

HIDEOUS CREATURES

# STAR VAMPIRES



BY KENNETH HITE  
TRAIL OF CTHULHU



Pelgrane Press



## STAR VAMPIRES

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# KEN WRITES ABOUT STUFF

Hideous Creatures: Star Vampires is part of the Ken Writes about Stuff subscription series, featuring new and original Hite goodness every month for twelve months. A subscription costs \$24.95 and as well as giving you a generous 30% discount on the individual article price of \$2.95, we'll be offering an exclusive extra later in the year to all subscribers.

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# Hideous Creatures: Introduction

Lovecraft created his various “shadowy congeners” because the stories of vampires, werewolves, and even ghosts had become too familiar and too formulaic to evoke true horror. Almost a century after he wrote, his own monstrous races have likewise begun to seem like comfortable story furniture rather than unnerving signals that the world is horrible and wrong.

Our goal with this series is to present a comprehensive look at Lovecraft’s hideous creatures, from as many angles as we can. Our goal is contradiction, surprise, and most especially the uncanny: the recognition of something familiar as something weird. As in the “Gods and Titans” section of the *Trail of Cthulhu* core book, this series deliberately contradicts itself, blurring boundaries and erasing certainties in the name of the uncanny. In your campaign, these variant truths might be misunderstandings, legends, heresies, or deliberate lies spread by the creatures to lull their foes into a false sense of familiarity.

Change anything and everything in these pages, most especially the ability scores. If you need a terrifying assassin, a brief but survivable fright, or a sanity-shattering horror, just add or subtract points at will.

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# Star Vampires

**“IT WAS RED AND DRIPPING; AN IMMENSITY OF PULSING, MOVING JELLY; A SCARLET BLOB WITH MYRIAD TENTACULAR TRUNKS THAT WAVED AND WAVED. THERE WERE SUCKERS ON THE TIPS OF THE APPENDAGES, AND THESE WERE OPENING AND CLOSING WITH A GHOULISH LUST.... THE THING WAS BLOATED AND OBSCENE; A HEADLESS, FACELESS, EYELESS BULK WITH THE RAVENOUS MAW AND TITANIC TALONS OF A STAR-BORN MONSTER. THE HUMAN BLOOD ON WHICH IT HAD FED REVEALED THE HITHERTO INVISIBLE OUTLINES OF THE FEASTER.”**

## ROBERT BLOCH, “THE SHAMBLER FROM THE STARS”

These loathsome, hovering things are normally invisible, their presence signalled only by a sort of ghoulish tittering. A star vampire is roughly ovoid, a pendulous stomach surrounded by tentacles, each tipped with needle-toothed suckers. Two cartilaginous stalks hold razor-sharp talons, with which it grasps and slashes open its prey. It then maneuvers its large central mouth to drink the spurting gore. As a star vampire feeds, the blood it drinks or splashes on itself remains visible, revealing the form of the bloated obscenity.

Because the star vampire originates in a relatively obscure tale, merely returning to Robert Bloch’s original model acts as a considerable changeup in itself. For instance, although Bloch explicitly describes the star vampires’ appendages as “tentacular trunks,” most imagery emphasizes the tentacular at the expense of the pachydermous. Simply emphasizing the “titanic talons” instead of the sucker-tipped extrusions likewise alters players’ assumptions – although the combination of invisibility and tittering will keep the basic identification intact. Keepers interested in ringing changes on the star vampire have a number of possible tactics open to them.

Describe the appendages differently:

- Trunks (waving, questing for smells, grasping things, inhaling the blood instead of drinking it)

- Cilia (thin webbing of scarlet emerging in the air around the creature and never truly revealing its core)
- Probosces (insectile, hollow, razor-sharp siphons, blood flows up them as into a syringe)
- Rootlets (vegetable, dendritic, waving in an invisible wind, slowly darkening all along their length)
- Eels (active mouths wide open, full of jagged or barbed teeth, each moving independently on blind-sight)

Alter its characteristic noise, if you think you can reproduce it both repeatedly and in a manner conducive to fear instead of hilarity:

- Whistling (as of an icy wind over a dead planet)
- Chittering (as insects, or dolphins, or a flock of birds)
- Ultrasonics (sharp, discordant, staccato feedback)
- Human (clearly human laughter, albeit of a cruel, sadistic sort, low-pitched scorn instead of tittering)

