



BLACK MAGIC

BY GRANT HOWITT AND CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR, 2017
FOR USE WITH THE SPIRE ROLEPLAYING GAME

SPIRE
THE CITY MUST FALL

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BLACK MAGIC

There are two kinds of magic in Spire. The first, and most common, is divine magic – spells and rites sanctioned by a church or temple devoted to a deity or pantheon. These rituals, many of which have been handed down from master to student for hundreds of years, produce reliable results in exchange for a predictable cost.

But you aren't here for divine magic, are you?

The second is occult magic, which is far more exciting. Occult magic is on the bleeding edge of what magic can do. Occult magic is barely-researched and semi-improvised. Occult magic is art, and passion, and grabbing the threads that bind the world together and tugging them to see what happens. Every Lajhan calls to Limyé in the same fashion, using more or less the same words – each Idol makes their own spells, cobbles them together from found parts and black-market sorcery, binds a little of their soul into each. Every Vermissian Sage lets the dark energies of that dread network into themselves, and understands the flow and pulse of energy through it – they can feel

the rush of air through a tunnel beneath their feet as though it was their blood pumping through their veins. They know the place, and they can make it do strange and unnatural things.

And there are more occultists, besides the artists and the scientists – there are grangou, or hunger-witches, who practice the old arts of the dark elves: magical cooking, supporting a community through food, bringing the dead back to life in their cauldrons. There are deep apiarists, who commune with a strange intelligence known as the Hive, and battle against the corrupting forces of the Heart with swarms of bees that reside within their bodies. There are the hellish blood-witches, carriers of a sentient blood disease that warps the world around them.

And, for the truly brave (or foolish, or cruel), there is demonology – a dark path indeed, and the costs incurred are dreadful. But if you want to kill thousands of people in the most horrendous way possible, there's nothing better.



BLOOD-WITCH

“I can hear your heartbeat, aelfir, and I hear terror.”

You are a ritual magician who has travelled to the dark Heart of Spire, and brought back with you a strange and debilitating blood disease that allows you to warp the natural world with your essence. You possess dominion over blood, and your unnatural countenance makes you a terrifying figure to behold when riled.

CORE TRAITS

RESISTANCES: Blood +3, Shadow +1

REFRESH: Share a moment of intimacy with another person.

SKILLS: Deceive, Resist

DOMAINS: Occult, Low Society

BONDS

- You have captured a creature and fed your diseased blood to it, turning it to your will and enhancing its intelligence. Choose a small common creature such as a cat, toad, crow, snake, spider or raven, and gain it as an individual-level bond. The creature has a physical tell that indicates it is under the influence of black magic, such as compound eyes, additional legs, strange markings, or horns.
- You have tasted the blood of another player character, and learned a secret about their past (or future). What did you learn, and how often do you remind them of it?

EQUIPMENT

- Athame (D3, Bloodbound)
- Several sets of tattered, weird-looking clothing
- A collection of occult ephemera

BLOOD-WITCHERY

Although blood-witchery spells have the Occult tag, the caster doesn't have to make a roll to cast them. In this way they function like divine magic, but they don't have a specific godly source – the unique blood chemistry of the witch lets them channel the residual energies of the Heart into potent, and stable, sorceries. For this reason, they cannot be cast by a character who has not made the pilgrimage to the Heart.

Should a blood-witch cast as part of a coven – traditionally three witches in total – then all stress incurred can be equally spread amongst the members of the group. (Or offloaded on the weakest witch, as is more common.)

Also: the majority of blood-witches are women. Most men who pick up the infection die before their transformation into a witch is complete due to a quirk of biology, but male witches are not unheard of.

CORE ABILITIES

NIGHT TERROR. *You have a history of fear in the city of Spire.* Once per session, when you meet an NPC for the first time, declare that they have tried to intervene in your affairs at some point in the past, and failed. They are now terrified of you, with all the risks that entails.

ECHOES. [Occult] *You can taste the intricacies of a person in their blood.* When you taste the blood of a creature, you will learn something interesting or surprising about their past or future. The blood must still be warm; the colder it is, the less accurate and more disjointed the visions will be. Visions of the future are inaccurate at best and misleading at worst, but they will represent one potential future for the target. (You cannot derive any information from tasting the blood of a cold-blooded creature.)

TRUE FORM. [Occult] *Try as you might, you just can't keep the writhing terror inside yourself.* Since returning from the Heart, your true self pushes and boils beneath the surface of your skin. If you ever take moderate or severe fallout of any kind, you shift into the form that the Heart wishes you to be – a flickering zoetrope horror. Your fingers twitch and flex and your movements are stop-motion and disjointed; your shoulders pop and creak as they bend at the wrong points and the stench of old blood fills the air. You gain the Compel and Pursue skills, and anyone with an ounce of sense will most likely run from you. You may attempt to stop this change with a Resist+Occult roll. Your true form lasts until the end of the situation.

You can mark D3 stress to shift into your true form at any time.

