

Fate's Edge: The Whispered Grimoire

A Collection of Rituals, Rites, and Forbidden Arts

Compiled by Veyla the Hedge-Witch

Servant of Ikasha, She Who Sleeps Within Shadow

With Notes from Rukhir, My Raven Familiar

Tenth Moon of the Crimson Year

From the Press of Whispered Pages, Theona

The Whispered Grimoire
A Collection of Shadow-Rituals and Forbidden Arts

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Tenth Moon of the Crimson Year

*To Rukhir, my shadow-brother,
whose black wings carry secrets
and whose beak pecks at truth
until it bleeds revelation.*

*To Ikasha, Mistress of Whispers,
who teaches us that in shadow
we find the spaces between
where power truly dwells.*

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Chapter 1

To the Seeker of Shadows

Let me begin, dear reader, with a warning whispered in the dark hours before dawn, when the veil between worlds grows thin as a spider's silk. What you hold in your hands is not mere parchment and ink, but a gathering of truths that the light-bound would burn, the law-bound would imprison, and the truth-bound would deny.

I am Veyla, hedge-witch of the Tulkani, daughter of wandering merchants who taught me that the greatest treasures are those hidden in plain sight. My path led me to the worship of Ikasha, She Who Sleeps Within Shadow, and through her dark blessings, I have learned that power flows not from the sun's harsh light, but from the spaces between the stars.

Rukhir tells me you are worthy of these words. He has been watching you, as ravens watch all who walk the paths between. "She moves with the caution of one who knows that shadows have teeth," he caws to me. "Her footsteps make no sound on the stones of secrecy." For a raven to speak of caution is high praise indeed.

The rituals contained within these pages are not for the faint of heart or the weak of spirit. Each one demands a price, for Ikasha's gifts are never given freely. But for those with the wit to pay and the will to claim, they offer power that kings would kill for and gods would envy.

The Nature of Shadow-Magic

Shadow is not darkness, child of light. It is the space between what is and what could be, the pause between heartbeats where truth whispers its name. In my years of walking the twilight paths, I have learned that shadow-magic is not about casting spells in the traditional sense, but about opening doors that others have locked and forgotten.

Rukhir nods from his perch upon my shoulder. "The simple think shadow is absence," he says, preening his black feathers. "The wise know it is presence waiting to be acknowledged."

The Tulkani understand this better than most peoples. We are wanderers, yes, but we are also watchers. In our travels, we have learned that every culture hides its secrets in the spaces between words, and it is in those spaces that true power lies. The shadow-magics I present here are drawn from a dozen traditions, whispered to me by spirits, traded with other seekers, and discovered through my own communion with Ikasha.

The Price of Power

Before we begin, you must understand a fundamental truth: there is no such thing as free magic. The Utarans speak of balance, the Aeler of the deep laws, and the Wood-Elves of the cycle of giving and taking. In the tongue of my people, we say that every gift must be paid for in kind, and Ikasha's gifts are the most expensive of all.

Listen well to this, for it is the most important lesson I can teach you:

The shadow that you command
Will command you in return.
The secret that you steal
Will steal a piece of you.
The truth that you uncover
Will uncover truths about yourself
That you may not wish to know.

Rukhir caws agreement. "I have seen wizards become slaves to their own spells," he tells me. "I have watched sorceresses consumed by the very shadows they thought to control."

This is why I have included not just the rituals themselves, but the warnings, the preparations, and the aftermaths. Each ritual in this grimoire comes with three sections: The Weaving (how to perform the ritual), The Price (what you must give), and The Whisper (what Ikasha will whisper to you in return).

The Tools of the Shadow-Witch

You will find that shadow-magic requires few material components compared to the flashy spells of the light-wielders. Our power comes from understanding rather than force, from knowing rather than doing. However, there are certain tools that every shadow-witch should possess:

- **A black candle** - Not for light, but for focus. The flame should gutter and dance as if in a wind that others cannot feel.
- **A mirror of dark glass** - To see what others cannot see, and to guard against what would see you.
- **A raven's feather** - For writing in shadow-ink that only the initiated can read.
- **A small pouch of shadow-salt** - Gathered at the crossroads when the moon is new, used to mark boundaries and ward off unwanted attention.
- **A whisper-stone** - A smooth stone that has been held in the mouth during a silence, used to store and release spoken secrets.

Rukhir has brought me a bone from a hanged man, which he claims is essential for certain workings. I have not yet had the courage to use it.

The Structure of This Work

This grimoire is divided into four sections, each corresponding to a different aspect of shadow-magic:

1. **Whispers and Secrets** - Rituals for gathering information, speaking across distances, and uncovering hidden truths.
2. **Shadows and Veils** - Rituals for concealment, transformation, and movement through spaces that should not exist.
3. **Dreams and Nightmares** - Rituals for entering the dream-realm, influencing sleepers, and drawing power from the unconscious mind.
4. **Bargains and Bindings** - Rituals for making pacts with spirits, binding servants, and compelling others to your will.