Finally, and in extremis, you can change the thing’s invisibility:

- Visible as heat distortion or sun-dogs
- Moves discontinuously in “frame drop” or “fast motion”
- Creates large, agonizing “floater” in the eyes of those who look directly at it, witnesses’ eyes actually dry out or weep aqueous humor
- Ingested blood visible only as a constantly distorting, scarlet shadow
- Thing’s entry drops whole room into “ultraviolet” complete with seemingly uninterested floating monsters

Star vampires are very strong, smashing through window-ledges and snapping a human spine in two in mid-air. They travel on a cold wind, presumably from interstellar space, often in response to a summoning.

Powerful wizards and other beings who possess the hubris or lore needed to control them summon star vampires as familiars, or to slay their enemies. Such as, say, meddling Investigators.

## Star Vampire

A star vampire can only feed on one target at a time, or it can attack a target with two talon attacks in a round. If not actually feeding, it must make a Difficulty 3 Athletics test to avoid moving toward the largest quantity of spilled, open, or spurting blood available.

Star Vampires

**Abilities:** Athletics 9, Health 11, Scuffling 26

**Magic:** Wizards who repeatedly summon the same star vampire run the risk of allowing it to learn spells. A star vampire who takes advantage of its opportunities has a Magic rating of 4 to 10, and a spell for subtle revenge like Curse of the Stone or Mind Exchange.

**Hit Threshold:** 6 (invisible but tittering); 3 (slow and visible when feeding, and for 3 rounds thereafter)

**Alertness Modifier:** +1

**Stealth Modifier:** +0

**Weapon:** +2 (talons), -1 (bite); victim Health lost to bite attacks is added to the star vampire's Health or Athletics pool.

**Armor:** -3 vs. any (integument); bullets do half damage

**Stability Loss:** +1

Possible Star Vampire

Abilities

Mix and match these abilities for star vampires in your campaign. Star vampires may be as multifarious as Earth's jellyfish, possessing any number of subspecies-specific powers granted by evolution under alien stars or the whim of the protean and sardonic Tsathoggua. The Keeper may also wish to consult *Night's Black Agents* for more vampiric power possibilities.

**Consume Likeness:** A star vampire that drains a human of its blood can project a convincing illusion of that human around its invisible self. (Disbelievers must make a Sense Trouble test at Difficulty 5 to hear the constant giggling behind the mask) Depending on the campaign metaphysics, this ability may require 2 Magic points, not function in direct sunlight, or (in a Pulp game) "short-circuit" if the star vampire is hit with silver. Consuming blood from another human also might dispel this effect.

**Constricting Tentacles:** With a successful Scuffling attack, a star vampire may grasp a character with its tentacles and squeeze (+0 damage modifier). Each

round thereafter, the star vampire bites automatically and does -1 more blood draining damage each time. A character snared by the star vampire must make an Athletics test against a Difficulty equal to the creature's initial Scuffling attack result (die plus its spend) to break free (or at that Difficulty -2 to use weapons against it). A horribly strong star vampire can spend Athletics or Scuffling points against her in that test.

**Dread (Elder Sign):** A star vampire cannot directly attack anyone brandishing an Elder Sign. With a successful Difficulty 8 Health test, it can try to indirectly attack such a target; smash a supporting pillar or retaining wall, hurl an ally into him, etc.

**Interstellar Cold:** The star vampire carries with it an aura of freezing cold. In addition to eerie effects on its surroundings, touching the star vampire with unprotected flesh costs 1 Health.

**Photosensitive:** Star vampires must make a Difficulty 6 Health test to move into or use their abilities in bright, direct sunlight. (The more common light of red or orange suns doesn't affect them.)

**Stench:** The cold wind of space is unutterably foul. All unprotected breathers around a star vampire must make a Difficulty 5 Health test or be Hurt until they return to clean air.

**Track Summoners:** Star vampires don't appreciate being summoned. They can always track their summoner to his location, as well as anyone present at such a summoning ritual.

