

The Templar Code FOR **DUMMIES®**

**by Christopher Hodapp
and Alice Von Kannon**



Wiley Publishing, Inc.

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Code***
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DUMMIES®

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and Alice Von Kannon**



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Dedication

For Steven L. Harris (1954–1999)

“He was a truly perfect, gentle knight.”

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Introduction

You can tell a lunatic by the liberties he takes with common sense, by his flashes of inspiration, and by the fact that sooner or later he brings up the Templars.

—Umberto Eco

Last October, the two of us received some happy news; after a long process of outlining, cutting, pasting, re-outlining, meetings, major changes, and more meetings, our editor called to say that victory was ours. This somewhat unusual project had made it into the list for 2007; in fact, it would be out by June. We would be doing a project we cared about a great deal, *The Templar Code For Dummies*. Any author will tell you that this is always a thrill. But the next piece of news was a little unnerving. The official launch date for the project had been set for the following Friday, which happened to be Friday, October 13th.

For one brief moment, a chill of premonition slithered down our backs, like ice cubes at a frat-house party. After a few seconds of silence, we did what many people do when they have an uncomfortable moment of premonition; we both burst out laughing. It did help the shiver.

The chill we felt wasn't because we're particularly superstitious, at least, no more so than anyone else. It was something far more disconcerting than mere superstition. Because for anyone who knows the lore of the Knights Templar, Friday, October 13, 1307, was the date that the Order was rounded up all across France in one single day, by order of the French king, Phillip IV, to be indicted on various charges of heresy. In fact, this is sort of superstition in reverse, because the reason that Friday the 13th is considered an unlucky day, so the legend goes, is *because* of what happened to the Templars on that fateful date, seven centuries ago. Whistling in the cemetery, we decided it was the perfect launch date for the book.

That particular Friday was the 699th anniversary. By the time this book is on the shelves, it will be precisely 700 years since the Knights Templar were arrested, and seven centuries haven't dimmed the fascination people have with this mysterious, courageous, and singular brotherhood of knights.

What is known for certain about the Knights Templar is a story with a larger-than-life aura of myth, that finished in an abrupt and almost unbelievable tragedy. Founded in A.D. 1119 by nine crusading French knights, the Poor Fellow Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon (known as the Knights Templar) shot across the political landscape like a meteor, vaulting from

obscure guardians of pilgrims in Jerusalem to the most powerful and influential force of their age. They were fierce warriors, devout monks, and international bankers. Within half a century of their birth, they were men who walked with kings and advised popes, brokered treaties, and built castles and preceptories on a massive scale. Then, even more inexplicable than their rise came their fall, a harrowing plunge into arrest, trial, flight, and execution that shocked the medieval world, both East and West. The charges against them of heresy and sodomy were equally shocking, and are still debated by historians today.

In fact, theories about the Templars are hotter today than ever before. Historians, researchers, wishful thinkers, and dreamers have claimed that the Templars lived on after their destruction, placing them in Portugal, Scotland, Switzerland, Nova Scotia, and Massachusetts. They are alleged to have sailed pirate ships, founded banking dynasties, and given birth to the Freemasons. Their explorations in the Holy Land have led to speculation that they found the Ark of the Covenant, the True Cross of Christ's crucifixion, the head of John the Baptist, the Spear of Destiny, and the Holy Grail. They have alternately been described as pious guardians of the most sacred secrets of Christianity, and as heretical practitioners of occult and satanic rites. And more than one suicidal doomsday cult has claimed to be descended from the Templars, living in wait for the Intergalactic Grand Master's mother ship to enter low-earth orbit and beam them aboard.

In 2003, an author named Dan Brown published a modest sequel to a moderately successful mystery entitled *Angels & Demons*. Little did he know that he was handling fissionable material. *The Da Vinci Code* has sold more than 60 million copies in 44 languages, and is the eighth most popular book ever published. In it, Brown told the tale of the "true" nature of the legend of the Holy Grail. If you're one of the seven or eight people left on earth who haven't read it yet, allow us to spoil the ending for you. According to Brown, the Grail was not some humble cup used by Christ at the Last Supper, or even a golden, jewel-encrusted chalice. It was the bloodline of Jesus, a child born to Mary Magdalene from a union with Christ. The book tells of a mysterious organization that was created to keep the secret, and to protect the offspring of Christ and Mary down through the centuries. And that group, through a succession of plot twists, was — you guessed it — the Knights Templar.

