



Kickstarter Manuscript Preview #1:
Rise of the Methuselah Cult

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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**.

- **Introduction** — You are here. Now you just need to step through the door into these pages of sin, faith, dogma, and miracles.

- **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.
- **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.
- **Styx 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.

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 stat blocks. For those who prefer a simpler method, the General Difficulties are there for you.

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.

[LAYOUT: TRANSCRIPT]

The Justicars Speak

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

[BEGINNING OF RECOVERED SECTION]

Ian Carfax: ...and this rising of faith is most disconcerting. More and more of our young are turning toward the esoteric in these troubled times. We are losing our hold on our message and it’s being replaced by messages of worship, prostration, and faith.

Diana Iadanza: The Ministry must be having a field day.

Ian Carfax: Look, we are dealing with the fallout of our rightful choice to no longer extend our protection to the Anarchs, pulling back on the use of technology...

Diana Iadanza: And whose fault is that, hmm?

Ian Carfax: ...and by doing so strengthening our Masquerade. Not to mention the Anarchs are filling the power vacuum left by the Sabbat. Along with that, the Ministry, or whatever they're calling themselves now, turning Anarch, and a handful of our number getting caught in the Paris bombings. We've lost domains to this so-called "Second Inquisition" and there is even talk of a new death cult forming. Reports are unclear. Might just be the Giovanni acting up again. The Promise is close to ending...

Diana Iadanza: Yes! Fine, alright. We get it. Must you whine on? We are all aware of the shifting sands. One thing at a time. The question is what do we do about these new faiths rising up?

Ian Carfax: Many of them aren't exactly new, are they? Some have been around for quite some time in the shadows. It's an even greater indicator that we are losing our hold. The Ministry will leverage this, like they leverage everything. So many of our elders have been called away. Surely some of you feel it as well?

[THERE IS A LONG PERIOD OF SILENCE]

Lucinde: It is hard to deny the power of old blood. I can see how often they become objects of worship.

Ian Carfax: You sound like you might know something about that.

Lucinde: I've had dealings with the... Mithraists... the Cult of Mithras, yes.

Ian Carfax: Dealings. Yes. We are wasting time. What do we do about it? How do we stem this tide so we can deal with all of our other... challenges? We must be seen as the Tower we have always been, gleaming in the night.

Lucinde: We do nothing.

Ian Carfax: What? Lucinde, you must be...

Lucinde: Put out a call to the Archons. Tell them not to waste resources on stopping any religious gatherings should they not be working actively against the Traditions or the Camarilla. Put a moratorium on the collection of the *Book of Nod*, *Revelations of the Dark Mother*, and any other such documents that survived into these modern nights. We will not deny the existence of ancient ones, how can we now? But we will not support the idea either.

Ian Carfax: Explain.

Diana Iadanza: Can you not see it? We would run ourselves ragged trying to "stem this tide," as you say. But we will do as we have always done. We can use it, can't we, my dear Lucinde? We use these faiths, these little religions, as a mortar to help shore up the cracks in our beautiful Tower. Like Japanese Kintsukuroi.

Lucinde: Yes. I have seen first-hand how faith can bolster a domain. With enough influence over some of these faiths and cults, we may be able to fashion them into a cudgel to use against the Ministry. Perhaps we should look into the idea of adopting an "official religion" of the Camarilla in these coming nights. Use the kine's idea of separation of church and state but maintain a steady hand upon it. See it done. Now, we should discuss the situation in London...

[RECORDING ENDS]

[/TRANSCRIPT ENDS]

The Why and Way of Worship

As written by Aditya Hay, Ventrue, former Seneschal of Edinburgh

My childe, you've asked me why I worship? Why do I, every night, bend my knee in supplication to my Lord? Why do I cut my arm from fingertip to shoulder? Why do I starve myself each spring to the edge of frenzy? Why, when I supported the Toreador for centuries, did I deliver the throne of Edinburgh to de Camden without so much as a challenge? Because my unlife has meaning. My unlife has meaning through Mithras, my Lord. Our own God of War who Walks. Mithras who will come again.

There are so many who do not understand, so many like you, who simply float through their existence or fill it with political games or debauched excess. My Lord fills my existence with purpose. I am a part of a plan for his glorious return. I prepare for the coming war that will follow in his wake.

Meaning is rare and fleeting in this world, my childe. You must grasp it when you can, and mine was given to me only once I took it. I have a place. That place is now at the side of de Camden, the Voice of Mithras. London fell and he arrived. Who better to lead us than the one who stood at our Lord's right hand?

Every night and every season we prepare. We spill blood on grounds that were battlefields and may be again. We starve ourselves so we may fight our Beasts. We bend knee in supplication and understand there is an order to things. For what is a war without soldiers? What is a god without followers?

I have tried to instill in you an understanding of these things. Brought you to the mithraeum. Read for you the Roman texts. But I can see it's been for naught. These questions you ask of me tell me you have not absorbed the lessons. You have failed to find the meaning willful supplication can bring. So, I cast you out. Wander until the burning fires of war from within or without light your way home.

[LAYOUT: THE BELOW IS A TYPEWRITTEN LETTER]

The Bull and the Blood and the Bone

Welcome to the Syndexioi. If you are reading this then you have been given all you need to prepare you for what is to come. You are being welcomed in Mithras' light. He, the Unconquered Sun. He, the right way.

Prepare.