Each ritual is presented in the same format:

Name of the Ritual Purpose: What the ritual accomplishes

Weaving: Step-by-step instructions for performance

Price: What must be sacrificed or risked

Whisper: What Ikasha grants in return

Warning: Important cautions and potential consequences

Rukhir insists I add this final note: "Not all who seek power are worthy of it, and not all who are worthy seek it. Be certain which you are before you turn the next page."

Now, if you have read this far and still wish to continue, then perhaps you are ready for what lies ahead. Light your black candle, settle into your chair, and prepare to learn the arts that others fear to name.

But remember, dear seeker - once you have seen into the shadows, you can never claim to walk in the light again.

Chapter 2

Whispers and Secrets

The Art of Listening

In the Tulkani tradition, we say that the greatest magic is not in speaking, but in hearing what others dare not say. The rituals in this chapter will teach you to listen to the whispers that exist in the spaces between words, to read the truth in a person's eyes, and to gather secrets that would make emperors tremble.

Rukhir has been very quiet this evening. I think he senses that we are approaching dangerous territory. Even ravens have their secrets, it seems.

The Listening Shadow Purpose: To hear conversations from great distances, particularly those that the speakers believe are private.

Weaving:

1. Light a black candle at the darkest hour of night, when even the moon has set.
2. Take a raven's feather and whisper into it the name of the person whose words you wish to hear.
3. Bury the feather beneath your doorstep, or in the earth beneath a window where your target might pass.
4. For three nights, you must dream of shadows dancing. Do not fight these dreams - embrace them.
5. On the fourth night, the words you seek will come to you on the wind, spoken in a voice like rustling leaves.

Price: You will hear one conversation that you desperately wish not to hear. This knowledge will burden you until you either act upon it or deliberately forget it.

Whisper: Ikasha will grant you the ability to distinguish truth from lies in any spoken word, but only for as long as you hold your breath.

Warning: Do not use this ritual to spy upon those who are innocent of wrongdoing. Ikasha favors those who seek justice, not those who indulge in cruelty.

Rukhir shifts uncomfortably. "I have seen this ritual drive people to madness," he mutters. "The knowledge comes with the weight of responsibility."

The Bonding Ceremony

A ritual to strengthen connections between companions

Purpose: Create a permanent bond between party members that provides mechanical and narrative benefits

Participants: All willing party members (3-5 helpers maximum)

Channel Phase (Wits + Bonds):

1. Each participant holds an object representing their connection to the group
2. Perform a shared activity (sharing a meal, telling stories, etc.) while focusing on the bond
3. Roll Wits + Bonds skill for each participant

Weave Phase (Presence + Sway):

1. Participants speak words of commitment to each other
2. Create a physical symbol of the bond (knotting cords, mixing earth from homelands, etc.)
3. Roll Presence + Sway for the primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 CP:** Temporary tension between bonded members (-1 die to cooperative actions for Significant Time)
- **3-4 CP:** The bond creates unwanted attention from external forces; party generates 2 CP whenever they act as a group for the next session
- **5+ CP:** All existing bonds between party members are temporarily severed; party suffers -2 dice to all social rolls for Significant Time

Effect:

- Bonded members gain +1 die when aiding each other for one arc
- Can sense each other's general emotional state across any distance for one arc
- One "bond-mate" can be called upon for aid once per session (counts as Cap 3 follower for that action)

Rukhir preens thoughtfully. "I have seen flocks torn apart by too-strong bonds," he caws. "The heart that beats as one can also break as one."

Duration: One full arc, renewable with simpler weekly reaffirmation

Casting Time: Significant Time (ritual requires shared meal and ceremony)

The Sanctuary Consecration

A ritual to create a safe haven from supernatural threats

Purpose: Establish a protected area that repels hostile supernatural entities

Primary Caster: Spirit 4+, Lore 3+

Helpers: 2-3 participants with relevant skills (Lore, Faith, Arcana)

Channel Phase (Spirit + Faith/Lore):

1. Gather materials sacred to the caster's beliefs or relevant to the threats faced
2. Consecrate the space through prayer, meditation, or ritual preparation
3. Roll Spirit + relevant skill for each participant

Weave Phase (Wits + Ritual):

1. Perform the consecration ceremony within the designated area
2. Create permanent wards using blessed/sacred materials
3. Roll Wits + Ritual for the primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 CP:** The sanctuary attracts the attention of other supernatural entities; 2 CP added to next supernatural encounter
- **3-4 CP:** The protection creates a vulnerability elsewhere; choose one party member who becomes more susceptible to supernatural influence for one session
- **5+ CP:** The ritual backfires, making the area supernaturally dangerous; the space becomes a beacon for hostile entities

Effect:

- Area becomes sanctified ground (Sanctity +2) against specified supernatural threats for one month
- Hostile entities of the specified type suffer -2 dice to actions within the area
- Area provides +1 die to resistance rolls against specified supernatural effects for one month
- Party members resting within the sanctuary recover 1 additional Fatigue per night

Rukhir circles the perimeter warily. "Sacred spaces are like nests," he observes. "They keep some things out, but they also keep you in."

