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Campaign Expansion



A  
Guide to Transylvania

a Masque of the Red Death™ accessory

by Nicky Rea





# A GUIDE TO TRANSYLVANIA

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# INTRODUCTION



It is difficult to separate fact from fiction, folklore from oral history, and old wives tales from ancient wisdom in an area that many consider the repository of every superstition in existence. Still, that's exactly what one must try to do when writing anything about lands that are generally thought of as "Transylvania," the

area that spawned Dracula, the character who is now virtually a synonym for "vampire."

A difficulty in creating an easily digestible guide to Transylvania in the 1890's is that the region does not have such niceties as readily defined borders, a single composite population, or a unifying religion. Instead, it has a hodgepodge of ethnic groups, competing religions, and a border so fluid and changeable that most maps of the regions automatically state "borders not necessarily accurate." From Roman times to the time period of the *Masque of the Red Death* campaign setting, internal squabbles and external pressures in Transylvania have never been a matter of one side or the other, but of how many sides can manage to get involved. The political maneuverings and conflicts in Transylvania and in its ethnic partners, the regions of Wallachia and Moldavia, are highly complex and convoluted. Even though Transylvanians are viewed as a quaint, simple people by the western Europeans of the 1890's, the complexities of their history govern them still.

## Who Should Read This Book

Virtually all the information in *Guide to Transylvania* is for DM's eyes only. If you have purchased this product and plan to run a character in a Gothic Earth campaign, you should read

no further than this chapter. Many secrets about the denizens of Gothic Earth's Transylvania that are revealed in these pages are best discovered through play.

There might be some DMs who would like to give players access to certain portions of this booklet, but no player should read anything but the sections allowed by the DM.

## In Search of Transylvania

It is not within the scope of a book this size to completely cover a region that has a history reaching back over 2,000 years. Further, it should be understood that this is not, by any stretch of the imagination, anything but an accessory for the *Masque of the Red Death* campaign world. Though the history and geography sections are extensive, they have both been streamlined, omitting many important personages, battles, events, and locations. Further, some of the same is true of the geography section. Moreover, the reasons cited for some of the historical events are often different from those of the real world and reflect instead the secretive and pitiless manipulations of that terrible evil of Gothic Earth, the Red Death.

While there is plenty of information here and enough details to run several dozen game sessions and several different campaigns within the area, some DMs will undoubtedly wish to know more.

The best place to start is your local library. Don't feel compelled to limit yourself to history. Books on everything from Eastern European travel to cookbooks may prove treasure troves of information.

## Using the Guide

To fully understand and appreciate a culture or its people, one must have some knowledge of their history—of those who have played major roles in their development, the time in which those people lived, and the political and physical realities necessitated by their geographical placement and topography. Though by no means an exhaustive study of Transylva-



# INTRODUCTION

nia, its customs, its history, or its people, the *Guide to Transylvania* does cover many of the high points. Individual Dungeon Masters will find some sections more useful than others, depending on their gaming styles.

Emphasis has been given to the early history of Transylvania and to the time of Vlad the Impaler so that the DM may have a thorough understanding of the region and its most notorious inhabitant. It is hoped that this historical detail will allow groups to explore games set in earlier times (perhaps featuring characters who are of succeeding generations of the same family who oppose the dread prince) or to enrich the descriptions and mood of play in the 1890s. To portray Transylvania's peasants, merchants, and nobles merely as the sort of backwards, semihumorous, superstitious caricatures so often seen in horror films is to do them (and the game) a disservice.

Each section is designed to both provide information about the region and to illustrate details of daily life (or secrets that must be uncovered) that can be brought into play to enhance the reality of the game for the players.

The best horror stories always start with the mundane and ground the characters in the "real world." That is what Bram Stoker did in *Dracula*, where nothing really supernatural happens for about the first thirty pages. It is only after he has "grounded" his characters in the normal world that Stoker begins gradually introducing the horror. Using the descriptions of the countryside, the clothing of the peasants, even the food Jonathan Harker eats during his journey, Stoker creates a solid reality that nevertheless seems exotic to a young solicitor from England.

In the same way, the DM can utilize the various chapters to set the scene (What do the Carpathians look like?), suggest events (Is there a marriage feast in progress?), detail NPCs (Does she look like a peasant, or is she dressed in modern clothes?), and even confound the characters with everyday difficulties (Who speaks Hungarian here? Why do those Gypsies look so angry? All we did was ask that Gypsy girl out to dinner. . .). The possibilities for enhancing the game are endless.

## Historical Bias

Transylvania's history is not a happy one. The chief conflict (Magyar versus Romanian) concerns more than the conquering of one people by another. Both sides have a story to tell and depending on what sources you read, you can come away feeling righteously indignant at first one side, then the other. A choice has been made, however, to stress the Romanian side of the story rather than the Magyar for one simple reason: Dracula was Romanian. His story was bound up with conflicts and he was subject to others' manipulations and maneuvers *because* he was Romanian and not Magyar or Szekler. For this reason, the Magyar side has not been fully told.

## Forbidden Lore and Story Ideas

The Forbidden Lore sections included in the *Guide to Transylvania* are intended to provide the DM with interesting tidbits which can be used in the *Masque of the Red Death* setting. Some of the information can be given out as heroes investigate and discover more about the world. Feel free to work up some of the cryptic hints into pages of ancient tomes or passages found in a qabal's secret books.

Or, let something within the Forbidden Lore section spark your imagination and suggest scenes or even whole story lines. Use them in tandem with each other to create stories (or brief interludes) based around the NPCs mentioned in the personalities section.

Finally, some of the details given will never be known to the characters, but are meant to provide the DM with background material that will help make things more real and colorful for the players.





## A MUCH-BLOODIED LAND

*Indeed, history is nothing more than a tableau of crims and misfortunes.*

—Voltaire  
*L'Ingenu*

Surrounded by stronger, aggressive neighbors throughout its history, Transylvania has been a magnet for invasions, warfare, and bloodshed.

Indeed, for much of

its history, Transylvania has not been an independent state, but under the control of a series of foreign overlords. From the Roman Empire to the Ottoman Turks to the Hapsburgs, each has left their mark on the region and its people.

A land which should have served to keep alight the advances of Roman civilization has become a land of superstition and intolerance. Transylvania should have been a bridge between the East and the West, but has instead been twisted into a battleground in which there are no victors. The Red Death has held sway over this land for many centuries.

### Early History: The Dacians

For at least 12,000 years, humans have lived in Transylvania. Remains found in the area testify to ongoing habitation and development through the Paleolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic ages onward. The first arrivals were the Thracians, who migrated from the north and west. Many settled in the Carpathian foothills, while others moved onward into the Danube River Valley.

The earliest written records of these people are found in the works of the Greek historian Herodotus. He wrote that the area was thickly populated with Thracian tribes that herded cattle, kept bees, and kept fields of grains and

vines. Thracian villages consisted of up to 100 homes, small rectangular wooden or reed structures mortared with earth and roofed with straw.

About 1,000 B.C. an offshoot of the Thracians known as the Dacians developed an independent state north of the Danube. Called Dacia, the territory centered on the mountain and hill regions of what would come to be known as Transylvania, Oltenia, and northern Wallachia. Their access to iron ore and copper allowed the Dacians to turn Dacia into an advanced and powerful region. They established trade with Greek merchants who had ports along the Black Sea and controlled trade along their portion of the Danube River.

### Romanization

The gold and silver deposits of Dacia proved too much of a temptation to foreign invaders. Although they initially came as trading partners, eventually Rome attempted to take over Dacia's resources. Dacians staged raids across the Danube in response. In 72 B.C. the Romans launched an offensive across the Danube but withdrew because (as one account of the period reports) "the soldiers were frightened by the darkness of the forests." A spiteful hard-fought war that lasted for two centuries ensued.

The Roman emperor Trajan took power in A.D. 98, determined that he would conquer Dacia. In A.D. 106, Trajan's armies crossed the Danube and succeeded in defeating the Dacians. Signs of the bridge which Apollodorus of Damascus designed for the Roman invasion of Dacia are still noticeable above the torrential waters of the Iron Gates. Trajan colonized the region with traders, farmers, and soldiers from other parts of the empire and settled a large occupation force there to keep the peace. These new settlers built roads, fortifications, and cities, and introduced the Latin language into the region. Rome used its new colony as a bulwark against the threat of barbarian invasion of the Empire.

Roman settlements were usually founded on



# A MUCH-BLOODIED LAND

ancient Dacian sites where they would be either strategically or commercially valuable. Cluj-Nápoca and Alba-Iulia are among those Daco-Roman cities. In the Middle Ages, many settlements (such as Brasov, Sibiu and Bucharest) grew into important trade centers. In general, the settlements were of three types: agricultural and livestock centers in the plains, fruit and wine producers in the hills, and those that depended on livestock and lumber for their livelihood in the higher altitudes.

## The Withdrawal of Rome

Repeatedly attacked from the north and east by Goths and Sarmatians who threatened the western frontiers of the Empire, the Roman army withdrew in A.D. 271. The colonists who had intermingled with the Dacian peasants remained behind and formed the people who would become known as Romanians.

After Rome withdrew from the region in the late third century, Dacia fell prey to invasions and migrations from both northern Europe and Asia. Visigoths, Bulgars, Huns, and Avars raided villages and besieged Dacian towns, while eastern European Slavs moved through the region en route to lands further west and south. Many Slavs stayed, however, and intermarried with the native populace. The language, which was basically vulgar Latin, took on many Slavic words. In the face of these constant invasions, the Daco-Roman populace fled for protection farther into the Carpathian Mountains and Transylvania. Towns were abandoned, roads crumbled, and in many areas the formerly cultivated lands were left to revert to nature.

The Roman Empire split into western and eastern halves. While the Western Empire collapsed under a series of invasions in the fifth century, the Eastern (or Byzantine) Empire survived. From its capital of Constantinople, Byzantine culture spread throughout the Balkan peninsula. Many Daco-Romans already practiced the Christian faith; when the Christian church divided into the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox faiths,

the Daco-Romans followed the Byzantines in adopting Orthodox ritual.

## Magyar Settlements

In 896, Magyars (who would later become the Hungarians) from central Asia moved into, and began conquering, lands along the Danube. The Magyars soon converted to the Roman Catholic faith. In search of fertile cropland, they moved southward into Transylvania in the eleventh century. A dispute that has lasted for centuries and colored relations between the Hungarians and the Romanians stems from this period. Hungarian historians claim that Transylvania was all but deserted when the Magyars arrived. Romanians insist that their ancestors remained in the region and constitute the area's original inhabitants.

In the year 1000, the Roman Catholic pope crowned the Magyar leader Stephen I as king of Hungary, which claimed Transylvania as part of their holdings. Although attempts were made to convert the people of Transylvania to Roman Catholicism, most of the Romanians living in the region refused to abandon the Eastern Orthodox church.

To strengthen their control over Transylvania, the Hungarian kings offered land to the Szeklers, a Magyar ethnic group from Flanders. These landowners adopted a feudal system that forced Romanian farmers to pay a portion of their harvests to the newcomers. Although Romanians (whom the Slavs called Vlachs) still made up a majority of Transylvania's inhabitants, many became poor peasants or serfs on Transylvanian estates. Teutonic Knights returning from Palestine after crusades were also granted land and founded the city of Brasov. These knights built a fortification called Bran Castle in 1077 on a peak overlooking a trade route from Brasov into Transylvania. Conflict with the king of Hungary resulted in the knights' departure from the region in 1225.

The newcomers were granted land, commercial rights and privileges, and much autonomy. Nobility was restricted to those of



## A MUCH-BLOODIED LAND

the Roman Catholic faith, however, and though some Romanian noblemen converted, most Orthodox Romanians were stripped of their meager lands and forced to live as serfs.

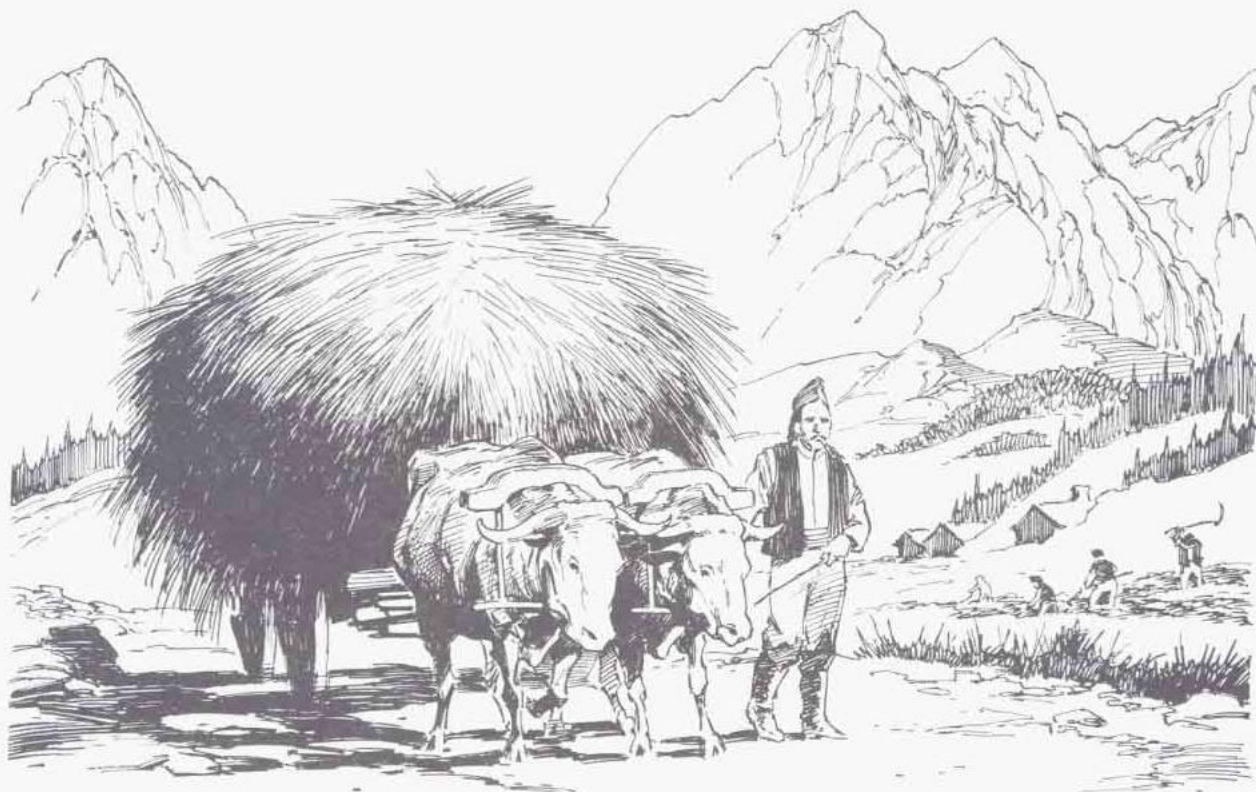
In 1241 Mongols swept across Transylvania, crushing the Hungarian armies. Although they retreated in the next year, the Hungarian king, Béla IV, had lost his hold on Transylvania. Though he invited more foreigners (Saxon Germans) to settle the area and ordered the nobles to build stone fortresses as protections against invaders, troubles at home forced him to allow Transylvania's virtual autonomy.

In 1288, the Transylvanian nobles formed their own legislature known as the *Diet*. New farming methods increased crop yields and craftsmen formed guilds. Money replaced barter as the chief means of exchange, and townspeople were made exempt from feudal obligations. At the same time that the feudal lords demanded increasingly higher crop payments from the Romanian peasants, seizing

lands when they failed to pay. Many peasants fled the country; others became outlaws.

In 1437 Romanian and Hungarian peasants rose in revolt. In response, the Magyar, German, and Szekler nobles united and crushed the rebellion. After the uprising, they formed the Union of Three Nations. This document declared the Magyars, Germans, and Szeklers to be the only recognized nationalities in Transylvania, hence the only ones with rights and privileges.

Gradually even more demands were made upon the serfs. Some had to work without compensation for their lord one day each week using their own animals and tools; a few were required to perform labor for their overlords up to six days per week at harvest time. This left them little time to plant and harvest the few poor fields in which they grew their own food. Romanians were prohibited from holding public office or from living in Saxon or Magyar towns.





# A MUCH-BLOODIED LAND

## The Creation of Wallachia and Moldavia

To escape the harsh conditions imposed upon them, many Romanians fled Transylvania and settled lands to the east and south. Some refugees created small states, known as *voivodates*, in Wallachia and Moldavia. Boyars (the landowning nobles) supported themselves by renting their land to peasants. Boyars also became officials and advisors to the voivodes (the overlords of the region).

In reality, the boyars were little better than brigands; their territories included large tracts of lands speckled here and there with mud and straw hut villages, and they kept the peasantry poor, uneducated and overburdened with duties to their overlords.

Hungary attempted to control the new settlements, but a Romanian noble who took the title of Prince Basarab defeated the Hungarians in 1330 and established a principality called Wallachia (land of the Vlachs). From this prince descended the Basarab family, the line from whom the most infamous ruler of Transylvania, Vlad the Impaler, sprang.

In 1349 a Transylvanian noble named Bogdan founded a new state along the Moldova River. A decade later, Bogdan's state became the independent principality of Moldavia. In both lands, councils of boyars and Orthodox clergy elected the princes. For their part, the princes had the power to grant land and noble titles to buy the loyalty of the boyars, but there were frequent struggles among those claiming the title of prince.

Endless feuds over the succession ensued as all members of the current ruling family, as well as outsiders who could present evidence of their fitness (or enough money to buy adherents) pressed their own claims. The resulting weakness of this endless succession of princes left the principalities vulnerable to invasion.

## The Ottoman Turks

In the fourteenth century, the Ottoman Turks of Asia Minor attacked the Balkan peninsula. The Turks conquered the Serbs in 1387 at the Battle of Kosovo, and in 1391 they crossed the Danube into Wallachia. Mircea cel Batrin ("the Old"), a particularly strong and wily prince of Wallachia, allied briefly with the king of Hungary to stave off the invaders.

Ottoman forces were triumphant, however, and in 1417 Mircea signed a peace treaty with the Turks. Under the agreement, Wallachia remained independent and was allowed to continue practicing their Orthodox faith, but the country was forced to pay a tribute of money and goods every year to the Ottoman sultan. To meet his obligations to the sultan, the prince had to gouge peasants and nobles alike, making him less than popular.

Mircea the Old, grandfather of the man who would come to be known as Vlad Tepes (Vlad the Impaler), died the next year after ruling for an unprecedented 32 years. Aside from holding the Turks at bay, he is best known for having added two districts of Transylvania, the duchies of Amlas and Fagaras to his lands, building fortifications along the foothills of the Carpathians to ward off Hungarian aggression and constructing the fortress of Giurgiu on the Danube border as a strategic bulwark against the Turks.

## Vlad Dracul

An array of princes, some legitimate and some not, followed Mircea. Among them was Dan II, a nephew of Mircea. Rival factions—some in favor of the Danesti line (named for Dan), others for the Draculesti (named for Vlad II, the illegitimate son of Mircea the Old and father of Vlad the Impaler)—vied for the throne throughout this and later periods. Dan II became prince with the blessings of Sigismund I of Luxembourg, the Holy Roman Emperor. Vlad was dispatched to Transylvania in 1430 to keep watch on the Transylvanian–Wallachian border. His



## A MUCH-BLOODIED LAND

headquarters were at Sighisoara.

In 1431 Vlad traveled to Nürnberg where he was chosen by the Hungarian king to assume the throne of Wallachia. "Elected" as prince of Wallachia by anti-Danesti boyars, he was also invested as a "Draconist" in the Order of the Dragon, a knighthood pledged to fight the infidel Turks. Upon returning to Sighisoara, however, he discovered that his half brother Aldea had become prince in his absence. Needing supporters for his claim, he turned to the Musat family, rulers of Moldavia. Dracul took as his second wife the sister of the two princes who jointly ruled the principality, Ilias and Stefan. With their help, Vlad Dracul took the throne of Wallachia in December 1436 and took up residence in Tirgoviste, capital of Wallachia since 1385.

In all, Vlad II had five sons: Mircea and Vlad, who were born before their father became prince, and Radu, their half brother (son of Eupraxia, the Musat princess) were legitimate and recognized by their father; Vlad, the Monk, and another son named Mircea were illegitimate.

Dracul was both wily and deceitful. Caught between the Hungarians, who wanted Wallachia as a buffer state between themselves and the Turks, and the Ottoman forces just beyond the Danube, Vlad Dracul played a dangerous game in which he switched allegiance from one side to the other more than once—a pattern his son Vlad would also follow.

The *domnul* (Romanian for prince) was empowered to raise and spend taxes, collect customs (payments made to the prince by Saxon merchants in return for exclusive trading rights in certain towns) and mine revenues, dispense justice, mint coins, and command both the army and police. However, he was always subject to the changing loyalties of the boyars and influential churchmen. The latter included both the Metropolitan (the first bishop of the land and head of the Orthodox Church) and several wealthy and powerful monasteries. All had to be placated, flattered, and bribed while not offending either the Hungarians or the Turks enough to cause the loss of his throne.

In 1437, sensing that the Turks held the upper hand, Dracul signed an alliance with them and made an official visit to the sultan to pay the yearly tribute amid much pomp and circumstance. The following year, in which a great peasant revolt occurred in Transylvania, he accompanied Sultan Murad II into Transylvania, where they looted and burned several cities and towns.

In November of 1441, János Hunyady (Romanian by birth, and made a Hungarian noble due to his valor against the Turks) was appointed co-governor of Transylvania. Ladislas, the new king of Hungary, intended to start a new crusade against the Turks and wished to secure Wallachian loyalties, so Hunyady and his fellow governor Nicholas Ujiak, traveled to Tirgoviste to ask Vlad to renew his pledges to the Christian cause and keep his vows as a Knight of the Dragon.

At this time the Ottomans controlled the whole line of the Danube, with many fortifications on the Wallachian side of the river. Moreover, Dracul knew that the Hungarians had secretly been courting a rival candidate for prince, Basarab, the son of Dan II. In the face of such perceived treachery by the Hungarians, Dracul decided to remain neutral.

The Turks entered Wallachia in 1442 under the command of Mezid-Bey, and Dracul allowed them free access into Transylvania. The Hungarians won, Dracul was forced to flee, and Hunyady placed Basarab II on the Wallachian throne. Dracul would reclaim the throne the next year backed by the might of the Turks.

Before giving their support, however, the Turks required Dracul's promise to never again take up arms against them, to pay the yearly tribute, and to send a yearly contingent of Wallachian children to become Turkish janissaries (slave soldiers). As a pledge of his intentions and continued good conduct, Dracul was forced to send his sons Vlad and Radu as hostages to the sultan. Vlad was twelve and Radu barely nine. Mircea, the heir and favored son, was kept at home.

In 1444, the king of Hungary broke the



# A MUCH-BLOODIED LAND

peace, calling for a new crusade against the Turks. Ladislas III, the King of Poland, and Hunyady led the crusade and called upon Dracul to fulfill his oath as a Draconist. Trying to keep his captive sons from being slain by the vengeful Turks, Dracul sent a small force under the command of Mircea to assist Hunyady, but refused to participate personally.

The Varna campaign was a failure. King Ladislas and the papal legate were both killed, while Hunyady escaped with his life only with the assistance of Mircea and his Wallachian force.

Dracul's sons were spared, but Dracul and his son Mircea argued that Hunyady should be tried and executed as a traitor for his failure at Varna. Hunyady's international reputation as the White Knight of Christendom saved his life, and he returned to Transylvania. This humiliation was avenged in 1447 when Hunyady led a punitive expedition against Dracul. The battle was joined south of Tirgoviste and Dracul and Mircea were defeated. Mircea was captured by enemy boyars, while his father was pursued into the marches of Balteni, not far from Bucharest.

Mircea was tortured and killed by the citizens of Tirgoviste, who buried him alive. Dracul was assassinated as he fled. He may have been buried at the monastery of Snagov, to which he had made many donations. Hunyady placed Vladislav II of the Danesti line on the Wallachian throne.

However, not even a year later, Dracul's second son Vlad would avenge his father's death and seize the throne.

## Vlad the Impaler

**T**he Red Death won two great victories in the year 1431. In France, the Maid of Orleans, Joan of Arc was burned at the stake. In Transylvania, the Red Death's elaborate manipulations finally bore fruit, as a child who would grow up to be one of the cruelest men to ever walk the Earth was born—Vlad the Impaler.

## Early Life

**V**lad was born in 1431 in Sighisoara, Transylvania, the second son of Vlad Dracul. Named Vlad, like his father, he was given the distinguishing name of Dracula (son of Dracul). To the people of Transylvania, the word Dracul has two meanings. The first meaning is "dragon," a fitting name for a knight of the Order of the Dragon; the second interpretation is "devil," and may have seemed to his rivals and enemies a more fitting translation. Dracula's mother either died in giving birth to him or soon thereafter, and his father remarried.

When Vlad was five years old, Dracul assumed the throne of Wallachia, and the family moved to Tirgoviste. Though it was the practice at the time for princes of the west to send their sons to Constantinople for their education, Dracul decided to have his sons tutored at home.

Gifted with a keen mind and strong body, Vlad was an apt pupil of both the martial and intellectual arts. His princely education included several languages—his native Romanian, Latin, Italian, and some French, Hungarian and German—and knowledge of both the Cyrillic and Slavonic script. Taught humanities, the classics and history, he was also thoroughly indoctrinated with a new science—political theory—and the ideas of divine right and the right of the state over that of the individual.

Court protocol, statecraft, battle and siege tactics, and warfare accompanied lessons on reading and mathematics. Expected to one day assume the duties of knighthood, if not that of rulership, young Vlad was schooled in longbow, broadsword, quarterstaff, jousting with shield and lance, swimming, fighting in light armor, and horsemanship, which the young prince mastered.

## The Hostage Years

More than his formal education, however, the uncertain fortunes of his life and his father's tenure as prince shaped the Vlad's personality. Observing his father's deceptions and betrayals in



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the name of survival, the boy became cynical and calculating. Sent into captivity to the sultan at the age of twelve, a tendency toward sadism was fanned into fiery insanity in young Vlad by his treatment as a hostage.

Sent to the hill fortress of Egrigöz in Anatolia nearly 600 miles from home, Vlad and his younger brother Radu learned the Turkish customs, war tactics, and language.

The boys also learned that their continued health depended upon whether their father was in the sultan's favor or out of it. They were frequently abused and made cognizant that they were expendable pawns in a political game.

That the boys survived Turkish cruelties without permanent disfigurement or maiming is usually ascribed to the sultan's political astuteness and a fondness he developed for Radu. Vlad spent almost four years in captivity among the Ottomans. Radu became a favorite of both sultan Murad II and Mohammed II. He remained in Turkey until his ascension to the Wallachian throne in 1462.

### Forbidden Lore

The Red Death had chosen Vlad to be molded into its greatest servant, and it took an active interest in his development. Its agents shadowed Dracula all through his life, manipulating events and people in a fashion designed to create the monstrous tyrant whom the ancient evil desired: A midwife made certain that the boy's mother did not survive long enough to have a gentling influence on him; tutors who espoused philosophies of political expediency and rule by terror were sent to train him; and the boy was sent into captivity, all to prepare him for the Red Death's use.

### Vlad III, Prince of Wallachia

In all, Vlad Dracula claimed the throne of Wallachia three times. When Vlad II and Mircea were defeated and killed, the sultan freed Vlad and awarded him an officer's rank in

the Turkish army. He also advised Vlad that the Turks considered him their candidate for the Wallachian throne. In 1448, Vladislav II, ruler of Wallachia, accompanied Hunyady on a new offensive against the Turks at Kosovo in Serbia. During Vladislav's absence, Dracula invaded Wallachia with a force of Turkish cavalry and troops loaned to him from the pashas of Nicopolis and Varna. Without a battle, he took Tirgoviste and occupied the throne of Wallachia.

The Turks handily defeated the Christian forces. Unfortunately for Vlad's political aspirations, rather than chasing Hunyady and Vladislav from the battlefield, Sultan Murad II remained for three days to bury the Turkish dead.

Then, as was the Turkish custom, he ordered tables set and feasted among the corpses of the enemy, a grisly action that Vlad the Impaler would later be accused of originating. This allowed Vladislav the time he needed to return to Wallachia, rout Vlad's army and oust him from the country. To do so, however, Vladislav had to abandon Hunyady, who was captured by the Turks to his fate, a decision that cost him Hunyady's future support. Dracula fled to Adrianople. His rulership of Wallachia had lasted just under two months. He was seventeen years old.

### Moldavian Retreat

Reluctant to trust himself to the Turks again after his "defeat," in December of 1448, Dracula went to Moldavia, where his step-uncle Bogdan II ruled as prince. There he completed his formal education alongside his younger cousin Stephen, who would become known as Stephen the Great, Moldavia's most famous ruler. Dracula lived at Suceava until 1451. Vlad and Stephen fought together under Bogdan's banner against an invading Polish army in 1450, gaining military experience and forging the bonds of friendship.

In October of 1451, Bogdan was assassinated by a rival named Petru Aron. Vlad and Stephen, having no other choice, fled to Transylvania, where Vlad threw himself on the



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mercy of János Hunyady, who had secured his release from the Turks in the meantime. After a brief respite, they returned to Moldavia when the usurper was driven out. There Vlad heard of the event which was to rock all of Europe—the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks.

## Forbidden Lore

Dracula had become too comfortable among his relatives in Moldavia. Though it suited the Red Death to allow Vlad some time in which to gain experience and confidence, it arranged the assassination of Bogdan II to force Dracula to seek Hunyady's help. In doing so, Hunyady became personally acquainted with the youth. This event led to the one real stain on Hunyady's pristine reputation: his placing Dracula on the throne of Wallachia.

## His Second Reign

Dracula remained in Moldavia until 1455, when Petru Aron again took the throne. Once more, he fled to Hunyady. By this time, Hunyady's relations with Vladislav of Wallachia has soured considerably. Renewed Turkish threats to Hungary seemed imminent and Vlad pledged his support to Hunyady and the Hungarian crown. Having few other options, Hunyady charged Vlad Dracula with the defense of the Wallachian-Transylvanian border. In March of 1456, Hunyady introduced Dracula to Ladislas Posthumus, the Hungarian king, as "the only candidate who could be trusted as prince of Wallachia."

In August of that year, Hunyady died of plague. After his patron's death, Dracula rode with a small force of Wallachians to battle Vladislav for the throne. Vladislav was defeated and slain. In early September, Dracula swore his formal oath to the king of Hungary. A few days later, he formally acknowledged his position as vassal to the sultan before a Turkish delegation in Tirgoviste. At the age of 25 he was, at last, the undisputed ruler of Wallachia.

Once he was safely ensconced upon the

throne, Dracula revealed his rabid hatred of the Turks. His brutal treatment of Turkish warriors, ambassadors, and sympathizers have become the stuff of legends and folk tales. Like his father, he was granted the title of Dragonist or Knight of the Dragon.

## Dracula and His Subjects

As ruler of Wallachia, Dracula made sweeping changes, many of them in keeping with the actions of the Renaissance princes of western Europe. He attempted to crush the power of the nobles, to centralize authority in his own person, and to create a military force loyal to him personally. One of the key ingredients to accomplishing these goals was the persecution of the boyars.

Avenging himself on the slayers of his father and brother and incidentally ridding himself of pro-Turkish forces within his realm, during the Easter festivities in the spring of 1459, Dracula feted five hundred boyars in his banqueting hall at Tirgoviste. As they were finishing their meal, he had them seized by his soldiers. At his command, those who were old or infirm were immediately impaled outside the palace and beyond the city walls.

The young and able-bodied were marched to Poenari, where they were compelled to act as slave labor building Agrish Castle, which came to be known as Dracula's Castle. Some died upon the way; others labored until their Easter finery turned to rags and fell from their backs. Even the women and children were no spared, that there be no enemies left to plot against him. From this time onward he was known by a new name, Vlad Tepes or Vlad the Impaler.

## Forbidden Lore

Dracula was adept at combining political objectives, personal revenge, and physical practicalities.

Unknown to all except those who were involved, when the boyars were finished building his new fortress on the Arges River, Dracula had them marched northeast.



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Taking advantage of the forts built along the foothills of the Carpathians, Dracula, his personal guard and his army of noble slaves made their way along the border between Transylvania and Moldavia until they reached a grim peak somewhere to the south of the Birkau Pass.

There they were made to repeat their labors in building a second Castle Dracula. The castle they constructed this time utilized stones from a previous structure which had existed on that spot, the ruins of an ancient castle said to be the ancestral home of Dracula's family. It more closely resembled Bran Castle than Agrish.

Dracula replaced the slain boyars with a created nobility of his own, giving confiscated lands to those who would owe their new power entirely to him. Many of these were peasants whom he elevated to the nobility. He did the same with envoys, governors, and functionaries of the court, as well as rewarding those free peasants who served with distinction in the military by making them officers.

Dracula insured the peasants' loyalty by granting many of them immunity from feudal dues and by refusing to pay the tribute in money, produce, and children to the Turks. Finally, he cowed church authorities, granting lands and moneys to those who acceded to his rule, while stripping those who opposed him of all they owned. This aspect of his reign is also remembered in tales, and there are some in the region who speak of Dracula as the common man's friend.

Throughout his reign, his extreme cruelty and stern, unforgiving nature became his best known characteristics. Though it was said that crime, immorality, thievery, laziness, and unemployment were unknown under Dracula's rule, it was purchased at the price of the absolute terror of his subjects. The crime of one man occasionally resulted in the deaths of dozens, and sometimes Dracula would trick "criminals" into appearing guilty with clever conversation. Though the peasants initially embraced him and flocked

to his banner to battle against the Turks, they eventually deserted him.

