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Perveniet Calix

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Perveniet Calix

—Ryan Macklin

*Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom,
that dwellest in the land of Uz; to you also,
the cup shall be passed.*

—Lamentations 4:21

Nutshell

The Dukes of Edom, chief operatives of a deep conspiracy within MI6, are tasked with the impossible: harness a medieval vampire for the 21st Century's shadow wars. Now rogue agents—and your fellow Dukes—are making the impossible even worse.

This DramaSystem pitch is based on the opposition force in the *Dracula Dossier* known as Edom. You can play this alongside a *Dracula Dossier* campaign or as an entirely separate storyline.

Setting

The *Dracula Dossier Director's Handbook* provides considerable details on Edom and its operatives; pages 49–54 in that book give you plenty of information... from a *Night's Black Agents* point of view. But to its Dukes, this isn't a sinister conspiracy -- it's a necessary duty and burden: protecting the world from the revelation of supernatural terror, while fighting to coax the devastating force that is Dracula toward Britain's enemies.

Night's Black Agents protagonists – burned spies and other shadow players -- consider this treason against all humanity. But to Edom, those rogue agents are a threat to every man, woman, and child on the planet. The only sensible option is to manipulate Dracula's power structure to steer him away from Britain and Edom's other self-appointed charges, while handling vampiric rampages as quickly and quietly as possible. The ends justify the means when the ends involve preserving life, freedom, and prosperity.

What separates the Dukes of Edom from rabble-rousing burned agents is simple but fundamental: the Dukes *know* that Dracula can't be destroyed. The destruction of Dracula is a ruse; the fiend always comes back. Trying to end him is folly that will get good and innocent people killed, all the while risking the truth being revealed to an unprepared world.

Let that sink in for a moment: You know Dracula is real. You know what he can do. And you know *he can't be killed*. What else can you do but try to steer him, no matter how impossible that might be? To every Duke of Edom, it is utterly irresponsible to not take up this heavy mantle once you know the truth. To shirk this duty and pursue some quixotic dream of staking the king of vampires isn't just folly—it actively invites the death of everyone you love.

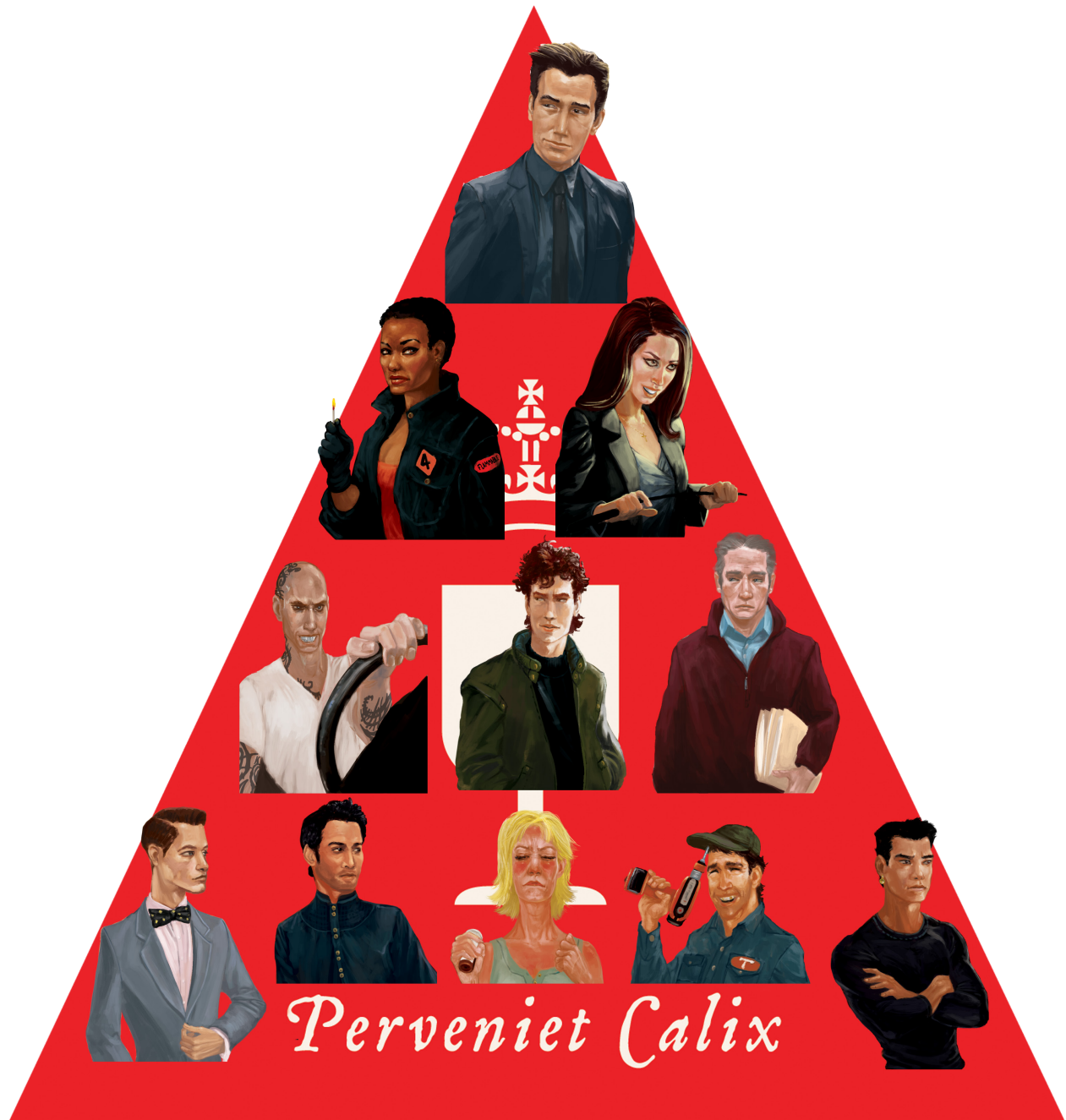
Welcome to MI6's proudest and most secret tradition. Welcome to Edom.

