



Kickstarter Manuscript Preview #2F:
Kindred Religions –
The Mithraic Mysteries

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Kindred Religions

“Every methuselah is capable of shepherding a flock of devotees, convincing them of miracles of the Blood, and forcing them to supplicate before an almighty leader. Every methuselah is a god just waiting to take on the title.”

— Shrug, Nosferatu Mistress of Cardiff

Undeath causes many a crisis of faith. The devout Christian might cease to believe in the sanctity of life and the forgiveness of God Almighty. The Muslim might fail to reconcile their own experience with the Qur'an's teachings on death as a long night of sleep, where upon dying, the individual immediately discovers their destiny in heaven or hell. The Hindu waits for their atman to be reborn in a new body, only to find themselves locked in their own damned, unliving shell.

It is enough to drive one away from faith entirely, and yet, vampires discover new beliefs. There will always be great mysteries in the world, and faith has provided millions, perhaps billions of humans with answers, and comfort where there are no answers to be found.

Vampirism is a terrifying state in which to find oneself. It's only natural that Kindred flock together to find meaning, purpose, and sometimes, salvation in communal struggle. Sometimes it comes in service to a higher power, other times it comes through examining the Beast within, and rarely, it leads to transcendence beyond a vampire's base instincts.

The religions presented in this chapter all exist within the World of Darkness, with some as prominent vehicles of vampire faith, and others merely existing on the fringes of Kindred society. In your chronicle, these might act as backgrounds, support networks, the sources of powerful Mawlas, or the font from which to draw horrifying antagonists.

The Mithraic Mysteries

“All hail our lord and savior, Mithras, who journeyed through the Underworld and now returns to us!”

— Rose Abawi, Toreador Pater of the Soho Mithraeum

The cult of Mithras lies in disarray. Forged in secrets and persecution, the cult long preferred erecting a new temple over expanding an existing one. Likewise, it founded new cells instead of forming a singular sprawling cult. This worked well with Mithras at the helm, but his rumored destruction at the claws of Lupines and subsequent disappearance left the disparate cult rudderless. Unscrupulous Patres started giving their own orders, while the most loyal Patres — paralyzed with grief and a lack of guidance — saw their cells fall apart. Yet now these loyal few sense a stirring in their blood, a whisper on the air: prepare, for He returns. The cells communicate with each other, the network reforms, and the Mithraists stand to rank among the most active power players in Kindred society.

From Persia to Rome

The Mithraic Mysteries is a cult of personality as much as a mystery cult. For Cainites, there is no separating the cult from the methuselah at its center. Yet what Kindred know of Mithras is scarce and conflicting. To his followers, he is the Indo-Iranian god Mithra first mentioned in a collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns transcribed around 1380 BCE, or depicted even earlier on the royal seal of King Saussatar of Mitanni around 1450 BCE. They know Mithra was a member of the solar pantheon, and his divine purview centered upon honesty, camaraderie, and bargains.

When Mithra was said to have walked the Earth in corporeal form, as gods in ages past were wont to do, the Ventrue claim he was Embraced by an ancient vampire named Veddartha. Mithra remained active for centuries afterward, until the clash between his divine blood and the curse of Caine forced him in and out of torpor. Still, his followers remained loyal and Mithra's teachings, passed down orally, may even have inspired tales of the Buddhist Maitreya. The cult learned to survive without their god's direct presence, dutifully awaiting his return — a trait that served them well to the modern nights.

Mithra became Mithras in Rome, and his religion took on the trappings of a mystery cult. His followers congregated in caves and underground cisterns, coaxed by Mithras' lieutenants to ensure the god-turned-Cainite could visit them. Whenever the Mithraists gained sufficient funds, they erected a new temple rather than expand an existing one. His cult spread rapidly and far, operating in cells rather than as one collective, even reaching Britain at the furthest reaches of the Roman Empire. Building on Mithra's purview as divine judge of truth, companionship, and trade, worship of Mithras was popular with soldiers, merchants, bureaucrats and custom officials, freedmen, and slaves. For a while, Mithraism rivaled the nascent religion of Christianity. In the end, however, the Church of Peter triumphed and Mithraism became a relic in mortal history.

[LAYOUT: LAY OUT AS A PENNED LETTER]

Mithra and the Bull

As penned by Roger de Camden, Pater of the Cult of Mithras in Britain

The Persian deity Mithra accomplished many great deeds, but none greater than slaying the bull. He rode the creature until it was exhausted, then forced it into a cave and killed it. This myth is retold over and over on stèles and shrines dedicated to Mithra, and the bull-slaying myth even carried over into Mithras' Roman and British cults.

