

Mind's Eye Theatre

FAITH AND FIRE™

IN THE COURTS, ON THE BATTLEFIELDS

It is the Year of our Lord 1230, the hour is midnight, and all is not well. In the courts, princes thirst for territory. In the gardens, ladies twist acts of love into games of life and death. In the cloisters, zealots and heretics turn on one another. In the shadows, vampires hunt and feed, but at great peril. There are stranger things than themselves in the Dark Medieval world, and the dawn that approaches is heralded by the Inquisition's torches.

THE LONG NIGHT IS OVER

Faith and Fire is the revised edition of The Long Night, based on Dark Ages: Vampire. Here is all the new material you need to play, laid out in one place — the High and Low Clans, their strange Disciplines, the roads they tread, the courts where they play their games, and the fields where they do battle.



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PRELUDE: TO THE VICTOR, THE SPOILS

Hauknefr twisted his blade roughly, and the body before him crumpled to the ground. With a flick of the tip to his ready stance, he spun to survey the bloodied battlefield. It was silent for the moment, barring the sound of the waves that crashed almost to his feet. Their eternal rumbling had masked the cries of the guards as they fell.

"That's the last of mine," he grunted, turning to look at his companion. "Are you fin— Must you play with them?"

"Every one of them that you kill is one less than I can question," his companion said. Paulo had a survivor held in his gaze, his will locked firmly about the soldier's mind. His left hand coiled about the soldier's throat, and his right index finger had twisted a strand of his carefully curled hair. "Tidy up after yourself if you would be so kind."

Cracking his knuckles, Hauknefr set about hiding the corpses he'd strewn about. A few sparse, hardy bushes dotted the ground hereabout, but the cracks between the great rocks afforded sufficient concealment for his purposes. He hoped the sea would wash away most of the new red pools. In years to come, the bones would grind away, their powder sinking to mix with the sand far below.

Paulo finally gave an exasperated curse. "So much in there. Hopes and dreams. But there's no time now." He quickly snapped the soldier's neck between his hands and said, "Come." Gathering his wool cloak about his waist, he stepped into the tiny hut that clung, limpet-like, to the side of the cliff. Within stood a wicker cage. Ropes and spindles would bear the cage aloft with two sturdy men sweating at the winch above.

Hauknefr disposed of the last body and wiped his weapon clean before clambering in alongside. He watched as Paulo concentrated, sorting his new memories, then strummed a pattern on the thin ropes that connected the basket to the heights above.

A tense minute passed. They shared a glance. No clamor came.

"Grigori has done his part in this, at least," Hauknefr said. "No guards wait above. Let us hope he has completed the rest of his duties. I still feel it was foolish to trust him."

"It was he who infiltrated the monastery and uncovered our target's resting place. Think of the glories the prince shall shower upon us when we unravel his mystery for him! Now get that over-muscled frame working for all of us. There's a good boy."

Hauknefr grunted, then rubbed false warmth into his hands. Gripping the rope Paulo indicated, he then began to haul them both up into the darkness.

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"Silence!" Grigori had hissed in warning as he reached out with his mind to cloud them from the minds of others. By this point, he was nearly cursing aloud himself. They had not yet made it across the treacherous rocks that jutted like the broken teeth of a giant out to the blunted fang of the monastery's foundation. Thrice already, Paulo had cried out in faux-panic when his foot slipped or his hand missed a grip. Thrice, Grigori had admonished him in lisped whispers (drawing humorous looks from Hauknefr) of the perils beyond and instructed him in the need for extreme caution. Thrice, he had patiently rewoven the concealment.

Now the Norseman bore his load with ease, the hefty bundle draped across his shoulders. When they reached the cover of the forest at last, he dropped his burden and propped it against a tree.

"Careful!" Grigori snapped.

"What's the problem?" Hauknefr growled. "He's basically just bones — he doesn't feel a thing."

"Have you ever been in his position? Staked, left to dry? Do you know what that feels like? What that can do to a Cainite? Some say it drives you mad being just helpless, pathetic meat... so vulnerable. He might be awake... he might... feel and hate yet!"

"Indeed he might, so we shall keep him this way until we have the information we want," Paulo sneered. "Alright, Hauknefr. What now?"

Hauknefr crouched to test the bindings on the bundle. "I've arranged a site near the port. We'll hide him there for the duration. Remember, once we return, we must continue to go about our nightly business, or the others might suspect we're up to something."

"Suspect and try to steal our glory," Paulo added. "They'll find out eventually, but not until we're ready. Oh, I can almost taste the accolades...."

"You're too focused on yourself, and not enough on the mission."

"Don't presume that I'm as blind as you are. You sally along on your ignorant path of self-righteous 'nobility,' but you're blind! A Cainite survives on his reputation. This will *make* mine. It could make yours as well if you would only let it."