**Vital Point:** A star vampire has a single vital point just below its main stomach, where it translates blood into its own ultraterrestrial ichor. If struck there (+3 to Hit Threshold; only those who have read *De Vermis Mysteriis* know the right point) by a lead ball or lead-tipped spear or quarrel, it takes two instances of damage without armor or other mitigation.

**Yearling:** A young or stunted star vampire (possibly one kept as a familiar on Earth by a witch) is much smaller (the size of a dog or child) and less powerful. Lower its talon damage to +0 and use these ratings: Athletics 6, Health 6, Scuffling 9.

VARIATIONS





As with the "Gods and Titans" section in the corebook, this compendium is intentionally self-contradictory. Its facts and theories come from Lovecraft, from later writers, and from the universe of possibilities opened up between them.

- The spell to summon a star vampire appears in *De Vermis Mysteriis* by the Flemish magician Ludvig Prinn, who used them as "invisible companions" and "star-sent servants."
- This incantation, the *Vocatio Sadoquem*, begins as follows: *Tibi Magnum Innomiamdum, signa stellarum nigrarum et bufaniformis Sadoquae sigillum* ("To you, the Great Not-to-Be-Named, in the signs of the black stars, and the seal of toad-shaped Sadoqua")
- Star vampires are the spawn or servants of Hastur, dwelling on the Hyades and acting to enforce the Bargain of Hastur by exchange of blood.
- Their "tittering" is actually constant recitation and incantation including the spells that carry them from world to world. If recorded with the correct instruments and played back at the correct speed, star vampire speech becomes intelligible Mythos lore. This is why Prinn used them as familiars.
- They do not inevitably drain their victim completely; a star vampire might spare even an unworthy or unprotected summoner, returning every other night to feed on him and gain knowledge of spells or other lore it wishes.

## Hideous Creatures

### Starry Night's Black Agents

The star vampire needn't be trapped within a *Trail of Cthulhu* context, of course. It makes an excellent monster in a *Night's Black Agents* game, especially if the campaign already features Alien vampires.

-   It might be another species of alien, enslaved by or rivals of the main vampire species, or a human biotech construct reverse-engineered using alien DNA and imprinted with human neural patterns taken from serial killers and other vicious inhuman sorts.
-  It might be the natural form of the demons who gave humanity vampirism in the first place or a Son of Moloch, a demon prince. Add campaign-standard vampire blocks, banes, etc. to its stat block to match.
-  It might also be the "actual" form of one or another supernatural being such as the murony or camazotz. Blend stat blocks accordingly, if you wish. (See also the *Mythic Echoes* section for some possibilities.)

You can also make the star vampires the Level 6 main vampire villains, with several possible ways for invisible giggling octopi to run a global conspiracy:

- Shrink the star vampires down to 40 kg mass, and add mind-control sera in their bite. They cling to "master humans" under clothing or inside limousines, on the model of Heinlein's *Puppet Masters*.
- One star vampire (trapped on Earth? a cosmic scout? a solo conqueror?) runs the Conspiracy from a guarded penthouse, a never-seen mastermind. Its key bodyguards, wet workers, and Level 5 privy council are all Renfields, some of them possibly given extended suites of vampiric powers.
- Star vampires can shapeshift into human form (possibly after draining their chosen form's blood), or infra-dimensionally possess select victims, or otherwise move among us.

In that last instance, you can use almost any conventional vampire story as an operation or campaign model. E.g.: A star vampire wants to spawn in Europe's biggest city, so it possesses a solicitor vacationing in Romania. Upon his return to London, it prepares to impregnate his fiancée and her girlfriend while mind-controlling a madman in the nearby asylum.

The writeup below gives another possibility.

### Zvezdy Vampir, the Shambler from the Tsars

Rasputin summoned this alien entity (or created this tulpa) in 1916 in an ambitious attempt to control the Romanovs' hemophilia. Having fed on the blood of both Rasputin and the Tsarevich (along with several prisoners and lunatics on whom the mad monk tested his control of the thing) it is definitely insane as far as humans can tell. Given his notorious near-invulnerability, Rasputin likely exchanged blood with the *zvezdy vampir* -- the unnerving possibility exists that he also transferred his mind to it at the moment of his death.