Yet these same myths name Sol Invictus, the Sun God, as Mithra's patron. Does it not seem odd to accomplish such a great deed away from your patron's gaze? Most Kindred dismiss the myth as allegory, or point out that Mithra as Cainite had to retreat into a cave. They're not paying attention. Myths are allegories, yes, but they are also intentional. This one, specifically, names both the patron Sun and the cave. That's not an error — Mithra performed his greatest kill away from his patron's gaze.

And this, my dear neonate, is where I urge you to stop and think. Who would serve as patron to one as ancient as Mithras? Who would Mithras fear enough to hide his actions from? What does slaying a bull, a symbol of fertility and procreation, embody? Rumors have long named Mithras as Fourth Generation, yet not a direct childe of our clan founder. Perhaps both are true.

[LAYOUT: LETTER ENDS]

A London Renaissance

Though outdone on the mortal stage, Mithras remained powerful in Cainite politics. He moved to the domain of Londinium in 71 CE, where Roman soldiers did fierce battle with Britain's people. By the time Rome accepted Christianity in 313 CE, Mithras was so entrenched in Britain he could safely bring his most dedicated followers to London, both as reward for their service and to continue his worship. With the London cell now the most important within the Mithraic Mysteries, they began work on the London Mithraeum. Britain's rebellion against Rome spilled over into Cainite unrest though, leading the local Kindred to rebel against the foreign Mithras. Mithras emerged victorious, but again slipped

into torpor. The cult continued without him — split into independent cells, certain in their faith, and awaiting his return as always.

While the Mithraic Mysteries never regained the global power it had in the era of Persia and Rome, the cult spread throughout England, Wales, Scotland, and even to the coasts of France. When Mithras awoke again in 1066 CE, he found his cult diminished in numbers and power, but with all its trappings in place and waiting for him. Mithras brazenly reopened the London Mithraeum, only to see it burned to the ground by Ventrue lords acting through the clergy. The cult retreated back into the shadows, playing to its strengths and attracting new followers among young nobles and soldiers. Meanwhile Mithras' Cainite agents sowed discord among the local Ventrue. With the Ventrue focused on each other, Mithras' popularity spread from young kine to young Kindred, patiently waiting while his detractors turned against each other and replacing them with his loyalists. Come 1154 CE, Mithras openly claimed the Baronies of Avalon, England's most powerful domain, as his own.

With Mithras as Prince of London, the cult continued to spread and thrive. The cells remained separate and hidden though, each working toward their god's greater purpose. One might worship Mithras as bull-slayer and soldier, while another celebrated him as god of bargains and merchants. Each cell made its own rules in accordance with the Seven Steps to the Sun.

Mithras himself traveled the world, meeting with a variety of famous and infamous Kindred in pursuit of knowledge and power, with his cult remaining ever faithful. His followers survived Christian persecution, bouts of madness in their god during the Victorian era, and potential coups against their Prince — only to await his return, and resume their service every time.

The London Blitz

Mithras *designed* his cult to survive without him. The Mithraic Mysteries propagated into independent and separate cells, remained hidden, and fostered relations with the middle and lower classes rather than the elite. This let Mithras pursue his myriad passions, yet always return to find at least one cell still serving as base of operations.

The last six decades were different though. A Lupine pack drove Mithras into torpor during the London Blitz in World War II, after which a Banu Haqim neonate named Montgomery Coven stole and diablerized his body. While no one knew of Mithras' diablerie, his followers could no longer sense his presence and rumors of his final death swelled. Finally, Queen Anne came forward and quietly confirmed his death. Certainly, she would lie to advance her own cause, but she also remained loyal to Mithras — if motivated largely by opportunism and fear — throughout long bouts of torpor, depression, and madness. Queen Anne breaking ranks now was a clear sign she believed Mithras either dead or never returning — and she would be in a position to know. Mithras' acolytes desperately searched for their god's guidance — his voice in their heads, his blood in their veins — and found nothing. For the first time since Mithras' rise three thousand years ago, his followers' faith wavered.

Faces of the Bull God

Without Mithras to guide the cult, separate cells survived or fell on their Pater's strength — and *many* of them fell. Mithras' Cainite enemies, sensing blood in the water, came down on any cells that revealed themselves in their search for guidance. The cells that did remain were forced wholly underground, with no way to contact each other. The London Mysteries were disparate, weak, and defenseless with Mithras seemingly gone forever. The cult of Mithras stood poised to fall.