The Bull. Bring its blood to the one who reveals Mithras' light to you. Thank them for revealing the way of the true Sun.

The Blood. Follow them to a place of battles past or battles to come. Pour the blood there along with your own vitality. Pray to Mithras for strength in the night.

The Bone. Be interred in stone in the mithraeum for seven days and seven nights. Remain in control and free yourself. Be born into the Church as Mithras was born into this world.

Welcome shall be yours.

Keep these secrets in your mind. Destroy this document.

Prepare.

[/LETTER ENDS]

[LAYOUT: TRANSCRIPT]

Time of Thin Blood

A conversation between two Duskborn as recorded by Philipa Hernandez, Nosferatu of Lima, while testing her new parabolic microphone outside of a local resort club, Bella Luna

Duskborn 1: I don't know about this. This place looks dangerous.

Duskborn 2: Trust me. We have to do this. What did we say when we found out what we were?

Duskborn 1: We said we'd survive, no matter what.

Duskborn 2: Exactly. I'm tired of living this half-life. Looked down on by the vampires of this city? Chased around and hunted? Eating rats and dogs and...

Duskborn 1: Don't! Don't remind me. I get it. And hush... Philipa told us not to use the V word out loud, remember. She was nice. Real messed up face, but nice.

Duskborn 2: She also told us this was the place to go if we wanted to be... how did she put it... if we wanted to be brought fully into the night. I want that.

Duskborn 1: If we could just... I don't know, find a cure? Pray it away? Can't we do that?

Duskborn 2: No, we can't. You heard her. That's impossible. God has turned his back on us. This is what we are now. We can already do some amazing things if we feed right. Philipa just appeared out of nowhere, literally. And she isn't even that, uh... thick-blooded. She said the power is in the blood and ours is thin. Look at what we can do, even as so-called "Duskborn." Imagine what an elder can do? What they could teach us? You trust her, right?

Duskborn 1: I mean, I guess. She has shown us the ropes a bit. Told us where to stay away from. Got us some rats.

Duskborn 2: Don't forget we would have been dead if she hadn't stopped those men. I see no reason to stop trusting her now. It's a shame she got called away like that though, but it was good of her to tell us about this place before she left.

Duskborn 1: So, what, we just walk in and introduce ourselves? Is there a secret handshake?

Giuliana: There is no need—

Duskborn 2: My God!

Giuliana: —for that my young friends. I am Giuliana Santisteban and you are most welcome at Luna Roja. [Laughs] I apologize for the dramatics. It's a weakness of my line. Philipa told me you were coming. Why don't you come inside? I have much to tell you and much to teach you, I suspect.

Duskborn 1: It's... it's a pleasure. You know Philipa? Do you know where she is?

Giuliana: Sadly, I do not. But I'm sure she will be glad to hear from you when she returns. I understand you are looking for elders to teach you. To bring you into the night. I believe I can

provide. Now, let us not stand out here, exposed in the open. Come inside and let me tell you of what I know. Let me tell you of the Children of Si.

[/TRANSCRIPT ENDS]

Brother Sweetwater Speaks

A sermon as given by Brother Sweetwater, clan unknown, to his congregation

I say to you, my dear sisters, brothers, and all others, Gehenna is here. Gehenna has come and reigns over us as certain as I stand before you! Our elders vanish in droves! Swords have broken! We have failed! We have been left behind by the dark rapture! The end is here, creeping and silent and terrible!

We cannot fight. We see this now. Dreams of the past must die and we must face a burning future. I hear you crying. I do, I do! I tell you these things not to frighten you. No, no. I am here to offer words of comfort and joy. I have seen light. I have seen truth. And I am here to share it with you.

I tell you, we must forge our broken sword into a plowshare. Let us make peace with our oppressors. Only through worship may they be appeased! We must prostrate ourselves before the Christ that is Caine. Only He may beseech his children on our behalf! He speaks through the blood. Through the blood we are bound. Speak to him and we speak to them!

The more we resist, the more conflict we create. Let us not follow those who war. The way to salvation is submission my dear congregation. It is through the light of this submission we will find our way through the End Times. Now... let us pray.

[LAYOUT: PLEASE HAVE THIS AS A HANDWRITTEN PRAYER SHEET]

A Cainite Hymnal

Caine has come, Caine has risen, Caine will come again.

Caine, our Dark Father, whisper to your children.

Caine, our Dark Father, tell them words of peace.

Caine, our Dark Father, sate their lust for blood.

Caine, our Dark Father, keep us from the flood.

We call on the name of Zillah.

We call on the name of Irad.

We call on the name of Enoch.

Speak to your sire on our behalf.

Lead us through Gehenna. Lead us to peace.

[/PRAYER SHEET ENDS]

Protect the Flock

The following is a leaked transcript from Blacksite 34, location unknown, somehow obtained by Molly MacDonald, Nosferatu Justicar

Location — Blacksite 34 “The Cage”

Clearance Level — Crimson

Involved Agencies — [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]

Interrogation Lead — Gwen Zhang

Interrogation Support — Harold “Doc” MacElroy

Observation Theater:

Witness — [REDACTED]

Witness — [REDACTED]

Witness — [REDACTED]

Subject — Kit “Patches” Esposito, Designation — Blankbody, Subject 23

[Loud and tortured sobbing can be heard on the recording. Requisition of directional microphones placed.]