Dan Brown undoubtedly set out to tell a good story, but he couldn't possibly have known that he was writing what would become a worldwide phenomenon. How could he have known that his book would cause millions of people to reexamine their own beliefs and those of their neighbors, inspiring thousands to make pilgrimages to the sites of his book in France and the United Kingdom, in search of a sign or symbol that would reveal some hidden truth to them? He might not have intended it, but, whether by chance or fate, that's exactly what happened. And curiously, in spite of what many alarmed religious leaders feared, the result has been a greater interest in the origins of Christianity, and a whole world of readers whose faith seems to have been strengthened by what they've found.

Brown, like so many others, looked at the Knights Templar and was intrigued by what he saw. The unanswered mysteries and outlandish legends surrounding them didn't just spring out of nowhere, or even out of Mr. Brown's fertile imagination. The Templars have been a pillar of Western mythology for centuries, and there's no end in sight for the world's obsession with the Poor Fellow Soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon.

About This Book

We wrote this book to assemble the vast, outlandish, popular, and confusing lore of the Knights Templar into one convenient volume. The first four parts of the book strictly tell the Templar story; their rise, their fall, and the forces at work in the world that gave them birth. If you first encountered this stuff in *The Da Vinci Code*, you can go straight to Part V; that entire part is devoted to the questions raised by the novel, including the bloodline of Christ, the "sacred feminine," and the mysterious relationship between those concepts and the Templars. It's a unique approach, but it should give you a great overview of the Templars and their world, as well as a definite leg up at the office holiday party when somebody wants to talk your arm off about the Black Madonna Cult or the Council of Nicaea.

We're both writers, both history fanatics, and both obsessed with the Knights Templar. While other people may loll about, wasting their vacations broiling on the beaches of Cancun or falling down the ski slopes of Aspen, history cranks like us spend our free time taking off every year for the backcountry of France and Britain, Portugal, and Turkey, up at dawn every day to strap on a backpack and go sweat our way up another ruin. *We* know how to have a good time. Who wants to spend a vacation lolling on the beach with an umbrella drink in his hand?

We're hoping that in this book, all that sweat paid off. Together we've stood in the prison cell of Jacques de Molay, last Grand Master of the Knights Templar, reading the messages scratched onto the walls by the imprisoned knights. And together we've stood on the Île de la Cité in the shadow of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, where de Molay was burned at the stake for the amusement of the crowd that was, to the vindictive king's disappointment, sullen rather than boisterous.

Generally, people in the 14th century enjoyed a good burning or hanging or quartering, but no one was indulging in any satisfaction on that tragic day. The Templars had been the most formidable knights of Europe, brave warriors as well as monks sworn to a life of poverty, chastity, and obedience. No one gave up more for the sake of his faith than a Knight Templar.

Consequently, the Poor Knights, as they were sometimes called, had the respect of the entire Christian world, and even many in the enemy camp. When the brilliant soldier Saladin won back the Holy Land from the Crusaders, the prisoners he took who were to be beheaded at once, without question of ransom or the slave market, were the Templars. As far as Saladin was concerned, they were just too dangerous an enemy to be left alive. And never once did a Templar knight beg for his life. After the disastrous Battle of Hattin, they queued up in their hundreds to be slaughtered, each calmly waiting his turn.

Everyone knew the legends of their almost foolhardy courage, and everyone knew what the Templars had sacrificed in order to secure the Holy Land for the sake of Christian pilgrims, so that the souls of the men and women on this journey could be saved from purgatory or damnation. In fact, one particular biblical quote from John 15:13 was something of an unofficial motto for the Templars: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” The general consensus of the somber crowd on that bleak execution day in 1314 has been the general consensus of most people ever since: that the Templars were getting a very raw deal, whether they had fallen victim to some Eastern heresy or not.

For us, ever since that prophetic launch date, we’ve had the feeling that the martyred de Molay could be looking over our shoulders, which made for two very nervous writers. More than anything else, we wanted to get it right. We think we have.

