possible. A sleeping elder is a valuable target to Sabbat, anarchs and childer; if the character's location is found out, it pays to wake up with a little more mental capacity than a semisentient vegetable.

The Storyteller may also adjust the time spent in torpor to fit in with her chronicle (and to correspond with the dates of the acts in *Ill Omens*). Since the Storyteller knows each character's Humanity ratings in advance, and probably how they will react to the prospect of stepping out of society for awhile, she can plan around or incorporate age torpor into her story plans.

Many characters won't want to enter age torpor. They lose direct control of their assets for possibly a very long time. It definitely puts a kink to whatever plans they had in mind, plans that probably didn't include taking an extended nap. Not all is bad, however; vampires normally awake from torpor more powerful than when they entered the earth. During age torpor, all trait development (except Backgrounds, which are inaccessible) costs only 75 percent of its normal value, rounded up, in maturation or experience points. At the Storyteller's discretion, the experience penalties for advanced age may be reduced for vampires that have entered age torpor.

MATURATION AND EXPERIENCE

In the *Transylvania Chronicles*, there are vast periods of game time that are not covered by events directly related to the story. The Storyteller and the characters

have 180 years to fill in between the end of *Son of the Dragon* and the first Act of *Ill Omens*, 40 years between Acts I and II, and 80 between II and III. This is a significant amount of game time, even for vampires, and some of the most drastic events in Kindred society take place during these unaccounted stretches.

Most likely, neither Storyteller nor player will want to roleplay through nightly existence during these intervening years, or even a significant proportion of it. For these time stretches where the characters exist and develop but aren't roleplayed, the *Transylvania Chronicles* have a maturation system that can be used to represent the intervening time.

Maturation points are rewarded simply for existing and, presumably, learning or developing in some way. They are used like experience points to purchase new Traits or develop existing Traits, but with a very important difference: If the maturation points are not used, they are lost. Maturation points cannot be saved for later use like experience points can. Also, characters do not receive as many maturation points as they would experience points for actual roleplaying. Presumably, the instances that bring the characters the most chance for development are active parts of the chronicle; downtime is as much a lull for the characters as their players, and there are correspondingly fewer opportunities to learn and mature.

Maturation points are awarded in rough correspondence to the amount of downtime the characters experience.

Years of Downtime	Maturation Points
1-100	1-15
101-250	16-25
251-500	26-40

There are very few times that a character will ever have more than 500 years of downtime. The Storyteller awards maturation points depending on what actions the character takes during the break in the story. If the Tremere character simply holes herself up in a chantry while the Sabbat ravages through her territory for 25 years, this is worth, perhaps, one or two maturation points; the Tremere learns little more than how damp her chantry becomes in the wintertime. However, should that same Tremere put all her effort into toppling a local Trimisce from his well-entrenched principedom, this is worth substantially more... and possibly a Storytelling session or two, as well. In the end, it is the Storyteller's decision how many maturation points to award characters, depending on how active they are.

Maturation points are spent in the same way as experience points, with the same costs for trait development. However, they cannot be used to develop Background Traits through the Fortune Paths described below. Only awarded experience points can affect these ratings.

FORTUNE PATHS

Some of the least expensive Traits for characters to buy are Backgrounds. They are also extremely valuable: Backgrounds determine everything from how much money the

character has, to how much information he can get on short notice, to whether he survives an anarchy attack bent on diablerie (if you had just had a dot or two of Retainers...).

Backgrounds are inexpensive, however, because they are inherently unstable. Most of this is due to the very nature of vampiric existence. Few Allies, Contacts or Herds can survive even a significant portion of a Kindred's unlife. No source of Influence or Resources remains unchanged (and unmolested) century after century. And Status can change just as quickly and drastically as it does in the mortal world. The only stable Background is Generation; though it can't fall, the character cannot spend points to raise it. He must commit diablerie to change his generation, and such drastic efforts often have dire consequences.