Characters

The eleven Dukes of Edom are, as detailed on p. 50 of the *Director's Handbook*: Elvis, Fort, Hound, Ian, Nails, Oakes, Osprey, Pearl, Prince, Tinman, and Tyler.

Other Characters

- The 1894 vampire (p. 54 of the *Director's Handbook*)
- A burned Edom agent trying to get back into Edom's graces
- An MI6 agent in the dark, poking around where they shouldn't
- A high-value asset who knows enough about the conspiracy to be dangerous, but is also valuable and (at least initially) reliable
- A friendly NPC from your *Dracula Dossier* game, who is playing both sides



for their own reasons or is trying to play Edom to help the *Dracula Dossier* PCs.

- A personal relationship—family, friend, lover—who’s in the dark about vampires

Three Cast Modes

Perveniet Calix centers on the Dukes of Edom, described in some detail in p. 50–53 of the *Director’s Handbook*. There are three modes of casting your *Perveniet Calix* game:

- **No Pawns:** Every player character is a Duke.
- **Edom Cell:** One or two PCs are Dukes. The others are assets, different conspirators, or significant players in their own right.
- **A Hard Life:** One PC is a Duke, and others are people in the Duke’s life—assets, foils, or family and friends in the dark.

The **No Pawns** mode works best either as a one- or two-session interlude, or as a reaction to a major victory the *Dracula Dossier* PCs just made against Edom. No Pawns is difficult as a sustained campaign, since DramaSystem needs PCs to keep being in scenes with each other, and the Dukes of Edom aren’t a team of field agents. They have discrete operational or geographic mandates. Also keep in mind that a DramaSystem game thrives on inter-PC conflict and need, which could also cause Edom to drift apart or become frayed beyond what your *Dracula Dossier* PCs do.

For example, Elvis might appear in scenes outside of the Balkans, but spending several sessions away from his network is counter to his duty. Fort and Tinman may travel somewhere to oversee an experimental device they’ve built, but “D” will want them back to doing their core job rather than playing field agent for long. The most mobile Dukes—like Ian, Nails, and Pearl—won’t stay in one place for too long, as Edom’s needs span Europe and beyond. And Prince doesn’t leave her home or have natural reasons to be in a scene with others (except perhaps via video conferencing). That said, Elvis, Hound, Oakes, Osprey, and Tyler could all operate out of a Bucharest safe house with guest appearances by other Dukes, or a *Perveniet Calix* series could center on Ring or Carfax (*Director’s Handbook*, pp. 172-176 and pp. 185-188) with Oakes, Tinman, Fort, Osprey, and a Skype-or-text

virtual Prince as central cast members.