[REDACTED] — Please state your name, agency, and role for the record please. Loudly, please.

Zhang: Agent Gwen Zhang of the [REDACTED], onsite. Lead interrogator, Blacksite 34 “The Cage.”

MacElroy: Doctor Harold MacElroy, freelance, former [REDACTED], Interrogation Support and Autopsy.

[Sobbing becomes a series of wails]

Zhang: Let’s begin, Mr. Esposito. Tell me. How long have you been... dead, shall we say?

Subject 23: Who... who the fuck are you people? What did you do with Claire? Where the fuck am I?

MacElroy: Fascinating. Is that blood? I didn’t know blankbodies could cry. Do you suppose all of their fluids have been infected? Perhaps all of their fluids have been replaced by blood? Can they mimic intercourse?

Zhang: Focus MacElroy. [Zhang snaps twice] Shhh... shhh. It’s good to see you’ve calmed down. You injured quite a few of the agents bringing you in from that zoo. Did you know that?

Subject 23: I... I did?

MacElroy: Subject 23 seems to be expressing remorse. Their ability to mimic us is extraordinary.

Zhang: You did. Do you not remember? Allow me to remind you. Here. Take a look at these pictures. This is Agent Jemma Perkins. Not that you can tell. Half of her face is gone and the other half was chewed up. This here is Prishna Agar. He will most likely be on a liquid diet for the rest of his life... if he makes it. And this... this is Thomas Detrick.

MacElroy: Even the subject’s snot... mucus, sorry, seems to be made of blood.

Subject 23: Please put those away. Please...

Zhang: But I think you need to see this Mr. Esposito. Thomas was just in the wrong place at the wrong time it seems. The one you call Claire murdered him in the most brutal fashion. Look here, you can see how she ripped...

Subject 23: That's because you bastards opened fire on us! You made her lose her shit! You did this! We just... we just wanted to be free.

MacElroy: The subject is now convulsing with sobs, even though we suspect they do not need to breath. Reminder to send the information requisition to the Society... again. What would this be, Zhang? Three times? Four?

Zhang: Five. Now, Mr. Esposito, that's interesting. Lost control? That implies it's something you can't control. It's also interesting you feel like you're trapped. Why don't you elaborate? Does this have something to do with why you were at the zoo in the first place, killing those poor animals?

Subject 23: [Screams]

MacElroy: Zhang has stabbed the subject in the leg, repeatedly. This is my first time seeing the blankbody healing factor up close. The wounds seem to have no lasting effect, but there is a pain response? The nerves should be dead. Amazing.

Zhang: Mr. Esposito?

Subject 23: Stop it! Please stop it! I don't want... I don't want to lose myself again. I don't want to [growls] hurt anyone again.

Zhang: Tell me what you were doing at the zoo. Why were you killing those animals surrounded by those ridiculous candles? What makes you "lose yourself?" You killed so many people. Are you not responsible? Is it not your fault?

Subject 23: Claire and I... we... we aren't monsters. We don't want to be this way. I can still feel it in me. It wants me to kill you. Oh God, what have we done?

Zhang: Now we seem to be getting somewhere. What is in you, Mr. Esposito. We can help you.

Subject 23: She said it would work. Why didn't it work? Claire... I'm so sorry.

MacElroy: Maybe you should back off, Zhang. I don't... Look at... There is so much blood coming out of his face. They can even ugly cry.

Zhang: Keep focused. Mr. Esposito, so far, I have only used one knife. Hold this for me, will you?

MacElroy: Zhang has stabbed the subject in the leg and left the knife there.

Zhang: If you look over on this table, you'll see I have many more tools at my disposal.

MacElroy: Subject 23 seems... I suppose the right word would be "inconsolable."

Subject 23: She told us it would work! She said if we killed the beasts it would kill our beasts! We said the words! We did everything she asked us! [screams] We don't deserve this...

Zhang: Who are you talking about? Is there a third blankbody? Tell me. Tell me and we might let you see Claire again.

Subject 23: You don't understand! How could you understand? We just wanted to be like you! She told me it would make me like you!

Zhang: Who? Who are you talking about!

MacElroy: The subject has suddenly gone ridged and unfocused.

[Recording compromised, distortion causes the voice of Subject 23 to fluctuate and occasionally sound feminine. Rush requisition of directional microphones placed.]

Subject 23: I think you have asked enough questions of my lambs for one night, Gwen Zhang of Hong Kong.

Zhang: What is this? How do you know that?

[REDACTED]: What is happening? What is this?

Subject 23: Oh, I know so much about you, Gwen. For example, I know you are the secret wife of Cynthia Hong. I know you tell her you work in immigration, but she doesn't know what horrible things you've done. What would your parents think? Look at me Zhang. What would Cynthia think?

MacElroy: A... agent Zhang has fallen to her knees, staring at Subject 23.

[REDACTED]: We have been compromised! Lock down Interrogation Suite 3! Prepare for purge! Back up all recordings to Blacksite 34-B

Subject 23: You have been abandoned.

MacElroy: The... the subject is calm now. Almost serene. Zhang has started to weep.

Subject 23: And you Harold MacElroy. You named yourself "Doc," but do you know what they really call you? "Stitch." It's all you're good for after all. Do they know what you get up to in the morgue, "Stitch?" Now run. I curse you. Live with what you know, dream of it every night, and find no succor except among the dead.

Subject 23: You... you came for me?

