
CULTS OF THE BLOOD GODS

A Sourcebook for
Vampire: The Masquerade



Sample file

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VAMPIRIC RELIGION AND REAL-WORLD COUNTERPARTS

This book concerns vampires' relationship to religion. It features harmful and twisted alternate interpretations of religious practice, just as vampires are in many ways alternate versions of mortal life. Many of the depictions of religion within this text show the worst aspects of religious devotion. Please remember not to confuse the vampiric version of a religion with its real-life counterparts. If you learn something new about someone else's religious traditions through this book, that's great, but before you do anything with that info, always check with real-world sources to make sure it's not a fictional in-game only detail.



Just Another Family Dinner

By Eddy Webb and Rachel Wilkinson

Moonlight pours through the stained-glass windows of a remodeled Gothic church, and in its basement, the dead dine with family. From a small table off in the corner, I watch a thin, almost emaciated woman with steel hair and pale eyes stand from one end of a ridiculously long table. Anja Giovanni raises her wine glass of treated blood to the assembled. I swirl around the thickening blood in my own glass, half-listening to her speech. Something about gathering the Clan of Death, embarking on new beginnings, the usual horseshit. I tune in just as I sense she's wrapping up. "For we are all Hecata, now. We are all family."

She nods to the Japanese man at the other end of the table, who also stands up. Asano Hiromitsu has a twig pinned to a jacket that's worth more than I make in a year. He thanks her and raises his glass in return. Everyone else raises their glass, too. The whole room smells like a hospital dump: nothing but cop-py blood and dead bodies. The

gazillions of flower place-settings just add a layer of fragrant death over everything.

The sweaty-looking man in a rumpled suit sitting next to me has been trying to catch my eye for half an hour now. Clearly annoyed that I didn't raise my glass for the toast, he reaches over and taps his glass against mine. "There. Now you're being social."

I take a sip of the blood. "Didn't come here to be social."

"Tough." He shoves a hand out to me. "Tony Ambrose. Of the Puttanesca."

I sigh and take it. It feels clammy and soft, like a fish a day past its sell-by date. "Maria. Of the Pisanob, I guess."

He raises an eyebrow at that. "Pisanob? Ain't many of yours around anymore."

I bite back yet another profanity and close my eyes.

I watched the flames lick the sides of my sire's haven. I didn't get

the call fast enough, I didn't drive fast enough, I wasn't fast enough to stop it. I fell to my knees, tears rolling down my face. And all I could hear in my head was him chiding me, like he did during my first ceremony lessons.

"Don't cry, little Maria," he would say. I could remember how he always smelled of sandalwood and copper. "Death comes to us all, even the immortals. One day I, too, shall cross the Shroud and join both those we have lost and those we have enslaved. You can't become a necromancer if you cry over every single death."

I wiped my arm across my eyes, and blood smeared on my sleeve. In the corner of my eye I could see a man who was also watching the blaze. He put his cell phone away and got back into his large sedan. He was a fat, sweaty man in a rumpled suit. He didn't look at me as he drove away.

"Hey, you listening to me?" Tony's voice cuts through my reverie. "I asked you what happened to all of youse."

I open my eyes and turn to stare at him — the first time I've looked at him all evening. "Most of us were murdered." He leans back from my gaze, and I imagine what it would feel like to rip his throat out with my teeth.

I feel a hand touch my shoulder, gently. "Leave him be," she says. "It's not nice to play with your food."

I turn back to look at her. Berlin smiles at me, like she always does when she knows I'm about to punch someone. Her green eyes twinkle with mischief, like they always do. We've only been seeing each other for a few weeks, but she's always telling me that I've gotten under her skin, in the best possible way. I nod, and she drops her hand to my knee. Her fingers feel cool through my stockings as she points to the head table. "Besides, Mora the Death Seer is up to something."

I follow the line of her finger, and see a delicate person dressed in a draping black sweater stand up. Their back is to our table, and they speak softly, but their voice carries through the room. They talk about Augustus Giovanni's plans to murder the Cappadocians, and how they've killed many Giovanni in retaliation. They just manage to avoid making it sound like a boast or a threat before they offer their condolences to Asano for his losses. He murmurs something nice in return.

Berlin clicks her tongue against her teeth. "Damn, Mora must have practiced that apology for a week. Imagine having to

kiss Giovanni ass after everything done to them."