ADVANCES

LOW

BLOOD-BOUND COMPANION. [Occult] *You strengthen your bond with your familiar.* Gain two of the following abilities:

- +1 Mind. Your familiar can talk to people other than you.
- +1 Blood. Your familiar can change its shape into any similar-sized non-unique creature (but retains the tell).
- Gain the Sneak skill. Your familiar can very briefly shift to become incorporeal.

- Gain the Fight skill. Your familiar can be used as a (D6, Ranged, Surprising, One-shot) weapon.

You can take this advance twice, choosing different abilities each time.

BLOOD WARD. [Occult] *You slit your palm and slap it against the wall, leaving a bloody handprint that will lash out at anyone who comes near.* Mark D3 stress to Blood to cast this spell, which is instantaneous. The next person – friend or foe – to come within arm's reach of the ward before it dries takes D6 stress.

BLOODY MASK. [Occult] *You mix your tainted blood with that of another, and daub sigils of glamour with it onto your brow and lips.* Gain the Steal skill. Mark D3 stress to Blood to cast this spell. Draw on your face with a mixture of your blood and someone else's: until the blood dries completely, you will appear as though you are the other person to onlookers. The spell won't disguise your clothing, though.

ARTERIAL SPRAY. [Occult] *You spit a curse in a thrice-dead language and stinking, vitriolic black blood sprays out of a wound or orifice.* Mark 1 stress to Blood to cast this spell. It functions as a (D3, Ranged, Spread D3) weapon.

BLIND EYE CURSE. [Occult] *You conjure a hex which manifests as sigils crawling underneath your skin that beguile and confuse those who would try to stop you.* +1 Shadow. Mark D3 stress to Blood to remove minor Shadow fallout; mark D6 stress to Blood to clear moderate Shadow fallout; mark D8 stress to Blood to clear severe Shadow fallout.

EVIL EYE. [Occult] *You spin a hex on a target, guaranteeing that three misfortunes will assail them.* Mark D6 stress to cast this spell – you must be able to see the target. The next three times you or an ally roll against the target of this spell in any way (attacking, defending against their attacks, investigating, tailing, etc) the difficulty rating of the action is 0, and you roll with mastery.

MEDIUM

HEARTS-BLOOD THRALL. [Occult] *Your cursed blood has warped your familiar's body almost beyond recognition, turning it into something truly monstrous.*

Gain two of the following abilities:

- Your familiar confers three additional resistance slots to which you can allocate stress marked as a result of spellcasting.
- +1 Reputation. Your familiar can be used as a (D6, Ranged, Piercing, Unreliable) weapon.
- Gain the Steal skill. Once per session, you can see through the eyes of your familiar and control its movements for a situation.
- +1 Mind. While you sleep, your familiar whispers secrets about those around you into your ear. At the end of each session, ask the GM what tidbits your familiar tells you.

MANNEQUIN CURSE. [Occult] *Your blood burrows inside other people and plucks their puppet-strings.* Introduce a droplet of your blood into the target's body, and you may mark D3 stress to Blood to force them to perform a simple action – opening or shutting a door, walking in a certain direction, speaking a few words. They are fully aware that the impetus for the action is coming from elsewhere, and the actions aren't precise – they can't load, aim and fire a gun, but they can certainly pull the trigger of a gun they're already holding. Once you have infected them with your blood, the spell remains active until the next dawn.

CORPUS DESAN. [Occult] *You fashion a concoction from the blood of your allies, and ask them all to drink deep. Once it takes effect, you move as one being.* Mark D6 stress to cast this spell; all other participants mark 1 Blood. Until the next dawn, all those who gave their blood and drank of the mixture can swap places with one another instantaneously, if both are willing; their bodies flex and change into one another with a noise like tearing meat.

WENDING CORRIDORS. [Occult] *You twist your enemies' perceptions of space and time into a nightmare distortion.* Mark D3 stress to Blood to cast this spell. For the next situation, you automatically succeed at all Pursue checks you undertake.

CLOSE THE WOUND. [Occult] *Your saliva can sear shut the wounds of others.* Spit on a wound to heal it almost instantly, leaving a knot of dark scar tissue where it was. Mark D3 stress to Blood to remove D6 Blood stress from a target other than yourself.

LAIR. [Occult] *Soaking up loose magic, the area around your home transforms into a nightmarish realm – a shadowy warren of skittering creatures, of words daubed in shifting blood, of corridors to nowhere.* Your lair counts as a Street-level bond which can act in accordance with your desires – trapping intruders, remembering what occurs within its boundaries, and finding items from nearby. When you apply stress to this bond, halve the level of stress inflicted. You can remove 2 stress from your lair bond by marking 1 stress to Blood.

TORRENT. [Occult] *You learn the secret of animating the blood of another, turning it against them.* Mark D6 stress to cast this spell. For the rest of the current situation, you can pluck out the blood of a living target through their nose, eyes and mouth simply by gesturing at them. This gesture functions as a (D6, Devastating, Ranged) weapon.