The conspirators who killed Rasputin dosed the star vampire with phosgene gas, sealed it up in a bank safe, and dropped it into a quarry, where it grew ever madder and hungrier. In 1991, newly unemployed KGB agents looking for loot to smuggle West discovered the safe and opened it. The *zvezdy vampir* has been running them -- and much of the Russian mafia -- ever since. It wants revenge on certain bloodlines (such as the Yusupovs), and it wants to accumulate magical knowledge so it can summon or create a mate. It perhaps also wants to become Tsar some day. To accomplish these things, it vampirizes mafia soldiers and bribes them with supernatural knowledge of buried treasure and historical knowledge of buried secrets. It guards knowledge of its summoning rite ferociously.

The *zvezdy vampir's* ability pools have been slightly adjusted from the star vampire model to increase its supernatural throw-weight, but Directors can change them at will. The *zvezdy vampir* is still primarily a horrendously deadly physical foe, on par with the camazotz or vorthr.

**General Abilities:** Aberrance 13, Hand-to-Hand 20, Health 11

**Hit Threshold:** 6 (invisible but tittering); 3 (when feeding, and for 3 rounds thereafter)

**Alertness Modifier:** +1

**Stealth Modifier:** +0 (invisible but tittering)

**Damage Modifier:** +2 (talons) or +0 (lamprey bite)

**Armor:** -3 vs. any (integument); Rubbery, Unfeeling

**Free Powers:** "Darkvision" (eyeless), Drain, Extra Attack (one extra talon swipe), Invisibility, *Memory Haze*, *Sonar*

**Other Powers:** *Interstellar Warp*, Levitation, Magic, *Mesmerism*, *Regeneration*, *Summoning*, Tracking (anyone who has ever summoned it or been present at such a summoning), Vampiric Speed, Vampiric Strength

**Banes:** acid, lightning, phosgene gas

**Blocks:** yellow or blue-white sunlight, high heat

**Compulsions:** come when summoned correctly, drink blood, emit high-pitched laughter

**Dread:** *Elder Sign*

**Requirement:** drink blood

## Star Vampires

- Star vampires dwell in Carcosa beneath the black stars, having killed and drained the humans there in service to the King in Yellow. Like Keats' lamia, when summoned properly they provide artistic inspiration by inculcating a kind of holy madness. The "tittering" is entirely illusory, in the ears of those who call them.
- Star vampires are the creations of Tsathoggua, and a colony of them orbits Saturn. His cruel humor explains their tittering. The star vampires dwelling in N'Kai and other subterranean caverns occasionally emerge to drain and mutilate livestock.
- Star vampires serve Uvhash, Blood-God of the Void. The Blood Sphere of Uvhash reveals Mythos lore to the quester, and summons star vampires to it when awakened.
- Among the enemies of the star vampires and Uvhash are Nodens, the Xothian sorcerer-priest Y'lla, and Gi-Hoveg, an immense aetheric anemone-titan.
- The "tittering" of the star vampires is a sort of hyper-dimensional sonar, locating them in relation to Azathoth's piping and Nyarlathotep's roiling.
- Invisible, tittering, tentacled star vampires are descended from the invisible, whistling, tentacled Flying Polyps; they spread into interstellar space during the evolution of Earthly mammals, when they adapted to gain nutrition from blood.
- A flightless, leech-like sub-species of star vampires lives on Mars where it dominates the native Aihai race, forcing them to serve the vampire god Yoh-Vombis.
- These Martian star-vampires attempted a dimensional invasion of Earth in 1897 but after inspiring several outbreaks of bloodlust and insanity in British prospectors and Belgian imperialist

officials, were defeated by the heat and bacteria of the Congo. They plan another invasion in New Jersey in 1938.

- A murder-cult led by a Greek slave named Rhyllkos worshipped the planet Mars and star vampires in Rome under the rule of Caligula. Nero's Fire burned it out, but Rhyllkos' scripture, the *Blood Rituals*, survived.
- Star vampires are the "djinn" summoned by Solomon. The cult that grew up to worship them left its traces in the Old Testament: "But you shall carry the shrine of Moloch, and the Kiyyun of your star-god, which you brought unto yourself." (Amos 5:26)
- Star vampires are fungoid aliens from Rigel similar to octopoid Mi-Go. They become invisible in yellow sunlight, but not in most lights. They drain energy and life-force; the blood-drinking is cruelty and religious rite in service of their god Ubbo-Sathla. They can send their mentality out of their bodies to possess other forms, switching bodies as they drain the energy from them.

