



CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO THE FINAL NIGHTS

There are strange things afoot in the halls of power. Whispers of signs spoken of in the oldest texts buzz from every corner, while rumors of portents mumbled by the far-sighted become facts with each night. These are, as the Chinese might say, interesting times.

The Camarilla stands as it has for nearly six centuries, a pillar against the night. Claiming jurisdiction over every vampire across the globe, the sect has greater numbers than any other, and the reasons for membership are as varied as the Kindred themselves. For some the Camarilla means safety from enemies — the Sabbat, the Lupines, mortal hunters and other groups of Kindred. For some it means a safe place where they might continue gentler pursuits. Some belong because their sires belonged, or because they are unaware that they can belong to anything else. For the elders it is their ivory tower, and it is the default for their childer. All will agree that whatever it is to its members, the Camarilla is monolithic in its strength and purpose.

But in these nights, the monolith is beginning to show signs of strain. The change in the Malkavians has brought consternation to many. The departure of the Gangrel shook the sect nearly to its foundations. Its strongholds are assaulted on all sides by a host of enemies: the bloodthirsty Assamites; the Sabbat, who seem to have found renewed fire in these nights; and the mysterious Cathayans making incursions on the West Coast. Still the Camarilla holds fast against all comers.

Or does it?

As the power struggles grow more ferocious, as the mysteries come to pass, as the once unassailable comes under attack, will the Camarilla finally crumble? Or will it prevail, as it always has in the past — iron-willed and eternal?



WHAT THIS BOOK IS (AND ISN'T)

This book details the interior of the oldest and largest sect of vampires, the Camarilla. Here stands revealed the might of the elders, the sect's secret ways and means, and the nightly business of power. On a more mundane note, here are rules for the mysterious Gargoyles, new Traits for character creation and everything a Storyteller could want to add new levels of realism and depth to her city.

This book isn't meant as a substitute for **Laws of the Night**. You'll still need that book for character creation, the lower levels of the most common Disciplines and the basic rules. This book runs on the assumption that you already own **Laws of the Night** and are at least passingly familiar with the rules of **Mind's Eye Theatre**. This book also covers only the clans of the Camarilla and their erstwhile sibling Clan Gangrel; the Sabbat and independents will find their own homes in future releases.

With that said, welcome to the halls of Elysium, where the monsters dwell.

