



Kickstarter Manuscript Preview #5:
Cult Construction

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Cult Construction

“As I entered church today, I heard a few of you bemoaning your lack of cash. Your scarcity of capital. Your absence of money. Well let me tell you, my friends: money does not occupy these seats. Money does not fill a heart. Money cannot hear my words. More important than money is the soul. And I see a lot of souls out there tonight. Your souls are ripe and full of love and aspiration. Souls are all I need!”

— “Coach” Tyrone Soros, Motivational Speaker, Ministry, Indianapolis

The majority of this book revolves around cults already in existence within the text of **Vampire: The Masquerade**. These are only a small fraction of the cults within the world, however. Small circles of Kindred, ghouls, and humans form their own religious movements that either grow or splinter off into tiny subsects that eventually die. People ask themselves what the meaning of life is, and turn to charismatic leaders and mystery rituals to find the answer. Cults give people a sense of purpose — and since there are seven billion people on the planet, there are as many types of cults as there are stars in the sky.

This chapter gives you the tools you need to create your own cult, religion, or organization, as well as cult-related coteries. Note that this chapter deals with in-character perceptions of cults, as well as discussions of love-bombing, grooming, and abuse.

The Act of Creation

One could describe an organized religion as a cult that’s received formal recognition. In truth, there’s little to divide the two, beyond the word “cult” becoming dirtier as organized religions consumed the world. Neither cults nor religions are two-dimensional clubs for wayward hobbyists. They’re families bound together by belief, values, and ideology. Over the past thirty years, Kindred society has seen a glut of individual churches rise to the fore, which has created a sea of competing faiths. Players are encouraged to build their own coteries, cults, and spiritual covenants. The following material helps customize a methodology and system to put meat and flesh on the bones of an idea. In order to get started, the players can ask themselves several crucial questions:

- What are the core tenets of this faith? What are its central mandates?
- What is the structure of the cult?
- How does the cult recruit members?
- What rituals, rites, ceremonies, and sacraments enhance the faith?
- Are there any revered texts or protected relics?
- Are certain holidays or specific dates honored and celebrated?
- What symbols and colors represent the cult?
- Where does the cult meet?
- How do cult members live night to night?

A discussion or exploration of answers to these can turn a whisper of an idea into a three-dimensional organization with previously unimagined motivations. With each added layer of detail infused into the creation of a religious organization, storylines, chronicle hooks, and coterie possibilities emerge on their own.

This can also help Storytellers create a framework that remains consistent despite the questions or challenges characters encounter. The more specific players are in their answers, the easier it is to understand what is and isn't acceptable and who does or doesn't call the shots in any given situation.

How to Build a Cult

Like any stable group, a cult requires three things: people, money, and time. In order to have a flock of fanatical worshipers, you need people to convert. You need time to convert those people, and rewrite their thought processes to be more in line with your doctrine. Finally, you'll need money in order to house, feed, and clothe those people, and advertise your new group. It's a lengthy process, and many find themselves without enough of one of the three resources listed above to complete it.

Vampires, however, have access to as many people as they can get their hands on, all the time in the world, and plenty of ways to get money. Most don't tend to play nice with others, but some decide to spread their reach and form cults, both to gain more mortal and Kindred followers, and to genuinely worship. A Vampire is a selfish creature, and so if she is devoted to an entity worthy of worship, others should be too. After all, who better to judge the situation?

Vampire cults are often stereotyped as the flock of blood dolls and ghouls eagerly awaiting their turn on the St. Andrew's cross or the operating table, opening their veins and wallowing in depravity. While this is certainly true for some vampiric cults, others are not quite so gauche. Some Tremere chantries manage cults of eclectic occult practitioners, who they use to do research they don't have time for and groom new members of the clan. Ventrue host cults of superstitious tech developers, fostering atheist discussion circles and solstice rituals without a focus, channeling that energy into themselves and their projects. There are dozens, maybe hundreds of iterations of the cult model all across the world.

The Basics

Whatever the cult's use of money, people, and time ultimately looks like, there are several characteristics that all cults share. These are, according to the International Cultic Studies Association, in no particular order:

The leadership dictates what members do, where they go, who they marry, and more. This may be small, such as recommending members only live in a certain part of town or telling them not to get involved with another race, gender, religion, or tax bracket. On the other end, it may involve arranged marriages, communal housing, disposal of all non-cult items, and scheduled mealtimes and meetings.

The group claims an exalted or privileged status in the world. Cults often claim to offer secret knowledge, the key to happiness, immortality of various kinds, and a place to belong. Humans, ghouls, and Kindred who feel lost, abandoned, or spiritually hungry are drawn to cults by these inducements. Some even receive what the cult promises.

Everything is presented as “us versus them.” The cult’s dialectic resembles battlefield strategy. It’s a way to get one over on those outside, those who don’t understand and who persecute the cultists because of it. A cultist is convinced she knows “what’s actually going on” and she has to keep that secret from the undeserving. The cult defines the in-group, or the people inside, and the out-group, the people who are not members of the cult and therefore are evil.

Doubt, dissent, and questioning are discouraged, violently if necessary. In mainstream religions, there are ministers whose job it is to counsel the doubters among their faithful. If someone is a member of a cult, however, she is right, with a capital R. Questioning is not normal in a cult, it’s a sign of weak faith. Weak faith means the cultist has the potential to defect, and that cannot be tolerated. Leadership makes use of shame, withholding food or sleep, physical punishments like beatings or kneeling for hours, emotional abuse, and other methods to keep everyone in line. Anyone who questions is part of the out-group, and might poison the in-group. This cannot be allowed.

The cult is the cultists’ world... Long-term members of a cult cannot think of a life without it. All their time and energy goes into the cult’s activities: promotion, worship, work, punishment. Even leisure time is spent doing cult-approved and cult-related activities. The outside world is full of sin and suffering, so why go out there when you can just stay in here? Even if all of her money and time is going toward the cult, a cultist sees it as a necessary sacrifice for whatever the cult promises her.

...but not so for the leadership. Leaders of cults often hold some sort of mystical, even messianic, standing among the membership. They hold all of the wealth and power of the cult in their hands, and it’s not long before they’re using it to fuel their own vices. Some cults have true believers as leadership; some Bahari cults, for example, channel that centralized power into acquiring more knowledge and better teachers for their fellow cultists. Others, especially in more famous mortal cults, spend their followers’ money on drugs, booze, seventy-bedroom mansions, swimming pools, and all sorts of other luxuries while their flocks live in squalor, seeing it as a divine hardship.

Cults do not think of themselves as evil. It is easy to judge a cult from the outside, to say that they’re all brain-damaged or pathetic or sadists. The truth is, cults are as complex as any other group of people, living or otherwise. Recruiters prey on the lost, the damaged, the lonely, and the depressed — what they, themselves, once were. Cults are insidious in that they build a space for people to feel accepted and part of something greater, a feeling they might not have had before. All the work they do, all the crimes they commit, everything they sacrifice is for this group that has shown them love and acceptance. That’s just human nature.

This is a difficult mindspace to get people into, especially in Western societies. Many American and European cultures have a strong thread of individualism running through them, and in any “normal” religious relationship, telling a devotee she can’t leave the church home except during certain times or she can’t speak to her family any more sparks outrage and backlash. There are some exceptions to this, monastic orders for example, but in that case the power relationship with the religion is consensual and up front.

Cults recruit using a technique called “love-bombing.” Essentially, they find people who are struggling, lost, lonely, or grieving, and provide them with a space that unconditionally affirms them. As the potential cultist is drawn further in, this affirmation slowly gives way to rules, demands, and punishments. The cultist craves that love she had been given, and so she acts in

accordance with the cult's rules, hoping to receive it once again. When she is in this space, she is the perfect adherent: fanatical, refusing to care for herself, and sublimating her needs into serving the greater whole.