Duration: One month, renewable with weekly maintenance (10 minutes of ritual work)

Casting Time: Significant Time (requires preparation and ceremony)

The Memory Reconstruction

A ritual to recover lost or suppressed memories

Purpose: Retrieve information from a participant's suppressed or forgotten memories

Primary Caster: Wits 4+, Arcana 3+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with Insight or Lore skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Arcana):

1. Participant enters a deep meditative state
2. Primary caster prepares scrying tools or ritual components
3. Roll Wits + Arcana for primary caster, Wits + Insight/Lore for helpers

Weave Phase (Spirit + Insight):

1. Guide the participant through their memories using guided visualization
2. Use ritual tools to stabilize recovered memories
3. Roll Spirit + Insight for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 CP:** Recovered memories are fragmented or unreliable; information may be misleading
- **3-4 CP:** The ritual triggers traumatic memories causing temporary psychological effects; participant suffers -1 die to social rolls for Significant Time
- **5+ CP:** Participant becomes obsessed with recovered memories; must make Spirit + Resolve (DV 2) rolls to act against the memory's implications for one session

Effect:

- Recover one specific memory or set of memories from the participant's past (immediate)
- Memory clarity depends on success margin (partial recall vs. complete recovery)
- Participant gains +2 dice on related knowledge rolls for this scene
- GM reveals one piece of information that connects the recovered memory to current events

Rukhir tilts his head. "The past is a cage made of whispers," he says. "Some birds prefer to forget they were ever caged."

Duration: Memory effects last for this scene; knowledge benefits last for this session

Casting Time: Some Time (requires deep meditation and guided ritual)

The Shadow Passage

A ritual to travel through the Ways Between

Purpose: Transport the party across great distances through shadow-realm shortcuts

Primary Caster: Wits 5+, Arcana 4+, Spirit 3+

Helpers: All party members (spiritual support during the journey)

Channel Phase (Spirit + Arcana):

1. Create a circle of shadow-conductive materials (obsidian, black candles, etc.)
2. Each participant contributes a drop of blood or lock of hair to the circle
3. Roll Spirit + Arcana for primary caster, Spirit + Resolve for helpers

Weave Phase (Wits + Ritual):

1. Perform the opening ceremony to breach the shadow-realm
2. Lead the party through the passage while maintaining the connection
3. Roll Wits + Ritual for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 CP:** The journey takes longer than expected, arriving at an inconvenient time (advance relevant clocks by 1 segment)
- **3-4 CP:** The party arrives in a slightly different location than intended; position for first action is Risky instead of Controlled
- **5-6 CP:** Something follows the party back from the shadow-realm; introduce a persistent supernatural threat that tracks the party
- **7+ CP:** The party finds themselves in the Ways Between.

Effect:

- Transport party instantly across great distances (anywhere on the same continent) for this scene
- Arrival position is Controlled for planned destinations, Risky for improvised ones
- +1 effect on the first action after arrival (momentum from the journey)
- Party is immune to fatigue from the travel itself
- Cannot be used more than once per week without increasing backlash severity

Rukhir fluffs his feathers nervously. "The spaces between spaces have their own hunger," he warns. "They take payment in ways you won't expect until it's too late."

Duration: Instantaneous travel with lingering effects for this scene

Casting Time: Significant Time (complex ritual requiring careful preparation)

The Geas of Binding

A ritual to create unbreakable oaths or compulsions

Purpose: Bind a willing or unwilling target to a specific course of action

Primary Caster: Presence 4+, Spirit 4+, Lore 3+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with relevant cultural or religious knowledge

Channel Phase (Spirit + Lore):

1. Prepare the binding materials according to cultural tradition
2. Research the target's nature and vulnerabilities
3. Roll Spirit + Lore for primary caster, relevant skill for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Command):

1. Perform the binding ceremony with the target present
2. Speak the terms of the geas in the appropriate ritual language
3. Roll Presence + Command for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 CP:** The geas has unintended loopholes or consequences; target finds creative ways to technically fulfill the geas while undermining its intent
- **3-4 CP:** The caster becomes partially bound by the same geas; must also follow a related constraint for Significant Time
- **5+ CP:** The binding creates a spiritual debt that attracts unwanted supernatural attention; 3 CP added to next supernatural encounter involving the caster

Effect:

- Target is compelled to follow the terms of the geas or suffer spiritual consequences for one arc
- Breaking the geas requires a successful Spirit + Resolve roll (DV 4+) each time
- Failure to follow the geas causes 1 CP per day of violation
- Geas can be complex but must be clearly defined (no "be good" - specify actions)
- Willing targets suffer reduced backlash; unwilling targets may resist with opposed roll

Rukhir caws sharply. "Words are chains made of air," he says. "But they bind tighter than iron when spoken with true power."