## Relations With the Saxo-Germans

The Transylvanian Saxon-German merchants were the people most responsible for blackening Dracula's name among the Christian princes of Europe. When he first came to the throne, Dracula signed trade agreements with the merchants of Brasov and Sibiu. He later broke those agreements to protect Wallachian traders. Further, he supported Matthias Corvinus, son of János Hunyady and a fellow Romanian, against Ladislav Posthumus in his bid for the Hungarian throne.

The Saxon-Germans, who owed their position in Transylvania to the Hungarian kings, supported Ladislav and hated Dracula for interfering in Hungarian affairs. When he closed certain cities to their trade and levied additional tariffs on their goods, they moved to circumvent him.

Dracula's first incursion into Transylvania to punish the Saxon-Germans came in the Sibiu district in 1457. Men, women and children were impaled, and he burned and pillaged every castle, village, church, and home along his route. 1459 to 1460 was the main period during which Vlad Tepes terrorized Transylvania. After he looted the Church of Saint Bartholomew and later impaled uncounted victims and dined among the cadavers (a terror tactic he had learned from the Turkish).

In all, during his six year reign, he is said to have killed somewhere between 40,000 and 100,000 victims. Since some estimates put the slaughter at the town of Amlas alone at 20,000, the higher number is probably more accurate. Little wonder then that descriptions of such atrocities described "the forest of the impaled." Reports circulated throughout Europe as far as the Vatican that Dracula also indulged in drinking his victims' blood and cannibalism. Whether he actually engaged in such acts is unknown, but it is considered highly unlikely.



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### The Turkish Campaigns

From 1461 to 1462, Dracula waged war against the Turks. Making a lightning attack across the Danube, he sought to draw his allies Matthias Corvinus of Hungary and his cousin Stephen the Great of Moldavia into a crusade to free the Balkans from the Turks. Most Balkan rulers were too beset by internal problems to come to his aid, and though Corvinus collected moneys from the pope to help finance the crusade, help from the Hungarian king failed to materialize.

Stephen, who should have been Dracula's most trusted ally did not come to his aid, either. Though they were cousins, had been students together, and had fought together to win back Stephen's Moldavian throne, Stephen betrayed Dracula and collaborated with the Turks. He attacked one of Dracula's forts on the Danube, forcing Vlad to divide his forces at the worst possible time. For their part, the Turks brought forward his younger brother Radu as a candidate for the throne.

In the early stages of the campaign Dracula took the offensive, driving the Turks out of parts of Bulgaria and chasing them down the Danube. This gained the admiration of much of Europe and forced the Turks to act lest they lose their empire. Though he was initially successful against the superior Turkish forces, by the spring of 1462 when improvements in the weather made a Turkish counter-offensive a certainty, Dracula found himself facing the Turks alone.

Mohammed the Conqueror's army consisted of janissaries, Asiatic soldiers, trained cavalry, cannons, and Radu, who commanded a force of 4,000 Wallachian horsemen (drawn from the ranks of the boyars whom Dracula had deposed but not slain). Dracula's troops consisted of his peasant army and those newly created boyars loyal to him. He was outnumbered at least two to one.

Rather than risk all in open battle, Dracula withdrew before the Turks, burning everything behind him, poisoning wells, and destroying whatever livestock he couldn't drive before him.





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He coupled the retreat with daring nighttime raids on the Turkish camp. During one such, he almost succeeded in assassinating the sultan but failed to find him in his tent.

When he reached Dracula's capital in June, however, the sultan chose not to attack. Though the gates of the city of Tirgoviste lay open, a frightful display before the city apparently so disturbed the sultan that he lost heart. In a narrow, mile-long gorge just outside the city were over 20,000 rotting corpses. Men, women, and children's mangled bodies were impaled there, including boyars and Turkish prisoners taken the winter before. Sultan Mohammed is reported to have asked, "What can anyone do against a man such as this?" before quitting the field.

Dracula then turned his attention to his border with Moldavia, where Stephen and the Turks were collaborating in the taking of the fortress of Chilia. Whether Stephen was protecting the interests of Moldavia by siding with the Turks or whether he was sickened by his cousin's atrocities, Stephen felt he was an ally of the lesser of two evils.

Despite forcing the Turks from the field with brutal terror tactics, Dracula was fighting a losing battle. His newly created nobility realized this and defected to his brother Radu. By the fall of 1462, Dracula's second reign as prince of Wallachia was over.

Dracula retreated to Agrish Castle. There, he was warned by a Wallachian who had been forced to become a janissary that a Turkish army planned to launch an all-out assault the next day. His wife was the first to receive the message reputedly tied to an arrow that he shot from the cliffs across the river. After informing her husband, she declared that she would rather be dead than subject to the tortures and humiliations of the Turks and threw herself from the battlements to the Arges River far below. That section of the river has ever afterward been known as the River of the Princess.

Dracula escaped through a secret passage inside the castle's well to Brasov. Corvinus took him into custody within a matter of weeks,

acknowledged Radu as prince of Wallachia, and kept Dracula prisoner for the next twelve years.

While a captive, Dracula was offered a deal by Corvinus. In return for converting to Roman Catholicism, Corvinus would allow Dracula to take a member of the Hungarian royal family as his wife. Once this was done, Corvinus would free him, help restore him to the Wallachian throne, and set him in charge of a new crusade against the Turks. The funds contributed by the pope would be used to finance it.

In January of 1475, he and his Hungarian contingent fought alongside Stephen the Great in the Battle of Vaslui. From this time on, the cousins again became friends, pledging to support one another. In the summer of 1476 plans were made to regain Dracula's throne from Basarab Laiota (a Danesti who succeeded Radu in 1473).

### Forbidden Lore

Although the Red Death was pleased with Dracula's successes in bringing Wallachia under his control, it was not yet ready for the Christian princes of Europe to end the ongoing conflicts by uniting against the Muslim Turks.

Had they not been focused on internal squabbles and external wars, the religious and secular powers of both Europe and Asia might have had the luxury to pinpoint more accurately the cause of their woes: the Red Death and its minions.

Further, the Red Death was insuring that Dracula would remain firmly in its grasp. While ruling Wallachia, Dracula made occasional attempts to redeem himself by acts of faith and piety. During periods of profound melancholy, the prince visited monasteries seeking absolution for his many sins. The Church of Saint Nicholas of Tirgsor, which Dracula founded in 1461 was one such attempt. Whatever donations and reparations he attempted to bestow upon the church, however, Dracula was never able to escape his own proud heart and taste for exotic tortures to truly embrace the light again.



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## His Third Reign and His Death

**T**hough Dracula won back his throne, it was only a matter of time until the end. The boyars would not support him, the Orthodox church reviled him for converting to Catholicism, Laiota was waiting to avenge himself, and the Turks would not accept Dracula on the Wallachian throne again.

Though he had a small personal force of Moldavians given to him by his cousin Stephen, it was clear that when the Hungarian and Moldavian forces withdrew from Wallachia that Vlad would be in great danger. He accordingly did not bring his wife or children with him from Transylvania.

The final battle occurred near Bucharest, which Dracula had occupied as his new capital. Laiota, the boyars, and the Turks faced Dracula and his Moldavians. Reports of his death differ, but most agree that Dracula was ambushed and cut down by archers. His head was taken and sent to Constantinople so that all could witness that the Impaler was truly dead. Tradition states that his headless body was taken to the monastery at Snagov, where it was laid to rest at the foot of the altar where monks constantly prayed for his soul's repose.

## After Dracula

**A**fter Dracula's death, Stephen the Great of Moldavia continued his resistance to the Turks, urging other European nations to join his crusade. He was unable to convince them, and after his death in 1504, the Moldavian princes became vassals of the Turkish sultan. Wallachia was already back in that position.

In Transylvania, a violent revolt which involved Magyar peasants as well as Romanian ones was savagely suppressed in 1514. So many were killed, however, that the levies of Transylvanian peasants expected to serve in the Hungarian army were all but missing, weakening the army fatally in their struggle against the Turks. In 1526, after the Battle of Mohacs, the Hungarian capital (Buda) fell. In

1541, Transylvania became semi-independent under Turkish suzerainty. Still, it was ruled by Hungarian nobles, who formed their own parliament and appointed their own prince.

Later in the sixteenth century, Protestants came to the area and began mass conversions. In the 1570s, freedom of worship was granted to both Catholics and Protestants, but the Orthodox religion was still slighted. Romanians, who were mostly Orthodox, continued to suffer in the service of the nobles.

In 1600 Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania were briefly united under the leadership of Michael the Brave, himself a Romanian. He was not a champion of the Romanian peasants, however, choosing to side with the nobles against them. Nor was he to succeed in the unification for long, as King Rudolf of Hungary and the Magyar nobles plotted against him and he was murdered.

The end of Michael the Brave's rule placed even greater hardships on the region's Romanian peasants. The Three Recognized Nations forbade all contact between Transylvania and Wallachia, deprived the Romanians of all rights, and severely punished any Orthodox priests they discovered.

As the 1600's drew to a close, full-fledged war once again broke out between the Christian nations and the Ottoman empire. A Turkish army marched on the Austrian capital of Vienna—and was soundly defeated. The Austrians pressed their advantage, and soon Hungary was taken away from the Ottoman empire, and made part of the Austria-Hungarian empire.

## The Modern Era

**W**ith the defeat of the Turks at Vienna in the late seventeenth century, Transylvania became again a self-governing state, united legally to Hungary and ultimately ruled by the Austrian emperor.

Strongly Roman Catholic, the court in Vienna hit upon an idea to bring converts to the faith and to undermine the inroads made by the Protestants in Transylvania. They



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offered the disenfranchised Orthodox priests and their Romanian faithful a new, "Uniate" church that combined the Greek and Roman rites. By a decree issued in 1699, those who joined the new church were allowed to enjoy the same rights as Catholics in Transylvania. Many leapt at the chance; the majority, however, did not.

Quarrels soon arose between the Magyars and Saxon-Germans, as the nobles believed they should be relieved of taxes and that the wealth of the Saxons should be distributed more evenly (i.e. to them). The Romanians continued to live miserably. Laws deprived them of the right to hold any public office, to live in any house which had a window that looked out onto a street, or to wear boots or

### The Uniate Church

The creation of the Uniate Church in Transylvania was not the first appearance of a church with combined rites. In 1596 Austria persuaded the Orthodox Church in Galicia (southern Poland and the Ukraine) to accept Vatican authority. It was hoped that this would separate them from Russian influence. This was the birth of the Uniate Church, which has been called the Greco-Catholic Church or the Catholic Church of the Eastern Rites.

In 1699 the Orthodox Church in Romania also accepted papal authority, accepting four key points of doctrine. These were the use of wafers rather than bread in the communion rite, the *Filioque* clause in the creed which states that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son (rather than just the Father as is believed in the Orthodox doctrine), the belief in Purgatory (heretofore unknown in the Eastern rites) and the supremacy of the pope. In other areas such as the marriage of priests, the cult of icons and differences in vestments and rituals, the Uniate Church remained Orthodox in practice. To some extent, the Uniate Church introduced the ideas of independence and self-reliance to the hierarchical and conformist Orthodox community.

shoes. Only sandals were allowed, a deliberate and petty cruelty in a land where snow often covers the ground from November to April.

The Magyar and Saxon peasants, though not as deprived as the Romanians, were seen as hardly human by the nobles. When Emperor Joseph II visited Transylvania in 1773 and in 1783, he was besieged with desperate petitions from thousands of peasants. Joseph instituted reforms to address the most serious abuses.

This gave the peasants heart, and in 1784, believing they had the Emperor's support, they rose in revolt. Castles and nobles' houses were burned and the peasants rampaged through the land. Joseph, however, decidedly did not support bloody revolution and the revolt was suppressed. The leaders, Horia and Closca, were executed in a manner so savage that Joseph instituted more reforms recognizing the Romanians as citizens and freeing the peasants from slavery. Soon, however, Austria had other matters to worry about, Joseph's attention turned elsewhere, and the nobles reinstated feudal ways. Joseph was unable to again make changes before his death.

In reaction to the revolt and the perceived usurpation of their powers and rights, the Magyar nobles reacted with a policy known as Magyarization. Terrified that Transylvania would unite with Moldavia and Wallachia and trap them as a minority within a Romanian majority, the Magyars sought ever greater union with Hungary. Hungarian was declared to be the only official language. Anyone serving in government, church, schools or any professions had to speak and write Hungarian. The capital of Transylvania was changed from the Saxon city of Sibiu to the Magyar one of Cluj.

In 1848, in the revolutionary nationalist spirit that was sweeping through Europe, the Magyars united Transylvania with Hungary. The Saxons and Romanians protested, and eventually, the protest became violent. An ethnic war broke out, with the Magyars on one side, the Saxons and Romanians on the other. Atrocities were committed by both sides.



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Eventually, the Hungarian national revolution was crushed and Austria again took over Transylvania.

1863 brought a meeting of the Diet in Sibiu, but a clash between Magyars and Austrians resulted in the only delegates being Saxons and Romanians. They passed laws giving Romanians equal status for their ethnic group, church, and language, but the Magyars declared these invalid. In 1867, Austria and Hungary united in empire and Transylvania was brought again under the direct control of Budapest.

The Romanians responded to laws formulated against them with passive resistance, neither learning Hungarian, nor taking Hungarian names. "Classical" Roman names such as Ovid, Lucretia, and Octavia became very popular, as they closely approximated Romanian names and were hard to "Magyarize."

Wallachia and Moldavia were ruled by the Turks for somewhat longer. For many years it had been the custom of candidates for rulership to buy their preferment with gifts and bribes to the sultan. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, native rulers were saddled with Turkish advisors, almost all of whom were Greeks from the Phanariot district.

Eventually, the native candidates were dispensed with altogether, and the Greek Phanariots assumed power directly. The average length of rulership for a Phanariot was a little over two years (due to constant backstabbing in their ranks). In 1821, the Phanariots were overthrown, but their wringing of every bit of available wealth from the principalities and their savage repression of the peasants had left the countries in shambles. Most of the populace lived in mean huts in conditions not too dissimilar than those of the middle ages.

The Turkish Empire was weakening and the 1818 Russo-Turkish war freed the principalities from Turkish influence. Though under Russian supervision, Wallachia and Moldavia began moving toward independence and unification.

In 1848, a group of Wallachian revolutionaries attempted the takeover of Wallachia, prompting the Russian army to occupy the region. In 1853, the Tsar's army returned, seeking to annex the principalities permanently. Fearing Russia's growing empire, the Western powers objected and this was one of the causes of the Crimean War.

Russia withdrew from the region, but the advancing Austrian army occupied it in turn. When the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1856, Romanian patriots lobbied for freedom and unity. Napoleon III supported their cause and the Great Powers agreed that no single power was to have "exclusive protection" of the principalities.

In 1866 a foreign prince was invited to rule over the united principalities. Prince Charles of Hohenzollern was elected. As a Prussian officer and Prince, he could not go directly to his new throne through Austria due to the political situation at the time. He therefore traveled in disguise via a Swiss passport and reached Bucharest in May.

### Present Day Transylvania

In 1881 a Romanian National Party was formed and in 1890, they appealed to the world outside Transylvania for help. In 1894 a group of Romanians tried to petition the Austrian emperor, but were caught, tried and given lengthy prison sentences. The Romanian National Party was dissolved—forcibly.

Baron Banffy has ruled Transylvania from Budapest since 1895. His repressive regime has oppressed not only the Romanians and Saxons, but Magyar workers and peasants as well. These Hungarians have begun their own protests and many are emigrating. Austria is becoming leery of Magyar policies as they constitute a possible threat to the stability of the empire. While the great empires struggle to retain their territories, nations within their boundaries are moving toward the idea of independence.



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## Forbidden Lore

Roughly a century after the death of Vlad the Impaler a nobleman calling himself Count Dracula took up residence in an castle located in the Borgo (Birkau) Pass of the Carpathian Mountains. Despite his repeated attempts to break his pact with the Red Death, at the moment he died, Dracula vowed to trade all he held sacred for the chance to avenge himself, thus sealing himself to his evil master forever. He eventually rose from the dead as a vampire, and has since become one of the Red Death's most devoted servants.

Residing in his hidden castle high in the Carpathians, Dracula has watched events unfold and occasionally interfered in small ways in Transylvanian politics. Because of his fluent grasp of a number of languages, he has been able to pass himself off as a Szeckler, a Magyar nobleman, and even a native

Hungarian. He seeks to rule all of Transylvania in secret and from behind the scenes.

Though he himself is Romanian, Dracula is more sympathetic to the old notion of the rights of rulership by strength and terror. Much of the overreaction to the peasants' struggles for rights can be traced to Dracula's secret influence on those in power. Many of the gruesome tortures and horrible executions meted out to so-called subversives can be laid directly at his door.

The peasants of Transylvania know of his deeds and take steps to protect themselves from the dreaded "blood Count," but outsiders rarely believe their tales. If skeptics knew that Dracula's head disappeared from Constantinople and that the grave that held his remains in the monastery of Snagov lies empty, perhaps they would listen more carefully to old wives' tales.







## THE LAND BEYOND THE FOREST

*he Stars are dead.  
The animals will not  
look.*

*We are left alone  
with our day, and  
our time is short,  
and*

*History to the  
defeated May say  
Als but we cannot  
help nor pardon.*

—Auden, *A  
Summer Night*

Transylvania (Latin  
for the “land beyond  
the forest”) is a part

of the Balkan Peninsula, which lies between the Adriatic and the Black Seas in southeastern Europe. This small land occupies a unique and somewhat uncomfortable position as a crossroads between the East and the West. If a line is traced from Turkey to Germany, and another from Mongolia to France (the migratory paths of barbarians and empire seekers for ages), it can be seen that Transylvania lies squarely along the cross thus created. Because of this central geographic placement, it is hardly surprising that Transylvania has been a sought-after prize by conquerors from both the East and the West.

Hungary and Yugoslavia border Transylvania to the west, Serbia and Bulgaria to the south, the Russian steppes (the Ukraine) to the north, and the recently formed nation of Romania (until 1861, the former principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia) to the east.

Transylvania is a land of rolling hills held within the curve of the majestic eastern Carpathian Mountains on the east, the lower, western Carpathians to the west, and the Transylvanian Alps to the south. The Bihor Mountains, an offshoot of those southern Alps, clump together near the center of the country just to the north of the Mures River, which stretches the width of Transylvania from the Carpathians in the east to the Hungarian plains in the west. From there, the waters

sprung from the snows of the Carpathian Mountains join with the Tisza River and make their way down to the River Danube south of Wallachia.

### Transportation

Several methods of getting to Transylvania exist. The most frequently chosen method by travelers from the west is by train via the famous Orient Express. The Orient Express runs from western Europe to Budapest in Hungary. Crossing into either Transylvania or Romania entails taking a ferry across the river and continuing on local transportation.

For those who either cannot afford the train or who prefer to travel by other methods, there are coaches that enter Transylvania, crossing through the Banat region where natural passes occur.

In Transylvania, local trains (that are notoriously unpunctual) connect many of the major cities. Coach travel is an option as well. For those lacking funds, local peasants can often be persuaded to provide a ride on a farm wagon, but this is slow and uncomfortable at best. Riding horses or carriages may be hired in larger villages and towns, and walking is always an option.

From the east, the Black Sea ports offer starting points from which to travel overland. Natural passes through the Carpathian Mountains have always provided access to Transylvania from the east. Coaches run from Bucovina and Moldavia, utilizing old roads that ascend to dizzying heights. From Wallachia in the south, trade roads lead to the cities of Brasov and Sibiu. Traditionally, none of these roads has been kept in as good repair as they might in order to discourage invaders.

### Time

Transylvania is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. (When's it's 10 p.m. in London, it's midnight in Transylvania.)



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Inns, shops, and other business establishments do not unbar their doors until dawn (at the earliest) and are almost always closed before sundown. The exceptions to this are inns and waystations that cater to coaches arriving after dark and a very few entrepreneurs in the larger cities who scoff at the peasants' tales of supernatural evils.

Suspicion always falls on those who arrive after sundown, however, unless such folk can be shown to carry charms, wards, or religious items to protect themselves from the forces of darkness. Foreigners are, to some extent, exempt from much of this suspicion, as it is well known that they routinely take the most absurd risks (such as braving the night in Transylvania).

## Currency

Since Transylvania is a part of Hungary, they use the Hungarian korona as their currency. Before 1892, Hungary used the forint instead of the korona, and much coinage of this time is still in circulation. Other currencies that can be found in Transylvania are the Romanian leu, the Austrian florin, the German mark, the Russian ruble, and the French franc. Coinage of any type are not readily available to peasants, who continue to use barter for most important transactions.

## Climate

Though generally temperate during the short spring and fall seasons, Transylvania usually has extended, warm summers and long, frigid winters.

In winter (from mid November to March), temperatures regularly fall below freezing; instances of cold as severe as  $-37^{\circ}$  F have been recorded. Snow blankets most of the country and makes many of the higher mountains impassable. A strong, icy wind (called the *crivás*) blows from Russia across much of Transylvania during the winter.

Spring (which arrives in late April) brings a softening of the weather with the Mediterranean winds from the south. Snow begins to melt, with only the tallest peaks in the Carpathians (those around 8,000 feet high) remaining covered until early summer. Wildflowers bloom in profusion in the sheltered valleys of these peaks, and herds of sheep are taken up into the mountains to their summer pasturage where they graze on the lush grass brought forth by the spring rains. Run-off from the peaks can be treacherous, with less-traveled passes and byways flooding or chunks of ice melting and tumbling down the mountainsides in mini avalanches.

Summer arrives in June, when the temperatures reach into the high 60s. In the Transylvanian basin, temperatures average in the low 70s throughout July and August, and begin sliding into the lower 60s again come September. Summer and early autumn are the best time for traveling in Transylvania, especially in the Carpathians, as the ground is generally firm, the weather pleasant, and food more abundant than at any other time of year.

Autumn begins in late September or early October and is over a mere three to four weeks later. Deciduous trees cover the mountains in a riot of orange, crimson and gold interspersed with the green-black splendor of towering evergreens. The herds are brought back down the mountain to their winter quarters in the lower elevations. Harvest festivals are held and homes prepared for the onslaught of winter.

## The Transylvanian Plateau

The Transylvanian basin or plateau lies at an altitude of 1,300–2,000 feet. It consists of forests of oak and beech, rolling hills and grassy steppes. Rivers flow between long hills and the valleys are wide with gently sloping sides which gradually climb to the Carpathian foothills. Much of this fertile land has been cleared and made into farmland, orchards, and vineyards. Corn, wheat, potatoes, sugar beets, sunflowers and other



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vegetable crops account for most of the produce, though herbs and hardy fruits (especially grapes, apples and plums) thrive as well. Those few who can afford to leave a field in clover (larger landowners) may keep bees and sell their honey for a good profit.

Villages and towns dot the area; some few larger cities also exist, though none are so large as their western European counterparts. The villages are usually no more than a single dirt street with rows of wooden cottages with carved wooden fences and gates along its length. In almost every village, a church can be found in a central position or framed at the head of the main street. Many also have wind or water mills for grinding their grain. Surrounding the villages are their fields and frequently a stretch of dense deciduous woodlands.

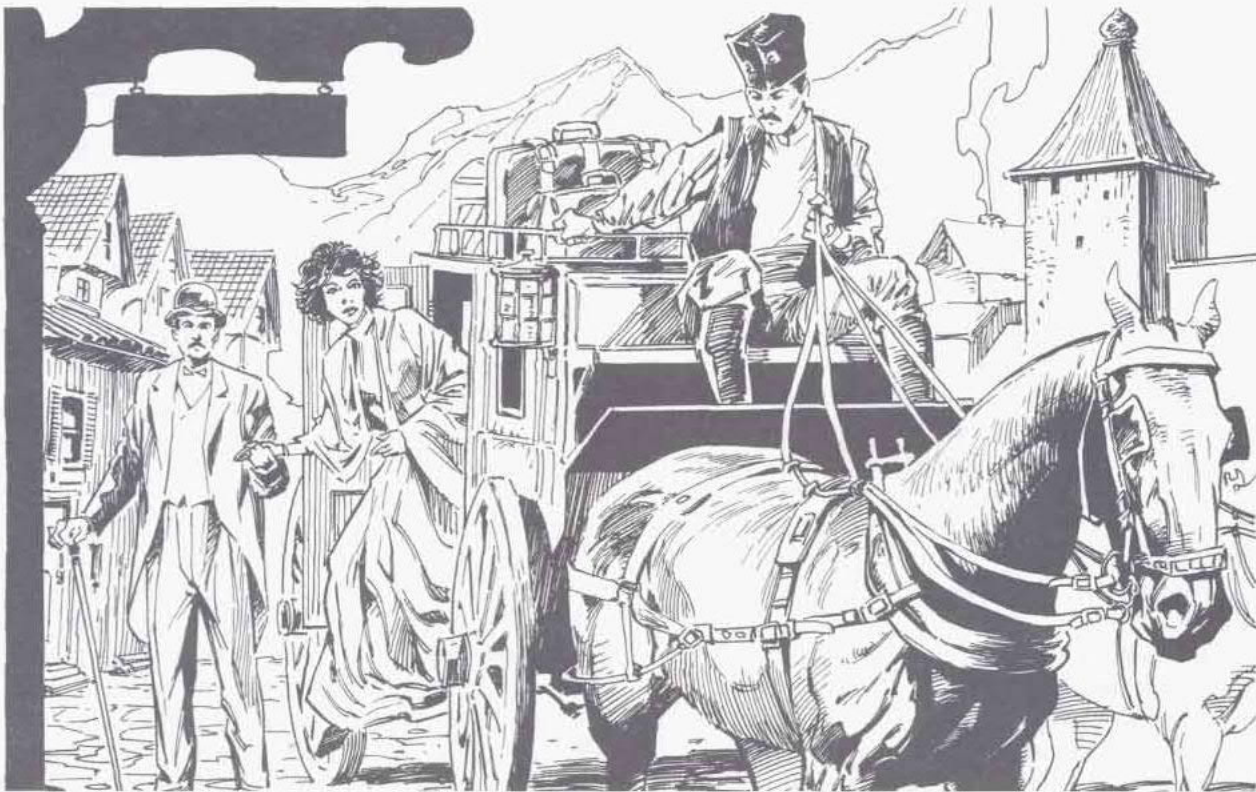
Farmers walk the dusty road from the fields and orchards, accompanied by their slow moving ox-driven carts. Wooden water mills

and horse-drawn plows are the most recent inventions in evidence, giving rise to the feeling of having stepped back in time to the dark ages.

Larger towns and cities usually are (or were in earlier times) walled enclaves, many of which sprang up to serve the needs of Saxon (German) traders. In many cases, they too have changed little from the fifteenth century.

One way to tell whether a traveler has entered a Saxon or a Romanian village is the way in which the houses are built. Saxon villages feature houses built in a continuous row along the street and joined together by big stone gates. In each house, three windows face the road. Romanian houses are built so that their sides face the road. There are no windows that overlook the road itself in a Romanian house, the result of a peculiar law that forbade Romanians from doing so.

Travelers arriving in Transylvania from the soot-choked streets of Paris or London, the





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glittering palaces of Vienna or even the provincial sights of Boston or Philadelphia might well think themselves transported backward in time by a century or more. The first impression most visitors have of Transylvania, however, is of mile upon mile of unspoiled natural beauty.

## The Carpathians

**L**ooming over the sunny fields of the Transylvanian basin, the Carpathian Mountains, which form an arc that curves southward from the Ukraine and ends at a southwestern area called the Iron Gates of Transylvania. This final stretch of the great Danube River is marked by deep gorges carved into the mountains by the mighty, roaring river.

The Carpathian Mountains are composed of a great variety of rock types (volcanic, sedimentary and metamorphic), and the limestone portions of the mountains have been sculpted over time into weird and fantastic shapes.

The mountain range is of fairly low altitude, with few peaks higher than 6,500 feet, however, and only four or five above 8,200 feet. Many summit passes (some at altitudes above 8,000 feet), provide access to and from Transylvania. In many places, glaciers carved corries and moraines that are now covered with thick forest. Hollows excavated by glacial ice hold clear mountain lakes. High altitude tablelands formed from erosion provide areas for permanent settlements, and it is not uncommon to emerge from a lonely, twisting pass or sinuous defile and encounter a small village where least expected.

The Carpathians are divided into three distinct portions — the Eastern Carpathians, the Southern Carpathians (also called the Transylvanian Alps) and the Western Carpathians.

The eastern range consists of three parallel ridges running northwest to southeast. The westernmost ridge has many cones and craters indicative of its origins as a now-extinct volcanic range. The mountains are covered by

verdant forest and dotted with small lakes, mineral springs and caves. Depressions within the range house mining and agricultural centers, the largest of which is the city of Brasov. Silver and gold can be found in the area as well as copper, zinc, lead, bauxite, and coal. Oil has recently been discovered here and is now beginning to be exploited. Natural gas was accidentally discovered by a shepherd in the middle of the eighteenth century. Scientists traveled from all over Europe to study the phenomenon of this "inextinguishable fire." Salt mines, such as the one at Ocna Dejului have been worked in Transylvania for nearly 2,000 years.

The Southern Carpathians boast the highest peak in the land, Mount Moldoveanu, which rises to 8,343 feet in the Fagaras Mountains to the southeast of Sibiu. Over 150 glacial lakes can be found in these Alps, which are covered mostly by grassland that is good for pasturage. The mountains are crisscrossed by ancient roads, made possible by the numerous passes and valleys formed by the Danube, Olt, and Jiu Rivers. Portions of the old Roman Way are still visible in some areas.

The Western Carpathians are the lowest of the three and feature deep depressions which have allowed easy passage over the centuries. Because they can be stoutly defended as well as easily crossed, these passes have come to be known as "gates." The most famous gate is the Iron Gate which lies on the border with Yugoslavia. Many high-altitude permanent settlements can be found here in this most densely populated area of the Carpathians.

## Waterways and Mineral Springs

**N**umerous streams run down from the Carpathians, and limpid glacial lakes grace their upland valleys. All the rivers are tributaries of the Danube. The three major rivers of Transylvania flow westward, emptying into the Tisza River, a Danube tributary.

The Mures River crosses between the Transylvanian Alps and the Bihor Mountains, watering the fertile farmlands of the



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Transylvanian basin. It is the largest river in Transylvania, winding across the whole of the region before flowing through the lowlands and crossing into Hungary.

The Bistrisa River flows to the north and east of the town of Bistrisa. It arises in the northern curve of the eastern Carpathians, then flows westward toward Hungary, where it too joins other waters and becomes a tributary of the Danube.

Arising in the northeastern Carpathians, the Somes River flows westward and slightly north into Hungary. A branch of the river curves to the south by the city of Cluj-Nápoça.

From its headwaters in the Transylvanian Alps, the Olt River flows south through Turnu Rosu (the Red Tower Pass) below Sibiu into Wallachia. The wide Olt valley served as the traditional route for Turkish invasion. The western portion of Wallachia is known as Oltenia in honor of the river.

The Jiu River flows south from Transylvania through the southern Carpathians, across the Wallachian plains and down to the Danube. The river moves through the Jiu valley, where some of the richest deposits of brown coal in the region are to be found. A road that links Wallachia to Transylvania was built through the valley to facilitate mining and trade.

The Dimbovisa and Arges Rivers seem to mirror one another as they tumble southward from the Transylvanian Alps. Though in some places they are over 30 miles apart, in others they flow within 10 miles of one another, creating a fertile region between them that serves as prime farmland. The two join together far to the south and flow into the Danube. The city of Bucharest is set along the east bank of the Dimbovisa, while the infamous Agrish Castle looms above the left bank of the Arges River some 50 miles from Tirgoviste.

Transylvania is known in some circles (including European royalty) for its mineral water spas, which feature anti-aging compounds, mudpackings, baths and the drinking of mineral waters. A course of treatment at a spa usually lasts between

twelve and twenty days. A variety of mineral waters have been used for cures as different as bronchitis and rheumatism since Roman times, and these still attract many visitors. While not yet as fashionable as those of Germany and western Europe, they are gaining in popularity among those who frequently travel to the east.

Several springs of sulfurous water were discovered by the Romans in the Cerna Valley near the western end of the Carpathian Alps. They are used in the treatment of rheumatic conditions and skin diseases and as a cure for "chronic intoxication" (alcoholism).

On the southern slopes of the Gurghiul Mountains lie several salt lakes. Some contain mud rich in chlorides (Lacul Negru), while others (Lacul Rosu and Lacul Ursu) feature very warm waters. Rheumatic conditions, illnesses of the peripheral nervous system, and "women's disorders" are treated here.

At the crossing of the Dorna and the Bistrisa at an altitude of 2,652 feet, lies Vatra Dornei. Treatments for cardiovascular and locomotor conditions are given at this mountain spa.

Lacul Rosu, some sixteen miles from Gheorgheni, is a natural lake in the highlands of the Carpathians. Lined with evergreens and featuring boating as well as relaxing treatments, this resort is noted for its cures of mental and physical exhaustion.

## Flora

**A**cross the Transylvanian hills and on the lower slopes of the mountains grow great forests. Spruce, fir, and pine dominate the landscape, creating a dark, brooding atmosphere which frightened the first Romans to see them. Intermixed with these great evergreens are conifers, oak, beech and ash, hornbeam, silver fir, and sycamore. Willows and poplars line the banks of the Mures and other rivers.

Wildflowers form a riotous carpet in the mountain meadows in springtime. Colorful butterflies frequent the meadows, adding their own hues to the display.



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Above the zone of spruce which dominates the slopes from about the 3,000–5,000 foot elevation rises an alpine zone that is filled with dwarf pine and other stunted bushes. Here too, there are meadows interspersed with the woods and watered by dozens of tiny lakes and streams.

Gentians, crocus, and false white hellebore abound here, while in the higher meadows campanulas, alpine buttercups, saxifrage, and even edelweiss can be found. A very rare flower, the Piatra Craiului pink, is found in no other regions of the world than in the alpine meadows of Transylvania.