HIGH

UNKILLABLE. [Occult] *Death holds no power over you.* +2 Blood. If you die as a result of fallout, you do not die. Instead, you reawaken in your lair on the morning of the next dawn. If you do not have a lair, you are reborn in the Heart, and this ability is removed from you (you may purchase it again).

A DARK AND BLASTED LAND. [Occult] *You understand the secret of your lair; that it lives in you, rather than the other way around.* +2 Blood. As LAIR, but if you spend D6 stress and spend half an hour concentrating, your lair recreates itself around wherever you are currently standing. You can move between this new lair and the original instantaneously, but you can only maintain a single additional lair at a time. If you do not visit your new lair for a full week, it dissipates and the area returns to normal.

CHEVAL [Occult] *You plunge your consciousness into the body of some poor unfortunate, and you steer them like a horse.* +2 Blood. As MANNEQUIN CURSE, but: you gain full control of the target's body for the period of the spell, and do not have to mark stress to have them perform actions. They have no memory of the actions they performed during the possession. For the duration of the spell, your original body is in a semi-conscious trance – you are only barely aware of events that are occurring around your writhing, chattering body.

INFAMOUS BLOOD-WITCHES

COUNTESS BERYL ALIQUAM THE THIRD.

Beryl was a shoo-in for the council several decades ago, having emigrated from the nomadic nation of Aliquam during the Year of Eight Gods and quickly risen through the ranks of Spire nobility. Unbeknownst to her companions, she had visited the Heart and become a blood-witch, and an off-colour comment on her fascinators at a ball led to a full heartsblood transformation and several untimely deaths. She currently resides in Ivory Row as a guest of Lady Theryn.

SISTER GRISWOLD. Very active in the Crimson Vigil; furious, vindictive against the aelfir, enjoys destroying whole noble houses in a single night by plunging them into chaos and fire.

DOCTOR SERRYS DE VIRE. Doctor De Vire was a great influence on medical research in Spire, pioneered many modern methods of anaesthetic and disinfection, and is solely responsible for the hex-maladi plague of the Year of the Red Moon that saw the streets of Little Whitecross overrun with needle-toothed ceiling-crawling mutants.

SOMNA. Grew tired of Spire and founded her own patchwork version, deep in the Night City, over which she rules.

GORE-TOOTH. Used to rule Grist before the ghouls came in and took over; some say she still does, using them as enforcers and the lunatic demigod King Teeth as a puppet ruler. Most blood-witches don't eat children – Gore-Tooth does.

MAJI-MAL, MOTHER OF MONSTERS. The arachnid terror known as Maji-Mal is the only known individual to combine both blood-witch and midwife traits. Her lair (which travels with her through the undercity) is riddled with the foetuses of tenderly cared-for creatures, nightmarish combinations of drow and spider and the nameless monsters that cavort within the Heart, and she takes great pleasure in dressing her spawn and providing them with a proper education.



EXTRA ADVANCE: GRANGO

Far older than the upstart faiths of Our Glorious Lady and the Solar Pantheon, grangou magic is an ancient and oral tradition that has been passed down from mother to son, from father to daughter, since time immemorial. A cobbled-together mix of hedge magic, prayers to slumbering gods and good old-fashioned cookery, grangou magic has been a mainstay of drow communities since before the curse. A grangou is often the central figure in impoverished drow communities, especially when the Lajhan have failed to make an impact; their magics ensure that all are fed, or at least feel no hunger, and their hearth marks a place to return after a long day's toil.

Requirement: Be regarded as an important figure within your community. Learn the secrets of grangou from an existing practitioner.

Refresh: Fix a problem in your community, or nip one in the bud before it gets out of hand.

When you become a grangou, mark one of your Street-level bonds as your community. If you lose access to this bond, you cannot use your grangou abilities until you regain standing or rebuild the community.

LOW

GENIUS LOCI. [Occult] *Staring deep into the flames of your hearth, you connect to your community's soul.* Gain the Investigate skill. Roll Investigate+Occult

to cast this spell. On a success, you speak with the spirit of your community – a zeitgeist comprised of the thoughts, fears and awareness of everyone within it. By focusing, you can gain awareness of anything that happened within the boundaries of your community within the last week as though you were there when it happened.

BREAK BREAD. *Not everything the grangou do is magic; a lot of it is just good cooking and good conversation.* +1 Reputation. When you share food or drink that you have cooked with someone, gain mastery on all social checks made against them until the meal is over.

STONE SOUP. [Occult] *You gain nourishment from hope, not food.* +1 Mind, +1 Blood. You no longer need to eat or drink, and suffer no stress from not doing so. You can extend this effect to your community (and anyone within its boundaries) for a week or so by making a pot of stone soup; roll Fix+Occult to cook enough to feed everyone.

HUNGER CURSE. [Occult] *You instill your target with true hunger and watch them wither away.* Roll Deceive+Occult to cast this spell. On a success, a target who can see and hear you is struck by your hunger curse; they take D3 stress, and their difficulty is reduced by 1 until they eat.

