

# IUN

## International Upire News

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**Catalunya (Catalonia)**

*Països Catalans (Catalan Nations)*

## Croatian 'Dracula' revived to lure tourists

As evening mist slowly embraces this village in the heart of Croatia's picturesque Istrian peninsula, a few young enthusiasts gather in a bar trying to revive the legend of a 17th century local Dracula.

Sitting in a red velvet chair in the "Vampire" bar, decorated with garlic wreaths and lamps with crosses, Mladen Rajko explains how local tourist authorities launched a project last year called "Jure Grando, the Vampire from Kringa".

"No one is claiming that vampires or evil forces exist, all we want is to promote a documented legend in order to boost what we can offer tourists," says Rajko, 28, head of the nearby municipality of Tinjan.

Croatia is already a hotspot destination for foreigners with some ten million tourists -- more than the double the local population -- visiting the beautiful Adriatic coast of the Balkan country last year.

The first document on Grando, dating back to the 17th century, was written by his contemporary Janez Vajkard Valvasor, a Slovenian travel writer and historian.

In his 15-tome work "The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola", which was published in 1689 in Germany Valvasor tells the story heard when he visited Kringa.

According to the legend, for 16 years after his death and burial Grando terrorised his former fellow-villagers, notably his widow.

At night he wandered the area knocking on the doors of houses, many of whose inhabitants later died, it said.

The lustful demon paid regular visits to his widow, forcing her to continue fulfilling her marital duties.

Eventually, in 1672 a group of nine local men decided that they had to put an end to the menace.

Upon opening his grave they saw Grando, his body intact, smiling at them.

After the first attempt to drive a hawthorn stake through his corpse failed because the wood rebounded, the bravest of the nine eventually managed to decapitate the body, bringing to an end Grando's reign of terror, the legend said.

"Grando already has all the characteristics of future literary vampires -- who appear some 150 years later -- he is a cynic, challenges both civil and church authorities and is sexually active," explains Boris Peric, a writer who investigated the issue.

"The story was later taken and quoted by various authors from theologians to historians," he said, adding that German writer Herman Hesse published an account of Grando in an anthology early in the 20th century.

Peric says he believes Grando served as one of the models for his future literary counterparts, possibly even for Irish writer Bram Stoker's "Dracula", which is said to be inspired by cruel Romanian Prince Vlad Tepes the Impaler.

Although the legend of the "Istrian vampire" -- in local language called "strigun" -- never died, Grando's name was slowly forgotten, he explained.

The story gradually returned to prominence after Croatia's first edition of Stoker's "Dracula" in 1999, as Valvasor's story was mentioned in a preface written by Peric.

In August last year, eight months after its opening, the "Vampire" bar hosted the first exhibition linked with the legend.

This year, the bar has monthly "Vampire Nights" featuring appearances by horror literature writers, while a science fiction and horror literature festival will be staged in Kringa on August 11.

A plaque to the memory of the nine courageous villagers who defeated the demon will be also unveiled, Rajko says, adding the event would start with a symbolic blood donation drive.

However, those promoting the legend are aware that they have to do it rather cautiously as they still face opposition in the small conservative community, notably from the elderly and the Church.

Kringa, a typical Istrian village whose stone houses fight for space at the top of a hill surrounded by forest trees, is located about a dozen kilometres (six miles) southwest of the central Istrian town of Pazin.

The younger generation in Kringa, which has around 300 inhabitants, are the most supportive of the idea to make the village a destination for Dracula fans.

AFP, 24 Apr

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## Vampire arrest warrant

Authorities have issued an arrest warrant for the 15-year-old girl accused of bloody "vampire" attacks in Queens, after she failed to show up for a court date.

A lawyer for two of the victims claims her clients have been living in fear, and is demanding Hillcrest HS and the NYPD protect them.

"Where is Vampira?" lawyer Stephanie Ovadia asked. "She is not obeying the court and is roaming the streets. Where is she - and is she a danger to my clients?"

Ovadia said that as soon as she heard there's a warrant for the teen - a self-styled "goth" ghoul - she immediately alerted her clients' parents, school officials and the police.

The lawyer has filed a multimillion-dollar lawsuit against the Jamaica school, the city and the girl's parents.

The arrest warrant "doesn't surprise me because she's a dangerous girl," said Daniel Melendez, the dad of victim Michelle Melendez, 16.