Then, in recent nights, a niggling sensation. Not as powerful a presence in his followers' minds and veins as before, but rather an *echo* of Mithras, a voice that was both his and not his. The cells that survived, and the Patres that still believed, painstakingly pulled themselves back together. In London a new Mithraeum arose under guidance of Rose Abawi, a Toreador claiming to be the Voice of Mithras. Throughout the long nights without their god, several beliefs and practices yet remained.

Mithraist Ambition

The Cult of Mithras follows a many-headed religion, but above all, they are a cult of law. At the cult's height its rituals were formal, its structure rigid, its mysteries impenetrable to outsiders. Since Mithras' destruction the cult broke up, and with it the religion lost much of its power. Mithraism is strongest when centralized around an unliving god with firm edicts. Since his apparent return, the cells returning to the fold have found great purpose in returning to the old ways. They believe in a world where secrets are kept secret, where the truly powerful seize power and hold on to it until someone more potent can topple the leader, and where training should start young, so age and experience might convey wisdom.

Mithras is the model the cult strives to emulate. As a god, he is multi-faceted, symbolizing spheres from conflict to fertility, and justice to business. This appeals to the cult's varied followers, as while the Ventruer adherent might find attraction to the cult's wealth, a Brujah might find appeal in its dedication to war. Through this range of influence, Mithras belongs to his followers, but they all belong to him in turn.

Once a follower digs deeply into the Mithraic Mysteries, concepts such as diablerie become less and less of a taboo. As Mithras gave himself up to his diablerist in the 20th century — at least, that's how the Mithraists describe it going down — some of the cult's elders may give themselves over to promising up-and-comers. They may even try to create gestalt personalities, giving themselves up to create something close to divine. This horrifying ritual rarely works, but such self-sacrifice is a point of great pride to Mithras' cultists.

Unlike the Setites, who believe in unshackling oneself from mortal fetters, and the Bahari, who believe in exalting in vampiric power to serve their goddess, the Mithraists believe in enlightenment by way of control. Mithraists reinforce each other's Convictions, Touchstones, and therefore Humanity, not due to ethical concerns, but because doing so makes the cult stronger and brings a vampire closer to mastering their urges.

When not pursuing their vein of enlightenment, the Mithraists run a successful protection racket in multiple domains, utilizing their tight structure to extort and bodyguard those who pay into the temple. The temple itself acts both as a clubhouse — often along the lines of an exclusive gentlemen's club with old fashions and practices, such as telling stories, singing as a pianist or harpist plays, or even playing war games — as well as a site for cult rituals, inductions, and burial of torpid peers. The few Tremere who gain admittance to the cult (Mithras always despised the clan) draw parallels between their practices and those of Hermetics, Freemasons, and Rosicrucians, while the Mithraists boldly declare that if anyone set the mold the others followed, it was them.

Law and Chaos

If there are two diametrically opposed cults in this book, one might suspect the Church of Caine and Bahari make for the most contentious, but it's the Cult of Mithras and Church of Set most inclined to go to war. One could argue Mithras and Set are among the most "successful" of vampires, to have successfully masqueraded their identities behind the names of gods and cultivated religions

in their wake. However, the two have never been comfortable sharing success, this world, or potential followers. The two faiths have two completely opposed views of the world, which in extreme terms amounts to Mithras wanting a vampire world governed with tight laws, with power funneling up to him, while Set wants a vampire world with no laws, and power raging unbridled. The Mithraists may be the best fit for the Camarilla, with the cult's preference for hierarchy, Blood Bonds, and secrets, while the Setites veer toward the Anarchs with their love of unrestricted knowledge and influence.

Of course, neither vampire is open to speaking their views, which leads to this law vs. chaos divide being one perpetuated among their followers. It's not known if Mithras and Set ever encountered each other or discussed their opposing philosophies, but there's enough vehemence between their followers to make any city with a temple of Mithras and a temple of Set within its borders liable to assassination attempts, bombings, and other assorted strife.

Divine Mithras

The Mysteries teach that Mithras is a god, Embraced by Veddatha when he walked the world in corporeal form. While in the past the cult linked Mithras to the eponymous Roman God, advancing historical insight links Mithras to the Persian Mithra. Devout followers accept this without hesitation — Mithras and Mithra are one, even if the details of his worship changed from one ancient empire to the other. The cells silence any infidels who believe Mithras an ancient Persian impostor at best, or a much younger poser who handily connected the dots between the Persian and Roman deities in an effort to appear older than he is.

Mithras is a god of war, feasts, and fertility, and these attributes reflect in ceremonies dedicated to him. His followers engage in war on Mithras' enemies, the feasts hosted in his name are extravagant and lavish, and loyal followers are permitted to Embrace — the only act of fertility available to Kindred — as a reward for their service. These acts further the cult's secular goals, but above all they channel the divine. Proper worship prepares a Kindred's body, and the blackened remnants of their soul, to receive the true secret of Mithras — for he was once a companion of Sol Invictus, and still keeps the Sun's secrets.

