

WARHAMMER™
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ROLE-PLAY

SYLVANIA THE CURSED COUNTY

A GUIDE TO THE EMPIRE'S MOST FORSAKEN PROVINCE

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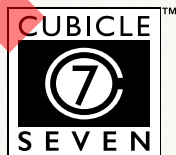
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♦ INTRODUCTION ♦

VENTURING INTO THE DARK

WELCOME TO SYLVANIA

'The Sylvania problem... it clings to Stirland like a canker, nothing but miles of tangled forest, dismal swamps, and wretched little townships. The peasants are superstitious, the nobles faded, and trying to tax it is like getting blood from a stone. If Stirland is to stand alongside the great provinces of the Empire, then we must handle our association with Sylvania carefully — but in truth I'd rather be shot of the whole ghoulish place.'

— Stirmarshal Haygich, Regent of Stirland, serving Alberich V

Crouching on the far east border of the Empire, lurking in the shadows of the Worlds Edge Mountains, lies the cursed county of Sylvania. Ancient, decrepit, and yet still grand, the wilds of Sylvania have a savage beauty, while its crumbling towns speak of a past era of finery and conquest. Its rivers, once flowing with goods that would feed the Empire and enrich the county, are now plied only by sullen riverwardens and bobbing corpses.

The fertile hills and chalk downs have been stripped of ore and minerals, lying barren and haunted only by the most wretched of creatures. The grand old capital of Waldenhof moulders as its rulers grow paranoid and its citizens ever more fearful — while back west its ostensible rulers in the Grand County of Stirland seek to exploit what little remains.

In truth though, Sylvania is ruled over by other masters, and their plans unfold over the course of generations...

Akin to those true masters, Sylvania is dead and yet it still lurches on, immortal and forever hungry. The populace are careful to never speak of the vanished creatures that once ruled these lands, speaking instead of dark ones, the nobility, lords of the night, each euphemism a shield against the awful truth — vampires. To the folk of this era, the von Carsteins are nothing more than reclusive nobility, and vampires are stories to scare children.

The truth of vampires, and even the certainty of their existence, has faded into a muddled past. Superstitions about them persist, an indelible part of Sylvanian culture, but few now live who know that tales of a nobility who could not die, who raised armies of the dead, and who took their taxes in blood as well as gold are entirely true. Folk hurry home before dark to hang witchbane above the door, sprinkle salt before the windows and clutch the symbol of the Twin-Tailed Comet. The dead walk fast, as the Sylvanians say, and everyone knows to mind their own business when someone vanishes in the night.



Hunger and Paranoia, the Constant Companions

Sylvania's landscape is harsh and unwelcoming. Its forests are impenetrable warrens of thick pines and ancient oaks, while the marshes and fens hide all manner of secrets beneath their murky waters. The near-constant cloud cover rolling off the mountains renders meager sunlight into gloom, and at night the roads are scarcely lit by the light of Mannslieb. Towns and villages are fortified with walls to keep the known safe within and the unknown safely without.

The dour and secretive nature of the land is reflected in the common folk of Sylvania. Theirs is a legacy of hardship, with the smaller villages scraping by on subsistence farming, and the larger towns exporting a limited amount of hardy Sylvanian wool and vegetables. Outsiders are not welcomed by the native Sylvanians. Strangers rarely know how to survive in its wilds, or the unspoken traditions and rituals that keep the undead at bay. Even when they mean no harm, they are liable to stumble into places where the Sylvanians know not to go.

Those visiting Sylvania soon find themselves suffering the same hesitancy and paranoia. Travel is difficult however you go about it, and competent guides are in short supply. The most reliable route, travelling via the Stir river, passes through the mire of Hel Fenn, the battlefield still patrolled by those long dead. The roads are beset by bandits and cutthroats, who prey on the unwary for survival. What safety can be found in taverns or coaching inns comes with the constant glower of suspicion, awful food, and watery ale. Sylvania guards its own, and does not take kindly to strangers.

Deprived Nobility

A few noble families still cling on in Sylvania; most notably the Stolpes, the Bundebacks and the mortal von Carsteins. They rule from small townships, drawing a pittance in tax from the few subsistence villages that surround their little fiefs. They typically dwell in run-down draughty manor houses, served by a small staff, and tend towards becoming recluses — few administrative matters bother them and pleasurable diversions are hard to find within their demenses.

The Stolpes are considered the rising power of the Sylvanian families, in as much as any can be said to wield influence. They claim their town of Leicheburg lies within Stirland proper, but even the most lowly of Stir nobles know they are over the dark border. Nevertheless, their patriarch Petr von Stolpe is attempting to make his domain worthy of the Empire, with a burgeoning export business of native Sylvanian wool.

The Bundebacks vacillate between the old ways and the new. They are in truth an old von Carstein scion line, but they have sided with the Stirlanders on more than one occasion, attempting to drag Sylvania into the modern age. Countess Gabriella von Bundeback however is whispered to be *'of the blood'* as some put it, and her true motivations and allegiance are known only to her own august person.

The von Carsteins are the most ancient of all the families in Sylvania, their line burnt into the land in both word and deed. Legend tells of a time the von Carsteins waged war against the Empire, though scarce few believe the more fanciful myths of those conflicts and the dread armies that walked under the progenitor of the line, Vlad von Carstein. For all the whispers and stories of the von Carsteins' true nature, they are well liked by the common people — they represent stability against the myriad dangers that threaten the land, and the taxes are always fair. Though no one has seen the current Count von Carstein in years, the people view him with near reverence.

THE VAMPIRE WARS

Beginning with the waning of the von Drak family and the rise of Vlad von Carstein, the Vampire Wars changed Sylvania forever by the time of their conclusion a hundred years later. The two families had been united in 1797 IC with the death of Otto von Drak and the wedding of Vlad and Isabella, but it wasn't until 2010 IC that Vlad rode to war against the Empire, determined to become its first undead ruler. Vlad's seeming immortality led him to claim a great many victories, until he was finally stopped by the theft of the ring that bore his essence. Sylvania could have been crushed at the end of the first war in 2051 IC, but the Empire fell to infighting as Ludwig, Elector Count of Reikland, attempted to use his victories to claim the throne.

Vlad's rule was inherited by his mad son Konrad, who matched his father in bloodthirsty power, but not in tactical acumen. The second Vampire War was less of a military conflict and more a series of raids as Konrad rampaged across the Empire — which ended when he suffered the ignominious death of being hacked to pieces by Thane Grufbad and Helmar of Marienburg.

Vlad's true inheritor rose with the Third War, when Mannfred von Carstein returned from years of wandering and study to claim his father's title. Mannfred was an equal tactician to his father, and by the end of the Third War it took a coalition of elves and men, as well as Grand Theogonist Kurt III of the cult of Sigmar to drive him back to Sylvania. The Vampire Wars ended in the climatic Battle of Hel Fenn, in which Mannfred was slain and his body lost.



KRUGENHEIM

HUNDERSHEIMER
WALD

TOMBIE
MARCHES

DEAD WOOD

THE EIRIE
DOWNS

HUNGER
WOOD

GRIM WOOD

GRIM
MOOR

DARK
MOOR

DRAKENHOENZUG

WARTENHOF
VER BOGENWALD

HELL FENN

WADENHOF

MESSINGHOF

ESCHEN

RECKHOF

MORRENN

KONIGSTEIN

LEICHBURG

SWARTZHAHN

CHOUL
WOOD

BYLORHOF MARSH

AVER REACH

AVER REACH

AVER REACH

AVER REACH

AVER REACH

THE WORLD'S EDGE
MOUNTAINS

FENNONHÜGEL



0 miles 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