## MYTHIC ECHOES

**"TO SAY THAT WE ACTUALLY BELIEVED IN VAMPIRES ... WOULD BE A CARELESSLY INCLUSIVE STATEMENT. RATHER MUST IT BE SAID THAT WE WERE NOT PREPARED TO DENY THE POSSIBILITY OF CERTAIN UNFAMILIAR AND UNCLASSIFIED MODIFICATIONS OF VITAL FORCE AND ATTENUATED MATTER; EXISTING VERY INFREQUENTLY IN THREE-DIMENSIONAL SPACE BECAUSE OF ITS MORE INTIMATE CONNECTION WITH OTHER SPATIAL UNITS, YET CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE BOUNDARY OF OUR OWN TO FURNISH US OCCASIONAL MANIFESTATIONS WHICH WE, FOR LACK OF A PROPER VANTAGE-POINT, MAY NEVER HOPE TO UNDERSTAND."**

- "THE SHUNNED HOUSE"

As with the variations and possible powers above, the star vampires might more closely match their various mythic depictions than Bloch's fiction. Conversely, human legends might poetically (or defensively) distort the true nature of the being, or be built around a single kernel of experience.

### Banshee (Ireland)

For example, the banshee's scream and habit of "washing blood" might be a folkloric distortion of the star vampire's high-pitched laugh and sanguinary habits. The banshee's dangling breasts and trailing hair could be third-hand descriptions of thick tentacles or thin cilia. In this context, the legend that if you see a banshee by the water, you must tell it the name of your enemy for it to kill or it will drain your blood takes on Mythos significance.

### Hantu Saburo (Malaya)

This invisible spirit lives in pools, lakes, or swamps, where it keeps three dogs called Sokom. It lures travelers into the forest by making strange noises or harries them in with its hounds, then drinks all of their blood. It feeds the bodies to the Sokom. Its dogs, at least, can be driven off with the sound of metal striking wood. The Hminza Tase of Burma has similar habits, but no dogs.

### Kephn (Burma)

The Karen tribes of Burma fear this floating vampire monster created or called by dark magic. Its shape is confused, either a humanoid or canine head topping coiled intestines or flowing water beneath. Other Burmese know of the Thaye Tase, a ghostly ogre visible only to its victim; it laughs as it drinks their blood.

### Khrag Thung (Thibet)

The name of this demigod means "blood drinker." In two of its "nine moods" (laughing and ferocious) it laughs aloud. Although a spiritual entity, like many Buddhist and Hindu deities it is depicted with multiple arms. It may or may not have any connection with the Thibetan-Bihari vampire known as the bhayankara ("terror").

Hideous Creatures



**Moroi (Rumania)**

One of many different vampire spirits that hunts in the form of a cloud of glowing lights or a translucent mist. The moroi, strigoi (Wallachian), muroi (Czech), ephata (Syriac), armenki (Bulgarian), and so on are all connected to wizards or witches, often dead ones whose corpse must be violated (burning of the heart, severing the head, etc.) to dispel the moroi.

**INVESTIGATIONS**

Keepers should treat this section, and use these elements, even more idiosyncratically.

**Clues**

Perforce, the clues in this section mostly point to “conventional” star vampires as outlined in Robert Bloch’s story “The Shambler from the Stars.” Feel free to adjust them at will. Clues that deliver useful means of seeing or killing the star vampire may require spends, as noted in italic parentheses.

**Accounting:** With Starnes dead, although his son inherits his shares, the actual controlling stock interest passes to his partner Van Leuwen. But his alibi is perfect; he was in Belgium when Starnes got his throat torn out. (Cop Talk)

**Anthropology:** While ritual cannibalism in this part of New Guinea is far from uncommon, ritual blood drinking is unusual to say the least. This tribe must have a strong connection to the act, perhaps identifying it with their Octopus totem? Having lived inland for centuries, perhaps they’ve forgotten how octopi feed?