I take a sip from the glass before pointing it at Berlin's face. "You're just mad they're not kissing your Giovanni ass."

"Damn straight," she laughs. "My ass is much nicer than his."

"Nice ass," I said, as I watched her walk down the hallway.

She looked over her shoulder and smiled. "You know it. Have we met?"

I shook my head and walked to her as she turned around. "Maria Ibarra. A cousin."

"Berlin Giovanni." I clasped her hand as she looked me up and down. "A cousin, huh? Not a kissing cousin by chance?"

"Kissing? No." I leaned over and put my lips next to her ear. "I'm thinking of something much, much better."

She shivered then. The same shiver she had later, tied down to the bed, when she was begging for my tongue.

I smile, but I'm not looking at her. Instead I'm watching as Asano walks over to Mora, who's pulled a cylinder wrapped in pale blue silk out of the folds of their sweater. The two vampires are going through some tiresome ritual where Mora offers the gift and Asano refuses it, then he pulls out a small wooden box from his jacket and the roles are reversed as the two of them go through it all over again.

The man sitting across the table from me sighs and turns back to face us. The moonlight from

the stained glass glints off the polished ebony of his mask. "I have always found these pleasantries to be tiresome. They detract from my studies." He carefully adjusts his tattered brown robes around his frail form, and carefully lifts the edge of his mask up so that he can sip from his wine glass.

"I'm surprised this pulled you away from your studies, Zebadi-ah." Berlin has reluctantly pulled her hand off my knee and leans forward on the table, her elbows resting on either side of the barren plate in front of her. "I figured you would still be in mourning for the loss of your childe, Elias."

Zebadi-ah carefully pulls the mask back over his face. "We are the Clan of Death. To mourn those that have died seems... pointless."

Tony has, unfortunately, decided to join in the conversation. "Pointless? Don't know about that, Zeb. If I—"

"Zebadi-ah."

Tony is distracted by the sudden interruption. "Huh?"

The cool, flat voice comes from the mask again, faintly muffled and hollow. "My name is Zebadi-ah. Not 'Zeb'."

"Sure, that's what I said. Zebadi-ah. And if I had a childe that was tore up like that, I wouldn't be mourning. I'd be out hunting the bastard that did it."

"Would you? I suppose that makes a degree of sense. But I am simply... what is the word?"

Berlin leans back again. "Upset?"

Tony knocks back the rest of his glass. "Fucking furious, more like."

"Jealous. Yes, that's the word. He died in such a creative way. I hope I get to experience that some night."

The pale man never said a word when I nailed his hands to the wooden top of the table. Nor his feet. But when I pulled his mask off, he started screaming like he was on fire. "Please! Please! Give me back my face! I am Elias of the Harbingers, and you must give me back my face!"

I leaned over him and gave him a smile. I made sure he could see the blowtorch under the spoon, which had started to glow from the heat. "Here's what I'm going to do, Elias. If you don't answer my questions, I'm going to scoop out your eyes. If you do, you get to keep them."

Those same eyes, dark and terrified, stared at me. "And then you'll let me go?"

I set the blowtorch next to his hand, which was starting to ooze thick, coagulated blood. "Let's not go crazy now. But first things first. The Harbingers are hunting down the Pisanob. Correct?"

He closed his eyes. I jammed a finger in one of them, and they snapped back open. I waved the cooling spoon in front of his face. "Correct?" I asked again.

"Yes! Yes! You know we are!"

"I do, because you tried to come after me, and you were sloppy. Honestly, I don't know how you ancient

fuckers managed to accomplish anything. But I'm not here to debate your failings as a family." I moved onto the table surface, managing to sit right next to where his hand was nailed down. I picked up the blowtorch again and began reheating the spoon. "Next question. Who told the Puttanesca where to find my sire's haven?"

"I don't—" The rest of his sentence was lost in the scream, as I plunged the white-hot spoon into his right eye. There was a soft pop and then a sizzling sound, as the vitreous fluid in his eye began to boil.