HISTORY: NIGHTS GONE BY

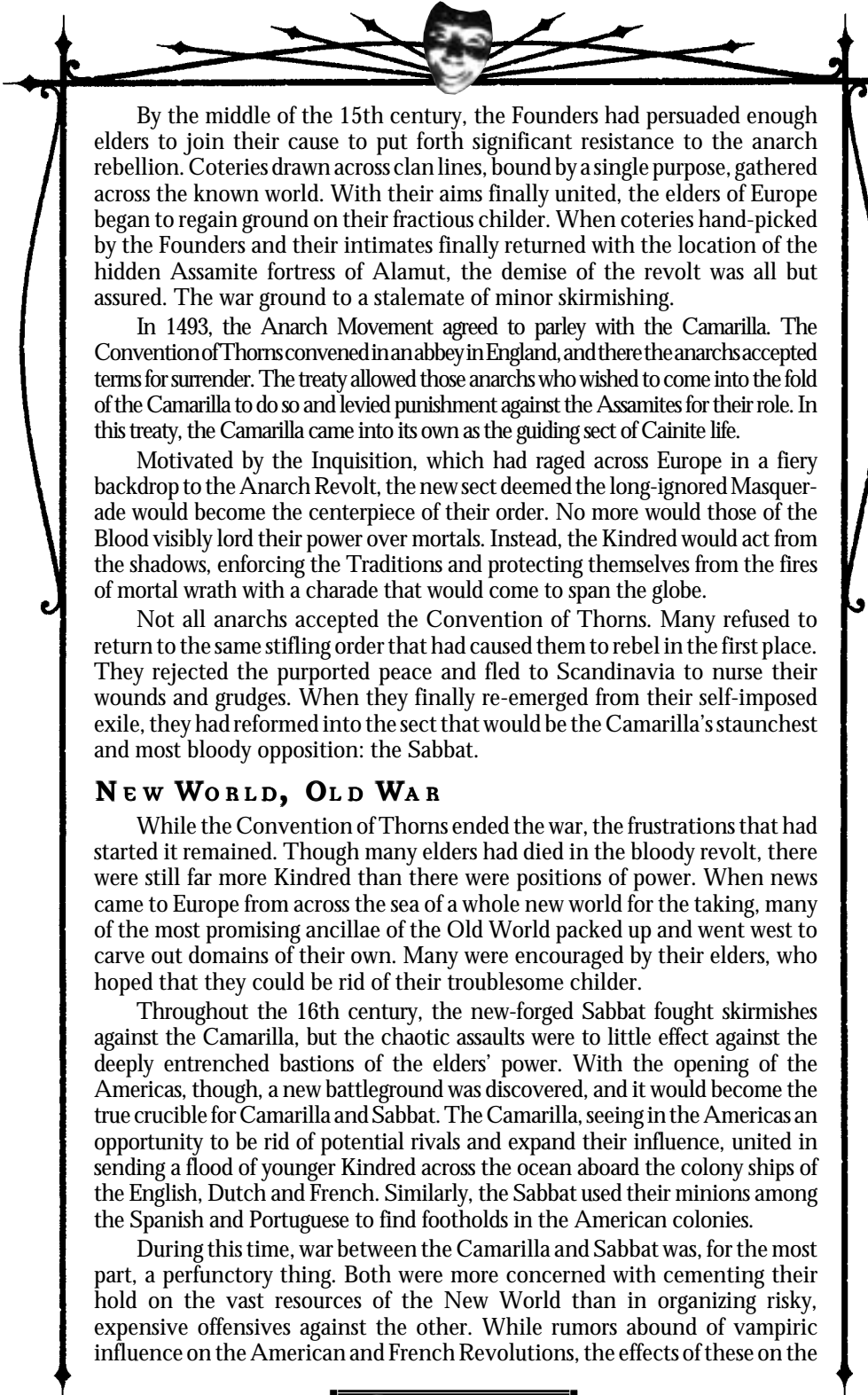
The Camarilla's history, like so many other parts of the Kindred's tale, is a long and bloody one. Born in the fires of rebellious change and watered with much spilled vitae, the sect has grown since its early days as a bulwark against youthful rage and mortal hunters.

In 1381, a band of English peasants rebelled against their local lord, drawing the attention and aid of several young Kindred. Though quickly put down, the mortal rebellion left its mark on those of the Blood who took part. Frustrated in their rise to power and often suffocated under their immortal elders' iron grip, the childer of Europe kindled the beginnings of their own rebellion.

The early 1400s saw the spark that would ignite a wildfire of rebellion throughout the Kindred of Europe. A young Brujah by the name of Tyler assaulted an elder Ventrue named Hardestaadt. Inspired by this insolence, childer rose against their sires throughout the continent, clearing the avenues of power with blood and fire. War raged against the eldest of the clans. At the height of the madness, the rebels destroyed the Lasombra Antediluvian and claimed to have destroyed Tzimisce himself as well.

Bolstered by the diablerie of their elders, the rebellious youth, now called anarchs, marched through Eastern Europe, laying waste to the work of centuries. In those lands a means to break the stranglehold of the blood bond had been found, and suddenly, many neonates and ancillae were slipping leashes elders had thought secure. Eager for the opportunity to diablerize European elders, the Assamites joined the fight on the anarch side.

In 1435, Hardestaadt gathered the elders in convocation and proposed an arrangement to deal with the anarch movement. The arrangement he offered would cross blood and territorial lines to deal with the issues of the Kindred as a whole. True to form, most elders offered little more than skepticism and left for their own havens to wait out the anarch storms in the way they weathered so many trials for centuries before. A few, though, remained and joined Hardestaadt in his vision. They were the Founders, and they would lay the groundwork for the next five centuries of Kindred society.