It's important to note here that, once again, cults do not think of themselves as evil. While they may very well be, their members see love-bombing and punishments as necessary steps. Many cults use terms such as "religion," "faith," and "order" to reassure followers and themselves. Very few people want to be the next Charles Manson, nor do many people want to join the next Manson Family. New cultists are shiny and innocent and should be treated with kid gloves, but members who have been in the cult for weeks or months and still manage to commit transgressions against its doctrine, leadership, or other members need to be shown the error of their ways. It's just a necessary cycle of love and punishment.

Cults and Religions

As mentioned in the text, there is little to no difference between a cult and a religion beyond the veneer of respectability and accepted practices. The public see cults as groups of brainwashed fanatics in service to some esoteric or violent purpose. The public see religions as groups of individuals who have made the choice to commit to faith, and while they may not understand the faith, they might respect the choice to follow it.

This chapter makes some rigid definitions of what a cult is or could be, but those definitions can apply equally to many religions. While many find comfort and cause within belief, others find control, deceit, and horror. We use the word "cults" because to some vampires, when freshly Embraced, these faiths represent exactly those horrifying, alien belief systems they've heard about. But one vampire's cult soon becomes another vampire's religion, faith, or church.

Belief

At its core, a shared system of belief binds a group together. Be it religious, ideological, or philosophical, this belief defines the identity of the organization. While mortal society may claim a difference between saintly churches and deviant cults, Kindred society makes few such distinctions. When it comes to "churches" and "cults," the terms are largely interchangeable.

Ancestral Worship

The vast majority of Kindred cults worship a specific methuselah. Some followers seek to emulate these blood gods, while others commit themselves to the role of useful pawn. In general, Kindred suspect they are unknowing tools in a greater Jihad, but members of an ancestral cult are voluntary tools, working on behalf of a single, ancient Kindred. Such cultists offer patronage to their church, hoping to appease their god and earn their attention. The most common list of deified methuselaha include:

- **Banu Haqim:** Mancheaka, Tegyrus, Ur-Shulgi
- **Brujah:** Altamira, Menele, Uga Dugud
- **Gangrel:** Enkidu, Matasuntha, Mictlantecuhtli, Odin the All-High
- **Hecata:** Augustus Giovanni, The Baron, The Capuchin, Japheth, Lamia, Lazarus

- **Lasombra:** Boukephos, Montano, Sybil
- **Malkavian:** The Eater, Malakai, Nissiku
- **Ministry:** Nakhthorheb, Set
- **Nosferatu:** Azazel, Gorgo, Yima
- **Toreador:** Amarantha, Beshter, Helena, Michael
- **Tremere:** Goratrix, Meerlinda, Tremere
- **Ventrue:** Hardestadt, Mithras, Artemis Orthia, Tiamat, Tinia

Secular Values

Some churches center less on a specific individual and more around a particular concept. The Amaranthans hunt down diablerists. The Eyes of Malakai believe madness is the only way toward absolute truth while the Nosferatu Cleopatras of Yima attempt to regain their beauty. There is no founding blood god to guide these churches, but rather a prime value crucial to their identity and unique to their organization.

Heresies

Even among Kindred society, tolerance has its limits. Many circles tolerate cults like the Bahari or the Church of Caine. But other cults, especially those Gehenna cults who preach the end of the world, are too radical in the opinion of these same circles. At best, Kindred discourage these cults, or purge them outright at worst. Such organizations exist on the fringes of vampire society. They gather in secret behind closed and guarded doors. When discovered, these heresies suffer swiftly and publicly, though more than one Prince has persecuted a local cult less on grounds of security and more out of political expedience.

Mandates

Religions have commandments. Governments have laws. Sects have the Traditions. Every major organization, religious or secular, has a specific list of rules or forbidden actions to solidify their character.

You Shall...

A well-crafted cult has at least one mandate which helps define who they are, what they want, and what they represent. These rules are very personal, and players should customize them for their cult. A good rule of thumb is to ask what each faith believes in and why. The cult of Mithras, for example, has deified the most powerful and famous Ventrue Prince in Kindred history. As a result, Mithraists place the honor of the lineage, or the greater community, above their own. Meanwhile, the Meneleans honor the memory of Carthage and have sworn vengeance against the Toreador whom they believe betrayed them during the Punic Wars.

You Shall Not...

By contrast, a cult should have at least one sin or prohibited action, but may have many, many more. A cult succeeds based on the amount of control it has over its members. So, a cult likely has a long list of “do’s” and “don’ts.” Some of these rules can be minor infractions requiring repentance and absolution if transgressed. Violating other rules might be impossible to forgive and demand the ultimate retribution. These directives may or may not conform to the sins of a

given sect, so part of the fun in creating a cult is the Kindred involved may need to tread very carefully when navigating these two worlds at the same time.

The First Rule of Vampire Club

The first rule of **Vampire** is don't get caught. A Kindred can get away with anything they want until someone else catches them. That's when consequences come knocking. Do they list this rule explicitly in the vampire handbook? No. Or at least, not as such. This is an implicit rule or a cultural norm, meaning there can be completely unwritten rules for a cult as well.

These unwritten rules are mandates everyone seems to know, but usually have no idea where they came from or how they got started. Phrases like "it's always been this way" and "we don't do that here" are good indicators of cultural norms based on tradition rather than anything to do with faith or doctrine.

Hierarchy

The following groupings only serve as an example because terminology may change from cult to cult. But, most have roughly the same hierarchical structure. A single leader commands and the masses follow. Those masses are part of a ladder leading ever upward, elevating members based on merit, devotedness, seniority, education, charisma, gamesmanship, and other manipulations. Some churches focus on dedication of faith while others honor ability. Regardless of what promotion is based on, which is usually a combination of factors, the further someone climbs the ladder the more they are able to peek behind the curtain. Through their elevation, they gain greater understanding of the cult's inner workings and, at times, its hypocrisy.

Laity

Laity are members of a religious group who are not an ordained part of it. "Lay members" often refers to people who participate in a field without being professionals in that field. This can include volunteers and hobbyists.

In relation to cults, these are the outermost ring of involved individuals. Time and circumstance, along with their doubt, misfortune, or naiveté has led them to it. Laity may still have misgivings, questions, or reservations with one foot in and one foot out, but for the moment, they are curious enough to contribute. For them, the cult represents a chance at peace, purpose, and community. There must be appeal or advantage to their participation for people who the cult often tasks with the most menial chores and obligations.

These members are the weakest links in regard to security and secrecy, but are often the best vectors for pulling more people into the cult. They participate because of their love for the deity or passion for the espoused ideals of the organization, and their enthusiasm draws others in. Keeping these members happy (or seemingly so) with real or imagined benefits is important to the success of the cult.

Initiate

Inducted Initiates are the general rank-and-file within the cult. They understand the basic tenets of the faith and are both able and willing to carry out the commands of their superiors. Initiates have committed themselves to the cause, and while they may have lingering concerns or questions, they are generally smart enough not to voice them openly. Initiates focus only on the positive aspects of the cult and tend to ignore or deny any doubts voiced by others.

Initiates who have committed to the cult's agenda usually perform essential nightly tasks to keep the belief machine running. Some function as preachers and messengers, traveling between cities in order to recruit new members and pass along communiqués from their superiors. Others participate in internal ceremonies, assisting leaders in their religious services. Finally, Initiates may serve as soldiers tasked with guard duty, city patrols, or offensive attacks.