I gave him a minute to calm down before I spoke. "I told you, I need you to answer my questions. See, no one really gives a shit about the Pisanob except you Harbingers. And the Puttanesca aren't clever enough to hunt down one of us in our haven. But they are just dumb enough to take on a job for someone else if they think it will get them somewhere." I slid off the table and moved to the other side, so he could see me with his remaining good eye. "I know your sire hired them. And don't worry — he'll get his. But I also know that you don't get out of your crypts for a simple hit job. There was someone who arranged everything. Wasn't there?"

He cried a bit. I slapped him in the face with the blowtorch. "Wasn't. There."

"Yes... yes, there was a... a Giovanni that my sire knows. Someone who wants to take out the competition in her family."

My thoughts are interrupted as a crowd of mortals start to

mill into the dinner area. They're all dressed in white clothing, but otherwise there's nothing linking them together. A wide variety of ages, genders, sizes, what have you. Some carry carafes of blood and start refilling glasses. Others start to carefully put food onto the places — small bones stuck into carefully sliced raw meat, also covered in blood. Tony waves off the meat and looks a little green around the gills as he looks at it. Zebadiah nods once at the server filling his plate. Berlin just stares at me with a smirk on her face as she takes a sip from her newly filled glass. I can feel her foot running up the side of my leg.

As the servers continue to fill glasses and plates, Mora is chanting a prayer. "I am the end and the beginning. Dead flesh may cover my bones, and my bones may encase an unbeating heart, yet I remain...."

I held the spoon close to Elias' remaining eye. "Give me a name."

He started to speak, like he wanted to negotiate. But he realized that I was going to kill him anyway. I could see his whole body relax a little, as he accepted the end.

"Berlin. Berlin Giovanni."

Mora's voice rises in volume. "For I am Hecata. I am the beginning and the end. I remain."

I turned and looked into Berlin's beautiful eyes. I wonder what they taste like.





Introduction

“Welcome to the one family where ‘motherfucker’ isn’t a pejorative.”

— Accorri Giovanni, giving a warm welcome to a fledgling Hecata

Faith, religious order, and cultish devotion hold places of incredible importance within Kindred society, and contrary to views spoken in Camarilla domains and Anarch baronies tonight, they always have. For every instance of fledglings murdering sires, Anarchs burning down the havens of Camarilla Princes, and cannibal vampires pursuing campaigns of diablerie, there are others who hold opposing views. These childer worship their sires due to the strength of the Blood Bond. These Kindred look up to their Princes due to the might the vampire in charge wields each night. These neonates revere their elders and the godlike methuselahs of their clan, just hoping for a trickle of that rich vitae, that it might allow them to become more like these deific figures.

Cults form as vampires look up to their elders. Sometimes, cults form as vampires look down at the mortals beneath them. Power becomes religion, religion exalts in power, and vampires are all about the value of power.

Believe in the Blood

If you are a Storyteller or player who wishes to involve vampire religions, ceremonies, and worship in your chronicles, you will find a great deal of material in *Cults of the Blood Gods* to satisfy that need.

This book provides everything you require to run and play in chronicles within or branching away from the traditional Camarilla and Anarch setups, as characters take on fringe or established religions, gain benefits from following them, and attempt to balance morality on top of the demands these faiths place upon their believers.

Cults of the Blood Gods is the book you want for full detail on the state of the Hecata — the Clan of Death — and their necromantic powers. This clan is probably the largest singularly focused cult in the World of Darkness, unified against opposition, dedicated to its goals, and prepared to stand and die for its vampires. After all, when you’re the Clan of Death, death is far from the end.

Whether you're an established or new Storyteller, the story and chronicle hooks found in this book will be sufficient to fuel dozens of **Vampire: The Masquerade** stories involving sacrifice, black magic, the strength of belief, and the monstrous, alien might of methuselahs as benefactors and enemies.

A Place of Worship

The content in the following chapters of **Cults of the Blood Gods** invites you to explore the myriad Kindred faiths, religious orders, and darkest powers present in tonight's **Vampire: The Masquerade**. We invite you to take or adjust any of the material in this book, whether it be part of a belief system, a religious hierarchy, a character, or just a concept from one of the chapters, and make it your own. We encourage you to use this material as you see fit for **Vampire: The Masquerade**.