Subject 23: Shhh... shhh. Of course I did my lamb. But it's time. It's time for release. You did well. My fire shall burn it out of you. I will free you as I promised.

Subject 23: What? You said I could be like them! I just want to be human! I don't want to be like this anymore!

Subject 23: And you won't be.

Planting the Seed

As written by "Joe," Gangrel bartender at The Wilder, Portland

To She Who Tends the Garden, To My Sister, To My Savior, My Tremendous Pain In The Ass
I am trying to write this as best I can, I know how you love your poetry, but I'm no rose. Give me the thorns.

I told you I'd write when I got to where I was going, so here it is.

My garden grows. Since you kicked me the fuck out, I've made my own way. The words of Lilith echo in my head, are detailed on my skin, and etched on my heart. I guess I should thank

you enough for your final gift of, let's call it "guidance." As you suggested, I have set up shop here in Portland. I picked Northeast, where it seems the whole fucking city is fighting for its own soul. You'll be happy to know I've found myself the owner of a bar, the oldest bar in this damn town, in fact. Weirdly, the Prince was fine with me claiming this choice location. One of the Primogen suggested it would "be a good place to keep an eye on them all." Weird how that worked out? Don't suppose you had anything to do with that you meddling old biddy? Anyway, it's proving to be fertile ground as I "plant my seeds," as it were.

I admit I have a soft spot for the dregs, the Duskborn, the Caitiff, and those who find they have no place among either sect. But I think you already knew that when you suggested this place.

I gotta tell you, I'm shining here. It's like they were just looking for a place to be, the punks, the gutter-trash, the sad children, the lost. It's become quite the hangout and hunting ground. If you're new in town, everybody knows Joe will look out for you. I'm proud of that. It's pretty much a halfway house. I even cleared out some space in the back room for a promising Kindred (I know you hate that word. I don't give a shit) should the Dark Mother guide them my way, like you did for me.

I listen. Everyone talks to the bartender.

I don't coddle them, of course, but I love all these little turds in my way. As you told me countless times, pain is an excellent teacher. I'll take care of them whether they like it or not.

I learn about what they value and I trim or nurture as they need to help them lift the scales from their eyes. I've pruned more than a few who couldn't get a handle on their new existence. Tragic accidents, but it makes the rest rally around me, without even knowing it.

I'll beat 'em 'til they get it. Teach them like you taught me. Be the Maiden. Be the Mother. Be the Crone. But most importantly, just Be.

Rotten to the Core

A diary entry as written by Ken Higashiyama, Brujah member of the Rough Road, a Camarilla biker gang

Look, if you're reading this or got your hand on this in some way, go fuck yourself for killing me. I hope I got a few good licks in. Welcome to my diary. I write this at the top of every entry in this doc, all off-line, of course. Part of the new low-tech directive from the top of the Tower. But I gotta put my damn thoughts somewhere. And that's here. Congrats to you, shitbird. You got me. Enjoy the reading. Oh, and just in case it wasn't clear. Fuck you.

Well holy shit. St. Louis is as fucked up as they say, but definitely not in the way they say it. We were expecting to ride into the biggest shit storm on God's green earth. We've all heard the stories, Sabbat and Camarilla fighting on the streets, all manner of shit stalking the night, the kine living it up during the day but turning most boroughs into a fucking ghost town at night except for the real well-lit places and the goddamn outskirts. Even heard about some Nosferatu disappearing. What with the Tower kicking out the Anarchs, we expected the Rough Road might take a trip from KC and throw our hat in with the Cam in the Lou. What we expected was a three-way war. What we got was way different.

We planned to roll into town by way of the I-70, easiest way in we heard, not much action in Columbia and St. Charles. We spend a few nights outside, just to fuel up, rest from the road. It ain't easy avoiding Lupes out there, ya know? We lost Frankie, but we didn't need him anyway.

We figured, we'd head through Northwoods, after our repast, figure out where in North Lou the heaviest fighting was taking place. Kill a few Anarchs, Sabbath, didn't matter. We'd present those heads to the Prince and Council, and wham bam, we're in. Simple. Easy for a crew like ours.

Now, we should have known something was off right in Northwoods. We were approached by a preacher. Like, a vampire preacher while we were at a dive bar hunting. Don't know how he found us or knew we were in town, but whatever. Seemed normal enough, for a guy dressed like a priest. We thought Sabbath, but nah. Nice guy. He started off the night right, chatting us up, telling us the Gateway City wasn't so bad no more. We gave him some shit about that.

Everyone's heard the stories, right? We told him what we're here for, asked him where the fighting was fiercest and he starts talking about how "That's not the fight here anymore." Then launches into a speech about how Caine was Christ or some shit. We beat the blood out of him and left him in an alley. I'm sure he'll be fine.

So, we move on to North St. Louis and we start trying to stir up some shit. It takes a week and a half, but we finally find a fight, except it's not, like, between the Sabbath (can't even find those fuckers) and Cam like we were expecting. It's between two cults or churches. Members of two goddamn churches are fighting over a fucking graveyard. It was too weird. We just got the fuck out of there.