By the middle of the 15th century, the Founders had persuaded enough elders to join their cause to put forth significant resistance to the anarch rebellion. Coteries drawn across clan lines, bound by a single purpose, gathered across the known world. With their aims finally united, the elders of Europe began to regain ground on their fractious childer. When coteries hand-picked by the Founders and their intimates finally returned with the location of the hidden Assamite fortress of Alamut, the demise of the revolt was all but assured. The war ground to a stalemate of minor skirmishing.

In 1493, the Anarch Movement agreed to parley with the Camarilla. The Convention of Thorns convened in an abbey in England, and there the anarchs accepted terms for surrender. The treaty allowed those anarchs who wished to come into the fold of the Camarilla to do so and levied punishment against the Assamites for their role. In this treaty, the Camarilla came into its own as the guiding sect of Cainite life.

Motivated by the Inquisition, which had raged across Europe in a fiery backdrop to the Anarch Revolt, the new sect deemed the long-ignored Masquerade would become the centerpiece of their order. No more would those of the Blood visibly lord their power over mortals. Instead, the Kindred would act from the shadows, enforcing the Traditions and protecting themselves from the fires of mortal wrath with a charade that would come to span the globe.


Not all anarchs accepted the Convention of Thorns. Many refused to return to the same stifling order that had caused them to rebel in the first place. They rejected the purported peace and fled to Scandinavia to nurse their wounds and grudges. When they finally re-emerged from their self-imposed exile, they had reformed into the sect that would be the Camarilla's staunchest and most bloody opposition: the Sabbat.

NEW WORLD, OLD WAR

While the Convention of Thorns ended the war, the frustrations that had started it remained. Though many elders had died in the bloody revolt, there were still far more Kindred than there were positions of power. When news came to Europe from across the sea of a whole new world for the taking, many of the most promising ancillae of the Old World packed up and went west to carve out domains of their own. Many were encouraged by their elders, who hoped that they could be rid of their troublesome childer.

Throughout the 16th century, the new-forged Sabbat fought skirmishes against the Camarilla, but the chaotic assaults were to little effect against the deeply entrenched bastions of the elders' power. With the opening of the Americas, though, a new battleground was discovered, and it would become the true crucible for Camarilla and Sabbat. The Camarilla, seeing in the Americas an opportunity to be rid of potential rivals and expand their influence, united in sending a flood of younger Kindred across the ocean aboard the colony ships of the English, Dutch and French. Similarly, the Sabbat used their minions among the Spanish and Portuguese to find footholds in the American colonies.

During this time, war between the Camarilla and Sabbat was, for the most part, a perfunctory thing. Both were more concerned with cementing their hold on the vast resources of the New World than in organizing risky, expensive offensives against the other. While rumors abound of vampiric influence on the American and French Revolutions, the effects of these on the



sects was minimal. The stalemate lasted through most of the 17th and 18th centuries; each side felt the flush of power as the Industrial Revolution flooded the cities with more and more mortals, and more and more opportunities for control. Up until the early years of the 19th century, the Camarilla concerned itself far more with capitalizing on the gains afforded them by advancing technology than on the few assaults made by the Sabbat.

The War of 1812 masked a major shift in the fortunes of the Camarilla. As the British and the Americans fought their war, the Sabbat pressed in on the Atlantic seaboard, gaining cities one at a time over the next 50 years. Flanked on the North and South by Sabbat strongholds, the Camarilla fell back again and again, finally holding on to a scant handful of cities after the attacks subsided. The East Coast has never been regained, and the fighting continues to this day. Some even say that the losses taken in the East are rising faster than ever.


In the mid-1800s, a new front opened in the war between the sects. This time, the vast tracts of the western frontier were both battleground and prize. For a long time the Camarilla teetered on the edge of disaster as the Sabbat pressed and pressed, nearly toppling the Camarilla's foothold not only in the West, but in the Americas as a whole. If not for several sudden, stunning losses and the respite they gave the faltering Camarilla, the Sabbat may well have dug in so deeply as to make it impossible to remove them. There are those that feel that without those losses, the Camarilla would have lost the Americas entirely, but those that dare suggest such a thing often find themselves speaking to silent rooms and smoldering glares.