Higher still there lies a zone of grasses, small shrubs, lichens, and mosses. These wend their way upward, becoming more and more sparse until they fail altogether, leaving the highest zone of bare rock face. These fractured and crevassed tors are snow-covered for much of the year and loom menacingly over the hills and forests below. With their foreboding appearance, it is little wonder that the grim, gray Carpathians have become the focus of countless folk tales and ghost stories through the ages.

## Fauna

**T**he animal life of the area is as varied as its landscape. Attracted to the rich grain fields and abundantly wooded nesting sites, many birds make their homes in Transylvania. Among them are the exotic-looking hoopoe, red-footed falcon, the gray shrike, and the imperial eagle. Larks, nutcrackers, ravens, and jays nest in the deciduous trees alongside several varieties of woodpecker. Golden eagles float lazily over the higher mountains, their aeries built in the highest, most inaccessible regions.

Raptors are also in evidence, with sparrowhawks, buzzards, hen harriers and eagle owls the most abundant. Game birds such as grouse and capercaillie inhabit the forests, while red-breasted geese and pintail, goldeneye and teal ducks populate the waters of mountain meadow and plateau lakes alike.

White storks nest in chimneys in some of the towns and villages and the clear songs of the nightingale can sometimes be heard on a summer evening.

In Transylvania's many lakes and rivers can be found over seventy species of fish. Trout, dace, pike, carp, grayling, flounder and salmon are among the better known varieties. Salamanders live near the streams, appearing in great numbers after rainstorms. Grass snakes and adders are the most common snakes in the region and are usually found near farmlands and in light woodlands.

Found within the many caves which riddle the Carpathians are numbers of bats. The most frequently encountered are brown and fruit bats.

Most peasants keep a few pigs or sheep, while wealthier farms support pigs, chickens, sheep and cattle. Horses are usually used as draft animals rather than for riding, and oxen are often employed to pull heavy farm carts.

Where settlements have not encroached upon or destroyed their habitats, wild boars, foxes, chamois (small, goatlike antelopes), wolves, lynxes, and deer thrive. By far the largest animals live in the forested mountains. Brown bears are a frequent sight, especially in the eastern Carpathians. Red deer are found most often in the spruce forests of northern Transylvania. In September and October, during mating season, their strangely resonant, coughing mating calls echo through the valleys.

Chamois flocks graze upon the sparse grasses and lichens above the treeline, while a lone male stands guard perched on an overhang above them and silhouetted against the sky. Wild boar dig for roots in the clearings of the lower altitude forests and are noted for their aggressive behavior when protecting their young.

Wolves are found mostly in the forested hills, though a surprising number somehow survive at high altitudes even in the dead of winter. They usually prey upon sheep, though some have been emboldened enough by starvation during colder months to attack lone



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travelers. In winter, when their tracks can be followed in the snow, parties of hunters are organized to hunt down wolves who have come too close to a village or town.

## Cities and Historical Sights

**T**ransylvania may feel empty and isolated to travelers due to the rugged landscape and the abandoned fortresses and ancient villages that dot its hills. However, there are a great number of thriving communities here. This chapter takes a look at those.

In keeping with the variety of peoples that have called Transylvania home, many towns have several different names. Each entry lists the Romanian name first, and any additional names thereafter.

### Alba Iulia

(Balgrad) (Weissenburg)  
(Karlsburg) (Gyulafehérvár)

One of the oldest cities of Transylvania, Alba Iulia's multiplicity of names records its long history under the Dacians, Romans, Slavs, Saxons, Romanians, and Hungarians. Although a ruling class of Hungarian nobility has made its home here, the bulk of the population consists of Romanian peasants.

The citadel of Karlsburg dominates the city and forms most of the upper town. Within the citadel stands St. Michael's Cathedral, an elaborate Romanesque structure built in the thirteenth century and which contains the tomb of János Hunyady. The upper town also encloses the Prince's Palace, meeting place of the Transylvanian Diets in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as the Bishop's Palace and its nearby library, built in the eighteenth century as a gift from Bishop Count Batthyány.

Surrounding the citadel, the area known as the lower town houses shops, inns, and the small homes of the local citizenry.

### Forbidden Lore

The walls of the citadel form a seven-pointed star, but whether this formation was meant to act as a ward against evil from without or to contain some great evil within has long been a closely guarded secret. There are those who claim that the library inside the citadel houses a small but significant collection of volumes and ancient manuscripts dealing with the supernatural manifestations in the area, but the truth behind this allegation is difficult to confirm. Led by Brother Mihai Bolgiu, the head librarian, believed by some to be connected with the Fraternity of the Tattered Scroll and by others to be a member of The Circle of Seven, the monks and other members of the staff show a marked reluctance to allow visitors into the library.

### Horia's Field

Just south of the citadel of Alba Iulia lies an area known as Horia's Field. This large field marks the spot where Horia and Closca, two Romanian peasant leaders, were publicly disemboweled for their part in the 1784 uprising of Romanian peasants against their Hungarian rulers. A third leader, Crisan, committed suicide rather than face this dreadful form of execution.

### Forbidden Lore

Ghostly voices shrieking in pain are sometimes heard coming from this accursed spot and strange apparitions have been seen entering the field at night only to disappear, seemingly into the earth. A secret entrance to an underground passageway connecting the field with the cell in which Horia awaited execution (located above the main gateway to the citadel). The obelisk commemorating Horia's martyrdom which stands just outside the main gate hides the entry to this tunnel.



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## Cluj

(Napoca) (Klausenburg) (Kolozsvár)

With its many stone buildings and square-towered Gothic churches, the capital of Transylvania reflects the influence of the land's Hungarian rulers. Known as Năpoca by the early Dacians who settled there, the Germans who "founded" it in 1272 on behalf of the Hungarian King Geza named the fortress city Klausenburg. The Hungarians, themselves, often refer to Cluj as Kolozsvár.

Prominent sights in Cluj include the fourteenth century structure that houses St. Michael's Church—a testimony to the Catholic Magyars' power. It was built in the fifteenth century and expanded in 1715. The church stands at the city's center within the defensive walls of its citadel. The small mansion in which Hungary's Romanian-born King Matthias Corvinus was born in 1458 can also be found here.

North of the city's center stands the Hintz House, where Cluj's first apothecary has ministered to the city since 1573.

South of central Cluj, Babes-Bolyai University, established recently in 1872, has attracted a large student population to the city, infusing it with an intellectual and youthful vigor. Numerous cafés near the university cater to the students' often nocturnal habits. Cluj also boasts a variety of hotels and other accommodations for visitors to this center of Magyar culture. The Hotel Royale features many Hungarian dishes such as *paprika hendl* (chicken with paprika), *mamaliga* (a maize porridge), and *impletata* (stuffed eggplant).

### Forbidden Lore

The city's oldest apothecary, besides providing more modern medicines, still contains a vast store of ancient herbal remedies and instruments. The Acsacy family, who currently occupy the premises,





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have been rumored to provide (for a price) certain substances thought to be effective in protecting against supernatural threats. József Acsády, the family's patriarch, is said to possess an ancient alchemical tome which he uses in producing potions and elixirs with reputedly magical properties.

## Sibiu (Hermannstadt)

The capital of Transylvania before the Hungarian empire moved the Diet to Cluj to consolidate its rule, Sibiu remains the major Saxon-influenced city in the region. Narrow streets filled with old, gabled houses painted in brilliant colors lend a spirited charm to the town, despite its troublesome history.

Located on a hill overlooking the Cibinul River, Sibiu is one of the Siebenburgen, the seven towns founded by the Germans at the invitation of Hungary's King Geza in order to colonize Transylvania.

The Brukenthal Museum, opened in 1817 in the palace once occupied by the imperial governor Samuel Brukenthal (1777–1787), houses a fine collection of Old Masters' paintings as well as contemporary artists whose works reflect the growing cultural influence of the French.

The old city rises on two levels, linked by stairways, the most famous of which is the Pasajul Scarilor ("Passage of Stairs"). Tiny window slits in the roofs of the buildings of this Saxon fortress are called, appropriately, the "eyes of Hermannstadt" and were once important as watch-holes looking down onto the lower part of the city. In 1859, a wrought-iron bridge was erected to span the two sides of the canyon-like Strada Ocnei. This structure is familiarly termed the Liars' Bridge, from a recent superstition that the bridge would collapse under the weight of anyone telling a lie.

Like other Saxon towns in Transylvania, Sibiu served as a center for the rising merchant classes of the sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries, containing many guild houses under royal charter. The production of gunpowder is the special provenance of the manufacturers of Sibiu.

Deep within its crypt, the Evangelical Cathedral, dating from the fourteenth century, contains the tomb of Mihnea the Bad, the son of Vlad the Impaler, assassinated just outside the church in 1510.

Parts of Sibiu's *cetasi* (fortifications) still stand, as does the House of the Guild of Furriers and Skinners which became a theatre in the eighteenth century. In the same square can be seen numerous "houses on legs," a name given to houses built with porticoes in which the craft guilds sold their wares. The council tower, built in the 15th century occupies the center of the area which then formed the town's main square.

For visitors, Sibiu offers an assortment of eating establishments, most of which are located within the city's hotels. The Hotel Împaratul Romanilor, the oldest in the city, once guested a host of famous individuals including Franz Liszt and the Emperor Joseph II.

By the 1890's, Sibiu is the undisputable center of Romanian culture.

### Forbidden Lore

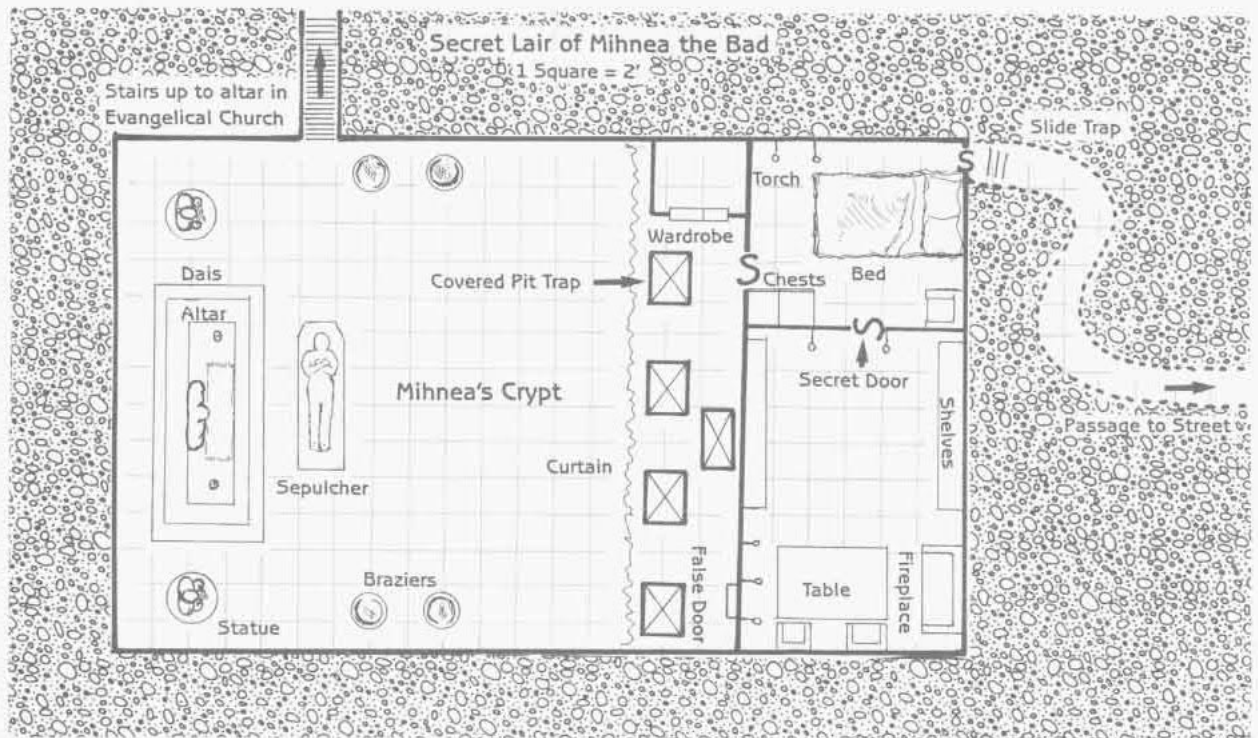
Unknown to most of Sibiu's populace, a secret confederation of guilds devoted to forgotten or suspect trades has its headquarters in a small building squirreled away amid the labyrinthine streets of the under city. Practitioners of the arts of poisonings meet here under conditions of deepest secrecy.

The tomb of Mihnea the Bad serves as a focal point for the evil rituals of a group of corrupted priests who regard Dracula's son as their spiritual patron. Their blood sacrifices do not go unanswered.

The "curse" of the Liars' Bridge is not entirely false. During the ceremonies marking its completion, Edward Kofbauer, a member of Die Wächtern, invoked a secret blessing



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known only to that order of holy warriors. The result has imbued the bridge with the ability to leave a telltale mark (visible only to those gifted with specially crafted silver-rimmed monocles that are the qabal's symbol) on the left cheek of anyone who tells an untruth while crossing the bridge. The intensity of the mark varies according to the magnitude of the lie. The purpose behind this action was to enable agents of the qabal to question suspicious individuals, gauging their character while taking a casual stroll across the bridge.

## Brasov (Kronstadt)

Nestled beneath Mounts Timpa and Postavaru, the Saxon city of Brasov began as a walled fortress in the thirteenth century under the guidance of the Teutonic Order of Knights. For centuries, the armies of Brasov attempted to defend the nearby Birsa region from waves of attackers including the Turks, Tartars, and the

forces of Vlad Tepes. In the aftermath of one such assault, the outer edges of the city were put to the flame, while hundreds of captives were impaled on St. Joseph's Hill outside the city.

Perhaps the most famous landmark in Brasov is the Black Church (Biserica Neagra), whose soot-blackened walls—the result of a great fire that swept through the city in 1689—have given the structure its name. Dedicated to the Virgin, the church was restored from 1711 to 1715, and is one of the finest examples of Gothic art in the region.

The Black Church is also the largest church in either Transylvania or Romania, being 290 feet long with a nave and side aisles. It is 75 feet wide. The church's pristine white interior forms the backdrop for a collection of oriental carpets, donations from merchants who traded with the east. A large organ boasting 4,000 pipes was built for the church in 1839.

The main square of Brasov is surrounded by red-roofed merchants' houses, the 15th century Council House, and the Merchants Hall, a



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meeting place for the Saxon guilds which once dominated the city. Nearby is a gate that once served as a barrier against those of Romanian blood, as the town center was forbidden to them except on the first Sunday in May.

## Forbidden Lore

According to one folk legend, when the Pied Piper spirited away the children of Hamelin, he delivered them via an underground passage to Transylvania, depositing them in the main square of Brasov. Today, there are some individuals in the city who claim to be the descendants of those vanished children. Calling themselves the Heirs of the Piper, they constitute a clandestine society of protectors who watch the city carefully for signs of growing evil. A few of them are thought to have mystic abilities, and all of them excel in some form of music. Posing as street musicians, in fact, enables them to keep a discreet watch on the city from their favorite street corners.

## Sinaia and Environs

Set among the glacier-carved Bucegi Mountains in southern Transylvania lies the exclusive aristocratic resort of Sinaia. Originally settled only by hermits and shepherds, this pristine, lovely region has become a fashionable stopping place for visiting aristocrats and royalty.

The first permanent building in Sinaia was erected in 1640. It was a wooden hermitage built and funded by a patron from Breaza. A few houses and an inn were built near the hermitage over the next century, but it was not until 1870 when the town became host to a royal summer residence that it began to grow. With the coming of the railroad in 1879, Sinaia developed into a town, and by 1880 it was a playland of the aristocracy.

Set beside the frothing Prahova River, the town that has been dubbed the "Pearl of the Carpathians" is noted for its breathtaking mountain scenery and its recently built royal





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castle. From Sinaia it is possible to hike in the Bucegi Mountains, with paths just above the town being the easiest to navigate. Several sheer escarpments compete with slopes covered in beech and rowan trees. Hunting has recently become popular, with woodcock, hazel grouse, Carpathian deer, and wild boar providing the game of choice.

Sinaia is also known for its mineral springs similar to those found in the Olt Valley. The springs contain bicarbonate, magnesium, sulfur, calcium, iodine and bromine. Drinking and bathing in the waters are said to promote good digestion by reducing bile secretions and promoting gastric secretions. Chronic gastritis and bladder stones are both treated with the waters from the springs of Sinaia.

Sinaia Monastery, an assemblage of small churches and courtyards, was founded by a boyar named Michael Cantacuzino in 1695. Built on the site of an earlier hermitage, the monastery incorporates a stone which the boyar brought back from Mount Sinai in the Holy Land (hence the name of the town).

North of the town lies a virtual survey of European landscaping and architecture. Here is a park which has been landscaped in the English fashion. Beyond it rises Peles Castle, a 160 room structure is built in the German Renaissance style with touches of Italian Renaissance, German Baroque, and French Rococo. On either side of the castle rise terraces laid out Italian Renaissance style in the shape of an amphitheater and decorated with statues and fountains. Built in the 1870's for Charles of Hohenzollern, who became Romania's elected monarch Carol I, the castle has been decorated with carved woodwork and stained glass by his wife Elisabeta, who insists that folk costume be worn when court is held at Peles Castle. Some of the stained glass dates from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

As the finer folk of Europe have followed the monarch to this lovely hideaway, a well appointed (and expensive) hotel, the Caraiman, was built in 1881 to accommodate visitors to the area. The hotel features

Brincovenesc style architecture (like a fourteenth century castle), with charming round towers. Other hotels have followed—all built during the 1880's and early 1890's.

Also new is a casino, opened recently to provide the visitors with yet another diversion. The rich fabrics, gilded woods and polished marble are said to be fully the equal of anything found in western Europe (indeed it is said to be modeled after the famous casino of Monte Carlo) and the dealers and staff are rumored to be far more honest—perhaps because they have yet to learn the “niceties” of the games.

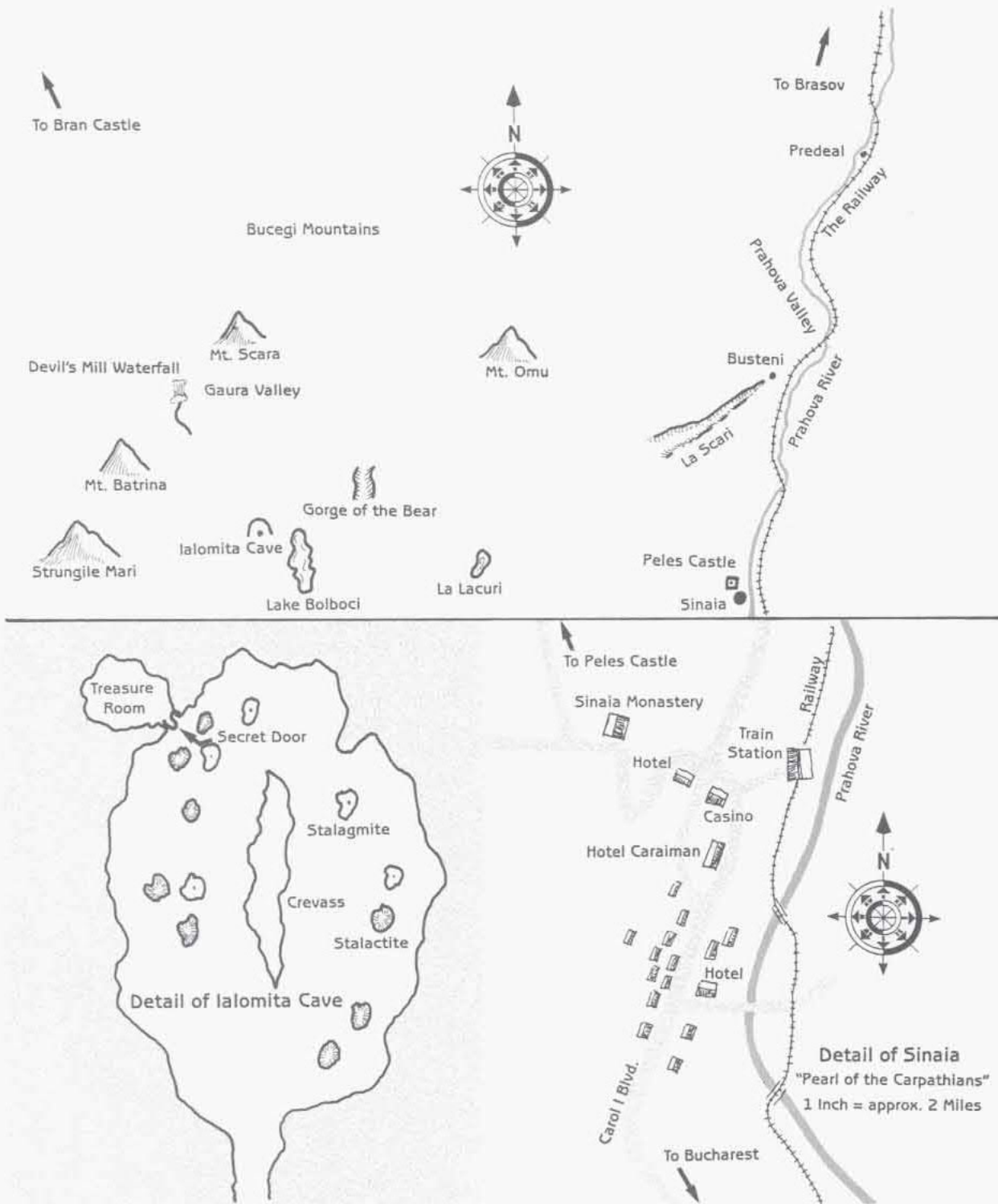
Within carriage distance of Sinaia lie several interesting features of the Bucegi Mountains. Mount Omu, the highest point of this range, is covered with snow throughout most of the year. In April, however, its meadows are covered with crocus, snowdrops, violets, primroses, edelweiss, and rhododendrons. La Scari is a spectacular stairway hewn into the rock of the mountain and leading from above down to the town of Busteni. To the west lies one of the many caves in the area. Known as the Ialomisa Cave, it is a huge grotto. Footing is perilous, but if care is taken, visitors may walk through the nearby Bătrâna valley and enjoy several lovely waterfalls. Past the waterfalls lie the “Gorge of the Bear” and two natural arched stone bridges.

### Forbidden Lore

In a time when the peasants were even more fully under Magyar domination, Orthodox priests were barred from Transylvania. Many crossed the borders from Wallachia and Moldavia to meet secretly with the faithful despite their terrible fate if discovered. Passes from Wallachia made this area a natural route for the priests to enter Transylvania and make their way to the larger villages, but eventually, even this proved too dangerous.



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Unknown to those who now hike and hunt throughout the area, the Ialomița Cave once served as the secret center for Orthodox services in Transylvania. Romanian faithful traveled to the cave, where they were able to practice their faith without interference. To provide the grotto with the proper atmosphere, exquisite trappings, golden icons, elaborately embroidered vestments and costly vessels were brought to the cave and stored in trunks between each use.

Additionally, it was rumored that several treasures were brought out of Constantinople when it became clear that the city would fall to the Turks. Trusting more to the goodness of fellow priests than to princes who were all too often corrupt, the Metropolitan (head of the Orthodox Church) sent the treasures to Wallachian priests to be hidden.

Fearing their discovery should any monastery be sacked (as was often the case), the priests worked for over a year hollowing out a hidden treasure room near the back of the cave. There the treasures of Constantinople and the vestments and trappings were stored. Among the treasures was rumored to be something called the Repository of Light, a great tool against evil and the powers of darkness. Never daring to open the sealed trunks containing the treasures, none of the priests ever discovered what it might be.

Three priests knew of the treasure. One died soon after helping to build the secret room. A second was captured by Transylvanian nobles and tortured to death. The third priest, hearing of the second one's capture, sealed himself within the treasure chamber as a last guardian against heretical hands seizing the treasures of the church. His ghost watches over the treasure to this day.

A rumor concerning the Repository of Light, theorizing that it lies quite close by in one of the caves of the Bucegi Mountains, can be found within the *Sigil of Blood*, the tome written by Teodosie Ispirescu, which is located at Bran Castle.

## Sighisoara (Schassburg) (Segesv)

The dark battlements and towering spires that distinguish this city provide a fitting atmosphere for the birthplace of the man who would be known as Dracula. Situated atop a hill that overlooks the River Tîrnava Mare, the city had its beginnings as the Roman garrison headquarters called *Castrum Sex*. Later, it became one of the seven Saxon fortress cities built around a massive citadel. The fourteenth century saw the city's rise as a free town under the governance of craft guilds, whose bastions provided additional protection and defense to the Saxon and Magyar burghers of the city.

Above the main gateway of the citadel looms the Clock Tower, where a procession of wooden figures (one for each day of the week) emerge from the belfry each midnight to mark the inexorable passage of the hours.

Below the Clock Tower stands a small, two-story house. In this house in 1431, Vlad, the second son of Vlad Dracul, was born.

Also located in Sighisoara are a number of churches, including the thirteenth century Church on the Hill, with its covered wooden stairway (added in the seventeenth century) which counts 175 steps as it winds up the hillside. The church itself is late Gothic style and contains many fine fifteenth century paintings. Beside the citadel walls lies the church's Saxon cemetery, now overgrown with weeds.

### Forbidden Lore

The house where Dracula spent his childhood exercises an eerie influence on any who are so bold as to enter it uninvited. An evil aura seems to permeate the building, making it difficult for individuals dedicated to the service of good to spend more than a few minutes in its vicinity. One of Dracula's vampire brides resides in the basement of the house, guarding it for her master.

A recent spate of vandalism perpetrated upon the graves in the Saxon cemetery has



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given rise to tales of the walking dead traveling through the streets of the city at night. These tales are more than just superstitious talk. Horst Buchen, a malevolent minion of evil who disguises himself as the town's embalmer, is creating an army of zombies. Unfortunately for him, his actions have attracted the attention of greater powers who see him as a rival that will shortly need to be eliminated or recruited. A power struggle will soon erupt in a war, and the innocent of the city will be caught in the middle.

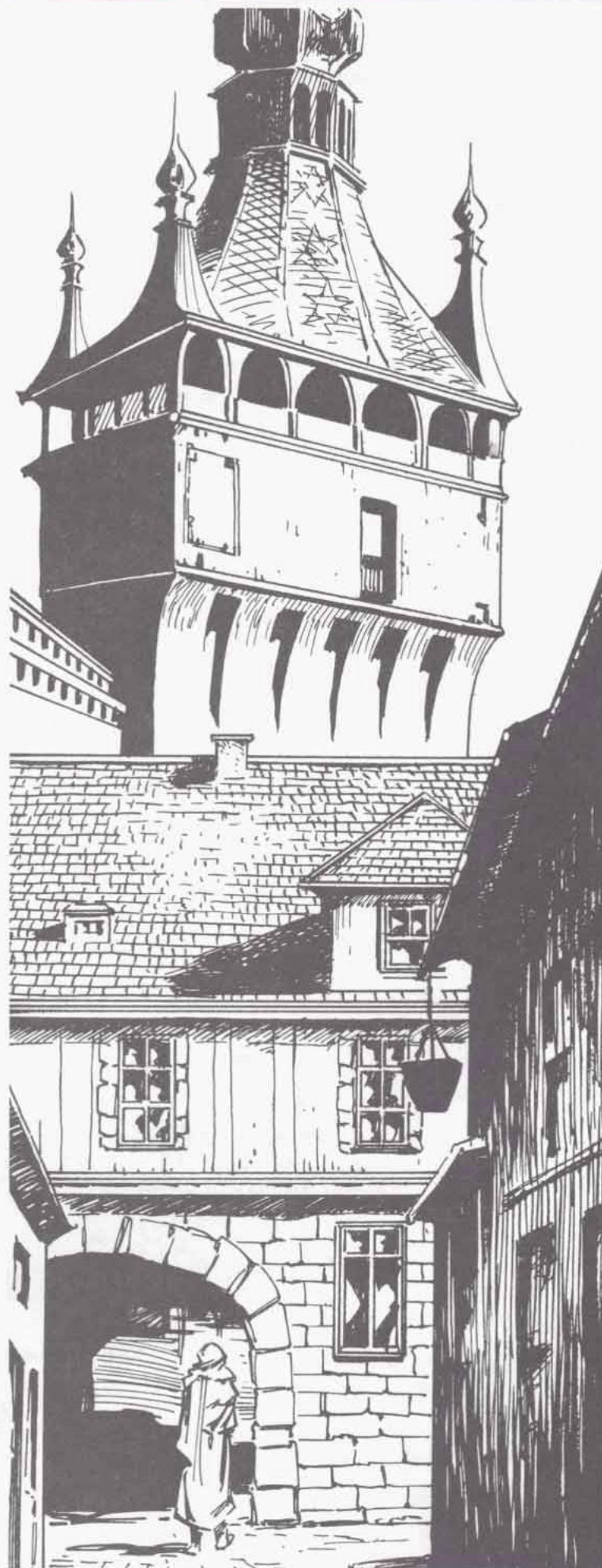
## Bran Castle

Built atop a craggy bluff that overlooks Bran Pass, the primary trade route from Transylvania into Wallachia, Bran Castle stands seemingly unchanged since its construction by the Teutonic Knights in 1377. At one time, Dracula's grandfather owned the castle, but it had passed from the family long before the birth of the Impaler. In fact, Bran Castle was subject to several attacks by Dracula's armies during the time in which he raided the surrounding countryside.

Its collection of forbidding towers and thick ramparts soar upward in tiered splendor from the forest which borders its walls. Inside, the castle contains a maze of narrow, spiraling stairs, hidden passages that lead to secret chambers, and unexpected arrangements of nooks and alcoves. Today it stands empty, a silent sentinel which overlooks the plateau between the cities of Brasov and Sighisoara.

## Forbidden Lore

Dracula developed a great hatred for Bran Castle and the resistance it symbolized. Even today, many of his servants keep a careful watch on the abandoned structure, contriving to discourage its rehabilitation by any means available. Adventurous individuals who attempt to stay overnight in the castle or on its grounds find their sleep disturbed by hideous shrieks and are sometimes the





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victims of attacks by unseen presences (although the weapons wielded by the attackers are quite real and deadly).

Hidden somewhere within the castle, in one of its secret rooms or deep in its lower levels, lies a book written by the Romanian scholar Teodosie Ispirescu. This tome, entitled *The Sigil of Blood*, is rumored to contain valuable information concerning artifacts said to be able to destroy Dracula once and for all, knowledge that the Impaler cannot afford to have fall into the hands of his enemies. For this reason, anyone who actually withstands the onslaught of the castle's secret guardians long enough to search the structure inevitably comes to Dracula's attention.

## Birkau Pass (Borgo Pass) (Tihusa Pass)

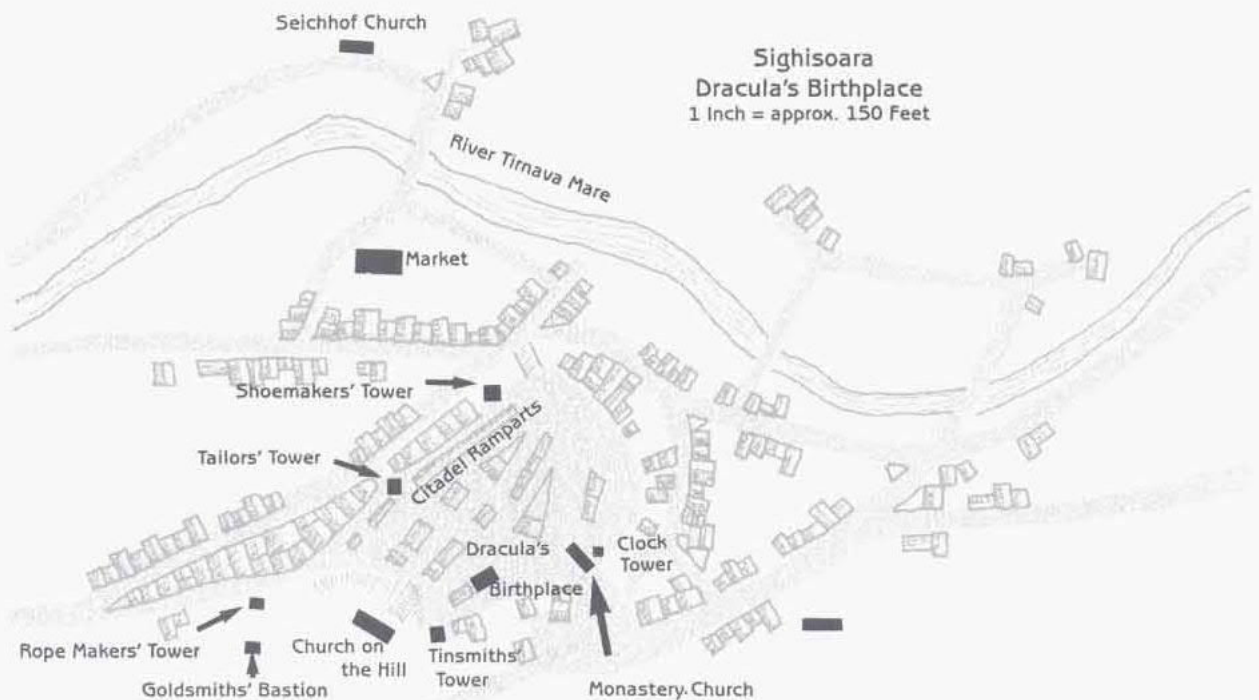
High in the Carpathian Mountains that form the northern border between Transylvania and

lands claimed at various times by both Hungary and the Russian Empire, lies the Birkau Pass, the only practical access from Transcarpathia south into the forested Birkau Valley below.