The Fortune Path system allows characters the opportunity to change their Background ratings, based on their plans for their characters. The system does not guarantee a ratings increase, or even to keep it at the same level; part of trying to increase one's influence involves risking that influence, and other parties can take advantage of that. The Fortune Path system leaves the final outcome to the roll of the dice.

The system may not yield immediately logical results ("What! My Finance-5, Intelligence-4 Master-of-Everything-Economic Venture lost two Resource dots? He's gonna get laughed outta the guild!") However, it encourages players to take a more proactive role in developing their characters, leading them through Storytelling sessions instead of leaving Background development to downtime. It also helps them to make more well-rounded characters and not invest their entire character's focus on a few sets of high Traits and dice rolls.

THE SYSTEM

Below are listed the Backgrounds that characters can attempt to raise through the Fortune Paths system. For each 50 year period of game time that passes, a character may pick one Background she wishes to affect, and roll on the table below to see what happens. This is a free roll; the character does not have to spend any points to get this. If she wants, the character may spend three additional experience (not maturation) points to roll for a second Background. For an additional six, the character can try her luck on yet a third table. On top of this, the character may spend up to three experience points on each roll, even the one for the freebie Background. Each experience point spent this way gives a +1 to that die roll (for a maximum of +3). Naturally, for a massive experience point expenditure, the character can greatly improve her odds that she won't lose something, but she still isn't guaranteed she will gain anything either.

Just as with any other situation, the Storyteller has the ability to assign other modifiers to this role. Perhaps the next part of the story depends on one of the characters losing some Influence; the Storyteller can apply negatives to insure a loss (or at least to insure no gain, despite the character dumping a lot of experience into the roll) or simply apply the loss without a roll.

Regardless of what happens to the characters' Backgrounds, the outcomes can be used to come up with some interesting storytelling opportunities. When the Nosferatu loses his entire Herd mysteriously, or the Malkavian suddenly experiences a meteoric increase in his Resources for no discernible reason, this may involve the troupe in all sorts of interesting plots. Sometimes a group of results can inspire a story on its own. ("Despite all our efforts, none of us could increase our Status... maybe the Justicar is plotting with the harpies to keep us down. Let's investigate!")

The Fortune Paths for each Background are found below. The paths themselves are simple and exact, only stating whether dots were gained or lost. Storytellers can explain the results with whatever justification they can come up with. Possible disasters and rationales are listed in previous installments of the *Transylvania Chronicles*, so any Storyteller who is having a dry idea day can consult those books for starting points. The Storyteller, of course, is also at liberty to ignore, change, or re-roll any result that violates common sense or simply goes against what she wants to take place in her chronicle.

With the characters' advanced ages and experience, it is quite likely that one or more of their Background Traits threaten to rise (or already has risen) above 5. To avoid completely unbalancing the game, the Storyteller needs to decide if there is an upper limit, if any, to Background Traits. Ratings over 5 become global in scope and power, which is rarely the result of dice-governed blind luck. Additionally, many chronicles are not equipped to deal with such an omnipresent character. More information on Background scores exceeding 5 can be found in *War of Ages*.

ALLIES

1: Extreme Disaster. Lose 2 Allies.

2-3: Disaster. Lose 1 Ally.

4-6: No change.

7-9: Gain 1 Ally. The character can either select a specific type of Ally, or roll randomly for an Ally on the Influence Specialization Chart (see below) to see which Influence the Ally is involved in. The Storyteller should decide whether the character may gain a specific Ally or must roll for one randomly.

10: Gain 2 Allies. The character again rolls on the Influence Specialization Chart, except she rolls twice (once for each Ally).

CONTACTS

1: Extreme Disaster. Lose 2 Contacts.

2-3: Disaster. Lose 1 Contact.

4-6: No change.

7-9: Gain 1 Contact. Just like Allies, the character may roll on the Influence Specialization Chart to see what type of Influence the Contact is involved in. The character may also pick what kind of contact she gains if the Storyteller allows.