THE LAST CENTURY

The 1900s proved ripe for upheaval among mortals and Kindred alike. As newborn social theory and political discontent rocked aging governments, the power structures of the Kindred controlling them were likewise shaken. In the chaos brought by these revolutions, many cities became primed for Sabbat incursions. When the assaults came, the Camarilla establishment often found itself struggling to bring its forces into line and frequently held onto ancient fiefdoms by the skin of its collective teeth.

In the devastation following World War I, many European Kindred tried to take control of the continent. Those that did were little more than twigs in the tide as the world plunged toward Adolf Hitler's Germany and the horror that would rise out of it. As World War II raged, some Kindred with more ambition than sense sought to turn the mortals' war to their own ends. Most did not survive. For once, those without a hold in the halls of power were luckiest, laying low and letting the storms of battle wash over them.

In the years that followed Germany's defeat, the people of America prospered, and the American Kindred along with them. In the chaos of the war, over 500 years after revolution sparked the creation of the Camarilla, the anarch movement once again reared its head. Princes on the West Coast fell as the young movement spread among the Kindred of California. But these were not the anarchs of old. Strong princes rose up to fight the tide, and, in the end, held the anarchs to their sliver of territory along the Pacific. Chicago rose as the anchor of the Camarilla in North America. Guided by Lodin's sure hand, it became a stronghold for the faithful and an example to others across the continent as cities rose overnight in a flood of immigration and urbanization.



In the latter half of the century, interest in vampires took a strange turn as subcultures embraced the image and mystique of the undead. Princes around the world saw it as an unexpected windfall, as many minor infractions could be passed off on mortal admirers, but the trend was not without its repercussions. With such increased interest, each incident became all the more memorable, and concealment became all the more crucial to survival. New technology opened ever-wider avenues to power as younger vampires took advantage of the elders' staid reliance on the old ways to carve inroads into emerging markets and industries. The tides of prosperity continue to swell as mortals flood the cities and Kindred find ever more blood to be had. The question, however, remains: how long can this last?

Omens of misfortune have plagued the Camarilla in recent years. The sect lost its one and only hold on the Far East when Hong Kong was returned to China. Younger and younger Kindred are Embracing childer of their own and with each generation, the Blood grows thinner. There are rumors of neonates whose blood is now too thin to sustain the Embrace and who can even bear the touch of sunlight. The anarchs squat on the Pacific Coast, nettling the princes of the Camarilla with their presence. More disturbingly, reports have come from Western cities of incursions by the mysterious Asian vampires. Along the Atlantic the Sabbat remains, turning back the Camarilla's attempts to recapture their long-lost cities. Only Europe remains unperturbed as the elders there

When the Convention of Thorns drew all Kindred under the auspices of the Camarilla, the Gangrel were among the seven clans who chose full membership in the sect. In the five centuries since, the Gangrel proved themselves invaluable allies, leading the fight in the war against the Sabbat. Both their combat abilities and the great wealth of intelligence gathered by the nomadic clan played decisive roles in the success of the Camarilla's efforts against their rivals.

Until recently.

Speculation abounds as to the circumstances and motives for the Gangrel defection from the Camarilla. There are as many guesses as there are mouths to voice them. Most prevalent of the rumors is that Xaviar, former justicar of the clan, entered the council chamber of the Inner Circle, spoke one sentence and left. Within a month, most of the clan had divorced themselves from the sect, though none would speak of the reasons. To be sure, many also remained, but without a justicar to defend their interests, they are vulnerable to the political machinations of those clans that retain full affiliation.

To date, the Gangrel continue steadfast in their unwillingness to explain their departure from the Camarilla. Those who ask are tersely rebuked — if they're lucky. Though now considered an independent clan, many of those who retain their claim of Camarilla membership are as welcome as ever they were. There are those who have held grudges against the shapeshifters, though, and lacking the threat of justicar retaliation leaves little reason not to make unlife hard for those that remain.