

NOT NEAR NORMAL
THE PARANORMAL

VAMPIRES AND OTHER BLOODSUCKERS



by Ruth Owen

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A Vampire's Heart

On a cold January night in 2004, six men crept into a dark cemetery on the outskirts of Marotinu de Sus, a tiny village in southern Romania. The men carried shovels, a **pitchfork**, and a razor-sharp **scythe**.

The men carefully walked between the crumbling **tombstones** until they reached the grave of a family member, Petre Toma. Together, the men began to dig until they had uncovered Toma's coffin. After opening the coffin's lid, one of the men slashed Toma's chest wide open with the scythe. Another man plunged the pitchfork into Toma's heart, pulling it out of his **corpse**.

Then the men built a fire nearby and lowered the bloody heart into the flames. As the heart burned, the men felt no regret at what they had just done. They believed burning Petre Toma's heart was the only way to protect their family and village from what he had become—a vicious, bloodthirsty **vampire**.



A Family Dinner

In Romania, vampires are known as *strigoi*. According to **legend**, a *strigoi* is a dead body that comes back to life to feed on the blood of the living. The creature climbs from its grave at night and visits family members to suck their blood as they sleep.



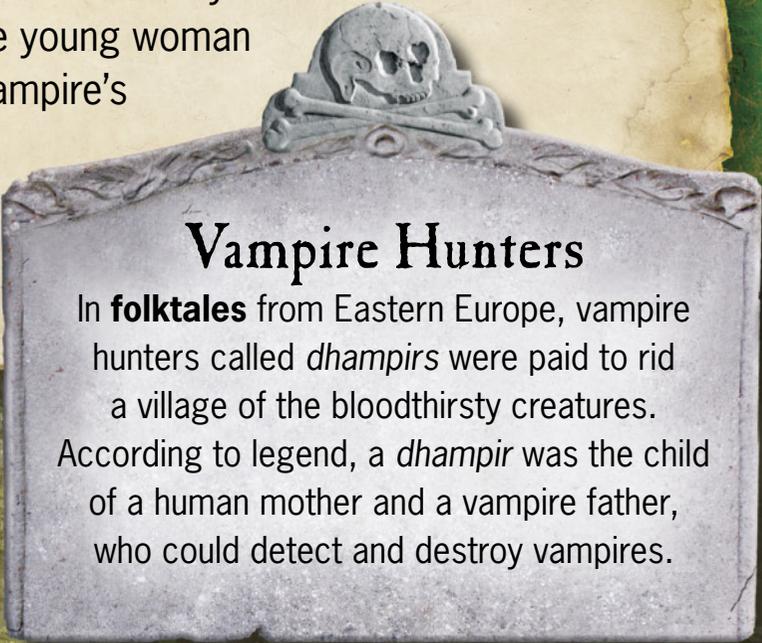
Petre Toma
1927-2003

Petre Toma, the Vampire?

Why did Petre Toma's family think he was a vampire? Just before Christmas 2003, 76-year-old Petre Toma died. His body was buried in the village cemetery. Soon after Toma's death, his niece became seriously ill. The weak and **feverish** young woman told her family that a *strigoi*, or vampire, was visiting her at night to drink her blood. The vampire, she said, was her dead uncle—Petre Toma.

The family believed that the only way to save the young woman's life was to destroy the blood-sucking vampire and burn his heart. So, on that January night in 2004, the men from Toma's family dug up his body, tore out his heart, and then set it ablaze.

As Petre Toma's heart burned, the men gathered ashes from the fire. They blended the ashes with water and fed the mixture to Toma's niece. By the following morning, the young woman felt well again—the vampire's **reign of terror** was over!



Vampire Hunters

In **folktales** from Eastern Europe, vampire hunters called *dhampirs* were paid to rid a village of the bloodthirsty creatures. According to legend, a *dhampir* was the child of a human mother and a vampire father, who could detect and destroy vampires.



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About the Author

Ruth Owen has been developing, editing, and writing children's books for more than ten years. She lives in Cornwall, England, just minutes from the ocean. Ruth loves gardening and caring for her family of llamas.

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AND OTHER BLOODSUCKERS

In 2003, a gravely ill young Romanian woman was having terrible nightmares. She told her family that her uncle, Petre Toma, had been visiting her during the night—and drinking her blood! The sick woman's uncle had died several weeks earlier, however. Had Petre Toma become a bloodthirsty vampire?

For hundreds of years, legends have been told of vampires rising from the grave at night to drink the blood of the living. If stories about vampires and other bloodsuckers are just fiction, why have so many people claimed to have witnessed these frightening creatures of the night? Look inside to investigate the truth behind the terrifying tales.

ALIENS
AND OTHER VISITORS

GHOSTS
AND OTHER SPIRITS OF THE DEAD

HALF-HUMAN MONSTERS
AND OTHER FIENDS

VAMPIRES
AND OTHER BLOODSUCKERS

WEREWOLVES
AND OTHER SHAPE-SHIFTERS

ZOMBIES
AND OTHER WALKING DEAD

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