**Archaeology:** The star-symbol incised into this stone plinth marks it as a possible altar of Moloch, a god of the Ammonites. He had an obscure connection with stars, human sacrifice, blood, and fire. Note the ends of the star almost look like mouths; very unusual. (Occult)

**Architecture:** Note these heavy shutters; they’re a recent addition, and they were hung in a big hurry. It must have taken a whole crew to do it in one day’s work. Maybe one of the work crew saw something.

**Art History:** In his early work in the 1550s, Pieter Breughel the Elder depicted demons, monsters, and apocalyptic scenes very different from his later pastorals. On his deathbed, he told his wife to burn his earliest sketchbooks ... but could one have survived? And if so, did it depict one – or more -- of Ludvig Prinn’s “invisible servants”? Nothing is known of Breughel’s life before 1551, after all.

**Assess Honesty:** Did anyone else think that cultist gave up this formula way too easily? Do we have any idea whether it’s actually a banishing spell? What if it *summons* something instead?

**Astronomy:** Professor Ebblewhite’s theory of “vampire stars” – stars that consume their binary companion’s mass, thus violating the normal physics and time-scale of stellar evolution -- builds on the work of Otto Struve in Chicago and Ernst Öpik in Estonia, which is to say it’s sound astronomy. But that doesn’t explain why he puts up those iron shutters on all his windows when Algol or Beta Cephei are in the sky.



## Star Vampires

**Biology:** The sucker wounds are similar to those left by the *Vampyroteuthis infernalis*, the “vampire squid” found in deep-sea trenches. (0 point spend) Perhaps this thing’s flesh is similarly ammoniated; if so, phosgene gas might chelate, destabilize, or even kill it whether it breathes or not. (1 point spend) (Chemistry)

**Bureaucracy:** According to the hospital files, last month Dr. Crowne wrote prescriptions for blood thinners and sleeping drugs for everyone in the house *except* the deceased, for whom he prescribed iron supplements and stimulants. Crowne wanted him awake and, what, ruddy-complexioned? (Medicine, Pharmacy)

**Chemistry:** The body is slightly cyanotic – the thing’s own blood may rely on hemocyanin instead of hemoglobin. That lets it process oxygen far better than we can -- but it’s more vulnerable to heat than we are. (1 point spend) (Biology)

**Cop Talk:** The whole estate was guarded. Nobody saw anyone cross the lawns, no dogs barked. Right around 2 a.m., the time of death, one of the girls thought she heard him sniggering or tittering to himself in the room.

**Credit Rating (3-4):** As you’re in the trade, I can tell you that the book you’re looking for got snatched up for a dollar from Camp’s Books on South Dearborn last year. Boy was Camp steamed when he found out he’d had an intact Prinn on his shelves and never known it! Oh, he’s still looking for more of the same – come at him as a collector and he might spill his leads. (Bibliography)

**Cryptography:** This copy of Manilius isn’t a corrupted text – it’s an enciphered text, using Trithemius’ steganography method to conceal its true meaning. This chapter, for instance, is actually headed *De Sanguisuga Stellarum*: “Concerning the Leech of the Stars.”

**Evidence Collection:** Someone had tampered with the latch on the French window; it wouldn’t shut.

**Forensics:** The body was found almost folded up, the joints so bloodless as to be loose and slack. There was not a trace of blood anywhere in the corpse, despite the deep, jagged wounds under the arms, across the throat, and in the back. The skin and flesh were stark white – even the capillaries were drained, so there was no postmortem lividity. The bones were hollow; the marrow gone. The spine, humerus, and femurs were snapped like pencils.

**Geology:** The thing left tiny particles of dirt or rock behind when it smashed through the windowsill – particles that don’t match anything found on Earth. The spectroscopic lines even disappear partway through, like the element is somehow fundamentally invisible! (Physics)

**History:** Before his death of a cut throat in 1822, Lord Castlereagh insisted he was being followed and spied on. He had a number of mysterious blood diseases that apparently began after he saw a mysterious “radiant” apparition. The inquest records show clear falsification of testimony: apparently his enemies wanted a verdict of suicide but settled for insanity. (Law)

**Languages:** The Latin in this document is a strange combination of 13th century and 16th century usage, although the writer retains the same literary style. (Textual Analysis)

**Law:** The medical examiner was extremely – even actionably -- hasty in all four cases. The family’s petition for the body’s return has been unjustifiably buried by his office, but the judge seems interested in getting at the truth. Maybe we have leverage there.