Duration: One full arc, permanent unless specifically countered by equal magic

Casting Time: Significant Time (formal ceremony requiring proper ritual components)

The Communion of the Ancients

A ritual to speak with the spirits of the dead

Purpose: Contact and communicate with deceased individuals or ancestral spirits

Primary Caster: Spirit 4+, Lore 3+, Faith 2+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with spiritual sensitivity or relevant cultural knowledge

Channel Phase (Spirit + Faith):

1. Prepare the ritual space according to cultural traditions for contacting the dead
2. Offer appropriate sacrifices or prayers to the spirits
3. Roll Spirit + Faith for primary caster, Spirit + Lore for helpers

Weave Phase (Wits + Lore):

1. Open the channel to the spirit realm
2. Guide the summoned spirit toward communication
3. Roll Wits + Lore for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 CP:** The contacted spirit is confused or unhelpful; information provided is vague or misleading
- **3-4 CP:** Other, less welcome spirits are drawn to the ritual; 2 CP added to next supernatural encounter
- **5+ CP:** The ritual creates a permanent spiritual connection that cannot be easily severed; caster suffers -1 die to all social rolls involving living beings for one session

Effect:

- Communicate with one specific deceased individual or type of ancestral spirit for Some Time
- Spirit can provide information, advice, or warnings about specified topics
- Spirit's knowledge is limited by their mortal understanding and perspective
- Communication lasts for a number of minutes equal to the success margin
- Spirit may request a favor or service in return for their cooperation

Rukhir shivers, feathers ruffling. "The dead remember everything," he whispers. "But they forget what it means to be kind to the living."

Duration: Some Time (ritual communication period)

Casting Time: Significant Time (preparation and ceremony required)

The Ward of Protection

A ritual to create lasting magical defenses

Purpose: Establish permanent or semi-permanent protective wards

Primary Caster: Wits 4+, Arcana 3+, relevant cultural skill

Helpers: 2-3 participants with Craft, Engineering, or cultural ritual skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Arcana):

1. Gather materials appropriate to the type of protection desired
2. Prepare the location where wards will be placed
3. Roll Wits + Arcana for primary caster, relevant skills for helpers

Weave Phase (Wits + Craft/Engineering):

1. Inscribe, construct, or otherwise create the physical components of the wards
2. Activate the wards through ritual consecration
3. Roll Wits + relevant skill for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 CP:** The wards have a minor vulnerability or require specific activation conditions; wards function at -1 effectiveness until properly calibrated
- **3-4 CP:** The wards attract the attention of entities they're designed to repel; 2 CP added to next encounter with specified threat type
- **5+ CP:** The wards backfire, creating the opposite effect or affecting unintended targets; wards harm allies instead of protecting them for Significant Time

Effect:

- Create wards that provide +2 dice to defense against specified threats for one month
- Wards can cover an area, protect specific individuals, or guard objects
- Duration: One month, renewable with monthly maintenance rituals
- Wards can be complex (multiple effects) but each additional effect increases backlash risk
- Wards can be detected by those with appropriate skills and may reveal the caster's presence

Rukhir examines the warding materials critically. "Boundaries are promises written in power," he observes. "But promises can be broken, and power can be hungry."

Duration: One month, renewable with weekly maintenance

Casting Time: Significant Time (complex construction and consecration process)

The Veil of Misdirection

A ritual to conceal the party's true nature and intentions

Purpose: Create illusions and false impressions that mask the party's activities

Primary Caster: Wits 4+, Arcana 3+, Deception 2+

Helpers: 2-3 participants with Performance, Deception, or cultural masking skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Deception):

1. Prepare illusion components (cosmetics, costumes, symbolic objects)
2. Each participant contributes a personal item that represents their true self
3. Roll Wits + Deception for primary caster, relevant skills for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Performance):

1. Perform the masquerade ritual, weaving false identities around each participant
2. Create shared illusion patterns that reinforce the group's fabricated story
3. Roll Presence + Performance for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 CP:** The illusions have minor flaws or inconsistencies; -1 die to social rolls when under scrutiny
- **3-4 CP:** The false identities begin to influence the participants' behavior; party members must make Wits + Resolve (DV 2) rolls to act against their assumed personas for Significant Time
- **5+ CP:** The ritual creates a feedback loop where the false identities become partially real; participants suffer identity confusion and -2 dice to rolls involving their true skills for one session

Effect:

- Party assumes completely fabricated identities that are believable to casual observers for one session
- Each participant gains +2 dice to Deception and Performance rolls related to their assumed identity
- Social interactions start Controlled when the false identities are relevant
- Magical detection of true identities suffers -2 dice for Significant Time
- Party can coordinate complex deceptions as a group action with +1 effect

Rukhir preens his feathers with satisfaction. "I have worn many faces," he crows. "But I always remember which one is mine."

Duration: One full session, requiring daily renewal (10 minutes of ritual work)

Casting Time: Significant Time (elaborate preparation and group ceremony)

Chapter 3

Part II: The Shadow's Embrace

On Possession and the Compromised Soul

The deepest shadows, dear reader, are not those that fall from candlelight or moonbeam. They are the darkness that grows within, fed by our own fears, our own compromises, our own willingness to trade pieces of ourselves for power.