A rugged, though surprisingly well-maintained, road snakes its way through these mountains, reaching its peak at the Birkau Pass. Amid the looming, dark forests, it is possible to come across ruins that date from before the arrival of the Saxon settlers, remnants of the original inhabitants of this unforgiving landscape.

In the valley are a number of small villages and farmhouses, and the Romanian peasants who live there display a rich tradition of folklore and ancient customs. Shrines and crosses dot the roads of the region at regular intervals, bearing testimony to the simple faith of the villagers.

At the pass itself, the mountains seem to crowd oppressively on both sides, grim and





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forbidding guardians of the borderlands. Travelers are cautioned about the dangers of crossing the Birkau Pass alone or at night, since the area is home to numerous wolves who sometimes attack hapless individuals. The mournful howls of these wild creatures often echo across the valley late at night. The winter snows make the road through the mountains almost impassable at certain times.

## Forbidden Lore

One of the most persistent rumors whispered throughout the region tells of a dark, ruined castle at the top of a jagged mountain some small distance (one or two days by carriage) south of the Birkau Pass. From this castle, it is said, evil radiates.

This is, in fact, the second Castle Dracula, erected in secret after the building of Castle Agrish. Noted scholar Abraham Van Helsing and a group of allies traced Dracula to this forsaken spot. However, the stalwart band have kept the location of Castle Dracula a secret, as they fear there might be artifacts of evil hidden within that explorers might attempt to retrieve should they know how to find it.

Dracula, for his part, has more or less abandoned his long time haven once his enemies discovered it. He now moves back and forth between Agrish Castle and various European and American cities, extending his network of evil throughout the world.

The ruins of his sinister fortress, however, still house some of his minions. The werewolf Lajos Kovi often takes shelter here during the long Carpathian winter.

Most of the wolves who make their lairs near the Birkau pass are normal creatures, though some of them are descended from animals Dracula compelled into his service. At least one such pack is led by a dire wolf with nearly human intelligence. Many peasants refer to this clever and vicious predator as the Stalker, since it seems to single out and pursue its chosen victim over the course of several nights before finally cornering its prey.

## Bistrisa (Bistritz)

Just southwest of the Birkau Pass lies the town of Bistrisa. The Evangelical Church, built in the Gothic style in the fourteenth century and later overlaid with Renaissance embellishments, towers over the town's central plaza. Along with the arcaded buildings which housed merchants in the fifteenth century, these structures endow Bistrisa with a distinctively medieval atmosphere. The city also contains a number of defensive towers once maintained by the various merchant guilds. The most prominent of these is the Cooper's Tower. A recent succession of fires has demolished much of the fourteenth century citadel that formerly enclosed part of the town.

Most visitors to the northern Carpathians find themselves in Bistrisa at one time or another during their travels. The Golden Krone Hotel, where Jonathan Harker received his first warnings of the evil he would soon encounter, occupies a site in the northern part of the town.

Although the residents of Bistrisa are used to seeing strangers from the world outside Transylvania, they are leery of visitors who arrive after dark and are often scandalized by the lack of belief in the supernatural so often demonstrated by outsiders.

## Forbidden Lore

The proximity of Dracula's hidden castle and tales of its cruel master have lodged themselves in the minds of the villagers of Bistrisa, making them understandably fearful of the evil of which they cannot directly speak lest they draw its attention upon themselves. For centuries, this overriding terror has acted as a surety to keep the knowledge of Dracula's second home a secret. Generally regarded as ignorant and superstitious by the ruling classes, the Romanian peasantry of Bistrisa have rarely been believed when they speak of dark deeds and foul servants of evil.

One persistent folk superstition states that at midnight on May 4, St. George's Day, the



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forces of evil assume their strongest presence, roaming at will throughout the countryside. This was the evening of Jonathan Harker's first journey through the Birkau Pass.

## Hunedoara Castle (Corvin Castle)

In 1453, Iancu de Hunedoara, also known as János Hunyady, rebuilt his father's fourteenth century castle, transforming it into a magnificent edifice, Romania's greatest fortress. Accessible only by a narrow bridge across its deep moat, Hunedoara Castle served as the base from which Hunyady (called the White Knight) and, later, his son Matthias Corvinus, fought a succession of battles against the Turks and other enemies of Hungary.

The castle's startling appearance, with its myriad towers—both round and squared—and spiked roofs, seems to embody the very essence of power and majesty. The interior is no less imposing, with numerous galleries, staircases spiraling gracefully between the building's floors, a Knights' Hall famous for its pillars of rose-colored marble, high vaulted ceilings in the lower chambers and throne room, and many secret passages and hidden rooms.

Additions to the castle in the seventeenth century only increased its grandeur, and it soon became a major focus for sightseers to the region, dwarfing the small town of Hunedoara which grew up around it.

### Forbidden Lore

The legacy of the White Knight's devotion to the forces of good has survived in the presence of a secret qabal of warriors and scholars who hold clandestine meetings in the Knights' Hall. Although this group, which calls itself the Sword of Hunyady, dislikes the idea of having to operate in the shadows, it realizes that the forces which they oppose have compelled them to hide their true purpose. At the head of this qabal is Magda Arany, a young woman descended from Hunyady through the Corvinus line.

## Agrish Castle

Towering high above the towns of Arefu and Curtea de Arges, in northern Wallachia, Agrish Castle occupies a mountain peak in the Fagaras foothills near the source of the River Arges. A stairway consisting of 1,400 steps winds up the side of the mountain to the castle at its summit, a compact yet menacing citadel built in 1459, two years after Dracula ascended the Wallachian throne. Constructed using the stones from Castle Poenari, a nearby ruined Basarab fortification, Agrish Castle rose through the efforts of boyar slaves.

Built in the Romanian, rather than the Teutonic style of so many other fortresses of its time, Castle Agrish has five towers connected by walls of twice the thickness of the original structure. Seeming at first to rise out of the mountain itself, Dracula's solitary refuge while he ruled Wallachia served as his last bastion of defense against the incursions of the Turkish hordes.

### Forbidden Lore

A secret passage from the well in the castle's courtyard tunnels through the mountain and ends in a cave at the edge of the Arges River. Dracula used this as his escape route when he was forced to flee the castle in 1462 in the face of a massive Turkish onslaught.

The restless souls of the murdered boyar slaves still haunt the site where they died from their labors or, later, at the hands of their vengeful overlord.

## Tirgoviste

South of Brasov, the city of Tirgoviste, founded by Mircea the Old, the grandfather of Dracula, served as the royal capital of Wallachia from 1415 to 1659. During that time, the city exercised both cultural and religious power over the region. Situated around the Princely Court in the northeastern part of the city, the houses of the boyars reflected the



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Byzantine mannerisms of the ruling class of Wallachia. Numerous elaborate floral gardens separated the homes of these elite citizens from the more modest residences of the merchants and artisans whose work was the life of the city.

Dracula spent his youth at the Princely Court, which was at that time a small structure built from brick and stone. Upon his ascension to the throne of Wallachia, Dracula added various improvements to the Princely Court, the most notable of which was the Chindia or Sunset Tower, which contained a platform that looked out over the palace's courtyard.

In 1459, the banqueting hall, which also served as the palace's throne room, was the site of Dracula's long-awaited revenge against the boyars and their families as well as the scene of later bloody massacres of the enemies of the Impaler.

In the sixteenth century, the Princely Church was erected as part of the palace complex of buildings, while Moldavia's Prince Vasile Lupu arranged for the building of the Stelea Monastery in 1645 as a gesture of peace with Matei Basarabs, then ruler of Wallachia. In the same year, Basarabs also erected walls around the city.

In 1659, the capital of Wallachia was relocated to Bucharest, and Tirgoviste began to fade into the pages of history.

## Forbidden Lore

Although much of the Princely Palace lies in ruins, the tower called "Sunset Tower" is still intact. It is thought that those persons gaining access to its viewing platform at midnight on certain nights can witness the ghostly reenactment of some of the atrocities committed in the courtyard directly underneath the tower. Many folk have reported hearing the anguished cries of the Impaler's many victims, particularly on stormy nights.

Once a year, on the eve of the boyar massacre, the ghostly spirits of the old women and children murdered by Dracula gain the power to deliver the "Curse of the

Innocent" upon anyone unlucky enough to stand inside the courtyard. Individuals so affected become obsessed with the desire to travel to Transylvania's Agrish Castle (see above) to deliver messages from beyond the grave to the boyar males murdered by Dracula after building that grim fortress. The accomplishment of this pilgrimage results in the lifting of the curse, leaving the affected person bereft of any memories of how he came to be there. The content of these messages between murdered family members is likewise forgotten.

## Curtea de Arges

The small town of Curtea de Arges, capital of Wallachia before Tirgoviste, contains the ruins of a walled palace as well as the Princely Church built by Basarab I in 1352.

Occasionally, Dracula would stop over in Curtea de Arges during his reign as Wallachian prince, particularly while the construction of nearby Agrish Castle was in progress. Dracula ordered the sculpting of a bas-relief of the serpent-dragon, his family symbol, to be placed within the Princely Church.

The city's most impressive building is, without doubt, the Episcopal Church which served as the center for the monastery of Curtea de Arges. Built in 1517 by the master builder Manole at the command of Prince Neagoe Basarab, the Byzantine-style church abounds in ornamental flourishes, from its whorled towers to its fanciful rosettes and elaborately carved exterior. French architect Lecomte de Nouy took it upon himself to "improve" the church in 1875, adding an uncharacteristically Moorish cast to the structure.

Visitors staying overnight in one of Curtea de Arges' inns are likely to hear, in either story or ballad form, the tragic tale of the Master Builder Manole.

According to the legend, during Manole's construction of the Episcopal church and monastery, one of the outer walls of the structure collapsed. Ancient custom required



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that before a new wall could be completed to replace the collapsed portion, a victim would have to be sealed within the wall as a sacrifice to prevent future calamities.

A lottery was held to choose the victim, and all involved, including Manole, swore to accept fate's decision in the matter. The Master Builder's enemies, fueled by their resentment at his proud nature, contrived to rig the lottery so that Manole's wife was the indicated victim. The Master Builder's wife so loved her husband that she accepted her fate in order to preserve her husband's greatest creation. Trapped by his own vow to uphold the workings of "chance," Manole, along with his assistants, entombed the hapless woman within the monastery wall.

Later, upon completion of the monastery, Manole was stranded upon the building's roof upon the order of Prince Neagoe Basarabs. Left to die as a final sacrifice (or perhaps to prevent him from building anything that would compete with the monastery church's grandeur), Manole

attempted to escape his fate. Using makeshift wings crafted from some of the shingles, the Master Builder leapt from the building, hoping he would be able to fly safely to the ground. Instead, he plunged to his death. A spring arose on the spot where Manole fell and a well, called Manole's Well, was later built to mark the site.

## Forbidden Lore

While trapped on the roof, Manole made a pact with the powers of darkness to ensure his survival and allow him to continue his obsession with building. The spring that spewed forth from the ground when Manole plummeted to earth carried the body of the Master Builder far from the eyes of the horrified witnesses.

Imbued by the Red Death with unnatural life, the Master Builder still wanders from city to city in Wallachia and Transylvania, disguised as an itinerant builder, erecting





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increasingly elaborate walls and fortifications, seeking to perfect his craft. As the price for his continued existence, however, Manole must reenact his most dreadful deed.

In each city, the immortal builder finds a young woman of beauty and means. Charming her so that she falls in love with him and agrees to marry him, Manole uses her wealth to support himself while he labors on his construction. When his work is complete, Manole immures his latest wife within its walls. Mesmerized by his supernatural charm, the unfortunate woman is helpless to prevent this fate.

## Snagov

The village of Snagov, north of Bucharest, is most famous as the site of Dracula's tomb. Murdered by the Turks in the nearby forests, Dracula's headless body was later brought to the island monastery in the center of Lake Snagov and entombed before the altar of the church.

While living, Dracula often used a prison complex that was part of the monastery to warehouse special prisoners. Here he had a cell prepared to his specifications: It contained a shrine to the Blessed Virgin, and when someone kneeled in front of it, a trap door in the floor fell open and dropped the hapless prisoner onto a bed of pointed stakes. The bodies were then decapitated and buried in the graveyard of the monastery.

## Forbidden Lore

By the time Dracula's body was delivered to the monks of Snagov, many people suspected that the Impaler had made an unholy pact with the powers of darkness. By burying him on holy ground, they hoped to prevent Dracula from rising from his grave. Unfortunately, the murders committed in the monastery's prison had already granted the forces of evil a foothold, enabling the Red Death to spirit away Dracula's body and

begin the process which would transform the Impaler into a vampire.

Should anyone gain access to the crypt in which Dracula is supposedly buried, he will find only a collection of animal bones scattered within.

## Deva

One of the ancient Dacian settlements, the town of Deva lies on the main road linking Timisoara and Brasov. The slightly larger town of Hunedoara stands just to the south.

Deva lies in the shadow of a fortress raised during the thirteenth century and later made into one of Transylvania's strongest fortifications on the orders of János Hunyady. Called the Citadel of the Djinn, the structure rests upon a volcanic hill in the shape of a truncated cone. According to local folklore, the shape of the hill is the result of a mighty battle between the spirits (djinn) of the mountains and those of the plain.

In 1849, an enormous explosion (its source unknown) blew the citadel apart. Today all that can be discerned of the once mighty fortress are the ramparts and barracks.

In a park below the hill lies the palace of Voivode Gábor Bethlen, who deposed the insane Gábor Báthori in 1613 and ruled until 1629. Transylvania had attained a measure of independence during this time. Bethlen's reign was marked by economic growth and resistance to the counter-Reformation. It is considered by some to have been a golden age.

Sometime around the second week of January (just before Whitsun), Deva is host to the *Festival of the Calusari*, which few foreigners have ever seen. Groups from southern Transylvania (and occasionally Wallachia) come to Deva to perform the intricate and difficult dance and rituals of the *calusari*. Originally, the dance was intended to insure good harvests and to drive off or dispel the *rusalii*.



## THE LAND BEYOND THE FOREST

### Forbidden Lore

The story of the mason and his wife naturally raises some questions as to whether Curtea de Arges or the Citadel of the Djinn is the actual site of Manole's original fall from grace.

In actuality, Manole had nothing to do with building the citadel. The citadel was simply another instance in which the custom of human sacrifice to insure the strength of a fortification was followed. It serves to show that such customs were, in fact, in use. Many people suppose that the explosion that destroyed the citadel was caused by the vengeance of the angry spirit thus immured. They are not far wrong.

The destruction was caused by a disastrous miscalculation on the part of a group of dancers, who rather than successfully exorcising a spirit, turned its fury loose atop the fortress—and upon the unfortunate dancers.

The *Week of Rusalii* which follows Whitsun is a time in which the departed are honored and remembered. Several taboos are in force during this week and many customs followed to insure the peaceful repose of the dead. When such customs and strictures are not followed exactly, the hapless individual who failed to do so may be possessed by *rusalii* (the spirits of departed friends or relations).

Such possession always bodes ill for the mortal so afflicted. Angry spirits might force the mortal to injure himself in some manner as punishment for his failure to observe the proper rites. The mortal might be made to approach the widow or parentless children left behind and bring them messages or try to take up the spirit's life again where it was cut off.

The only way for the one possessed to be freed of the influence of the spirit is to receive an exorcism performed by a group of

dancers led by a *vataf* (leader-priest-mystic) who is versed in the lore of *descintece* (magiccharms). Part of the exorcism involves the possessed individual lying prone while the dancers leap over and around him. Thus, it came to be believed that those who were ill could be cured by the *calusari* dance.

The only dancers currently capable of performing exorcisms are the mystic group known as the Company of the Dance. In 1849, another group led by a proud youth who was certain of his own mystic powers, attempted to perform an exorcism on a stranger who seemed sorely afflicted with *Rusalii*. To maximize their chances of success, they decided to perform the rite during the festival.

The Red Death had been awaiting such an opportunity to rid itself of the Company of the Dance and had, in fact, sent one of its evil minions in disguise to fool the less experienced dancers into attempting a ritual they couldn't hope to complete. When they began their dance, he intervened in the attempted rite, loosing a terrible explosion that killed a number of spectators. Several members of the Company of the Dance were also injured or killed either by the explosion or through their efforts to contain the demonic spirit released among them.

Though this happened some forty years ago, the scars of it have yet to heal. Some of the dancers were never able to walk again; others died, leaving their place in the dance to be learned by children barely able to talk. For many years, the Company of the Dance has struggled to regain lost ground. Finally they are beginning to once again emerge as a force for good, though they are always leery when approached to perform an exorcism—particularly upon someone they don't personally know.



## A FAR AWAY PLACE



*we are in Transylvania; and Transylvania is not England. Our ways are not your ways, and there shall be to you many strange things.*

—Bram Stoker, *Dracula*.

The perception of western Europeans in the Gothic Earth setting holds that Eastern Europe is distanced from

themselves by more than just geography. It is remote, mysterious, romantic, and obscure. This chapter endeavors to bring the people of Transylvania into focus for the DM, so he can convey this feeling properly to the players. (It is easier for a DM to make a place mysterious if he knows what can be found there.)

### The People

The people of the Transylvanian region are a curious mix of Romanian peasants (who claim to be the indigenous population and the descendants of the Dacians), Hungarians, and Germans being the most numerous. There are many Slavs, Jews, Gypsies, Tatars and Turks who claim residence in Transylvania as well. The only ones among these who comprise a significant portion of the population are the Gypsies and the Jews.

Once past an initial distrust, the people are generally warm hearted and concerned for the well being of travelers from afar. They do, however, live with the guidance of ancient knowledge and use charms and folk remedies that Westerners cannot hope to understand without experiencing the reality for themselves. Therefore, they are often cautious around strangers, occasionally seeming stand-offish or even hostile until the visitor has proven to be harmless.

Nonetheless, it is a rare Transylvanian who will not at least offer a traveler a crucifix or a place to sleep when night falls — provided the traveler arrives before sunset. However, most will refuse to open the door to someone arriving after dark. To do so might be tantamount to inviting a denizen of the dark inside.

### Romanians

The Romanians have been discussed at length in the history chapter. The Romanians are a subject people in the land they claim as their homeland. Most are poor, uneducated peasants and have only recently been freed from feudal duties to their Magyar overlords.

Romanians are Latin, while their nearby neighbors are Slavonic or Magyar. Most practice the Orthodox religion rather than western Catholicism, and unlike other countries in the area, they use the Latin rather than the Cyrillic alphabet. All of these differences have contributed to their individuality, but have also kept them from enjoying full, equal rights and freedoms in their own country.

### Magyars

The Magyars were the last of the migrating tribes to establish themselves as a state in Europe. Their claim to the land stems from the crowning of Stephen I as King of Hungary in the year 1000. The pope included as part of the Hungarian lands the area known as Transylvania. From the time they moved into the land, the Magyars have dominated it. Seeing themselves as essentially Hungarian, the Magyar nobility has filled the main administrative and political positions in Transylvania for centuries.

Though they granted rights to the Szeklers and Saxons, the Magyars denied any privileges to the Romanian peasantry. In essence, the Magyars are western in outlook, educated and urbanized, while the Romanians who hold superiority of numbers cling to their eastern identity and are almost without exception agrarian. Of course, Magyar laws deny them rights, education and



## A FAR AWAY PLACE

permission to live in Magyar or Saxon towns, insuring that the Romanians stay that way.

Not all Magyars are nobles, however. There exists a large population of Magyar peasants who are little better off than their Romanian counterparts. Though not persecuted for their ethnicity or religion, these peasants are hardly treated as human by their more privileged kinsmen.

### Szeklers

Soon after the Magyars assumed control of Transylvania, they invited another Hungarian people known as the Szeklers to settle the southeastern portion of the land. Of peasant origin, the Szeklers are seen as the best example of Hungarian peoples. The dialect they speak is considered to be both pure and pleasant sounding. Accorded rights by the Magyars, the Szeklers were never serfs; indeed, many were granted noble status by the Hungarian king in return for military service.

### Germans

The Saxon-Germans came to Transylvania in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Primarily from the Rhineland, they settled mostly in the southern and eastern parts of the land. Because they had come to settle and hold the frontier against the Turks and Tatars, they were given much autonomy. An area known as Sachsenboden (Saxon Land) was given to them, within which they administered themselves.

Their greatest triumph came in the area of trade, at which they were unsurpassed. Cities they founded are distinctly German in feel. Their ethnic identity was further enhanced when they adopted the Lutheran religion in the sixteenth century. This provided them with cultural links to Germany and helped define their communities, as few of their Romanian or Hungarian neighbors embraced the new religion.

The Saxons have a reputation for being miserly and insular. They are a hard working and thrifty people, who seem more interested in tending to their businesses than in stirring up

trouble. They are less likely to marry outside the Saxon community and seem to distrust strangers more than any other segment of the population. Indeed, some travelers remark that they were never offered food, drink, or lodging in a Saxon household, whereas the Romanians and Hungarians are famous for their hospitality and generous natures.

The Swabians are also essentially German, but they differ from the Saxon Germans in numerous ways. Originally from the Württemberg area, they arrived quite late in the Transylvania region; they were settled in the Banat by the Austrians in the eighteenth century. Unlike their Saxon cousins, the Swabians have always been involved with agricultural pursuits rather than trade, and they retained their Roman Catholic religion rather than converting to Lutheranism.

### Gypsies

According to legend, there were Gypsies in Dacia when Trajan conquered it in A.D. 106. A more likely evaluation says the Gypsies arrived in eastern Europe around 1407. Though it is theorized that they came from northern India, their origins are obscure, and they were named Gypsies due to the belief that they originated in Lower Egypt.

When they arrived in Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania, they were divided into two groups, the *laiesi* ("members of the horde"), who were free to roam, and the *vatrasi* ("settled ones"), who became slaves. The *vatrasi* worked as servants, grooms, cooks, farm hands, and musicians. Various tribes or families of *vatrasi* became attached to specific boyars or princes, serving them generation after generation and being offered some protection from persecution in return. Their lot was not a happy one, however. As late as 1837, many were forced to wear chains on their arms or legs and iron collars to indicate their status as slaves. Failure to instantly comply with their lord's wishes brought savage beatings, starvation for the whole family, even executions in such imaginative styles as being



## A FAR AWAY PLACE

hung in the snow and left to freeze to death.

The laiesi Gypsies engage in horse trading, tinkering, fiddle playing, fortune telling and other, less legal pursuits such as stealing, smuggling, and swindles. They have remained mobile, moving from town to town in their colorful, ponderous wagons and living on the outskirts for a time before moving on again.

The Gypsies, or *Rom*, as they have come to be called, have no belief in private property, nor do they wish the burden of a house or possessions. They do, however, enjoy *utilizing* such possessions for a short period of time before trading them for something else. This may account for their cavalier attitude toward thievery.

Between 1837 and 1856, Wallachia and Moldavia freed the *vatrasi* Gypsies. Though many stayed with their original owners, others emigrated, spreading out throughout western Europe by 1868 and even to North America by the 1880s.

The Rom speak Romani (a language which reveals their Indian heritage) among themselves but have a knack for picking up languages wherever they travel. Having left India to escape the caste system, it is ironic that the Gypsies have divided themselves into so many distinct groups. Around forty different tribes live in Romania and Transylvania, each considered to be roughly equal to the others in status and importance. Among these are the *fierari* (blacksmiths), *rudari* (miners), *caldarari* (tin and coppersmiths), *lingurari* (those who make spoons and other wooden utensils), *boldeni* (flower sellers), *lovari* (horse dealers), *argintari* (jewellers), *lautari* (musicians), and *ursari* (bear leaders).

Gypsy musicians are welcome almost everywhere; indeed some communities feel that a wedding is not legal if a Gypsy band is not hired to play for the dancing afterward. On the other hand, bear leaders (those who exhibit trained bears) are greeted with suspicion throughout Transylvania. Some believe that they





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are the most notorious thieves among the Gypsies, while others fear that the Gypsies' abilities to tame wild animals indicates a pact with the powers of darkness.

Gypsies define everything as either *wuzho* (clean) or *marime* (unclean). The upper part of the body is considered clean; the lower half is not. Clothes from the upper part, such as shirts, vests, and shawls, must be washed separately from pants or skirts, which touch the unclean part of the body and may carry contamination to the other clothing. Women's clothes are washed separately from men's and children's. Cutlery and crockery carry the potential of being unclean, so many Gypsies eat with their hands rather than risk being contaminated by them.

Women do not cut their hair, but it is worn bound. Once they marry, their hair must always be covered with a *diklo* ("headscarf"). Girls are married in their teens. Gypsies equate fat with wealth and strive to show their status by having fat wives and children (though this is rarely achieved since they are mostly quite poor). Women carry the wealth of the family with them on necklaces, bracelets and belts. These are usually gold Hapsburg coins. Red and green are considered lucky colors, and Gypsies try to incorporate them into their clothing and the paintings on their wagons. Black is used only for mourning and is otherwise viewed as unlucky.

From the Gypsy point of view, since *gadje* (non-Gypsies) are ignorant of customs the Gypsies consider both wise and necessary, it is risky having dealings with them. Sharing food is considered particularly risky, though it is considered the height of insult to refuse to eat someone's food when it is offered to you. Perhaps because of all their strange customs and taboos, Gypsies seem very exotic to travelers from afar. Their reputation for fortune telling and for knowledge of the supernatural is legendary.

## Forbidden Lore

Among all Gypsies, one particular tribe stands out as having true powers such as second sight, foreknowledge and the ability to cast the evil eye. These are the Vistani.

The Vistani and Dracula give each other a wide berth for the most part. Whether this is due to an arrangement of some sort is unknown. Although the Prince of Darkness frequently employs other gypsies when he wants certain tasks carried out, a Vistani has never been known to be in his service. Likewise, there are no known instances of a Vistani moving against a scheme by the Count. The Vistani are described in more detail in *The Gothic Earth Gazetteer*.

## Jews

While there is a large Jewish population settled in Wallachia and Moldavia, they are far less evident in Transylvania. Nonetheless, the larger cities of the region all have Jewish enclaves within them or settled nearby. The Sephardic Jews live mostly along the Danube, while the greatest number of Jews in Transylvania are the Ashkenazim. The largest concentrations of these Yiddish speakers can be found in Bucovina and Maramures.

Jews have lived in the Transylvanian region since Roman times, with more arriving in the eighth and ninth centuries after the Jewish Khazar empire collapsed. Further influxes occurred in 1367 and 1648 when they were expelled from Poland and Hungary.

Many Jews engage in trade, while a good number of them are artisans, who sell their crafted items in small shops or directly from their workplaces. Many are farmers who own their own land or work as laborers for other Jews or sympathetic gentiles.

Although allowed to own land and govern their own communities, the Jews are accorded no rights as citizens and are often persecuted. Partly this is because they offer competition to the Saxon merchants, but in many cases, disenfranchised Magyar and Romanian peasants take out their frustrations on the non-Christians within their midst. Where they form a subcommunity among gentiles rather than rural enclaves of their own, whole communities of Jews live in dire poverty.



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## Language

Countless invasions and migrations into and through Transylvania have failed to eradicate the Romanian peasants' Latin heritage. The connection to Rome is both linguistic and cultural. The Romanian language is based primarily on the Latin that was spoken in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. Though it has incorporated Magyar, Slavonic, Turkish and even Greek elements, the language remains essentially Romantic in origin.

German, Russian and Hungarian are widely spoken, as is French (among the well educated). English is not spoken by most of the people of Transylvania, though some few who are better educated or more widely traveled may understand and speak English. This language barrier is partly responsible for the feeling of isolation that many travelers may have.

## Using Language for Flavor

Scattered throughout the *Guide to Transylvania* are several words in the Romanian language. Pronouncing them correctly will go a long way toward lending authenticity to the game, so a short section on Romanian has been included here.

## Pronunciation Guide

Romanian is fairly straightforward. It is not as "foreign" sounding as most East European languages because its roots, like most western European languages, lie in Latin. Words are usually stressed on the syllable before the last (but not always), and all letters are pronounced. Some letters have their sounds changed by their proximity to other letters, just like in English. Practice in saying the words and common sense are probably the best guides for using the language in a confident manner.

- A:** either has an "O" sound as in the word "won," or an "er" sound as in the word "mother."  
**AU:** when combined, make an "ow" sound as in the word "cow," or an "oh" sound as in the word "no."

- C:** sounds like a "K" as in the word "carry."  
**CE:** sounds like "cheh" as in the word "chest."  
**CI:** sounds like "chee" as in the word "cheek."  
**CHE:** does not pronounce the "h," but rather makes a "keh" sound as in the word "kept."  
**CHI:** does not pronounce the "h," but rather makes a "Kee" sound as in the word "key."  
**E:** sounds like the "eh" in the word "ten" unless it begins a word. When used to begin a word, it is pronounced as "ee" as in the word "ear."  
**EI:** sounds like "ay" as in the word "ray."  
**G:** is pronounced as a hard "guh" sound as in the word "gust."  
**GE:** sounds like "jeh" as in the word "gesture."  
**GI:** sounds like "jee" as in the word "jeans."  
**GHE:** sounds like (hard g) "geh" as in the word "guest."  
**GHI:** sounds like (hard g) "gee" as in the word "gear."  
**I:** sounds like "ee" as in "feet."  
**IA:** sounds like "yaah" as in "yap."  
**IE:** sounds like "yeh" as in "yes."  
**IU:** sounds like "yu" as in "you."  
**Î:** is pronounced midway between the "ah" of the "O" sound in "lesson" and the "O" in "sort."  
**J:** is pronounced like the "S" in "pleasure."  
**O:** is an "ah" sound as in "soft."  
**OA:** is pronounced as "wah" as in the word "quark."  
**OI:** sounds like "oy" as in "boy."  
**R:** is always rolled.  
**S:** is a slurred "sh" sound as in "shop."  
**T:** is a "ts" sound as in "fits."  
**U:** pronounced like the "oo" sound of "book."  
**UA:** pronounced like the "qua" sound in "quark."

## Useful Romanian Words

Da	Yes
Nu	No
Va rog	Please
Mulsumesc	Thank you
Salut	Hello
Buna dimineasa	Good morning
Noapte buna	Good night
La revedere	Good-bye



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## Romanian Names

An (f) after a name indicates that it is a feminine name.

First Names:	Last Names: [H4]
Alexandru	Andrescu
Andrei	Arghezi
Bogdan	Bacs
Calin	Balan
Constantine	Balla
Cristian	Basarab
Dragomir	Bentoiu
Emil	Boariosu
Erzsébet (f)	Brâncoveanu
Eszter (f)	Breban
Eugent	Cazacu
Evdochia (f)	Ciobanul
Ilie	Constante
Ion	Czekonics
István	Czelnai
János	Danceanu
Karel	Diaconescu
Károly	Erdélyi
Lajos	Florescu
Lena (f)	Giurescu
Livia (f)	Ionescu
Ludovic	Iochimescu
Magda (f)	Iorgulescu
Marusca (f)	Ispirescu
Matei	Kolchak
Mihai	Kós
Mihnea	Lapedatu
Milos	Lespeanescu
Mircea	Lovinescu
Mitru	Marbe
Myriam (f)	Marcu
Nadia (f)	Moisescu
Neagoe	Musat
Nicholae	Nemescu
Octavian	Odobescu
Paul	Olahus
Petru	Popescu
Radu	Skorzeny
Ronit	Soare
Ruxandra (f)	Stephinescu
Serban	Teodorescu
Smaranda (f)	Tóth

Stephen	Túrós
Tara (f)	Úrsu
Teodosie	Vatamanu
Tiberiu	Vitéz
Uri	Zamfirescu
Vintila	
Vladislav	
Voica (f)	

## Traditional Proverbs

Romanian speech is riddled with traditional proverbs, centuries of accumulated wisdom that are a part of everyday speech. Some reflect the injustices to which the peasants are subjected, while others are more like blessings or wishes for something better. Some of the more common expressions are:

- "Justice is as the rulers will have it be."
- "Kiss the hand you cannot bite."
- "Do not expect the fields to plow themselves."
- "The sun shines where and when it will. No man commands the things of nature."
- "The man who goes to law often loses an ox to win a cat."
- "May God grant you many sons and all of them strong and honest."
- "May God grant holidays all year round and only one working day, and let that be a wedding!"
- "May your wife be faithful, your daughters pretty and may there be wealthy suitors for all of them."

## Religion

Like much of the rest of Europe, the history of Transylvania and its sister regions, Wallachia and Moldavia, is bound up with the question of religion. Religious faith has been linked with national and ethnic identity.

The Magyars were converted to Roman Catholicism when they settled the region. They have remained staunch adherents of the Roman rites ever since. The church was of such importance to the Magyars that they enacted a law stating that only Roman Catholics could be



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nobles. Centuries later, under Austrian rule, Transylvanians were strongly encouraged to adopt the Catholic faith.

In contrast, the Saxon Germans, though originally Catholic, converted to Protestantism in the sixteenth century. Their embrace of the Lutheran sect strengthened their ties to Germany while bringing them into conflict with their Catholic neighbors. Nonetheless, they were accorded a status—that of a recognized religion—not given to the Romanians.

Refused recognition for centuries by the Hungarians and Saxons, most Romanians continue to follow the Orthodox religion. Many of them, tired of centuries of oppression, converted to the new “Uniate” church, formed in 1699 by the Austrian rulers of the region. The Uniate Church blended Orthodox and Catholic rites. Anyone converting to the Uniate church was guaranteed the same rights as a Roman Catholic.

In terms of their involvement with Transylvania and its internal politics, the Jews who settled this region have had no real effect. They have periodically suffered from persecution and there is a general feeling of anti-Semitism in Romania and Transylvania. Tensions among the Christians, however, have more than occupied the attention of the squabbling groups. In the past, whenever they ceased fighting among themselves, the various Christian sects fought the Muslim Turks.

