

The characters may read the journals or not as they choose. They need not give them to Tilda and she has no way to compel them to do so, though she implies otherwise. She doesn't have the nerve to take them while the characters sleep, nor does she pose the characters any *real* threat.

#### DREAMS AND REALITY

The following scenes may be used as transition vignettes to quickly move through scenes that might happen. The nightmare scene can be used at any time throughout the game, but if your troupe prefers snapshots or cut-scenes to playing through such scenes, simply ignore these and move on to Scene Four.

##### Nightmares

Throughout the day, the characters sleep fitfully, disturbed by the sound of screams and premonitions that the house is collapsing around them. Upon awakening, however, nothing seems wrong. Heavy raindrops continue to fall and the city remains preternaturally quiet. Characters who have the Nightmares Flaw should receive a horrific vision that incorporates imagery and allegory from Etrius's journal, giving them a sense of doom — perhaps a dizzying picture of a never-ending descent into the depths eerily lit only by candlelight or a view of a blood-soaked, bloated body along with a feeling that they themselves are trapped inside that putrid flesh and a flash of Etrius chanting and driving the stake into the character's wormlike flesh just might disturb their sleep.

##### Night Flight

Assuming the characters still plan to go along with the journey as presented and assuming they replaced the journal if they took it, Etrius awakes just after sunset and groggily accompanies the characters as they are driven to the airport by Johannes. The rain has stopped and though the streets are still slick, more cars are on the road and a few people move from place to place. The private jet takes off on time and there are no problems with the flight. The plane touches down hours later in Atlanta, Georgia. The flight from Vienna to the East Coast takes nine hours. As Vienna is roughly six hours ahead of the East Coast, the characters leave Vienna at approximately 10 p.m., travel for nine hours, arriving in Atlanta at 7 a.m. Vienna time, but only 1 a.m. in Atlanta.

Debarking, the characters quickly pass through a cursory customs inspection. The Storyteller should make customs difficult for any character who looks like trouble. Hartsfield Airport is notorious for its scrutiny of inbound travels from foreign countries.

A car awaits the conspiracy, this one with a young woman who identifies herself as Sonya. She welcomes them to Atlanta and explains that Etrius has set aside a house for their use while they are in town. She advises them to feed as they please — the Sabbath are present and Prince Benison has more to worry about than a few Kindred visiting for one night.

She mentions that they may feed at the airport if they are discreet. If they check, Sonya's aura seems much like a normal human with a light tinge that indicates a ghoul. She seems sincere, nervous and eager to please.

J. Benison Hodge, the Prince of Atlanta, has no idea what Etrius is doing in the city and hopes he can persuade the powerful Tremere to confide in him when they meet the following evening. The prince feels flattered that Etrius chose his city, believing that it was due to his reputation as a staunch supporter of the Camarilla.

Sonya explains that she will return tomorrow to chauffeur them in the early evening hours. Just before leaving, she hands one of the characters (the best-looking male) a cell phone and a number where Prince Benison's assistants may be reached in an emergency. It should be obvious that the prince knows who Etrius is and is taking pains to make the Tremere and his guests feel welcome. After all, a boon extended to such powerful Kindred certainly reaps benefits in the future.

#### SCENE FOUR: WARM WELCOME

Etrius chose to meet Sascha Vykos in Atlanta because the city boasts an international airport and is situated on the East Coast, yet it doesn't seem an obvious destination for a Tremere councilor. Unknown to Etrius, however, the city has recently become contested ground between the Camarilla and Sabbath. Wanting to know how tough Etrius's guards are so that the Sabbath keeps the upper hand, Sascha and his own bodyguards use the tense situation to stage a little test. Under cover of the tension that grips the city and using several shovelheads (newly Embraced shock troops) as cannon fodder, they attack the house to see what sort of fight the characters can muster. They don't intend for their ill-trained and weak recruits to actually win; they just want what they might face if the negotiations turn sour. Then again, if the shovelheads can overpower Etrius and his guards and take Etrius prisoner, Sascha gains the upper hand in the meeting. The enigmatic Tzimisce already feels nervous being in an ostensibly Camarilla held city and meeting Etrius again for the first time in a long while.

The house Prince Benison arranged for the characters is a small, unassuming Victorian-style cottage set behind a stone wall and a meandering garden near the edge of town. The area is large and isolated enough that odd things happening around the house attract no notice from the neighbors, yet it remains within the city and is therefore a less likely target for Lupines. It has a cozy living room, kitchen and pantry, two baths, several bedrooms and a few small rooms including one with a billiards table. There is also a basement with a concrete floor and a crawl space in the attic. Although there are several windows, each is equipped with thick, overlapping curtains and the beds all feature canopies with curtains that can be drawn around them.