The **Edom Cell** mode works for a longer-term campaign, especially if interwoven back and forth with an ongoing *Dracula Dossier* game, but it also works as a stand-alone dark conspiracy thriller. In this mode, you’re playing an Edom cell with a broad mandate or specific objective, which is just the narrative vehicle for characters in constrained relationships to have challenging needs and wants with each other. Start by choosing your Duke, and build the network around them: subordinates, assets, civilians, or wildcards like ex-Edom agents or the Edomite’s lover leading a double life. Look at the Asset versions in the *Director’s Handbook People* section (1977 and 2011 especially: pp. 89-101 and 102-137) for possible characters or recurring GMCs.

A Hard Life works off of DramaSystem’s strengths as a system for tight-focus stories of interpersonal drama. Edom doesn’t consume 100% of every Duke’s life, though it does come close. Maybe Oakes remarried a few years ago and now has a toddler, or Hound’s brother is constantly getting into trouble with gambling debts. Dukes aren’t always solely driven by idealism or antisocial urges—they can have personal, living reasons for fighting this dark but necessary war. And of course, everyone in a Duke’s life is a potential target for Dracula or for the *Night’s Black Agents* PCs. This mode plays on those pressures, and is the mode most disconnected from the events of going on in your *Dracula Dossier* campaign.

Or mix the Edom Cell and A Hard Life modes by blending those cast ideas into one game.

Themes

- **Loyalty:** Edom demands loyalty. Nations demand loyalty. Your cover demands loyalties. You demand loyalty of your assets and subordinates, and hope for loyalty among the other Dukes. The web of loyalties stretches everyone thin. What loyalties do you have that pull at you?
- **Hunger:** The literal hunger of vampires is matched by the metaphorical hunger of mortals. Dukes are ambitious—they seek power, thrills, or to leave a lasting

mark on the world. Everyone in their lives has something they yearn for, whether it's as grand as Edom's vision or as simple as craving another person's lifestyle or body themselves. What do you hunger for? What's keeping you from feasting?

- **Duplicity:** Everyone lies. Everyone keeps secrets. At the same time, everyone wants in on another's secret. Edomites play close to the vest, which means lying to the people in their lives. Surely, those people lie right back, making a Duke's home life a minefield of deception. What lies do you tell others? What do others tell you that certainly couldn't be lies?
- **Sins for the Greatest Good:** The souls of Dukes are stained as they commit sins against men to save all Mankind. Some are small sins, like getting someone fired so you can plant an asset in their place. Some are massive: betraying the rest of MI6 or murdering for the cause. It's always for the greatest good, so Edom says. What sins stain your soul? What sins do you swear you'll never commit?
- **Life Beyond Edom:** It's rare that someone in the Edom conspiracy is devoted 100% to the cause. People have lives outside of Edom, whether that's a family, some mates at the local pub, a mistress in Belarus, a former SAS team mate who always needs money, or a penchant for spending time at the local tobacconist. What's that life for your character?

Tightening the Screws

Foremost, use the actions of the *Dracula Dossier* PCs to tighten the screws of your *Perveniet Calix* game. That's part of the fun, as players get to feel the aftermath of their actions from the other side. But there's more to *Perveniet Calix* than some burned spies trying to bring you down, including:

- The betrayal of someone close, either personally close or close to an Edom operation
- Someone using leverage to blackmail
- A *small* secret revealed, or a *big* secret threatened
- A minor asset murdered, with little

evidence on who did it

- A new vampire appears
- Dracula commits some new outrage, testing Edom's control
- Emotions getting in the way—most of us are human, after all
- A rival conspiracy – CIA? FSB? -- pokes its head into an operation
- Someone personally or operationally important is turned, by Dracula or by the *Night's Black Agents* PCs

Names

The *Names at your Fingertips* section starting on p. 138 of the *Director's Handbook* has many names for British, Germanic, and various Eastern European nationalities.

Secret Phrases & Symbols

Some Edom passwords and challenge phrases come from Biblical references to Edom, either in Latin or (mostly among London operatives) from the King James edition.

From Deuteronomy 23:7: *Non abominaberis Idumeum* as the challenge phrase, with *Quia frater tuus est* as the password. "Thou shalt not abhor the Edomite, for he is thy brother." (The countersign is never Biblical.)

The Edom flash is a drop and a cup: this might be chalked graffiti near a dead drop, or a blaze cut into a Transylvanian hemlock, a tattoo over the jugular, or an informal callsign: "Want a cup?" "I could do with a drop."