Rukhir has not spoken much of late. I think he senses the weight of what I must record in these pages. Even ravens, I have learned, can be touched by shadows that should remain buried.

In all my years walking the twilight paths, I have seen many seekers of power become its prisoners. The line between master and servant is thinner than spider's silk, and it snaps more easily than most would believe. When I speak of possession, I do not merely mean the crude taking of bodies by wandering spirits—though that too has its place in the dark arts. No, the possession I warn you of is subtler, more insidious, and far more dangerous.

Player Character Possession: This is not a condition to be taken lightly, nor one that should ever be inflicted without the player's consent and understanding. Possession represents the ultimate compromise of character agency—the point at which external forces have so thoroughly corrupted or influenced a character that they are no longer fully in control of their actions.

The Compromised condition of possession manifests in stages:

- **Stage 1 (Influenced):** Character begins to hear whispers, feel urges, or experience compulsions that are not their own. They retain full agency but must resist temptation through appropriate rolls.
- **Stage 2 (Controlled):** Character occasionally acts against their will or better judgment. The possessing force can compel specific actions once per session, which the player may resist with a Spirit + Resolve roll.
- **Stage 3 (Possessed):** Character becomes a puppet of the possessing entity. The GM takes control of the character for extended periods, though major life-or-death decisions should still involve player consultation.

"Possession is not defeat," Rukhir finally speaks, his voice unusually grave. "It is transformation. And transformation, my dear Veyla, is always a kind of death."

GM Guidance on Possession:

Possession should never be used as a punitive measure or to railroad players. It is a narrative tool of last resort, representing the culmination of a character's moral and spiritual decline. Before imposing possession, the GM should:

1. Ensure the player understands and consents to the possibility
2. Provide multiple opportunities for the character to resist or break free
3. Make the descent into possession a gradual process with clear warning signs
4. Offer meaningful ways for other characters to help their companion
5. Respect the player's agency even when the character is compromised

The path to possession should be paved with choices—each one a small surrender, each one making the next compromise easier. A character who deliberately seeks dark power should understand that they are playing with forces that demand payment in ways they may not anticipate.

The Ritual of Exorcism

When possession takes root, when the shadow has grown too deep, there remains one path to salvation: the Ritual of Exorcism. But know this—exorcism is not a simple spell cast and forgotten. It is warfare. It is negotiation. It is sometimes surrender.

Purpose: To forcibly remove a possessing entity from a possessed subject

Primary Caster: Spirit 4+, Faith 3+, Lore 2+

Helpers: 2+ participants with Faith, Spirit, or relevant cultural/religious skills

The Exorcism Encounter:

Exorcism functions as a special encounter with its own clock mechanics. The ritual creates a contested space where the caster's will battles the possessing entity for control of the subject's soul.

Exorcism Clock: 2 + Subject's Tier in segments (minimum 4 segments)

Each segment represents a phase of spiritual combat requiring:

1. **Channel Phase (Spirit + Faith):** Primary caster and helpers focus their spiritual energy
2. **Weave Phase (Presence + Command):** Direct confrontation with the possessing entity
3. **Response Phase:** The entity fights back—participants are Exhausted and cannot act for One Moment

Entity Response Actions: During each Response Phase, the possessing entity may attempt actions that, if not resisted, advance the Exorcism Clock:

- **Whispers of Doubt:** Tempt participants with promises or threats
- **Physical Manifestation:** Cause harm to participants or the subject
- **Spiritual Assault:** Drain spiritual energy from participants
- **Reality Distortion:** Create illusions or false visions to confuse the ritual

Participants may resist these actions with appropriate rolls, but failure allows the clock to advance by one segment.

Defensive Support: Non-participating allies may concentrate on defense, providing +1 die to resistance rolls for each defender. However, defenders cannot take other actions during the exorcism.

Ritual Failure: If the Exorcism Clock fills completely before the ritual succeeds, the exorcism fails with severe consequences:

- The possessing entity grows stronger (+1 die to all future possession attempts)
- The subject suffers additional corruption (advance Sanity loss or equivalent)
- All participants suffer Fatigue 2 from spiritual exhaustion
- The entity gains knowledge of the participants' weaknesses

For Player Characters: When a PC becomes possessed and exorcism fails, they gain complications based on the possessing entity's Tier:

- **Tier I-II Entities:** 1 CP banked each session from the entity's influence
- **Tier III-IV Entities:** 2 CP banked each session from the entity's influence
- **Tier V+ Entities:** 3+ CP banked each session from the entity's influence

These banked CP represent the entity's ongoing influence and may manifest as:

- Compulsive behaviors or speech patterns
- Nightmares or visions that provide the entity information
- Uncontrolled moments where the entity acts through the character
- Social consequences as others notice the character's changed nature

Rukhir shivers, and I realize his feathers have gone dull. "Even I," he says quietly, "have felt the touch of things that would wear me like a glove. The difference, Veyla, is that I chose to be worn."