After the characters settle in, let them briefly interact with Etrius. They may have several questions for him, after all. He seems very tired, almost drained, and his answers ramble off the subject and into speculation concerning whether the characters can take over the brunt of the negotiations in the meeting with Sascha. He repeats several times that he is willing to agree to almost anything to achieve the accord he seeks. Etrius slips into sleep, then comes awake moaning as a particularly violent spasm wracks his body. The characters clearly see that his face contorts as he rushes from the room to the bedroom he has chosen for his own. Once he reaches the bed and pulls the curtains around himself, he again falls into such a deep sleep that he cannot be awakened by less than Gehenna itself.

Just as the characters are thinking of retiring, the Sabbat troops attack.

#### THE ATTACK

Two shovelheads have been Embraced for each character in the coterie. These frenzied half-starved vampires crash through windows, erupting into the characters' midst unless the characters have set up some sort of guard to watch outside the house. They have only a few minutes left until sunrise. If the characters were not keeping watch, the attackers surprise them. Once the shovelheads engage the characters, a few Sabbat recruits who have not yet proved themselves take potshots through the windows with cheap, discount-store shotguns. Two of the True Sabbat run forward and throw molotov cocktails through the windows at different areas of the house then flee. The characters' players must make a Courage roll to avoid Röttschreck, as must the newly turned vampires attacking them.

The characters should feel that they are under serious assault, but unless they are truly incompetent, they should be able to overcome their attackers, douse the flames, then find and disarm the two gunners or at least chase them off. All the snipers know is that they were told to come here along with the shovelheads and prove their competence. They believe the whole city is under attack and warn the characters that the city is even now falling to the Sabbat. They do not know Sascha's name, nor have they seen it. They *do* know the pack leader's name — Fairuza — and that they were under her direction. They know that the pack has been staying in an abandoned warehouse and can lead the characters there, if necessary.

At some point during the battle it may occur to a character that Etrius has not appeared. They may wonder if he is still safe and go to investigate. If anyone thinks of this within three turns, they can thwart the half-hearted attempt by three of the pack members to spirit the sleeping Methuselah away while the battle rages elsewhere. The three run whenever opposition appears, fleeing into the darkness (courtesy of their Lasombra) unless the characters have some means to stop them. If the characters wait longer than three turns to

investigate, by the time they reach Etrius's room, the window stands open and he is gone.

If anyone phones for help from Hodge's assistants, they promise aid, which arrives within 20 minutes. By then, of course, the battle is probably over.

Assuming that the characters fend off the attack and keep Etrius from being kidnapped, they can also call Prince Benison's contacts after the fight and demand that ghouls be sent over to protect them during the day. One of Hodge's ghouls, Leslie — a huge man with a prodigious taste for Kindred blood — dispatches three ghouls with several guns to do so. The characters may sleep undisturbed. Conversely, if they don't call Prince Benison either some characters must attempt to remain awake throughout the day or trust to luck. No more attacks occur during the day. The ghouls use most of their time to board over broken windows. They explain apologetically that unless the characters want to transfer to a hotel, the prince currently has nowhere else they can stay, and the hotel is not secure.

If the Sabbat has taken Etrius, it is far too close to dawn for the characters to track them. They have to wait until the sun sets the next evening.

At some point, the characters may question how the Sabbat knew where to find them. The obvious conclusion is through someone in the prince's camp. They may suspect Sonya or one of the ghouls sent to guard them. In fact, Fairuza got to Benison's ghoul, Leslie, several nights ago and convinced him that in return for the continued unlife of his master and for his own worthless hide and a nonstop supply of vampire vitae, he should report anything out of the ordinary to her immediately. Fairuza and her pack often serve as the infamous Sascha Vykos's bodyguards. She arrived in town early to check things out and learned from Leslie that "someone important" was staying at the cottage. Two plus two made four, end of story. It matters little whether the characters figure this out and expose Leslie. That isn't their purpose here.

#### THE OPPOSITION

These are examples of the characters' opponents. If they seem overly weak or strong for your troupe's characters, simply change their generations, Traits or anything else to a more appropriate rating. Remember, however, that this is only supposed to be a feint against the characters, not take them out or put them in torpor.

#### SHOVELHEADS

These guys are newly created. They're pitiful cannon fodder, though they are surprisingly strong since Fairuza's pack contains some stronger vampires. Still, the pack members don't even know their names. They're frenzied, blood-starved thugs who haven't even had time to realize they're vampires yet. Only the applicable Traits are given.