BOUYON KABRIT. [Occult] *Your goat stew, already a traditional drow comfort food, is imbued with*

magical power that lends strength to those who eat it. +1 Reputation. Roll Fix+Occult to cast this spell. On a success, you and up to five others may gain 1 additional Blood slot until the next dawn.

MEDIUM

INFECTION SPREADS. [Occult] *A dark art, but: you can channel injury and madness away from yourself and into your community.* +1 Mind. When you take stress to Mind or Blood, you can choose to apply that stress to your community bond instead of your own resistances.

THE PICTURE OF HEALTH. [Occult] *No matter how grimy and disgusting your domain is, you magic a glamour over it to make it seem perfectly comfortable.* Roll Deceive+Occult to cast this spell. On a success, you cast an illusion over an area no bigger than a house; all negative elements of the area (dirt, danger, ugly art etc) are suppressed and replaced with something that will instead lure a trespasser in and put them at ease. This effect lasts for a week or so, or until someone bleeds onto the ground in the area – whichever comes first.

BOUYON KON. [Occult] *You know the old trick of putting horn and hooves in your goat stew to amplify the flavour and focus the magical effect.* As BOUYON KABRIT, but you can divide 6 additional Blood slots between up to six people however you see fit. These additional slots last until the next dawn, and you may only cast this spell once per day.

HIGH

BOUYON KABRIT SAN KON. [Occult] *Your cauldron holds ancient secrets within its blackened iron, and you can bring people back from the land of the dead.* +2 Reputation. Roll Fix+Occult to cast this spell. Placing a corpse of someone from your community into your cauldron, you create a soup which is shared with the remaining members. Assuming they all consume it, the dead person will

be reborn anew within the cauldron on the dawn of the next day.

The returning character loses all but one additional slot in Blood and Mind, if they have additional slots to lose, and it only works once on each person; making the soup out of someone a second time creates a vile, bitter broth that curses the community.

SACRED FLAME. [Occult] *You reinforce the ever-burning flame beneath your cooking pot that forms the heart of your community, making its inhabitants fight with zealous fury to protect it.* Gain the Fight skill. When you and your allies fight in defence of your community, all of your attacks inflict D8 stress and you gain the Brutal and Piercing tags.



EXTRA ADVANCE: DEEP APIARIST

The Deep Apiarists are an occultist sect who count drow, humans and aelfir among their ranks. They claim they alone know the truth behind the Heart; that it is actively malevolent, a primordial force older than any god, and it must be constrained and controlled lest it break out of Spire and consume the entire world.

They will do this through the Hive; an otherworldly intelligence that manifests as glyph-marked bees. These bees are kept in hives, positioned around the Heart, that reinforce the spiritual and arcane wards that keep the Heart in check – or so they say.

The true mark of induction to the apiarists is to become a living hive of bees – to undergo a lengthy and hellish process that sees the apiarist's organs replaced with waxen simulacra, and marks them out as agents devoted to the containment, and potential destruction, of the Heart.

Requirement: Become inducted to the sect of Deep Apiarists who are sworn to defend the city against the Heart by all means necessary, and accept the Hive into you.

Refresh: Destroy an occult magician, an agent of the Heart, or an artifact that holds the unearthly powers from that place.

CORE ABILITY

LIVING HIVE. [Occult] *You accept the swarm into you, and become a living hive of bees.* This has no in-game effect, aside from being tremendously

unsettling if discovered, but it allows you to practice the other magicks of the Apiarists.

LOW

REPAIR. [Occult] *The bees that live inside you patch up your wounds with wax.* At the start of each situation in which you are present, remove 1 stress from Blood.

REASSURING WHISPERS. [Occult] *Your bees whisper directly into your eardrum, telling you that everything is going to be okay.* Once per session, when you take a minute to commune with the swarm, remove D6 stress from Mind.

RELEASE THE HIVE. [Occult] *You flood the surrounding area with bees.* +1 Mind. Roll Compel+Occult to cast this spell. On a success, a swarm of bees pours forth from your clothing; these bees inflict D3 stress to anyone that stands near you, and most sensible people will flee once the swarm takes flight.

ASSESS CHAOS. *You gain an eye for the unpredictable.* Gain the Investigate skill and Occult domain. Once per session, you can ask the GM what chaotic, unpredictable thing is about to occur in your vicinity; you can try to stop it, if you wish.

SENSE THE HEART. [Occult] *Your eyes rearrange themselves into strange and otherworldly patterns, allowing you to sense the rot at the heart of the city.* Roll Investigate+Occult to cast this power. Your eyes

shift into jet-black compound lenses, allowing you to detect the insidious workings of the Heart; you can sense anything that is of the Heart (i.e. Hungry Deep cultists, blood-witches, needle-toothed children, etc) within a street's radius around you.

