



Guide to the Sabbat

Justin Achilli

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Shadows of the Elders War

The Sabbat are depraved monsters, reveling in their Damned state and herding the kine about them like cattle. Or so it would seem to the uninitiated. In truth, the Sabbat wage a secret war on the elders, struggling night after night to free themselves from the tyranny of the dread Antediluvians and the Jyhad itself. But are their tactics effective or simply horrific?

Cast by the Fires of the Packs

The Guide to the Sabbat examines the Sabbat exhaustively from the antitribu, or "anti-clans" that populate its ranks to the terrifying Disciplines they use to their methods of waging war on the Camarilla and Antediluvians alike. This book also explores the progress the Sabbat have made in their war effort, chronicling their inexorable climb over the East Coast of the United States and their usurped territories in the Old World.

The Guide to the Sabbat includes:

- * An updated, definitive look at the sect and its role in the Final Nights;
- * New bloodlines, Disciplines and layers of intrigue in the Jyhad
- * The secrets and schemes of the most reviled sect of vampires ever to walk the night.

Guide to the Sabbat Details

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From Reader Review Guide to the Sabbat for online ebook

Timothy McNeil says

While I found much of the material in the Guide to the Sabbat to be both well written and capable of expanding the World of Darkness, the mechanics introduced tended to kill what Vampire: The Masquerade was about. The Sabbat "paths" (effectively philosophies) neutered the humanity (or shadow thereof) in the vampires and led to too many players seeking to play bloodthirsty monsters without any form of restraint. I cannot imagine that anyone is looking to read it these days, but I would recommend the Guide to the Camarilla more strongly than this book.

Christopher Johnson says

Before I read this book, the Sabbat just seemed like a bunch of crazy, stupid, violent vampires. I wasn't really very interested in reading about them further. However, after reading this book, my opinion on them changed significantly.

This book fleshes out a group of vampiric zealots in way that makes them have their own rules, priorities, and virtues, though it's also balanced out by very violent tendencies and a lack of common sense. It also does a good job of painting a portrait of how they view the Camarilla, who are the "good guys by default" of the setting, though they have a ton of dirty laundry themselves.

Covered here are the interesting Antitribu, who are vampires who turned their backs on their clan's Camarilla membership and joined the Sabbat. There are also new bloodlines such as the Blood Brothers, Panders, and Harbingers of Skulls.

Bradley says

The equivalent of the mainstream Camarilla Vampires, with a decidedly antagonistic ideological difference. Freedom, Freedom, let Freedom Ring!

This rpg book really opened my eyes to what was originally the antagonists in the previous vampire games I'd played. Things definitely aren't as they seem, and the exploration of what makes anyone human is the most engrossing part of the gameplay. It's not about blood and guts, although there is plenty of that. It's more about exploration and viewpoint, about how pain and loss can twist a psyche.

If you're going to lose your humanity, and fall in with others who have gone so far as to forsake it altogether, then what are you? What is left, or more importantly, how much is there to gain? Fascinating core book supplement, and ought to be required reading for any serious gamer.

At least for WoD, that is. :)

Kira says

same problems with this as the camarilla one but goddamn the sabbat are cool as shit. plenty of really good ideas and great lore on the sabbat and playing a pack.

Brian says

One thing about living in Santa Carla I never could stomach; all the damn vampires.
-Grandpa, *Lost Boys*

It's relatively easy to look at the Sabbat as the villains of Vampire, and earlier in the line that's basically what they were. There's a reason that Obtenebration allows multiple actions at level three and Vicissitude is extremely vague on what you can do with it, because the Lasombra and the Tzimisce were originally the terrifying opponents of the main Camarilla vampires with mysterious and frightening powers. And then they became playable, and then the Sabbat needed some reason for being as over-the-top as it is, and so it was refined through the line until we got *Guide to the Sabbat*. And overall, it does a pretty good job.