Patres tell stories of Mithras acting during the day without any of the usual sluggishness, and even walking in sunlight. While these gifts are Mithras' by divine right, he lost them at the hands of Veddatha and spent long centuries regaining them. They say Mithras achieved Golconda, a state which allows him to reclaim his place at Sol Invictus' hand, and *this* is the final secret he will teach his acolytes. If so far none have actually attained this, it is surely a failing on their part — they *were* born mere mortals — rather than a refutation of the Patres' claims.

Religious texts dating back to ancient Persia further claim Mithra will save the world. While the Mysteries largely ignored this in favor of focusing on Mithras' fortitude and prowess, the story received traction in the midst of the Beckoning and the Second Inquisition. Neonates believe Mithras is a messiah who can save them from new calamities. Duskborn note their own resistance to sunlight, and believe Mithras can teach them to fully harness this power — though they don't know if this would make them a vampire god like Mithras himself, or let them return to a mortal state. The rumors of Mithras as savior even find purchase with ancillae who find themselves out of their depth with the upper echelons of vampires depleted. Had the cult better leadership, it could easily grow to rival any methuselah cult or even the Church of Caine.

An Underground Religion

The Mithraic Mysteries suffered persecution at the hands of Christianity, both as genuine religious warfare and as a way for Mithras' enemies to undermine him. The cells learned to hide early on, and do so well. Mithraea are underground, physically hidden from public sight. Ironically the oldest and most prominent Mithraeum in London has since been discovered by mortals and turned into a museum, but many more remain hidden. Their access points lie in elite clubs founded by merchants, illegal fighting clubs, occult shops, and even pubs.

The cult is not just physically hidden though. Recruitment and initiation are similarly obfuscated, with a cell's Pater and Heliodromi selecting new recruits and then sending the Corax — the lowest ranking members — to assume the risk of actually inviting them. Acolytes are taught a variety of secret codes, depending as always on the individual cell. Rich merchants might identify themselves by wearing a specific lapel flower, or a secret handshake. An anarchistic cell sends out instructions through the deep web or street graffiti. The Mysteries use some symbols near universally, such as the sun or bull, but only Mithras knew every code.

The London Uncertainty

Even as Mithras' fate languishes in uncertainty, with rumors claiming his soul was diablerized, his old vassals conspire to resurrect their god. Their work is shrouded in mystery, gears moving within gears, but one key component may be missing: faithfulness.

Gwenllian Arwyn long served as Pater in London's largest Mithraic cell, after the former leader — Roger de Camden — was believed destroyed. Her loyalty now turns from the ancient. Once an enemy of Rome, Arwyn was brought to heel by Mithras, and in his disappearance she sees a renewed chance for freedom and independence. If she takes the leap and betrays Mithras, the largest of the old cells finally falls. Arwyn might even scuttle the resurrection plot completely. The ancient has contingencies in place for that eventuality though, and he's already grooming a new Pater from Soho to replace her.

Celebrating the Bull God

Each cell has its own approach to worship, but some aspects are near universal.

Bull Running

Initiates wear down their enemies in a ritual called bull running, which can conclude in a single night or take years to complete. Sometimes, if acolytes seek appeasement in a symbolic ritual, this enemy is an actual bull. More often though, the Pater names a mortal, ghoul, or Kindred as the bull. Mithras himself chose the targets when he was active, but now faithful Patres make their own judgment as to which enemy of the cult must be removed, while disloyal Patres send acolytes after their personal enemies.

While the Pater chooses the target, the initiates themselves decide if an enemy must be killed, or can be defeated through other means such as social disgrace or financial ruin. Bull running is a favorite practice among Soho's mortal acolytes, who delight in bringing down the powers that be. Rose isn't fully focused in selecting targets, and often strays from bull running that serves Mithras in favor of protecting her community. So far, Mithras has allowed this in the name of good practice, but he intends to correct her upon his return.

Fertility Feasts

The traditional fertility feasts seemed poised for obsolescence, as few modern mortals are willing to conceive a child as part of a cult initiation. The feasts made a comeback as mortals became increasingly sexually liberated though, and "fertility feast" was reinterpreted as "sex

acts.” Some cells see a couple performing an act predictably named “mounting the bull.” Other cells engage in grand orgies where participants of all genders are welcome. Likewise, one cell might sate the room with a thick opium smoke, while another forbids drugs entirely as it believes all sensations are to be experienced without barriers. The purpose of all feasts, however, is to channel the divine fertility of Mithras.