We spent a night just staring at the walls, then decided it had to be a one-off. It's fucking not. We have goddamn ridden all over this goddamn city, every fucking neighborhood, and that's what's going on. It's like, six or I don't know how many fucking churches or whatnot fighting for territory and worshipers. Don't get me wrong, the Tower *is* here and we did find *some* Sabbath, but it's almost like they aren't important in this town any more. I mean, I'm writing this from an Anarch bar in fucking Dutchtown where some ugly hipster is asking me if I've heard the good word of motherfucking Sutekh. So, shit's fucked up all around. I don't know what the fuck is going on here, but the face of the goddamn world is changing, man. Maybe I need to find a god too, huh? Seems to work for these fuckers.

[LAYOUT: A LETTER]

Beauty is Divine Truth

My beloved childe,

Returning to our discussion concerning the existence of God, or "intelligent design" as your generation calls it, versus nature: have you considered that Darwinian evolution has no purpose for beauty? A bird with bright plumage stands out to predators. Weaving a delicate song requires time and energy better spent on catching worms. A bowerbird nest, viewed through a utilitarian lens, is sheer absurdity. Yet we see all these things in nature. Even if we allow, purely for the sake of our discussion, that these qualities are implausibly the most efficient way to attract a mate, there is no evolutionary reason why *we* would find them beautiful too. Yet the feathers of a peacock, and the song of a nightingale, bring such profound ecstasy it makes one weep. What is this if not a glimpse into Paradise; a gift from God Herself.

Which brings me to Michael, fallen Archangel and patriarch of Constantinople, or rather: to his childer. I shan't bore you with the tale of Constantinople and its egregious destruction. Either you already know it (and you should, my childe, or I must chide Miss Evers for being so lax in your training), or I hereby grant you permission to peruse my library for the history. Of importance to us is what happened after. From the ashes of Constantinople's Dream were born the Nephilim, the surviving childer and acolytes of Michael. Where lesser creatures might have decided that beauty and dreams bring no succor to the struggle of the night, and thus serve no purpose, the Nephilim recognized the opposite to be true. Existence is ephemeral. Nothing lasts. Nothing is safe. Within that insecurity, that forever looming destruction and despair, *beauty* is the only thing of true value.

The Nephilim pursue beauty in all their endeavors. Art and architecture, poetry and song, even the reshaping of their own bodies: all these pursuits with abandon, and with beauty as their highest goal. This is the way to paradise, the road left to us by God, and I intend to follow it. Yes, my beloved childe, you read that correctly: beauty calls, and I must leave you. But fear not: I have put my affairs in order and prepared your presentation to Prince Harami. I leave to you the mansion, town house, night club, and the contents of the safe which you'll find quite generous. I have also made arrangements to reward Miss Evers for her service, though it behooves you to thank her yourself. She will no longer be your governess once you are accepted into the Prince's court, but she can still make a powerful ally.

We must both spread our wings and fly now, my beloved childe. You to go forth from my shadow and become the force I always saw in you. Treat Prince Harami with respect and the occasional *slight* touch of rebellion, and you will keep him endlessly entertained. I myself will ascend the next rung on God's ladder. From kine to Kindred, and now from Kindred to Angel. Beauty, and only beauty, holds the key to apotheosis.

I hope one day you will join me in the ranks of the Nephilim and have squirreled away all the clues you need to follow the trail. For now, I bid thee well.

Forever your loving sire,

Antonius Di Amoran

Clan of the Rose

[/LETTER ENDS]

[LAYOUT: TRANSCRIPT]

Bed the Bones

Transcript of meeting between Subject 1, Madrigal, and Subject 2, Surya. Date [REDACTED]. Observed by Agent Pink of the Milan cell. Our target remains the elder leech Nico. Agent's advice is to detain Surya for questioning.

Madrigal: Bed the bones.

Surya: Excuse me?

Madrigal: The servitor that's been giving you problems. Remember your breathing days, you'd attune tarot cards to your will by carrying them in your purse and drawing a card a day? Or sleeping with your pendulum under your pillow? Same thing.

Surya: Ick. I'm not taking a bunch of withered old bones into my coffin.

Madrigal: It's that, or letting your sire know you're struggling. Wait — you sleep in a coffin?

Surya: I am all about style. And valid point about Nico, but still.... It doesn't strike me as hygienic; you know?

Madrigal: You literally drink blood. Those bones are more likely to catch something off you than vice versa.

Surya: Fair, but-

Madrigal: Nico.

Surya: Okay, I'll do it. For how long?

Madrigal: Seven nights. It's the number of completion.

Surya: And if it still doesn't work?

Madrigal: Well then I tell you about **bedding** the bones.

[LAYOUT: SAME, BUT UNDERLAY THE VERY TOP OF THIS FOLLOWING TRANSCRIPT UNDERNEATH THE LAST PAGE OF THE PREVIOUS ONE]

Transcript of meeting between Subject 1, Madrigal, and Subject 2, Surya. Date [REDACTED]. Observed by Agent Pink of the Milan cell. Our target remains the elder vampire Nico, but this "mass" presents new opportunities. Agent now advises letting Surya remain at large and trailing her.

Surya: Can I ask your opinion on something?

Madrigal: Opinion or advice?

Surya: Bit of both, I guess.

Madrigal: I like you, so I'll play you straight: you haven't repaid me for the last one yet. Sure you want to run up a debt?

Surya: Better you than someone else.

Madrigal: Oh honey. Ask for advice then, and don't say I didn't warn you.

Surya: So Roseline invited me to a mass. As a way of showing unity, she says. But — well I don't want to go. Firstly, fuck her for usurping my place in Nico's eyes. And second, she's creepy.