As the two exchanged plans and barbs, Grigori sat to one side, playing a game in his mind. He envisioned his place in his world as a juncture on a spider's web and looked out at the neighboring threads. Straddling each was another Cainite, some local, some distant. Each had something to offer him, and each posed a threat. Sometimes, those threads thrummed with excitement, and if he put his ear near the

sticky cable he could make out those voices. Those voices were the guides he had heard and followed since before his Embrace. Sometimes he even beat staccato rhythms in reply. He hoped that they could hear him as he heard them. He hoped they approved.

Paulo shook his shoulder and broke his trance. "We're moving," the Spaniard insisted. "It's still four miles back to the city, and the sun's not going to stay down forever."

"Your observational skills astound me," Grigori said, climbing to his feet. "Perhaps when we get to the city you can astound me once more with your capacity for silence."

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Almost all the vampires in the city had heeded the call of the prince. His ghouls had visited as many of his subjects' haunts as they knew and asked those they met to spread the word that Prince Salvatini had matters to discuss with his domain. Such a summons had occurred rarely, and several rumors were quick to form as to the reason for such a gathering.

A score or so were in attendance, and they milled about for an hour waiting to see what the prince considered so important. Hushed conversations took place in dim corners; louder ones echoed in the gardens beyond. At least one Cainite took the opportunity to rough up another, but few cared to intervene in such... personal matters. There would be no death — fear of the wrath of their prince ensured their adherence to that rule, and others — but severe beatings were well within the limits of Cainite law. Elsewhere in the gardens, vampires argued philosophy, compared tales of battle and tried to manipulate each other to their own ends.

Eventually, ghouls beckoned each group to join the prince in the dining hall, so they gathered with nervous haste. The room had mostly been cleared of its decorations, and Prince Salvatini stood before a row of five simple chairs, his being central. Behind him sat his four closest advisors, all powerful elders in their own right. He waited until his subjects had settled before he spoke.

"My valued friends," he began. "I have news of great importance."

Susurrations rose — young and ancient voices alike mixed like sand then sifted away as Salvatini raised one hand.

"You all know of the untimely demise of my sire at the hands of unknown assassins." He paused and noted the heads that nodded and the heads that shook. "A loyal coterie has recently brought me information that one of those assassins has dwelled amongst us for many years." He paused again, noting the shocked looks, genuine and carefully feigned alike. He saw his target out of the corner of his eye. "Come forward, Paulo, Hauknefr and Grigori. Present your case to my people as you have presented it to me."

The trio made their way forward to their prince's side. Grigori remained aside from his companions, seemingly distracted and glancing into the dark corners. The prince stepped back, waving for them to speak. With a grand bow, Paulo began.

"Honored Cainites," he said. "Ours is a tale grand in the telling, of danger and daring! Such were the intrigues and battles that brought us here to where we stand tonight...."

"Cut it short," Hauknefr grunted. "They'll die of old age at this rate!"

Humorless laughter scattered about the room, and Paulo blanched, his moment stolen yet again! Hauknefr stepped in front of him before he started another tirade. "We hunted down and captured another of those responsible for the death of Lord Damiano," the Brujah said. "We gained from him the knowledge that the murderer yet walks among us."

All the audience saw shadows gather behind the chairs, a miasma coiling to strike. The darkness paused. Waited.

Prince Salvatini stepped up beside Hauknefr and addressed the crowd. "All of you know my laws, and they are simple ones. If you cannot abide by them, you have the choice: leave or die." He then turned back to Paulo and said, "Make your accusation that all may hear. Quickly."

Paulo inhaled, waited a moment to extend the tension, then spoke. "Primogen Madeline is guilty of the murder of Damiano."

"Madeline has sat at my right hand for many years as my advisor," Salvatini said like a seasoned actor. "We all consider her the very paragon of loyalty to our state. What evidence can you present to me that she was complicit in the death of my sire?"

Paulo looked back to where she sat, fanned and furious at the gall of her clanmate. "Madeline," he purred. "I have a message from your accomplice: Mars is in Scorpio and the moon doth share the sun!"

At this, her eyes opened wide, and blood tears streamed down her cheeks. "Yes! No... I did not know I had killed dear God! I did it! The taste... sweet still!" She broke down sobbing in confusion.

The shadows solidified and struck. They hoisted Madeline from her chair and carried her high over the assembly. At this cue, Salvatini's ghouls stepped to the edges of the hall and snuffed torches and candles until the room was only barely lit. The tension among the crowd grew apace. No one noticed Grigori slipping toward the side door.

Madeline now hung far above them all, blackness holding her crucified in mid-air. She attempted to continue her denial, but a blob of shadow shifted to fill her mouth, muffling her cries. Salvatini's eyes glazed as his Beast pushed him further toward brutality. He felt the rush overwhelm him, and he went with it.

Paulo turned his head to Salvatini and sneered, "I believe a confession should be proof enough, my prince." He could not help the smug smile. He was still smiling when Salvatini's stake entered his heart.

A second thereafter, Hauknefr found he was entangled in the same darkness with which Madeline was held aloft. "What in Hel is this?" he roared. The captives struggled against the black bonds, but they would not yield. All Hauknefr's might could not break these strands that pulsed with the puissant power of the prince. "Kalen! Brother!"