### The Orthodox Church and the Development of Romanian Art

In the Middle Ages, Orthodox monasteries of Byzantine origin provided the focus for Romanian culture. Princes of Wallachia and Moldavia founded and helped maintain great monasteries such as Dragomirna, Putna, Sucevisa and Vorones. All provided an outlet for a particularly Romanian type of architecture. This utilized Byzantine styles but added Romanian touches such as eight-sided steeples, towers built up of stone beams laid atop one another, and colorful frescoes.

The most famous frescoed churches are those of Moldavia and Bucovina. Today, they still

serve as centers for the Orthodox religion, where chanting and the beating of the *toaca*, a long piece of wood (which serves the same purpose as a bell) can be heard.

The monks and nuns work in fields outside the walls, make icons and vestments, carve crosses and copy ancient texts in addition to attending their schedule of prayers. Since their inception, the monasteries have served to develop Romanian art. Woodcarving is one example of the melding of Byzantine style and Romanian folk art. Carvings adorn the doors, rafters, and support beams of many Orthodox churches, some interspersed with beautiful frescoes.

Painting was exclusively devoted to religious subjects until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Before that time, no nonreligious paintings existed in Transylvania. Folk art has recently begun to emerge, as painters have begun portraying both rural and urban scenes.

Transylvania's Orthodox church is responsible for creating a new art form that has found popularity among visitors to the region. Though iconography has traditionally been Byzantine in both form and design, the gilded and colorful religious scenes have always been painted on wood. Most were painted by monks and nuns. Transylvania has developed a new form of icon, one painted on glass. Brightly colored and enthusiastically presented, most of the glass icons are painted by peasants as expressions of their faith. Despite their amateur origin, they are rarely crude. Most are quite beautiful and are attracting the attention of foreign collectors.

Romanian literature has been tied to the Orthodox church for the simple reason that the church copied texts in the monasteries and ran one of the few print shops available. Demand for nonreligious books was virtually nil until the nineteenth century, and novels, poetry and other forms of literature printed in the Romanian language are the exclusive province of small printing shops. The first Romanian novel was published in 1863. The Romanian people were mostly kept illiterate and uneducated until recently, so this is hardly surprising. Romanian intellectuals and scholars have heretofore looked to France and Germany for their reading materials.



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## Music and Dance

Unlike other art forms, Romanian music was not the exclusive province of the church. Instrumental music, songs, and dancing have traditionally played a large role in village life. For centuries, no annual celebration, marriage, festival, or party has been complete without songs being sung and energetic dancing. Music is so integral a part of life in Transylvania that it is difficult to find anyone who can't play at least a little on one or more instruments. Those who are not precluded from doing so by injury or age take part in dancing.

## Songs

Solo songs are delivered with heartfelt passion, and group tunes are bellowed out by everyone in the vicinity at the slightest invitation—regardless of the relative talent of the participants. Farmers sing in the fields or as they walk beside their loaded carts, women hum as they card wool or spin, and children play games to rhyming songs that may be as old as the Romanian people.

Several types of songs are popular, but there are three types which are most characteristic of the people of Transylvania, be they Magyar, Saxon, or Romanian. All have long been sung in the region and constitute some of the first musical forms known there.

*Dainas* are folk songs, always sung by an individual. They are love songs that illustrate the themes of romance, true love, and loss. Originally, *dainas* were private music, sung to soothe oneself in moments of grief. The singer is often accompanied by a single violin, which evokes the plaintive quality of the song. Traditionally, these songs are supposed to be improvised on the spot, but like many folk melodies, there are conventional verses and lines lifted from earlier works that are almost always included. Regional differences in the *dainas* include the pace at which it is sung and the kind of tune preferred. There is always some element within it of longing and lament, however. Gypsies, especially the women, are

considered to be the most accomplished singers of *dainas*.

*Balada* are group songs. They most often tell stories of the feelings of a group of people or the conditions under which they live. The songs almost always contain some historic element that explains what has happened to the subjects of the song or the reason why they feel as they do.

A subcategory of *balada* are epic songs. These tell of battles against the Turks, great love stories or the suffering of the peasants or the sacrifices made by a particular hero. Most epic songs are not sung by groups, but by an individual. Many have repeating refrains, however, allowing listeners to join in at preset times.

Traditional shepherd's ballads are like epic songs, but they usually concern less lofty subjects. Some shepherd's tunes are more like tone poems. In the most famous of these, *The Shepherd Who Lost His Sheep*, the music begins like a *dainas*, slow and melancholy as the shepherd laments his lost sheep. The music becomes joyful as he sees the sheep in the distance, then sad again as he discovers it is only a bunch of large white stones. Finally, the shepherd finds his sheep and the music becomes a merry, lilting dance tune.

One of the greatest ballads sung tells of the Master Builder known as Manole. The story of Manole's vow and its terrible consequences has been told in the section on *Curtea de Arges*. Variations of this song exist in virtually every region of the Balkans.

The third type of song has no special name associated with it. These are group songs that originated as ritual music associated with the different seasons, rites, and religious festivals. These include, but are not limited to, the following forms: The *colinde* are traditional carols intended to bring luck and prosperity. Children go from house to house singing *colinde* on New Year's Eve. *Zorile* (the dawns), *cintecul cel mare* (the great song) and *bradul* (the fir tree) are funeral songs sung by the mourners of Oltenia, the Banat, and southwest Transylvania. Other songs celebrating the harvest, midsummer's day, and marriages also belong in this group.



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## Music

Much of the unique character of Transylvanian music comes from the instruments used, many of which are found nowhere else in the world. The *bucium* (alphorn), *cimpoi* (Transylvanian bagpipe), *cobza* (pear-shaped lute with 8-12 strings), *sambal* (dulcimer) and *nai* (a pan-pipe with 20 cane tubes) are the best known of these. *Ocarina* (ceramic flutes with three finger holes) and *tilinca* (a flute with no finger holes) are also frequently used. The various flutes and bagpipes originated with Romanian shepherds, who played to pass the lonely hours guarding their flocks.

By far the most popular instrument used in Transylvania is the violin or fiddle. Though of more recent origin than the other instruments, it was popularized by Gypsies and is now the most commonly played folk instrument in Transylvania.

The usual ensemble is a string trio (violin, contra and double bass) combined with a *sambal*. The *contra* is a viola with only three strings and a flat bridge, meaning that only chords can be played on it. Combined with the deep tones of the bass (which is bowed, not plucked), it provides the rhythm section for the band. The *primás*, or first violinist, plays the melody and acts as the director for the band, leading them from one song to another. When they expect a large and noisy crowd, bands may add a second bass or violin to add volume to the music.

Music is used in almost all social functions, be they weddings, funerals, or weekly dances. By far the most sought after musicians are Gypsies. In many villages, Gypsy communities live along one particular street on the edge of town. The street is invariably known as *Strada Muzicansilor* or *Strada Lautari*, which both translate as "Musicians' Street." Many Gypsy children learn to play at an early age, and it is not uncommon to see small children playing alongside their parents and grandparents during performances.

Gypsy bands are universally appreciated, whether the audience is Hungarian, Saxon, or Romanian. Almost by instinct, the Gypsies know which melodies will be most well received in

each community. The *Lautari*, in contrast to almost all other Gypsies, are respected and well rewarded by those for whom they play.

Most of the best known songs and instrumental pieces in Transylvania are shared by almost all the ethnic groups. Many times the only difference between a "Hungarian" melody and a "Romanian" one is that the words are in a different language. Less Balkan sounding than the music of neighboring countries, Transylvanian tunes are more like a wild, enthusiastic cousin to central European music. Within this greater tradition, however, can be found hundreds of local variations that keep the music from becoming stagnant.

## Dance

The people of Transylvania are not content to listen passively to music. If they aren't singing along, they want to be dancing. There are ten styles of dance that serve as the basic models throughout the land, but each of those styles are flavored with local variations from village to village.

An individual dancing while others watch the performance is almost unheard of. Individual dancers will step out from a line or circle of their fellows and take a principle role for a short time, but each does so in succession, proudly exhibiting his or her best dance steps for a brief moment.

Among some nomadic Gypsy tribes, a woman will sometimes dance alone when the family gathers around the fire at night. There is an element of courtship ritual in this, as she tries to attract the attention of a potential husband. In more recent times, Gypsy women have danced before an audience of *gadje* in return for money—a practice which has led to some of the more prudish to label them "lascivious."

Round dances are among the most common of Romanian dances. These feature several dancers who link arms or stand in a circle which moves around clockwise or counterclockwise as the participants perform the various steps.

The most famous of all Romanian dances is a round dance called the *hora*. The basic step of



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this dance is a gliding hop, first on one leg, then the other. This is followed by sideways skips in a clockwise direction followed by the same number of skips counterclockwise. The dance is performed with arms linked so it is a little more difficult than it might sound. Visitors who are allowed to join the *hora* almost always underestimate the dexterity and precision required to keep up with the locals—to the great amusement of the native populace! There is nothing stately about the *hora*, and it is usually performed to delighted whoops.

The *hora* is something of a coming of age measurement. Young men are allowed to join the circle as they approached manhood, while girls joining the circle signify their readiness and candidacy for marriage. By custom, anyone who has behaved in an immoral manner or broken the law is excluded from the dance. Should such a person attempt to join the dance, the other participants stop dancing. This can be a powerful tool to control behavior in remote villages where being excluded from the *hora* is tantamount to being shunned.

Couple dancing also is quite popular. These dances usually feature some elements of round dancing, with all the participants forming into a large circle at certain points of the dance. Couples then break away from the others and move around in a circle (much like promenading in square dancing).

Twirls and fancy steps add frills which differ from village to village, with each community inordinately proud of their original footwork. The couples then join together into larger groups, with two, four, or six couples meeting together and moving in patterns much like a wagon wheel with their crossed hands serving as the spokes to anchor them in the center. Though somewhat like square dancing or clogging, the Transylvanian folk dances are at once smoother in gait and more energetic and complex than either.

Ancient rituals served as the root for many of the more curious dances performed at certain times of the year. Among those dances linked to special occasions and seasonal rites are the and the *capra*.

The *capra* (or goat dance) is performed as

part of the New Year's Eve celebrations. Similar in nature to the ancient Greek fertility dances performed in the theatre, the *capra* uses the goat as a symbol of fertility and plenty. Dancing is done around a *plugusor* (little plow), yet another symbol of fertility. The performance of the *capra* on New Year's Eve is intended to bring fertile crops and good fortune for the whole of the coming year.

The *calusari* is said to be one of the most difficult folk dances known. It certainly requires a great deal of cooperation among the dancers as well as unflagging stamina. In the past, the *calusari* had a ritual significance, but by the 1890s, though the dance has remained popular, virtually no one knows what it was.

The *calusari* is performed before Whitsun by nine young men from nine neighboring villages. The youths wear embroidered vests and ribboned hats. Their boots are adorned with spurs and bells which ring out fiercely as they pace through the steps of the dance. Before the dance, all swear oaths against evil spirits. The dancers carry sticks, hareskins and a pole wound about with garlic. The dance itself lasts for hours, with the participants becoming inured to any muscle fatigue and reaching a sort of transcendent state similar to that achieved by dervishes.

### Forbidden Lore

The is a potent ritual against evil. Those who dance it must all be mystics, though they need not be high level ones. All the participants must perform the correct steps and ancient ritual wording must be recited at certain points during the dance for it to be effective. Only one group, the Company of the Dance, can still call forth its power.

When correctly performed by those with the knowledge and power, the enables the group to cast *abjure* as if a 9th level mystic regardless of their own actual levels. The sticks, hareskin and garlic are used as material components of the spell. Though most effective at Whitsun, the ritual can, in fact, be cast at any time. Knowledge of the true ritual has been passed down from father to son for generations.



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## Devil's Dancers

This strange dance is performed by young men who travel from village to village, dancing as they go. For three, five, or seven years, these youths make a pact with the devil to dance during their every waking moment. In return, they receive food and drink, and the devil agrees to make them irresistible to the young women of the villages they visit.

In practice, the young men travel from village to village living off the largesse of the inhabitants. When a group of devil's dancers enter a village, it is traditional for the people to treat them to a feast and hold wild celebrations in which the young dancers show off their best steps and partner various girls of the town in couple dances. Whether the devil makes them irresistible or not, many young girls are attracted to such exotic youths. Most villagers see devil's dancers as harmless excuses to hold a party.

### Forbidden Lore

As the Red Death and its minions have gained strength, even supposedly harmless foolery has become dangerous for the participants.

Over the years, the subtle manipulations of the Red Death have transformed the Devil's Dance into a conduit through which fiends from beyond the veil of reality can physically replace the young dancers on Gothic Earth.

The dance results in a variation on the *gate* spell that gradually transposes the young man with an incubus. Whenever one of the dancers performs, the DM must roll a powers check. If the result is 1%–2%, the incubus that has been drawn to the man takes a little more of the character's body and spirit.

The changes in the character are so subtle and gradual, however, that only those who know the young man best will notice anything is happening. (And since the Devil's Dancers are constantly on the move, it is rare that the corruption is detected before it's too late.) There are five stages to the transformation, each of which affects both the body and mind of the character.

**First Stage:** The fiend establishes a psychic bond. Whether or not the character was an incessant flirt, he comes one now, displaying a "love them and leave them" attitude.

**Second Stage:** The fiend's love of cruelty and hedonism begin to color all the character's actions. Depending on the character's personality prior to the fiend making contact with him, these thoughts and urges may be disturbing. The character's physical appearance begins to change. His skin becomes smooth and he grows more handsome (+1 Charisma).

**Third Stage:** The minds of fiend and character are so closely connected that all the urges and desires of the fiend seem perfectly natural to the character. The character's alignment begins to reflect that of the incubus. The character's senses become heightened, and when he is excited his eyes glow.

**Fourth Stage:** The character is now wholly evil and driven exclusively by the fiend's twisted urges—there is nothing left of the character's original personality. His physical appearance increases dramatically (+2 Charisma, to a maximum of 19), and his voice becomes pleasing and soothing, giving him the ability to *charm person* at will.

**Fifth Stage:** The fiend has completely replaced the victim in body and spirit. The character is irretrievably lost, and an incubus walks the world in his place, seeking spirits to corrupt.

The character that has fallen prey to an incubus can be saved at any time before the final stage of the transformation, but to do so is difficult, and it can only be accomplished by the correct performance of the ritual dance, something only the Company of the Dance is capable of. Further, once the incubus is thrust back from whence it came, the character must make a successful System Shock check or die.

Only the calusari can counteract the sinister effects of the unwitting invitation issued by the Devil's Dancers.



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## Festivals and Celebrations

It is perhaps not at all surprising that with all the strife and misery that has plagued Transylvania over the centuries that the people throw themselves into every possible celebration with unbridled passion and joy.

## Weddings

Wedding parties traditionally last two days—Saturday and Sunday. A special wedding tent is built from tree fronds braced by wooden beams. This is bedecked with fir branches and ribbons. Scores of garishly decorated cakes and bottles of *suica* (plum brandy, a favorite of the region) are brought in along with several food courses. Within the tent are a space for dancing, a platform for musicians and a high table at which the bride and groom must sit while their guests dance and make merry around them.

The wedding customarily begins at either the bride's or groom's house, where the band meets the celebrants. In a traditional wedding, the young men of the village assist the prospective bridegroom in bringing a fir tree from his house to the bride's. Sometimes the tree is decorated and given as a gift to the bride. Other times, they pantomime using it as a battering ram to break down the door follows and the bride's family puts up a mock resistance to her being "carried off by the groom."

An emotional farewell song (*cintecul miresei*) is then sung by the bride to her family and friends. She offers a formal lament that her life as a maiden is now over. All the participants form a solemn procession to the church, where the actual marriage ceremony takes place.

The band continues to play outside the church to entertain the children and those who weren't invited to the wedding feast. These dance in the street before the doors of the church. Once the marriage ceremony is concluded, there is another procession to the wedding tent. The musicians take a break while the couple is toasted, then play all Saturday night.

There are traditional melodies (the soup song, the roast meat song, etc.) that accompany the

various courses of the feast as they are presented. Interspersed among these are lively dance tunes designed to let participants work off the food (and the effects of the *suica*).

Late in the evening comes a much anticipated highlight to the festivities. The *jocul miresei* (bride's dance) is a chance for all the men of the village to dance with the bride, each in turn. For the "privilege" of dancing with the bride, each offers her money. Most amounts are small, but they are a traditional way of offering the new couple a little much-needed cash with which to start their married life without offending them by seeming to offer charity.

By dawn on Sunday the party has wound down and the participants have returned home or found a bed in a nearby field. Sometime around noon the music begins again and continues until late into the evening.

## Festivals and Holidays

Most of the festivals of Transylvania are linked either with annual ceremonies featuring mountains that were once considered holy or coincide with the rhythm of the rural calendar. Harvest time or the departure of the sheep to mountain pastures in spring and their return in autumn are examples of the latter.

*The Gaina Fair* which is held about the 20th of July every year atop the 4,900 foot plateau of Mount Gaina (in the Apuseni Mountains) began as a festival honoring the mountain. Over time, it changed into something that was called the "Girl Fair." The intention of the fair was to allow young men (who were often away from their homes for two thirds of the year tending the flocks up in the mountains) to meet young women. Women from communities other than their own circumscribed ones could thus be met and, if they and their parents approved, wed.

Would-be brides were displayed at their very best. Wearing their finest clothing, they would pose amidst linens, pottery, furniture and anything else that might presumably be included in their dowries. By the 1890's, this portion of the fair no longer exists, but thousands of peasants come to the fair from all



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over Transylvania and Romania to enjoy the parades, folk art, and of course, day long singing, dancing, and feasting.

*The Pageant of the Juni* takes place in Brasov on the first Sunday in May. Juni is a Latin word meaning "youth." Once a festival that served as the one day a year that the town's Romanian population could freely enter the town's center, it is now a spectacle in which the young people dress in costume and parade through the town. The married men (known as Old Juni) bring up the rear of the procession. Some of the costumes are over 150 years old. After the parade, round dances are held.

Some regions take particular pride in their big winter festivals. The New Year Customs are spread over several days from December 24 to January 7. They include *Christmas*, *New Year* and the *Epiphany* (Twelfth Night). Traditionally, these celebrations are organized by the young men of the village or town, who begin planning and rehearsals in early December. Miming

plays, songs, hymns and greetings are all planned. On Christmas Eve and the three following days, and on New Year's Eve and Twelfth Night, the young men give greetings and hopes for prosperity in the coming year to every house they visit. They are joined at New Year's by bands of children who go from house to house singing *colinde*. These are changed slightly depending on who the recipient is to be.

In addition to the *colinde* and greetings, there are games such as tip-cat, hymns about the Star of Bethlehem and the three wise men, folk plays, and a masked procession.

At *Easter* everyone appears in their finest garments, many of them unveiled for the first time (to the delight and envy of the neighbors). The Sunday before Easter, people bring willow branches to church to be blessed in remembrance of the palm branches laid before Christ when he entered Jerusalem. Easter occurs twice every year in Transylvania, with the Roman Catholics celebrating it on a different





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Sunday than the Orthodox due to the Orthodox calendar's method of determining dates.

Among the other spring celebrations are Whitsun (described under Dance and the entry under the town of Deva), the *Ariet*, the *Ploughman's Festival*, the *Dragaica*, and the *Bestowal of the Flowers*.

The *Ariet* is also known as the shepherd's festival or the Gathering of the Ewes. It celebrates the practice of gathering all the sheep of the village into a single large flock prior to taking them into the mountains to their summer pasturage. Amazing amounts of food and drink are consumed at the festival and traditional songs and dances provide the entertainment. The shepherds who will be spending the long months until autumn in the lonely reaches of the mountain are honored and given the choicest delicacies among the feast foods.

The *Ploughman's Festival* was once practiced throughout the region, but by the end of the nineteenth century it only survives in southern Transylvania. This traditional ceremony honors the young man who first ploughs his fields as the leader of all the young men of the village for that year. The leader has the right to punish those who fail to do their work properly.

The *Dragaica* is an ancient custom that is still practiced in some parts of Wallachia and Transylvania. On Midsummer's Day, young women and girls wearing crowns and hoods go into the fields. There they sing and dance while seeing if the wheat is ready for harvesting.

The *Bestowal of the Flowers* also occurs on Midsummer's Day. Once a widespread celebration, by the 1890s it is practiced only in Transylvania. On the appointed day, the girls of the village go into the fields, weave circlets of flowers and throw them over the roofs of the cottages. This is said to bring good luck to the people of the village.

The *Harvest Festival* is a great occasion in village life. Based on ancient rituals, and intended to insure that each farmer would be able to successfully bring in his crops, the festival is a time of shared work and rejoicing.

Whole villages go out into the fields of the farmer who is seen to have the finest heads of

grain. There a crown is woven from the best wheat available. The village helps the farmer reap his fields. Then they move on to the next farm and repeat the process until all the crops have been harvested. Each time a field has been reaped, the crown is borne in procession to it, accompanied by ceremonial songs. From time to time during the days in which the festival takes place, pure water is sprinkled on the crown. When the last field is cleared, the people dance around the crown and hang it up in a place of honor. Finally, the grain from the crown is mingled with the grain set aside for sowing in order to assure a good harvest the next year.

### Funerals

Though dreaded, these inevitable ceremonies are also festivals in the sense that they ritualize an event in village life. The dead person's female family members and neighbors make a great show of their sorrow by performing the *bocet*, an improvised lament based on traditional patterns and formulas. It serves as a sort of conversation with the deceased.

The funeral wake is accompanied by a masked dance in which the participants jump over a fire lit in the farm or home as a purification. This usually marks a last farewell to the deceased before the village takes their leave of him. However, there are times when other rites are performed over the body if there is a fear that the deceased might not rest easy in his grave. Details on these additional beliefs are given in the section titled "Folklore of the Carpathians."

### Folk Art and Handicrafts

The oldest folk art in the Transylvania region is Neolithic. It featured a distinctive style based on a great variety of geometric ornament. Many of these geometric figures are still found in traditional folk art patternings. Dacian art (which was traded with the Greeks, Romans, and Celts) had its finest expression in intricately decorated pottery, terracotta statuettes and fine metalwork.



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The people of Transylvania, regardless of their ethnic background, have always appreciated finely crafted items that display a love of beauty as well as utility. Even the meanest tools and domestic implements receive some sort of ornamentation. Three areas in which this is most clearly seen are iron working, wood carving, and pottery making.

## Iron Working

This art goes back to Dacian times. Dacian tools and weapons were prized by the Greeks for their ornament and beauty as well as the strength of their metal. Iron working as an art form reached its peak and flourished between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. Wrought iron became the rage, with intricate and delicate window grills and impressive locks and banding on doors becoming the standard by which a well-made house was judged. Inside the house, wrought iron was used to make fancifully shaped candlesticks and andirons, many of which can still be seen throughout Transylvania today. Another use of wrought iron which became quite popular was the custom of placing a wrought iron fence around graves.

## Pottery Making

Pottery making and decoration hold a place alongside embroidery as one of the most shining examples of Transylvanian folk art. Based on patterns known since Dacian times, the beautiful, black pottery in northern Moldavia and northeastern Transylvania is decorated with luminous gray, sometimes shading through all the colors from a silverish gray to black.

Transylvanian glazed pottery is much sought after for decorating the home. Dishes, plates and jugs are brilliantly colored, then finished with a transparent glaze. Pottery statuettes and figurines of birds, animals, instruments, and butterflies are also highly prized.

Like their ancestors before them, master potters use traditional tools and techniques in their work. As the pot or plate is turned on the wheel, the potter drips the paint for the

decoration onto it through the tip of a cow's horn, and ornamental shapes in jugs and figures are crafted using old-fashioned chisels.

## Woodcarving

Woodcarvings are so ubiquitous in the Transylvania region's architecture and furnishings that they seem almost to have grown that way. The pillars of many houses are lovingly carved in characteristic themes. These include the sun, flowering vines, braided cords, or geometric figures.

Wooden instruments also attest to the woodcarvers' art, with carved shepherd's pipes, *cobza*, and *sambal* showing both elaborate carved decoration and wood inlay. Peasant cottages are filled with carved furniture. Pieces from different regions can be discerned by the distinctive patterns used in their carving. Wooden utensils and tools are shaped for beauty and ease of use, and many particularly fine wooden platters and boxes are often passed down as part of a bride's wedding gifts from her parents.

Likewise, the crosses in the churchyards bear witness to the care and craftsmanship of the native woodcarvers. Many are decorated with religious imagery, though a few boast more secular themes such as hearts and roses.

A further testament to the woodcarvers' ingenuity is the Romanian slat house. These are cottages built entirely of slats of wood which are artfully criss-crossed to make a decorative statement of the whole building. Looking somewhat like a latticework, these cottages embody the best elements of Transylvanian folk art—taste and harmony.

## Rug Weaving

In Romanian, rugs are called *scoarte* (bark). This strange name derives from the custom of lining the interiors of wooden peasant cottages with tree bark to minimize drafts. That is why in Transylvania the rugs are hung on the walls rather than laid on the floor.

Rug weavers work in their cottages, producing rugs by knotting natural wool yarn and hemp on



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wooden looms. Cottage looms are usually very narrow, so large rugs must be made a piece at a time and sewn together in strips. Much of the artistry involved in weaving the rugs thus lies in matching the pieces so that a harmonious whole is created.

Peasant women usually weave rugs during the fall and winter months when their work in the fields is over. Weavers choose from a variety of traditional patterns. Each pattern is associated with one region and all have names such as "sawteeth," "rings," and "stars." By combining different patterns in different combinations, an almost limitless variety is possible. Geometric patterns, stylized human and animal figures and flowers provide the most popular designs. Though their style is related to that used in Oriental rugs, the peasants of Transylvania have adapted the basic model, changing it into something uniquely Romanian.

### Sewing and Embroidery

Sewing and embroidery have long been a matter of special pride among the Transylvanians. Most Transylvanian linen bedsheets, tablecloths, and doilies are sewn and painstakingly embroidered with complimentary patterns by women and girls of the households. These cherished items form part of what a young woman takes to her new home upon her marriage.

Young girls and women spend many evenings at the home of one of the older married women or widows in the village. There the group works on sewing colorful quilts to match the embroidered linens. The older women teach the younger ones patterns and techniques passed down to them from the prior generations. This group activity provides the women with a chance to talk over events and gossip with one another.

Many times, the young men of the village find some excuse to drop by the house as well (perhaps with a basket of bread and cheese or to ask if a widow needs someone to chop her firewood). Naturally, they are invited in (it would be scandalous to turn away a visitor without even offering him a drink of water or a bite to eat). Everyone pretends that the meetings are

merely coincidence, but these get-togethers provide an acceptable way for the young men and women to get to know one another better—and all under the supervision and watchful eyes of the village gossips!

### Native Costume

Though linens for the house are made with great care, nowhere is the art of sewing and embroidery so evident as in the native clothing of Transylvania. The designs and detailing vary from one region to the next (and, in fact, can be used to determine where a person hails most likely hails from), but all make artistic use of pattern and rich ornamentation in gold and silver thread.

It is the general practice to dress according to one's age. Brighter colors are worn by young people and darker ones by older folk. Further, a special kind of headdress is worn by young, unmarried girls to denote their status.

Most folk take great pride in wearing the traditional garb of their region. Despite the variations, all have certain things in common.

Men's trousers are of coarse wool, invariably narrow and white, with those worn in the south and east being the most tight fitting. With this they wear a shirt with long, white sleeves. Though these are left plain for work in the fields, for Sunday or festival wear, they don shirts that have been intricately embroidered along the neckline, hem, and wrist portions. Those of the north and west are traditionally worn shorter than those worn by men in the south and east. The latter often reach mid thigh. Over their shirts they wear hand woven cloth or decorated leather belts. During warm weather, this is the whole of their outfit, but in fall and winter, they top it with elaborately embroidered long vests and sheepskin or fur cloaks. Men almost invariably wear some sort of hat.

Women wear a delicately embroidered blouse with patterned billowing sleeves and heavy, two-layered woven skirts. The overskirts are in fact a sort of apron that has both front and back panels, but which is open along the sides to show the white skirt beneath. The overskirts are



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invariably of dark colors highlighted by exquisite, colorful embroidery patterns. For festival wear, a *marama*, an embroidered veil made of natural silk, and a cap ornamented with pearls is worn. As with the men, in colder weather, women too don overvests and cloaks.

Though the embroidery employs several different patterns, each is chosen to compliment the others. The overgarments' colors also match or coordinate well with the rest of outfit. Tan, green, brown, orange, red, and yellow (all of them earth dyes) are most often used for embroidery.

Constructing their native dress is a work of love. The women spend long hours in perfecting the intricate embroidering. Sacrifices are made to allow the family to afford expensive gold and silver thread and pearls to adorn the women's caps. The colors are never gaudy, the designs never crude. Their aim is to reflect the harmony of the patterns and colors of nature and to show the pride they take in their Romanian origins.

### Food

Meals in Transylvania are social events. Families take time out from whatever else they are doing to sit down to the noontime meal together. They provide an opportunity for family members to talk together and pass on beliefs and values during this quiet time.

Transylvania has been blessed with fertile fields, fine pasturage, prime orchard lands, and streams and lakes filled with fish. These are all utilized in the local cuisine. Flavored by contact with its Greek, Turkish, and Hungarian neighbors, Transylvanian cooking has adapted their contributions to make dishes that are wholly Romanian in character.

In some areas, breakfast may be only rolls with butter or jam and tea or milk. This is because Transylvanians eat their heavy meal in the early afternoon. A specialty of the region is poached eggs served in butter atop a layer of *mamaliga* (a cornmeal porridge). *Mamaliga* is often used as an accompaniment to main entrées served later in the day as well.

The large meal of the day is served around

noon or slightly thereafter. Usually the first course in a meal is the soup. *Paysanne* (meat soup with several kinds of vegetables), *borshch* (thick cabbage-lamb soup traditionally made with bran), giblet soup (made with fowl's giblets and believed to act as a restorative) and fish soup (very like a *bouillabaisse*) are among the most common soups. In Transylvania, soups are usually served with eggs or cream.

Many visitors are surprised by the number of fruit soups offered to them. Cherry, red currant, apple, gooseberry and plum are among the most frequently served.

Fruit is also used in making teas, sauces, and vinegars. Herb teas (especially chamomile, which is believed to have great healing properties), cranberry, and rose hip tea are all common, as are fruit vinegars made from pears and apples. Other vinegars are flavored with sour cherries, tarragon and thyme. These are usually offered at the table and used to flavor the meal to the diner's taste. Mustards are always offered as condiments for meat, especially pork. They may be spicy mustards, regular mustard, or a particular type known as Hungarian mustard which features grape juice and minced quince mixed in with the mustard powder.

*Mititei* (cylindrical rolls of spicy grilled beef) is often eaten as an appetizer, though it may sometimes be used as the main course. *Branzeturi* (various cheeses, some mild and others sharp) are served before or during meals.

The most famous Transylvanian dish is *sarmale*, a dish of bitter cabbage leaves stuffed with minced meat (and sometimes rice). A variation on this dish is to substitute vine leaves soaked in boiling *borshch* for the cabbage leaves. When this is done, cream or yogurt is served alongside the *sarmale*.

Stews are popular main courses. Known as *tocana*, they feature stewed pork, beef, or mutton served with and strongly flavored by garlic and onions. Vegetables such as eggplant, peppers, or gherkins often accompany the main course. When *mamaliga* is not served as a side dish, noodles are occasionally substituted.

*Patricieni* are grilled sausages of various sorts. They run the gamut from mildly flavored to



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unbearably spicy. The smell of grilling *patricieni* wafting out over the village square has enticed many a visitor into the grillman's shop. Equally enticing is the aroma and taste of carp on the spit. The roasting fish is flavored with butter and spices and served on the skewer. *Pirjoala* is another favorite. This large flat serving of very spicy minced meat is traditionally served with a variety of garnishes that can be mixed with the meat to create different tastes with each bite.

Vendor's roast (pork) and Torda Roast (lamb) are sometimes prepared over hot charcoal grills on the street and offered to passersby by meat vendor's. Robber steak, which is made of bacon, onion, and beef seasoned with red pepper and strung on sticks (like shish-ka-bob) are also roasted over a charcoal fire to give them their unique flavor.

Transylvania's abundance of wildlife allows its people to serve an astonishing variety of "game" meats. Carpathian deer, chamois, bear, wild pig, black and red grouse, hares, pheasant, pigeon, turtledove, hazel grouse, quail, woodcock, duck, goose, and an array of fish are frequently served smoked or roasted accompanied by savory herbs and mustards.

Doughnuts, pancakes and turnovers are perennial favorites and usually served with fruit or jam. Nut and poppy seed loaves are traditionally prepared by the Szeklers for Christmas, New Year's Eve, and Easter. Nuts cooked in honey usually accompany feasts held on holy days because nuts are believed to hold mystical significance to purify and give one stamina.

Pastry horns, however, take center stage as the most delicious Transylvanian dessert. The pastry horn known in Transylvania is as thick as a finger, but of feather-light leavened dough that is made with egg yolks. Rolled around a wooden cylinder to give it shape, it is then brushed with melted butter and sugar. Chopped nuts are sprinkled on and the horn is then baked over charcoal embers.

By tradition, Friday's noon meal must include bean soup or puréed beans. Protestants serve it with meat, while the Catholics and Orthodox adherents observe the custom of meatless Fridays. Thursday is the day when break is baked, so hot, buttery bread fresh from the oven

is served with cabbage and pancakes.

Christmas and other holy days are honored by cooking poultry dishes, though at New Year's, pork is traditionally served.

While famed for its many wines, the most popular drink of Transylvania is plum brandy, known as *slivovitz* or *suica*.

## Folklore of the Carpathians

All superstition was at one time regarded as religious practice and taboos. Still grounded in faith, as evidenced by the many wardings and protections attributed to the sign of the cross, Transylvanian superstitions and folklore serves as a common lore for the peasantry.