Madrigal: Creepy?

Surya: She literally has to staple her face together every evening, or chunks of her fall off. Plus this mass is just some weird superstitious vodou shit, and—

Madrigal: Vodou shit?

Surya: You know, it's just — like — chanting and sacrificing chickens, and stuff.

Madrigal: Have you ever been to a vodou mass?

Surya: Well, no, but—

Madrigal: Then I think you need to set your racism aside and go.

Surya: I am not racist!

Madrigal: You raise ghosts from their graves using necrotic blood, yet what Roseline does is superstitious shit? Good news though: now you know you're racist, and you can learn to do better.

Surya: You're a bitch.

Madrigal: A bitch you asked for advice.

Surya: Okay, fine. But even if Roseline wasn't an interloper, and her brand of necromancy isn't superstition, it's still a mass.

Madrigal: Yes.

Surya: Dedicated to this Baron of theirs.

Madrigal: Yes, I assumed that.

Surya: Don't you think that's a little offensive? Like, you can't just go around pretending to be a god.

Madrigal: Who says he's not?

Surya: What?

Madrigal: A god. Do you believe Christianity is the only true religion?

Surya: It's my religion.

Madrigal: Not what I asked. Is it the only true religion?

Surya: I don't know. I didn't come here to debate theology.

Madrigal: Then let me skip to the conclusion. Either he is the loa of the dead, which you have to admit is pretty fucking appropriate for a progenitor, or he's just a really old vampire pretending to be a god. In both cases, you're going to that mass.

Surya: But—

Madrigal: Do you want to be the girl who turned down a perfectly polite invitation toward integration, after Nico made it clear he was keen on that? Or the girl who refused a god? Or the girl who refused an ancient? Because if you don't go, you get to tick two out of three.

Surya: Shit.

Madrigal: Maybe you're right, and the Baron is a pretender. He will still crush you for not paying proper respect. Heck, Nico will crush you for making unwanted waves. So you get your petite little ass to that mass, you are nice to Roseline, and you worship the Baron like you would any other god — even if it's not your god. This is no different than bedding the bones — put your reservations aside, and just fucking do it. And honey? While you're at it, try to keep an open mind. It'll do you good.

[/TRANSCRIPT ENDS]

Hail Gorgo, Slayer of Men

Medusa was a heinous monster, a seductress who lured men to their stony deaths until a brave hero stepped forward to remove this female scourge from the land.

This is the story you likely heard, the lie passed down by men. The women of ancient Greece told it very differently.

Medusa's snake heads were a blessing, not a curse, from Athena to protect the Gorgon from ravenous men after Poseidon raped her. Even with this divine weapon and shield though, Medusa did not seek retribution or vengeance. Instead, she retreated quietly. Medusa wished only to be alone and to heal, but this was not a wish men would grant. They still came in ships, bringing sword and fire, intent on taking her as a trophy. Athena's gift brought them all death. Until Perseus, the last man in a long line of abusers — and he, finally, killed Medusa for daring not to submit.

The life of Medusa ended there, though her story was passed down from mother to daughter. Men warped it into a cautionary tale: submit, or be a monster worthy only of death. We know better though. We also know Medusa was not the last of the Gorgons. She had two older, immortal sisters.

The Gorgon of *this* story is not as kindly as her younger sister. She is not content to retreat into a cave and heal in solitude. Gorgo laughs as she grinds oppressors under her heel, and scatters their ashes to the wind. She laughs as she topples the Ivory Tower, and breaks the Sword of Caine. She laughs as the age of men draws to a close. Only when the work is done, does Gorgo allow herself to mourn her sister and all others struck down by the kyriarchy.

Hail Gorgo, Slayer of Men.

We are the Daughters of Gorgo, and we are already among you. We know your secrets. We know where you sleep. Warwick, Pascek, de Guy, Mysancta: they all fell to our righteous fury, and now we are coming for you.

The Six Truths of Gorgo

If you mistreat your childer, or Embraced without their consent or forgiveness — fear us, for we are myriad and coming for you.

If you use the Bonds of Blood to rule as a tyrant — fear us, for the Blood of Gorgo breaks all chains, and we are coming for you.

If you are an elder in the Ivory Tower or the Pyramid — fear us, for Gorgo owes allegiance to no one, and we are coming for you.

If you are alone and cast out — join us, for we are all sisters among the downtrodden.

If you are wronged — join us, for we will not rest until your abuser is ashes on the wind.

If you desire freedom — join us, for we ask no less of you than to break all that binds you.

[LAYOUT: TRANSCRIPT]

On a Mission for the Goddess

Transcript of meeting, taken for posterity by Tamil Gorgonsdottir. Secured against unsanctioned reading by the Rite of Stone Eyes. All hail Gorgon, her name be hallowed!

Jamina: Where to next? Is Chicago ready?

Tamil: The pack in Chicago is still collecting intel. For now, I suggest Bogotá, Colombia — we have a potential new recruit there.

Jamina: Damn, that's a ways away. Are we flying or road tripping?

Tamil: Road trip for sure. I have more targets lined up in Medellín and Manizales.

Jamina: Sounds good. Tell me about the Bogotá recruit?

Tamil: They're a Blue Blood. Embraced for their knowledge of computers, with hacking side skills, so that's great. Didn't get along with their sire, but he went "mysteriously" missing in a recent SI raid. Turns out grandsire is even more of a jerk though.