10: Gain 2 Contacts. The same as above, except the character rolls twice on the chart.

HERD

- 1: Extreme disaster. Lose 2 points of Herd.
- 2-3: Disaster. Lose 1 point of Herd.
- 4-5: No change.
- 6-8: Gain 1 point of Herd.
- 9-10: Gain 2 points of Herd.

INFLUENCE

1: Extreme Disaster. Lose 2 points of Influence. If this brings the character's Influence into the negative, she now has negative Influence. Mortals and institutions have heard of the character's bad reputation, and actively avoid contact with her. The further the character's Influence dips below 0, the worse it affects her, possibly spreading to colleagues. The only way to bring her Influence back to 0 or above is to roll on this chart again in the future or counteract the reputation through storytelling.

2-3: Disaster. Lose 1 point of Influence. The results for negative Influence are the same as above.

4-6: No change. At least the character doesn't have negative Influence.

7-9: Gain 1 point of Influence. Roll on the Influence specialization chart below or, with Storyteller's permission, choose the type of Influence gained.

10: Gain 2 points of Influence. The same as above, except the character rolls twice on the chart.

Influence Specialization Chart

- This chart can be used to determine what part of society a character's new Contact, Ally or Influence comes from. Some of these cross over or reach into the same types of influence; this represents real life, giving different means to the same ends. Roll a 10-sided die for each point of Background gained.

1 **Aristocratic/Bureaucratic:** You hold sway over, or have connections in, one of the ruling families in the area, or the less flashy (but far from impotent) bureaucracies of a country. Though the aristocratic form of government will not truly atrophy until after the French Revolution, the tide of bureaucratic leadership can be seen rising behind the monarchies of Europe. At this time, both types can provide roughly the same services or information (access to courts, protection of titles and lands), though through different routes.

2 **Church:** The Church's influence, constantly in a tug-of-war with the secular governments of Europe, has slowly been eroding. However, it still holds a very important part in life and leadership. It can deflect the Inquisition, give considerable occult knowledge or provide a great deal of dirt on just about anybody. (People still confess, you know.)

3 **Natural Resources:** This power comes from your control of some crucial item. Ore, gold, water, salt... virtually anything that is in scarce supply somewhere. If this is gained as a Contact or Ally, then this acquaintance is not



specifically linked to a resource, he simply knows who controls (or who wants) any type of natural resource.

4 Fashion: Your whims sway trends. If you pay artists to sculpt in Greco-Roman style, that's the only style that can be found anywhere; if nothing but red silk graces your closet, anyone wearing anything else is ridiculed. Contacts and Allies in this area can inform you of anything from trends to parties. Additionally, this Influence may be used to make or break the social Influences of others.

5 Mercantile: Guilds, merchants and traders are under your close scrutiny. If needed, you can make sure a loan doesn't go through, or that a crucial shipment arrives on someone's doorstep in remarkable time. Allies and Contacts in this area are an invaluable source of information, as traders have been just about everywhere (and have dealt with just about everyone).

6 Military: A raised militia or levied force gives its alliance to you, or to someone you control. They will defend your estates and your person if necessary, and can often be used as a helpful weapon against rivals. Military Contacts and Allies give accurate estimates of army strength, plans and leaders, which can be invaluable in a continent so geared toward conflict.

7 Political: Your bed is home to all the right people. You may be a guild spokesman, a member of an important council, or you may have the ear of someone who is. Many lucrative favors are at your command. Contacts and Allies are invaluable in politics, as they know dirt on anyone who plays the game.

8 Reputation: Personal reputation gives you your influence. Your name is instantly identifiable as a pinnacle of some type: the respected sage, the well-known banker, or the caring bishop. Many people ask for your advice or opinion. A reputable Contact or Ally is also a well-respected person who can offer you such advice freely.

9 Academic: You are the patron of a university or college and correspond with noted scholars. Your grants or requests can destroy old knowledges, alter philosophies, or seek out answers to arcane questions. Academic Contacts and Allies can give you the latest thoughts and theories of scholars, or access to ancient texts.