Player Agency Preservation: While possessed characters suffer ongoing complications, their players must always retain meaningful agency:

- Players choose when to resist the entity's influence
- Major character decisions remain with the player

- The entity cannot force the character to betray core relationships without resistance
- Redemption paths should always remain possible, however difficult

The Ritual of Exorcism is not merely about casting spells—it is about the fundamental struggle between light and shadow, freedom and control, self and other. Approach it with the gravity it deserves, and remember that sometimes, the greatest mercy is to help a friend find peace, even if that peace requires them to let go of everything they were.

Duration: Variable encounter time, typically 20-30 minutes of game time per segment

Casting Time: Extended ritual requiring continuous focus and participation

Mist-Road Veil

Draws a low fog that dulls footfalls and blurs silhouettes along a chosen path

Purpose: Create concealing mist that aids stealthy movement along a specific route

Primary Caster: Wits 3+, Arcana 2+, Survival 2+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with Survival or Stealth skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Survival):

1. Gather water sources and cooling materials (damp cloth, morning dew, etc.)
2. Trace the path where mist is desired with light touch
3. Roll Wits + Survival for primary caster, relevant skills for helpers

Weave Phase (Wits + Arcana):

1. Channel moisture into the air along the designated path
2. Whisper words of concealment in the local tongue
3. Roll Wits + Arcana for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 CP:** Mist is patchy or reveals more than it conceals; -1 die to Stealth rolls
- **3-4 CP:** Mist attracts unwanted attention from creatures that hunt in fog; 2 CP added to next encounter
- **5+ CP:** Mist becomes supernaturally thick, disorienting even the caster; party suffers -2 dice to navigation for Significant Time

Effect:

- Creates concealing fog along a path up to 100 yards long for Significant Time
- Party members moving along the path gain +2 dice to Stealth rolls
- Sound is muffled by 50% within the mist

- Non-magical tracking becomes nearly impossible within the affected area

Rukhir circles the area warily. "Mist hides the hunter," he caws, "but it also hides the hunted. Choose your prey wisely."

Duration: Significant Time (approximately 1 hour)

Casting Time: Some Time (10-15 minutes of preparation and ritual)

Bell of Truce

Rings a hospitality note that compels all within earshot to parley before violence

Purpose: Create a magical compulsion for peaceful negotiation before combat

Primary Caster: Presence 4+, Spirit 3+, Command 2+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with Diplomacy or Performance skills

Channel Phase (Spirit + Command):

1. Obtain a bell or chime of significant quality
2. Focus on the concept of hospitality and peaceful resolution
3. Roll Spirit + Command for primary caster, relevant skills for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Performance):

1. Ring the bell with specific intent and rhythm
2. Speak words of truce in the old tongue
3. Roll Presence + Performance for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 CP:** The compulsion is weak or easily resisted; -1 die to Diplomacy rolls for next social encounter
- **3-4 CP:** The bell's influence extends beyond intended area, affecting neutral parties; 2 CP added to crowd-related complications
- **5+ CP:** The compulsion backfires, making the caster appear weak or cowardly; -2 dice to Command rolls for one session

Effect:

- All intelligent beings within 200 yards must make Spirit + Resolve (DV 3) to initiate violence for Some Time
- Successful resistance grants +1 die to subsequent social rolls with that individual
- Failure to parley first creates 2 CP backlash when violence finally erupts
- The bell's tone marks a sacred space of temporary sanctuary

Rukhir preens. "Even warriors must pause to hear beautiful sounds," he observes. "It is in that pause that wisdom often speaks."

Duration: Some Time (approximately 30 minutes)

Casting Time: Some Time (ritual ringing and proclamation)

Lantern Weir

Stitches light into a soft fence that guides crowds and resists panic surges

Purpose: Create a barrier of light that guides movement and prevents chaotic rushes

Primary Caster: Wits 3+, Arcana 3+, Performance 2+

Helpers: 2-3 participants with Performance or Command skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Performance):

1. Gather multiple light sources (lanterns, candles, etc.)
2. Arrange participants in a line or curve to form the barrier
3. Roll Wits + Performance for primary caster, relevant skills for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Arcana):

1. Weave the light sources together into a unified barrier
2. Speak words of guidance and protection
3. Roll Presence + Arcana for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 CP:** The light barrier flickers or has gaps; -1 die to Crowd management rolls
- **3-4 CP:** The barrier attracts attention from the wrong crowd; 2 CP added to next social encounter
- **5+ CP:** The light becomes blinding rather than guiding; all within 50 yards suffer -1 die to perception rolls

Effect:

- Creates a 50-foot barrier of soft, guiding light for Significant Time
- Crowd movement is directed and calmed; +2 dice to Crowd management rolls
- Panic effects are reduced by 2 CP for those within the barrier
- The barrier provides dim illumination equivalent to moonlight

Rukhir examines the light sources critically. "Light is a gentle master," he says, "but it demands respect from both those who wield it and those who would flee from it."