Acolyte

Acolytes are the most fanatical members of the cult. They have followed its precepts, participated in its rites, and have been rewarded for their devotion. They spearhead short-term missions or coordinate some aspect of the cult. When a cult needs to get its hands bloody, an Acolyte tends to lead the charge. They are the first to volunteer their services and the first to put down dissent. For them the cult is their entire identity and the only real source of purpose in their life.

Specialized Acolytes take on specific positions ranging from shock troops to secretaries. They are the bread and butter of the cult. These people support the cult because they have tied their lives and livelihood to it.

Clergy

Clergy are leaders. They are the shepherds to the sheep. They can perform all of the major rites, handle internal disputes, and conduct religious services. Smaller cults may have a single Clergy person who serves as the right hand of the highest authority. Larger cults may have more, with each focusing on an aspect like financial, organizational, or spiritual matters.

They can also function as an advisory council to the cult leader. Given their role and their understanding of the cult's inner workings, they are also the most likely to use it for their own personal agendas. A cultist who is the equivalent of Clergy likely has their life and the lives of others dependent on the successful execution of the cult's objectives. Because of this, they can be enforcers of doctrine, the secret police, or propaganda artists who maintain the status quo.

Prophets

Prophets are the people at the top. They are the charismatic cult leaders, the CEOs of the brand, and the visionaries who inspire a movement. Unless there is a particularly wily member of the cult or the structure is something other than a hierarchy, Prophets set the agenda for the cult. They can inspire or manipulate their followers because they are the heart of the cult and control the power it can wield. And, they use everyone underneath them. They make the decisions or set the goals those lower in the hierarchy execute.

Whether a rousing preacher, an inspirational thought leader, or the Pater of a blood cult, often they *are* the cult. Likewise, when something decapitates the cult by taking out the head, the whole organization can crumble. This is why cult leaders surround themselves with true believers and people who would give their lives to save them.

Cult Practices

Strict rules often govern the night-to-night practices of a cult, but this is not always the case. A sense of community and rigorous indoctrination might be all anyone needs to remain dedicated to a cause. Indoctrination can come from techniques like brain washing and induced dependency, but followers can also come together because of the culture or lifestyle the cult provides.

Religious practices are the building blocks of a cult's culture and community. To some extent, everyone in the cult participates in its practices. From the prayers they recite to the clothes they wear, these aspects create a group's spiritual identity.

Scripture

Not every religion has a single holy book, but many have stanzas, prayers, and songs. Scriptures capture key occasions, either developed over centuries or recorded by the faithful in the presence of their god. They can take the form of ancient tales passed down to form a kind of living history. Cultists may, for example, base their prayers, what they do or don't eat, or what they do on a particular day on such historical manuscripts.

Scriptures are for teaching, but the documents themselves can become holy relics. Holy books, sacred texts, and ancient tomes can become as important for their pages as for what those pages say. A cult that venerates knowledge might preserve books simply because they are books. Another cult might protect a letter written by the founder because they believe it has magical properties.

Relics

Along with sacred texts, objects and artifacts can become holy relics. The ashes of a great Kindred, a sword once wielded by a blood god, or the home of a founder are all examples of relics. The most prized are the most protected. For many, being in the presence of a relic makes their worship feel more real. In a cultist, an object can inspire a feeling of connection to their leader or god and remind them of their faith.

Services

While some more devout members may actually live in the temple, others may be more infrequent visitors, only attending on holidays or during major events. Determining when the church gathers helps determine how active and cohesive its membership is. A regular worship service every month or every week creates a dependable schedule that followers can rely on.

Nightly activities, such as recruitment drives, training, and social events may not be religious services, but they do help solidify a group and assist in the overall growth of the cult.

Meanwhile, weekly feasts may become formal occasions, with an additional half dozen holidays to augment the year.

Apparel

Not every cult has strict mandates when it comes to clothing. Some churches need to blend in with their surroundings to avoid drawing unwanted attention to themselves. Others are quite brazen in their faith, traveling together in groups wearing the same garments or color scheme. Clothing (or the lack of it) can easily become another one of those unwritten rules. But mostly, for the purposes of the cult, wearing the same clothes or having particular vestments adds to the overall indoctrination of followers.

Rituals

Acts of adoration, veneration, and homage are the cornerstones of any faith. To believe in a deity is one thing, but to properly express belief is something else. Cultures throughout history have developed intricate methods of worship and Kindred cults do the same. Rituals can be small

nightly actions cultists take, like saying a prayer or lighting a candle, or larger ceremonies combining the magical will of the group to perform massive feats.

Blood: The primary ingredient in the rites of most Kindred cults. Consuming blood during feasts and sacrifices isn't uncommon, nor is painting sigils of protection, baptism, or curses in blood.

Fire: Given the destructive nature of fire, Kindred cults tend to use it only on rare occasions. Conversely, the use of fire can be a punishment for wayward followers.

Incense: Burning something to honor the gods is no new concept. Most use it as a means of purification, suffuming a room or person with smoke from frankincense, myrrh, and benzoin.

Construction: Creating works of art or feats of engineering are common enough shows of worship. Faith inspires many cultists to use their talents.

Sacrifice: To prove their dedication to their ancestor, many cults conduct blood sacrifices. But sacrifice doesn't have to be bloody. Rumors suggest the followers of Helena create works of exquisite art only to sacrifice them to her.

Holidays

Nights set aside for religious observances, holidays serve specific customs within a given cult. Used to celebrate or commemorate an event, holidays hold traditional significance. For vampires, holidays and religious observances come in several different forms.

Lunar

In many vampire cults, holidays are associated with the lunar calendar. Given their nocturnal connection, the moon not only represents shifts in time, but also has specific meanings depending on its given phase.

The New Moon: As the sun shines against the far side of the moon, new moons represent moments of renewal.

The Waxing Moon: As the moon grows each night, so too do intention and preparation to act. Nights under the waxing moon are about growth and building.

The Full Moon: Full moons are powerful, ceremonial, and climactic. Kindred cults might use the full moon for Embraces, coronations, and initiations into the cult.

The Waning Moon: Sliding back toward the new moon, waning moons represent times of healing, self-reflection, and the end of something.

Historic

Some cults might center holidays on key events. As many practice some form of ancestral worship, the majority of these historic events focus on the progenitor's birthday, death day, or in rare instances, their true death day. Other holidays celebrate key milestones such as praxis seizures, founding dates, and major victories.

Birthday: Kindred largely ignore mortal birthdays. Ancestors tend to have little connection to their mortal mother or father, placing their vampire sire above their blood parents. Some methuselahs are so old they pre-date even the Julian calendar, making their actual date of birth difficult to pin down. But, without birth, no Kindred would exist.

Death Day: Dates of Embrace are more impactful the older the Kindred. The Embrace can be an occasion of celebration as much as horror, but it is a defining night for any Kindred.

True Death Day: Methuselahs do not die often, but when they do, it reverberates throughout Kindred society. Such true death days can be solemn occasions, marked by commemorations, sacrifices, and remembrances.

Major Events: The most common kind of historic holidays commemorate major events. The blood cult of Ur-Shulgi marks the moment Haqim created Alamut, home of the Banu Haqim. The Meneleans remember the date Carthage fell to the Romans.

Seasonal

Those Kindred cults closely tied to nature often use seasonal festivals to highlight their beliefs.

Midwinter: The winter solstice is the longest night of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and the shortest in the Southern Hemisphere.

Vernal Equinox: The spring equinox takes place in March in the Northern Hemisphere and in September in the Southern Hemisphere. During the equinox, day and night are of equal length.