10 Choose one of the above categories or decide on your own.

MENTOR

1-3: Disaster. Lose your mentor.

4-6: No change.

7-9: Gain one point in Mentor. If you already have a mentor, then this mentor has gained new knowledge or power.

10: Gain 2 points in Mentor.

RESOURCES

1-2: Extreme Disaster. Lose 2 points of Resources.

3-4: Disaster. Lose 1 point of Resources.

5-6: No change.

7-9: Gain 1 point in Resources.

10: Gain 2 points in Resources.

RETAINERS

1-2: Extreme Disaster. All your retainers are killed or lost.

3-4: Disaster. Lose 1 retainer.

5-7: No change.

8: Gain 1 retainer.

9: Gain 2 retainers.

10: Gain a special retainer. This retainer is exceptional in some way: a Lupine blood bound to you, a mage, a cagey infernalist, virtually anything the Storyteller can come up with. This is not an excuse to bring exotic or exceptionally supernatural retainers into the game, but an opportunity to bring something unexpected, and not entirely controlled, into the game. Even elders need a little excitement.

STATUS

Status is best to use as a Storyteller-controlled trait than something to roll for during downtime. A character's actions and decisions dictate her Status more than a lucky 10 and a few experience points. The Storyteller can change a character's Status according to her actions as she sees fit. However, in the interest of completeness, we are including a Status table in the Fortune Paths. The Storyteller may decide whether to use it or not.

1-2: Extreme Disaster. Lose 2 points of Status. Oops.

3-4: Disaster. Lose 1 point of Status.

5-6: No change.

7-9: Gain 1 point of Status.

10: Gain 2 points of Status.

OTHER DOWNTIME TECHNIQUES

Rather than reprinting pages of previously published material, we encourage Storytellers to adapt the systems from *Dark Tides Rising* and *Son of the Dragon*. Bluebooking exercises, interludes, snapshots of time, Merit and Flaw adjustments—all of these are valuable and viable options for a Storyteller to make use of during the *Transylvania Chronicles*. We've opted to present more new material at the expense of reiterating some devices in this book, but Storytellers should feel free to use any and all of the previously suggested tools.





APPENDIX: KNOWLEDGE OF THE AGES

Once the game is over, the king and the pawn go back in the same box.
— Italian Proverb

This historical timeline is more for general time-keeping, rather than backgrounds and ideas for stories. Storytellers can use the timeline to keep track of Kindred events as they occurred in relation to kine history, and also to reference dates of the most important changes in society and mortal beliefs. If one of the cited incidents arouses your interest, study it in the books listed in the

reference list; this list is by no means enough information from which to create an accurate or complete adventure. It is also heavy on Kindred history and pertains less to mortal achievements, which should be researched for inclusion in your chronicle.

Cainite history is listed in italicized print and marked with two dots (••).

TIMELINE

- 1492: Columbus discovers the island of Hispaniola in the New World.

- 1493: *The Council of Thorns convenes in Silchester, England. The Anarch Revolt ends, and the Assamites are subjected by a Tremere ritual to end their practice of diablerie.*

- 1495: *Dracula forces the Tzimisce Lambach to embrace him.*

- 1500: *The beginning of the High Renaissance. Attacks in Spain and Transylvania against the Camarilla begin, and are attributed to a new sect named the Sabbat.*

- 1514: *A major peasant revolt breaks out in Transylvania. The Ottomans slowly surround the nation.*

- 1517: *Martin Luther posts his 95 Theses in Wittenberg.*

- 1520-1530: *The Tremere gradually move from Ceoris to a new chantry in Vienna.*

- 1526: *Parts of Hungary fall to the advancing Turks. Transylvania is put under Ottoman vassalage.*

- 1529: *The Turks besiege Vienna. The siege ends in failure.*

- 1532: *The Prince by Machiavelli is published in Italy.*

- 1541: *Ferdinand of Habsburg attempts to take the vacant Hungarian throne. The Ottomans attack in response, taking control of Buda.*