**Clan:** varies  
**Nature:** varies  
**Demeanor:** Bravo  
**Generation:** 11 or 12  
**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3  
**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3  
**Mental:** Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2  
**Talents:** Alertness 1, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2  
**Skills:** Firearms 1, Melee 2, Security 1, Stealth 2  
**Knowledges:** Computer 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 1  
**Disciplines:** Celerity 1, Potence 1, Fortitude 1  
**Virtues:** Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 4  
**Morality:** Humanity 3  
**Willpower:** 4

#### TWO RECRUITS

These are new members of the pack who were recently created. They call themselves Rowdy and Razor. They have begun learning about the Sabbat and now work to earn themselves a place within it. They hope to become True Sabbat by proving themselves in this battle. Only the applicable Traits are given. Other pack members should be fleshed out and named by the Storyteller.

**Clan:** Brujah *antitribu*  
**Nature:** varies  
**Demeanor:** Bravo  
**Generation:** 9th  
**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3  
**Social:** Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3  
**Mental:** Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2  
**Talents:** Alertness 1, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1  
**Skills:** Drive 1, Firearms 3, Melee 3, Security 2, Stealth 2  
**Knowledges:** Computer 1, Investigation 2, Law 1, Medicine 1  
**Disciplines:** Celerity 1, Potence 1, Presence 1  
**Virtues:** Conscience 2, Self-Control 2, Courage 4  
**Morality:** Humanity 5  
**Willpower:** 6

#### THREE TRUE SABBAT

These three are proven members of Fairuza's pack. Guggenheim is a 9th generation Toreador *antitribu*, Dinaro is a 10th generation Lasombra and Flayer is a 10th generation Tzimisce. They ignore everything else going on during the attack. Their job is to kidnap Etrius. Neither Fairuza nor Sascha expects this to actually work; it's just a feint to see if Etrius recognizes that he shouldn't try to kill those that he supposedly wants to join.

These three are the most surprised of the pack if they actually succeed in capturing the Methuselah. The pertinent Traits are given. Slashes indicate the different Traits for each pack member.

**Clan:** Toreador *antitribu*/Lasombra/Tzimisce  
**Nature:** varies  
**Demeanor:** varies  
**Generation:** 9th/10th/10th  
**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3  
**Social:** Charisma 3/3/2 Manipulation 2/3/2, Appearance 3/3/4  
**Mental:** Perception 3/2/3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2/3/3  
**Talents:** Alertness 2/1/1, Athletics 2/2/3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2/3/1  
**Skills:** Drive 1, Firearms 3, Melee 3, Security 2, Stealth 2  
**Knowledges:** Computer 1, Investigation 2, Law 1, Medicine 1  
**Disciplines:** (Guggenheim) Auspex 1, Celerity 2, Presence 2 — (Dinaro) Dominate 2, Obtenebration 2 — (Flayer) Animalism 1, Auspex 1, Vicissitude 2  
**Virtues:** Conviction 2, Instinct 2, Courage 4  
**Morality:** Humanity 4  
**Willpower:** 6

## SCENE FIVE: PERILOUS DUTIES

If the characters stopped the attack and foiled the kidnapping, they may briefly meet with Prince Benison the following evening. The prince is apologetic about the attack and seems particularly solicitous of Etrius. For his part, Etrius seems distant, answering in monosyllables and clearly wanting to discharge this duty and get away. He declines an invitation to the theater, claiming pressing business elsewhere.

Once back at the house, Etrius dismisses the ghouls and tells the characters that they must attempt to bargain with Sascha on his behalf. If the characters tell Etrius that they know Tremere's spirit is inside him, he explains that he must conserve his strength for the next meeting — the one that this meeting precedes. He explains that it is absolutely essential for everyone's safety that no one else discover that he harbors Tremere's spirit within him. Otherwise, he simply tells them he always intended for them to assume this role since they are acting as his guards and assistants.

Etrius asks the characters to achieve every concession they can imagine so that they are all as protected as possible. At the least they must insist that they all act as his guards and make certain the Sabbat do not have more guards at the meeting than Etrius does. He adds, however, that if there are points that are obviously non-negotiable that they must give in and request some other concession to offset them. It is more important that the meeting take place than that they remain entirely safe or gain all the concessions they want.

Finally, he explains that Sascha is acting as a go-between to arrange a meeting between Etrius and Goratrix. If the characters were among those who escorted Goratrix to Ceoris long ago, they probably have memories of him —

good or bad depending on their interactions with him at that time. Goratrix undoubtedly remembers *them*, which gives them a far more personal stake in the mission than they might have believed.