Conventions Used in This Book

We don’t use many conventions in this book — why use conventions when you’re talking about such an unconventional group of guys? — but we do use a couple:

- ✓ Any time we define a term for you, we throw some *italic* on it and put the definition nearby, often in parentheses. (We sometimes use italic for emphasis, too, because our editor won’t let us type in all caps — something about sounding hostile.)
- ✓ Web addresses and e-mail addresses appear in a funky font called `monofont`. It’s there so you can easily tell what to type in your Web browser and what to leave out.

When this book was printed, some Web addresses may have needed to break across two lines of text. If that happened, rest assured that we haven’t put in any extra characters (such as hyphens) to indicate the break. So, when using one of these Web addresses, just type in exactly what you see in this book, pretending as though the line break doesn’t exist. And if you *do* see a hyphen in a Web address, that means you’re supposed to type it.

What You're Not to Read

You don't actually *have* to read *anything* in this book — we won't test you on it, we swear — but we know you won't be able to resist turning the page. When you do, you can safely skip anything marked by the Technical Stuff icon (see “Icons Used in This Book” for more on that). You can also skip sidebars (text in gray boxes), because they're not critical to your understanding of the subject at hand.

Foolish Assumptions

The Templar Code For Dummies was written for a lot of different people, but we make a few superficial assumptions about you, without even knowing you or asking your relatives about your most embarrassing moments. With luck, one of these descriptions fits you like a chain-mail gauntlet:

- ✔ **You know nothing about the Templars.** If so, the whole story is here: the Crusades from which they emerged; the Christian society back home in Europe and the strange combination of religions and cultures they were surrounded by in the Holy Land; their skyrocketing fame among the movers and shakers in Rome and the capitals of the world; their lavish wealth and their creation of the banking business; their mysterious reputation as the “Grail knights”; and their abrupt fall and destruction.
- ✔ **You know a little about the Templars.** If you've already studied some about the knights, this book will put it all in perspective for you. It covers the facts and the legends, from the plausible to the downright preposterous.
- ✔ **You first heard about this stuff in *The Da Vinci Code*.** *The Templar Code For Dummies* is the book you need to make sense of Dan Brown's connections between the Templars, the Priory of Sion, the Holy Grail, and the sacred feminine. As good as *The Da Vinci Code* is, what Brown wrote wasn't a new theory — it's been around for a while — and he left a lot out of the whole picture. In this book, we explore what the connections really are and where they might have come from.
- ✔ **You are either a Christian or an interested bystander.** Especially if you're a Catholic, or just wonder what they say about all this hullabaloo, we clue you in on the Church's position on the Templars, Constantine, Opus Dei, celibacy, Black Madonnas, and killer albinos.
- ✔ **You are a Freemason.** If so, this book is an essential. The fraternity of Freemasons has a modern Order of Knights Templar, and though they don't profess a direct descent from the original 12th-century knights, an awful lot of claims have been made over the years about the Templar origins of the Masons. There's more to the Templars than what the Masonic version says, and in this book we clear up the confusion.

How This Book Is Organized

If you sped right past the Table of Contents without bothering to signal, go back and take a look. You'll see this book is divided into six easily digestible slices. Feel free to read them in any order. We don't care. Really. Here's what you'll find inside.

Part I: The Knights Templar and the Crusades

You can't tell the players without a program, and you can't understand the Knights Templar without knowing a little bit about the Crusades. In this part, we give you the overall lay of the Templar landscape. In Chapter 1, we set out the road map that leads from Jesus and Mary Magdalene to the Templars and the Holy Grail. In Chapter 2, we cram hundreds of years of crusading history into one densely packed, whirlwind tour of mucking about in the Holy Land. Finally, in Chapter 3, we trace the very beginnings of the Order as protectors of pilgrims, through their incredible rise in power and prestige as the bankers, landlords, and ecclesiastical fat cats of the Christian world.

Part II: A Different Kind of Knighthood

This section is the red meat of the Templar story — who they were, what they became, how they got whacked, and who did it to them. In Chapter 4, we give you a rundown on the harsh daily lives of the men who chose to become these warrior monks. Chapter 5 examines their annihilation just two centuries later by a king, a pope, and possibly their own successes and excesses. Chapter 6 takes a closer look at the accusations against the Order made during their trial, and pieces together the evidence that was used to make the case — from the serious and creepy, to the outlandish and cockamamie.