- 1550: *In France, the Twilight Cult is formed.*

- 1560: *The Ventrue of Transylvania begin implementing a more rigid hierarchy in their cities. This helps them maintain control during Sabbat Crusades and ferret out Sabbat spies. The practice quickly spreads to other Camarilla cities across Europe.*

- 1566: *The Ottoman sultan decrees that all Transylvanian princes must be approved by him after appointment by the Diet.*

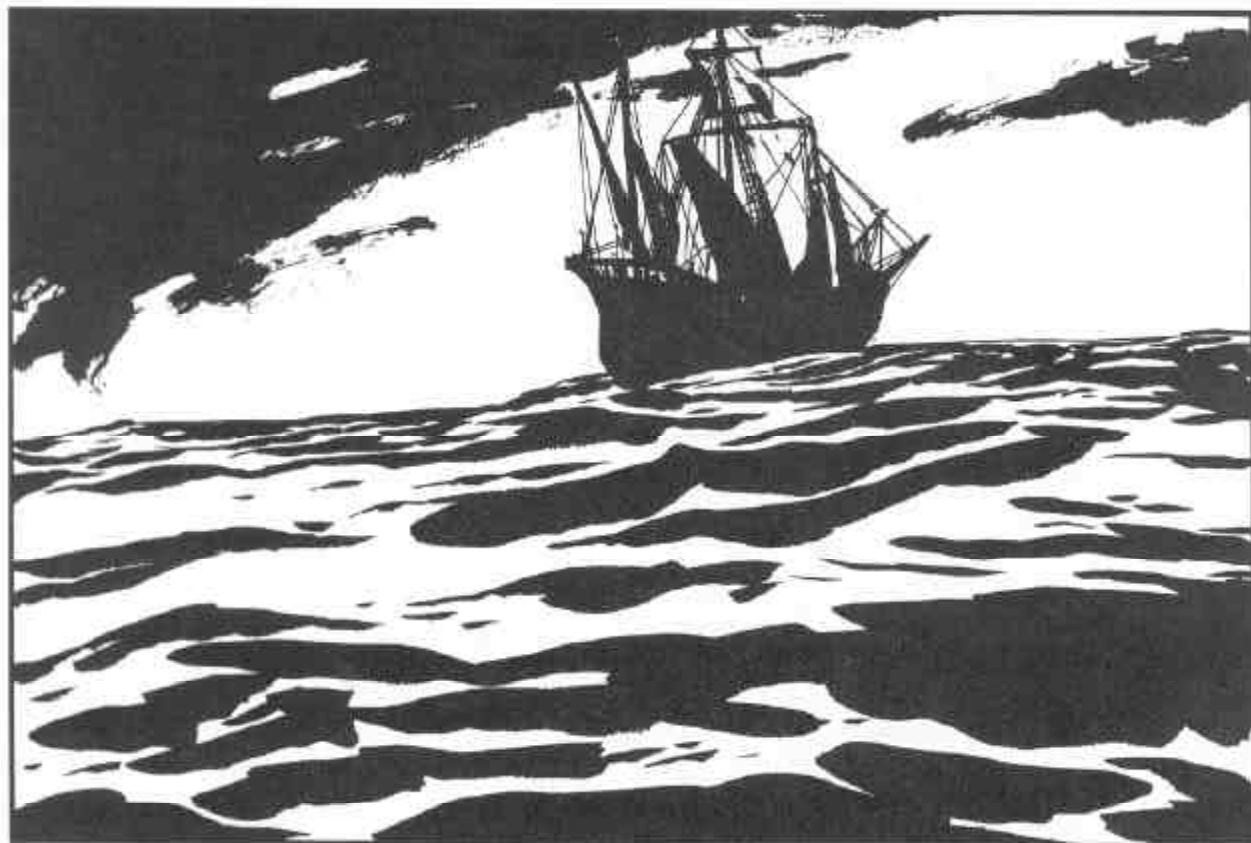
- 1595: *Shakespeare writes Romeo and Juliet*