If a Kindred acolyte is granted the right to Embrace, they do so during a fertility feast. Kindred fertility feasts rarely host any vampire-on-vampire sex, as the chances of someone biting and becoming Blood Bound to another acolyte instead of Mithras are too great. Instead the Kindred joins the mortals’ fertility feast, in whichever form it takes, and quietly steals their intended childe away for the Embrace during the feast’s climax.

The Blood Equinox

Mithraists fast in late Spring, then hold a grand feast on the summer solstice. While for mortals this might mean no alcohol, cigarettes, or other drugs, for Kindred it entails a literal fasting — feeding *just* enough to keep the Beast at bay. The purpose of the summer feast, for Kindred, is to inspire a divine frenzy which channels the warrior spirit of Mithras. Frenzying during the fasting period indicates a lack of self-control, while not frenzying during the Summer feast means the acolyte didn’t push themselves far enough in spring — both disgrace the acolyte and, in higher ranks, might lead to a demotion.

The meal during the feast can be anything from an animal — bulls are popular for obvious reasons — to mortals or even other vampires. Only Mithras may assign the right to Amaranth however, so the latter fell out of practice with his disappearance. The Soho cell, however, plans to hunt down one of Mithras’ Kindred enemies as their sacrifice.

The Bleeding

The Bleeding sees select Kindred bathed in the blood of their Pater and Mithras, denoting them as elite soldiers in Mithras’ army. Back in the old nights, Patres carefully guarded a chalice of Mithras’ vitae for this ritual. Now, however, most chalices are long empty or the Pater is too terrified of Mithras’ enemies to remove the holy vessel from its hiding place. Until Mithras’ return, this ritual remains in disuse.

Ascension through Loyalty, Duty, and Servitude

Compared to the Church of Set’s doctrine of elevation via freedom, the Mithraist view of obeying one’s elders, taking the Blood Bond to grow closer to Mithras, and sacrificing oneself to form a gestalt divine entity seems murderous, arcane, and a hell of a lot less glamorous. Despite this, many vampires are drawn to structure, codified goals and measurements of success, and the number of stories told by Patres of vampires reaching glorious levels of power through loyal servitude is addicting. Unlike the Setites, who abandon or conceal their failures, the Mithraists hate the stain of failure to the degree they’ll do whatever they can to rub it out and make it clean, including attaching a Mawla to a failed initiate until they make it. Giving up is not an option in the Cult of Mithras.

The cult’s loyalty, especially within respective cult cells, is almost fanatical. Mithraists have a genuine solidarity through shared rituals, secrets, and faith in Mithras as a figure to aspire to emulate. The Blood Bond also helps enforce this feeling, of course.

Seven Steps to the Sun

All Mithraic Mysteries follow the Seven Steps to the Sun, which sees the initiate rise closer to Mithras and by extension his solar patron. Most cells welcome mortals into the lower steps, then force them into becoming ghouls, or Embrace them as they prove their worth. On the flipside of this belief that vitae is a reward for worthy mortals, all Kindred initiates automatically started as Miles in the olden nights. The modern era saw a rush of Kindred joining the cult for secular reasons though, most seeking to be close to Mithras as Prince of London, rather than out of sincere religious belief. To combat this, many modern cells “ease” a Kindred into the cult by starting them as Corax. The Soho cell specifically did this with its Duskborn, not as a mark against them but rather to hail their potential as a rare Kindred who could walk *all* seven steps. Hyde, and Rose’s lover and ghoul Noelle, both act as Soho’s Heliodromi, while Rose serves as the cell’s Pater.

Kindred initiates take an oath not to Embrace, lest they dilute their devotion to Mithras, or spend their time teaching when they should be learning. The cult does not begrudge them existing childer, and encourages the initiate sire to recruit these too.

The First Step: Corax, the Raven

The raven serves as messenger in the Roman legend of Mithras. The Corax initiate is both the recipient of a message — the invitation to join the cult — and bearer of a message when they’re sent to invite someone else.

The Raven associates with the element of air, as does the Pater to bring the Seven Steps full circle. Air is the element of mental clarity, and of cutting bonds as the initiate foregoes old baggage upon entering the cult. This is both liberating, as a Corax might finally flee their abusive family, and, as cults are wont to do, isolating.

A Kindred joining the cult in any rank must bow to the divinity of Mithras’ blood. In practical terms this means obeying Mithras, descendants of his bloodline, and the Patres who carry his vitae.

The Corax wears a raven mask during ceremonies.