MEDIUM

THE HIVE'S BLESSING. [Occult] *Your swarm marks ancient glyphs and sigils in the air which punish those who would attempt to undo reality. Make a Fix+Occult roll to cast this spell. On a success, you project an aura of stability and unchaos around yourself for the remainder of the situation – any occult spells cast within your immediate vicinity, including your own, cause the caster to suffer an additional D6 stress from feedback.*

THE QUEEN'S WISDOM. [Occult] *The queens of the Deep Bees are the wisest of their ancient race, and yours speaks soft secrets directly into your brain.* +1 Mind. At the start of each session, pick one domain – you gain access to that domain. If you already possess the domain, gain a knack in it.

PATTERN THEORY. [Occult] *You analyse the movements of crowds, the pulse of galvanic energy in brains, the rhythm of heartbeats; it's all part of one perfect system.* Once per session, when the GM asks you to mark stress as part of a roll, declare that you're using this power. Instead of marking stress,

rewind time to the point just before you rolled the dice – what happened all took place in your head as you extrapolated out the situation from known parameters. You can't repeat the same roll that you just made if you do.

HIGH

SMITE. [Occult] *Your body, writhing with unknowable forces, becomes anathema to agents of the Heart.* Roll Fight+Occult to cast this spell, and touch something that is of the Heart. If you succeed, the creature you touched is encased in crystal by a swarm of glyph-marked bees, and dies (or, if it is an object, it is rendered inert). Some Keepers like to surround their hives with the crystal statues of those they have entombed as a warning to others; the corpses do not rot, and some apiarists believe that their victims are stuck forever in perfect stasis.

THE HIVE MIND. [Occult] *You spread your mind out across the swarm, and from them into others.* Whenever you mark stress to Mind, you divide it as equally as possible between yourself and all characters who are standing nearby. You may choose how the remainder of the stress is divided if it does not divide equally, and you do not have to mark stress to your own Mind resistance if there are more nearby characters than the amount of stress incurred.

NOTEWORTHY QUEENS OF THE ORDER

The queens of the Hive have names unpronounceable by the tongue of elf or human; theirs is a language of buzzing wing, of pheromone, of intricate and graceful dances. Within her own hive each queen is simply known as "Queen"; on the rare occasions that bees from one colony must speak to another and refer to their rulers, their full names are used. The process of pronouncing a Queen's name in full can take upwards of an hour and involve tens if not hundreds of bees, so amongst their order, the Apiarists use their own names for the queens.

YELLOW-CANDLE, QUEEN OF THE HEARTS-BLOOM HIVE, who holds dominion over the largest grove of heartsflower in Spire, and trades nectar with other colonies in exchange for mercenary support.

FIVE-LEGS, QUEEN OF THE DARKFEN HIVE, who was injured in a battle against the minions of the Heart two decades ago, and bears a finely-wrought silver leg to replace the one she lost.

QUERENT, QUEEN OF THE SUNLESS SHORE HIVE, who is fondly named after the current duchess of Aliquam, and brokered an uneasy truce with metal-weaving spiders from the Works to reinforce her monstrous hive.

ASHE, QUEEN OF THE MANSION HIVE, who mastered the secret of fire and takes great pleasure in using it against hornets or wasps she discovers in her domain.





DEMONS

Demons come from an alternative plane of reality: a sort of writhing, roiling sea of madness and potential energy. When magi practice demonology, they build a vessel for this energy to occupy. Some of these vessels summon a particular demon, or shape the incoming energy into a relatable form – the jury is out on whether demons have personalities or whether those personalities are forced onto them by the vessel itself.

EIDOLONS

An eidolon is a physical object that summons demonic force into the caster's presence. There is no such thing as a reliable, modern eidolon outside of rare and closely-guarded gnolish technology – they are either ancient, unknowable artefacts in dire need of repair, or cobbled-together experimental devices built by a cabal of heretical occultists and engineers. An eidolon is a reflection of form, and demonic force will not inhabit an object that does not match its resonance – they vary from boxes that will fit in a drow's pocket to room-sized shattered bells to hidden mazes, far beneath the surface of the world. (The aelfir, creative as they are, have mastered secret songs that will turn any who hear them into a walking eidolon against their will.) Most eidolons that a demonologist will interact with are old, tattered things, handed down between student and master or stolen from the cold, dead hands of the betrayed; making a new eidolon, especially a stable one, is a rarer art than kindling an existing one into life.

FIRST CONTACT

The first time you commune with an eidolon and make a bond with it, it burrows into you and wrenches secrets from your thoughts – mark D6 stress to Mind.

Power channeled through an eidolon into real-world effects on a broad scale (for example, the Labyrinthine rearranging the corridors of Spire into a more pleasing shape) is known as suffusion. Instilling that power into a specific object or item and changing its properties (for example, the Labyrinthine enchanting a key to open any door) is infusion. Both arts are dangerous, but neither compare to incursion – the eidolon is used as a direct portal for the demonic energy, and it spreads unchecked in a wide area, rewriting reality in a hellish, unpredictable nightmare. Aelfir war demonology focuses largely on incursions.