Midsummer: The summer solstice is the shortest night in the Northern Hemisphere and the longest in the Southern Hemisphere.

Autumnal Equinox: The fall equinox, like the spring equinox, is when the day and night are equal. It takes place in September in the Northern Hemisphere and March in the Southern Hemisphere.

Methods of Recruitment

With a combination of charm and intimidation, a recruiter taps into a person's fears, hopes, and dreams, and lures them into a belief system. Be they the desperate, the driven, or the indulgent, vampire cults capitalize on those in search of something more than a solitary life provides.

The Desperate

Kindred existence is often a lonely affair. Ennui grows, causing a vampire to become bored, listless, and disillusioned. After someone has fallen in love with someone or something, only to see it die with age, repeatedly over centuries, it's understandable for a vampire to fall into despair. It's a muted existence wrought with atrophy.

For these individuals, a Kindred church can provide new meaning, purpose, and a family. It's an appealing prospect to a Kindred in pain. The leader who can take away pain, even for a moment, earns true loyalty in return.

The Driven

Some Kindred join cults not out of desperation but out of drive. They seek to join a group larger than themselves either for protection, camaraderie, or power. They play the game and they play it well, rising high enough in the ranks of the cult to use it for their own ends. Drawn more toward dominion than dogma, they must strive to stay atop the proverbial ladder.

The Indulgent

Finally, Kindred with beliefs, tastes, or indulgences considered too deviant for polite society conduct themselves in secret far from prying eyes and always with one glance over their

shoulder. They are often lonely creatures, angry at the world, or view themselves as morally superior. For such hedonists, certain cults represent a welcome release and an opportunity to express their true selves. These groups can also delve into the darker aspects of Kindred society, performing blood sacrifices and worshiping creatures deemed heretical to the undead community.

Places of Worship

While the internet has allowed individuals to come together in massive numbers without actually ever being in the same room, cults require direct contact. Though they come in various forms, a physical place is necessary for meetings, religious services, and emergencies.

The Temple

Those who choose to call a place their temple gather in a safe building, using it to pray, commune, or perform their religious rites. It's a secure location, purchased outright and free from outsiders. Most cults utilize remodeled buildings or churches large enough to house their flock but small enough not to attract unwanted attention. Cults usually want to keep their prayers, blood rites, and other practices discrete. Temples also often serve as hostels for the cult, requiring multiple sleeping quarters and daytime security systems.

Historic Site

A historic location connected to a cult's deity is of personal value to the parishioners especially if it's a place of ancestral significance. Perhaps it's the place where their methuselah was born, Embraced, or killed. Perhaps it's the former home of their progenitor or where they won a great battle. Cults can view such locations as vital to their identity, going to great lengths in order to financially secure them.

Anywhere and Nowhere

Not every church needs a permanent location. Some transient cults are more nomadic. Rented spaces or temporary ones fill this need. Some examples might be a high school gymnasium after hours, a rented mortuary, the backroom of a bar, or a converted slaughterhouse complete with folding chairs and linoleum floors.

[LAYOUT: THE FOLLOWING IS A LETTER FROM PERSON A]

A Letter from Laylah Froud of the Bahari

Khal,

I've been thinking a lot about last week's discussion on the differences between a witch and a priest, how each has different duties and methods. While I agree with you that the witch grows and prunes and the priest codifies, I think there's a great deal more fluidity between the two roles than you allow. I am well aware that the Church of Set requires, well, set roles for all things, but there is no reason a priest couldn't receive visions or a witch couldn't set canon.

I suppose it's our difference in upbringing, so to speak. I know the Church has the Order of Taweret, what I would call a Bahari sect within the Church itself. As a follower of Lilith, I find myself at home with your witches in the Order, the Kindred who mix growth and law. In a sense, you could say they are the counterbalance to the larger church, the life to your god of death.

(Let it be known, of course, that I do not revile Set in any way. Set is simply a new frontier, held by a masculine-presenting force, that I have yet to explore!)

I look forward to hearing more of your thoughts on the subject. I know you're busy, so take your time in getting back to me.

Yours sincerely,

Laylah Froud

[/LETTER]

Grooming, Love-Bombing, and Disciplines

If you and your fellow players decide to tell a story about your coterie being inducted into a cult, be sure everyone knows what they're getting into. Read over the rules for considerate play in **Vampire: The Masquerade** and use them as needed. Be ready to pull back on scenes if they are too much. Love-bombing is similar to partner grooming, and can be part of abuse patterns.

If you do decide to play a game like this, consider how Disciplines could be used to assist in love-bombing new members. Presence and Dominate are the obvious ones, but what about Animalism to win over their pets or Auspex to sense their motives before they realize them? Give it some thought — and again, be mindful of your players' boundaries and desires.

Quick Cult Creation

Below are tables for rolling up your own cult. Use these for random rolls, or pick what you like from the tables and use them as inspiration. There is no wrong way to use these resources.

Backgrounds

Cultists all need certain Backgrounds to make sure their cult is functioning as it should. Below are suggested uses of some of the Backgrounds within a cult context.

Allies

- A cult recruiter who is willing to take care of you when you're hurting, but needs you to also recruit new members of the cult.
- One of the cult's cooks who has access to the food supplies and knives.
- Two mortal cult members with whom you're close.
- A landlord who is a new member of the cult, who lets the cult get away with not paying the rent in exchange for free counseling and protection from their shady past.
- A new member of the cult, who has a certain amount of influence within the local city's politics.
- An established cultist, fanatically loyal to the religion but less than functional in the outside world.
- A ghoul or prestigious mortal within the cult who would die for you.
- The cult's elite members who will defend the organization to the hilt.

Contacts

- A cultist from another branch of the order.
- A new member in the cult with a decent grasp of the occult.
- A police dispatcher in a town unfriendly to the cult.
- A ghoul researcher with a sizable library on the occult, willing to look things up for you.
- The leader of another branch of the cult, or a second-in-command of the local cult.
- A cultist well-placed in the city emergency services.
- A celebrity who vocally supports the cult in a way that doesn't damage the Masquerade.
- A cultist with impressive influence over the running of the city.

Influence

- (Church) The cult holds meetings at a local house of worship, claiming to be a self-help group like Alcoholics Anonymous.
- (Street) The local gangs leave the abandoned home the cult squats in alone, unless they need something.
- (Bureaucracy) The cult can get forged IDs once every couple of months for members who have gotten in trouble with the law.
- (Transportation) Some of the cult members work as taxi drivers for extra money and don't charge fellow cultists fare.
- (High Society) Several celebrities are members of the cult and promote it whenever the cult tells them to.
- (Media) The cult has contacts in several local (or one national) news outlets that allow them to run ads, and also be interviewed in special segments, on the regular.
- (Industry) The cult makes and sells a product that has made them a formidable force in the market. Several high-up members of the cult are also infiltrating competitors to try and either force a merger or drive them out of business.
- (Police) The cops look the other way when the cultists drive drunk or people and animals go missing near the compound. It's too much trouble to get involved.
- (Politics) One of the members of the cult is a regional governor or involved in the country's legislative branch. They push really hard for legislation that benefits the cult, and manage to get funds directed to the cult.
- (Underworld) The cult has designated hitmen who take out their enemies, as well as money launderers, spies, and other criminals at their disposal. Some of them may even be members of the cult. They control the equivalent of a big mafia family's territory.

Haven

- An abandoned house in an inner-city block. No running water or electricity, but room for all of the cultists.
- Tents in the woods of a national park, moving whenever you're discovered.