The Second Step: Nymphus, the Bride

The bride(groom) has proven their worth and enters a spiritual bond with Mithras in a binding ceremony. The Pater leads this ceremony, and a relic takes the place of the absent Mithras. The Nymphus’ task is to learn all they can about Mithras’ enemies, and they often serve as spies.

The Nymphus’ element is water, symbolizing a coming together as the initiate becomes a drop in Mithras’ ocean. Nymphi pledge their voices to Mithras by singing or rapping during their initiation, and swear to tell no secrets of the cult.

The Nymphus wears a veil, which covers both their head and body, during ceremonies.

The Third Step: Miles, the Soldier

Mithras is a war god, and his chosen are soldiers. Where once the methuselah scorned anyone who did not partake in actual physical combat, passing centuries have led the broken cult to reconsider — there is value in fighting investment bankers, politicians, and socialites who get in Mithras’ way. With Mithras seemingly returned, however, even Kindred armed with briefcases may be expected to pick up the sword or javelin.

Once a Kindred achieves initiation as Miles, they must preserve their purity by making every kill a tribute to Mithras — this absolves them of the moral implications of the kill, and bestows Mithras’ blessing on them. However, they must not kill if the target would make an unworthy sacrifice.

For mortal initiates this stage is represented by the element of fire, and they are branded with the mark of Mithras. While this used to be an actual fire brand, modern cells opt for a tattoo bearing Mithras' symbol. For Kindred, however, earth represents the soldier's element and they are reburied before emerging as a Miles.

The Miles wears a wreath, which represents both Mithras' blessing and dominion over them.

The Fourth Step: Leo, The Lion

The Leo represents purity. They must never act out of individual interest and, in recognition of how confusing the world can be, have most of their actions dictated by a Pater. Leones serve largely the same task as Milites — to combat Mithras' enemies — but are sent after larger and more dangerous targets. They also serve as messengers to Mithras' Kindred allies, often traveling from London to other domains with all the dangers this entails.

A Kindred reaching Leo initiation must pray to the sun nightly, though they may choose whether to pray at sunrise or sunset. They must also recognize fire as purity. These initiates build resolve by fire leaping and, in extreme cases, branding rituals. Their self-control and mental acumen becomes just as important as their physical prowess, and a Leo's calm and clarity gives them a trustworthy air.

The Leo wears a lion mask during ceremonies to show their strength and ferocity.

The Fifth Step: Perses, the Persian

The Perses serves Mithras in his aspect as fertility god. They are the keepers of Mithras' fruits, often represented symbolically by honey, bull semen, or the treated vitae of cult elders. Mortal initiates are tasked with growing Mithras' influence in the city, whether that means starting a new cell, financing a movie hailing the deeds of Mithra, or doctoring a new drug that uses Mithras' vitae to Blood Bond mortals en masse.

The Persae see a division between Kindred initiates. Some are chosen for the Blooding ritual, which marks them as elite soldiers for Mithras. These are given an item ostensibly belonging to Mithras to keep. The item is usually symbolic and false, but Persae who prove themselves dedicated and resourceful find their fake relic replaced by one of actual value.

Kindred not chosen for the Blooding are finally granted permission to Embrace, so long as they immediately bring their new childe into the cult. No one but Mithras, and any Patres he wishes to tell, knows what criteria determine the difference between the two classes of Persae.

When Mithras still ruled London, Persae killed by his command. The cult provided them with anything they needed to leave the murder site unscathed, from alibis to secret identities. If that failed, Mithras would still pardon them — though he preferred to maintain plausible deniability.

The Perses carries a sickle during ceremonies to signal their task of growing Mithras' crops.

The Sixth Step: Heliodromus, the Courier of the Sun

The Heliodromus relays Mithras' commands — often as given by the Pater — to the rest of the cult. They suggest new initiates, determine who is worthy to rise in the Seven Steps, and help the Pater select enemies for bull running. As the Patres are all Kindred, the few mortal — though usually ghouléd — Heliodromi also serve as the daytime face of a cell.

The Heliodromus is also responsible for preparing the summer feast, whether they're a mortal bringing fruits and the occasional sacrificial bull, or a Kindred bringing mortals and the occasional sacrificial Kindred. All Heliodromi, Kindred and mortal alike, are Blood Bonded

to Mithras, and what little of the methuselah's vitae the Pater still has goes to bonding new Heliodromi.

The Heliodromus carries a whip during ceremonies, as they are an extension of Mithras' commands.