When the suspect appeared as a minor in Queens Family Court on charges of assault, gang assault and weapon possession, a judge issued an order of protection - directing the unnamed biter to stay away from Michelle.

In the bloody Dec. 15 assault on Melendez, the suspect "slashed the victim's face multiple times with a pointed object" and "bit the victim's face and neck," said Angela Albertus of the New York City Law Department.

But the suspect failed to appear for the next court session and a judge issued a warrant for her arrest, Albertus said. If the judge finds that the girl committed the attack, she could be placed in a state facility for up to 18 months, and the sentence could be extended every year until her 18th birthday, Albertus added.

In the lawsuit, Ovadia charges that both sets of concerned parents promptly notified the school - but nothing was done.

Melendez's parents also called police and had the "vampire" teen arrested.

But school officials claim that the crimes, which occurred off school grounds - at a bus stop and on a bus - were not reported for three weeks and that the victims did not identify their assailant.

"That is not true," said Daniel Melendez. "We were at the school to report it the next day, and my daughter identified the girl who bit her from a book of pictures the school showed her.

Kieran Crowley. New York Post, 3 May.

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## **"But I Make This Stake Look Good"** Will Smith in Upcoming Vampire Movie

Will Smith has been cast to play the role of the last vampire-fighter in the apocalyptic tale tentatively set for release in 2007. The movie is going to be directed by Constantine helmer Francis Lawrence, and will be based on Richard Matheson's famed original novel.

This story's been made into movies a few times before, most notably the version starring Charlton Heston called *The Omega Man*, which came out in 1971.

At the age of ninety, the eminent Richard Matheson (of *Twilight Zone*, *Night Stalker* and *Trilogy of Terror* fame, to name a bare few) is still going strong. In addition to *I Am Legend*, the scary scribe has three other movies based on his work in development (*The Box*, to be directed by *Hostel*'s Eli Roth; *Countdown* to be directed by Emily Rose's Scott Derrickson; and *The Incredible Shrinking Man* to be directed by *Scary Movie*'s Keenen Ivory Wayans).

<http://horror.about.com>, 11 May.

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### **Dracula castle returns to bloodline**

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) -- More than 60 years after it was seized by communists, the Romanian government is to hand back one of the country's most popular tourist sites, the fabled Dracula Castle, to its former owner, the culture minister said Tuesday.

The hand-over ceremony will take place Friday noon in the 14th century castle's museum deep within the fortress in Transylvania, said minister Adrian Iorgulescu at a news conference.

The castle, worth an estimated \$25 million (19.6 million euros), was owned by the late Queen Marie and bequeathed to her daughter Princess Ileana in 1938. It was confiscated by communists in 1948 and fell into disrepair.

It was inherited by Dominic van Hapsburg, a New York architect who will be at the ceremony on Friday, said Iorgulescu. The Hapsburgs ruled Romania for a period starting in the late 17th century. Under the agreement, the owner will not be allowed to make any changes to the castle for the next three years, Iorgulescu said.

Restoration work began in the late 1980s and was partially completed in 1993. It is now one of Romania's top tourist destinations.

While known and marketed as "Dracula's Castle," the Bran Castle never belonged to Prince Vlad the Impaler, who inspired Bram Stoker's Count Dracula character, but the prince is thought to have visited the medieval fortress.

The Gothic fortress, perched on a rock, has appeared in numerous Dracula movies.

At the gates of Bran Castle, peasants sell Dracula sweaters hand-knitted from the thick wool of local sheep, cheesecloth blouses, and Vampire wine. Bran Castle is the most famous of 15 citadels and fortresses in the area, which were built by peasants to keep out marauding armies of Turks and Tartars and cruel local medieval lords.

Another former royal property, the Peles Castle, built in the late 19th century in the mountain town of Sinaia, will be returned to former King Michael, who owned it before it was confiscated by the communist regime in 1948.

Romania passed legislation earlier this year to return property to its former owners and establish a "property fund" to pay damages for assets that cannot be returned.

The fund includes stock in state-owned companies that are being privatized, such as utility companies, the Romanian postal service, and the Savings Bank.

CNN.com, 23 May.

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### **Vampires in the Adirondacks.**

#### **Will the new vampire novel, *The Dancing Valkyrie*, keep hikers out of the woods?**

The vampire novel, *The Dancing Valkyrie*, tells the story of an erotic dancer who becomes a vampire while hiking in the Adirondacks.