Red is an iconic color, from the story of how Esau received the name Edom in Genesis 25:30: "And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom." (*Ait da mihi de coctione hac rufa quia oppido lassus sum quam ob causam vocatum est nomen eius Edom*)

Other passages used by Edomites include Numbers 20:18, 1 Kings 22:47, 2 Kings 3:8, Isaiah 63:1, Jeremiah 49:8, Lamentations 4:21, and Ezekiel 25:14.

Crossing the Streams

Playing *Perveniet Calix* alongside your *Dracula Dossier* game presents some interesting challenges to the spy thriller and mystery story that is a *Night's Black Agents* campaign. GUMSHOE and DramaSystem have different

focuses—the former about characters together against a common mysterious force, and the latter about characters divided by what they want from each other. You won't get far playing your *Night's Black Agents* game like a dramatic ensemble TV show cast, and you won't get far playing *Perveniet Calix* with all the protagonists setting aside their differences and individual desires to take on Dracula and your *Night's Black Agents* PCs.

Timing & Structure

How often you play *Perveniet Calix* alongside your *Dracula Dossier* sessions greatly influences both games. Interleaving them session-by-session gives a slow tempo to the conspiracy, perhaps as each side edges closer to a dramatic confrontation. Playing *Perveniet Calix* sessions after *Dracula Dossier* cliffhanger moments adds suspense and a layer of context. Or you can use *Perveniet Calix* to bookend your *Dracula Dossier* game, playing some sessions before your *Night's Black Agents* campaign, and the conclusion afterward, with appropriate time lapse.

Or play your DramaSystem game as a one-shot at the conclusion of a *Dracula Dossier* arc, showing how the conspiracy reacts and adapts to your *Night's Black Agents* PCs. This is a fun way to foreshadow elements of a follow-up *Dracula Dossier* arc.

Key Advice

Keep the biggest secrets off-screen until discovered. Don't reveal "D," Dracula, or others in your *Perveniet Calix* series until they've been revealed in your *Dracula Dossier* game. Treat it as though it's a mystery or just utterly taboo for the Dukes to mention anything about "D," etc. Even once they're discovered, use them sparingly, and keep their presence from revealing more secrets that players in the *Dracula Dossier* game are yearning to uncover.

Watch out for on-screen appearances of the other cast. Once someone starts playing a character, they can have weird feelings when the GM plays that character in the opposing game. Voices and mannerisms feel "off," actions or dialogue may violate that player's sense of her character, and—most of all—there can be the temptation on both sides to severely harm or kill a GMC in one game who's a PC in another, or worse, to grant such figures unwarranted "script

immunity."

Beware of information bleed. Part of the fun in playing *Night's Black Agents* is unraveling the threads of the Conspyramid. Since you're playing Dukes of Edom and other "insider" characters in *Perveniet Calix*, everyone knows at least some element of what they're going to unravel. It might take some of the fun out of the mystery for the players, and makes some interesting GM tools harder to use—over-introducing information that turns out to be red herrings, calling for Investigative spends in scenes for extended information, and so on. Vice versa, if you're playing *Perveniet Calix* and want to ham up the mysterious nature of these rogue operatives. If your *Dracula Dossier* PCs are dealing with Edom head-on, this could be a problem. If the focus is elsewhere, then playing *Perveniet Calix* works more as a second lens into the overarching story.

Spin off the games if you need to. If people are enjoying the DramaSystem but aren't comfortable with *Perveniet Calix* feeding back into their *Dracula Dossier* game (notably with Edom successes the make the rogue agents' mission tougher), make it a spin-off: nothing that happens in one game is canon for the other, though certainly mine cool moments in each game to use in the other as inspiration strikes.

Other Ways to Play *Perveniet Calix*

You can play this as a standalone game that doesn't tie into any ongoing *Dracula Dossier* campaign, of course. Or play some sessions of *Perveniet Calix* as a prologue—a novel way to start a *Dracula Dossier* game. And should your *Dracula Dossier* party suffer cruelly and ultimately perish at the hands of Edom (or Dracula), playing a *Perveniet Calix* game could make for a fascinating capstone.

You can also run *Perveniet Calix* with one group of players, and its linked *Dracula Dossier* game with another group. The actions in each game can influence the others, and should they become irreconcilably divergent—especially if a PC in one is killed in the other—then you simply split them into independent narratives, using the events in one as inspiration for the other.