- 1599: *Michael the Brave unites Transylvania, Moldavia and Tara Romaneasca under one rule for the first time. He revolts against the Turks.*

- 1600: *It becomes clear the Sabbat is losing its war against the Camarilla. Cities under Sabbat control fall on nearly every front, and Sabbat leaders begin fleeing to Scandinavia.*

- 1601: *Michael the Brave is assassinated. His union of the three Romanian countries quickly dissolves.*

- 1618: *The Thirty Years' War begins. Gabriel Bethlen, Prince of Transylvania, fights against the Habsburgs during the conflict.*



- 1632: Galileo Galilei is tried for heresy by the Roman Inquisition.

- 1650: Younger Sabbat start traveling to the New World in droves, trying to keep the Camarilla from gaining control of the Americas.

- 1659: Gheorghe Craciun begins a religion-inspired revolt that ends dismally. The Turks tighten their control over Transylvania, and use it as a staging area for an attack on Vienna.

- 1660: The Sabbat begins researching and codifying what will one night become the Paths of Enlightenment.

- 1680: Ambrogio Giovanni proudly announces that the last member of the Cappadocian line has been destroyed.

- 1683: The Ottoman Empire again sieges Vienna, and are again defeated. The Habsburgs pursue the Turks as they retreat from Hungary and Transylvania.

- 1687: The Habsburgs gain control of Transylvania with the Treaty of Blaj.

- 1692: The Salem Witch Trials take place in Salem, Massachusetts.

- 1703: Ferencz Rakoczi II begins a revolt against the Habsburgs in Transylvania. His revolt is put down by 1711.

- 1710: The Malkavian Anatole diablerizes Octavio.

- 1737: The first in a series of minor revolts sweeps Transylvania. Other revolts take place in 1744, 1759 and 1784.

- 1750: The Tremere, after three centuries of compiling a list of suspected traitors to the clan, ritually curse the antitribu with a symbol that all Tremere can see.

- 1789: The French Revolution begins. Anarchs, with the help of younger Sabbat, lend support to the revolution and spur it on.

- 1793: Robespierre's Reign of Terror begins. In fear, many Camarilla elders flee France.

- 1799: Napoleon Bonaparte takes control of France.

THE SWORD OF DRACULA

This powerful relic holds a great deal of mystery in this chronicle. Its history and powers are never fully disclosed to the characters, though they see it and may even possess it for a short time. The sword takes on a greater mystery the less the characters know; little save what is necessary should be revealed about it. However, Storytellers are meant to know far more than the players. (That's what makes their job so fun.)

The sword of Dracula is a broadsword of the finest quality, with a shining blade set into an ornate hilt. Many

Eastern and koldunic symbols are etched along the length of the blade, and multicolored jewels are inset into the guard and hilt. It was forged by Vlad Dracul, Dracula's father, with the help of the Ravnos Durga Syn and her knowledge of the demon Kupala. Vlad Dracul made the sword specifically to slay Kupala, the malevolent servants of the greater demon. The sword deals aggravated damage to all supernatural entities; its detailed properties are listed below.