- A nice two-bedroom apartment with crash pads on the floor and a futon for cultists, and the beds for leadership.
- Rented space at a campground, held indefinitely.
- An apartment building full of studios, with the cult's sanctuary on the ground floor. The building is managed by the leadership.
- A full campground owned by the cult, with a lodge and tents. Most of the space is rented out to families and backpackers, who you try to indoctrinate.
- A suburban development owned by the cult, with the cult's center of worship either in the community center or housed in its own building.
- A mountain lodge with cabins. Full amenities, so long as the members of the cult behave themselves.
- A massive house of worship situated downtown in a major city. There are public spaces, of course, but the private spaces are heavily locked down and controlled.
- A network of comfortable safehouses throughout the country, all heavily decorated with cult iconography and things that can be used as weapons. Each safe house has an alarm system.

Mawla

- A Kindred cultist, one step above you in the order.
- A vampire who has been studying the cult from the outside.
- A vampire well-practiced in recruiting for cults.
- A vampire who holds title in the cult and the local Kindred government.
- A Kindred member of the cult who has magical aptitude and has taken a shine to you.
- A vampire who used to belong to the cult, and still knows many of its old secrets.
- A Kindred member cultist with wealth, influence, and magical aptitude who will teach you some of the mystic secrets of the cult.
- A vampire Osiris who can find you teachers, allies, contacts, and other useful people and things in and connected to the cult.
- A vampire within the inner circle of the cult, who has taken you on as a special project. Their combined resources and connections are formidable.
- The Kindred behind the cult, who sees more use for you than others do.

[LAYOUT: THE FOLLOWING IS A LETTER FROM PERSON B]

A Letter from Khaled al-Fakhani of the Church of Set

Honored Laylah Froud,

As much as I appreciate your views on the Walid al-Set, I think you lose something from not having a formal education within the ranks of the faithful. There is much to be found within the exploration of pain, but you are not bringing your work to the great scholars and either letting it stand up or watching it crumble. To be frank: you have no network of orthodoxy to fall back on,

no one to objectively say that your communications with Lilith have been, indeed, with Lilith. That is why you don't understand the priesthood.

I don't mean to say, of course, that I disbelieve in the Typhonic Mother. Quite the opposite. One would be a fool to think that an entity called Lilith does not exist in some capacity. It would also be foolish, further, to think that this entity has not been speaking to you through some means. Looking at you with enough Auspex clears that up immediately. This letter is not about diminishing your own faith within the Order of Taweret, but you did ask for my thoughts, and unfortunately they come with a preamble.

Let us look at the largest religions in the world as of right now: Christianity and Islam. Within Christianity, the largest denomination is the Roman Catholic Church. In Islam, the Ahl as-Sunnah, or the Sunni Muslims, are almost 90% of the population of the faithful. Why is that?

I posit to you it is the strong network each denomination possesses. You were raised in the United States, so perhaps Catholicism will be an easier comparison for you. The priest guides the spiritual well-being of his flock. The bishops guide their flock of priests. The cardinals guide their bishops, and the Pope is the Shepherd of all Shepherds, the throne of God on Earth. Doctrine is passed down from hand to hand, solidified and codified through the repetition of the faithful. There is, of course, personal gnosis, but you know when that revelation comes from your god — there are hundreds of texts and mountains of theology to look to.

This brings me to my second posit: a priest is a link in this network. To keep the faith strong and stable, to express the faith outwards and help others seek the truth — that is the duty of a priest.

This of course does not mean that witches don't have their faith. A priest is meant to pull from the theology and canon set down by other priests before him. So it is in Catholic Christianity with the Bible and papal letters and bulls, so it is in Sunni Islam with the hadith and the Quran. A priest is a conduit for the faith as it is. A witch goes into the spirit of the faith itself and pulls out new meaning for herself and others. She may not always be listened to — she may even be a heretic, and burned for it, as so many were — but a witch wields the power of the faith and grows it, whereas a priest tends to the faithful and the doctrine. A faith that is all witches is a philosophy, a faith that is all priests grows stagnant.

I hope this helps with your confusion. I remain, as always, your faithful friend.

In Set's shadow,

Khaled al-Fakhani

[/LETTER]

Cult Names

Naming things, especially groups, can be extremely difficult for even the most experienced storyteller. Below is a mix-and-match table of cult names. Add or remove prepositions and conjunctions, and pluralize as necessary.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Church of	The Light	Journey
Congregation of	The Darkness	Pilgrims
People's	The Garden	Service

First	The Three Angels	Slaves
Heaven's	Caine	Servants
Children of	Lilith	Bound To Serve
Family Arikel	Worshipers	
Temple of	Ishtar	Disciples
Dominion of	Absimiliard	Faithful
People of	Haqim	Apostles
Garden of	The Crone	Witches
Tree of Veddartha	Saints	
City of Tremere	Citizens	
Earth's Zhao-lat	Corpses	
Death's	Saulot	Spirits
Servants of	Enoch	Freedom
Slaves of	Irada	Revolutionaries
Lilith's Zillah	Lovers	
Caine's	The Lovers	Warriors
The Abyss's	The Martyr General	Soldiers
Repentant	Ennoia	Children
Penitents of	Malkav	Literalists
Precious	Ravana	Scholars
Community of Set	Gardeners	
Songs of	Troile	Singers
Order of	Brujah	Dancers
Local Ilyes	Teachers	
Disciples of	Al-Mahri	Warlocks
Fundamentalist	Nergal	Of the Garden
World Ninmug	Of the Abyss	
Unification	Loz	Of the Light
Mission of	Lucian	Of the Undying
At the Heart of	Mekhet	Of the Word
Fiat Laodice	Of the Umbra	
Fidelity of	Dracian	Of the Roses
International Society of	Temple	Of the Mother

Yearning for Group Home Of the Father
Foundation for Candlelight Of the Blood
Ancient Mystical Order of Vigil Prayer
Apostolic Malakai
Guardians
Brethren of Insight Of Enoch
Darkness Song Of the Second City
Cyber- Blood Of the Third City
Esoteric Promise Of the First Garden
Insight Sin Of the Second Garden
Monastic Order of Redemption Of the Third Garden
Movement of/to Prayer Devotions
Moral Worlds Fundamentalists
Blood of Martyrs Community
Hands of Thorns Church
Nation of Knives March
The New Ashur
Promises
The Promised Immortality/Immortal Secrets
House of Spirit/Spiritual Coven
Pilgrims of Saint Covenant
Saint Purity/Pure Circle
Shepherds of Mourning/Mourn Rebirth
Dancers of/in Morning Sect
Blessing of Evening Religion
United Midnight Union
One Daybreak Consecration
Two Resurrection Bond
Three Open Healers
Four Special Brethren
Five Chosen Fraternity
Six Sacred Sorority
Seven Holy In Silence

Sunrise Royal In Suffering
Sunset Imperial In Love
Valley of Suffering In Truth
Society of Empathic In Beauty
Holy Service/Serving In Knowledge
The Way of Kingdom Triumphant
Sacred Principality Princes
Consecrated Nation Saints
Bound Shining In Blood
Happy Repentant Family
Neo- Wild Blood Brethren
Cainite Raging Movement
Kindred
Untamed Philosophy
Ghoul Fallen Army
Shadow of Silent Heathens
Covenant of Reborn Heretics
Traditional Welcoming Proclaimers
Traditions of Warm Believers
Syncretic Cold Society
Heretical Golden Anonymous
All Silver Order
Circle of Scarlet Identity
Alliance of Dark Theism
Reformed Pale Anchorites
Saints Crystalline Mystics
Council of Final Mediums
Marriage of Apocalyptic Psychics
Gateways to Starlight/Starlit Celebrants/Celebration
Final Umbra/Umbral Thought
Beginnings of Singing Universal
Home of Quiet Academy
Antinomian Still Reason

High Low Transcendence

[END TABLE]

Symbols

While not every church has a symbol, many do, and the following tables offer some basic meanings for colors, objects, and creatures. Storytellers and players can use them in combination to create a quick flag, crest, or icon as well as incorporate them into rituals and practices. For example, a cult dedicated to peace and integrity might use a combination of doves in blue and white, while a cult dedicated to war and victory might showcase a ram and arrow in black, red, or gold colors.