Jamina: I love hackers — so useful. Who's the grandsire?

Tamil: That'd be Lady Ezrella Di Morti. Some high-up from the local Blue Bloods.

Jamina: This just keeps getting better. Do we have all the info we need on her?

Tamil: Courtesy of our new prospect.

Jamina: Perfect. Speaking of the prospect though — they get that breaking "all that binds you" means *all*? No killing grandsire and then sticking around to rise in the ranks of the Camarilla.

Tamil: They understand, and welcome that. They're indigenous, of the Muisca people. Majored in Environmental Studies at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, with minors in Gender Studies and Political Science. Embraced by a colonial Blue Blood to serve as glorified digital adapter. They are ready to burn the whole thing down.

Jamina: Amen to that. They also understand that Gorgo is real?

Tamil: Real as in ancient Cainite, yes. Real as in the actual Goddess Stheno — not quite there yet. But honestly, I did not believe that until my initiation. I bet my pretty parts they'll come around.

Jamina: Fair. Do we have packs in place for all our targets?

Tamil: Medellín is a two-girl job — target goes to bed early, and his haven is badly secured. I honestly think he was relying on secrecy to keep him safe. Q's crew is meeting us in Manizales, as that job looks to be tougher, and they'll ride with us to Bogotá.

Jamina: Perfect. I'll go prepare. Meet back tomorrow night. All hail our Lady Gorgo.

Tamil: Blessed is Gorgo.

[/TRANSCRIPT]

The Seeker and the Moon

From the lost and found Diary of Kalini, Seeker of Golconda, entry for the twenty-fifth week

The local Kindred have not approached me yet, but I can sense them watching me. Let them — it's not them I seek. I have come for the Children of the Moon, Los Hijos de Si, who are said to possess the last secret of Golconda. This is what I seek — throwing off the shackles of Caine's Curse, a new birth, and transcendence.

Moonlight soaks Lima. I can feel Her, the one locals call Si, seeping through my flesh and into my blood. Not the hard light of the sun, but a gentler touch preparing me for Transcendence. I requested a meeting with her High Priestess, a Kindred named Illari. I have not clearly

ascertained her clan — she is by all public accounts a Leper. Mine is not the place to judge this, nor does it matter — we are all the same as we endeavor to Golconda.

From the lost and found Diary of Kalini, Seeker of Golconda, entry for the twenty-sixth week

Illari granted my request for a meeting, and her presence lifted me. We spoke at length, the high priestess asking many questions about my time with the Inconnu, and answering my own questions in return. I felt the sun rise and set again as we spoke, but neither its burning rays nor sleeping balm touched us in the caves where Los Hijos de Si dwell.

Los Hijos worship both Si, a local moon goddess, as well as creatures they call Machukuna. I believe they are vampires of sorts, but possibly not descended from the Dark Father. Both Si and the Machukuna are needed to complete the journey, and this in turn is more than a Transcendence of Self. The Children of the Moon believe this age will end, and the next Pachakuti will turn the cycle to a world of eternal moonlight where, away from the baleful sun, the Machukuna and Los Hijos de Si will live in harmony.

It's a wide-reaching vision, and one I never dreamed of. But the path seems clear now that I see it — which, of course, is true of all steps of the journey. Self and World are both manifestations of will — transcending one transforms the other. This is why the moon shines so powerfully in Lima. The Machukuna light the path, and Los Hijos walk it — and as they do, they transform themselves *and* the land. We will leave the Curse of Caine, and our transcendence lifts Lima up from this world into the next.

The king is the land. The Machukuna are the path. The seeker walking the path *is* the journey. Everything is connected, parts of one greater and radiant whole. Illari promised to take me to the Machukuna, to initiate me further into their teachings. My eyes are open. The path is clear. My journey nears completion.

[LAYOUT: EMAIL]

Trickle-Up Religion

From: marianargh@sunburst.org

To: sofia3x@redq.net

Subject: Cult of Shalim

Beloved Sister,

I looked into the Cult of Shalim, as you asked. Most acolytes dutifully spread the cult's wonderful nihilistic message of suffering, but I found one dissenting voice — I attached their exposé now, and will sort and send the rest of my findings later. I made an effort to track the dissenter, but they seem to have gone missing shortly after writing this. I don't know if that is the cult's doing, or one of the other people they maligned.

I will telephone you an hour after your usual waking time. That gives us enough time before I'm off to sleep to discuss your repayment of my efforts.

Affectionately yours,

Marian

[/EMAIL]

[LAYOUT: TYPED WORD DOC]

Beware False Religions

In a letter to his wife in 1938, L. Ron Hubbard wrote: “You don't get rich writing science fiction. If you want to get rich, you start a religion.” He did, and he was right. Such a grand pyramid scheme — nothing but money and pussy all the way out to sea. Take a look at any modern religion, and you can see money flowing up. Scams, the lot of them.

But you tell me our religions are true? Pull the other one.

Mithra was a Persian deity. A SUN god. Yet somehow he ended up as one of us? Either we believe the Mithraists’ tale about Mithra walking the world in corporeal form when an ancient overpowered and turned him — or we go for the simpler explanation. Someone saw a good opportunity to be heralded as a god, took the trappings of Mithra, added an *s* to his new name so it wouldn’t be too blatant, and waited. Another scam, just like Scientology, and it fucking worked. Seven steps to the Sun in the cult of Mithras (what, is that supposed to be a secret?) while servitude flows up, and commands flow down.

