



# Ashen Cults™

AD 1215

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VAMPIRE CREATED BY MARK REINHAGEN

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## ABOUT THE DATES

**Ashen Cults**, like **Bitter Crusade** and **Iberia by Night** before it, is marked on the title page with a date, indicating the assumed “present” of the supplement. **Dark Ages** is advancing from it’s longstanding start date of AD 1197 and these dates are here to help you keep track. Almost all the material in **Ashen Cults** is usable as is in 1197 or at any other time in which you want to set your **Dark Ages** game. There are a few parts that portray aftereffects of events in **Bitter Crusade**, however. Hence, the 1215 date.

Just thought, you’d all want to know.



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# Patron Saint of Lies

O cunning enemy,  
that, to catch a saint,  
With saints dost bait thy hook!  
- William Shakespeare,  
Measure for Measure.

It had always been dark, and wet, and often cold for us. After all, I have often heard visitors from other countries claim how dour and phlegmatic we Poles are. Surely, something must be to blame for our defeated disposition, and the weather should bear its own share of the responsibility for making us who we are.

But it is more than the cold and wet that makes us look over our shoulders after dark. I understand the night people have traveled all across Europe. Nowhere, though, do I suspect that they have had such a shuddersome effect on the uncursed folk as they have here in Krakow. Even in those blighted lands beyond the forest, where the witches still prowl the night openly, the average man knows that his lord and master is a dreadful monster. Here, we are a worldly people. It is with a dry mouth that, by day, we smile at the assertion that the blood-drinkers walk among us, while, at night, we leave a dram of salt on the eaves so that the upier will pass us by. We know all too well that such things can only be shrugged or cried away, as was the case with Grezgorz, who lived near the chapel, and my own brother over a dozen years ago. The night marauders take as they will.

Yes, the vampires have come here, too. Usually, we can stop our own from joining them, but too often, our hands are tied if one alights upon Krakow from abroad or a man is so wicked that burying him face-down doesn't prevent him from digging his way back up from the grave.

A good man — a just man — will never become one of these upier, and God willing, he will never have to suffer their touch. Krakow is a modern city, though, and home to the greatest market in all of Christendom. I will not lie to you and claim we are saints. Almost all of us are stained with the filth of the earth from some deed or another, some crooked transaction or some declivity of character that

moral men proscribe but the rest of us, in our simplicity, indulge.

It was on such a wet, cold, dark night that I myself ran afoul of the vampire. By trade, I am a saltcutter. I am responsible for a few dozen men, who take the raw salt mined by the workers and prepare it for use. I supervise my men when they break the salt from the heavy blocks in which it arrives, and I take it to the market, where I sell it or trade it. It is not a glamorous trade, but it is a necessary one. Without me, the people would not have this precious spice with which to cure their meats or season their foods. I would not have guessed that a vampire would have need of salt, owing to the fact that their kind subsist on blood and not on meat, but their kind are cagey and unknowable. I knew that I dealt with one of the night people when he arrived at my hall — he had no cloud of breath, as did I in the cold, wet air, and his eyes never blinked. His exposed skin was smooth and pale, like alabaster, and not ruddy or rough like that of my men and I.

I had just closed the cutting hall for the evening when this unholy guest arrived. The men had all taken their leave, and I was putting the last of the day's cut in bags on the shelves, to be gathered and taken to market the next morning. I have before been in the habit of selling after hours — while technically against the principles of the market, I am not so cruel a man as to turn away a wife who needs salt for her family's evening meal.

This, however, was no mild wife. I have noted before his pale skin and his unmoving breast. Those details, though, were minor compared to his gaze and the predator's mien with which he appraised me once he had quietly closed the door.

I honestly thought that I was to die then. This wicked creature, crawled out of the