

Brotherly Love

Settings and History Guide

I. Game Emphasis

A. Core Story Types

1. Grand Epic (The timeless struggle against the Ancients and their servants)
2. Quiet Subterfuge (Cloak and Dagger politics)
3. Lovecraftian horror

B. Themes

1. Ancient conflicts
2. Gothic mystery
3. Struggle for survival
4. Shifting alliances and unexpected bedfellows
5. Hidden Secrets

II. History

A. Introduction

“Cry Havoc, and let slip the dogs of war.” -Julius Ceasar Act 3, Scene 1

1. First, Philadelphia was a place of untouched wildness. Held by those humans who precursed European settlement. Then, with the advent of William Penn and those who followed behind him, it became one of the earliest strongholds of the Camarilla. Following the declaration of Prohibition and during the citywide resistance to the Federal government which followed, it fell into the hands of a cadre of traders made up of Setites and independent Lasombra. Finally, after the creation of the Code of Milan in 1933, the Sabbat took the city in a grand coup, a single night of bloodshed which nearly rent the Silence of the Blood with the screams of the Cainites' victims. Since that bloody night, the Sabbat have held Philadelphia in an uncontested grip. For nearly 80 years, the Sword of

Caine found no enemy in the city. Their power was unchallenged, and those who had once claimed power over the city melted away into the shadows.

Following the Red Star, however, the city of Philadelphia has begun to change. Names not spoken in decades, centuries, have been on every person's lips, with no sign or signal as to where those names were first heard. Shared nightmares keep entire neighborhoods awake in the darkest hours of the night. Enemies the Sword never knew it had are beginning to make themselves known, testing the edges of the city's power. Watching, listening, waiting for a chance to strike. Though no one has said as much, every Cainite knows that the Sword will soon find itself tempered, or shattered.

B. Current Status

1. Philadelphia has been a Sabbat city for most of a century. For one reason or another, it has enjoyed status as one of the quietest and most firmly held strongholds of the Sabbat. It is a place where the religion of Caine has flourished, and its adherents have grown used to unconditional control. As the 2017 Masquerade chronicle begins, the city has just begun to see its first opposition in recent memory. The Red Star seems to have served as a call to action for the enemies of the Sword. Control over the city is no longer a sure thing, and only the neighborhood of Center City can truly be said to be under firm Sabbat rule. Chaos reigns in the outer parts of the city, and safety is a thin illusion at best. Fortunately, as even the freshest shovelhead knows, Chaos is a ladder.

C. Venue Timeline

1. Philadelphia is a city suffused with history. Home to the foundation of the United States, the site of many of the nascent country's most historic moments, a center of arts and communities for the East Coast, Philadelphia has been a hotbed of activity since William Penn first planted a flag. Of course, where humans congregate, vampires flourish.

The first humans to live in the area were Natives of the Lenape tribe. They held the territory for centuries, uncontested and largely unconcerned with the events of the world around them. The Lenape took part in the First Nations government, working in coordination with other Amerind tribes in order to govern their mutual territories. Until the first European colonies arrived to drive them away from their ancestral home, there is no evidence that Vampires ever set foot in the area. However,

not long after the first colonizing ships landed on the Eastern shores, European “settlers” began the bloody process of pushing the Natives off of their land. Philadelphia was one of the areas most affected, with all members of the Lenape tribe either killed or exiled into places which the newcomers had not extended their grasp.

Following the ouster of the Natives, European colonizers set about bringing their notions of civilization into fruition. They built homes in the English style, though with their own “rugged” inclinations. They founded societies, clubs, and organizations. Business and industry came to Philadelphia like parasitic species, destroying the last vestiges of the wilderness which once dominated. While the settlers were planting the seeds of American history, the Kindred of the Camarilla were following suit. While their enemies in the Sabbat were busy squabbling in civil war, the members of the Ivory Tower took advantage of the burgeoning society to deeply enmesh themselves in Philadelphia’s foundations. Literally, in some cases. More than one building has been rumored to provide an impressive epitaph for a sleeping ancient.

Philadelphia spent well over two hundred years in the grip of the Camarilla, from its founding in 1681, the Tower was the undisputed master of its territory. The Prince of the city, Antonious of Sparta, was a famed and lethal warrior of Clan Ventrue. A Crusader respected even in the times when members of that Bloodline were widely regarded as aberrant monsters, he enjoyed the patronage of House Vilya, an ancient and noble house of the parent Clan which ensured that no one opposed his reign for long. He destroyed those few foolish enough to attempt usurpation, and held the Tower’s ideals as absolute truth. Only once did the Sabbat attempt to take his city from him. In the midst of the American civil war (1863), while the Prince and his associates were busy managing the city and keeping the populace under control, an army of Cainites struck. Nearly a dozen packs, each noted for its bloodthirsty (and soul-thirsty) membership, attacked the city at once. A hundred of Caine’s most lethal and powerful soldiers sought to bring holy fire down upon a Prince of the Tower, with sword and claw they struck, and the city struck back.

The Prince and his coterie, the very existence of which had previously been nothing more than a rumor, stepped from his Haven in the Presidential House just when the fighting reached its apex. The seven Kindred, Elders all, six of whom had never been seen in the city of Philadelphia, traveled through the streets of the city like a cleansing rain. Wherever a Cainite stood against them, that Cainite was ashed. They

slaughtered the packs en masse, until only a handful of the soldiers still walked the earth. The shattered Sabbat fled, and for more than a century the memory of Antonius' Walk kept the Sword of Caine at bay.