Or take the Cult of Shalim, if you will. They destroy anything that holds value, ruin your existence, and then propose *they* have the answer to your suffering. Piss on someone, then turn around to sell them an umbrella. “Reality is suffering” the Shalimites say. Sure it is, after they bend over backwards to make it so. And once the target buys into that story, they have to do the same to others. Ruin more lives, preach more false answers, recruit more acolytes. Another fucking pyramid scheme. Who benefits? The person at the top, whoever this Shalim is.

By which I mean to say: Do. Not. Fall. For. It.

Our kind’s inclination toward religion is no different than any mortal’s. Indulge if it comforts you. Pray if you believe any god is listening. But enlightenment flows down — it is a gift from the Universe to You. If resources are flowing up, be they money or labor, it’s not a religion but a pyramid scheme. Run as far as your little legs can carry you, and do not look back.

[/WORD DOC ENDS]

[TRANSCRIPT]

The Lord of the Red Desert

From the collected teachings of Wise Neferneferu to their pupil Ahmose

Neferneferu: We have many desert flowers to choose from this year. Perhaps we can finally find you a sister.

Ahmose: Thank you, sire, I would welcome a sibling. I too noticed an upward trend of acolytes. What do you think caused it?

Neferneferu: The time of the Tyrant Priest of Rome draws to an end. People are returning to the gods of old. Our Lord included.

Ahmose: True. Do you think it will last?

Neferneferu: Nothing lasts. Even in the Old Kingdom, our Lord waxed and waned in popularity. But this does not matter — He is true, and people always return to truth eventually.

Ahmose: Why now though? Do you think it ties into the rumored awakening of the ancients?

Neferneferu: For the children of the Storm Father, certainly. The ancients proved themselves real, and our Lord at least rewards His faithful. We are servants in His army, soldiers and generals alike, rather than lambs to sate an ancient's appetite. Many children of the Aeons seek to abandon their false and tyrannical masters, in favor of our Lord's magnanimity.

Ahmose: And kine? Why so many new adherents among them?

Neferneferu: A congruence of events. The stranglehold of Rome finally abates, and its scandals have come home to roost. Meanwhile war, climate change, and diseases once thought eradicated seem poised to end the world. People search for meaning and power, and find it in the old religions. Our Lord is a natural fit — it's the ruling class that got the kine into this mess, and He is first among rebels.

Ahmose: Fortuitous indeed.

Neferneferu: For us, yes.

Ahmose: Our doing, sire?

Neferneferu: Theoretically possible. But if so, I am not part of the conspiracy.

Ahmose: In the Old Kingdom, Osirian propaganda turned the people against our Lord.

Neferneferu: Yes. But people were less educated then. More prone to believing what they're told.

Ahmose: And they're smarter now?

Neferneferu: Oh, the masses not at all. But those who seek hidden and secret knowledge? Yes. They keep searching until they find the oldest, truest tale. Before Isis and Horus fed the world lies about our Lord. But the old legends tell the truth of Him as the most faithful of warriors, standing at the prow of Ra's solar barge to do battle with Apep.

Ahmose: Isis and her spawn. If anyone profited from a return to the old gods, it's them. We should mount an offensive to—

Neferneferu: No. Our grievance with them is long in the past. We should prepare our defenses, and if they come we will annihilate them. But if they choose to maintain peace within the Divine Family, our Lord welcomes that. They were at balance once, our Lord of the Red Desert and Horus of the Black Land. There is room enough for all of Egypt's gods, as it was in the Old Kingdom where people prayed to them in turn.

Ahmose: Are you certain?

Neferneferu: Our Lord is certain. His battle now is with the false children, not with his sister and nephew. You should not question His wisdom. Or my words.

Ahmose: Yes, sire.

Ahmose: You spoke of the false children of the Aeons. Sire, I do not fully understand. They are like us in the night, are they not?

Neferneferu: They are nothing like us. You are correct that we all share the Blood of the Defiant. The difference lies in the other half of our heritage. Their progenitors were all mortal once. Ours is a god, made only more powerful by the Defiant One's Blood.

Ahmose: Does that alter the Blood?

Neferneferu: It makes us more powerful, certainly. But it also gives us great responsibility. The Pharaohs of Egypt were gods born of men. Tearing out of the womb bloody and wailing like all men do, yet lifted into Divinity by the touch of a god. We too are born of blood and the touch of a god. And just as the Pharaohs had to tend their lands and subjects, so must we tend the lesser children of the Aeons. Correct their errors. Remind them of their place. *This* is our battle now, rather than an ancient and best forgotten grudge with our Lord's Family.

Ahmose: And the ones that abandon their false sires to worship our Lord?

Neferneferu: I shall not lie — their lesser Blood will forever be a hindrance to them, no matter how hard they strive. However, we will be benevolent and kind, and teach them all they can learn. This is our Lord's gift to those who worship Him.

Ahmose: I see the wisdom of Your words, sire, and the grace of our Lord.

Neferneferu: Of course you do. Both are undeniable. Still, your continued eagerness to learn pleases me. Let us discuss your sibling. I have a candidate in mind, from the University of Cairo. I will allow you one guess as to their identity. Show me you are indeed paying attention.

[/TRANSCRIPT ENDS]