Not every superstition has a basis in fact; indeed, the peasants are often quite misled in believing they can protect themselves with certain rituals or items that really have no affect.

The superstitions of the region can be divided up into lore on bad luck, wardings off of evil, and wisdom concerning the terrible doings of creatures of darkness. This chapter separates baseless superstitions from ancient wisdoms useful in combatting the servants of the Red Death and other evils.

## General Superstitions

Superstitions and their attendant practices survive more in rural areas than in the towns, and are more common in smaller towns than in large cities. Many superstitions relate to bad luck—specifically what causes it and how to avoid it or get rid of it. Some of the more common beliefs follow:

- It is bad luck to begin on a journey on a Tuesday.
- When you leave your house in the morning, you must put your right foot outside first. To do otherwise invariably leads to trouble.
- If you have left a house and remember something you left behind, don't go back to get it, or it will bring you bad luck all day.
- Meeting a priest first thing in the morning means you will have a bad day.



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- Crossroads are both unlucky and dangerous, being infested with spirits called lele (“man’s enemies”).

## Forbidden Lore

The origins of this belief date back to the times of the Dacians. Before the coming of the Red Death, the Dacians practiced a form of spirit magic in which they would join efforts with summoned spirits to perform divinations or weather controlling magic. The Dacian magic users would travel far and wide in the practice of their arts, and to facilitate their efforts, they made their homes near crossroads. When the Red Death corrupted magic on Gothic Earth, the spirits the Dacians dealt with turned evil and baneful. They slew their summoners, and, now trapped on the prime material plane, took to haunting the surrounding area.

Although virtually all traces of the ancient spirit masters have vanished, the spirits remain. Heroes who camp near a crossroads had a 5% chance to be attacked by a spirit who has abilities and statistics identical to one of the following creatures (roll 1d12 to determine which):

- |     |                  |
|-----|------------------|
| 1-2 | Poltergeist      |
| 3   | Animator, Minor  |
| 4-5 | Rushlight        |
| 6   | Odem             |
| 7-9 | Boowray          |
| 10  | Fenhound         |
| 11  | Animator, Common |
| 12  | Geist            |

Game information on all these creatures can be found in the *RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix III*.

- Don’t cross the path of a priest or you will sicken. Holy men should never be obstructed in their straight path to goodness.
- When given money, spit on it for luck and to wash away any evil from its prior owner. In this way you may save yourself from curses attached to looted treasure or ill-gotten gains.





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- Knocking on wood can ward off bad luck, making it pass you by.
- Dreaming of a young child, especially of being a young child, brings bad luck. If you have such a dream, you must wash the bedsheets to ward off the attentions of dark beings, who are obviously tormenting you through your dreams.

## Forbidden Lore

Between all realities, there exists a group of beings known as the Nightmare Court. They are creatures who feed off the dark dreams and nightmares of mortals whom they catch in the Web of Dreams as they sleep. One of these beings is known as the Redheaded Child. Appearing in dreams as an emaciated, rag-clad urchin, he causes mortals to dream of their childhoods and feel sorrow for innocence lost and happy times long gone. He feeds off the despair this generates, and persons who are being tormented by the Redheaded Child feel drained, unrested, and increasingly depressed. They have a hard time focusing their attention on matters at hand, and thus fall victim to mishaps, hence the folklore about dreaming of being a child leading to bad luck. (The character loses 1 Intelligence point per night the Redheaded Child is affecting his dreams. This loss is temporary, and the points are restored at the rate of two per day once the Child has been driven off.)

While most beings of the members of the Nightmare Court release their victims within a few nights, the Redheaded Child tenaciously torments his victims with recurring dreams of their childhood, which become increasingly focused around deceased loved ones, childhood crushes, or missed opportunities. However, simple performances of mundane adult tasks, such as washing bedsheets, repairing a leaky roof, or working in the fields, will bolster the character's focus on the present and free him from the Child's nighttime grasp.

More information on the Nightmare Court and the strange land beyond the Veil of Sleep in which they dwell can be found in the RAVENLOFT® campaign expansion *Nightmare Lands* (catalogue number 1124). This boxed set also contains rules for running dream-based adventures that might work well with Gothic Earth campaigns.

- If an owl sits on your roof at night and hoots, calamity is on the way. Someone in the family may even be marked for death.
- St. George's Day eve on May 4 (or April 24 in the Orthodox calendar) is when "all the evil things in the world have full sway." Despite the belief that hidden treasures betray their resting places on this night by means of a blue flame which flickers over their burial places, no Transylvanian in his right mind would be abroad on this night any longer than he absolutely had to.
- Should you see a flame burning over a place suspected of hiding buried treasure, do not touch it if the flame is green. Green flame treasures belong to evil spirits or ghosts.
- Evil things cast no shadows.
- Stepping on dropped bread crumbs means the family faces famine.
- The newly dead cannot be left alone lest they become inhabited by evil spirits.
- Those who are born on a Saturday, especially if they are twins, are granted the power to see ghosts and spirits.

## Placating the Dead

Transylvanians have a wide variety of beliefs regarding walking dead and restless spirits. Some beliefs hold that the undead are being punished for crimes in their lifetime, while others hold that the dead return to punish the living for their crimes. Also, Transylvanians believe in free-roaming evil spirits that must be guarded against.



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- Funeral feasts, called *pomonas*, must be repeated two weeks after the body has been buried, again in six weeks, then once a year on the anniversary of the death for the next seven years. To do otherwise is to insult the spirit. It will then rise out of its coffin and wander, complaining of its shoddy treatment. Such spirits are harbingers of sickness and misfortune.
- Shrouding all the mirrors in a house where someone has died prevents the spirit from being trapped within the mirror, held captive by its own reflection.
- Putting a headstone on a grave prevents the corpse from sitting up, and thus, returning.
- To remove a corpse from a house, a hole must be cut in the wall and the deceased passed through it to the outside. Going out by the door invites evil spirits in.
- Loud and prolonged weeping over a corpse prevents the deceased from returning. Hearing the love and sorrow of the family comforts the spirit, whereas silence forces it to return for an accounting.

## Gypsy Lore

In Gypsy folklore, vampires (*mulé* or *mullo*) have power at the exact moment of midday (as well as at night), a time when the sun casts no shadow. Gypsies must not travel while there are no shadows on the ground, for at that time *mulé* control the roads, the surrounding terrain and all physical objects and animals. Gypsies try to appease the *mulé* by leaving out balls of rice, bowls of milk and animal blood.

The *mulé* rises at midnight to strangle people and animals and feast on blood. Greatly feared by their Gypsy kin, they are filled with hatred for the living—especially those who caused their deaths, kept the *mulé's* possessions rather than destroying them or who failed to correctly perform graveside ceremonies intended to give them peace. Gypsy *mulé* only exist for three to five years, after which time they return to the grave forever.

## Forbidden Lore

The *mulé* is identical to the revenant described in the AD&D® MONSTROUS MANUAL™ tome. It is an undead creature who has risen from the grave to seek those who caused its death or somehow violated their body in death. Any who attempt to prevent it from performing this mission are marked for death as well.

Regardless of what weapons or attack forms it used in life, the *mulé* always attempts to strangle its victims, its eyes blazing with hatred from beyond the grave as it does. (The great strength of the *mulé* inflicts 2d8 points of damage upon its victim each round. The *mulé* does not release its grip until the victim is dead.)

The *mulé* can exist for no more than five years, and if one manages to survive that long, it's body has decayed to the point where it is little more than a skeleton with brittle, dried skin stretched across its bones. Once the fifth anniversary of a *mulé's* death or once it has avenged itself upon those who wronged it, the *mulé* disintegrates and its spirit goes to rest in peace.

The primary beliefs about gypsies—held by both gypsies and nongypsies—revolve around their ability to see into the future. Many gypsies make money by reading palms, tea leaves, and interpreting omens for the peasants. How much of these fortunes are true, and how much are actually just clever showmanship varies from tribe to tribe, but there is little doubt that the Vistani gypsies are by far the most renowned seers of the Transylvania region.

Another widely attributed supernatural gypsy power is that of the evil eye. While Transylvanians believe the evil eye (a curse brought on by someone in a fit of rage of jealousy) can be wielded by anyone, the gypsies are particularly feared, as legend has it that those who come under the evil eye of elderly gypsy women will sicken and die.

There are several different ways in which a person can protect himself from the evil eye.



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The most commonly acknowledged ways are listed below.

- Crossing yourself under the full moon is a sure way to rid yourself of evil. Bad luck falls away from you and the evil eye has no more power over you for that month.
- Making the sign of the cross and pointing two fingers at someone is a guard against the evil eye.

## Forbidden Lore

The evil eye on Gothic Earth follows the guidelines for curses laid out in the *Realm of Terror* rulebook. It brings Embarrassing or Frustrating curses.

The evil eye is a gaze-attack form, similar to that of a vampire, for example. Each character can invoke the evil eye up to three times per day, but only in moments of great passion or anger. For those Dungeon Masters who make Ravenloft powers checks for their NPCs, invoking the evil eye prompts a 1% chance of attracting the attention of the dark powers (modified by any of the situations defined in Chapter V of *Realm of Terror*; in the boxed set).

The victim is entitled to make a saving throw vs. paralyzation, with success indicating an avoidance of a minor curse.

Despite popular beliefs, the saving throws, or entreating the curser to forgive the offense is the only way to lift the effects of the evil eye.

## Monsters of Transylvania

Various creatures, spirits, and other beings haunt the shadows of Transylvania. Whether benign or wicked, these beings have more dealings with common folk than is considered comfortable. Some of the creatures in this section are native only to Transylvania, while others can be found throughout Gothic Earth, abominations that have sprung from the Red Death.

- **Spirits of the forest** can assume any shape they choose, even that of humans. They can become invisible at will and may serve as the guardian spirits of a particular place such as a hollow tree, a stand of woods, a site where treasure is buried or even a great forest.

Some are benign, others dangerous, but all demand respect and proper behavior from humans. Cutting down all the trees in a given area will greatly anger spirits of the forest, as will boasting about one's prowess in wood cutting. Offering a libation of a few drops of clean water or brandy can assuage the spirit's anger, but only up to a certain point.

Those who anger forest spirits find that their tools break, they lose valuable items in the forest, and cut trees fall the wrong direction. If they are greatly or repeatedly angered, sometimes axes slip or trees dropon those who have offended them, putting an end to the offense once and for all.

- **Spirits of the Mine** are nonhuman ghosts that can appear in any form. Whenever they encounter miners, these spirits may take on a form (usually that of an animal) and appear to the person. They strike up conversations and urge the person to engage in some sort of wrongdoing (cheating a partner out of gold one has found or planning to murder another to keep the location of a gold mine secret, for example).

If the person fails to respond to a spirit of the mine or refuses to consider such things outright, they may be rewarded by the spirit with buried treasure or by hitting a valuable deposit of gold. Those who give in and listen to the spirit are punished. Little wrongs lead to merely not finding anything of worth in the mine; large wrongdoings may provoke a cave-in that only buries the evil human.

- **Bitang** are unfortunates who have been visited by a particularly insidious curse of the Red Death. Bitangs are children born out of wedlock, particularly if they are the third, seventh, or twelfth son or daughter,



## A FAR AWAY PLACE

who may become a werewolf. The transformation is triggered by acute guilt, anger, or shame, or during a full moon. The Red Death has used the collective beliefs of both Roman and Orthodox Catholics that children born out of wedlock are somehow already condemned to bad fates to power a curse that actually makes these beliefs fact.

- **Dhampir** are the offspring of vampires and human women. During the day, they look like normal humans. At night, however, they often betray their vampire heritage because their eyes glow a blood-red color in the dark.

Dhampirs have a variety of powers, most of which grant them exceptional resistances to the abilities of vampires. However, in order to maintain these powers, dhampirs must feast on the blood of humans at least once a week. Many of them seek to atone for their father's crimes, hunting down and slaying vampires wherever they find them.

No matter how hard they struggle against the darkness, however, dhampirs are doomed to rise as vampires after their deaths.

More details on dhampirs can be found in the **MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM** appendix of this volume.

- **Tormented souls** cannot depart from the world even when they have been properly buried. They take on the guise of black cats, black dogs, and bats, or become inanimate objects such as wagon wheels, pitchforks and ladles. Whatever form they take, they cause mischief, and can at times be quite dangerous.
- **Zmeu** are unhappy spirits that cannot rest in their graves, but who haunt the scenes of their past or move about repeating the evil acts which caused them to become restless spirits. Condemned to forever repeat the actions or re-experience the sad events that led them to their fate, *zmeu* are truly in a hell





# A FAR AWAY PLACE

on earth. There is no English language equivalent of the word *zmeu*, as this type of spirit is found only in Transylvania. (A *Zmeu* is essentially identical in appearance and abilities as the deceased was in the prime of his life. The only special ability they possess is the power to *charm* mortals at will.

Targets must be within ten feet of the *zmeu*, and they may roll a successful saving throw vs. spell to avoid the effect. If the *zmeu* is targeting a single individual, the save must be made at a -4 penalty.)

- Certain tools, particularly those with sharp edges, such as knives, axes, scythes, and scissors, can become *vampiric tools* if the owner cuts himself and any of the blood falls upon it. Unless a quick blessing is said over the implement and it is washed in clear running water immediately, it will become vampiric. Thereafter, each time someone tries to use the tool it will cause injury so as to receive more blood. Particularly evil tools will seek to slay their wielders.

Once they have become infected with vampirism, such tools must be broken and buried among the roots of an oak tree to prevent their returning and causing more damage. Merely throwing the tool away is ineffective as it returns to its former home or to some innocent person's abode, where it begins its predations once again.

- *Rusalii* are the spirits of departed family or friends who haunt and possess those who do not correctly perform the rituals and keep the taboos associated with the *Week of Rusalii*. The week of *Rusalii* follows Whitsun and is a time when the dead are remembered and placated. Those who fail to properly honor their departed relatives may be possessed by *rusalii* and forced to perform strange actions or injure themselves. Only a ceremony performed by *calusari* dancers can then free the captive mortal from the possessing spirit.

## Forbidden Lore

*Rusalii* are identical to the *odem* described in the *RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix III*. They are invisible at all times, and once they take over a mortal's body, they have complete control; the mortal is still aware of his surroundings, but he is a helpless passenger in his own body, forced to witness whatever atrocities the chaotic evil spirit wishes to perform, either to the host or others. These spirits cannot be attack or destroyed through any means except the *calusari*, although they can be driven from possessed bodies by spells like *banishment* and *dismissal*.

## Vampires

These unnatural monstrosities haunt the Balkans and Transylvania in such great numbers that they have become virtually a synonym for the region.

Called *vămpir* in Hungarian and *strigoi* in Romanian, vampires are undead corpses whose bodies fail to decay and who feed on the blood of the living. The people of Transylvania believe that vampires can be created (through the bite of other vampires) or born. A baby born with a dark-colored spot on the head, teeth in its mouth, or hair anywhere but its head may become a vampire.

However, it is believed that a vampire is usually created when someone dies whose soul is unable to enter heaven or hell. They may have died without expiating their sins, committed suicide, or lived a heretical life.

The greatest fear for the Transylvanian peasant is that one vampire will become an epidemic of vampires. Though popular belief has it that vampires must bite their victims and drain their blood to turn them into other vampires, Eastern European folklore states that the vampire's look or touch can do the same thing. Whenever epidemics or wasting sickness occurs, vampires are suspected. Corpses are exhumed. If any seem undecayed or turned somewhat in the coffin, they are destroyed by traditional methods or burned to ashes.



# A FAR AWAY PLACE

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# A FAR AWAY PLACE

fresh blood. Their lips and skin take on a ruddy glow, while wrinkles smooth away and hair darkens to the color of their youth.

- On November 29, the eve of St. Andrew's Day, vampires rise with their coffins on their heads, frequent their former homes, and fight each other with hempen whips at crossroads.

- Vampires often betray supernatural strength. They are able to lift and break things no normal human can. It is said that a thwarted vampire can tear a hole through the side of a house or throw a heavy wooden coffin at pursuers. In some areas, vampires are believed to regularly carry their coffins with them when they go hunting at night.

- Physical changes to the body are a sure sign of vampirism. If the teeth seem enlarged, the gums are pulled back or puffy looking, the nose very sharp, or the eyes bloodshot, it is probable that this is a vampire. Other signs include ears that are pointed at the top, hair on the palms of the hands or excessive hair elsewhere on the body.

## Destroying Vampires

There are two ways Transylvanians destroy vampires. One is a proactive measure by treating the bodies of individuals who are expected to rise from the dead as vampires. Once a vampire has been identified, Transylvanians move to destroy it as quickly as possible. However, being more than aware of the creatures' great strength, Transylvanians never move against vampires unless they know where its resting place is, so they may destroy it while it can't fight back.

- Tying a piece of red yarn around the corpse's knees and ankles will prevent it from walking, while burying it face down will confuse it, preventing it from escaping to the surface and leaving its grave.
- Placing a thorn under the tongue of the corpse prevents the potential vampire from sucking blood; filling the mouth with rose petals purifies the corpse, granting it rest.
- Crosses on the grave prevent the vampire from passing through the earth in mist

form, forcing the creature to dig its way out and thus giving clear evidence (the disturbed grave) of its nature.

Should lesser measures prove ineffective, there is one procedure that works on all but the most powerful vampires.

First, a stake must be driven through the heart. It must be made of ash wood or iron, and this incapacitates the vampire so other necessary tasks in its destruction can be performed.

You must cut off the vampire's head and burn the whole body to ashes. The coffin is then reburied, filled to the brim with garlic, roses, and holy items such as icons or crosses. Holy water may be poured into the grave or bits of the host broken up and scattered within it as well. Even then, one cannot be certain that the vampire is truly destroyed unless the ashes are scattered to the four winds. Naturally, all this is not as easy as it sounds. After all, the vampire is likely to do *something* to prevent its destruction!

## Protection Against Vampires

When all else fails, Transylvanians fall back upon ancient protections against vampires, some of which are more effective than others, and some that really have no effect at all. Just like there are a wide variety of beliefs about the abilities of vampires, so do the Transylvanians claim dozens of ways to protect one's self against them. Some of the more common beliefs follow.

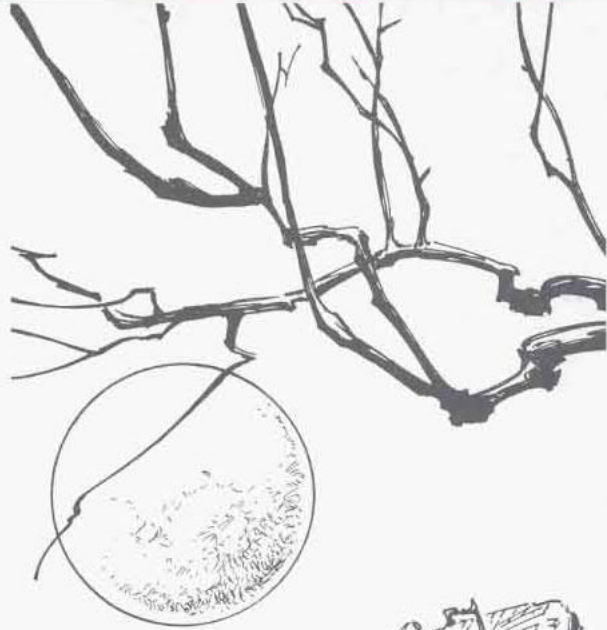
- To safeguard the chimney opening against entry by a vampire, a pot of beans soaking in water should be hung in the fireplace. If the vampire enters through the chimney, it must count all the beans before proceeding into the house. If a fire is lit, the vampire is thus consumed while counting the beans.
- Carrying a bit of wild rose or mountain ash is said to be a sovereign remedy against vampires.
- If the person has fallen under the sway of a vampire and is being drained of blood by one on a nightly basis, placing a wreath of garlic around the victim's neck and



## A FAR AWAY PLACE

liberally appointing the bedroom with crucifixes or icons will prevent the vampire from entering. Care must be taken, however, that the victim is not left alone, for the hypnotic powers of the vampire can force the victim to remove the protections.

- Some peasants believe that iron grillworks on the windows prevent a vampire from gaining entry; others place iron fences around gravesites in the belief that the dead cannot pass such barriers unaided.
- A vampire cannot enter a home where garlic has been smeared around the doors and windows.
- Placing thorns in a circle around one's bed is a sure deterrent to vampires, who cannot cross such a barrier lest they prick themselves and burst.
- New-born babies must be guarded until they are christened, lest a vampire sneak in and transform them into other vampires. If a baby is made into a vampire, it grows to adult size in the grave, reaching full size in only seven days.



### Forbidden Lore

The root of this belief surrounding babies arises from the existence of dhampir, the offspring of a vampire and a still-living woman. There is more information on dhampir in the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM* appendix of this volume. Particularly cruel vampires will sire a child and then take it away from its mother immediately by slaying it. Once interred, the newly slain dhampir will indeed mature in seven days. However, it will have the mind of a raging beast and will go on a blind killing rampage. These creatures are generally short-lived as they are too insane to return to their graves at sunrise.

Centuries of being haunted by vampires have educated Transylvanians in how to ward them off better than most. Aside from the various weaknesses of vampires that are described in TSR's various collections of game monsters, any of the above-listed wards may be effective at the DM's discretion.



# PERSONALITIES

*h, it is the fault of our science that it wants to explain all; and if it explain not, then it says there is nothing to explain."*

—Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

The characters and monsters described below are representative of the Transylvanian region. Those given all have some tie in with the region in general or with specific towns, cities or places that are covered in chapter one. Not all the characters given are good;

many will undoubtedly try to thwart the player characters' aims if given the chance. There are others, however, who will lend their help in the fight against evil.

Some possibilities for conflict or cooperation among these NPCs has been written into the Forbidden Lore sections. It is hoped that the individual DM will find others or create entirely new NPCs from ideas generated by these.

Though many of these NPCs possess supernatural powers, not all the difficulties the characters encounter in Transylvania should focus on supernatural opponents and the minions of the Red Death. The game would be enhanced were the political situation or the religious conflict to be stressed. Bringing in some of the realities of life for the Romanian peasants rather than relegating them to the status of "superstitious nonentities" could easily turn just another horror adventure set in dread Transylvania into an experience the characters (and the players) will never forget.

Imagine, for example, having to stop the assassination of a government official when you know the person in question is guilty of terrible repressions and the torture of peasants. Though the players might feel that such a figure's assassination might actually be a good thing, their characters (brought up with the strictures and mind set of the late 1880s) would find the idea of assassination repugnant—no matter who the target is.

The Transylvanian background thus becomes much more interesting than merely a spooky backdrop for Dracula stories. It takes on the feel of the whole Balkan region in miniature and thereby provides a more lasting impression on the players due to the richness of the scenario.

Finally, not everyone who may oppose the heroes is a minion of the Red Death. Sometimes they just have different agendas or ideas of what is good (as is the case with Brother Mihai Bolgiu). If the DM can try to adopt the mindset of these characters, it will go a long way toward making the game richer and more believable.

## Acsady, Jozsef

Tradesman (Apothecary), Neutral Good

Armor Class	9	Str	10
Movement	9	Dex	14
Level/Hit Dice	7	Con	15
Hit Points	20	Int	14
THACO	17	Wis	12
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	9
Damage/Attack	By weapon		
Special Attacks	Nil		
Special Defenses	Nil		
Magic Resistance	Nil		
Weapon Proficiencies:	Cane, dagger		
Nonweapon Proficiencies:	Alchemy, cooking, healing, herbalism, history (local)		

Nearing his seventieth birthday, József Acsády shows only the most minimal signs of aging. His hair is noticeably gray and beginning to thin, and he uses a cane when he walks to ease the stiffness in his right leg. He is otherwise in exceptionally good health, a factor which he contributes to simple food, a daily regimen of walking, and his homemade tonics.

**Background:** Since the sixteenth century, the Acsády family has occupied the same house in the city of Cluj, where they have provided apothecary services for generations of the city's residents. The formulas used in the preparation of herbal elixirs, powders, and potions are the same ones used by the family for hundreds of years.

Besides supervising the work of his two sons Lázló and Emil as well as his oldest daughter



## PERSONALITIES

Katarina, József has made a name for himself as something of a local historian, particularly where the family lineage is concerned. He is a storehouse of folklore and folk remedies. Although he has heard of more modern methods of treating illness and has occasionally been exposed to proponents of medical science as it is practiced in other parts of Europe and in America, József remains convinced that the old ways are better.

**Role-playing:** József displays a gregarious nature to customers and is always ready to discourse on the history of Cluj and of his family. He grows somewhat reluctant, however, when conversation turns to the supernatural, since he believes very strongly that the dark powers that exist in the world are drawn to those who speak of them. Occasionally, however, he has been known to provide persistent individuals with substances reputed to be effective in combating or warding against supernatural creatures. He is not above asking a steep price for his assistance, since he feels that he is putting himself and his family at risk by his involvement in matters best left alone.

**Combat:** József is not a skilled fighter. He carries a dagger that is mostly used as a tool.

### Forbidden Lore

József Acsády's most treasured possession is an ancient tome which contains the research of the founder of the family business. Although parts of the book are nearly illegible, József has managed to decipher a few of the formulas it contains. He suspects that the indecipherable pages may, in truth, be a form of magical inscription describing the preparation of magic potions. Over the years, individuals have come into the shop requesting to see the book, but József has managed to deny them their wishes, lest he unwittingly render assistance to practitioners of dark magic. Several times, the patriarch has entertained the notion of seeking out some expert in the occult and attempting to learn the secrets contained in the book, but his own fear of endangering his soul has prevented him from doing so.

### Arany, Magda

Head of the Sword of Hunyady  
8th-level Adept, Lawful Good

Armor Class	9	Str	12
Movement	12	Dex	14
Level/Hit Dice	8	Con	13
Hit Points	25	Int	17
THACO	18	Wis	15
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	15

Damage/Attack By weapon or spell

Special Attacks Spells

Special Defenses Spells

Magic Resistance Nil

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, pistol

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Ancient religion, forbidden lore, history (Hunedoara Castle), spellcraft, spiritcraft

Spellbook (4/3/3/2): 1st—*cantrip, detect magic\*, detect undead\*, light\*, read magic, sleep\**; 2nd—*continual light\*, detect evil\*, forget, know alignment\**; 3rd—*clairvoyance\*, hold undead\*, sepia snake sigil\**; 4th—*detect scrying\*, remove curse\**

\*Indicates spells usually carried in memory.

A strikingly attractive woman in her mid-thirties, Magda Arany's bearing and choice of clothing styles seem far too cultured and sophisticated for her surroundings—the provincial town of Hunedoara. Her looks and her manner could easily win her suitors in even the most cosmopolitan of European cities, but she is content living with her aging aunt and uncle.

**Background:** Magda was a precocious child who was already reading and doing basic arithmetic by the time she was four. Her family recognized her uncommon intelligence and could not bring themselves to deny her the schooling she deserved. A series of tutors from Vienna and Bucharest saw to it that she received the equivalent of a university education. One such tutor, a colleague of Abraham Van Helsing, recognized Magda's innate aptitude for magic and began instructing her in the arcane arts.

As she learned more and more about the powerful forces of the supernatural, Magda's desire to become a part of the struggle to



## PERSONALITIES



prevent the spread of evil prompted her to dedicate herself to the cause of righteousness. Enlisting the aid of a few of her contemporaries, most of them young men who were initially attracted by her beauty and charm, Magda formed a qabal named for her illustrious ancestor Hunyady. The members of the Sword of Hunyady soon became caught up in Magda's fervor, adopting her cause as their own.

After the death of her parents, during an epidemic of influenza, Magda continued to occupy her family's modest home in the town of Hunedoara, where she was joined by her maternal aunt and uncle.

Most of Magda's time is taken up with her studies, but she occasionally acts as a tour-guide for outsiders interested in visiting nearby Hunedoara Castle, the palace once occupied by Hunyady. Her familiarity with that structure and her ability to gain access to some of its inner rooms made the castle a perfect meeting place for the Sword of Hunyady.

Magda periodically receives visitors from Vienna, sent to her by her original instructor in magic in order to assist her in perfecting her arcane knowledge.

**Role-playing:** Magda is consumed with her battle against evil and her desire to live up to the reputation of her ancestor, Janos Hunyady. She receives suitors on a regular basis but never views them as potential future husbands—instead, they are judged in their usefulness to the qabal.

She has an air of culture and sophistication about her, and although she can trace her lineage back to her distant ancestor, Matthias Corvinus, once called Hungary's greatest king, and, through him, to the legendary János Hunyady. She does not boast of this connection, but it shows in her attitude of quiet self-assurance.

**Combat:** Magda is a crack-shot with the army pistol that was given to her by Abraham van Helsing and possesses a keen awareness of tactics. If prepared for a confrontation, she and her allies are formidable foes. Her qabal contains several skilled soldiers. However, Magda prefers to use her magic to prevent battles from even occurring.



# PERSONALITIES

## Forbidden Lore

The Sword of Hunyady has recently begun piecing together bits and pieces of information that point to the existence of an obscure tome said to be hidden somewhere inside Bran Castle. Arany is making preparations to organize an expedition to explore the castle and search for the book.

## Bolgiu, Brother Mihai

Head Librarian, Alba Iulia  
6th-level Mystic, Lawful Good

Armor Class	10	Str	11
Movement	12	Dex	13
Level/Hit Dice	6	Con	10
Hit Points	30	Int	14
THACO	18	Wis	17
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	11
Damage/Attack	By weapon		
Special Attacks	Spells		
Special Defenses	Spells		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

Weapon Proficiencies: Cudgel

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Academician, ancient language (Latin), ancient religion, forbidden lore, spiritcraft

Spells (5/5/3): 1st—*bless, command, detect magic, light, protection from evil*; 2nd—*augury, chant, hold person, know alignment, silence 15' radius*; 3rd—*dispel magic, locate object, remove curse*

Brother Mihai Bolgiu is an austere-looking man in his forties. His dark brown hair and prominent nose, along with his perpetual scowl, combine to present a stern and forbidding countenance to strangers.

**Background:** Brother Mihai has been the head librarian of the library attached to the Bishop's Palace in Alba Iulia since his predecessor died ten years ago under mysterious circumstances. His love of learning and his respect for the knowledge stored in the library led to Brother Mihai's appointment to the prestigious position.

As a youth, Mihai Bolgiu saw the effects of

the powers of darkness at first hand when his older brother was slain by their own father to honor the Red Death. This trauma drove Mihai into the arms of the church, instilling in him a fear of becoming a pawn of evil.

Mihai endeavored to understand the phenomenon of the walking dead in order to better protect himself and others from them. Armed with his faith, he began to learn how to affect various types of undead and soon gained some real power to combat them. The monastery's librarian pointed the young monk in the direction of some obscure manuscripts in the library's vault which further assisted him in increasing his knowledge.

Now that he is responsible for the storehouse of information contained within the library's collection, Brother Mihai is determined that the knowledge not fall into the wrong hands. Like his predecessor, he actively discourages visitors to the library unless they can convince him of their good intentions. He is too aware of how easy it is to succumb to the lure of evil, having seen its powers at work in his own family.

**Role-playing:** Beneath his off-putting exterior, Mihai is a man of great compassion and simple, determined faith. He is distressed by the rumors that have begun to spread linking his name to various evil societies, but is powerless to clear his reputation without revealing to his detractors the powers he does possess.

**Combat:** Mihai is a peaceful man, but when forced to fight, he tries to keep distance between himself and attackers so he can attempt to use spells. He carries a black-lacquered cudgel with which he will defend himself if he has no other options. It inflicts 1d6 points of damage on a target.

## Forbidden Lore

Unknown to Brother Mihai, one of his fellow monks has already been seduced by the forces of evil. Certain visitors to the library during the day who speak a code word in the presence of the fallen monk are instructed to approach the building after dark, where they are allowed access to some of the very books Brother Mihai has tried so hard to keep secreted away.



# PERSONALITIES

## Buchen, Horst

Zombie Lord, Neutral Evil

Armor Class	6	Str	18
Movement	6	Dex	8
Level/Hit Dice	6	Con	10
Hit Points	32	Int	9
THACO	15	Wis	10
No. of Attacks	2	Cha	8
Damage/Attack	2d4-2d4 (fists)		
Special Attacks	command undead, animate dead.		
Special Defenses	Immune to mind-effecting spells.		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

Horst Buchen is known to be a man in his early forties, yet he appears twice that age. His appearance is cadaverous with his pale skin drawn tight over his bones, his eyes lifeless and dull within sunken cavities. There is a faint smell of disease around him, which he tries to mask by wearing entirely too much cologne. The citizens of Sighisoara assume that he is suffering from a wasting sickness that is slowly killing him. The truth is that Horst is already dead.

**Background:** For most of his life, Horst Buchen made his living as an embalmer in the town of Sighisoara, following the trade taught him by his father. As a young man, Buchen was fascinated with death and began active studies of its many forms. He abducted many of the city's beggars and took them to a secret room in the basement of his shop where he proceeded to murder them in various ways, seeking to identify the precise moment of death. His proclivities drew the attention of certain dark powers and one evening, an unidentified corpse was delivered into his care. As he was preparing the body for interment, the corpse rose from its slab and slew Buchen. With his dying breath, the embalmer invoked the powers of darkness to deliver him from oblivion. His plea was heard, and Buchen awoke as a zombie lord.

Buchen soon realized that in death he possessed many powers. He eventually came

to believe that the powers had been granted him so that he might rule Transylvania and repay those who have visited so many indignities upon his people. Already familiar with the old cemetery outside the Church on the Hill in Sighisoara, Buchen began raiding its contents for the army he needs to fulfill what he in his madness sees as a holy calling. He continues to pursue his profession as an embalmer, although he now drenches himself in heavy colognes and strong-smelling embalming fluids to mask his scent and employs an agent to arrange for the delivery of corpses.