**Library Use:** A surprisingly accurate description of a star vampire appears

in “The Feaster from the Stars” (*Eldritch Stories*, May 1935) a short story by Robert H. Blake, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Blake is struck by lightning and dies in Providence, Rhode Island on August 8, 1935. (Occult)

**Medicine:** Wait! The Cook County Hospital has a whole storage system for donated and cadaveric blood; they call it a “blood bank.” If we can draw the thing there, maybe we can swamp its senses with too much human blood. (1937 and later)

**Occult:** The Flemish sorcerer Ludvig Prinn reportedly trafficked with, and was guarded by, “invisible companions” and “Star-sent servants” in his tomb-laboratory outside Brussels. When captured in 1540 by the Inquisition, none of his apparatus or materia could be found, only fresh bloodstains on certain pre-Roman stones.

**Oral History:** “Peasants shunned the forest by night, for they did not like certain noises that resounded to the moon, and they most certainly were not anxious to see what worshipped at the old pagan altars that stood crumbling in certain of the darker glens.”

**Outdoorsman:** From the size and extent of the broken branches in its path up the mountain, the thing must have been approximately six feet in diameter when fully engorged.

**Pharmacy:** Look at her eyes; Anne Browder must be a habitual user of opiates. There’s no way that tiny dose would have made her hallucinate something that grandiose.

**Physics:** These things must be transparent, not truly invisible, or else we couldn’t see the blood inside them. If we can hit on the proper combination of colored light beams, their matter *must* refract: we might get an after-image, or a highlight, or better yet a halo. (1 point spend per each -1 to Hit Threshold)

Hideous Creatures

**Photography:** This mercury emulsion is based on that “alchemist’s ointment” you found the recipe for, and it should let us photograph the Thing when next it attacks. (*1 point spend*)

**Sense Trouble:** “The room turned cold. A sudden wind shrieked in through the open window ... It bore an evil bleating from afar ...”

**Streetwise:** Mr. Barker gets his freaks from a fagin named Hardcannon, who mutilates kids who disobey him. You don’t want to hear Hardcannon laugh: they say that his laugh is the only thing you can hear before you die. You can’t even see him, just hear his laugh.

**Theology:** According to Maimonides, the star-worshipping Sabians (a pre-Islamic group in Mesopotamia and Lebanon) drank blood to commune with blood-drinking demonic familiars. (Occult)

SCENARIO SEEDS

A star vampire is usually just a really tough “sidekick monster,” something called down by a sorcerer up to some other kind of no good, intended to (literally) bleed the Investigators’ ability pools and keep them from interfering with his real plans. You can pull a bit of a head-fake here: the sorcerer has changed minds with the star vampire for mystical insight or power. Now, the creature trapped in his abandoned human body roams the city drinking blood. The Investigators might “drive off” the star vampire and “stake the vampire sorcerer” and only learn of their error when the magus-vampire recruits a new cult – or not even then, if he carefully grooms a new front man!  
To change things up structurally, either make the star vampire a bigger threat or the centerpiece of the

villain’s scheme. One example of each appears below. (See the *Starry Night’s Black Agents* sidebar for more notions.)

We Can Dismember It For You Wholesale

Someone, somewhere in a cramped staff office or on a remote colonial frontier, has weaponized – and amplified the *Vocatio Sadoquem*. Instead of summoning one star vampire, the Major can summon a flock of them, to feast on the enemy and crush their stubborn morale once and for all. The Investigators hear rumors of his first tests on remote populations and follow the Major to war to destroy his discovery and leave him either thought insane or even mysteriously dead. Which war depends on the Keeper and the campaign. Here are a selection:

- **Chaco War:** The chattering cries of clouds of vampire bats mask the star vampires flowing through the doomed and surrounded Bolivian positions. At least 2,000 Bolivians died in the Campo Via pocket (Dec 7-11, 1933) before surrendering to the Paraguayans, their spirit broken and drained.
- **Italo-Abyssinian War:** Mustard gas clouds sweep over the Ethiopian positions, half-revealing the star vampires as they roil through the air and batten on the dying. The battle of Genale Doria (Jan 12-20, 1936) is the worst: 9,000 Ethiopians dead or missing, almost entirely from aerial mustard gas and thirst.
- **Sino-Japanese War:** During the siege of Shanghai (Aug 13-Nov 26, 1937), Chinese troops are ordered to hold their positions to the death against massive Japanese artillery and armor superiority. 200,000 of them do

exactly that. Star vampires hover over the craters, firing pits, and trenches, leaving broken corpses behind.