The Seventh Step: Pater, the Father/Mother

The Pater oversees a Mystery cell as deputy of Mithras. All Patres are Cainite, and worthy mortal Heliodromi are Embraced upon their elevation to Pater. The Pater seeks out Mithras' enemies, mortal and Kindred alike, and sets the rest of the cult upon them. They also choose areas ripe for the Mysteries to expand, whether kine slowly return to ancient pagan religions, or the Beckoning leaves Kindred searching for spiritual guidance.

They also guard the vitae of Mithras, given to them in a vessel to use in Bleeding rituals. With Mithras absent so long now, unscrupulous Patres filled the vessel with their own vitae to Blood Bond acolytes. Meanwhile loyal Patres fiercely guard the last droplets they have. Many Patres willingly met the sun when they could no longer feel Mithras' presence following his diablerie.

Some Patres take charge of entire nations, while others claim only cities. Some lead cults directly, and others stand alone following the religion's fractures. Mithras expects Patres to become Princes if the standing Prince does not abide by Mithraic worship.

The Pater bears a ring and a staff to represent their authority over the cell and fealty to Mithras.

Cult of Mithras Convictions

The Cult of Mithras' adherents firmly believe in the benefit of order and aspire to control. Mithras is one of the grandest examples of a vampire who was able to straddle the line between god, vampire, and emperor, and with his dominion over Britain for a millennium, he exercised influence on a scale rarely paralleled within Cainite society. Many Mithraists, in emulation of their god, attempt to uphold the same Convictions as Mithras:

- **Always have a say in the governing of your domain**

The Mithraists may operate openly or in secret within Kindred society, but they are compelled to influence the domain government in some meaningful way.

- **Never abandon your allies**

Brotherhood and sisterhood within the cult is important. You are never alone when you are a member of the cult.

- **Accept no disparagement of Mithras' name**

Mithras is your god, and through his will you fall under his protection and prosper from his benevolence. If you hear of anyone insulting Mithras, you must draw their blood.

- **Always put the weak in their place**

Weakness does not deserve a place in Mithras' church. If you find a cultist to be weak, beat them, hector them, and ridicule them until they improve. If you find a weakling outside the cult, make sure they're aware of their lowly state so they might better themselves.

- **Protect the pregnant / newborns / fresh Embraces**

Mithras is a fertility god, and his cult advocates the protection of the young and pregnant. This is not through altruism; Mithraists should protect and cultivate the herd.

- **Immediately punish chaos and misrule among your servants**

The cult can only function if the hierarchy remains in place. Accept no rebellion among your servants. Punish it severely.

Mithraeum: Edinburgh

An old faith in an old city, the Cult of Mithras is nevertheless new to the domain of Edinburgh. Long under the control of Brujah and Toreador interests, nominally independent from the reach of Mithras' London even when he was declared Prince of the British Isles, Edinburgh has finally fallen to the Mithraists following the cult's core migrating north from London. Shortly before the Second Inquisitions systematic assault on London's Kindred, Mithras found a way to communicate with his Seneschal and cult Pater, Roger de Camden, and commanded him to take the cult's elite with him to Edinburgh and set up a new regime in the Scottish capital. Never one to refuse his god, de Camden did just that. Kindred the world over are hearing the tale of how London's Kindred fell to the Second Inquisition, but none are speaking about how Edinburgh's Kindred fell to the Mithraists.

The invasion of Edinburgh was swift and bloody. De Camden and his cohort didn't take the time to negotiate their presence or opt to exist in exile. The cult had long kept Edinburgh — and a couple of other potential domains — as possible cities for retreat. They observed every Edinburgh vampire, keeping mental notes on practices, habits, and havens, so when it came time to take the city they could do so with minimal resistance. While some of Edinburgh's Kindred survived the onslaught, no vampires of title escaped with their unives.

Edinburgh is a display of what the Cult of Mithras can do when challenged. The cult is an army waiting for orders, and whenever they receive them, they strike with little reservation. Now, the Cult shows what a traditional Mithraic domain is all about: competence, reverence, war, and fertility. Under de Camden's command, the Mithraists Embrace fledglings into their ranks, showing them that true power lies in the hands of vampires willing to fight for their existences. De Camden declared the city Camarilla — though the Justicars suspect this was to prevent the sect's reprisals — and himself Prince, as there was no obvious replacement for the fallen one. The city has swiftly changed from one where old vampires pursue petty aspirations toward wealth and influence, into one where Mithras' might deserves regular worship and sacrifice, so you too might benefit from his hierarchy and spread your reach to other domains. In many ways, it's shaping up to be the perfect Camarilla city, as the fingers of vampires who callously manipulated mortal interests were severed and replaced with the grip of those trained, practiced, and capable of doing so with the same discretion Mithras used for a millennium across an entire country.