Buchen maintains his lair in the cellar of the building which serves as his embalmer's establishment. He also has a second lair beneath one of the gravestones of the Saxon cemetery he frequents. He has enlarged the empty grave and is using his army of zombies to construct a tunnel connecting the two lairs.

**Role-playing:** Buchen is a megalomaniac. He manages to contain his insanity to his agent and to any relatives of deceased that might seek him out, but the mask slips if extended conversations are held with him. He might start treating the other person like an ignorant child or become indignant and imperious. He also shows great delight in particularly mangled corpses that are brought to him.

**Combat:** Buchen attempts to avoid combat whenever possible, but when confronted, he is ready to use his great strength and his overpowering stench to overcome his opponents. Anyone approaching within 30 yards of Buchen must save vs. poison or be affected in one of the following ways.

1d6 Roll	Effect
1	<i>Weakness</i> (as the spell).
2	<i>Cause disease</i> (as the spell).
3	-1 point of Constitution.
4	<i>Contagion</i> (as the spell).
5	Character unable to act for 1d4 rounds due to nausea and vomiting.
6	Character dies instantly and becomes a zombie under control of the zombie lord.



# PERSONALITIES

Like other zombie lords, Buchen can control any zombie within his sight. He has the power to *animate dead* once per day, enabling him to create other zombies from corpses. This power can also be used on living creatures provided they have fewer hit dice than the zombie lord. Victims subject to this power must make a successful saving throw vs. death or die, only to rise in 1d4 rounds as a zombie under Buchen's control.

## Forbidden Lore

Those who entrust their deceased relatives to Buchen's care have no idea that they are merely providing him with additional troops. Many rock-filled coffins now rest in the town's cemetery, while the bodies who should have been consigned to eternal rest now serve Sighisoara's zombie lord.

Not all the servants of the Red Death are happy with the rise of a new power in their midst. In fact, it was a servant of Dracula who tried to kill Buchen in the first place, as she feared his activities would draw undue attention to plots the Count was orchestrating in the town. Now, this servant has sworn to put an end to Buchen's army of undead, knowing that the zombie master may one day attempt to seize control of Transylvania from its rightful ruler.

## Florescu, Voica

Guild of the Dark Flower

6th-level Tradesman (Poisoner). Lawful Evil

Armor Class	8	Str	9
Movement	12	Dex	16
Level/Hit Dice	6	Con	17
Hit Points	38	Int	13
THACO	18	Wis	14
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	15
Damage/Attack	By weapon		
Special Attacks	Nil		
Special Defenses	Nil		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, darts, stiletto

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Cooking, herbalism, hide in shadows, toxicology

Voica Florescu is an attractive young woman who has just turned 21. Her dark hair is usually kept bound in a snood, and she wears sensible, though attractive clothing. She has deep brown eyes and a ready smile that attracts people and makes them feel as if she is their warmest friend.

**Background:** Born to poor parents in the service of one of the wealthy German merchants of Sibiu, Voica was expected to help her mother keep his house in order. Her father barely acknowledged her. She discovered why one evening at dinnertime. During a terrible argument, he revealed that she was not, in fact, his daughter, but the daughter of the man for whom they worked. He made it clear that her real father hadn't wanted her. Shocked beyond reason, Voica fled into the undercity and lost herself among its labyrinthine streets.

There she was approached by a cadaverously thin gentleman named Hermann Mueller, who offered her a goodly sum of money in return for delivering a package to a certain address. She agreed. Later that evening she returned home, but she was determined she would not stay in her parent's house much longer. Seeking out the gentleman in hopes of more employment, she began learning about herbs from him. He allowed her to sleep in his little herbalist shop in return for cleaning it and keeping the shelves in order.

Voica went on several more deliveries for her mentor before she discovered that he was using her looks to allay the suspicions of the recipients of the packages she carried. Each of the addresses to which she delivered the packages had a death soon thereafter. It was clear that she was bringing them poison.

Excited rather than repelled by this, Voica asked to more fully assist her master in hopes of learning enough to one day poison her true father. Thereafter she was fully recruited by the Guild of the Dark Flower, a poisoners' secret guild.

Considered one of the guild's brightest young members, Voica has quickly learned all



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she can about poisons. Occasionally she is hired by wealthy individuals to remove business or political rivals.

**Role-playing:** When speaking with males, Voica's manner is always flirtatious. She uses her looks to attract victims (usually poor young men who have come from the countryside to find work), who serve as test subjects for the guild's ever widening array of poisons. She treats other women as competitors, and usually addresses them with a slight sneer. Her bearing, manners, and speech patterns all reflect someone who has spent several years on the underbelly of society.

**Combat:** Voica never initiates combat, but will try to end it quickly by defending herself with the stiletto she hides up the sleeve of her blouse. It is treated with a Type F poison (a successful save means poison does not take effect; failed saving throw vs. poison means instant death) that loses its effectiveness after three successful hits.

If prepared for attack, she will also be armed with four darts, each coated with Type E poison (a successful saving throw means the victim suffers 20 hit points of damage; failed saving throw means instant death) and will try to ambush opponents and fell them even before they close to melee range.

## Forbidden Lore

Voica has developed an overriding hatred for her real father, a German businessman named Hansel Schenker. She has been surpassing the other members of the guild in her studies because of her single-minded determination to punish him for his rejection of her. Since personal vengeance is frowned upon in the guild, Voica has realized that she will have to become the guild head if she is to survive the deed. To that end, she has been searching for any rare poison that the guildmaster may not have developed an immunity to yet.

## Harker, Jonathan

6th level Tradesman, Lawful Good

Armor Class	10	Str	12
Movement	12	Dex	12
Level/Hit Dice	6	Con	14
Hit Points	38	Int	10
THACO	15	Wis	10
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	14

Damage/Attack By weapon

Special Attacks Nil

Special Defenses Nil

Magic Resistance Nil

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Derringer, knife, navy pistol, repeating rifle

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Appraising, equestrian, etiquette, language: English (native), language: Latin, language: German, photography, Sl: business law

A light-complexioned man in his thirties, Jonathan Harker's noble features are framed by light brown hair. He is always well-groomed, dresses somewhat conservatively, and appears in all ways a typical Englishman abroad. There is one exception, however: Jonathan is not quick to dismiss Transylvanian legends.

**Background:** Jonathan Harker was born near Exeter, England. His father was a man of business and Jonathan grew up living the life of the upper-middle class. Late in 1889, he proposed to his childhood sweetheart, Wilhelmina Murray, an assistant school mistress, and the two were engaged.

In May of 1890, Jonathan was dispatched by his employer to finalize the sale of Carfax Abbey, an estate near Purfleet, to a Transylvanian nobleman named Dracula. Little did he suspect that this task would change his life forever.

Harker found that his host was an inhuman monster who planned to travel to England to satisfy his lust for human blood. He escaped from the vampire, but not before the beast completed its journey.



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Upon his return to England, Jonathan and Mina were promptly married. Before long, however, the Harkers encountered Dracula again and the two joined with a number of friends to battle the vampire.

**Role-playing:** Harker is a determined man who has taken Van Helsing's battle against evil to heart. He is generally cultured and well-mannered, but confronts servants of the Red Death with merciless determination. He sees himself not as a hero, but as a man doing what must be done.

## Forbidden Lore

Following their encounter with Dracula, the Harkers joined Die Wächtern. Mina has proven herself to be a valuable asset with her work in the archives, and Jonathan has become a devoted soldier in the war against evil. Rumors that Dracula still stalks the earth have reached Jonathan, and he is reported to have returned to Transylvania in search of the fiend's trail.

## Horia

Ghost, Lawful Evil

Armor Class	0/8	Str	—
Movement	9	Dex	—
Level/Hit Dice	10	Con	—
Hit Points	80	Int	13
THACO	11	Wis	11
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	15

Damage/Attack	Age 10-40 years
Special Attacks	Cause fear, dominate victims
Special Defenses	Silver or magical weapons to hit, immune to mind-affecting spells
Magic Resistance	Nil

Horia appears as a thoughtful looking man, his dark thinning hair touched with gray and a full, though well-trimmed beard and mustache. His large, expressive dark wide-set eyes on a high cheekboned face and he has deep creases between his brows.





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**Background:** Horia haunts Horia's Field, his death site, which was so named in honor of his martyrdom for the Romanian cause.

Horia, along with two other Romanians named Closca and Crisan, led the ill-fated peasant uprising of 1784. The revolt was savagely repressed, the three were captured and brought to his cell to await execution.

Though the peasants were granted amnesty at emperor Joseph's insistence, the three leaders were condemned to death. Crisan escaped punishment by committing suicide, but Horia and Closca were taken to the field where thousands gathered to watch. There, they were broken on the wheel, disemboweled while still alive and their limbs cut up and sent around the country as a warning to other peasants.

Half-mad by his torture and execution, Horia's final moments were focused on revenge and hatred. The negative energy sustained his spirit beyond death. The insane ghost now haunts the place of his death and seeks revenge on those of Magyar blood.

**Role-playing:** Horia is single-minded in his quest to gain revenge against the Magyar and views the living either as tools to achieve this end or targets of his righteous anger. If heroes should somehow manage to speak with Horia (while he is in possession of a body, for example), they will find a being who believes he has been transformed into an angel of vengeance and who is enraged over the defiling of his body after death.

**Combat:** Horia has the abilities typically associated with ghosts, with the exception of the *magic jar* attack. Instead of displacing the victim's spirit, thus destroying it, the way most ghosts do, Horia merely *dominates* his victims—rendering their minds unconscious while he inhabits their bodies to exact his revenge on any people of Magyar blood he can reach. Potential victims receive a saving throw vs. spell (modified by any Wisdom bonus) to fend off the assault. Horia tries to dominate each member of a party three times. If unsuccessful in all attempts, he goes into a killing frenzy and materializes to attack.

Despite initial appearances, Horia's

preservation of the host body's spirit is not necessarily a kinder fate. When successful in a possession, Horia can go anywhere he can travel to within 24 hours. When 24 hours have elapsed, his spirit is drawn back to Horia's Field, and the hapless mortal suddenly finds himself standing in a strange place. The mortal has no memory of what has transpired; in fact, he may have committed several murders at Horia's behest—murders he is at a loss to explain.

## Forbidden Lore

Several unexplained murders have occurred in Alba Iulia. In some cases, those arrested for the murders claim they did not commit them and many have no ties to or prior knowledge of the victims. Police are at a loss to explain why.

If the remnants of Horia's limbs could be recovered from the spots where they were finally disposed of, a determined group could give them proper burial rites, at last laying Horia's tormented spirit to rest.

## Iorga, Father Serban

Priest of the Cult of Mihnea

8th level Mystic, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	10	Str	12
Movement	12	Dex	13
Level/Hit Dice	10	Con	14
Hit Points	29	Int	13
THACO	16	Wis	16
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	14

**Damage/Attack** By weapon

**Special Attacks** Spells

**Special Defenses** Spells

**Magic Resistance** Nil

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Club, mace

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Ancient religion, forbidden lore, history (Draculesti family), psychometry, spiritcraft

**Spells (5/5/3/2):** 1st—*cause fear, command, curse, darkness, protection from good*; 2nd—*augury, chant, charm person or mammal, enthrall, hold person*; 3rd—*animate dead, continual darkness, remove curse*; 4th—*detect lie, poison*



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Serban Iorga is a slender man in his mid thirties. His red brown hair and sharp featured face combine to give him the appearance of a fox. The similarity is enhanced by the perpetually sneaky look he always seems to wear, a self-satisfied smirk that indicates to those around him that he knows something they don't.

**Background:** As a young man, Serban decided to join the church so he would always be assured of a job, a place to live, and the respect of those to whom he ministered. Caring little for the actual rites and duties of the priesthood, he was corrupted by Minhea soon after taking his vows.

While searching for forgotten treasures in the bowels of the church, Serban came across Mihnea engaged in feeding on a peasant girl. Fascinated by what he believed to be a true vampire who could so mock the church as to reside within it, Serban made himself known to the former prince and asked to serve him.

Mihnea was pleased to find someone who could hunt victims for him and bring them right to his lair. He has rewarded the priest's devotion with elixirs made from his blood which confer greater resiliency to those who consume them. Serban has thus only aged at half the normal rate in the last few years and is able to heal himself of 1d4+1 points of damage per day.

Realizing that his priestly duties precluded him from satisfying all of Mihnea's requests (such as new victims sacrificed to him at least once per week), Serban has carefully recruited other members and started the Cult of Mihnea. Members have been promised eventual immortality in return for spreading evil throughout the land.

**Role-playing:** Serban is a self-satisfied, self-absorbed hedonist. He believes the rest of the world is ultimately motivated by the same things he is. He is constantly on the lookout either for potential cult members or potential victims for Mihnea.

**Combat:** Serban is always in the company of a beefy cultist who serves both his companion and bodyguard. A 5th-level soldier with 18/47 Strength who is proficient with club, this character generally does Serban's fighting for

him, while the mystic tries to get some distance between himself and his attackers so he may use spells on them.

## Forbidden Lore

Needing ever more money to meet the demands of the vampire prince for opulent fabrics, jeweled chalices, and such, Serban has decided to recruit a self-serving merchant he believes will fund the cult in return for eternal life. He has been courting Hansel Schenker, even though Schenker is nominally a Lutheran. Serban is unaware of Voica's plans to murder Schenker but would be most vexed were he to learn of them.

## Kofbauer, Edward

Member of Die Wächtern

9th-level Soldier, Lawful Good

Armor Class	9	Str	18/04
Movement	12	Dex	15
Level/Hit Dice	10	Con	17
Hit Points	29	Int	14
THACO	16	Wis	15
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	17
Damage/Attack		By weapon	
Special Attacks		Spells	
Special Defenses		Spells	
Magic Resistance		Nil	

**Weapon Proficiencies:** club, dagger, army revolver, rifle, military saber, sword

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Equestrian, Etiquette, Forbidden Lore, Heraldry, Marksmanship

Edward Kofbauer is a distinguished looking gentleman in his sixties, with iron-gray hair, a full mustache, and piercing blue eyes. He dresses in conservative clothing, and he is always armed, though not obviously. Sometimes when he walks, a slight limp is noticeable, although he works hard to conceal his physical imperfection.

**Background:** Edward Kofbauer was a career military man in the Emperor's army. While he was still a young officer, his exemplary conduct



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and rare devotion to the belief that a soldier should protect as well as defend attracted the attention of his commanding officer, a member of Die Wächtern. The qabal's commitment to the war between good and evil so inspired Kofbauer that he eagerly joined.

In 1859, Kofbauer played a part in an important ritual in his hometown of Sibiu. Knowing that Sibiu was a center for several groups who served the forces of the Red Death, Die Wächtern decided that it was of utmost importance to establish a means of maintaining a watch on the city's activities. Along with other members of the qabal, he managed to be present at the dedication of the Iron Bridge where he participated in a special ritual, performed in secret during the ceremonies surrounding the bridge's completion. Devised by one of the society's senior members, this ritual required each participant to speak a part of the blessing which formed the core of the invocation. As he spoke the words assigned to him, Kofbauer felt as if destiny were marking him for some special purpose. He had to wait for many years for that purpose to make itself known.

Years later, when a fall from his horse resulted in a severely twisted knee, Kofbauer was encouraged to request retirement from the military. It was made clear to him that Die Wächtern saw in his accident an excellent opportunity to advance their work in Sibiu. Although he was somewhat reluctant to leave the army, Kofbauer returned to Sibiu, and took up his post as the chief agent for Die Wächtern in that part of Transylvania.

Kofbauer lives in a small house not far from the Iron Bridge and has incorporated its span into his morning and evening walks, part of a regimen of strenuous exercise he uses to keep himself fit and to strengthen his weak leg. Because of this, no one in the city questions his frequent presence near the bridge.

Kofbauer's pension has enabled him to live comfortably, although he is not wealthy by any stretch of the imagination. He regularly attends a small Lutheran church and donates a small portion of his income to the city's poor. He has carefully cultivated a sizable

network of social contacts who pass along snippets of information regarding newcomers to the city as well as curious rumors.

Kofbauer's military training has served him well in helping him distinguish mere gossip from nuggets of information that need to be investigated by.

**Role-playing:** Kofbauer's ramrod-straight posture, a legacy of his former military career, commands respect. His voice, though hardly ever raised above a soft, conversational tone, carries a tone of unquestionable authority. Any encounter with Kofbauer will come straight to the point, as he will brook no beating around the bush on his part or by any of those he must deal with.

**Combat:** A superb marksman, skilled swordsman, and a storehouse of occult knowledge, Kofbauer is a foe to be reckoned with by both servants of the Red Death and others who would cross him or Die Wachtern. He realizes he is not as young as he once was and will resort to physical combat only as a last resort. But, when the time to fight arrives, none fight fiercer than Kofbauer.

## Forbidden Lore

Recently, Kofbauer has heard rumors that an evil cult exists somewhere in Sibiu, and is responsible for the disappearance of several of the city's poorer residents. These rumors have prompted him to add a late-night stroll through the city to his exercise routine, during which he has taken note of any suspicious-looking individuals lurking around sites which he has marked as likely headquarters for such a cult.



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## Kovi, Lajos

Werewolf, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	8 (5)	Str	16 (18/10)
Movement	12	Dex	16 (19)
Level/Hit Dice	4+3	Con	14
Hit Points	30	Int	10
THACO	15	Wis	9
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	17
Damage/Attack	By weapon or 2d4 (wolf-form)		
Special Attacks	Surprise		
Special Defenses	Hit only by silver or magical weapons		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

In his human form, Kovi appears to be in his late twenties. He is stocky, with a full beard and curling brown hair. His clothes are covered in unidentifiable stains and hang loosely on his body, as though he had recently lost a great deal of weight. He wears clothes that hang loosely on his body. A few of the region's local inhabitants feel uneasy in his presence, but are afraid to confront him.

**Background:** Lajos Kovi was born into a family of werewolves whose line stretches back to the time when Dracula dwelled in his fortress south of the Birkau Pass. Bound to Dracula's service, along with the normal wolves and dire wolves who inhabit this mountainous region, the Werewolves of the Pass (a name given them by the Impaler himself) have been among the vampire's most loyal and vicious servants.

Occasionally, Kovi will travel out of the mountains into one of the small villages in the foothills, sometimes even as far as Bistrisa. He is not comfortable among normal humans, but his duties to his absent master require him to keep track of visitors or strangers to the area. If he can, Kovi will attempt to lure outsiders into visiting the scenic grandeur of the mountains, offering to act as their guide. In this fashion, he has delivered many of the Red Death's would-be enemies into the jaws of his pack.





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Kovi and his small pack of werewolves, consisting of two females and their cubs, make their home in the forests surrounding the Birkau pass. In the coldest part of the winter, however, they take shelter in the ruins of the secret castle Dracula had built there centuries ago.

**Role-playing:** Kovi's is somewhat gruff when he is in a good mood, and , although he attempts to be cordial in his approaches to his intended victims, his bestial nature is never concealed for long. His is impatient and very short-tempered.

**Combat:** Kovi has all the combat abilities of the standard werewolf described in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome. (The numbers in parentheses are the statistics of his wolf form.) In human form, Kovi fights with a sword, but he usually prefers his werewolf or wolflike forms for combat, attacking with his ferocious bite. When in his wolf form, Kovi can only be harmed by silver or magical weapons of +1 or better. Normal weapons do not harm him due to his natural powers of instant regeneration from anything other than magic or silver.

## Forbidden Lore

Kovi has struck up a friendship with the dire wolf known to the residents of the Birkau Valley as The Stalker. The pair frequently work together to rid the area of anyone they perceive as a threat.

The influence which both Kovi and The Stalker exercise over the normal wolves in the area of the Birkau Pass had led to rumors of an army of wolves under the direction of some dark agent of evil. Those rumors are not far from the truth.

## Manole, the Master Builder

Zmeu, Neutral Evil

Armor Class	8	Str	14
Movement	12	Dex	16
Level/Hit Dice	5	Con	13
Hit Points	35	Int	15
THACO	15	Wis	9
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	17
Damage/Attack	1d4		
Special Attacks	See below		
Special Defenses	See below		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

Manole appears to be a swarthy man in his late thirties. When not working at a construction site, he dresses in the finest and most current fashions. When working, he dresses in simple workmans clothing and smock and is invariable covered with dust. He sports a well-kept mustache and a clean-shaven chin.

**Background:** When Manole was born, a Vistani seer prophesied that the child would become a great craftsman but that his pride would undermine the foundations of his soul. From his earliest days, Manole knew he would become a builder. As soon as he was old enough, he apprenticed himself to the local masons' guild and swiftly moved through its ranks, becoming its youngest Master Builder.

Manole's talents soon made him popular among the nobility, who wanted to surround themselves with walls and fortresses that were not only sturdy but aesthetically pleasing. Manole's artistic sensitivity to the nature of stone allowed him to create architectural wonders, each one more marvelous than the one which had preceded it. Unfortunately, Manole's pride equaled his talent, and he made many enemies among other builders due to his belief that no one could build so well as he, an opinion he voiced loudly and often.

His reputation brought him to the attention of Prince Neagoe Basarabs who commissioned Manole to construct the monastery and church in Curtea de Arges.



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The rest of Manole's story has become the subject of many folk tales and ballads (see Curtea de Arges).

Although he wanders incessantly throughout Transylvania and neighboring regions, Manole eventually always returns to the site of his death, the monastery at Curtea de Arges.

**Role-playing:** Manole is charming and easy-going in social settings, but when he is on a construction site, he is the most severe taskmaster masons will ever encounter. He will accept nothing less than perfection where his beloved architecture is concerned.

**Combat:** Manole's primary form of attack is his powerful *charm* ability, which he uses to ensorcel the women he has chosen for his victims. If he is forced into melee combat, he fights with his fists or with a sharp dagger.

As a *zmeu*, Manole is a spirit made manifest. Although he has a physical body, he is difficult to kill. If he is reduced to zero hit points, he disappears, only to reform elsewhere 24 hours later. The only real way to destroy him is to locate and free the bones of his first wife, thus breaking the curse which keeps him alive.

## Forbidden Lore

The minions of the Red Death had a hand in rigging the lottery that resulted in the choice of Manole's wife as the victim destined to be sealed into the monastery walls. Desirous of acquiring Manole as his servant, the Red Death spent most of the builder's lifetime preparing him for his fate, poisoning the minds of those around Manole. Prince Neagoe Basarabs was heavily influenced by a *suggestion* from one of the Red Death's minions when he ordered Manole to be stranded on the roof of his construction.

Unknown to Manole, the inspirations for new constructions and where he will build them are being placed in his mind by the Red Death. Each structure Manole builds is, in fact, part of a massive spell that the evil entity is preparing—each building serving both as magical glyph and material component.

## Mihnea the Bad, son of Dracula Vampire, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	0	Str	18/76
Movement	12	Dex	14
Level/Hit Dice	8+3	Con	18
Hit Points	60	Int	13
THACO	11	Wis	12
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	15
Damage/Attack	1d6+4		
Special Attacks	See below		
Special Defenses	See below		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

Mihnea appears as a sturdy man in his middle years. He wears his dark hair long, and dresses in rich clothing. He rarely smiles, and when he does, his face takes on a maniacal look that chills those who see it to the bone.

**Background:** Dracula's second son Mihnea was born in 1466. Mihnea's early life is overshadowed by the enormity of his father's deeds. In 1508, however, Dracula's son came into his own as the ruler of Wallachia. Like Dracula, Mihnea had developed a taste for cruelty and continued many of the practices begun by his notorious sire, focusing most of his persecution on the boyars and their families.

In 1510, Mihnea was assassinated in front of the Catholic Church in Sibiu, ending a reign that might have rivaled the Impaler's had it lasted as long.

However, Dracula saw that Mihnea had great potential as a servant of the Red Death, not to mention as a lieutenant of Dracula himself. The Red Death was pleased by the idea, and revealed to Dracula some of the secret behind his own resurrection. The Count then used the fell magics to restore his son to eternal "life" as a vampire. Dracula charged him with carrying out tasks that he did not have the time for, as well as the establishments of networks of evil that could serve as hidden armies or information sources.

Mihnea's greatest achievement is the establishment of a cult dedicated to him. This evil qabal meets clandestinely before Mihnea's tomb and offers sacrifices in the vampire's



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name. Mihnea has his lair in a secret chamber beneath the church which houses his crypt. This chamber is entered through a tunnel that runs under the streets of the city, with an exit point not far from the Liar's Bridge. A trap door in the ceiling of his lair allows Mihnea access to his fake tomb, where he meets with members of his cult.

**Role-playing:** Mihnea enjoyed being a ruler, and he enjoyed even more the power over life and death. He lords over his cultists, and he slowly tortures his victims as he gradually drains their life force. He is a sadist, though and through.

**Combat:** Mihnea is not a subtle fighter. He revels in his superhuman strength and delights in using it. He has all the combat abilities of the standard vampire described in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome.

### Forbidden Lore

Mihnea is growing increasingly dissatisfied with his hidden existence. He has been making increasing demands on his cultists to bring him more treasure and more victims, and he has been turning his eye toward the wives and daughters of powerful citizens of the region. Mihnea has gotten bolder in recent years, because he erroneously assumes that because Dracula is no longer present in Transylvania, he can begin to act outside the parameters set down by his father. His expanded activities, however, may soon attract negative attention from both those who would stand against the servants of darkness and Dracula himself.



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## Singer, Hanna

Heir of the Piper

4th level Tradesman (Entertainer), Neutral Good

Armor Class	8	Str	9
Movement	12	Dex	17
Level/Hit Dice	4	Con	12
Hit Points	20	Int	13
THACO	19	Wis	14
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	17

Damage/Attack By weapon

Special Attacks Nil

Special Defenses Nil

Magic Resistance Nil

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, sap

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Disguise, musician, singing, sixth sense

Hanna is nearly twenty, with lustrous, curly black hair, and startling green eyes. She most often wears traditional peasant dress, since it lends a poignant charm to her music. Her voice is crystal clear, almost bell-like in its purity, and she frequently accompanies herself on one of several stringed instruments she owns.

**Background:** Born and bred in Brasov, Hanna led an idyllic childhood surrounded by friends and nurtured by loving parents. Hanna still spends most of her time with the same friends she grew up with, and they have all embarked upon careers as musicians or entertainers of one sort or another. Visitors to Brasov are almost certain to encounter Hanna Singer, either performing traditional folk ballads in one of the local inns or playing with a group of street musicians in one of the town squares.

Although Hanna and her friends appear to be just a close-knit group of like-minded young people, in reality Hanna and her friends are members of a qabal known as the Heirs of the Piper and trace their families back to the lost children of Hamelin, transported by the legendary Pied Piper to the town square of Brasov.

The Heirs serve as spies for the enemies of the Red Death. Several societies engaged in

battling the dark powers make use of the Heirs to funnel information between their various agents, using messages encoded in the lyrics of traditional ballads. Hanna has become adept at incorporating these secret messages into the songs she performs in such a way as to render them unnoticeable except to those ears meant to hear them.

**Role-playing:** Her friendly nature leads her to strike up conversations with strangers who stop to hear her play. Within a few minutes of speaking with someone, Hanna can usually tell whether or not that person is associated with any of the forces of evil. She conceals this realization from the person, but reports it to her fellow Heirs as soon as possible.

### Forbidden Lore

Hanna is one of the best performers of the "*Ballad of the Master Builder*," perhaps because she suspects the dark truth that lies behind the mournful song. Her reputation has reached the ears of Manole himself, who is considering a stopover at Bra\_ov as soon as he finishes with his latest project.

In addition, Hanna has unwittingly become the victim of her own talent for another reason. One of the eeriest tunes in her repertoire tells the story of the Yellow Cat, a vampiric seductress who uses her charms to lure young men to their deaths. A few of the local gossips have begun spreading the rumor that Hanna is, in fact, the Yellow Cat and that she is on the prowl for a new victim.

Although most people pass off this rumor as the idle gossip it is, a few misguided individuals are discussing ways to rid Brasov of the fetching young "temptress."



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## Tepes, Vlad Dracula Vampire, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	-4	Str	19
Movement	12, Fl 18	Dex	18
Level/Hit Dice	13	Con	19
Hit Points	90	Int	13
THACO	7	Wis	12
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	14
Damage /Attack:	1d6 (+7 for Str)		
Special Attack:	See below		
Special Defenses:	See below		
Magic Resistance:	25%		

Physical descriptions of Dracula vary widely. Sometimes he appears to be an sickly, elderly man with a full mane of gray hair and eyes set deeply within a wrinkled face. At others, he appears to be a vital, dark-haired man in his early forties with piercing dark eyes and noble features. The marked change in his appearance is strictly cosmetic, has no effect on his game statistics, and comes about when Dracula survives off of animal blood rather than that of humans. When forced to do this, Dracula appears to be elderly (although certainly not frail). When he has an unlimited supply of human blood, he appears vital and robust.

When asleep in his coffin, Dracula bears the pallor of the dead; no examination of his body will reveal that he is anything but a corpse. Dracula sleeps with his eyes open and sees all that transpires about him while he rests.

**Background:** Dracula's life story is told elsewhere in this volume. After his death, Dracula rose to an eternity of service for evil. For the next several centuries, Dracula was as loyal a minion of the Red Death as any creature of the shadows. He spread suffering and terror throughout the Balkans. So dreadful were the deeds of the great vampire that to this day, residents of the Carpathians cannot resist the urge to cross themselves when they hear the name Dracula.

Early in the nineteenth century, Dracula discovered that his nightly feasts of blood had drawn the attention of a qabal known as *Die*

*Wächtern* or *The Watchers*. Try as he might, Dracula was unable to detect the masters of this order, although he did learn that the group was headed by a triumvirate of occult scholars. Although he damaged the lesser ranks of the order greatly, he was eventually forced to fall back from their efforts.

Pressure from *Die Wächtern* drove Dracula's recent attempt to leave his native land and travel to England. Eventually, the ranks of that qabal discovered his actions when Abraham Van Helsing, an important member of *Die Wächtern*, learned of his plans. Van Helsing led a cadre of vampire hunters against the count and, in the end, very nearly destroyed the Prince of Darkness. Indeed, so total was the vampire's defeat that Van Helsing and the other members of the qabal believed wholeheartedly that the world was free of Dracula once and for all.

**Role-playing:** When he wants to be, Dracula can be smooth, charming, and the very personification of grace and tact. Once crossed, however, Dracula reverts to the nature that drove him in life—a dictatorial disposition, and an inclination to destroy anything that offends or inconveniences him.

**Combat:** In all the world, no creature is more feared than the vampire Dracula, known by some as the Prince of Darkness. In addition to his tremendous combat ability, the master of the undead has an animal cunning and a wealth of experience to draw from in battle. While it is possible to deceive and even defeat him, he never forgets an enemy and never falls victim to the same trap twice.

In many ways, Dracula is identical to the nosferatu in the RAVENLOFT Campaign Setting. However, some important differences exist.

Dracula is stronger than the common nosferatu, having Strength 19. This adds a +3 bonus to his attack rolls and a +7 bonus to his damage rolls in melee combat. Thus, every blow that Dracula lands in combat inflicts 1d6+7 points of damage.

Dracula is more resistant to magical weapons and spells than his lesser kindred. He has a base 25% magic resistance and is hit



## PERSONALITIES

only by weapons with +3 or greater enchantment.

The same supernatural force that protects him from magical harm improves his ability to *charm* victims. Anyone who meets the vampire's gaze is subject to this attack. Dracula's *charm* is so powerful that a victim suffers a -4 penalty to the saving throw.

One of the most terrible of Dracula's abilities is his incredible speed. While he seldom displays this power, preferring to save it as a surprise for his enemies, Dracula is always able to act as if under a *haste* spell. He gains a -2 bonus to his initiative rolls and can double his normal movement and attack rates. Dracula's ability to regenerate lost hit points also improves; he regains 6 hit points per round.

Dracula is more resistant to running water and sunlight than other vampires. If he is immersed in rushing water, it takes 5 rounds for him to die. Sunlight poses no threat of death to him; he can walk about freely during the day. While he must spend eight of every 24 hours sleeping in his coffin, these need not be daylight hours.

When moving about between sunrise and sunset, Dracula is severely limited. He cannot change shape, summon animals, or employ his ability to *charm*. He has no magic resistance, and he can be harmed by normal weapons. However, he retains his great strength and is by no means helpless at such times.

Further, should anyone be foolish enough to seek Dracula in Castle Dracula, high in the Carpathian Alps, it will become clear that, within the confines of this terrible fortification, Dracula is the absolute master of all.

No door within the castle opens to a stranger's hand unless Dracula allows it. In game terms, all doors are treated as if affected by *wizard lock*. Should any intruder force his way past a sealed door, the dread vampire is instantly aware of the event.

The mystical powers of this nexus of evil greatly enhance Dracula's magical powers. Upon entering the castle, visitors forfeit their



saving throws against the vampire's *charm* gaze. Creatures that have already been bitten by the vampire (as described for the *nosferatu*) instantly become Dracula's pawns and must obey his will without question until his mark is removed from their necks or they escape the castle.

### Forbidden Lore

Dracula escaped destruction at the hands of Van Helsing and Jonathan Harker and later resurfaced later in San Francisco. Here, he ran afoul a group of adventurers and was almost slain again. Dracula is presently working on building a worldwide network of human and vampiric spies so that he might root out the good qabals and destroy them. He is poised to strike at those who have attempted to kill him recently, namely Die Wachtern and the adventurers in San Francisco.



