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the Knights Templar and their secret society

# The Templar Code FOR DUMMIES®

Christopher Hodapp

Bestselling author of  
Freemasons For Dummies

Alice Von Kannon

Writer, historian



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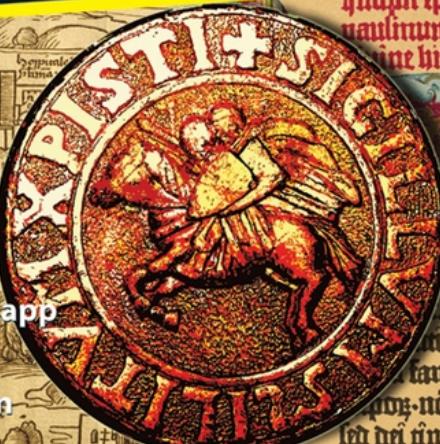
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# ***The Templar Code For Dummies***

**by Christopher Hodapp  
and Alice Von Kannon**



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## **The Templar Code For Dummies®**

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# About the Authors

**Christopher Hodapp** is a Freemason and a member of the Masonic Order of the Knights Templar. He is the author of *Solomon's Builders: Freemasons, Founding Fathers and the Secrets of Washington, D.C.*, and his first book, *Freemasons For Dummies*, has quickly become the most popular modern guide to the ancient and accepted fraternity of Freemasonry. In 2006, he received the Duane E. Anderson Excellence in Masonic Education Award from the Grand Lodge of Minnesota, and the Distinguished Service Award from the Grand Commandery of the Knights Templar of Indiana. He has written for *Masonic Magazine*, *Templar History Magazine*, *The Philalethes Magazine*, and *The Indiana Freemason*, and he is a monthly columnist for *Texas Home Gardener*. Chris has spent more than 20 years as a commercial filmmaker.

**Alice Von Kannon** has been an advertising executive, a teacher, a writer, and even a greedy and villainous landlord. She studied film production at Los Angeles Valley Community College and history at California State University, Northridge, and she has worked for many years as a writer and broadcast producer. Alice has traveled widely in Europe and the Middle East and has written extensively on the subject of the Barbary Wars and the birth of the U.S. Navy. She is a member of the Order of the Grail, the fraternal body of the International College of Esoteric Studies. A history junkie beyond the help of intervention since the age of 14, her recent

studies of Near Eastern religious cults and sects led to this, her first *For Dummies* book.

Hodapp and Von Kannon both live in Indianapolis, Indiana.

# **Dedication**

For Steven L. Harris (1954-1999)

*“He was a truly perfect, gentle knight.”*

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# Introduction

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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.