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Ventrue: Lords Over The Damned (Vampire The Requiem)



Synopsis

The first of the 5 clan books for requiem

Book Information

Paperback: 128 pages

Publisher: White Wolf Publishing (January 23, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1588462730

ISBN-13: 978-1588462732

Product Dimensions: 0.5 x 8.2 x 10.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (8 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

I find myself wondering where I should start the review for this product. Do I talk about the amazing art and the sudden change to color or do I discuss the mechanics or lack thereof? The book has great qualities but they seem to be obfuscated by an alarming number of bad qualities. The art is simply beautiful. Many of the pictures really bring to life the imagery of what is being discussed in the text. I found myself looking at the art like it was a coffee table book. Like older white-wolf clan books, nothing in this book is in stone. The book is masterfully put together to create an illusion that the book you are reading is a compilation of a vampires years of investigative work. If this is the design that white -wolf was going for, it worked. The book does feel like a collection of works from a historian. Even the art and page layout gives the impression of a work in progress. The writing is top notch and completely consistent throughout the paperback tome (an odd change from the normal hardcover) however the story seems to suffer from a major problem; it's unnecessarily contradictory to other white-wolf products and is in many places simply pedantic. Rather than having a clear cut story or an easy to understand account, we are given a rather boring ancient text that suggests that divine forces did not like a king and cursed him. After you get through page after page of this, you begin to wonder why you just did not make up your own history. If you have read Requiem for Rome, you most likely had questions on the Julii. After all they looked just like the Ventrue, minus the flaw.

Are they Ventrue? Are they a new clan? Where did they come from?

I'm part of a strange sub-culture that reads these things but doesn't actually participate in the games (simply have no time). I also read a lot of the old V:tM books and the core material for V:tR, so despite being a non-gamer I'm not a noobcake. This book is eminently readable and highly enjoyable for non-gamers. The reason is it's not about the mechanics. As an engineer I appreciate the mechanics, so I read those too, but here are the real enjoyable aspects:- The stories. These are of course the meat of the book, and they're dark, with the barest of light peaking out often enough to avoid predictability. You see Ventrue cast not just as the stereotypical CEO, but in roles like king of a trailer park. Very creative- The art. Every page or two has a really interesting piece of vampire artwork. It's tough to find "monster art" that isn't cheesy or somehow silly. These guys have done a great job, and the artwork really complements the writing, particularly when you look back and forth between the portrait and the story and correlate the two; it really brings the story to the next level- The production. High quality. Between that and the artwork, that's where your money is going (as opposed to 8 clams for a simple paperback) I'd like to point out for any other horror fiction fans that due to this book's size (8.5 x 11 inches, think a full piece of printer paper in the US), the page count is a little deceiving. It's tough to justify paying a lot for a novel of 120 pages, but these are bigger pages, so it's probably closer to 200+ (not all of it is writing of course). Also, if you're not planning on playing the RPG, you don't really need to read anything before this, though obviously the core Requiem book would help.

The White Wolf writers are fond of pointing out the characters haven't read the books. With this, that is no longer true. Apart from the appendix, this is written completely in-game. There is no prologue fiction. There is a brief introduction from the in-game author to the mysterious person who decided to compile it. The first chapter is on the origins of the Ventrue. On the one hand, it gives essentially one, clear explanation for the origin of the Clan, how it differed and separated from Rome and the Julii, and the origin of the name Ventrue. On the other hand, the origin is firmly encased in human mythology. It is an explanation the Ventrue can and do believe, teach their neonates, and use to explain various aspects of the Clan. But gamers that wanted an explanation that can stand without mythology don't get one. The second, much larger chapter is about the culture of the Clan, from a wide variety of angles and without exactly clear and concise descriptions. It is a collection of stories from Ventrue about the Clan, interviews with Ventrue that do, do not and really do not fit the stereotype of Lords. There are a couple of mad conspiracy theories and a contribution from a

would-be saboteur dealing with Ventrue that drag the nickname Lord in the mud. There is an excellent essay on how the Ventrue manipulate the mortal world. The arrogance and madness of the Clan really comes through. They claim to have stood behind every successful ruler in Europe. It also explains Malkavia, which takes the idea of a sub-group of Ventrue that are mad but still operational and gives it a unique spin. The technical stuff is covered in a short appendix. It introduces a new Bloodline and provides rules for using the Discipline that Malkavia allows access to.

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