MAKING A DEAL WITH A DEMON

Communing with a demon is a complex process, involving various rites and rituals that imbue an inert eidolon with energy and awaken it. Once summoned, a demon will speak to the caster in whatever way it

can – often it appears in a waking dream, but it may manifest as a spectre or write its intentions on the walls in blood. The caster should then state, as clearly and concisely as possible, what act they want the demon to perform on their behalf. Assuming the rites have been correctly observed, the demon will perform the task to the best of its ability.

It is almost always a terrible idea. Demonology is a fast route to power, but it comes at a cost – demons do not understand the material world, and wind their fate around the caster’s own, so any bargain struck with them inevitably has horrendous side-effects. Practising demonologists take great pains to distance themselves from the fallout of the art, using protective rites or resorting to magical proxies on which to offload the inevitable torment.

RULES

When you have bonded with a demon, you may ask favours of it as though it was any other NPC bond you possess – albeit a much more powerful one – by using the BESEECH DEMON spell from the demonologist extra advance on p18.

The player never rolls dice for the demon’s actions – the GM does, and does not necessarily have to tell the player whether or not it has worked (demons are notorious liars). If the bond suffers stress as a result of the action, roll for fallout at the end of the session as normal – however, because this is no normal bond, it doesn’t use the normal bond rules for fallout. Instead, it uses the table below.

To remove stress marked against a demonic bond, the caster must perform acts on behalf of the demon as defined during the casting. These often focus around things sacrificed to the demon in a ritual manner, which might include: people, animals, artefacts, relationships, memories, bonds, skills, domains, additional resistance slots, knowledge, etc.

A suffusion will have broad, narrative effects. An infusion, requiring an object or person to cast it on, will create a “magic” item – either it will have strictly defined abilities (a sword that can cut bonds) or it will have unusually impressive qualities (a sword that is D8, Devastating). A negative infusion, or curse, is also possible but more rarely cast. Neither suffusion nor infusion is permanent, and most will not last a full day before running out of power.

DEMONIC BOND FALLOUT

MINOR

BACKLASH. The demonic energy, burrowing through your mind, earths itself in someone you know. An ally – if not necessarily a bond – is subject to a terrible fate, and it is your fault. You will probably see it happen. If it is a bond or a fellow player, they immediately suffer Moderate fallout; otherwise, they’re dead, or worse.

ANATHEMA. Animals hate you, and will become enraged in your presence, even if normally docile. There is no way to circumvent this.

MODERATE

RESONANCE. Your body is wracked with demonic energy. You now function as an eidolon for your demon, and at least one other party will be interested in capturing you and locking you away forever; odds are, they will succeed, unless you die first.

DOOM. You wish you were dead, but that’s not how this works. Before the next dawn, you will suffer Moderate fallout in three categories of the GM’s choosing.

AETHERIC BURNOUT. Your mind rebels against the unnatural forces ripping through it. You can no longer cast demonological spells, but you can teach someone else to do it. Aetheric burnout is the main reason that demonologists survive past their fortieth year.

SEVERE

INCURSION. You become the conduit for an incursion; a nightmare realm bursts from your body, killing hundreds if not thousands of people, and lasts for anywhere from a minute to an hour. If you are lucky, you will not survive the experience, but even if you do, you will not be able to function as a person ever again.

A SMOKING CRATER OF A MIND. Suffer immediate Moderate Mind fallout. You can no longer cast spells with the [Occult] tag.

EXAMPLE DEMONS

THE LABYRINTHINE

Here is the Labyrinthine, a maddening riddle of a thing, that confuses and twists the minds of elf and man alike – and, moreso, rearranges the very structure of the city, plucks corridor and passage from their rightful environs and plunges them into strange and unsettling orders in accordance with its own unknowable desires. Should a sorcerer wish to step between New Heaven and Derelictus in a matter of seconds, the Labyrinthine can assist; it is the King of Ways, the Prince of Portals, and all places are as one to it.

Its eidolon is invariably complex; puzzleboxes, models of impossible buildings, interlocking metalwork, and so on. It is said that the Labyrinthine is a place unto itself, perhaps all places, and amongst the worst of the curses that it can inflict is to trap a luckless soul within itself for eternity, forcing them into an endless prison; this is a common end for magi who believe, wrongly, that they have the measure of the demon.

THE SENTINEL

The Sentinel is a great architect, a Lord of Watchtowers – it claims to have built Spire itself, but all demons are liars. The eidolon is a helm that fully encloses the face, and no eye-holes or mouth-holes can be made, and within it is sweltering hot, and unseen talons caress the wearer's eyes and tongue while they commune with the demon in silence. It is a furious thing, a creature of war, a lover of walls and unbreakable things.

Its chief power is to conjure structures from nothing in an instant, and many a sorcerer-king of the city-states of Ys has turned to the skills of the Sentinel in times of strife and war. These towers are strong, and of unknown make, and come fully stocked with sword and cannon and shot. Those who bond with the demon, who believe its lies and expose their mind to its poison, may find themselves unwilling to leave safe spaces, and suspecting all those around them as infiltrators.