Duration: Significant Time (approximately 1 hour)

Casting Time: Some Time (15-20 minutes of arrangement and ritual)

Oath of Shared Breath

Binds the party's rhythm; fatigue spreads thinly among all who consent

Purpose: Distribute fatigue and harm among willing party members

Primary Caster: Presence 4+, Spirit 3+, Bonds 2+

Helpers: All willing party members (2+ participants required)

Channel Phase (Spirit + Bonds):

1. All participants join hands or touch in a circle
2. Each participant speaks their willingness to share the burden
3. Roll Spirit + Bonds for primary caster, Spirit + Resolve for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Command):

1. Weave the participants' life forces together through ritual words
2. Create a shared rhythm of breath and heartbeat
3. Roll Presence + Command for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 CP:** The sharing is uneven, favoring some over others; one participant suffers +1 Fatigue
- **3-4 CP:** The bond creates unwanted emotional connections; party suffers -1 die to social rolls with outsiders for Significant Time
- **5+ CP:** The sharing becomes too intimate; participants can sense each other's thoughts and emotions for one session

Effect:

- All willing participants share Fatigue and Harm equally for one session
- Total Fatigue is divided by number of participants (rounded up)
- Harm from attacks is distributed among all participants
- Participants can sense each other's general health and location within 100 yards

Rukhir tilts his head. "The heart that beats alone," he says, "can stop alone. But hearts that beat together... those are harder to silence."

Duration: One full session

Casting Time: Some Time (ritual circle and shared oath)

River's Favor

Coaxes currents to slacken at a ford or quay so boats and rafts pass cleanly

Purpose: Calm water currents to aid safe passage for watercraft

Primary Caster: Wits 3+, Arcana 2+, Survival 3+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with Survival or Pilot skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Survival):

1. Touch the water at the point of desired calm
2. Speak to the river's spirit or natural forces
3. Roll Wits + Survival for primary caster, relevant skills for helpers

Weave Phase (Spirit + Arcana):

1. Channel calming energy into the water
2. Create a path of gentle currents
3. Roll Spirit + Arcana for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 CP:** The calm is temporary or localized; -1 die to Pilot rolls
- **3-4 CP:** The river's natural flow is disrupted elsewhere; 2 CP added to next water-related encounter
- **5+ CP:** The ritual angers local water spirits; introduce a water-based supernatural threat

Effect:

- Creates a 100-foot stretch of calm water for Significant Time
- Watercraft gain +2 dice to Pilot rolls within the affected area
- Currents are reduced by 50% within the calm zone
- Small debris and obstacles are pushed to the edges of the calm area

Rukhir drinks from the river cautiously. "Water remembers promises," he says, "but it also remembers betrayals. Be gentle in your asking."

Duration: Significant Time (approximately 1 hour)

Casting Time: Some Time (communion with the water and ritual work)

Chapter 4

Rites of the Outer Spheres

Out there, beyond the lamplight and the last safe mile of road, the world unfolds into angles that do not ask permission to exist. Some call them the outer spheres; I call them the *places that look back*. If you would traffic with such places and the minds that dwell there, you will not do so by reciting tidy cantrips. You will bargain. You will invite. You will bind yourself as surely as you bind them.

Rukhir clicks his beak and tilts one midnight eye at you. "She thinks she is ready to be kept," he croaks, "but does she know what it means to be kept?"

These pages gather what the temple fires failed to burn: names that answer when called, diagrams that hum under the skin, rites that bear the weight of attention. Do not mistake them for common spellwork. A rite is a door you open with your own breath and blood, a vow you sign with the hours of your life.

Two Ways to Hold a Thread

There are two roads by which a mortal may seat a rite in the bones:

- **Ink and Iron: The Codex.** A book that knows you back. You will oil its hinges, press its leaves, keep its cipher fed with your hours. In return, it remembers the shapes that make the world listen.
- **Flesh and Feather: The Thiasos.** A companion who has *already* heard a name you dare not say aloud. It is a mouth you borrow and a mirror you must feed.

Choose one. **Only one.** Those who try to carry both find their hands too full to grasp the next ledge.

"Two cups at once and you drown," says Rukhir. "Pick a vessel; sip with care."

If you keep a Codex, you will attend it. A neglected book sulks; a compromised one betrays. If you bind a Thiasos, you will watch its shadows and name its hungers. Either way, you do not walk alone thereafter.

The Price the Spheres Prefer

Every calling across the veil is answered with a ledger. You may not hear the scratching of the quill at first, but the ink dries all the same. Each time you Invoke a rite, the one you call *notices*. Their notice is not love and not hate; it is gravity.

Power borrowed is power tallied;
A boon spent is a bell rung.
When the bell is full of echoes,
Something comes to listen.

When your tallies swell, the world arranges a lesson. Perhaps the sea decides it is done being polite. Perhaps a truth hounds you down the alley you thought was yours. Do not panic; do not run. Kneel, count the echoes, pay what must be paid, and move with care.

Do not hide your costs from yourself. Hide them from your enemies, perhaps, but never from your own ledger.