The Sabbat assault had an effect on the city despite its failure. The sudden discovery of 6 powerful and ancient Elders in the city caused a deep rift between the Prince and his previous allies. House Vilya knew nothing of these Kindred, it appeared, and its leaders were not pleased to discover that the Prince in which they had invested so heavily had managed to conceal the might of his other allegiances. The House withdrew its support of the Prince, though that fact was known only to its membership. In public, they continued to offer advice and support, but in private they began setting plans in motion to topple their warrior-Prince.

One of these plans, neither the most ambitious or the most actively pursued, eventually bore fruit. A shipping company led by several independent members of the Lasombra Clan had long been operating in the area. They were one of the very few organizations which could successfully deal with any Sect or society without fear of destruction. They bought goods from the Camarilla on one night and sold them to the Sabbat on the next. A neonate of House Vilya put these Lasombra in contact with a local contingent of Setites. Through unknown means, this neonate managed to broker a deal which resulted in a firm alliance between the two groups. Working in unison, the two Clans founded the Eastern Sea Shipping Company. The ESSC enjoyed the same patronage which had once favored Prince Antonius. The deep pockets and powerful influences of House Vilya gave them access to possibilities they had never before encountered.

Over the course of several decades, the leaders of this company became the masters of the Eastern seaboard. They built what could only be called an armada of trading vessels, each of which secretly bore at least one member of the allied Clans aboard its deck. When the leading council finally judged their creation powerful enough, they fulfilled their agreement with House Vilya. The Prince's Coterie, which had returned to hiding after Antonius' Walk, were discovered in their secret resting place, and when the sun rose the morning of June 6, 1921, it did so on the unprotected forms of 7 ancient Kindred.

The rest of the Court was given a choice at that time, flee to some other Camarilla stronghold, be destroyed with their Prince, or join with the ESSC. Most fled, but some few rats deserted the ship and joined with the ESSC, strengthening its numbers and helping the management to

quickly take power within the city. While they did so, however, the ESSC delivered a shock to their erstwhile allies. House Vilya was Camarilla, they explained, and would get the same choice as the rest of the Camarilla. Leave, join, or die. Some members of the House took umbrage at the arrogance of these Independents and attempted to fight back. Those Kindred died almost immediately, not at the hands of the Independent invaders, but by those who had so recently been Camarilla, eager to prove their allegiance to this new organization.

The ESSC didn't hold sway over the city for long, however. Just a few years after they came to power, their leaders realized that there was far more profit to be had sailing than ruling, and that owning a city was more trouble than it was worth. Management and their favored lieutenants withdrew from running the city and left the night-to-night control in the hands of middle management. Similarly, among the rank-and-file, the majority of their Lasombra membership elected to return to the waters where they felt at home, leaving the city largely under the control of the Setites. This course of events was agreeable to everyone involved, the Setites had no interest in the business aspects of rule, and the Lasombra felt no particular draw toward ruling a city they already felt they owned. This lack of interest turned out to be their saving grace.

In 1933, still stung by the memories of Antonious' Walk, the Sword of Caine decided to try their hand at conquering once more. Many of those who had traveled from across the world to witness the signing of the Code of Milan, accompanied by shovelheads and nomadic packs, agreed to wage war against the now-Independent city of Philadelphia. This time, rather than charging headfirst, the Packs acted with caution, learning the activities and meeting places of their enemies. Finally, at the end of a particularly raucous gathering, full of extreme displays and frivolous activities, the Sabbat struck. The Setites were largely depleted and exhausted from their revelry, and woefully unprepared for the assault. Two dozen Serpents died that night, and none escaped.

Crowing their victory from the rooftops, the Children of Caine went forth to sweep the Lasombra to the sea. Unexpectedly, the Lasombra were awaiting them. Rather than attempt to do battle, the surviving Management of the ESSC struck a deal. They would assist the new leaders of the city, offering free transport and maintaining maritime dominance, as well as assisting the nascent Diocese in taking control and rooting out the surviving Setites, and in exchange they would be allowed to survive. Its members chose to follow their Clan in finally taking the Vaulderie, though they maintained that keeping a public perception

of independence would make them a better asset to the Sword. Finally, the Diocese agreed to the terms, though with promises to destroy the ESSC en masse should this new "Pack" attempt any duplicity. Since then, the ESSC has rebranded slightly, taking over all maritime activity in the city. They are now simply the Eastern Seaboard Company (ESC), and they offer everything from party boats to intercontinental shipping, to bahamian cruises. The ESC is still looked at askance, as they rarely attend Esbat and are believed to only take the Vaulderie when absolutely necessary. However, they have never been late with a payment to the Diocese, and have provided excellent service for nearly a century.

Since the year 1933, the Sabbat have held sway. Between 1933 and 1999, the residents of Philadelphia rarely had to worry about external conflict; and its occasion was always swiftly and easily ended. Philadelphia became a place of easy living and easier dying. Even the humans found some semblance of happiness. They were still prey animals, still hunted, but being hunted by a single apex predator proved considerably less destructive than being used as pawns in constant warfare.

After the week of nightmares and the nights of turmoil, however, the city has begun to change. Humans are warier, moving in groups and avoiding anyone they don't personally know. Gang violence has reached an all-time high, and police response is widely regarded as a myth. Even the always-profitable ESC has found itself in difficult times. Rumors reach Cainite ears that perhaps their Setite adversaries weren't so fully eradicated as believed, and perhaps some members of the long-dead Camarilla court still call the city their home. Other rumors, of humans snatched up in the night and carried off to horrific fates, of businesses which are always open, always empty, yet always full of wares for sale, of strange visions in the city's parks which are at once impossible and commonplace, are surely just the result of overactive imaginations and the new wash of occultism and religion sweeping the city. Surely there's no truth to such things.

Surely.