THE FOURTH SISTER

Legends speak of three sisters – a spinner, a weaver, a cutter – and they crop up throughout the old stories of the world. The drow position them in the night sky

far above; the aelfir speak of them in hushed tones, as they are the old gods of the north-lands, and must not be worshipped; and so on, and so forth. This is the fourth sister – a thief, a scoundrel, powered by jealousy and pain and fear, spurned by myth and turned rotten like spoiled milk.

She can steal anything, from anywhere, and bring it to the caster: a ring, a heart, a crown, a sword, a last breath. Her eidolon is a pair of fine rings, linked together with silver chains; when worn, she manifests between them as a spectre, and the caster can feel her ghostly breath on their cheek. Her bond is a curse, though, as is that of all demons; she steals things from the caster, or brings them treats unasked that lead them into danger.

THE NAMES OF KNOWN DEMONIC ENTITIES

Scholars have written many a tome regarding the nature and names of demons, and the vast majority of them are utterly useless. Most of the rest are just useful enough to be dangerous, and a select few containing reliable, tested information on demons are jealously guarded. Here are a list of demons, some of which may even be real:

- The Eternal
- The Grieving
- The Blighted
- The Vulpine
- The Twin Courts,
- Crow-Thing
- The Just
- The Infernal
- The Lost Kingdom
- Lock
- The Warden
- Miasma
- The Lashing Wind
- The Excoriator
- Knuckle-Crack
- Half-Face
- The Knife
- The Crucible
- The Guttered Candle

THE THRICE-HORNED

Residing in the top half of a suit of plate armour, unwearable by man or elf (the neck too narrow and constricting, the horns mounted on the helmet too heavy, the arms too many and spindly, the inside wreathed in spines and barbs), the Thrice-Horned is a granter of wishes steeped in pride and inadequacy – it can make the caster stronger, more charming, better-off, taller, happier, and so on. It is haughty, and not a little regal, and refers to a grand kingdom Elsewhere over which it reigns – it does not like to grant favours, and does so only under duress.

The favours, of course, come with a price; the asker will find themselves in over their head, or struck down by their hubris. An elf who wished for a silver tongue will find themselves unable to tell the truth; a man who begged eternal life will be trapped beneath a heavy flagstone; the money that lines an aelfir's coffers comes from the pockets of dangerous and armed men. But everyone believes they can put off or avoid the consequences, and the Thrice-Horned is perfectly happy to let them try.

WHAT ARE DEMONS?

- Demons are an ancient race that ascended beyond the need for physical forms, and can be communicated with extra-dimensionally via magic.
- Demons are the manifest form of drow sin.
- Demons are whatever remains of the Prokatakos, imprisoned forever beyond normal reality for their crimes.
- Demons are the fragments of dead gods.
- Demons are the amalgamated souls of the dead, coalescing into abstract intelligences.
- Demons don't exist; they are a magical force, and all names and personalities are simply reflections of the caster and whoever built the eidolon.
- Demons are the ancient Sorcerer-Kings of the drow, projected into the future with unknowable magic power, working their schemes into the current day and awaiting their resurgence.
- Demons are what happens when an undying aelfir finally dies.
- Demons are nothing but a hallucination brought on by too much exposure to ambient sorcery, and demonology is nothing but exceptionally dangerous, but otherwise unremarkable, ritual occult magic.

EXTRA ADVANCE: DEMONOLOGIST

You have delved too deep into the black arts and marred your soul with the darkest of magicks – demonology. Practice of demonology is punishable by death, or by extensive re-education and re-integration at the hands of skilled aelfir magi; most who are caught performing demonic rites are never seen again, and if they are, they bear very little resemblance to the person they were before.

The primary aim of demonology is damage control; those who are aware of the forces inherent in the art do their best to train themselves to resist the corruption and limit the side-effects. There are more details of demons, and what they can do, on p15, and eidolons – physical tools for interacting with those from beyond – are on p14.

Requirement: Find a source of knowledge that will allow you to learn the art of demonology, such as the Greshkin Codex or the work of heretic warrior-poet Tears-At-Sunrise.

Refresh: Perform an act communicated to you by a demon you have interacted with. These are strange requests indeed, and all of them are sinister and dangerous. You cannot use these to refresh your own resistances, but instead remove stress marked against the bond you share with an eidolon.

LOW

BESEECH DEMON [Occult] *You know the secret arts of making deals with demons.* Roll Compel+Occult

to summon demonic energy into an eidolon and activate it. Performing this spell successfully allows you to ask the demon for favours in the same way as a standard NPC bond; it is essential to function as a demonologist.

DEMONIC RESONANCE. [Occult] *You have trained your mind to be accommodating to many different forms of demonic energy.* The first time you handle an eidolon, you do not mark stress as others would – instead, refresh D6.

MEDIUM

CONSTRUCT LESSER EIDOLON. [Occult] *Using back-alley occultism and improvised materials, you fashion a new eidolon – a vessel for demonic energy.* Make a Fix+Occult roll to build an eidolon for a demon whose name you know. On a success, you create the eidolon; all stress marked against it is doubled.