"*The Dancing Valkyrie*," is a vampire novel for readers who have always been of the opinion that real vampires must like sex as much as they like blood.

The new novel, "*The Dancing Valkyrie*," is the story of a young woman who is a librarian by day and erotic dancer at a topless club in Schenectady, NY, at night who learns she was born to be a vampire while taking a hike on the Northville-Placid Trail deep in the wilds of the Adirondack Mountains of northern New York.

The novel follows her rapid acclimation into being what she was born to be - a vampire with a lust for both blood and sex - and draws to a conclusion when she meets with a vampire who lives to kill other vampires - and whose name is Van Helsing.

In Germanic mythology, Valkyries were women of mystical beauty and strength who were the guardian angels of the body and the soul. It was they who on the battlefield chose whose life to save and whose souls they would guide up to Valhalla after they were slain on the battlefield.

Peter Klein, author of the novel, says the idea for the novel grew out of one simple idea.

"If there were vampires, if they really were to exist, they would have to be creatures of skin and bone, flesh and blood, and they would have been created by God for whatever reason. I've just never been able to buy into the idea of mystical demons. We ourselves have the capacity for evil. Just look at the news with all the murders, rapes and robberies on display. Who needs demons when you have us?" says Klein.

With that said, are the vampires in "*The Dancing Valkyrie*" any more evil than the humans who make front page for their crimes?

Klein says, "They have their own standards of what is moral for them. In their belief system, most believe they were created by God when God 'marked' Cain in order to protect him from being killed by humans. Another curious belief shared by most vampires is that it was they who were summoned by God to be the Angels of Death who slew the first born of the Egyptians so that the Jews could escape from Egypt."

*The Dancing Valkyrie* (ISBN # 1411659651) is listed in Books in Print, Ingram's database in the US; and Bertrams & Gardners, Nielsons Bookdata in the UK and is already available online at <http://www.lulu.com/ravenwolfpublish> and at other popular online sources from Japan, the US, Canada, the UK, France and Germany, as well as at numerous brick-and-mortar bookstores.

#### About author

Pete Klein was born in Detroit, Mich. but has been living in the Adirondacks for the past 19 years. He is married with three children and two granddaughters. Klein has been a reporter for the Hamilton County News for the past four years.

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<http://www.prweb.com>, 23 May.

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### **Elton's savaged vampire musical to close**

Hugh Panaro, centre, and cast performing the number "Welcome to the New World". Alas, for Lestat it will soon be farewell.

Sir Elton John's Broadway vampire musical is to close after just 39 performances.

The Warner Brothers production Lestat, which cost more than \$US5 million (\$A6.67 million) to make, will play for the last time on Sunday afternoon.

It opened on April 25 to savage reviews and has since seen box office takings decline steadily.

Last week it grossed \$US448,525 (\$A598,100), playing to only 53 per cent capacity at the Palace Theatre.

Sir Elton wrote the music for the show inspired by Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles*, while collaborator Bernie Taupin penned the lyrics.

Lestat, which also played 33 previews, was branded a "musical sleeping pill" by the *New York Times*.

With its "loud and boring" music it was "a musical only the chief accountant of a blood bank could love", the *New York Post* decided.

It only managed to garner two Tony nominations - one for Carolee Carmello, who plays Lestat's mother, in the featured actress category, and the other for the lavish costumes.

The news of Lestat's imminent demise comes after it was revealed that a sitcom to have been executively produced by Sir Elton has been rejected by American TV networks.

*Him and Us*, was to have followed the life of a gay rock star and his entourage, with *Sex and the City*'s Kim Cattrall and *Little Britain* actor Anthony Head starring.

Lestat is Sir Elton's third Broadway musical.

*Aida* and *The Lion King* were both successes, and he also wrote the music for current London hit *Billy Elliot*.

And Elton John accepted six-figure libel damages from a British newspaper today after it alleged that he issued a "bizarre and absurd edict" to guests not to approach him at his annual charity ball.

London's High Court heard that the unfounded claims were published in the *Daily Mail* on June 24 last year under the heading "Senora Spice Goes Flamenco" and "Speak only when you're spoken to, Sir Elton tells party guests".

The star's lawyer, Nigel Tait, said the articles, which were published on the Internet and syndicated worldwide, caused "considerable embarrassment and distress" to the singer.

AP, 25 May.