I think the main element that makes the Sabbat work is that it's effectively a religious organization. A lot of its iconography and practices are stolen from the Catholic Church--the Watsonian explanation is probably because of the Lasombra, who had a lot of ties to the Church during the medieval period--and it views its mission as a holy war against the Antediluvians and the tyranny of the elders, as represented by the Camarilla. Add in an axiomatic belief that vampires are a separate and superior class of being from mortals fueled by the statement that Caine became a vampire through pride and you have a recipe for the excessive behavior that the Sabbat is known for. Driving up the crime rate in their cities to hide their feeding habits in the absence of extensive mortal influence? Embracing dozens of bystanders and hurling them into battle as shock troops? Tracking down and murdering any Camarilla elder they find? Open war in the streets? This is a crusade, son. Do you want to win or not?

Something else that's actually useful is the way the Sabbat forms packs. Whereas the basic unit of the Camarilla is the city, with the vampires in it mostly autonomous unless they're driven together by alliances of convenience or because you need some reason for the PCs to hang out together, the basic unit of the Sabbat is the pack. The Vinculum provides an in-game reason for why a bunch of solitary predators are spending all their time together and the theoretical-if-not-actual equality preached by the Sword of Caine means that the PCs are masters of their own fates and aren't walking into the bottom floor of an existing power structure. Or at least, they might think they aren't. The storyteller can pull the wool back gently.

On that note, there's a good point made about how the Camarilla and Sabbat elders aren't actually that different in behavior even if they are different in rhetoric. The Sabbat elders are less interested in pretending to be human, but both of them tend to settle down in one area, both of them manipulate their descendants and other new vampires into doing their dirty work for them, both understand the necessity of vampires hiding among mortals, and both play long-term games against both their allies and their enemies. The Sabbat elders talk a good game about equality and the need to fight against the manipulation of the Antediluvians, but when push comes to shove no Lasombra who was embraced in *Ancien Régime* France is going to grab a chainsaw and go roaring into a Camarilla city on a motorcycle during a siege. They have people for that.

Speaking of, the most interesting bit for me was the section on playing the Sabbat at the end, especially on

themes in a Sabbat game and the behavior of the Sabbat during a siege. There's a good bit of text devoted to the Sabbat's depravity and how to portray it during the game--whether to explicitly enumerate their crimes or to fade to black and gloss over the worst acts, depending on the comfort level of the players and the mood of the table. Sometimes you just want to ride motorcycles and throw molotovs at the Cammy scum, after all, and not worry about the impact of all those burned businesses on the neighborhood's inhabitants. The siege section drew a good contrast between the Sabbat, who want to force physical conflicts and tactically break the Masquerade to force the Camarilla to waste their resources, and the Camarilla, who tend to fall back on economic warfare when on the offense and on heavy usage of Dominated or ghouléd mortal resources when on the defense.

I also liked the Sabbat tactic of doing a drive-by on a Camarilla elder and then, after they "collapse from their wounds" to protect the Masquerade, driving up in a stolen ambulance, getting out wearing stolen EMT uniforms, loading the elder in for transport, and then diablerizing them. That's genius.

The lack of parity in Disciplines continues. Animalism 9 still causes one target's Beast to attack them from within, whereas Obtenebration 9 pours out the power of the Abyss onto everyone in a 50-foot radius and draws those who die into the darkness when it vanishes, whereas Dementation 9 is basically a psychic nuclear bomb, capable of driving everyone within a major metropolitan area into a homicidal rage. I don't like giving a pass to mechanical problems even if they were never White Wolf's strong point, but I do have to admit that an imbalance among Methuselah-level powers is not going to be a problem in the vast majority of Vampire games out there.

The biggest problem I had with the Guide to the Camarilla is that it didn't really do much to provide a different mode of play, but that's not a problem here. *Guide to the Sabbat* has plenty of reasons for why a Sabbat game can be fun and doesn't have to involve the kind of roleplaying that groups like BADD complain about. When I first read *Vampire* I wondered what the point of playing the Sabbat even was but reading this book convinced me that it would be worthwhile, and my impression hasn't changed. One of the better Vampire Revised supplements.

Ian James says

again part of my WOD kick