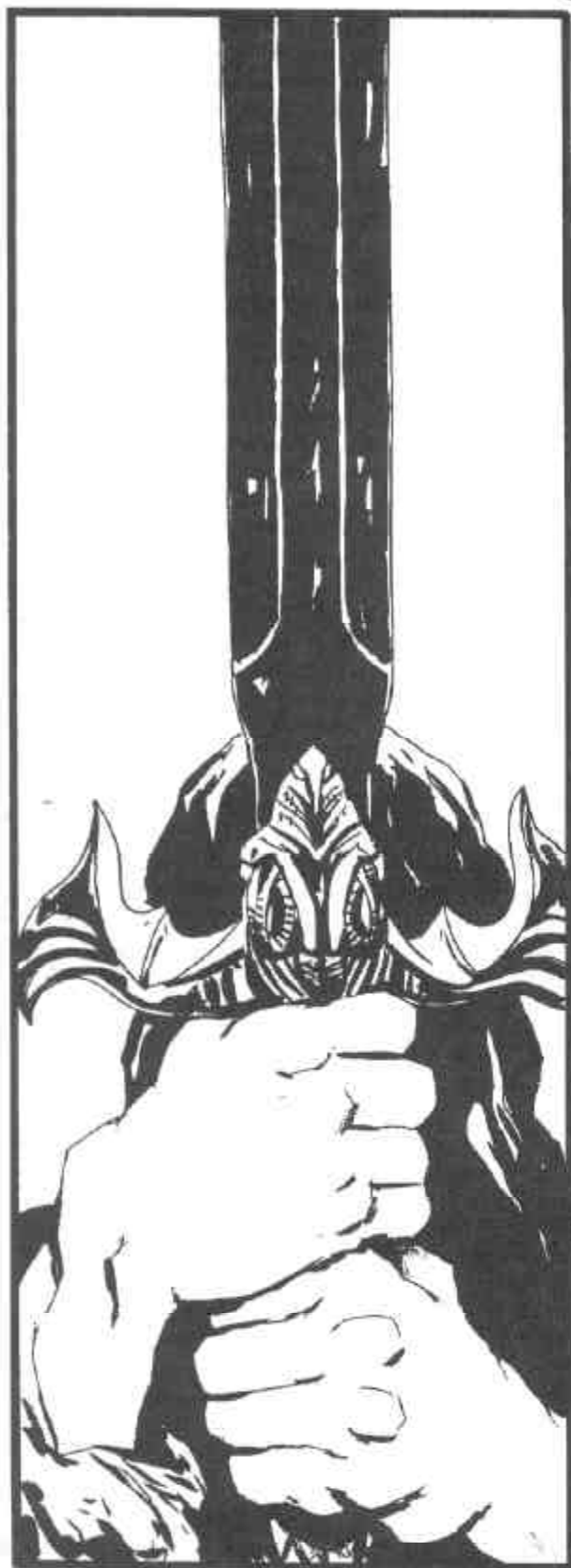
The sword also possesses several innate abilities. Durga Syn always saw Vlad Dracul, and later his son Vlad Tepes, as excellent candidates for the Embrace, so she designed the sword with powers that would benefit a Cainite who possessed it. For each health level of damage the sword causes, it absorbs one blood point from the victim. This is very disconcerting to watch; the blade visibly darkens as it takes in the blood, fading from a shiny silver to a deep crimson. No blood spills from the wounds it causes, since the sword absorbs all blood that would normally gush from the cut.

One blood point at a time can be released by touching a small jewel set into the hilt. The blood slowly seeps from the blade in drops. The blood stays fresh for as long as the sword contains it, making it a very effective means of transporting vitae. It is not known if there is a limit to how much blood it can hold, though Kindred must be wary when drinking from it. If the sword has slain other vampires, Lupines or changelings, it may contain the blood of those creatures. The effects of such vitae are still intact, and it is impossible to "select" the blood that is ejected from the sword. All the blood is mixed together, so each blood point consumed is a mixture of all the blood the sword has absorbed.

The weapon's second innate power is its ability to commit a type of diablerie on those it slays. The sword must deliver the killing blow for it to do this. This effect was originally intended to aid in destroying Kupala; it absorbed part of the essence of the entities, thereby denying Kupala a chance to return to wreak havoc. The essence of the minor demons could then be ritually disposed of with little risk. The sword does not capture a soul or any other usable measurement of existence; the essence it takes in cannot be communicated with, bound or diablerized by a Kindred. However, faint voices can be heard echoing from the blade if it has slain a great number of entities. These voices likewise cannot be understood, but the chorus of sighs and whispers can be very disturbing when heard emanating from the sword.