- **Just Another Family Dinner** — Fiction to introduce you to the current state of the Clan of Death, and some of the activities they get up to around the dinner table.
- **Introduction** — A brief taster of what you'll find in the upcoming pages of sin, faith, dogma, and miracles.
- **Rise of the Methuselah Cult** — A chapter filled with in-character accounts of religion's rise to prominence in the modern nights, with accounts from several of the cults profiled in this book.
- **Kindred Religions** — A thick mix of religious orders of various sizes and influence levels, along with new powers, new coterie types, and other new mechanics for adding to your games.
- **The Cult of Death and Undeath** — Welcome to the family known as the Hecata. This chapter introduces you to the history, current plots, and hierarchy of the Clan of Death, while also providing further coterie and Predator types for your chronicles.
- **Mortal Cults** — Not all cults are populated by vampires alone, with this chapter detailing some of the orders where vampires have set themselves up as gods to be worshiped, or mortals have pieced enough together to form faiths to combat the undead.

- **Cult Construction** — New uses for Backgrounds and rich detail on how to form cults in your own chronicles, with tables and advice on how to form religions, the methods cults use to indoctrinate their members, and the kinds of ambitions cults in your games might strive to attain.
- **Hecata and Oblivion** — This chapter provides the detail all players who want to play a member of the Hecata might need, with clan archetypes, introduction to the kinds of people the clan Embraces, and a bevy of Oblivion Discipline powers and Ceremonies.
- **Bloodlines and Loresheets** — The Hecata is a clan comprising multiple bloodlines, so this chapter breaks down how to use bloodlines in your chronicles and provides the Backgrounds for you to do so straight out of the book. The Loresheets that follow connect to the cults introduced throughout this book.
- **Stryx and Bones** — A high-energy story set in Munich where you play members of the Hecata in pursuit of (or fleeing from) a creature of horror even to the Clan of Death. Ready-made characters and even more chronicle hooks await you once you're done reading the main story.

Existing in Religious Disharmony

While some Camarilla Princes and all agents of the Second Inquisition believe the vampire population of the world is too high, in truth, it is too low to meaningfully sustain widespread religious organizations. The cults and orders presented in this book are prominent in specific domains and regions, but rarely spread their reach beyond them, in part due to the difficulty vampires find in traveling far (especially en masse), but also due to fierce resistance from the Kindred in each domain.

Domains in the modern nights, much as in the Dark Ages, exist as islands in the dark, each with their own Kindred hierarchy, society, and culture. As vampires grow older their beliefs become entrenched, compelling a reticence to adopt new belief unless they're faced with a fall to the Beast, witness something miraculous, or perhaps reconnect with their humanity.

With this is as the case, is it possible for the Church of Set, the Mithraists, and the Eyes of Malakai to all exist in the same location? Yes, but not without tension.

GENERAL DIFFICULTIES

Some minor characters in this book have what are referred to in their stat blocks as General Difficulties. These come in the form of two numbers divided by a stroke, such as 4/3 or 5/2. The first number is the Difficulty the players have to beat if ever opposing this character in an area in which they excel. The second number is the Difficulty whenever players oppose this SPC in an area in which they are mediocre or poor. For those who want to use Attributes and Skills to determine Difficulties, these characters also have full traits. For those who prefer a simpler method, the General Difficulties are there for you.