MENTAL BARRIER. *You have trained your mind to become a fortress, and occult backlash will find no easy purchase there.* When you mark stress from casting an occult spell, roll a D3; reduce the stress you suffer by that amount.

MINOR INCURSION. [Occult] *You know a secret, forbidden rite: how to channel raw demonic power into the world.* Roll Compel+Occult whilst in contact with an eidolon to cast this spell. On a success, an

area the size of a house around the caster is filled with blistering unreality for the next minute or so, killing everyone, and everything, that it does not drive irrevocably mad. This includes you.

HIGH

BRAND CONDUIT. [Occult] *You have learned the dark art of branding another with your resonance, through whatever means, and they will act as your proxy.* Roll Fix+Occult to cast this spell on someone you have bound helpless before you. On a success, you have bound them to your occult resonance. By focusing yourself, you can see through their eyes, and you can cast occult spells through them, treating them as the point of origin. Through this, you can avoid the immediate effects of an incursion.

MAJOR INCURSION. [Occult] *You are in possession of one of the most destructive weapons in the known world. How will you use it?* As MINOR INCURSION, but it affects an area the size of a district.

CONSTRUCT GREATER EIDOLON. [Occult] *Using ancient techniques and modern cunning, you have the almost unique ability to craft an original, functioning eidolon.* This functions as CONSTRUCT LESSER EIDOLON, but the eidolon created takes stress normally.

OCCULT FALLOUT

If you suffer fallout as a result of casting an occult spell, being the target of an occult spell, or braving environments that are rife with ambient magical energy (the Heart, the Vermissian, a blood-witch's lair, etc) then you might suffer occult fallout. The GM should feel free to draw results from the table below when appropriate.

Some of the results below are marked as [Hex-Maladi]; these are infectious spells, or curses, that sit in your mind and wait until the right conditions are met before spontaneously casting themselves. Each time you cast the spell, the GM should roll a D6 – on a 6, someone else has contracted the disease as a result of your actions.

Removing occult fallout requires special training, and probably undergoing a painful process of blessing and purification at a temple.

MINOR

FLEETING MARK. [Occult] Until the next dawn, you bear a tell or mark that identifies the sorcery in your blood – horns, glowing eyes, glyphs wriggling over your skin, moths crawling up your throat, and so on. When you need someone to trust you or treat you kindly while you bear the mark, increase the difficulty of the roll by 1.

HEART ON YOUR SLEEVE. [Occult] Until the end of the next session, any lies you tell cause the truth to appear as a tattoo on your skin or a pattern on your clothing. These will fade over time.

UNLUCK CURSE. [Occult, Hex-Maladi] Once per session, when you roll at least one 10 on a dice roll, the GM may activate this curse; your highest

dice counts as a 1, instead, and some magical tell appears on your body to let you know it was the hex-maladi.

MODERATE

BONE-CURSE. [Occult, Hex-Maladi] If you ever mark 3 or more stress to Reputation, you cast this spell upon the person who the GM feels caused you to lose face; their bone-marrow briefly turns to writhing centipedes and stinging ants, causing D8 stress and filling them with excruciating pain.

FAERY-CURSE. [Occult] If you ever touch unforged iron or cross running water, mark D6 stress. If you touch forged iron or cross still water, mark D3 stress.

WITCH'S MARK. [Occult] As FLEETING MARK, but the change is permanent.

SPELL MAGNET. [Occult] Your soul's resonance rings in time with magic, and it is drawn to you. If a nearby target marks stress from being the subject of a spell, halve the stress between you and them.

NEEDLE-TOOTHED CHILD. [Occult, Hex-Maladi] When you sleep, you cast this spell. A long-limbed, bony, needle-toothed creature unfolds from your mouth and crawls out into the streets to wreak havoc, returning to creep back inside you before you awaken. At first it will only get up to minor mischief (gutting cats, desecrating altars, etc) but it will soon graduate to assault, theft and murder. It has your face. Killing it will not stop the infection; it will crawl out of you again the next

time you fall asleep. You can trap the thing, potentially – but it is canny, and can escape from most cages given time, or simply starve itself to death.

If cornered, the creature has the following profile:

Resistance: 4
Difficulty: 0
Equipment: Needle-teeth and filthy claws (D3, Ongoing D3)

SEVERE

FETCH. [Occult] A copy of you, bearing some but not all of your memories and mannerisms, is trying to sneak into your life and replace you. It is made of broken springs, animal bones and old clothes glamoured to look like you, and without specialist training and magic, few will be able to tell the difference between you and it. It will stop at nothing to permanently replace you.

NIGHT TERRORS. [Occult] A powerful blood-witch has taken notice of your powers, and wishes to recruit you to her coven. If you refuse, or do not work hard enough towards becoming a blood-witch in her thrall, she will crouch on your chest each night and watch you sleep, or try to sleep, and you will not be able to move until the morning. While in this mad, sleep-deprived state, all stress removed as a result of refreshing or other methods is halved.