Part III: After the Fall of the Templars

In this part, we pick up the trail of mythology that followed the destruction of the Templars. Chapter 7 takes a closer look at what we *do* know about the Templars after their arrest, trial, and convictions, as well as what we *think* we know. Chapter 8 examines the possibility that the fraternity of Freemasons crawled out of the ashes of the Order, along with taking a peek at the modern-day Masonic Knights Templar. And in Chapter 9, you discover some other, lesser-known groups that claim to be the 21st-century heirs to the Templar legacy.

Part IV: Templars and the Grail

The Knights Templar and the story of the Holy Grail were twin sons of the same mother, born out of the Crusades. This part explores the Grail myths of the West, their connection to the Templars, and the place of the knights in the new Grail-mania brought on by *The Da Vinci Code*. Chapter 10 goes back to the beginning to examine the very first Grail stories, their links to both Christians and pagans, and how they led to the ideas of chivalry, courtly love, and King Arthur. Chapter 11 discusses the Grail myth of the 21st century, the supposed bloodline of Christ, starting in the B.D.B. (Before Dan Brown) era with the first modern researchers who proposed the startling notion that Jesus had a wife. From there the tale heads to the south of France, to the mysterious hill town of Rennes-le-Château, and to the legends of the Cathars, who play a major role in the Grail stories of the past and present.

Part V: Squaring Off: The Church versus the Gospel According to Dan Brown

If you picked up this book because *The Da Vinci Code* was the first place you'd ever read about the Templars and you wanted to find out more, you may want to turn to this part first. For every Christian reader who found new interest in the history of his faith, there was another who was upset or angered by Dan Brown's alternative theories of his alleged "true" story of Christianity. And the Catholic Church wasn't exactly thrilled with Brown's version either.

Dan Brown said that his famous novel was a fictional account based in fact, so this part examines the historical claims put forth in *The Da Vinci Code*. Chapter 12 looks at Dan Brown's version of the Knights Templar as the warrior wing of the secretive Priory of Sion, their survival, and their ongoing secret mission to protect the bloodline of Christ. Chapter 13 explores Brown's many assertions about the history of women before and after the Christian era, the Church's real historical attitude toward women, and some surprising aspects about Christian women and the sacred feminine. Chapter 14 presents the amazing behind-the-scenes politics in the creation of the Bible we know today. We delve into the significance of the Apocryphal biblical books, and the story behind the recently discovered Gnostic Gospels that have caused many to change the entire structure of their faith. We fearlessly tread on the role of celibacy in history and in the Church, and its survival into the present day. We finish with the place of the Knights Templar in the newly emerging picture of Christianity, and the latest theories of Templar influence on the survival of these alternative gospels and the secrets they contain.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

This part of the book cuts to the chase and taunts travelers, tourists, treasure-trove hunters, and tall-tale tellers with tantalizing tidbits and Templar tchotchkes. (Please, make him stop.) Chapter 15 explores ten possible candidates for the location of the Holy Grail. Strap on your backpack, grab your camera, and strike out for the ten must-see Templar sites in Chapter 16. Chapter 17 points you in ten different directions to start hunting for the hiding place of the fabled Templar treasure: long forgotten gospels, secret documents, gold and silver, the fabled Ark of the Covenant, or even the Holy Grail itself.

Icons Used in This Book

You'll find the following icons lurking in the margins of this book. Beyond just giving you a little scenery to gaze at, they help you find what you're looking for and navigate the potentially scary parts.



The Grand Master was the head of the Knights Templar, the Mr. Know-It-All of the Order. He was in charge of both military and spiritual matters, and it was a tough job. That's why he's wearing a helmet for protection. He helps sort out pesky issues about the Templar origins and rules.



This icon marks key points that are vital to understanding the Crusades, the Templars, the Grail myth, or other truly important topics. Don't skip these!



This icon highlights stuff like additional data, explanations of obscure rituals and practices, or other information that may interest you, but can be ruthlessly skipped over without missing the important themes of the chapter.



This one points out handy tidbits and topical advice.



This icon alerts you to subjects specifically having to do with topics from works of Dan Brown. If *The Da Vinci Code* is what piqued your interest in this book, these are the hot topics to look out for.