For now, the Cult cements its rule over Edinburgh. De Camden isn't interested in murdering every non-Mithraic vampire in the city, as every court needs peasants, yeomen, and traders. He and the rest of the former London core, numbering around a dozen vampires with firm influence over different mortal sectors, including police, telecommunications, and city transit and drainage, want to show other Kindred how service to Mithras can enrich existence through duty and purpose. They want others to see how being warriors in a surviving, millennia-old army is glorious. The Mithraeum de Camden's cult have constructed beneath Greyfriars Kirk — a church in the city center — is open to all who would partake of the cult's vitae in search of enlightenment, with the promise that as the cult rejuvenates and spreads, these new converts will find positions of power in other domains.

Perspectives

Queen Anne Bowesley: *Usurper. Cannibal. Coward. She got what she deserved. The Unconquered Sun's throne must remain empty until his return.*

Hecata: *In one hand I hold a coin, in the other a blade that stabs into my flesh. The Hecata have served this cult so loyally in times past, but just as soon bite the hand that feeds them. I know we will not admit any Kindred with the name "Giovanni" in these nights.*

Clan Tremere: *Mithras has long hated the Tremere, almost as much as he despised the Church of Set. We believe they are intent on destroying our cult once and for all, to rid themselves of a potential enemy. Maybe what we need to unify us is a good, active enemy.*

Clan Ventrue: *Are they truly the Clan of Kings? Certainly, they seem to spawn more leaders than any other clan. And yet, these modern nights have seen them fall into a horrible trend of white-collar rulership. Long gone are the nights where a Ventrue deserved the title of "god," excepting Mithras, of course.*

The Church of Set: *Our greatest enemies. Fire to our water, chaos to our order. Do not suffer a temple to this god to exist in a city where you hold dominion.*

New Powers

The Mithraists possess some unusual powers connected to their fallen god-emperor, in some cases passed down through Mithras' vitae, in others taught by vampires of higher rank within the cult.

Dominate

Level 2

Slavish Devotion

Amalgam: Presence 1

Those already under the mental dominion of the vampire find their minds strengthened against interference from other Kindred.

Cost: No additional cost

System: Any attempt to mentally coerce a character already under the influence of the vampire's use of Dominate has its Difficulty increased by two. The Difficulty cannot rise above 7.

Duration: Passive

Level 4

Ancestral Dominion

Prerequisite: Mesmerize

Amalgam: Blood Sorcery 3

Vampires of great age and potency find it possible to exert their will via the Blood, without the traditional need for eye contact and verbal communication with their target. This power enables a Kindred to compel a descendant to take an action on their behalf, even if it's one the target would normally be opposed to. Vampires instinctively know an ancestor is manipulating them, when subject to this power.

Cost: One Rouse Check

Dice Pools: Manipulation + Dominate vs. Intelligence + Resolve

System: On a successful roll of Manipulation + Dominate, the victim acts to fulfill the dominating vampire's request, providing it doesn't entail harming themselves. For every generation beyond the first one separating the user of this power from their target, the resisting vampire gains an additional die to their roll. For example, when a Fifth Generation vampire attempts to use this power on a Seventh Generation descendant, the Seventh Generation descendant gains one die in defense. An Eighth Generation descendant would gain two dice. If the number of dice in the resisting vampire's pool would exceed ten, the power automatically fails. On a total failure, the vampire cannot use this power on that target for the remainder of the chapter.

Duration: Whichever comes sooner: until the compelled action is taken or the scene ends.

Fortitude

Level 4

Shatter

Requirement: Toughness

When a fist hits concrete, it's usually the fist that breaks. So it is with this power, where a vampire turns a blow against the one delivering it. This power has been known to break weapons and shatter bones.

Cost: One Rouse Check

Dice Pools: Stamina + Fortitude vs. Stamina (+ Fortitude, if the attacker is attacking unarmed and possesses Fortitude)

System: With this power active, the next unarmed strike made against the vampire (whether a punch, kick, bite, or any other form of attack without a separate weapon) results in the vampire's player making a Stamina + Fortitude roll against the attacker. Each success nullifies a point of damage from the attack and turns it into a point of Superficial Health damage against the attacker. If the attacker uses a melee weapon, the player still makes a roll to see how many points were nullified, and if the successes match or exceed the total damage dealt before nullifications, the weapon breaks (unless it's magical, holy, or breakage is otherwise improbable). On a critical win, the attacker gains a broken limb or joint (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 303) if they attacked unarmed, or breaks even a magical weapon used in the attack.

Duration: One scene (or until hit)