# PERSONALITIES

## Van Helsing, Abraham

12th-level Metaphysician, Lawful Good

Armor Class	10	Str	8
Movement	12	Dex	9
Level/Hit Dice	12	Con	8
Hit Points	25	Int	18
THACO	17	Wis	17
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	16

Damage/Attack By weapon

Special Attacks Nil

Special Defenses Nil

Magic Resistance Nil

Weapon Proficiencies: Derringer, knife, navy pistol, sword cane

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Academician, forbidden lore, language: Dutch (native), language: English, language: Frisian, language: Latin, medicine, mesmerism, psychology, modern religion: Catholicism, SI: classical literature, spellcraft, spiritcraft, philosophy

Spells Memorized: 1st—*Alarm, detect magic, detect undead, identify, protection from evil*; 2nd—*Detect evil, detect invisibility, knock, strength, wizard lock*; 3rd—*Dispel magic, haste, hold undead, infravision, protection from evil (10' radius)*; 4th—*Detect scrying, emotion, fear, remove curse, wizard eye*; 5th—*Avoidance, contact other plane, dismissal, dream, false vision*; 6th—*Legend lore, true seeing*

**Background:** Abraham Van Helsing was born in Leeuwarden, the provincial capital of Friesland. His parents, both scholars, were deeply religious and he was brought up in an environment both nurturing and steeped in the ancient traditions of the Roman Catholic church.

As a youth, Van Helsing traveled with his parents throughout much of Eastern Europe. It was at this time that he became interested in the occult. Before long, this idle curiosity grew into an obsession, and he built a vast library of books detailing every aspect of the supernatural. As his knowledge of the subject grew, he began to publish summaries of the ways in which he was able to employ modern scientific methods in his research of mysticism.

By the time he turned thirty, Van Helsing had

published some thirty essays on metaphysical matters. At the same time, he pursued his more traditional studies, acquiring degrees in medicine, literature, philosophy, and several other fields.

It should surprise no one that he was eventually recruited by Die Wächtern. As the next decade passed, Van Helsing rose in the ranks of that qabal. Making use of the wealth of lore that Die Wächtern's agents had gathered over the years, he waged a highly successful campaign against the Red Death.

Shortly after Van Helsing's fiftieth birthday, a former student, Dr. John Seward, telegraphed Van Helsing to ask his advice in a most unusual case. A Miss Lucy Westenra was suffering from severe anemia, though no cause could be found for her condition. Van Helsing traveled to London to consult with Dr. Seward and came to the conclusion that Miss Westenra was being visited by a vampire. He acted promptly, but was unable to save the young woman's life.

Subsequent investigation brought Van Helsing into contact with Mina Harker and her husband Jonathan. Hearing of Jonathan Harker's experiences in Transylvania, he came to the conclusion that they faced Dracula, the Prince of Vampires himself.

Joining forces with Dr. Seward and a number of his friends, Van Helsing began to hunt the vampire. This noble company drove the creature from England and pursued him to the snows of his ancestral home in the Carpathian mountains. There, a brave young American named Quincy Morris struck down the great vampire with his knife, though he himself was mortally wounded.

As might be expected, this success brought him to the attention of Die Wächtern's Inner Circle. Within a year, he was made a member and now heads that most noble qabal.

Van Helsing currently chairs both the Theology and Philosophy departments at the University of Amsterdam. He is frequently consulted by many European governments on historical, theological, and (although it is never publicly acknowledged) supernatural matters. It is rumored that the church depends very heavily on Van Helsing's knowledge when dealing with the supernatural.



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In a letter to his friend Arthur Holmwood, the noted psychiatrist Dr. John Seward described Van Helsing as a philosopher and metaphysician who has an absolutely open mind, an iron nerve, the temper of an ice-brook, an indomitable resolution, self-command, and tolerance exalted from virtues to blessings. A better description of this man's personality can not be imagined.

Although years of research have given him the ability to cast a great array of spells, he is reluctant to employ these powers. Van Helsing is well aware of the dangers inherent in magic and, as such, he uses it only in situations of the greatest urgency.

## Forbidden Lore

Van Helsing is quite probably the world's foremost expert on the occult in general and vampirism in particular. This makes him a very valuable ally, but at the same time a dangerous companion. Few men in the world must endure the Red Death's scrutiny like Abraham Van Helsing. His life, and hence the lives of those around him, is in constant peril.

## Vitez, Marusca

Servant of Dracula  
Nosferatu, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	0	Str	18/76
Movement	12	Dex	14
Level/Hit Dice	8+3	Con	18
Hit Points	46	Int	13
THACO	11	Wis	12
No. of Attacks	1	Cha	15
Damage/Attack	1d6+4		
Special Attacks	See below		
Special Defenses	See below		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

Marusca Vitez appears to be a woman in her early twenties. Her beauty is of the kind that most would describe as "cute," and so she might be mistaken of a girl of somewhat younger years. She wears simple but elegant gowns, but does not wear any jewelry or other adornments.

**Background:** Marusca grew up in the town of Sighisoara, not far from the house in which Dracula was born. As a young woman, she was spoiled by her parents, who doted on their only daughter and sacrificed their own comfort to give her whatever she wanted. The only things her parents could not give her were, unfortunately, the things Marusca desired most: a noble name and real wealth.

She became a bitter, haughty young woman who scorned the poor young men who sought her hand in marriage, insisting to her parents and her few friends that some nobleman would see her and fall in love with her if she only bided her time. Those who knew Marusca pitied her for these delusions.

Then, against all reason, Marusca's dream came true. A mysterious man with impeccable charm and obviously noble blood encountered the young woman one evening as she was returning from church. Marusca immediately fell under Dracula's spell and began a series of secret trysts with him, meetings which resulted in her inevitable death and rebirth as a vampire, a willing slave of the man of her dreams.

Only then did she learn that Dracula's true interest in her was in finding someone to keep watch over his birthplace, protecting it from intruders and preserving it as a potential hiding place should he ever have need of it. Dracula also entrusted into her care a portion of his ancestral wealth, with instructions not to disturb any of it but to keep it against a time when he might need it.

Unable to disobey her master, Marusca now exists in a grim parody of her girlhood ambitions, surrounded by wealth and the trappings of nobility.

Marusca inhabits the cellar of the house in Sighisoara where Dracula was born. Her crypt lies behind a false wall near the rear of the building and is guarded by a pit trap that can only be activated from within the crypt. Marusca enters the small hidden room in *gaseous form*, enabling her to bypass the trap, which is always armed. Victims falling into the pit are impaled on a dozen sharp metal spikes and suffer 1d4 points of damage per spike.



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(The DM should roll 1d12 to determine how many spikes actually pierce the victim.)

**Role-playing:** Marusca is a bitter creature who has come to hate Dracula and has developed a pathological hatred of those of noble blood, particularly young men like those who spurned her in life.

She wants to have her freedom back and knows that the only way to attain it is for Dracula to be destroyed. Although she is unable to provide direct assistance to those who might otherwise attempt to seek out Dracula in his latest hiding place, she can and does leak information that might indirectly lead other to him in hopes that they will accomplish what she cannot.

**Combat:** Like most vampires, Marusca's unnatural strength enables her to inflict 5–10 points of damage with her fists. Her gaze is the equivalent of a *charm person* spell and victims subject to it suffer –2 to their saving throw. Like her creator, Marusca does not drain energy from her victims, relying instead on draining their blood, usually over a period of nights. Victims typically suffer a Constitution loss of 1d6 points for each night. These lost points are recovered at the rate of one point every two days. Marusca is immune to normal weapons,

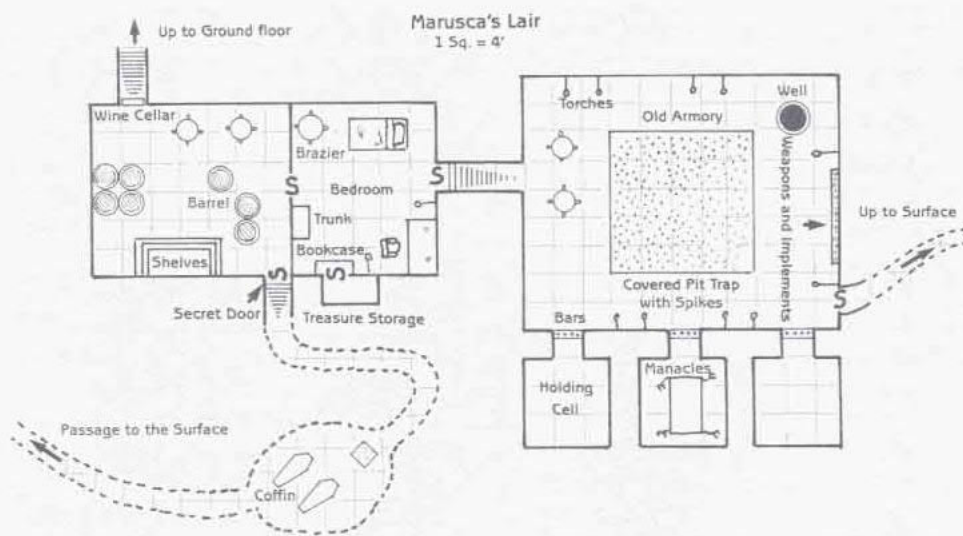
and regenerates damage from magical weapons at the rate of 3 hit points per round.

If reduced to zero hit points, Marusca is able to assume *gaseous form* in order to effect her escape, although she must reach her coffin within 12 turns or face destruction as her essence finally dissipates. Like other vampires, Marusca is immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold* spells, poisons, and paralytic attacks. She is able to assume *gaseous form*, *shape change* into a large bat, and employ *spider climb*, all at will.

Her weaknesses are those of standard nosferatu as outlined in the *RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM III*.

## Forbidden Lore

Marusca has not had contact with Dracula in many years, during which she has begun to seek ways to free herself from his control. She has taken the liberty of constructing and elaborate dungeon in the area which used to serve as the old armory of the house. She has begun kidnapping, torturing and gradually draining all the blood from young noblemen of the type who spurned her in her youth. She has thus created three devoted slaves of her own. If Dracula knew of her brazenness, he would be livid.





# APPENDIX ONE: NEW QABALS

## The Company of the Dance

### A Lawful Good Mystic Society

Music and dancing have long been powerful adjuncts to the practice of ancient magical and religious rites. The Romanian men who call themselves The Company of the Dance embody traditions which reach backward in time to the earliest arrival of their people in the Carpathians. Realizing the need to protect the living from the unwanted attention of the restless spirits of the dead, the early priests and religious leaders conceived of the intricate steps of the as such a means of protection.

Although not all those who practice the are true members of the Company of the Dance, all who exhibit a staunch dedication to their holy purpose, and it is their righteous faith which gives them the power to exorcise individuals possessed by *rusalii*.

### Symbol

The symbol of this mystic society is a stick made from specially prepared wood and wound with garlic. Although all dancers carry such sticks, members of the Company of the Dance carve a mystic rune into their sticks. When the Company of the Dance gathers together to perform a true dance of exorcism, each member must display his carved stick to the other members to ensure that no outsiders (either intentional or accidental) have made their way into the group. This practice served to safeguard the integrity of the throughout its long history.

Despite this precaution, the Company of the Dance suffered a severe setback some forty years ago when the minions of the Red Death inspired a nonmember to gather a group together and perform an exorcism. The resulting catastrophe nearly destroyed the Company of the Dance as members attempted to battle the evil spirit loosed as a result of the failed ritual.

### Members

By tradition, only men are admitted into the Company of the Dance. Membership is passed from generation to generation, from fathers to sons. Only rarely is a new individual, whose ancestors were not themselves members of the Company of the Dance, allowed to join. In such instances, the person desiring admittance to this society must be sponsored by nine other members of the Company of the Dance and must undergo a period of intense questioning by senior members of the society. Only when all members of a particular dance group are satisfied that the new member meets all the requirements is he formally inducted into the membership of the Company of the Dance.

### History

Although the Company of the Dance traces its heritage back to the earliest arrival of Romanian settlers, the actual origin of the society as a group apart from other dancers of the stems from the time of János Hunyady. The Catholic Magyar ascendancy, in its zeal to assert religious supremacy over the Orthodox peasantry, discouraged many suspicious folk practices — such as the and the *capra*.

Fearing that the true nature of the ritual would be lost, a few foresighted individuals gathered together to dedicate themselves to the preservation of the. They became the first members of the Company of the Dance.

In later times, when folk customs became fashionably picturesque, the Company of the Dance served to keep intact the precise form of the, in spite of a rash of popularizes of it and other folk dances.

Although they do not engage in monumental heroics against the forces of the Red Death, the Company of the Dance wages a quiet battle against its lesser minions and helps to strengthen the faith of the common people in the powers of good.

*"Everyone is not happy who dances."  
—French proverb*



# APPENDIX ONE: NEW QABALS

## Sons of Mihnea

### A Chaotic Evil Qabal

The pervasive influence of the Red Death has led to the rise of a number of recent societies dedicated to the proliferation of evil. The Sons of Mihnea, though not a large qabal, has made its presence felt in the town of Sibiu, where a rise in murders and kidnappings have spread an atmosphere of fear among the populace.

Members of the Sons of Mihnea dedicate themselves to the service of the dhampir for whom the qabal is named. Their purpose is to provide their lord with the blood he needs to sustain his powers. Doing this involves them in a variety of foul activities, including murder and kidnapping.

### Symbol

The Sons of Mihnea wear necklaces consisting of a wooden dragon's claw, painted red, concealed beneath their clothing. Since the red dragon is the symbol of the Dracula family, this is a sign of their adherence to the service of Dracula's son, Mihnea the Bad. Red robes are reserved for rituals and are worn only in the secret crypt beneath the tomb of Mihnea. To gain admission to the ceremonies, members must display their symbol to a cult member posted as guard at the crypt's entrance.

### Members

Since the qabal considers itself a priesthood, full membership in the Sons of Mihnea is restricted to men. A few women attend the cult's rituals, forming an auxiliary group whose primary function is to assist in obtaining victims and to otherwise aid the priests of the cult.

Father Serban Iorga, the cult's leader, personally oversees the selection of members, many of whom come from the ranks of the local priesthood. Over the years, Father Serban has identified likely candidates for corruption and induction into the cult from among the novices who seek admission to the priesthood. Under the guise of introducing these young men to the "true" secrets of their faith, Father Serban tests their willingness to serve the dark powers. Those whose performance satisfies him are presented

to the dhampir Mihnea and initiated into his service. Those who are found wanting remain ignorant of Mihnea's existence and usually meet with a fatal accident soon after they are rejected.

### History

The Sons of Mihnea arose in the town of Sibiu in the early part of the nineteenth century, when Father Serban Iorga discovered the existence of the dhampir who, in life, was Dracula's son Mihnea. Iorga offered his services to Mihnea in return for an extended life span and the hope of eventual immortality. Charged with providing the dhampir with a weekly supply of blood, Iorga soon saw the need to enlist others in the effort. He also realized that he had stumbled upon a perfect opportunity to build his own power base.

Iorga exercises a dictatorial control over the cult, requiring followers to pay him for the privilege of membership. He has also devised a number of rituals that have nothing to do with the primary purpose of the cult but which serve to solidify the group's identity and to bind the members to one another through a conspiracy of incriminating practices.

Mihnea himself cares little for what his cultists do so long as he receives the blood he needs. He supplies Iorga with a limited amount of an elixir which functions as a *potion of longevity*, allowing Iorga to unnaturally prolong his life. On rare occasions, Iorga will reward one of his followers with a dose of this elixir, thus encouraging the membership's belief that they, too, will share in the gift of immortality through faithful adherence to the commands of their leader.

Members of the Sons of Mihnea identify potential victims and arrange for their disappearance. These unfortunate individuals are brought to the secret crypt where they are sacrificed in a group ritual and their blood is offered to the dhampir. Some cult members also indulge in acts of robbery in order to acquire enough money to "donate" to the coffers of their leader. Over the years, Iorga has amassed a small fortune—all in the name of his master.

*"Evil is easy and has infinite forms."*

—Pascal, *Pensées*



# APPENDIX ONE: NEW QABALS

## The Sword of Hunyady

### A Lawful Good Qabal

Fortunately for those who oppose the Red Death and its attendant evils, the forces of good are not stagnant. This century has seen the rise of new qabals devoted to battling the powers of darkness in whatever form they may be encountered. The Sword of Hunyady, though young in years, lays claim to a heritage that is several centuries old. Those who fear that the days of the crusader and the holy warrior have long passed into the pages of history have only to look as far as this vital group of fervent servants of justice to put their doubts to rest.

### Symbol

Members of the Sword of Hunyady carry on their persons a coin stamped with the image of János Hunyady, the White Knight of Hungary. Although most of the members of this small qabal know one another by sight, the coin is sometimes used as a means of identifying them to members of sympathetic groups, such as *Die Wächtern*.

### Members

Most of the young men and women who make up the membership of the Sword of Hunyady come from Magyar families, though a few ethnic Romanians have recently been admitted into the qabal. The primary requirement for membership is an unquenchable desire to do battle with the forces of evil.

Although the leader of the qabal is an adept of some power, most of the members come from a variety of professions. The Sword of Hunyady believes in the fourfold combination of strength, scholarship, faith and magic.

Candidates for membership are brought by a sponsoring member to the qabal's leader who interviews them over a period of several weeks before making a determination as to their fitness to join the Sword of Hunyady. Usually, the potential member is unaware of the purpose behind these sessions, believing that he is merely spending time in pleasant, though unusually deep or esoteric, conversation with a

"friend of a friend." Only if the candidate is found acceptable is he offered an invitation to join the qabal. The care taken in selecting new members is such that none have so far refused the offer of membership.

### History

The Sword of Hunyady has been in existence for less than ten years, but already it has exerted a quiet influence for good within the small town of Hunedoara, where it has its center. Begun by Magda Arany, a descendant of János Hunyady, as a means of gathering together a group willing to take a stand against the growing powers of darkness, the Sword of Hunyady has spent most of its time to date making preparations for the confrontations they feel certain await them.

The members of the Sword of Hunyady share their knowledge and expertise freely with one another. Those who have military training conduct informal classes in swordsmanship and small arms so that all members of the qabal have at least a rudimentary ability to defend themselves. Those with magical powers or whose faith has given them mystic abilities pass along some of the philosophical aspects of their skills. (All members are skilled in Spellcraft and Spiritcraft.)

The qabal's most important work lies in their research and their ability to synthesize information from a variety of sources, including rumors and contacts in other good-aligned qabals. They have been occupied with trying to discover the resting places of legendary artifacts in hopes of gaining possession of powerful relics to assist them in their fight.

Despite their small size, the reputation of the Sword of Hunyady is beginning to spread beyond its local boundaries. The qabal is considering the possibility of forming other cells in various cities throughout Transylvania and Wallachia, hoping that their flame of goodness will start a fire that will blaze throughout the region, purging the land of its evil taint.

*Virtue could see to do what virtue would  
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon  
Were in the flat sea sunk.*

—Milton, *Comus*



# APPENDIX ONE: NEW QABALS

## Guild of the Dark Flower

### A Neutral Evil Qabal

Like many other towns in Transylvania, Sibiu played host to a number of guild houses during the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Although most legitimate guilds have since given way to more modern business associations, some of the darker professions still conduct their trade through a network of secret guilds. The Guild of the Dark Flower, a qabal of individuals well versed in the art of making and disseminating poisons, is one such secret society.

Although the Guild itself does not directly serve the Red Death, the actions of many of the members of this qabal have worked to further its ends.

### Symbol

Members of the Guild of the Dark Flower are marked at the base of the neck, just beneath the hairline, with a brand in the form of a small, five-pointed flower. Consequently, most guild members wear clothes with high collars or, in the case of women, necklaces or ribbons that conceal the mark from incidental discovery. Upon entering the clandestine headquarters of the Guild, members are expected to kneel and bare their neck for inspection. Anyone found without the appropriate mark is thus in a perfect position for swift reprisal for their attempted infiltration of the qabal.

### Members

Membership in the Guild of the Dark Flower is often a family affair, as one generation after another learns of the “dark secret” possessed by their parents and older relations. Occasionally, new blood is introduced into the Guild, but this is a rare event surrounded by much secrecy, lest the Guild’s existence be betrayed to outsiders.

Most of the members come from the middle or merchant class, and the Guild accepts both men and women on an equal basis. Since the qabal relies on its current membership to beget new members, individuals are encouraged to marry and have large families. The realization that husbands, wives, sons, and daughters are also hostage to the Guild members’ good behavior

helps to insure that the qabal’s security is seldom breached by defection from within its ranks.

### History

The Guild of the Dark Flower has been in existence since the sixteenth century, but it claims to have evolved from an even older society of alchemists and herbalists who perfected the art of making poisons. From creating toxins to using them was only a small step, but one which carried extremely lucrative rewards. Hence, the Guild of the Dark Flower became both a source for acquiring poisons as well as a clearing house for hiring poisoners.

Throughout the centuries since its formation, the Guild has supplied assassins to wealthy individuals desirous of ridding themselves of enemies, murdering romantic rivals, and otherwise advancing themselves at the expense of another’s life. Not infrequently, minions of the Red Death have sought out members of the Guild of the Dark Flower in order to enlist their services in assassinating some otherwise impregnable opponent of evil.

The Guild members not only preserve ancient methods of gathering and preparing various poisons, they also experiment with creating new toxins. Some are nearly impossible to trace, while others simulate various diseases. To further their research, members of the qabal often resort to kidnapping to acquire subjects for use in testing the efficacy of their new poisons.

Young children whose parents belong to the Guild are often used as messengers to carry poisons from the Guild’s headquarters to selected dealers, while older children—particularly girls—often pretend to be lost or injured in order to lure unwary tourists into an ambush. By the time these children have reached the age of apprenticeship, they are already well-versed in the corrupt practices of their elders. Thus evil perpetuates its own from generation to generation.

*“Murder, like talent, seems occasionally to run in families.”*

—George Henry Lewes,  
*Physiology of Common Life*



# APPENDIX ONE: NEW QABALS

## Heirs of the Piper

### A Neutral Good Qabal

Although many qabals have their origins in the ancient past, some few, like the close-knit group of entertainers and musicians who call themselves the Heirs of the Piper, attribute their beginnings to an individual from the annals of myth. Whether or not the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin is true, the work done by those who bear his name has contributed greatly to the efforts of those who struggle to preserve a vestige of goodness in a land dominated by the Red Death.

### Symbol

The Heirs of the Piper can be identified by the sash made of jester's motley that they wear around their waists or, sometimes, wound around an arm or leg. Frequently, members of this qabal sport bells, worn either on their wrists or ankles or else hung around their neck from a leather thong or silver chain.

### Members

The majority of individuals who form the membership of the Heirs of the Piper claim to be the descendants of the children spirited away from the town of Hamelin by the Pied Piper. In recent years, however, the qabal has broadened its membership to include "spiritual" descendants (a term which usually refers to someone with a talent for music who agrees to the principals espoused by the society). Nevertheless, the vast majority of members are of Germanic descent.

Both men and women belong to the qabal. In addition to their common ancestry, each member has mastered at least one musical instrument. Members are required to support themselves through their musical talents, whether as street corner musicians or as performers in the many inns and taverns of the town of Brasov, where the qabal has its headquarters.

### History

One version of the tale of the Pied Piper states that the rat catcher of Hamelin did not lead the children of the town into the sea but, instead,

spirited them east into Transylvania, depositing them in the town square of Brasov. There, it is further said, the Piper of Hamelin extracted a solemn oath from all the children that they spend their lives in atonement for their parents' misdeeds. In token of this oath, the Piper gifted each child with some of his own musical ability.

Adopted into the homes of various families in Brasov, these children managed to keep in touch with one another, remembering their promise to the mysterious Piper who, although he abducted them from their homeland, chose to spare their lives. The earliest members of this group, once they reached adulthood, contented themselves with roaming the town and its surrounding countryside in search of good deeds to do. Later, however, as they became aware of the very powerful forces of evil that were at work in Transylvania, the Heirs of the Piper realized that they needed to form a more cohesive society. Thus, they managed to acquire a small house on the outskirts of Brasov to serve as their headquarters.

The Piper's oath, along with the gift of musical talent, was passed along to succeeding generations. The work of the Heirs of the Piper soon attracted attention from two quarters, as both the forces of good and the agents of the Red Death learned of their existence. Agents of *Die Wächtern*, *La Lumière*, and other remnants of the Defiance, travel to Transylvania in order to establish contacts among the Heirs, seeing them as valuable scouts and information gatherers.

Despite the fact that they take their vow to fight evil seriously, the Heirs of the Piper retain a lightness of spirit through their love of music. They are sometimes regarded by their allies as frivolous because of their cheerful attitudes, but to do so is to misjudge this qabal's commitment to the cause of good.

The Heirs of the Piper often roam throughout Transylvania, but sooner or later, each member returns to Brasov, their spiritual home.

*"The music in my heart I bore,  
Long after it was heard no more."*

Wordsworth  
Memorials of a Tour in Scotland



CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Transylvania
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore/Human blood
INTELLIGENCE:	14
ALIGNMENT:	Any
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	10
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	Varies
THACO:	Varies
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	By weapon +4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Confusion gaze
SPECIAL DEFENSE:	+1 or better to hit, resistance to vampiric <i>charm</i> ability
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M
MORALE:	Champion (15-16)
XP VALUE:	475 + Hit Dice value

Dhampir (singular and plural) are the offspring of vampires and human women. At night, they often betray their vampire heritage by their red eyes which glow after sundown and their fangs. If seen in the light after dark, they can appear normal, if a little pallid. They are tragic creatures who spend their lives torn between two natures—that of a blood-thirsty creature of the night and that of an innocent who is horrified by a facet of his nature.

Dhampir have supernatural powers, bestowed upon them by their vampiric fathers—such as great strength and the ability to control animals—but none of the vampiric weaknesses. They can abide holy objects and holy water and need not be invited in before they can enter other's homes. Likewise, dhampir They are reputed to be seductive, being possessed of an uncanny attraction.

**Combat:** All of a dhampirs special abilities are only effective if the dhampir if the dhampir isn't in sunlight.

Dhampir have the ability to detect vampires within 40 feet of their location. If the dhampir makes a successful Wisdom check, he can identify vampires among crowds or can discover their hiding place if they are not visible.

Dhampir have no particular melee attacks that normal humans do not possess. They can use the wrestling and punching attacks outlined in the *Player's Handbook* or throw dangerous or heavy objects with their great strength. Otherwise, it must use weapons or spells.

However, when fighting vampires of any type,

dhampir have several subtle, supernatural advantages. First, are resistant to a vampire's *charm* gaze, receiving a +4 bonus to saving throws. Dhampir save normally against *charm* attacks cast by non-vampires. Also, when any vampire locks eyes with a dhampir's eyes, *he* must make a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation at -2, or be paralyzed for 1d4 rounds.

Dhampir have inherited the vampiric parent's ability to shrug off damage inflicted by normal weapons, and can only be injured by spells or magical weapons of +1 or better. More importantly, however, they can use melee non-magical weapons against vampires as though they were striking with +1 magical weapons. They cannot do this with missile weapons. A vampire that has been wounded by a dhampir cannot regenerate the damage unless he can escape the dhampir and return to his coffin.

Finally, dhampir may exercise control over domesticated animals like horses, dogs, and house cats. They can summon 2d20 of such creatures to attack an enemy. A logical mixture (DM's call) of these animals arrive within 2d4 rounds of the dhampir issuing a mental summons.

**Habitat/Society:** Dhampir live generally undetected among human society, although they invariably grow up motherless, as their mother dies giving birth to them. They can belong to any class, and may be found working in any profession, although they invariably gravitate to occupations that minimize contact with others.

Once a dhampir recognizes the supernatural abilities it possesses, many of them try to do good by hunting down and slaying vampires wherever they find them. This is particularly true of dhampir who have had contact with their vampiric parents. However, other dhampir find it just as easy to turn evil and adopt their father's predatory ways in exchange for power.

**Ecology:** Dhampir must feast on the blood of humans at least once a week or they become unable to use their powers. Many good dhampirs thus are powerless, unless they force themselves to drink the blood of humans when a vampiric threat becomes evident in their region. Dhampir can produce children, who may themselves become dhampir or who may be normal humans. (A 50% chance of either being the case.)

The tragedy of a dhampir's existence is that he is cursed from birth to enter the ranks of the Red Death's minions. Most find it easier to be evil to the core. At their deaths, dhampir rise as vampires and irredeemable servants of evil.





# Guide to Transylvania

a Masque OF THE Red Death™ accessory

by Nicky Rea

*The grim, grey Carpathians stand etched against the rising moon. Atop a lonely peak, a crumbling castle crouches. It waits, its broken battlements grinning like skull's teeth . . .*

*A Guide to Transylvania* is an indispensable accessory for any MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH campaign, or for a campaign for any game system set in the 1890's. This 96-page book contains everything needed to explore the exotic, fear-filled country that is home to Dracula.

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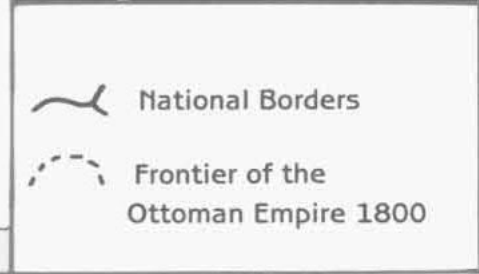
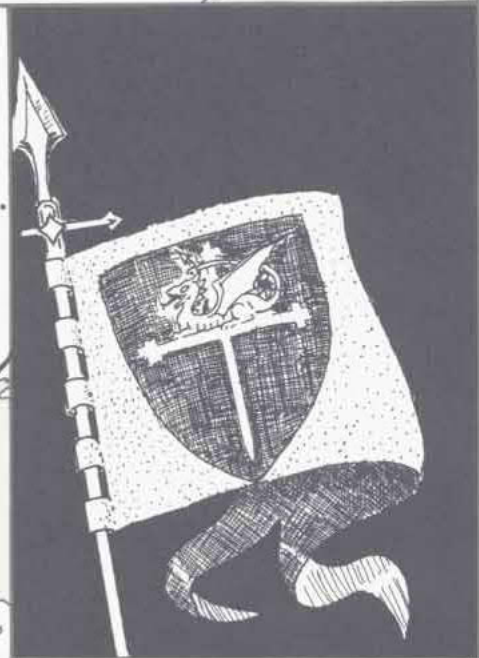
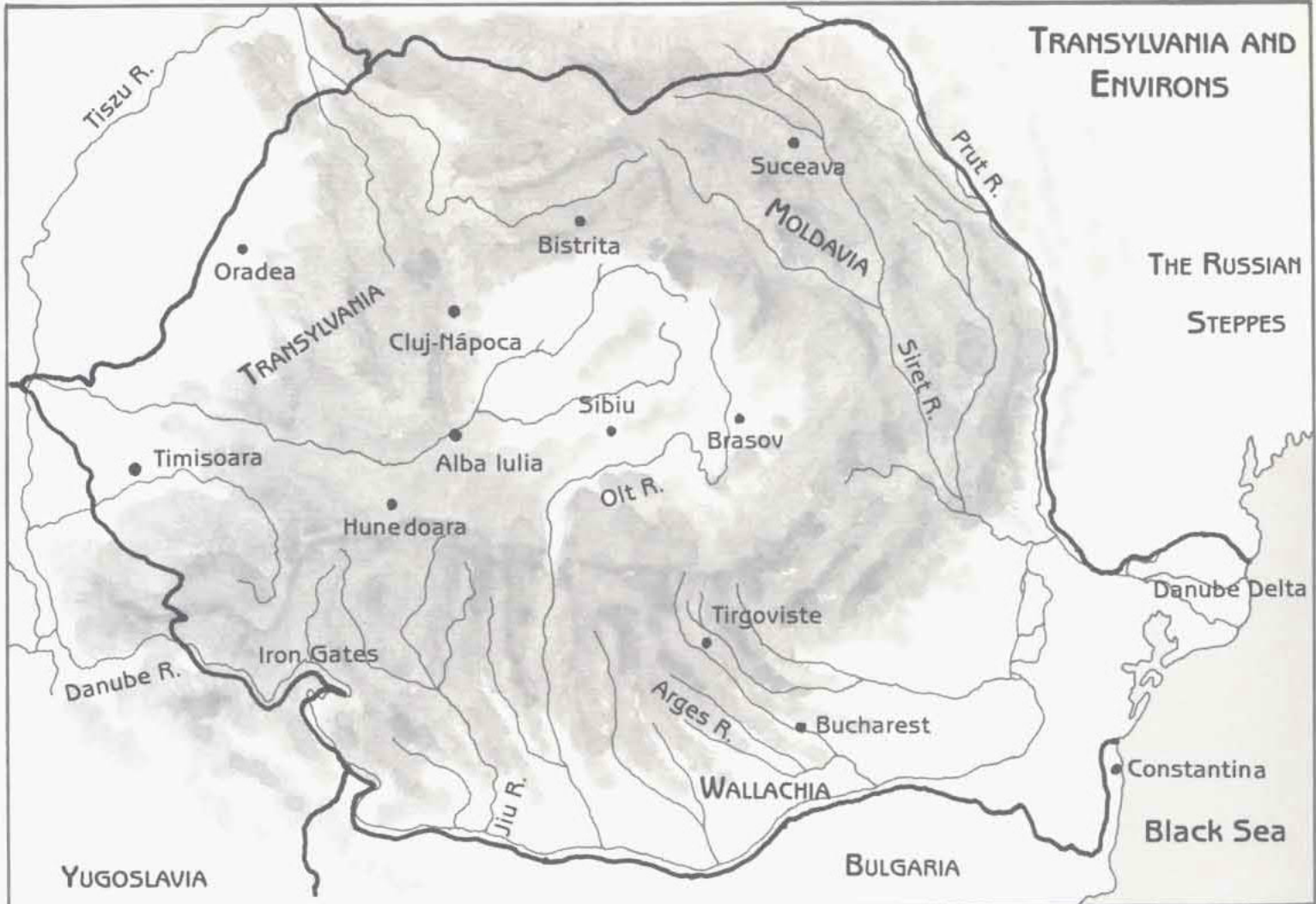
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