Colors

[THIS IS A TABLE]

Black Authority, Darkness, Death, Elegance, Formality, Power, Sophistication, Strength

Blue Coldness, Emotion, Honor, Integrity, Loyalty, Melancholia, Peace, Trust, Water

Brown Confidence, Earth, Endurance, Nature, Reliability

Gold Achievement, Success, Triumph

Green Balance, Calm, Growth, Honesty, Money, Nature, Relaxation, Safety

Grey Intelligence, Neutrality, Seriousness, Tradition

Orange Communication, Creativity, Optimism

Purple Elegance, Imagination, Magic, Mystery, Royalty, Sophistication

Red Action, Ambition, Anger, Courage, Determination, Energy, Love, Passion, Romance

Silver Emotions, the Moon, Mystery

White Innocence, Peace, Perfection, Purity, Winter

Yellow Comfort, Cowardice, Energy, Impatience, Intellect

[/TABLE ENDS]

Objects

[THIS IS A TABLE]

Air Communication, Imagination, Intelligence, Perception, Travel

All-Seeing Eye Higher Knowledge, Inner Vision, Insight, Spiritual Sight

Apple Immortality, Knowledge, Luxury, Peace, Sexual Awakening

Arrow Flight, Knowledge, Masculinity, Mortality, Power, Swiftness, War

Bell Signals, The Expansion of Consciousness, The Mind, The Voice of God

Book Education, Faith, Knowledge, Learning, Secrets

Caduceus Authority, Harmony, Health, Infinity, Medicine, Supernatural Forces

Candle Benevolence, Life, Light, Truth, Vigilance, Wisdom

Chalice Communion, Femininity, Forgiveness, Sacrament, Sharing, Water
Circle Femininity, Magic, Perfection, Protection, Sacred Space, Unity, Wholeness
Compass Balance, Direction, Perfection, Spirit, Time
Crescent Moon Dreams, Intuition, New Beginnings
Crown Authority, Loyalty, Power, Royalty, Superiority, Wealth
Earth Dependability, Material Wealth, Orderliness, Prosperity, Sustenance, Wisdom
Egg New Life, Resurrection, The Moon
Feather Air, Balance, Communication, Flight, ice, Truth
Fire Anger, Creativity, Destruction, Knowledge, Transformation
Fruit Earthly Pleasure, Overindulgence, Sexuality, Temptation
Heart Charity, Compassion, Love, Mercy
Horseshoe Fortune, Good Luck, Protection
Hourglass Death, Rebirth, Time
Key Access, Freedom, Initiation, Spiritual Knowledge
Ladder Ascension, Fulfillment of Potential, Transcendence
Lotus Flower Beauty, Enlightenment, Purity, Reinvention
Lightning Bolt Boldness, Energetic Action, Power, Salvation, Strength
Mirror Awareness, Gateways, Reflection
Scepter Authority, Control, Royalty, Wealth
Scythe Collection, Death, Harvest, Loss, Ruin
Shell Journey, Pilgrimage, Resurrection
Star Fame, Inspiration, Majesty, Spirit, Triumph
Sword Defense, Protection, Safety, Security, Strength
Water Intuition, Life, Purification, Reflection, Transformation
Wheel Change, Destiny, Fate, Luck, Motion
Wings Flight, Release, Weightlessness
Wreath Conquest, Success, Triumph, Victory

[/TABLE ENDS]

Creatures

[THIS IS A TABLE]

Bear Healing, Introspection, Strength
Buffalo Courage, Endurance, Sanctity

Butterfly	Hope, Resurrection, Transformation
Crow	Death, Prophecy, Wisdom
Deer	Gentleness, Nobility, Power
Dove	Peace, Tranquility
Dragon	Luck, Nobility, Power, Strength
Eagle	Divinity, Integrity, Nobility
Elephant	Loyalty, Power, Stamina, Strength
Fish	Fertility, Purification
Fox	Agility, Cunning, Intelligence
Griffin	Boldness, Courage, Strength
Lion	Leadership, Nobility, Strength
Mermaid	Emotion, Independence, Mystery, Perceptiveness, Seduction, Untamed Emotion
Mouse	Innocence, Scrutiny, Survival
Ouroboros	Continuity, Eternity, Motion, Purity, Rebirth, Renewal, Wholeness
Owl	Fertility, Magic, Mystery, Wisdom
Phoenix	Immortality, Resurrection, Victory
Rabbit	Fertility, Serenity, Virtue
Ram	Force, Glory, Innocence, Power
Scorpion	Death, Protection, Transformation
Snake	Creation, Death, Power, Transmutation, Wisdom
Sphinx	Guardian, Riddles, Wisdom
Spider	Construction, Divinity, Femininity, Patience
Tiger	Power, Protection, Royalty, Unpredictability
Unicorn	Harmony, Innocence, Integrity, Purification, Truth, Wisdom
Wolf	Education, Guardianship, Instinct, Loyalty

[/TABLE ENDS]

Basic Cult Descriptions

Use these as the basis of a cult and build from there. These descriptions do not include any mechanics, so feel free to customize them as you like.

- A Bahari cult. They grow urban gardens and provide job education for mortals, but they are also notorious for their less-regulated “education.”
- A heretical Ministry sect. They believe that Set’s murder of Osiris was not necessary, but is something that needs to be atoned for. This cult has its fingers in various funeral homes and performs strange rituals on the dead.

- A Gehenna cult. They believe the Red Star event is a reminder of things to come.
- A cult of Arikel. Consisting of Toreador and their loveliest ghouls, this cult dedicates itself to physical perfection, reasoning that the struggle to attain the highest form of aesthetic attraction reflects itself in the soul.
- A cult of Oblivion. They practice various shadow arts and blindfold themselves to worship.
- A cult of vampiric reason. Based on the writings of Dr. Netchurch, they seek out the scientific explanations for vampirism and vampiric Disciplines, and perform horrific experiments on nonbelievers.
- A cult of the Typhonic beast. They run underground fight clubs and sell highly-trained human combat ghouls, but also rescue dogs.
- A cult completely made up of humans who worship a Ventrue elder. They take “business acuity” classes and dress in rigid business formal every day.
- A teenage cult. They talk a big game about sacrificing animals to Satan, but honestly they love their cats too much. Their leader is very disappointed.
- A cult that runs a vegan pop-up restaurant to find clean blood for their rigorously health-conscious undead members.
- A sex cult with regular masked orgies.
- A cult of Ravana. Its members practice strange uses of Presence and Obfuscate alongside other Disciplines in the hopes of finding a way to bring him back.
- A cult of ghouls who take a blood sacrament. They are all unbound to any one Kindred and swear allegiance only to each other.
- A cult of singers who meet in unlit places at night to placate Oblivion with their songs.
- A cult of elders who only drink blood from those with True Faith, in hopes this will cure their curse.
- A cult dedicated to the three angels who visited Caine: Michael, Raphael, and Gabriel. They hope to be forgiven one day and raise their Humanity as high as possible in order to do so.
- As the cult of the three angels above, but they seek to destroy or diablerize the three angels.
- A cult of personal transcendence that is really just a front for seeking out ideal candidates for the Ministry Embrace.
- A Brujah cult based on the Cult of the Supreme Being, with Troile as the Supreme Being. Virtues include honesty, physical prowess, and purity of intent.
- A cult that seeks to corrupt society at the highest level through needless things and billionaires’ fear of the poor.
- A UFO cult that believes the antediluvians were beings from another planet or a higher dimension and not the childer of the biblical Caine.

- A cult of news nightcrawlers who sell the information they gather to flood the media with material to help fill time and distract from vampire life. They obsess over the coverage they get and feel touched by humanity from the stories they share.
- A cult of former sun worshipers who miss dearly the light they once loved so much. They work to recreate their precious sun-soaked days with white linen outfits, bright lights, and sandals.
- A cult of personality around a single vampire. He gives his worshipers occasional blessings or gifts, but mostly the cultists serve him in any capacity he desires.
- A group of vampires obsessed with eating (in the mortal sense) even in unlife. They go so far as to willingly make themselves sick eating normal food just to get the taste. Less extreme members mix alcohol and herbs with their blood, or deliberately feed off people who have been fed strong-tasting food.
- A cult of neonate vampires who worship the thrill of the hunt. They dress impeccably and treat feeding like British nobility treat foxhunting.
- A cult of vampires who worship the 1950s nuclear family and go so far as to have mock wedding and birth ceremonies. They're extremely gendered and insist they draw power from that binary.
- The Patmostine Order believes the Gehenna event was the evangelical Christian Rapture, and that no one was found worthy. They work to prepare Kindred society to be saved, whether they like it or not.
- The Diamond Thunderbolt is an all-Kindred order that practices self-sacrifice and self-abnegation to bring forth a rain of "spiritual nectar" to bless and uplift the souls of humanity. They are divided as to whether or not this will extend to vampires.
- A mysterious Nosferatu cult that believes it is their mission to mutate humanity to a higher state of being through disease and culling of weakness. Some of their more fanatical members also create blood plagues.
- A cult of blood dolls who dress modestly and bleach their skin. They believe they honor their undead gods by doing so.
- An Anarch cult that tries to find the common thread in all human religions. They seek to free themselves from the Beast by rigorous study and unlocking the riddle of unfettered spirituality.
- An offshoot of the Church of Set, populated mostly by members of the Clan of Death. They perform elaborate rituals which follow the journey of Osiris and Sutekh through the underworld, sometimes even sailing on literal rivers in total darkness on flimsy barges.
- A wild, hedonistic mystery cult of blood dolls and ghouls who dance themselves into unconsciousness so their regnants can feed on them. They say they have visions from the ecstasy.
- A Gangrel cult whose members sacrificially and nonfatally immerse themselves in sand, the ocean, swamps, and other natural features to meditate.

- A cult that only has one member in every city. They are meant to represent Caine, wandering in the wilderness with no friends.
- A Bahari cult that follows the *Revelations of the Dark Mother* to the letter. They believe Lilith wants the unworthy dead, and so they steal knowledge and kill those who held it.
- A Banu Haqim cult that focuses on hand-to-hand combat. Their philosophy suggests that is the only way to truly grapple with your demons. They diablerize everyone they kill.
- A Clan of Death cult whose members spend all of their time preparing mortals to become powerful wraiths once they are inevitably destroyed by outside forces.
- A vampire cult that ghouls only children to keep them in their state of innocence. They almost exclusively feed off these children.
- A cult of Tremere who worship Thaumaturgy as its own entity. They feel blessed to be chosen by the god they channel. Other Tremere think of them as fanatics at best.
- A cult of twelve vampire elders who believe themselves to be the fallen twelve gods of Mount Olympus. Their servitors worship them with mystery rituals and blood.
- A cult of Malkavians who view trauma as the only true method of growth, and so regularly perform nonconsensual exposure therapy on themselves and others. They have keen Auspex senses that reveal strange beings.
- A ghoul cult within the Church of Set that practices snake-handling.

Sample Cult Members

Below are a smattering of potential members of your cult. Whether human, ghoul, or vampire, they are all devoted to the cause.

Mortals

- A ghoul who does the cult's laundry and is privately a deep fanatic.
- A human blood doll who wears his multiple sacrificial scars with pride.
- A human who manages the weapons storage for the cult. She says she's former military, but the branch keeps changing.
- A ghoul who tortures misbehaving human cultists. She's very pleasant to talk to when off the job.
- Members of a revenant family who act as sextons and housekeepers for the cult.
- A human celebrity who talks up the cult on daytime TV. Somehow he maintains his charisma.
- A single middle-aged human woman who flirts with all of her fellow cultists and then shares their secrets with the leadership.
- A grandfatherly type with a violent streak.
- Children of human cultists. They have wide eyes and are constantly on alert.
- A human who keeps a vampire's schedule, drinks blood, and only eats raw meat. Their hair is falling out and their scalp is swollen, but they seem happy.

- A former teenage runaway who has become a prize ghoul.
- A ghoul with a “sacred familiar”: a snake, a raven, or something else.
- A blood doll who plays at being modest and shy to be seen as worthy of being fed on more.
- A cultist at any stage of life or undeath who refuses to leave the compound, citing that “they” will get her.
- A human cultist who feels that the cult justifies the conspiracy theories she clings to.
- A human member of the cult who ran away, came back, was punished, and holds her faith closer than ever.
- A ghoul and a vampire who are deeply in love. It’s unclear who was in the cult first, but one of them pulled the other in.
- The cult’s online recruiter who is not particularly good at his job — he uses too much jargon.
- A human who holds down odd jobs when she’s not working for the cult for free. She doesn’t get enough sleep and her eyes are bloodshot.
- A ghoul who “collects” foster children to induct into the cult. Some of them go missing.
- The human Sunday school teacher who takes care of the children and liaises with the adults.
- The ghoul chef who cooks for the humans of the cult and looks down on them.
- The human former therapist who constructed the cult’s regimen of love-bombing and gaslighting.
- The former investigator who tried to remain detached but fell into the cult’s arms.
- A human who claims to be a psychic and medium. Maybe she is, maybe she isn’t. Her “channeling” is always incoherent and esoteric.
- A ghoul who always seems to get blamed for the problems in the cult.
- The husband of a human cult member who seems terrified of everyone else in the cult. He takes great pains to be seen as a “normal” cultist.
- A ghoul who only wears clothing she’s made and will only eat raw food.
- A blood doll who resents anyone the leadership talks to and jealously guards her access to them.
- A human cultist who was born into another cult, and as a consequence, clings to this one as part of her adult identity.
- A wild-haired, wild-eyed older human cultist who cheerfully explores the darker beliefs of the cult and talks about them as though they are normal and fine. He occasionally has seizures, though whether those are “normal” or supernatural, no one seems to be able to tell.

- The animals of the cult. They are very suspicious of newcomers and seem to have minds of their own. Some might be ghouls, some might not be, it's difficult to determine with the naked eye.