Near midnight, a van pulls into the driveway of the cottage. Several figures emerge and make their way toward the house. This is Fairuza's pack. There should be one member for each character. If the conspiracy captured any of the pack the night before and accuse Fairuza of breaking the truce during the meeting by attacking them, she coolly replies that the meeting wasn't until tonight. She takes any prisoners they want to return but remains unconcerned if they've been killed or handed over to Hodge. Most weren't True Sabbat and every war pack knows the consequences of capture. She dismisses further talk about it and says she has brought Sascha to meet with Etrius. If they don't want to meet, she and her pack have better things to do.

Once Fairuza is convinced the site is secure, she makes a call on her cell phone and a SUV pulls up. Sascha Vykos emerges from the vehicle and walks to the cottage.

Even if the characters have met Sascha before, if they have not seen it in a while they may not recognize the disturbingly fleshcrafted Tzimisce *priscus*. Its weird alien beauty is both compelling and repulsive at the same time. Keeping their minds on the negotiations rather than simply staring in fascination at Sascha may prove difficult for the characters — particularly if any are Toreador (a Willpower roll versus difficulty 7, 8 for Toreador, requiring two successes).

Sascha expects Etrius to speak with it. Etrius manages to remain in the room and nod approval of the characters' negotiations, but says little himself. Their meeting is somewhat strained. Sascha was once a promising magus of House Tremere in the Order of Hermes. Since its Embrace into the Tzimisce clan (a result of a betrayal by Goratrix, who was jealous of the young man), Sascha has considered the Tremere its enemies — mostly because of Goratrix. Now it finds itself in the ironic position of negotiating with Etrius. It mostly liked him long ago, but is now his enemy by both clan and sect. It negotiates on behalf of her old foe Goratrix who is nominally its ally since they're both Sabbat.

On the other hand, Etrius led Sascha to believe that he is here to negotiate the defection of a conspiratorial Tremere faction from the Camarilla to the Sabbat, motivated by the recent events that have caused "schisms within the house of mystery." He implied that such a move cannot be made until he meets with Goratrix to work out their centuries-long feud. Sascha dares not cause that to fall through because of personal feelings. It means too much to the Sabbat and might fatally weaken the Camarilla, especially since the Gangrel, according to the whispers of some *antitribu*, seem perilously ready to abandon the sect as well. Etrius

lied, but could think of no other bait compelling enough to force a meeting with Goratrix. He's in no shape to try anything more covert.

Etrius remains almost impossible to read through *Auspex* both because he maintains Thaumaturgical wards against it. Besides, he is such a master of the Discipline that he knows how to defend against such intrusions. He isn't the second most powerful Tremere in the world for nothing.

Sascha tries to bargain in such a way that it places Etrius's group at a disadvantage when they meet Goratrix. Obviously, the characters should try to counter this ploy. Whatever other concessions or agreements are reached, there are three points on which Sascha has no authority to bend. He will not agree to the meeting on Goratrix's behalf unless all three are accepted:

- Goratrix insists that the meeting occur in Mexico City. Sascha has already shown the good faith of the Sabbat by coming to a nominally Camarilla city to meet with Etrius. Goratrix cannot trust that this is not some sort of trap laid by the Tremere to capture him. With the meeting on his home ground, he feels more secure.

The characters can make suggestions of other sites, plead for neutral ground or whatever else they like, but Sascha

doesn't budge. Eventually, if the talks bog down, Etrius agrees to this condition.

- Goratrix cannot be certain that Etrius doesn't have some sort of trick in mind. Therefore, Etrius himself must be physically restrained until the time of the meeting. He must either be bound and escorted to the meeting by the Black Hand or staked and transported.

There's some room for maneuvering here. The characters can get Sascha to agree to bind Etrius with manacles or other restraints, or they can convince Sascha to let Fairuza's pack escort him and go along themselves as guards to make certain the Sabbat doesn't harm Etrius on the way. If they get at least this much of a concession — no staking and no Black Hand — Etrius agrees.

- The characters must accompany Etrius to the meeting. Since they represent interests other than the Tremere faction, Sascha requires them to put their unives on the line deep in Sabbat territory. If any of the characters are Sabbat, they probably don't have a problem with this. Others may wonder if they were chosen *because* the thought of their demise does not greatly distress the Tremere. Funny how even elders sometimes feel expendable. Obviously, Etrius agrees to this. Now, the characters just have to do so too.