Dracula inherited the sword from his father, but never used it in battle, displaying it instead in his castle as a work of art. He did not realize its powers until he met Durga Syn many years later. After his Embrace, he found the sword to be invaluable for many of his koldunic rituals and for storing vitae.

Weapon	Damage	Concealment	Minimum Strength
Dracula's Sword	Strength + 5 (aggravated)	L	3



Eventually, the Tremere of Transylvania learned of the sword and its powers. Not only was it a mystic relic of Eastern and *koldunic* origin, it also possessed abilities that would aid in countless Thaumaturgical rituals. The target was far too tempting. Ardan of Golden Lane and Claas succeeded in stealing the sword from Dracula (after sending several spies to grisly Final Deaths), and managed to do so without the Impaler finding out who was responsible. However, they needed a way to control the sword if Dracula, or any other Kindred, reacquired it. Claas wove a Thaumaturgical ritual into the sword, warping its abilities so they would react uncontrollably when activated by a specific command word. The sword would eject all its stored vitae in one torrent, and discharge all the essence it contained with a loud shriek. He wanted to place more safeguards, but he feared that any more tampering would be noticeable.

Dracula, meanwhile, stumbled upon lore in one of his father's old castles detailing the demon Kupala, complete with summoning rituals and ways to break the web that bound Kupala to the Transylvanian soil. Misinterpreting the demon as a potent but benevolent spirit of the land, Dracula decided to summon it and use its powers to regain control of the potent magical soil of Transylvania, as he had done in his mortal life. The first step was to weaken the geomantic web; one of the symbols forming the web was etched into the walls of his very castle, and he wasted no time in destroying it. He still needed 100 innocent victims to complete the rituals, however, and the most effective way to undertake it was by using his sword. He then engaged in a thorough hunt for the weapon, and after finding it, set out to perform the ritual. Dracula never completed it, hampered by the Inquisition and his realization of the demon's true nature. He still possesses the sword and the rituals, though, and has not fully discarded the idea of some night reenacting the ritual.

Certain legends speak of a "sister sword," forged at the same time as Vlad Dracul's and, perhaps, also assisted by Durga Syn. Known as "Ainkurn," this other sword has played a noteworthy (if legendary) role in Kindred history. Certain tales attribute the Ainkurn sword with the destruction of Methuselahs, single-handed victories over ravenous Lupines and even travel into the realms of the dead. As rumors of the sword surface, they are often in conjunction with passing tales of a vampiric knight, a member of a fallen order who has since been claimed by the Brujah. Little corroborates the power of the Ainkurn sword reliably — its prowess is often demonstrated in tales of wonder and horror rather than in documented accounts. Whatever the case, the Ainkurn sword is reputed to be just as powerful as that of Dracula — and perhaps more so.

Transylvania Chronicles III[™]

Ill Omens

AN EPOCH OF TUMULT

Dracula stalks the night; Kupala rages beneath the cursed land of Transylvania, and Paris burns in revolution. The characters — princes, rebels and everything in between — find themselves amid the flames and besieged by friends and foes alike. Can they survive the terrors of both the supernatural world and the kine? Or will they become so much ash on the wind?

THE LONG NIGHT IS OVER

Transylvania Chronicles III: Ill Omens continues the chronicle begun in **Dark Tides Rising**. The players' characters, elders of the Camarilla, Sabbat or independent clans face opposition from all sides — Dracula, rival sects and even the citoyens of the burgeoning French Revolution. The signs of Gehenna continue to appear. Only the stalwart can stand against them, and only the most vile hurry them along.

ILL OMENS INCLUDES:

- The continuation of the popular **Transylvania Chronicles**
- Events from the French Revolution and the Giovanni purge of the Cappadocians
- Downtime and maturation systems for long-term play



VAMPIRE
THE MASQUERADE

BOOKS FOR NATURE NINJA

ISBN 1-56504-292-1
WW2813 \$15.95 U.S.



9 781565 042926