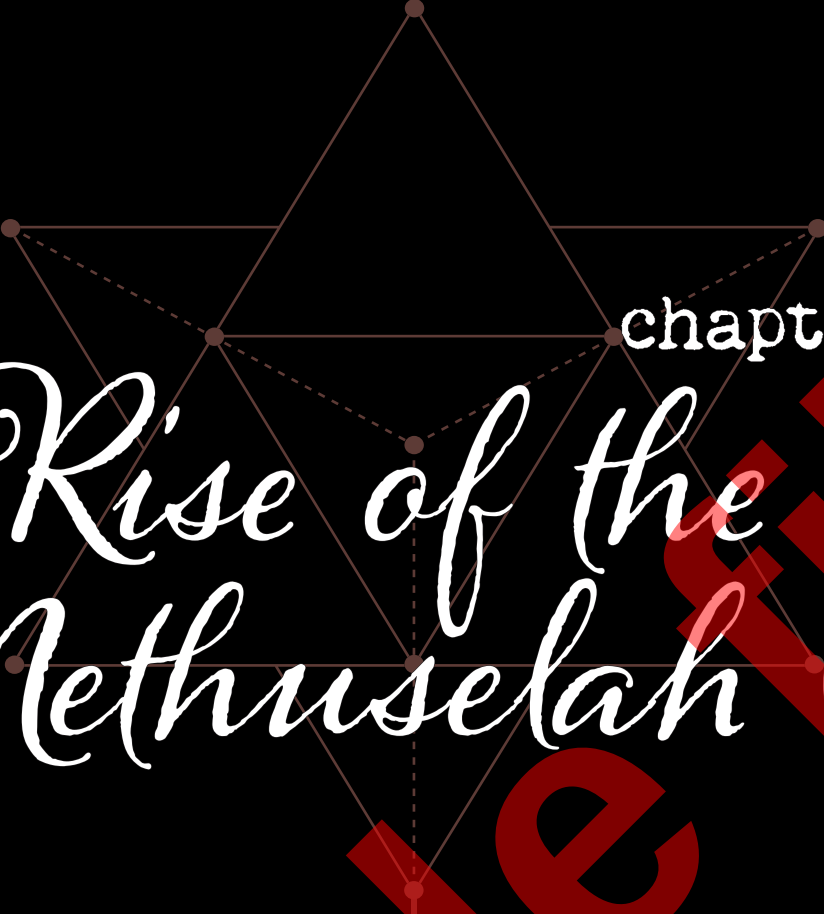
Religion adds a new layer to the societal strata, a new cause to cling on to and for which to fight, and another reason to claim territory, vessels, retainers, and primacy.

Being a member of a cult does not preclude a vampire from membership in the Camarilla or affiliation with the Anarchs, though a city with a small population of a couple of hundred thousand would be unlikely to field

more than a handful of vampires with religious inclination. When they do, these faithful undead have the option of evangelical belief, with an aim to convert or chastise others, or secret worship, so as to not allow their faith to impact other vampires' views on them. It's rare for a vampire to be a lay worshiper who accepts Set, for instance, but does so without pride or, conversely, subterfuge. On the other hand, a city or metropolis containing over a million mortals within its limits could support multiple faiths, and even harbor several coteries of the same belief, though they may follow their religions in different ways. These domains are more likely to see debates and even fights between so-called "orthodox believers" and "heretics", though no vampire is likely to lay claim to the latter epithet.

What this means for the Storyteller and players about to embark on this journey into the religions of **Vampire**, is that cults can be liberally dosed throughout a domain or held back as clandestine and rare. We will not prescribe for you a categorical number of vampires who worship one faith or another, or declare one major religion more powerful (or indeed, right) than another. Each cult, each tradition, and the fervor of belief in all these religious elements is for you to decide for your chronicle.





chapter one

Rise of the Methuselah Cult

"The gods are cruel and capricious, and we acknowledge they shape our destinies. We should despise them. Yet, when you realize they may be the only creatures free from the puppet master's strings, we of course seek to worship them, serve them, and ultimately, emulate them."

— Arjun Shah, Patre of the Cult of Mithras

For as long as there have been Kindred there have been those that worship the more powerful.

The modern nights are a tumultuous time for Kindred of all stripes, from Camarilla to Anarch to those in between. Oftentimes, the nights are uncertain. Long-standing bastions of Kindred society have been shaken. The Tower leans. The Pyramid crumbles. The Anarchs... are Anarchs. Those set adrift on these tides of change are drawn to beings of power, to collections of stability, to any calm in the storm.

Given the current state of things, the swell of ancestor worship should come as no surprise. It is easy to see creatures such as Mithras, who is said to have been able to enthrall entire cities, as divine and worthy of worship. Legends of these methuselahs, stories of these veritable gods of blood, are passed around in whispered tones on every stratum of Kindred society, in every generation. There are those who even claim to have met them, and they are the most zealous of all.

Cults centered around these creatures dating as far back as the Second City rise to the fore with the desecularization of the Camarilla. These are old faiths that speak to the blood as much as they speak to the spirit. Some have survived largely unchanged. Some shift in order to appeal more to the young vampires populating the cities. All fight for the attention of those that walk the night.

Some of these cults and faiths claim to have the Cainite's best interest at heart, some simply prey on the weak-willed the same way similar groups of kine would, but all of them should be known to a wise vampire seeking to survive this new and horrific landscape.

The Justicars Speak

The following was transcribed from a mnemonic recording of a meeting of the Camarilla Justicars: