



Kickstarter Manuscript Preview #3:
The Cult of Death and Undeath

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The Cult of Death and Undeath

“You may ask yourselves, why us? Why not any of the other sects who might embrace you to their bosom? Ask yourself this instead, could any of those peons understand you like we do?”

— Excerpt from the introduction of the Capuchin to the Anziani Council

The Clan of Death is one of the biggest cults in the world, dedicated to the study, manipulation, and mastery of death and the dead. It is not the only clan to possess coordinated ambition or hierarchy, nor is it the only one to possess an almost religious philosophy or indoctrinated loyalty among its constituent members, but what the Hecata have, is freedom. They are without sect-mates or permanent rivals. They are the only independent clan, and therefore are well-placed as both a family of vampires and cult of eschatologists to pursue their aims and tip the scales of power as they see fit.

One of Us

As spoken by Accorri Giovanni, Famiglia Giovanni of the Hecata. Recorded by Quinn Winters, Hecata fledgling, at the behest of his patron.

Let’s get this started; I don’t have a lot of time, but I was “asked” to speak with you. What? You wanted to talk to Isabel? Well, that’s unfortunate. The Ministry has her. You get me instead. Aren’t you the lucky childe?

Let this be the first among the many lessons you will learn with us: It’s about the family. We keep family close, some may say too close at times. It’s about what the family needs, not about what you want. The blood is important. It’s a lesson the Giovanni, we who remain, are relearning now that we are a part of — a vital, important part of — the Hecata.

Not many on the outside will know, or care, about the difference. Use that. To those on the outside we will be the Clan of Death; they might even call us Clan Giovanni until the new or, rather, old, branding sticks. A wise childe will use that. There is a reason our name carries weight. No matter what you might hear from our cousins in the Harbingers, the Samedi, or even the fucking Cappadocians, the Hecata, and therefore our mutual survival, would not be possible without us. The Giovanni. They may be the branches of this new family, but we are the trunk. *We* are still Giovanni. Even if your last name is Dunsirn, Pisanob, or Milliner. Even if we call ourselves “of the Hecata” now. We won’t forget where we came from, no matter where it is we may be going.

The Clan of Death has always been one of, oddly enough, change. The fucking Cappadocians? Yes. I did mention them. Yes, I did use an expletive. Now shut up and listen. Take them as an example. They killed themselves, we killed them, they came back.

The Cappadocians, the holder of the Clan of Death title before the Giovanni, enveloped our family for our acumen with the dead. We helped to further the study of death and the dead for them. We helped them increase both their temporal power and their power over the dead. We have always been merchants, either in coin or in death. They were, in the past, advisors and scholars extraordinaire. We, eventually, got tired of playing second fiddle and decided to bite the hand that fed. Literally.

While you may be new to the night, and the Hecata, even you have heard of us. The Venetian necromancers, the Merchant Lords, the Devil Kindred, and less savory things as well, I would imagine. Most of it is true. We are all of those things and more. We have been the masters of the dead since before 1444. That's the year our founder, Augustus Giovanni, wherever he is now, took the big bite out of the founder, known to some as Cappadocius, of the previous Clan of Death and ate his soul. Then we killed them all. Or so we thought. Some of our cousins hold to different versions of this event. Some even believe Augustus didn't finish the job properly.

We were officially recognized as the Clan of Death in the form of the Promise of 1528. It was an agreement between the then nascent Camarilla and Clan Giovanni to not get involved in each other's affairs. The Camarilla agreed that we weren't Sabbat and helpfully turned a blind eye while we hunted down the "last of the Cappadocians." The Promise lasts into this night, but some claim the terms are up soon. Did you know that? By the way, I highly suggest you not bring this particular event up to whoever you speak to from our relatives in the Harbingers. It's a particularly sore point and they still despise the Camarilla for not having their backs.

Hated and needed in equal measure, the Giovanni have been around for ages and we will be for ages to come. We can trace our family line back to the Roman Empire where we were known as Jovians. We were skilled in the manipulation of coin and the dead. We Giovanni have always venerated our elders and speaking to them from beyond the *sudario* wasn't as stigmatized then as it is now. We have always kept close ties with family.

Now, with the tragic loss of so many of our elders in the Giovanni, who are we in these nights? I don't know. Maybe you do. Now, what else do you want out of me?

The Underworld

What's the *sudario*? I suppose the term is heading out of vogue among our young. It is the skin between this world and where the dead dwell. You will sometimes hear it referred to as the Shroud, in English. You will certainly learn more about it the further into your studies you wade.

Our art has been called many things over the years, but it all comes down to using our secret ways, combined with the Blood, to command the dead.

With Augustus no long in the picture, having failed the Clan of Death, and having held our many enemies on the other side of the veil captive with his power, we will need this art, and each other, now more than ever. We are beset, and even though we are not bound to the Camarilla, we understand the importance of hiding. It just wouldn't do to have angry ghosts coming after us in public, now would it? And they are coming.

You have taken enough of my time, I should think. I am late for a meeting with my childe Kay. One last lesson from your uncle Accorri. One he had to learn the hard way. One that his own uncle Diego taught to him. Listen well: We're all family in the end. We don't have to like each other, we can even hate each other, but we are still family. Remember that, nephew. Now get out of my sight.

Masks and Murder and Plot

As spoken by Marchesa Liliana, Wearer of the Triple-Faced Mask, member of the Harbingers of Skulls, now the Harbingers. Recorded by Quinn Winters, Hecata fledgling, at the behest of his patron.

Yes, I will speak with you as I have been requested to. No, removing my mask will not make me “more comfortable.” Comfort is not important for us. Nor should it be important for you. There is little comfort among the dead.

You wish to know about our branch of the family, do you? You know nothing of the Harbingers of Skulls, but I will teach you in what time I have. I shall provide answers, for the Hecata would not be without us. This all grew out of the rich soil the ashes of our hate nourished. We must be quick about it for there are whispers beyond that there will be a breach in the Shroud near Delhi soon, and I will need to be there.

Harbinger is what they call me, and Harbinger is what I am. We are the speakers to the dead and the rulers, conveying whispers to and from the former and the latter, throughout the ages. We, when we were whole, provided counsel and solace to the powerful, standing at the side of princes, bishops, kings, and gods. Some of us still do even in these nights.

We were always a part of and apart from the Cappadocians, our original clan, before our Father locked us away in Kaymakli, before the Giovanni drank our Father and slaughtered us, before the Camarilla turned their back on us, and before the Sabbat left us behind. To ask those of the original brood of the Cappadocians that somehow remain, we still are Cappadocian. An argument can be made for it. Death always comes in threes, after all. But, as I have told neonates before you, and will after, my truth is that I am a Harbinger. I am of the Hecata now, yes, but always a Harbinger.

I told you the Hecata would not exist without our hate, and I meant it. We Harbingers hate. We are very good at it. We have every reason for it. Masks and murder and plot. We have nurtured that hate through every stage of our existence and survived to see our will done. We have survived every purge and were the instruments of the latest one. When our Father locked us away in that vast underground city, summoning the whole of the clan, not all of us answered, though most did. Those of us that did, he found wanting and sealed his failures inside. It was known as the Feast of Folly. Instead of withering away, we used our hate and our sadness to rip open ways into the lands of the dead and escaped. The mysterious Capuchin showed us the way, or so I am told. I have trouble remembering.

Not all our kin had the mastery, but we spent untold centuries among the dead and found time to learn. We found our way back, ready to take revenge on the Father who hated us so. We found that our time in that place left its mark on us and our faces had become as skulls. Yes, hence the masks. Thank whatever god holds your fancy that we no longer pass this affliction on with regularity to new initiates of the Hecata. I have long felt it is time to move on, decay and renew, and the Blood seems to agree.

Those of us who emerged from our mass grave at the first possible opportunity arrived just in time to see our Father’s favored children, his pet project, the Giovanni, drink him down and slaughter our kin. Some of us turned to the Camarilla for protection, but the Giovanni reached them first and convinced the new sect to turn a blind eye to our extermination. Again, we were left with nothing, so some of us retreated to the Underworld while others flocked to the Sabbat.

And then the Beckoning called that sect away to its damnable Gehenna War. A Beckoning we do not feel. You can ask others about why that might be. I have my theories but do not have the time.

We were adrift until the Capuchin came back to us and presented us the key to our vengeance. To make us the knife that would cut out those who had been poisoning our Clan of Death. It is we Harbingers who took away the obstacles to progress, the elders of Clan Giovanni who would not bend after Augustus Giovanni fell to our fangs, finally after all these years. We made way for the new growth, a return to old ways, and offered the Giovanni a measure of forgiveness to pair with our vengeance.

You neonates will carry us forward into that future with the wisdom and support of the past. We come together, Samedi, Harbingers, Lamiae, Cappadocians, and even the Giovanni. Death has many names and comes in many forms. Our clan has a face for every manner of death, and more than I can list without boring you.

Nevertheless, we are all Harbingers still. Harbingers of what, now, remains to be seen.

The Beckoning

Why the Hecata are immune to the Beckoning is a matter hotly debated within the clan. Some Necromancers theorize it's because they're the only line to successfully destroy their Antediluvian, but others retort Cappadocius went on to exist as a spectre and may still do so, so that claim is as arrogant as it is false. Others believe the clan's routine internal purges have annihilated dozens or maybe hundreds of their methuselahs and elders, and this practice has resulted in insufficient vampires remaining to call their descendants. Another faction believes the Capuchin enacted a ritual to still — or kill — the clan's Blood, disconnecting it from the source. This would go a long way to explaining the sterility in some Cappadocian and Harbinger vitae, but could the mysterious Hecata be that powerful?

Whatever the truth, few Kindred outside the Hecata know the clan did not succumb to the Beckoning, and the Clan of Death is happy to leave it that way. The Necromancer mindset is "let them think we're weak" as they use their peers' underestimation to further their ambitions.

...That You Do So Well

As spoken by Josette, Speaker for the Baron Samedi. Recorded by Quinn Winters, Hecata fledgling, at the behest of his patron.

Welcome, welcome. Yes, I know who you are. You have come a long way to meet with me, and travel is risky in these nights. The Baron has given me leave to speak with you on behalf of the Samedi and he would have me tell you of us. Kreyol pale, kreyol komprann.

I see you blanch at my appearance. It is fine. I am used to it. We are marked by the loa, and there are so many loa these nights. Our flesh rots, yet we abide.

The Samedi have been around for a long time, not as long as some of our fellow members of this cult we call the Hecata, but long enough. Many of our cousins probably have many theories and stories about where we come from. But you? All you need to know of our origins is that we owe our existence to Baron Samedi. We are his and he is his own. It is by his word and the will of the loa that we are part of this, and the Hecata would not exist without the Samedi. It is our relationship with the loa that keeps us ahead of the turmoil on the other side of the Shroud.

We Samedi ruled the islands and spread around the world, because we know there are things that need to be done that others haven't the strength to do. We took on the trappings we needed to get the job done. Vodun, Christianity, Noddism, and the rest. We ingratiated ourselves with the underbelly and used our power to speak with those departed on behalf of those that couldn't. We understand that the loa are ghosts, but not all ghosts are loa. We use honey over vinegar. We understand the deep secrets of the dead that even our cousins, who dismiss our knowledge because of their youth, do not understand. We are here because of them.

Augustus is gone. So many loa are freed. There is trouble across the divide and so many of the loa have invited us home.

We need each other, simply put. Look at me. We cannot hide in plain sight. The Hecata gives us protection and in turn we give them our knowledge and connections on the other side, from the ones who rest deep. How do you think we found the Giovanni elders in their holes? The Baron tells me this audience is at an end. There is work to be done.

Death Always Comes In Threes

As spoken by Amr Salib, Hecata childe of an unknown Cappadocian. Recorded by Quinn Winters, Hecata fledgling, at the behest of his patron.

I have to say, antimi, it is good to spend some time with someone my own age, so to speak. I have spent much longer than I would like these past years among the truly dead and half-dead. My sire asked that I speak with you as she is still, I suppose the best word would be, "shy." I am to be her bridge into the modern night. She has told me of our history and I am honored to be a part of such a storied line as the Cappadocians. She teaches me much and I, in turn, get to delight in watching her marvel at my cellphone, even if she does call them "devil-squares." I will now read a letter she penned for you, chronicler.

"The Cappadocians have known, we have always known and we prepared. We didn't flee to the other side. We resisted the call to Kaymakli. We threw our invitation to the Feast of Folly away. We did not become Harbingers. We did not orchestrate wars and plagues, advise Princes, and hate as they did, though we understand their hate. We did not become con artists, and oracles, and mercenaries as our Samedi cousins did. We did not consume and strive and barter as Augustus Giovanni and his brood did. Instead, we hid among the graves and the dead, as we always have. We threw some of our brethren who could not see the future clearly into the maw of the Giovanni and we faded from memory. We studied. We waited. We watched. And when it was time, we returned.

The others have probably told you how each alone is responsible for the Hecata, how it would fall apart without them and their particular skills. They are all correct. This is how we survive the sects that would see us falter and fall. We will weather the fires of the Second Inquisition. We come together as the last truly independent clan, because we must. The Feast, The Promise, The Reunion. Death, Rot, Rebirth. The Three Faces.

We survived and now we become what we always were.

The Hecata. The Clan of Death."

The Family Reunion

As spoken by Monica Giovanni of the Hecata to her Great-Great-Uncle Ignazio Giovanni

I can see why you'd be confused, Ignazio, why all of this happening now might surprise you. And you have every right to be afraid. But this is what happens when you ignore your young and your different for so long. When punching down becomes a way of unlife. Sometimes they start asking questions and punch back.

You see, we talk. Not through the dead where you can hear us. We meet up in person, we chat, we gossip, and we share secrets. Some of us even dabble with encrypted emails. Even the young Samedi, Harbingers, and Cappadocians. There have been a few new ones in the modern nights who reached out to us. Fancy that, huh? And do you know what we all asked each other? We asked why we must carry the grudges of our elders. And do you know what we came up with great-uncle?

We said we don't fucking know.

Eat the Rich

For centuries the Giovanni have kept tight control over the process of the Embrace through the practice of the Proxy Kiss, a process of selecting favored children from the various families under the Giovanni purview and forcing them to become thralls. Councils of elders have controlled the process for a very long time, deciding who among them deserves the Embrace. Over time it became political and the abuse, and sometimes outright murder, of others' prospective childer weakened the bonds of trust between sire and childer.

This breach of trust and ensuing discontent led many young Giovanni to throw off the shackles of the old ways of thought and tradition of their elders. They struck out on their own, and many of them made contact with the younger members of bloodlines and families who used the darker arts of the dead. Who better for a necromancer to commiserate with than other necromancers?

This led to long-held prejudice being challenged, and young Giovanni from every family of the clan coming together with members of the Samedi, the Harbingers, and some of the more obscure lines such as Cappadocians, Lamiae, and Nagaraja who came out of the darkness to make tentative contact with their cousins.

With new perspectives came new anger, new rage. It started a fire within the Giovanni as a whole. This fire was stoked by a combination of the elders of the Samedi, Harbingers, Cappadocians, and even some Giovanni into an inferno that would burn out those in all factions who did not belong in the Clan of Death.

Besides, we had to come together for protection — or did you miss all the fucking spectres that have been coming after all of us that have touched death?

Augustus is gone. All the angry spirits he held in captivity for his great work, they've come after all of us. His Endless Night, his grand quest to tear down the barrier between this world and the next? It's over. From what I hear, Uncle Auggie didn't work fast enough.

The Harbingers, the Samedi, and those Cappadocians who escaped probably killed him. They're definitely killing most of your generation. Kind of a nice one-two punch, huh? Did you notice how so many of your contemporaries didn't show up last April 4th? Or did you just not talk about it like an awkward mortal Thanksgiving?

And your precious Promise of 1528? You fuckers never told us it had a time limit. Five hundred years is what we're all hearing. Our non-aggression pact with the Camarilla runs out, and what with kicking the Anarchs out into the cold and all of the clans clustering together under one banner or another, we had to band up.

You see, if we Giovanni were together as a family like we should have been, we could have taken them. If we didn't shit on the Dunsirms, the Pisanob, and even the fucking Putanesca, this never would have happened. We would have stood against this tide of death. We're Giovanni. We can do any goddamn thing if we're together. We could have done what you elders should have done so long ago: killed them all. But we weren't together. And it's your fault. Now we're doing it this way.

So, while we're talking, my coterie is killing all your ghouls and your favorite childe. Elders with a fucking head on their shoulders from the Giovanni are finally getting the recognition and power they deserve in the clan. The Samedi are crawling out of the woodwork because their loa told them to or some shit and boy do they have some things to teach us. They don't command their ghosts, like we've always been taught. They let their loa ride them and commune. Their loa have taught us a few new things about how the other side works. Shit we've been trying to figure out for centuries. They can party too.

Same with the Harbingers. They just walked over on that side for years and years, alternating between running from us and attacking us from the shadows. Hooked up with the Sabbat for a while too. They know how to dig into spirits to get what they want. Even heard that one or two can feed on a ghost. Some of 'em can do some of that messed up shadow stuff I heard the Lasombra can do. They say it all comes from the same place, basically. I can't tell if they're old or not. I can't tell any damn thing with those masks. Probably for the best. Some of 'em still hate us. Hell, they might **all** still hate us, but we can work together. We have to.

And the Cappadocians? I haven't met any of the original ones, yet, but some of their new childer. What they are calling their "tethers." They seem good, if a bit haughty. They have learned more about our dark art in the span of a few years than I have in decades. Can't wait to meet some of the old ones, but I'm sure they're gun shy. Can't blame them. We did try to kill their whole clan.

And you know the funny thing? Most of the rest of the Kindred, from the Cams to the Anarchs to the Ashirra, probably aren't even going to notice anything has changed. To them we'll always just be the Clan of Death, or the Clan of Bankers, or the Clan of Gangsters, and I'm fine with that. They don't care if their necromancer wears a mask, a white top hat, a robe, or a suit. They just want us to do our thing and get out. They'll learn in time.

So, this is happening, great-great-uncle Ignazio. It's the end of you fucks. You, and the rest of you sycophants to Augustus who hated to see anyone else succeed, who hated anything new or different. You're done. You failed the family and the family took note. The young lit the fire and our grandparents came back to give us their guidance and their wisdom, and the aunts and uncles who remain are stepping aside. Whatever is calling the elders of the other clans away doesn't seem to be affecting us. But we, the young, run the show. We've got the energy for it. The drive. We are all coming together. It's our own little family reunion and there is no place at the table for the hardliners. No place for you.

Oh, scratch that, I forgot. I did meet one Cappadocian. I met the one called the Capuchin. He's the one who told me what you'd done to my sire. He's the one who told us where to find you. He dredged up our original name and gave it back to us. Hecata.

Now that I think about it, Uncle Auggie did bring about his Endless Night, in a way. It's us. We are of the Hecata, now. **We** are the Endless Night.

Goodbye great-great-uncle.

The Other Side

A letter from Casius Aubespain, Haiti, 1999

My Harbinger friend, you of the Mask of Cerberus, I have walked as you taught me on the other side, but in my own way. The land of the loa. They called and I took its hand and stepped into the puddle and my world turned upside down. It was beautiful and terrible, as you said. The land before me was bare, but there stood buildings I had not seen in centuries. The loa who walked with me was made of shadow itself, wearing the face of a child. It asked me to walk deeper and I said I would.

It took me to a place of perpetual storm and howling. It hurt. We did not stay long. I saw things in the mist and the rain made of glass and memory that will haunt me for the rest of my days, and I am of the Samedi. I look like a walking corpse.

The loa asked if I wished to go deeper, and I could not stop myself. I said yes.

We were then in a place of twists and winding tunnels that bent my brain in a thousand ways. Angry ghosts harried us, whispering sins I had long forgotten, and the loa protected me. It told me this maze was woven as much to keep things in as it was to keep things out. It was a place of terror, and madness, and pain. The loa asked if I wished to go deeper and I asked it what could be past this. It said, revelation.

It told me we could walk to where the light of the world ends and can go no further. It would take me to the last place that exists before the end of all things. The infinite abyss that yawns before Oblivion. Its home. Its prison.

Gods help me, I said yes. And the loa took my hand again and dropped its protection for the barest moment. I, blessedly, cannot remember what I saw, for I saw nothing in that place. I heard whispers, I think, whispers from all around. And one unending scream, stretching into forever. Cold. There was no light, no energy. It wanted me to just give up. To let go. I have had associations with the Lasombra, been struck by them and their shadows. It felt like that, and they describe their power much the same.

The loa came back then. I asked if we were to go deeper still and it told me, no. We cannot, for past the Abyss is Oblivion, and it wants us. It wants us all.

To put it as best I can, it's like a black hole with a will surrounded by an infinite abyss (to continue the metaphor, mortal scientists would call it an accretion disk) of infinite depth and proportion, which contains beings trapped there in the absence of light. Trapped between being and non-being. It is all contained by a maze so twisting and chaotic and elaborate that it almost made me mad. And above all of that a perpetual storm and the echoes of cities and people and things where the dead dwell.

It bade me return and tell my new clan about what I saw here. I woke then this night and started to write this letter to you. I do not know what it meant by new clan, but I find myself with one word echoing in my head from this dream, Hecata. Does this mean anything to you?

With respect, I'll not be using that ritual again, either my way or yours. I do not know if there is any real truth to what I saw, or if I failed the ritual and this was simply a dream, but I suggest you teach it to no other.

The Capuchin

*As spoken by Adisa, Lilin of the Hecata, sworn to Cerena St. Cyr, Cappadocian of the Hecata.
Recorded by Quinn Winters, Hecata fledgling, at the behest of his patron.*

You come to me to ask my patron about the Capuchin? She has no time for you. You may speak to me, you bold little one. There are few better teachers than a Gorgon, and I agree to teach you. Though I fear you may leave here less than satisfied.

Now, the entity known as the Capuchin is one shrouded in mystery. However, the Cainite — how I loathe that word — in friar's robes is more active in the night since the formation, or reformation, of the Hecata.

If you ask the different families of the Hecata about this creature you are likely to receive several different answers. Ask the Harbingers and he is a savior, the wearer of the Capuchin mask. They will say he led them into the Shadowlands circumventing their imprisonment in the underground city of Kaymalki by the Father, the Antediluvian known as Cappadocius. Ask the Samedi and he is a long-standing rival, friend, and confidante to their leader, Baron Samedi. They have tales of the Capuchin trading stories and knowledge with the Baron long into the nights. Ask the Giovanni and he is either a demon come to harry them, or a dealer in antiquities who once traded Vatican tomes and secrets for necromantic ones. Ask the dead, and the dead suddenly find themselves with somewhere else to be. The remaining Cappadocians are all too happy to gossip about the Capuchin's identity, should you be able to find them.

He is a figure relatively unknown to the younger of the Hecata, I would wager. But make no mistake, his anonymity has only ever been his ally. The Capuchin helps to guide the Hecata in the modern nights and, I suppose, is the closest thing we have to a leader in place of that wretch Augustus, though it is said he listens to the counsel of the infamous pioneer of necromantic rites and ceremonies, Ambrogino Giovanni. The Capuchin is the voice in the shadow, guiding from the background. He offers advice, the location of a rival, the haven of a traitor or anything else the Hecata may need.

Whispers are traded around about the Capuchin like goods in an open-air market. Some believe him to be Lazarus, who was the first of Cappadocius' direct childer to reject the invitation to the Feast of Folly. Some believe he is a creature from deep in the land of the dead or an agent of some other unknowable thing. A few believe that it is simply a title traded about by several figures in the Clan of Death's history.

One of the most popular current stories is that he is directly responsible for the death and diablerie of Augustus Giovanni, the patriarch of the former Clan Giovanni, who is currently missing. This would make the Capuchin accountable for unleashing the storm of souls partially responsible for bringing the Clan of Death together.

Yes, I understand you are leaving here with more questions than answers. I did warn you. Dissatisfaction is pain of a sort, one that might drive a soul forward to seek answers. You are most welcome for the lesson.

The Beckoning and the Blood

Since the Family Reunion, the Blood has been acting strangely in the Hecata. In the modern nights, the childer of members of the various bloodlines that the massive death cult comprises have found that several new fledglings do not suffer from the same curses, afflictions, and Banes as their sires. The Samedi are walking corpses, the Harbingers have no faces, and the Cappadocians suffer from a deathly pallor and otherworldly presence that frightens the living. However, some of the childer they Embrace are hale and whole, albeit suffering from a bite that does not bring pleasure, only pain. This was once known as Lamia's Kiss, the curse of the Giovanni, and spreads to most new Hecata. Along with this, these new Hecata find themselves struggling to find the fires of passion. It is as though their feelings are deadened.

The elders of every clan, and even the rare Caitiff of thickened blood and low generation, find themselves pulled by mysterious forces from across the Earth in a phenomenon that has come to be called the Beckoning. Not so for the Hecata.

Many think the Beckoning signifies the Antediluvians calling their clans to them. That Gehenna, the vampiric version of apocalypse, is here. Elders of the Hecata who subscribe to this thought, especially the members of the Giovanni family, believe that the Clan of Death is the only clan with a truly dead Antediluvian. Cappadocius is said to have fallen to the fangs of Augustus Giovanni in April of 1444 as the Giovanni are very keen to remind everyone.

The Harbingers believe that there is no Beckoning for the Hecata because they already had a Beckoning in the Feast of Folly. The Clan of Death has purged enough.

The Giovanni believe it is because their founder, Augustus Giovanni, is on the run and does not need to call his children to him, as they are the ones hunting him.

Some surviving members of the Cappadocian line tell stories about how their founder's soul was fragmented into three parts, one in Augustus, one which plummeted to the depths of the land of the dead, and one contained in a vessel, hidden somewhere on Earth.

If this is truly Gehenna, some of the Hecata figure it might be a good idea to find the fragments and restore them. After all, if the Antediluvians **are** waking, the Clan of Death should have one of their own if they want to survive. And what is dead to the Clan of Death, really?

The Giovanni Role

As spoken by Euan Dunsirn, of the Family Dunsirn

Welcome to the Council, cousin. I know there are many here who have awaited your arrival with great interest. Let us waste few of our precious seconds on introductions. I am Euan Dunsirn of

the Lairds o' Stirling. Aye, those Dunsirns. My Dunsirns. I'm here to give you the introductory information on our new alliance and our role within it.

The Giovanni are, simply put, the acceptable face of the Clan of Death. Of course, this seems obvious, given that we have far more acceptable faces than our contemporaries. However, the truth goes beyond that. Many of the bloodlines that form our new family of clans are mere rumor among Kindred society at large. Their names are spoken of as bogeymen or even simply tall tales from fledglings who were spooked at the sight of their first Nosferatu. If it can be said that Clan Giovanni has one thing that the other branches of the Clan of Death truly lack, it is brand awareness.

Clan Giovanni is considerably more populous than the other clans, dominating the Hecata in terms of numbers even after the purge. It has been said that around half of Hecata Kindred hail from Giovanni ancestry, but take it from me, those may be conservative estimates designed to keep their new allies from feeling intimidated and outnumbered. The Giovanni are still the cocks of the walk around here and that's how it'll stay as long as we're smart. These others are in the club, but they're not VIP members yet, most of them.

The Purge

Within the family itself, the shakeup has been far more widely felt. Without Augustus ruling the roost, pointing out that your surname is *actually* Giovanni, Giovani, di Giovanni, or whatever, is suddenly not the great decider it once was. As the clan's activities began to rotate more around the financial centers of the world, the Italy-based Giovanni found themselves more and more distant from where the real business was being done. Those of us closer to London, New York, those sorts of places, made a killing; literally in some cases. You'd be surprised how much death there is around making money. Death, decay, the whole lot.

As you'll no doubt be aware by now, those of us in the outer circles of the major family were suddenly given a bigger role in what was being done in Venice in our name. Augustus was a legend to us until then. What a fucking disappointment. We could see what his cronies couldn't, that he was holding the lot of us back and that he was the reason so many of our newfound brethren were actively trying to put us on the other side of the Shroud. They had to go. Best not to ask how, it's worked out pretty well for you. All that matters is that we knew new thinking was needed at the top or the bottom might just fall out, and some of us have been around long enough to have an idea of how that pans out.

A New Broom

It might surprise you to know that many of us had carried on under-the-table communications with hiding Cappadocians for a while. Some of us were even hiding them. Samedi were in negotiations with the Council over some artifact or other they claimed to have, Harbingers wanted us dead. Right? Of course, they only wanted some of us, the ones they stupidly thought were running the show around here. Well, we taught them better and now I'm teaching you.

The Promise of 1528 wasn't just a promise we made to the Camarilla and they made to us. It was a promise that Augustus made to those of us who believed he wasn't just a fat, bald fool with a God complex; those of us who knew he had the knowledge of the arts to maybe pull off what he claimed he could. But 500 years is a long time to wait to be proven wrong and we didn't fancy him as the man to secure us the clout we need with an increasingly paranoid and fractious Camarilla or whatever will be left of it in the next ten years or so.

That's when the Capuchin turned up again. Always seems to turn up at the right time, that one. I'll let one of the record keepers bring you up to date on what the Capuchin is; needless to say that it's a better option than the fat load of nothing Augustus was offering.

This isn't an empire, like he thought. This is a consortium, a company, a concern. This is the oldest and most powerful bank in the world. Not just one of money but of souls, spirits and secrets. The time has come to sweep out the old and bring in the new.

The Establishment

Now, don't be put off by all this talk of big changes and kowtowing to these up-jumped necromancers. We're not kneeling to everyone with a skull face and a few parlor tricks. They offered us knowledge and secrets we've been working to uncover for hundreds of years but, don't forget, they embraced us because of what we knew that they didn't. We let them think of this as a return to how things should have been, a rebirth of our great founder's ancient vision or simply an end of hostilities for a common good. What it really is, is consolidation. We've lost a whole load of useless clowns from the books and brought in people who have survived against all odds and who have skills and knowledge we didn't have access to before.

In return? Well, look around you. Where are we now? Whose hierarchy is it they're hoping to climb? Whose house is it they're living in... or underneath in some cases? They might have brought some innovations to the table, but we're the establishment. If this is a merger, we're the ones doing the buying. They can carry on under the umbrella we're holding, but they know we could take it away.

Sure, one of them is the figurehead now, but you'll come to understand how things work around here. Like I said, this isn't an empire.

The Family's Goals

Now that we've fixed our immediate problems, we go back to work. With so much of our estate now up for the claiming, we have a whole load of childer to bed-in to their new roles. The Camarilla might have questions, but until the term expires we don't really need to worry about answering them, and our new situation makes us, I believe, the only clan in the night who is not actively at war with anyone else.

War, all around us. Endless, undead war. Sounds like something that might interest you, my friend? It certainly should if you're half the Kindred your reputation suggests. Wars bring two things, death and profit. We need you and your, I'm sure, very capable progeny to find the ways to profit from the conflict in your own area.

Be careful who you trust, even among your own. If they think they can step into your shoes just by bumping you off then they will. Keep their eyes on the mystery box. There's a plan bigger than all of us out there and now we have the means to unravel its purpose, that sort of thing. They're on a need-to-know basis, got it? As for you, do business with those people out there, let them know that we're still a name they can trust and we'll work with whoever runs things wherever we go. We don't take sides unless we're attacked. We don't break a deal once it's made. We do what we say we will do.

That, my friend, is why our name still means something in Kindred society. It's the name that lives on, it's the name that people remember and it should always be associated with promises kept.

Of course, while that's going on, we continue the great work of the rot and the renewal. Do you think you'll be there when it all comes to an end? I don't yet know how to perceive the action of entropy on something the size of the universe, but I know when I'll be going at least.

Family Business

Our new associates will be joining your concern in the next week or so. I'll need you to pass on the instructions as to how Hecata moving through the territory can reach you; obviously they need to make contact with you before they go through any Princes or whatever there is out in that featureless wilderness you hail from.

Now, remember, these new folks are a bit weird. They're not entirely like us. They won't likely offer much on the business front, in fact you'll probably have to keep them under wraps to some extent, but that's for you to deal with. Treat them right and make use of what they bring to the table. As for your guys, they'll be expected to carry out the traditional roles, making sure the local operation is well funded, housed and protected. If you have anyone working in the arts, any proteges you happen to be molding out there, they can probably learn a lot from our allies. Get them working closely together — if this all goes tits up, we want to get out with as much of their knowledge as we can. Until then, we proceed in good faith. Consider them part of the family for the purposes of *Omertà*. They don't need to be locked out of the ritual chamber and kept away from the obsidian supply.

Dealing with the Authorities

As for introducing your new guests to the powers that be, you'll need to observe the rules of whoever that is. If you somehow happen to be in one of the places the Sabbat's still holding, they don't seem too bothered now the Harbingers are in the tent with the rest of us. As for the Camarilla, you'll have to do the song and dance with the Prince. I always liked to introduce my new Embraces and arrivals together and travel as a group. Having said that, don't take more than three at a time to Elysium with you; we don't want them worrying about the numbers game. I hear they're all excited about how we seem to be in decline and retreat from some of the old strongholds. I envy you, you'll get to see the look on the old Princes' faces when you break it to them that it was just a short hiatus.

Official line with them is that it's business as usual. We're still providing the standard services in finance and security as well as help in tracking down things, or childer, they've misplaced for whatever fee seems best to you. Make yourself useful to them and don't become too much of a thorn. You know the score, you've been at this long enough to get a seat on the Council.

When the question is asked, and it will be, you play it with a straight bat. This is the way things are, they're part of our arrangement and always have been, just now they're more... what should we say... public facing? You'll figure it out. You know the local yokels better than I do, I suspect. If they give you any trouble, we'll try to shuffle the deck a bit, can't have you getting embarrassed after making the big step up. It's always fun to watch how a Prince reacts when the Hecata in their domain one night are different from the Hecata in their domain the next.

No, don't worry about it. I look after my friends well and my family even better. And we are family, right cousin? Now, I've got a few more people to introduce you to before we can move in to the crucible. Don't worry about them though, you're here to keep faith with me. Don't you forget it. Don't forget who put you here, cousin.

The Harbinger Role

As recorded by Roger de Camden, Prince of Edinburgh, Pater of the Cult of Mithras, Wearer of the Death's Head Mask

My line — sometimes known as the Harbingers, other times known as the Cappadocians, though one is truly a subset of the other, and I can say that with all expertise — should be dead. Don't let arrogance convince you otherwise. If we were of any other line, we would be naught but ashes now.

That's the wisdom we need to retain to have a function in this new Hecata. The concept of "Hecata" is not new, however. If you believe our first clan name was "Cappadocian" or that Father's name was truly "Cappadocius," you're a fool. Everything changes. Everything cycles.

To an outsider looking in, the Clan of Death's hierarchy is a shambles, and never more so than in the Middle Ages, when we looked like a collection of unaffiliated scholars with a messianic father figure perched over us like a vulture in a tree. What the outsiders couldn't see, is we've always had structure. Once, it was schools of philosophy and later, proto-guilds, if you like. The Harbingers were councilors and saboteurs, their ambition one of disruption and misrule in service to delivering death in a myriad of ways. Plagues. Mass murders. Sieges that led to rulers more to our liking taking charge, and so on. You may ask, "I struggle to maintain my control and only feed when I must, so how could Harbingers even practice their trade and not devolve into wights?" and I must point out mortal politicians, generals, and religious leaders as evidence that it is easy to manipulate conflict without getting one's hands dirty, and thereby maintain a veneer of morality.

Yes, we have a history of dealing with death. Allow me to tell you about how we function in these nights.

The Timeline

I was never of the Sabbat, and I cannot speak as an expert on their current activities. What I can tell you, is the Harbingers joined the Sabbat largely in an effort to destabilize the Camarilla, but also to punish the Giovanni. I am often asked by younger Hecata such as yourself, "if the Harbingers were banished to Kaymakli by their clan founder, why were they so outraged at the Giovanni for killing him?" The answer is complex, so I will explain to you, little neonate:

- The Harbingers were a favored Cappadocian faction of politicians, assassins, and saboteurs well before the Giovanni Embrace. Few could match their mastery over widespread and intimate deaths designed to alter the course of monarchies, empires, and the fates.
- At some point, the clan founder (or his childer) decided the Harbingers (and other Cappadocians) weren't worthy of the Blood any more, and decided to banish them to the Underworld.
- Some Harbingers accepted the punishment, others fought, some never turned up for the hearing. In all cases, our resentment toward Father grew.
- The Giovanni, upon hearing how Father was prepared to punish even his favorite descendants, made plans to guarantee their survival. Namely, his death.
- The purge commenced, starting with Cappadocius. The Giovanni then turned their gaze toward the rest of the non-Giovanni Cappadocians.

- The Cappadocians (and some of the surviving Harbingers among them) turned to their long-time allies among the Ventrue and other founding Camarilla clans for protection. The Camarilla instead shut their doors to the Cappadocians, turning a blind eye to the internal conflict within the Clan of Death. Some Cappadocians banished themselves to the Underworld for protection, in exactly the same place Father banished their clanmates centuries before.
- (Some cynical Hecata might believe Father deliberately banished the vampires he did to protect them from the Giovanni's future actions, but that gifts an abusive, manic Antediluvian with a great deal of foresight and benefit of the doubt)
- The Giovanni ruled the clan for close to half a millennium, before numerous Harbingers emerged from the Underworld, hungry for revenge. They wanted revenge against the Camarilla for abandoning the clan, they wanted vengeance against the Giovanni too, but not for hunting the Cappadocians to near-extinction. Remember most of the Harbingers were seen as failures to the wider Clan Cappadocian and they did not mourn the deaths of their clanmates. No, they wanted to persecute the Giovanni for destroying Cappadocians before they could.
- The Family Reunion took place after the Harbingers launched a devastating assault on the Giovanni holdings in Venice, and surprisingly, enlisted many young Giovanni to aid them.

So you see, this timeline (which I believe is as accurate as any you'll ever see or hear, though Marchesa Liliana disagrees on some points) leads us to tonight. All families have black sheep and all families have skeletons in their closet. The Harbingers are both, and only now making firm bonds with their wider clanmates despite historic enmities.

How does this lead in to our role now, though? How does a clan so long kept in the dark achieve relevance tonight?

We use all our old gifts. Politics. Assassination. Mayhem. Epidemics. Choose one of the Four Horsemen and start riding with them. Tactics that worked well in centuries gone by still work damn well now.

But a further question. How does this apply to the fledgling Harbinger?

New Blood in an Ancient Clan

For a long time, the Harbingers could not Embrace new childer. Their vitae had gained a selective sterility after their long exile in the Underworld. As decades have passed since their emergence, however, the Blood is once again invigorated, and you see new members of the clan. Fewer take on the name Cappadocian than they do Harbinger, and even more classify themselves as Hecata without any of the bloodline confusion, but the good news for the clan is fresh blood now enters play.

The kind of existence a fledgling or neonate Harbinger faces, however, is an unusual one. There's a wider gulf between this clan's sires and childer, in terms of age, than perhaps any other. Therefore, the clan commonly Embraces those with a certain detachment from empathy and compassion (though not always, as it can make for an interesting case study), in order to utilize these new tools — sorry, childer — in ways appealing to the Harbinger ethos. That ethos being the study, mastery, and delivery of death on a grand scale.

Not all Harbingers are sociopaths and murderers, however. We know as well as any Kindred how easy it is to lose oneself to the Beast. We target pathologists, surgeons, soldiers who struggle to fit into everyday society, magnates, career criminals, and yes, the religiously-inclined.

Occultists these nights are hard to find, but any of the aforementioned professions tend to draw individuals well-suited to our aims.

The relationship between elders and new blood within the Hecata is a strangely joyous sight, I must admit. For so long believed incapable of siring, the older Harbingers shower their young with care, tutelage, and firm direction as fresh vampires. This can edge into coddling, making for some frustratingly entitled fledglings, and has from time to time entered into obsession, but for the most part the sire-child relationship within our clan forms an impressive bond.

I mentioned our aims before, so let's move on.

Dead Aim

Apologies for the apparent contradiction, but the Hecata's Harbingers don't just go around killing people, planting bombs, and spreading illness. If we did that, the other clans would have every right to destroy us. Perhaps that's why Cappadocius was so unhappy with our actions in the Dark Ages? Who knows. He's not around to answer questions, and believe me, plenty among us have tried to ask his spectre.

No, the ambition of the Harbingers is one of subtlety. We know what the Giovanni excel at, and now that we're working together — except in those cases where old vendettas cannot be settled — we come in from an opposite angle. The Giovanni are perfect mercenaries, independent researchers, and frankly, unparalleled necromancers. The Harbingers are still chamberlains, spies, and agitators, though these nights one might simply call them — or us, as I have been granted the Harbinger epithet despite never having received their curse myself — advisors to Princes.

The Camarilla and many Anarchs know the Giovanni. They know what to expect. They do not know what to expect from the Harbingers. When we enter their domains with secrets surrounding undeath, the Sabbat, and their enemies of the moment, and act as neutral parties for mediating conflicts... why, it's almost as if we're back to our old tricks, sitting beside or behind thrones.

For all that the Tremere are powerhouses of knowledge and the Ventrue are political masterminds, they do not know the inner workings of the Hecata. So pose as Caitiff, or even speak to a particularly aged Ventrue and remind them of their once-reliable Cappadocian regent, and get into their good graces. Work for them. Humble yourself to them. Speak to the Anarch Baron like they're an old friend and you'll bend over backwards to ensure they never suffer the crushing heel of the Camarilla again. Sprinkle your offers with enough truth to be believable, and worm your way into courts, Elysia, and powerful domains. *They* do not know we are aligned with the Giovanni. *They* barely remember who we are.

Use that. Use them. Feed whatever information you can find back to the clan, and where possible, start a war without leaving your fingerprints on the documents.

Factionalism

It is healthy for the Clan of Death to possess factions. We were always most functional when compartmentalized, and expecting a clan of individuals to march to the beat of a single drum is idiotic. Compare the Clan of Death to death's many ways of touching people. When I ask you how your loved ones died, did they all go the same way? Or did they each have their own

peculiarities, which made the events as distinct as they were memorable? So it is with the faces of our clan.

Plans for the Giovanni

Let's allow the Giovanni the numbers and the leadership role. They've held it for this long, why change now? But just as we put down roots in foreign domains and counsel Princes and Barons, we counsel our new Giovanni friends. We whisper words in their ears.

I cannot guarantee the status quo will remain as such for long, but what I can say is I've never anticipated such a productive future for our clan as I do tonight. "Productive" may not sound glamorous to one such as yourself, but what we intend to produce is a world better suited to our kind, and that includes the Giovanni.

We must be careful to not fall into open war with ourselves so soon after cessation of hostilities. All children must be educated that no matter what they might hear from their elders, they are not to attempt clandestine murders on another Hecata's behalf. That is not how one achieves status within this clan. I understand Venice intends to mandate that killing on behalf of another Hecata will soon result in torpor or final death, and that if a vampire of this clan truly does have a seething grudge in need of settling with violence, they must be prepared to wield the blade, gun, or torch themselves. It's an effective way of preventing clan disunity, and surprisingly it was a Harbinger who proposed this in-clan law.

Plans for the Samedi

Our relationship with the Samedi is a curious one, as depending on whom one might ask, they are vampires who fled the Feast of Folly, thereby making them close kin to the Harbingers; vampires who fled the Giovanni purge, likewise creating common cause; vampires native to the Caribbean and Central America, with an unknown lineage; aberrant descendants of Clan Nosferatu — which I know is a long-shot, but many believe it; or not even vampires but corpses with spectres propping them up.

As scholars of death we wish to study the Samedi, but as they possess the ability to reason and say "no," they tend to resent being poked and examined. Due to their centuries-long agreement of peace with the Giovanni and all Kindred sects, while acting as effective mercenaries, they may well be pioneers of the Hecata way. They didn't become so obsessed with vengeance or greed as the Cappadocians, Harbingers, and Giovanni, and instead pursued a way that strengthened their line and their studies.

They must be respected, and it is to be expected that they maintain their mysteries, just as we do ours, and the Giovanni do theirs. I recommend befriending one of these rotting bodies, however, as loyalty to coterie tends to trump loyalty to bloodline, even among the Hecata.

Hierarchy and Strains

We adopt much the same family hierarchy as exists within the Giovanni, it should be noted. We always called Cappadocius "Father," and many Harbingers (and those still clinging to the Cappadocian name) use Latin or Ancient Greek terms, such as soror, pater, avus, and so forth. The religion to which I proudly subscribe makes similar use of the ancient tongue, and it also confuses the kine. Dead languages suit the Clan of Death, after all. We don masks for Harbinger-exclusive ceremonies, with more elaborate masks being awarded to Kindred of significant status,

while fledglings wear simple death masks. It's a funny form of pageantry, but it's one of our oldest customs.

Our reliance on old parlance, rituals, and frankly the majority of our bloodline being considerably older than those of most clans, strains the first few months or years of a Harbinger's vampiric existence. It's one thing to have a sire who barely knows what the internet is, it's another to have one who's still amazed at the concept of steam power.

Despite the earlier mentioned close bonds between sires and childer, I do wonder at the break that might occur soon, if our elders can't keep up with modernity or if more childer are not created to form kin for our fledglings. In the meantime, we pair our newcomers with young Giovanni and Samedi, and sometimes with vampires of the Lamiae or even the Nagaraja. There is something to be said for communal suffering and trauma creating a firm bond between victims. Individuals who were mortals last week and have now been told "you're undead and can manipulate death with your fingertips" struggle, when not paired with fellows who received the same lecture.

The Samedi Role

As explained by Lenelle, Mambo of Birmingham

Ignore the chatter about "three faces of death," mate. That's just a neat and tidy way of cutting out all the other faces. You'll have read more than three names, but it's the bosses who want you to think there are only three in charge. Giovanni. Harbingers. Samedi. Look, I ain't arguing that it's a plum position to be in the big three, but let's get real: the Hecata's one big stew, and at any time, a different face of death could rise to the surface.

Setting Down Religion

If you have to stick with the trinity, because we know humans and loa both love putting things in threes, let's say the Giovanni are the heart, the Harbingers are the skeleton, and the Samedi are the spirit. Hell, they'd probably shift it all around if they could, but sticking us with religion makes sense.

The Giovanni are sacrilegious, holy icon-fucking bastards who will fold into whichever faith gives them the greatest access to spirits and bodies. They're the heart because they're defiant, ballsy, and willing to do anything to get what they want.

The Harbingers, or Cappadocians, if you want, are pretty irreligious too. Oh, you probably heard about the ones who didn't believe in God getting sealed up in a cave? I bet you £10 you don't even know which God. Neither did they. They were less likely to abuse religion than the Venetians, but more likely to shift with the winds and support the faith that most appealed to them at any given time. Whichever one offered their precious answers.

Now you come to us. Samedi. Vodun. Vodou. Voodoo, if you've been watching too many movies. We're about more than just dolls with pins in them, and face paint come time for a parade. But what we do have, is a deep-rooted faith. We believe in the loa. The loa speak to us. We've believed in them for centuries, and yes, it's all married to the Catholics, but we can see what awaits vampires on the other side. We *know* what's waiting for us in the Underworld. The loa help protect us in exchange for sacrifices, partly because they want the rich tidings we send their way, partly because we're the only vampires who talk to them regularly, and also, I suspect, because they know what shit awaits us when we die.

While the Giovanni and the Harbingers campaign for the end of the world (or at least it seems that way), we're laying down honest to goodness faith for our childer. We teach them to respect death and the dead, to always placate the spirits with gifts and occasionally blood sacrifice, and to fear the retribution of those you kill. As vampires, we stand to make a lot of angry spirits. The loa offer us some protection, but it's better to win their support than piss them off with one drained vessel after another.

I'm happy to say that many of our clanmates among the Hecata have adopted our practices in recent years. I suspect pragmatism drives them to it more than any pure belief, but I'm not complaining and neither are the loa. They don't grow in power through faith alone: they want relics from our world passed through to theirs. In return, our existences become a lot easier.

Religious Practice

We Samedi have a few rites we practice with regularity. Trust me: doing these will make your unives better, the dead happier, and might even draw some vessels to you when they think you're fun or mystical or whatever.

Sacrifice

Killing animals, drinking their blood, then cooking their meat for sustenance is common among our mortal servants. Some of us can obviously indulge in animal blood, if we're new to this undeath, while others make the sacrifice more... bipedal and sapient. Needless to say, making a murder of anything into a ritual, where you celebrate the meaning and importance of its death and dedicate its passing to another force, always goes down well with the loa.

Veves

This is a rite I recommend all Samedi practice, as well as our brothers and sisters among the Hecata. Veves are inscriptions, sometimes called holy symbols, wards, summoning signs, or other carvings of importance to the dead. You mark them on your floor or your wall in the correct colors, materials, and depth, and the loa you're calling will enter your body and take a ride for a while. Seems simple, but make sure you've placated this spirit first. You're not going to enjoy playing host to an angry Papa Legba, but you might love it if you've shown him some love first.

Celebration

A lot of folk associate us with some kind of 24-hour party culture, and I can only blame New Orleans for that. A lot of us are a little more introspective than that, and so much of it is blatant commercialism these nights. No, I recommend you celebrate the dead on the regular, but do it in a way that feels important to you. It'll help soothe your soul, and if they're out there and listening, it'll soothe them too. Being dead is no picnic, so to have one of the living or undead singing songs for you, pouring out a drink, or telling tales of your living exploits, makes a friend of someone behind the curtain.

Service

We exist to serve. This applies to the living and the undead. We owe a hell of a lot to those who passed before us, so when a spirit makes the effort to ask a favor, you damn well better be sure you're going to do it. And turning it down is better than accepting the task and then backing out of the deal. As long as you treat the dead with respect and do as they ask, they'll tell you so

many secrets and come to your aid when you need it the most. Trust me. I didn't become a mambo by pissing the loa off.

New to the Rot

You're never going to be regarded as much more than a distant cousin to the Giovanni. Yeah, most of you don't come equipped with the necrosis the older Stiffs exhibit, but the beliefs, the long-time removed nature of our line, and the fact our leader, the Baron never kneeled to Augustus or any of the rest of the Venetian Mafia (a ridiculous concept, by the by), makes the Famiglia look at us like we're wild horses ready to bolt or buck at any second.

They're not far off the money. The Harbingers, the Cappadocians, the Giovanni, the Lamiae... they've all been connected like the big incestuous freaks they are since time immemorial. Us? We've always been the outsiders. I guess the Nagaraja are too, but I can count the number of them in the Hecata on my fingers and toes and still have change.

Where does this leave you, new blood? It leaves you serving the valuable purpose of neutrality in times of conflict, of spiritual counsel in times of crisis, and of murder when one of the families is getting out of line. If they wanted to, they could all rise up and crush us. But they don't, because they know this wedge between them is valuable.

But you were just a priest when you were alive, weren't you? Or a therapist, an undertaker, a bodyguard, or a good old-fashioned owner of a curiosity shop. How can you be expected to administer balm to feverish vampires when you're so new to the Blood yourself?

With force of personality, my friend.

We're not "there, there" hand-patters, we're not going to tell them everything's going to be all right, and we're not going to offer them some sublime outcome like the Ministry, Bahari, and the rest of those charlatans do. We tell our charges where they fucked up, then we offer them a way of fixing it. If it requires hot words, we'll speak them. If it requires a new start, we'll arrange it. If it requires a bullet, we'll fire it.

This is who you are now. You're a step closer to death than any other clan, so you can witness it, touch it, wield it. You can face the end with certainty, and make everyone else's denouement so much worse.

Being a Samedi means being on the outside, but it also means surety of purpose and not having to kneel to Venetian or Camarilla pricks.

Shifting Tides of Necromancy

Reaching into the Underworld and hurling what you grab at an enemy is a good way to lose your hand to the great unknown. Don't do that. The best necromancers take their time to know the world beyond their own.

That raises an interesting topic though. There's lots of shades of necromancy. The Giovanni have always been obsessed with spirits. The Cappadocians of old were more focused on the flesh. The Harbingers had some obsession with making dead bodies take on the traits of the living. We would raise the dead as our servants. Yeah, *Dawn of the Dead* kind of stuff.

Necromancy comes in a ton of flavors, and you're never going to experience them all. With the consolidation of the Hecata though, the different families have taken to sharing a little more than we used to. Now, a Samedi might have a Rosselini as a Mawla. A Harbinger might join the same

coterie as a Milliner. We exchange secrets and suddenly, our clan is stronger. Working together has benefited us! Who'd have thought that possible.

Now, there's some interesting developments in the realm of the so-called "dark arts." We've cultivated a ceremony that allows any Hecata with the right components and tutelage to take on one of the loa. We Samedi are becoming a little more interested in the spirit — as my talk earlier probably implies — than shambling corpses. The Giovanni are all about binding the dead, which greatly piques the Harbingers' interests. Likewise, the Harbingers have taught others how to consume the stuff of ghosts when blood just won't suffice.

Yeah, I can't advocate that one.

My point is, as new schools of thought open to us, our clan changes. And so the merry-go-round goes round and round and up and down, and the Clan of Death becomes something new, and exciting, and dangerous.

Yeah, being undead sucks sometimes. But I'd rather know death personally, than stumble blindly into his grasp some night like an idiot from some other clan.

The Role of Others

From the words of Zelda Booke, Lilin of the Lamiae

You've read the perspectives of members of the Giovanni, Harbingers, and Samedi, and I'm sure you feel at least somewhat educated on the structure of this clan of ours. Giovanni on top directing operations, Harbingers wielding their ancient might and fraying enemies' powerbases, and Samedi on the outside, providing sage counsel and ceremonial wisdom.

Where does that leave the rest of us? Allow me to fill in the blanks.

The Lamiae

In times past, we were the Clan of Death's bodyguards. None of us male, all of us descended from the vampire Lazarus dubbed "Lamia." Our prestige came through dedication to the clan, its principles, and our discovery of how humours in the blood might affect a vampire drinking them.

Yep, that was our discovery. It's no hollow boast.

In any event, the Giovanni destroyed the last of us several centuries ago. The Lamiae were out of the picture for at least 200 years, maybe longer. It's difficult to tell sometimes, when ancestors pop out of the ground only to be destroyed sooner than they can leave a note to say "hi, I'm here!"

The question is, how are we here now, and what purpose do we serve?

You might say we're proof of the resurrecting power of vitae and Lazarus' beneficence, or his dedication to whatever plans exist in his ancient skull. Before his vanishing (and the Giovanni maintain the Clan of Death does not feel the Beckoning), he Embraced another, a high priestess of the Bahari, and through nuance of the Blood we were born anew. All of her childer were mortal lilin, and all of their childer were likewise, and so on. There aren't many of us at this time, and we're far less inclined to act as unquestioning bodyguards to this clutch of necromancers, but our founder... well, she says she's in communion with the spirit of Lamia herself. In turn, she says Lamia has a purpose for us. We're to strengthen and fight against those who would control us. For now, that does not include the other Hecata, but it does mean we often

act as hired guns for the Hecata against Sheriffs, Archons, Princes, and other assholes with god complexes. You know: The Camarilla.

We're the part of the Clan of Death that emphasizes rebirth. That part of the cycle is important, even if the other necromancers focus too heavily on the death and decay. We have to continue to develop our minds, motives, and activities if we're to avoid stagnation, because trust me, in the locker room with the other members of the squad, the stink of rot is bloody overpowering.

I suspect one part of the Clan of Death needs to make common cause with the Anarchs, or House Carna, and I can't imagine a better faction than our own to do the job. We've many things in common with both groups, and a union of Anarchs, House Carna, the Lamiae, and the Bahari, with the Hecata profiting sounds like it may suit Lazarus' goals too.

The Cappadocians

The Harbingers would have you believe that they represent all Cappadocians and that the Clan of Death we once knew has changed nameplates or merged with their political, formerly Sabbat brethren. This ain't the case. I mean, not entirely.

Cappadocians separate from the Harbingers still exist. Studious, morbid vampires, rarely bothering to use the Blush of Life to even imitate mortality, I wonder at how long these Kindred can survive in these modern nights. I believe when the Hecata formed, some benevolent-feeling Harbingers and Giovanni woke these Cappadocians from torpor, hoping to introduce them to a brave new world. Instead, these shell-shocked Graverobbers found a world in which they were forgotten, their name scrubbed from all records, and their methods of necromancy hopelessly outdated.

One could feel pity, or consign them to the fire, but I've got a feeling the entire idea of Cappadocians-as-reclusive-hermits is one hell of a good con. These vampires have lost none of their intellect, their skill in meddling with the Underworld and turning living flesh into crumbling ash. They're waiting, they're observing, and they're calculating whether to depart the Hecata in favor of the Camarilla or launch a coup against the Giovanni in retribution for centuries of persecution. My spies tell me they're feverishly researching necromantic arts, and they're not inclined to share their results. One informant even believes they're responsible for Augustus' disappearance.

One thing I know for certain, is the Cappadocians who Embrace share the Harbinger devotion to schooling their childer, and it's here that you recognize the fire of passion. These Cappadocians need a cause, a purpose, and following de Camden's lead, some even position themselves in titled roles within the Ivory Tower. Maybe forging their own, separate path is what's best for them.

In the meantime, of the Hecata's lines, the Cappadocians cling pretty closely to the Harbingers. As far as I'm concerned, they're one and the same, and most of my kin agree. They're appearing more and more in Hecata and Camarilla domains, so it'll be interesting to see how their role shakes out.

One thing worth noting: it was a Cappadocian, Serena Praha, who proposed the idea of the Hecata being representative of a cycle, though typically, every bloodline interprets the cycle theory differently. Most — sometimes called "Hecata Truists" — see the Cappadocians as death, the Giovanni as decay, and the Hecata as rebirth. The truists are a pretty firm cult within a cult

and they're the drivers behind a lot of our actions tonight. Others (mostly of my line) say the Lamiae are the rebirth part. Others still — we call them “the eaters” — say the cycle is Cappadocians as feast, Giovanni as promise, Hecata as reunion. Then you've got the real activists called “Hecatites” (I know it's confusing, but that's philosophers for you) who say the Cappadocians somehow represented life, with the Giovanni as death, and the Hecata as rebirth! It's a mess, and if Serena was still around tonight, and not off doing whatever the hell she's doing in Jerusalem, maybe we could ask whether it was a musing or a deep thought on her part. As it is, no Kindred volunteer to go to that part of the world. At least, not right now.

The Nagaraja

There's not much I can tell you about these flesh-eaters. I'm not even sure they're a part of the Hecata, as they've never shown much of any interest in affiliating with the Clan of Death, beyond the occasional trade of secrets.

What I do know, is the Nagaraja have a greater presence in Asia than they do any other part of the world. Asia is a large continent, of course, but as the Giovanni and Harbingers have struggled to make a foothold in India, China, and Japan, to name but a few great nations, it's pretty common that the Hecata come to blows with these cannibal Kindred when wishing to explore mass grave sites, ancient temples, or even claim territory near hospitals, morgues, and cemeteries — our usual feeding grounds.

Unlike the rest of us who suffer from the agonizing bite, the Nagaraja — who do share our weakness — can't even hide it behind a smile. Some have teeth like those of a shark or alligator, while others have teeth resembling needles. There are many reasons these bogeymen among necromancers are uncommon in Camarilla and Anarch domains, with horrific appearances and a predilection for eating their victims chief among them.

Consider all lines of the Hecata from a mortal perspective. Mortals understand family and hierarchy, so the shock of becoming Giovanni is lessened. Mortals understand plotting and vengeance, so Harbingers are at least somewhat palatable. They understand reverence for the dead and celebration of life, so the Samedi's activities make sense. Then look at the Nagaraja. Which mortal, Embraced into this line, could maintain their human core for long while resembling a dire beast and obliged to devour their victims?

If you are to deal with a Nagaraja, for the love of Lilith take backup. These vampires terrify even the coldest, most iron-willed among us.

And More Besides

A scholar of Kindred ancestry looks at the Ventrue, hums and haws, fills in some names on a family tree and feels satisfied. That same scholar looks at the Gangrel, realizes there's too many blank spaces to bother, and considers that clan a worthless study group. Then, the scholar moves on to the Hecata.

The scholar has never felt so confused.

Maybe a score of families, not all with the same progenitor, each with different preferences and practices, each with respective feuds. Somehow, the Clan of Death is the one most burgeoning with a form of life. Untangling our roots is an impossible task, so don't bother. My clanmates often say “there are as many clans of death as there are ways to die” and they're correct.

Beyond the ones you've already heard about, there are lines such as the Impundulu and Mla Watu, largely dominant in Sub-Saharan Africa. They're not officially members of the Hecata (not that we have membership cards), but I'm not denying their affinity for death magic.

The Unhudo of South America resemble corpses much like the older Samedi, though theirs is a mummified appearance. Perhaps they're also distant cousins to our clan. They remain common south of Nicaragua, though I've heard of some appearing in Phoenix in Arizona and one acting as a Sheriff in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

I wouldn't be surprised if further faces of death show up periodically, some ancient, some new. There's a delightful irony that perhaps the most fertile of clans is the one so preoccupied with life's end.

The Family Hierarchy

“Uncle Ranald, the affairs of the Chamber have kept me long overdue, though I hope I won't miss you at full Council next week. The landscape has changed, as you predicted.”

— Euan Dunsirn to Ranald Dunsirn

Those Kindred who trace their siring back to Clan Giovanni have always existed in a structure all their own and continue to do so. With that in mind, it was natural this system would continue on and become the basis of the nascent Hecata. While the other offshoots of the Clan of Death were far less formally structured, this convocation of clans, this reuniting of the disparate parts of Cappadocius' ancient blood, required something more rigid to hold it together. As the most numerous of the survivors of previous purges of the unworthy from the Clan of Death, it is the structure of Clan Giovanni that was adopted when the agreements were made.

For some of those outside the family, such a change is difficult and seems like an impinging upon their previous freedoms. Though, for many more of their clanmates, the rules and traditions of the Giovanni offered safety and a more elevated lifestyle. For the Giovanni themselves, casting off their previous management is not a call to cast off their traditions; traditions that they hold as dear as the Camarilla holds theirs; traditions based on bonds of blood beyond vampiric vitae, based as much on who gave birth to you as who sired you.

Unlike the Camarilla, the Giovanni family's hierarchy is formalized not by domain and praxis, since they may not be present in every city in a country. It is far more linked to those who wield control of the family's influence in an area. What form that influence takes is dictated by the desires of the Capuchin, the 1444 Chamber and the Council of Anziani. The exact names of the “ranks” are referred to in many ways by the various families and locales in which the Hecata operate. While the Putanesca cling to the terms familiar to their criminal past, such as Don or Soldato, others have their own regional versions and quirks. Above all of that, though, is the more rigid structure of those who fulfill what the clan sees as its true purpose: the study of “The Rot and the Renewal,” and the mastery of “the Arts,” or necromancy.

Who's Your Daddy?

Hecata Kindred place a great deal of emphasis on trust and loyalty. After all, when you have as many skeletons in your closet as these depraved vampires, literal skeletons in many cases, it pays to be able to keep secrets. For example, Clan Giovanni is more than just a loose association of Kindred with a common sire whom most of them don't even know. They are a culture, one

steeped in the history and traditions of their bloodlines and of peoples that existed long before many modern nation states, and even before Augustus Giovanni was offered the Embrace.

Those Embraced into the Hecata are often prepared for the event, even if they themselves did not know it. The vampires who grant them the so-called “proxy kiss” of ghouldom, or who actually Embrace them, will often be figures from their past who they have likely been aware of for much of their lives. For that reason, they will often continue to use those familial terms like Mother, Father, Uncle, Aunt, Niece, Nephew and Cousin when referring to one another, since that is what they are to each other.

Childer in Clan Giovanni are extensions not just of their sires, but of the parents who begot them, a quirk some members of the other Hecata bloodlines have begun to adopt themselves. Those born of outsiders, who were not bathed in the culture of the family from birth, whose loyalty and competency is not completely beyond question even before the Embrace, are regularly looked down on in favor of those with more rarefied breeding. Often, they are treated as outliers, relegated to performing menial tasks such as bodyguarding more important Kindred or simply providing a very specific boon to the local family.

The Families

Originally only Embracing from within the Giovanni family itself, the clan was broadened with the inclusion of many others from near and afar. Their competitors both in mercantile ventures and the pursuit of the dark arts of necromancy, the Rosselini family were brought into the fold in the 16th century, with some even having been Embraced by Cappadocians prior. The Sicilian Putanesca, whose criminal activities lend both muscle and a mafioso mask to the clan’s true intentions were added much later. The cannibalistic Dunsirns of Scotland were brought into the clan for their trade links to the New World and their knowledge of the entropic mysticism of the Nagaraja, an Indian bloodline with ties to the Ministry and the Underworld. The clan’s arrival in the United States eventually saw the financiers and political legacy of the Rothsteins and the Bostonian Milliners added, and the growth of Kindred influence in the burgeoning superpower has seen those families rise to greater prominence despite their younger membership. Tales from the conquistadors exploring South America told of the walking corpse that was Pochtli and led to the addition of the Pisanob family; expanding into the Far East were the Jesuit Della Passaglias of the earliest trade missions and the dynastic Weng family. In West Africa, the Ghiberti were long-term agents of the Giovanni, brought into play for their long-standing loyalty and the influence they garnered in the continent.

All of these families and more have been blessed with the vitae poured down through the Giovanni family, and each has expanded their influence across the mortal and Kindred world. In these nights, the stranglehold of the Giovanni family has given way to a more mixed leadership at the top of the rotting tree. Indeed, a new wave of families from across the globe are being considered as new additions to the reborn Hecata.

Behind the closed doors of their manor houses and crumbling mausoleums, Giovanni boast of the young girl they have coming up through their ranks. “Why, she’s the great-great-great-great-granddaughter of Evangelista diGiovanni! She’s been raised from birth to understand her family was different! She’s been taught all she needed to be taught to prepare her for this moment! She’s going to set the night on fire and bring just the spark the local family is looking for, all she needs is a sponsor to bring her into the fold!”

Like an ancient statesman or merchant family looking to seal a merger or alliance, the Giovanni trade their children to each other for an Embrace that will ratify a pact, and write the blood of their own children on contracts that never end, promising unchecked familial loyalty until the end of the world.

With the addition of their old foes and former clanmates, the Giovanni talk of “expanding the gene pool.” Now when people encounter the Clan of Death, it is not just the faces that have changed, taking on an often more hellish and undead façade, but the names. While before some Kindred would have only dealt with a Giovanni or a Rosselini, they will now hear far greater variation. While such change draws questions from observant outsiders, the Hecata are not interested in answering them, especially when a clanmate changes their surname to “Cappadocius” or “di Cappadocian.” To the outside world, the Giovanni present a show of unity and continuity. Not only is this the way it is, it is the way it has always been, others simply did not have the wit to notice it.

Coterie or Family Tree?

While coterie form out of necessity, mutual need or simple safety in numbers, Hecata coterie are often based around years-old friendships and alliances, ties to common sires, grandsires or even more ancient progenitors, or quite literal family ties. With the amount of inbreeding and interbreeding in the Giovanni families, almost any member of the clan is a blood relative to another.

Within the Hecata, the Giovanni are the most populous and prolific of the clans and also those with the most temporal power and wealth. They often act as the glue binding the disparate branches of the Clan of Death together, providing a haven and a mask of legitimacy that hides the terrifying studies and experiments that the members of a coterie conduct within. Members of the Hecata will very rarely seek to align themselves with those outside on a basis other than the purely mercenary. While they may be happy to extend their protection and hospitality to any Kindred they encounter, such services are always for a price and the relationship remains strictly business unless sealed with a Blood Bond to ensure the loyalty of the supplicant. The code of silence, or Omertà, that surrounds the family’s practices forbids submitting to Blood Bonds or sharing the deepest secrets of the clan with outsiders.

Outward Facing Operations

Their position as the only independent clan of note in tonight’s Kindred society places the Hecata in a dangerous, yet potentially profitable position. While a portion of the clan faces inward, studying philosophy and ceremonies relating to their death magic, the Underworld, and their unhallowed ancestry, another portion looks outward at the world and takes note of where it can capitalize.

The Hecata are, as well as the Clan of Death, a family of mercenaries. By the Promise of 1528, they cannot officially involve themselves in the Jihad between sects. Plenty of Necromancers test this, such as Roger de Camden, as Prince of Edinburgh, and Carlotta Rosselini, Baron of Naples, though to date no Giovanni hold such title. With the exceptions aside, the Hecata’s neutrality places them in prime position to act as mediators, advisors, and killers, all impartial to the conflicts around them, of course. The only restriction is they may not benefit *politically*. They can, however, benefit monetarily, through favors to be repaid in the future (the Hecata shy away from the formalities of Boons, as these entrench them too deeply in Camarilla society),

with unclaimed territory handed over to them, and through access to artifacts, sites, and people who might further their understanding of more esoteric matters.

The Hecata position makes them an easy target, as they have no official allies within the sects. It might seem strange then, that few coteries receive word from on high to assault the clan's holdings. Neonates may wonder at the "why," given the Necromancers are apparently vulnerable. Mawlas with any wisdom tell them, "Attack an Anarch domain and you'll get pecked at by a few angry, but disparate Brujah and thin-bloods. Attack a Hecata domain and you'll have an entire, united clan bearing down on you for years afterward. Just leave them alone." The Camarilla or the Anarchs could surely crush the Hecata if they could all pull in the same direction for more than a single night, but to date, such a united front seems unlikely. Meanwhile, the Hecata are always primed to fall into lockstep and counter-attack, though such skirmishes are rarely profitable.

Other than working as hired guns and diplomats, the Hecata field a wide array of experts on matters of money, death, and the dead. While the average Hecata knows little of the Underworld or its inhabitants, plenty come from moneyed families and can act as lenders and sponsors for other Kindred activities, whether in the form of a long-term investment or short-term heist with quick returns. Others act as mediums when vampires want to speak with ghosts, enlist the dead as spies, or more rarely, as exorcists when Kindred want to banish a bothersome spirit. Of course, anything a ghost spy sees when in the employ of the Prince goes straight back to the Hecata as well as the domain ruler.

The Venetian Ladder

"Our society is not so different from yours. We all want to take that next step. Sometimes it's knowledge, sometimes it's an artifact, a company, something the family needs, sometimes it's just someone who needs to be stepped on."

— Lia Milliner, Money Launderer for the Boston Hecata

All childer Embraced into the Clan of Death are brought in with one thing in mind: to climb the Venetian Ladder. Only the most long-lived and storied necromancers in the clan may take their place as one of the respected elders, the anziani, whose guidance helps establish the policy of the entire organization. Such Kindred may not even be seen as the "leading" members of the clan in their area by those outside, but those within know the value and respect of Venice is won not with the grandest tithes, but with breakthroughs in the arts.

The doors of the Mausoleum of Venice don't open to just anyone with the right surname. To gain access to the inner sanctum of the Family requires acts of sacrifice and heinous depravity in the name of the greater cause that would shame even the most ardent cultist into fleeing their faith in terror. The Kindred within these walls are cold, callous monsters without exception. While they may present themselves as "refined" or even gregarious and friendly, their goals are always aligned with those of the Hecata in general: to gain increasing influence and power over others, Kindred and kine alike, and to further their understanding and study of the Sudario, or Shroud, and the bizarre dimension beyond, the Shadowlands, the realm of the dead. To these individuals, nothing else matters and any Kindred would be wise to remember this when dealing with those who have climbed to the top of the Hecata's ranks.

Gaining the attention of an anziani is a great boon for any Hecata looking to advance their station within the Clan of Death. However, it comes at a cost. While the missteps, mistakes and failures

of less celebrated Kindred are treated with a sort of benign neglect, those who have shown promise are doubly punished when they fall short of what the clan expects of them. Just as the Cappadocians of old punished their kin by entombing them for centuries, the Giovanni have their own ways of handling failure.

The Anziani Council

Foremost among the elders of the Clan of Death, the anziani sit in a great conclave within the Mausoleum and there set the policy the whole clan pursues. This gathering of ancient blood once represented those who had contributed the most to the Giovanni family's great plan. It has now become a broader church, incorporating the overall leadership of the entire Hecata family.

The council has many groups within it and small pockets of collective influence, though they are forbidden from working openly against each other. What the Hecata have that other clans lack is a certainty in the unity of their purpose. While they have pursued disparate aims in the past, their ultimate goals were always unified within the teachings of the Clan of Death itself.

Some whisper of the Beckoning and question why so many of the older Kindred within the hallowed halls of their Venetian fortress remain. Is it due to the demise of their Antediluvian? Is it that they are disconnected from the true power that guides the other clans? Some Kindred scholars have speculated that the unification of the Hecata itself seems like a Beckoning of sorts, though others point to the great purges and schisms that have played out throughout the history of the Clan of Death for those who chronicle such dark matters.

Whatever the case, these elders remain undisturbed by the plagues that have beset their contemporaries, and continue to offer guidance to their branches situated around the world. Even the local Dons, whose power and wealth can seem obscene to an outsider, dream of holding a mere fraction of the influence held by the anziani.

The 1444 Chamber

Among the many groups existing within the Anziani Council, there is one whose membership is prized above all others. Nobody truly knows who the elite Kindred of the clan are, who hold their conclaves in the fabled 1444 Chamber, deep in the heart of the Mausoleum. The members of this group were once esteemed as Augustus' most trusted advisors and the closest to him in necromantic power. Some even say they were his peers or his betters, depending on who you talk to.

In modern nights, the Chamber represents the true leadership of the Clan of Death. It is they who, in frustration with a leader who promised them absolute mastery over two worlds within 500 years, have enacted the great change that brought the legendary Capuchin to the fore and united the Hecata in its newly minted form. It is they who smelled the tide of revolution among the disaffected and disillusioned Dons below, threatening their very own Anarch-style schism.

The members of the Chamber are shrouded in mystery even among anziani. Few have openly spoken to others of their position and those that have, only to their most trusted family members. To ascend to the Chamber is recognition that one is among the most powerful necromancers who ever lived. Many think of them as the Board of Directors. They are the final arbiters of the Chairman's performance.

The Endless Night

It has been whispered throughout the history of the Clan of Death that they intended to bring some great catastrophe down upon the world and subjugate all their peers. Most Hecata would laugh at such rumors and dismiss them as the paranoid prattle of those who simply do not understand what it is the Hecata do. After all, their goal is simple, to study and understand death. Sure, it's macabre, but is it dangerous to other Kindred? Not especially.

Of course, that is what they would tell you. Indeed, the various branches of the Hecata have hatched various plots to kill or enslave all other Kindred, kill themselves, and even kill God. In the realms of doomsday plots, they are past masters. However, the modern Hecata sees such grandiose posturing as merely the rantings of a few mad-eyed elders with deity complexes. If there is an "Endless Night" to be achieved in these nights, it is simply the continuity of the Clan of Death's original purpose. Understanding death, life and what passes between those two states is not just a voyage in pursuit of power, wealth and influence, it is a voyage of self-discovery for a Kindred. Hecata know the answers to questions that plague all Kindred. Those with the stomach to look deeper soon learn, their lavish lifestyles and ghastly, death's-head visages are merely masks behind which a truth is hidden. The Hecata are a cult of death and undeath.

The Hecata do not simply watch the dead and dying or fuck lifeless corpses with organs that no longer function. They worship death as a concept, they praise it as the ultimate reality. Through ritual and their Discipline of Oblivion, the Hecata have peered into the futures of countless lives, even their own, and they claim they have seen an end. What many of them want, including the Chamber, is to witness the ending of the world and the death of a universe, and what they believe to be its perfect rebirth as the precursor to aeons-long decay. They want to experience the ultimate expression of the infinite cycle of life as no mortal can.

To do so, they must traverse every night until then in an endless cycle of morbid survival that can only be halted by the termination of existence itself. The Hecata are pursuing the Endless Night. The Hecata are the Endless Night. Ironic, since it is only their most wise and powerful members who truly feel the end coming and rejoice that in the immortal span of a Kindred existence, that moment of their becoming one with the death of all is only a stone's throw away.

Perspectives on Kindred Religions

As the Clan of Death is itself a cult, its members have a unique perspective on the many spiritual movements that have sprung up as the modern nights have progressed. These fictions that less enlightened minds cling to in order to justify what they are, what they are becoming, and the bizarre and terrible acts they perform are always of great amusement to the Hecata. The clan's members love nothing more than to hear tell of the latest preachings of the new Kindred messiah or hear what some methuselah is saying to stop his own clan from gathering together to do unto him what they have done to each great leader that thought they could personify their followers' entire being.

Followers of cults concerned with a prophesied doomsday or apocalypse event are of particular interest to the Clan of Death. Records of such movements are highly prized by the anziani and they look kindly on those members who procure this information for them.

A Unique Cult

The entire Hecata clan is built like a cult, though unlike most religions, most of its adherents don't realize they're worshipers, and worshipers of one of the largest ancestor and death cults in the world at that. The Hecata teaches its clan members to respect their elders, so one day they too

might be worthy of respect and reverence. This isn't so different from the Camarilla's way of dangling bait above its neonates' heads, except the elders in the Hecata are often blood relatives, or have direct influence over the lower level cultists, who happen to be their descendants via vitae. The path to power is clearer within the Hecata, or at least the backs one needs to scratch are highly visible.

A vampire doesn't choose to join the Hecata. This isn't a religion Kindred adopt based on the appeal of doctrine or reward. The family chooses the cultists, rather than the other way around. A vampire — or indeed, a mortal — within the Hecata gains a family so tightly bound that they'd kill to protect their own, and interrogate the attacker's corpse to find out who hired them. The vampire gains access to knowledge forbidden or unknown among most clans, but most importantly, gains purpose in unlife. The clan seeks power in many forms, whether through wealth, influence, spreading the family line, the dark arts, or simple understanding. Depending on a Hecata's area of expertise, they might find any of these avenues open to them, and often have a Mawla to guide them to the path, if not down it.

Of course, the Hecata comes with its share of drawbacks. Just as the family is protective, it's obsessive about not letting its children fly the coop. Hecata cannot just leave the clan and join a sect like the Anarchs. Even those rare Hecata with titles outside the clan are reporting back to the family or serving their Blood in some way. Betraying the clan in any way is a death sentence for most Kindred. Exile is never an option, as the Hecata's secretive nature would not see the benefit of releasing a vampire or calling them Caitiff. When assessing one's place within the Hecata, it's the old decision of security versus liberty. If the first one is more important to the respective vampire, then they might feel at home among their kin. If they desire freedom more than anything else, they might enjoy it when working as envoy to a Camarilla domain or explorer in distant lands, seeking a necromantic relic of some description, but eventually they always have to come back and report to mommy and daddy. Freedom is an illusion the clan extends only as much as is useful.

Hecata Chronicles

As with any clan, the variety of stories available to players of Hecata vampires is vast, though due to the clan's structure, sometimes these tales work best when all players take on the role of a Hecata — whether all members of the same line, or a mixed coterie containing a Harbinger, Giovanni, and Samedi, for instance. This is not a limitation, but an opportunity to explore the importance of lineage in **Vampire: The Masquerade**, among many other themes and concepts. Story types might include:

- A story in which the coterie hunts down an artifact significant to the clan, or a dead individual of importance.
- The experimentation and mastery of new Oblivion Ceremonies, in the fringe territories of an Anarch domain.
- The unearthing of a Hecata ancestor, who is unfamiliar with the clan's new structure.
- A chronicle starting with a Prince's promise to the coterie that they may claim part of the city as neutral domain if they perform one service to the Camarilla.
- An exploration of a forgotten branch of the family, consisting entirely of black sheep the Hecata wish to forget.

- The enrichment and growth of Hecata territory in a domain, in which the coterie need to involve themselves in seizing influence over the city's crime, finance, and dead.
- The important role of grooming mortals for Hecata sires not in the coterie.
- A story where the coterie must investigate and put down a suspected rebellion within the family.
- Keeping the clan's mortal connections and relations in the dark as to the "family business" while still keeping them close enough should they be selected for the eventual Embrace.
- Visiting punishment on an entitled Camarilla coterie who saw fit to assault some young Hecata, due to their fear of getting involved in the sectarian Jihad.
- Brokering peace between Camarilla and Anarch war parties, while still trying to turn a profit for the clan.
- Assassinating the Prince's ghoul so accomplished Necromancers within the clan might interrogate their spirit for secrets.

The Hecata also work well in a coterie containing Kindred from other clans. Contrary to appearances the Hecata like to maintain, they are not entirely insular and incestuous. To profit from the world, they must branch out, interact with other vampires, and make themselves useful in any domain. Stories involving the Hecata in these roles might include:

- Working as hired guns to eliminate the enemies of a Baron who frequently hires the coterie.
- Extending a service to a mostly Camarilla coterie, in exchange for future favors due to the family.
- Simple companionship outside clan lines, maybe forged while still mortal or rank fledglings, or directed by a Mawla within the Hecata.
- An undercover operation where the clan has permitted the Hecata Kindred to act in furtherance of a Prince or Baron's interests, so long as they don't reveal their actual clan.
- Finding common cause with another cult group, as both of you desire the truth behind some Noddist mysteries concerning your clan and others.
- Digging through the wreckage of a fallen Sabbat domain with Camarilla vampires, under the agreement that whatever each of you finds belongs to you.
- Offering protection to the mortal contacts and companions of Anarch vampires, when the strict Baron told their followers they needed to let these kine go.
- Using your ostensible neutrality to assist Anarchs in planting a bomb in a Camarilla domain. A hefty payment is of course required.
- Working with Camarilla Kindred and telling your Hecata Mawla "you're trying to find out the sect's secrets," when really you just enjoy their company.
- Offering to defect to a sect or other cult and provide Hecata secrets, but only if they serve you in some way first.

- Befriending vampires of another group to gain a greater understanding of the Jihad and the wars between sects.
- Volunteering to assist in “Second Inquisition proofing” a Camarilla domain, to protect their interests and your own.

New Coterie Types

As the only clan independent of the sects, the Hecata often form their own kinds of coterie. Though they’re perfectly capable of blending in with Camarilla and Anarch groups, many vampires in the Clan of Death prefer to stick to their own.

Family

“No matter how much I hate you right now, you’re my brother, and nobody does that to you.”

The family coterie is one of reliance, connection, and support networks. Vampires within this coterie may be related in a mortal sense as well as through the Blood, and they likely recruit mortal members of their extended families to assist them in their plans.

- **Domain:** Chasse (•), Lien (•), Portillon (•••)
- **Ally:** (•) (a connected mortal family member)
- **Contacts:** (••) (family, extended family)
- **Resources:** (••) (cash and assets on loan from the family)
- **Enemies:** (••) (one or more mortals who oppose the family business)

Possible extras: Herd (extended family members), Influence (family business), Mawla (vampire within the same family), Retainers (a family ghoul), Fame Flaw: Dark Secret (family criminal connections)

Gatekeepers

“Our friends straddle the boundary between life and death.”

The gatekeepers coterie utilize their skills in communion with (and potentially control over) the dead to establish a type of coterie common among the Hecata and other Oblivion users, providing spiritual aid and counseling to some, spectral assaults and sabotage against others. They are prestigious users of animated corpses and ghosts as servants.

- **Domain:** Chasse (••), Lien (•), Portillon (•)
- **Contacts:** (••) (graverobbers, morticians)
- **Resources:** (•••) (stolen from the dead)
- **Retainers:** (•••) (a wraith servant and spy)
- **Enemies:** (••) (a vampire hunter who recognizes the coterie dealing with the dead)
- **Status Flaw:** (•) Notorious (dealings with dark entities)

Possible extras: Mawla (accomplished necromancer)

New Predator Types

The Hecata have their preferred ways of feeding, passed down from sire to child. With their Bane (see p. XX) preventing an enjoyable Kiss, the Clan of Death are forced to find other methods of extracting blood. While some become baggers (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 176), other predators arise among the Necromancers.

Extortionist

The extortionist likes to force their victims to bleed for them. Ostensibly, the extortionist acquires blood in exchange for services such as security or surveillance, but as many times as the need for protection is real, it is just as often a fiction engineered to make the deal feel acceptable.

- Add a specialty: Intimidation (Coercion) or Larceny (Security)
- Gain one dot of Dominate or Potence
- Spend three dots between the Contacts and Resources Backgrounds
- Gain the Enemy Flaw: (••) The police or a victim who escaped your extortion and now wants revenge

Graverobber

Graverobbers often feed from fresh corpses, but despite their name, they prefer feeding from mourners in cemeteries and sad, frightened visitors and patients in hospitals. Melancholic Resonance in a victim's blood appeals more than any other humour. This predator type often requires the vampire to hold a haven in or connections to a church, hospital, or morgue.

- Add a specialty: Occult (Grave Rituals) or Medicine (Cadavers)
- Gain one dot of Fortitude or Oblivion
- Gain the Feeding Merit: (•••) Iron Gullet
- Gain the Haven Advantage: (•)
- Gain the Herd Flaw: (••) Obvious Predator (your cold nature makes you act in a deeply unsettling manner when hunting)