Vampires

- An ancilla cultist who recently joined after escaping their abusive sire, she has all the desperate zeal of a new convert.
- A neonate who was Embraced into the cult and knows nothing else.
- Twin Malkavian neonates who refuse to be farther than ten feet away from each other at all times.
- A Toreador who has taken a vow of silence.
- A Tremere ancilla who only believes in practical research, not theory.
- A former teenage runaway who is now an ancilla with a youthful face and a saintly disposition.
- A vampire neonate who keeps notes on everything everyone says.
- A vampire from the Clan of Death who is always playing with tarot cards, ouija boards, pendulums, etc.
- A Toreador who makes the cult's sacred icons in exchange for blood and spiritual counseling.
- A neonate who struggles with the cult's doctrine even though she truly believes in its mission.
- A vampire ancilla who uses the human members of the cult as personal servants.
- The childe of the vampire who founded the cult. She is less devoted, maybe even heretical, but she is still part of the cult and she is treated either like royalty or with resentment.
- The former Primogen who struggles with letting go and letting her faith carry her along with the cult's practices.
- The cult's resident vampire pyromaniac and fire-dancer.
- A member of the Ministry who seems to link the cult to the story of Sutekh at every opportunity. Leadership tolerates him.
- A vampiric spiritual counselor who practices Oblivion to lend an air of legitimacy to her sessions.
- A self-abnegating neonate who strives for both physical and spiritual perfection in odd and concerning ways.

Sample Cult: The Order of Taweret

Description: The Church of Set is one of the single largest (perhaps *the* largest of) Kindred faiths, spanning clans, age categories, and political groups. It is a wealthy institution and a powerful one, and some groups attach themselves to it out of convenience, safety, an agreement in doctrine, or a mix of the three. As a result, there are, of course, disagreements with the mainstream stance.

The Order of Taweret are one such group. Founded by a Ba'ham who fled to the Church of Set for protection, the Order are nominally followers of the Church's doctrine — but they focus on Lilith as Set's progenitor, and not on Set himself.

In Egyptian mythology, Taweret is a goddess of childbirth (specifically of the struggle and pain of childbirth) and funeral rites. She is a liminal goddess, and one who guides humans through the two most potent transitions in their short lives. Taweret is also represented as a hippo-woman, and the mother of various Egyptian gods, including, in some cases, Set. Her links to growth, the Underworld, the river Nile, and children make her an obvious avatar of Lilith — at the very least for the hybrid Bahari who revere her in this form.

The Order of Taweret is an odd construction. While they do keep the Oath of Lilith as described in the *Revelations of the Dark Mother*, that is about the extent of their adherence to “typical” Bahari doctrine (if anything can be described as typical when it comes to the followers of Lilith). Order devotees keep urban gardens, usually on empty lots or in their apartments. They assist their Church of Set fellows in judging the ethos of humanity — but through this harsh and unforgiving judgment, they find those who have been chosen to walk the Path of Lilith. This is their strongest divergence from Church orthodoxy, the idea that those who suffer in their own imperfection can find a way out, instead of dying in it.

Order members are spiritual midwives, torturers, shepherds, and psychopomps. Pain and love are both gifts to be given, and Order members only offer them to the genuinely willing and able. They offer spiritual counseling to members of the Church of Set as well as unaffiliated vampires, keep tabs on the Church's targets to see if any of them are worth rebuilding, and tend gardens, both physical and emotional. They also shepherd the Embrace, encouraging it, grooming kine for rebirth into undeath, and making the entire process ritualistic.

It is extremely rare to find more than one member of the Order of Taweret in any given domain. Sometimes they meet in person, but most often they leave markers on sites related to maternity, such as hospitals and orphanages, to say whether they're present in the city or when they departed. As Lilith and Taweret walked their paths alone, with brief respites for company, so too do Order members.

Concepts: Undead midwife, dictatorial project manager, urban gardener/farmer, fanatical Harpy, ceremonial Elysium Keeper, graffiti artist, millennial burnout hungry for more

Recommended Backgrounds: Mawla, Influence (High Society), Influence (Politics), Influence (Bureaucracy), Mask, Status, Haven

New Coterie Types

Over the last two decades, Kindred society has experienced unprecedented tectonic shifts. As Anarchs are routed and as Camarilla cities fall, the Second Inquisition makes short work of wayward Kindred who travel on their own. In response, Kindred have found strength in numbers, forming coterie for the purposes of self-interest, shared beliefs, and mutual survival. Within those Kindred communities of faith, cohorts and coterie have taken on additional functions. Cerberi, Champion, Nomad, and Watchmen coterie are common, as are the examples below.

Envoys

“We may view the world differently, and we may worship different gods, but working together, we have a chance at survival. I want to turn our differences into collective strengths.”

This group serves on diplomatic missions, functioning as negotiators and mediators between disparate parties. Most often, envoy coteries form in the wake of conflicts between warring factions. When two or more cults come to a compromise, they sometimes task their younger members with forming such a coterie so shared service and common causes can transcend old grievances.

- **Domain:** Chasse (•), Lien (•••)
- **Contacts:** (•••) (mortals from diverse backgrounds and professions)
- **Resources:** (••) (pooled cash and assets)
- **Status Flaw:** (•) Suspect

Possible extras: Mask (cover identities for different domains), No Haven (always on the move)

Think Tank

“Okay, but I’m gonna have to see the books.”

Consisting of old and more established Kindred, think tank coteries are advisors, strategists, and researchers for a given cult. Preferably, they are a small group of individuals who are part of the membership, but leaders sometimes hire think tanks when they are trying to take their faith to the next level.

A think tank can take a small cult and grow it into a powerful entity through their expertise. They tend to research the best ways to recruit in a particular city, how to disseminate information, and how to use the local laws to the cult’s advantage. They have almost unlimited access to the logistical aspects of the church so they can create new procedures or policies for the benefit of the leadership.

Most think tanks are long-standing allies who have spent years working together, but some come together for a specific task and dissolve once they complete their goal. Members of think tanks are often procedural specialists, efficiency experts, former bureaucrats, marketing geniuses, or experts in a subject critical to a cult’s interests.

- **Domain:** Chasse (•) and Lien (•••)
- **Allies:** (•••) (analysts, bureaucrats, soldiers, etc.)
- **Haven:** (•) (small office as base of operations)

Possible extras: Resources (profits made from selling their services), Retainers (librarians, scholars)

[LAYOUT: THE FOLLOWING IS A LETTER FROM PERSON A]

An Accord Between Faiths

Khal,

I admit, it took me three fucking readings of your letter to read it without getting pissed. Being told I don’t know what I’m doing is a good way of getting to me — but I think you knew that

when you wrote that letter. I would expect nothing less from a Priest of Set, especially one who knows I prefer to learn through, shall we say, visceral methods.

I agree with you that a religion which is all witches is more of a philosophy. Some people who read Dolium's *Revelations of the Dark Mother* mistake the Bahari for an organized religion with pointlessly sadistic methods. Those people are fools. Each Ba'ham is a witch and a religion in her own right, her own temple and pope and sacred scripture. To destroy that is to destroy a precious resource. A cult of Bahari is like several different sects trying to work together on a long-term interfaith project. It can work, of course, but eventually we will leave to seek friends elsewhere. There is only so much one person can teach us — luckily I have a lot more to learn from you!

There is gnosis to be had here, and to be had elsewhere as well. A human can never fully know themselves and their own depths — but as vampires, we have infinite time. I mean to learn and learn and learn until my very body is torn away and all that remains is the glory of the garden of knowledge that I will become. I understand that priests cannot have this experience, and for that I pity them.

A priest must be solid and stable. I cannot follow that route. I have never been able to follow that route, and I do not look nor hope to at any point. If I am to take on an apprentice or an acolyte, I might do that, but then they will change in their own way, and their faith will not be the same as mine. To see you with your childer is to watch you shaping clay, and while that is beautiful, I would much rather be planting and growing a tree. I want to see that life that they take on without me, without my name attached.

As always, thank you so much for allowing me a position within the Church of Set to continue practicing and discussing my faith in safety. It means so much more to me than you know.

I look forward to seeing you again next Elysium.

Yours sincerely,

Laylah Froud

[/LETTER ENDS]