- **Spanish Civil War:** The city of Teruel changed hands twice in two months of near-continuous siege and battle during the worst winter in a generation (Dec 15, 1937-Feb 22, 1938). Ernest Hemingway, Paul Robeson, Clement Attlee, and Kim Philby are among those who visit the battlefield where 14,000 Spaniards die. Snow and ice cling to tentacles or puff into vapor when the monsters fill with hot blood.
- **Soviet-Japanese War:** Approximately 8,000 men die on each side of the battle of Nomonhan (May 11-Sep 16, 1939), near the Manchurian-Mongolian border. The creatures float down out of the immense Mongolian sky, like flickering parachutes.

If getting the Investigators onto a battlefield seems too difficult, they could hear about the star vampires’ flocking-feeding rampage from a surviving NPC. This shell-shocked, sweating hysteric seems unbelievable – until he turns up drained of blood. Now the Investigators must follow up his reports that an unsavory foreign major of intelligence is here in London (or New York, or Paris, or ...) and meeting with a disturbing number of retired military officers.

The Unteleported Monster

The Investigators begin noticing similar themes in the ravings of their local madmen: tentacles, blood, fire, and having “one eye open in the whale’s mouth.” They trace certain common factors in these unfortunates’ pasts: all underwent a period of hysterical or actual

Star Vampires

blindness, many were highly anemic or burnt or both before being treated by medical authorities, and many were once gifted scholars. As the investigation continues, another common factor emerges: all fell into the clutches of Dr. Theodorich Gloch, a professor of divinity at a faultlessly eminent university.

Dr. Gloch is attempting to wrest knowledge of the Mythos from Cthugha, but is not foolish enough to travel to Fomalhaut himself. Instead, he has bound a star vampire with fire magic and uses it to carry his victims' perceptions (bound up in blood and aqueous humor into a sort of one-eyed poppet he calls a "Mazdaen" after Ahura Mazda, Lord of Light) to that sun. But what he sees through their eyes keeps changing: as though the universe were inconstant, or Cthugha deceptive, or truth ultimately relative. Gloch now searches for a universe where he is already a god: when he finds it, he will open the Way for his own ultimate Truth. Of course, if the star vampire ever gets bored, it might bring back its own ultimate Truth from the Whale's Mouth, along with scores of magic-wielding, Cthugha-powered, insane Mazdaens.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

In its first appearance in Robert Bloch's "Shambler from the Stars," the star vampire arrives, kills an unnamed but obvious H.P. Lovecraft, and leaves in the space of a page. In Lovecraft's sequel to that story, "The Haunter of the Dark," it goes unmentioned, "Robert Blake's" cover-up (involving burning down Lovecraft's house in fine Investigator style) having apparently worked. This leaves lots of territory for Keepers to explore, so far very little of it worked even by other Mythos authors. "Blood Bags and Tentacles" by D.L. Snell in *Cthulhu Unbound* is



virtually the only other star-vampire tale to look out for, although James Ambuehl's "The Advent of Uvhash" is an excitable remake of Bloch's "Shambler" with lots more Mythos material jammed into its edges. It even adds a new Mythos tome by "William Thelder" of Wisconsin, *The Ultimate War*, carrying on Bloch and Lovecraft's game of inserting each other into the star vampire story. Derleth-equivalent "Thelder" is dead before the story opens, however, rather than being eaten by the star vampire.

On the fringes of Lovecraftian vampirism lurk Brian Lumley's

Necroscope psychic spies vs. vampire novels, especially *Necroscope IV: Deadspeak*, which inserts "Count Ferenczy" and the Yog-Sothoth cult from *Charles Dexter Ward* into the series. Remember, Joseph Curwen (and the other resurrected) fed on human blood! Finally, although Colin Wilson's *The Space Vampires* have little overtly in common with Bloch's giggling monstrosity, the coincidence in titles and the sheer brio of Wilson's story recommend the novel.