On Patrons and Their Proper Address

Call them Witness or Geometry, Sea or Serpent, Fire or Law, Bone or Dream, the Elsewhere or the Red Court—names are handles, not cages. Treat each with the grammar they prefer. Order listens to proofs. Shadows favor vows made without torches. Seas respect the traveler who brings a tide of their own.

“Say a thing as if the world already agrees,” Rukhir advises, “and half the time the world is too proud to argue.”

Each rite you will meet below is written with *The Weaving* (how to call), *The Price* (what will be marked), and *The Whisper* (what answer tends to come first). Read all three. Then read them again in a different mood.

Why You Must Not Serve Two Tables

You will ask me, as all clever fools do: *“Veyla, what if I keep both book and beast?”* And I will answer you as my aunt answered me: with silence, and a mirror.

A Codex demands *attention*; a Thiasos demands *presence*. Give both and you will split like spilled mercury. The outer spheres delight in halves because halves are easier to push. Choose. If one day you would change your choice, there is a knife for knots and a song for silence.

The Mercy of Severance

There are rites to bind, and there is one to *unbind*. I place it at the end of this gathering, under a black thread and a warning bell. We call it *Cut the Knot of Patronage*. It is not a betrayal to sever a cord that is choking you. It is a kind of piety.

“Mercy is a sharp thing,” says Rukhir, preening. “Only the kind learn to use it.”

Do not attempt severance in mockery or haste. Bring witnesses who will speak your name without flinching. Bring an emblem of how you first said *yes*. Bring enough quiet to hear the cord go slack.

How to Use What Follows

Begin with one thread only. Learn how it pulls when you pull it. When you Invoke, mark; when you are marked, answer. If you carry a Codex, *tend it*. If you walk with a Thiasos, *guard it*. When attention gathers like storm-smell on stone, step under an eave and wait for the first fat drop. Then choose whether to dance, or to shut the door and count your candles.

The spheres are not cruel. They are vast. Vastness feels like cruelty to those who will not look up. Look up. Then look back down and mind your footing.

If you are still reading, you are ready enough to begin. Turn the page, seeker. The doors do not open themselves—but they do not stay closed for those who learn the grammar of keys.

4.1 Design Premise

Warlocks (here: *Runekeepers*) leverage **Rites**—structured, named bargains with alien patrons and metaphysical forces. A Rite is not a spell; it does not use Channel/Weave. Instead, it runs on **Boons** and a **Patron Obligation Clock** that measures attention and debt.

Gating and Exclusivity

Choose *one* path at character build or via advancement:

1. **Talent: Thiasos Bond (Familiar).** You bind a supernatural attendant that serves as conduit. See §??.
2. **Asset: Codex of the Outer Sphere.** You keep a grimoire whose upkeep and study sustain specific Rites. See §??.

Mutual Exclusivity: A character cannot benefit from both a Thiasos Familiar and a Codex for Outer-Sphere Rites at the same time. If you later acquire the other, choose one *active*; the other becomes inert (no benefits) until you undergo **Exorcism of Patronage** (§??) or voluntarily dismiss one path during Downtime (GM approval).

4.2 Core Procedure: Invoking a Rite

Invoke: Spend 1 **Boon** and mark +1 **segment** on that Rite’s Obligation Clock.

While the Rite is in effect this scene, you may mark at most **two more** segments from the following triggers (each may occur once/scene per Rite):

1. **Push It:** You use the Rite's "*Push It*" rider (the bolder, alternative clause). *+1 segment.*
2. **Backlash:** A roll *aided by the Rite* results in a *Miss* or *Success & Cost*. *+1 segment.*

Cap: A single Rite can add at most **+3 segments** in a scene (Invoke + Push It + Backlash).
Clearing:

- During play, you may spend **1 Boon** to clear **1 segment** on that Rite.
- During Downtime, a *Maintained Codex of the Outer Sphere* clears **1 segment** from one associated Rite (§??).

Attention: When a Rite's Obligation Clock fills, the Patron's attention manifests as a new thread/complication appropriate to that Patron. Start a named thread and escalate per your standard pacing.

Tags for Each Rite List on every Rite: *Duration* (Action/Scene/Extended), *Range* (Self/Near/Zone), *Stacking* (Yes/No; list conflicts), *Push It* (what triggers the extra segment).

4.3 Character Options

4.3.1 Talent: Thiasos Bond (Familiar)

Cost: 6 XP

Type: General Talent

Effect: You bind a *Thiasos*—a supernatural familiar (shadow, homunculus, fae beast, clockwork sprite, etc.) keyed to *one* Patron. It may Assist actions involving that Patron's Rites (respect the +3 total Assist cap). The Thiasos follows Familiar rules for Exposure/Harm and *requires no upkeep*.

Limits: You cannot own or benefit from a *Codex of the Outer Sphere* while Thiasos Bond is active (see exclusivity above).

Risk Cue: If a single Rite marks 2+ segments in a scene, the Thiasos is endangered: mark *Exposure +1* on the familiar or suffer *Harm 1* on it (GM's choice).

4.3.2 Asset: Codex of the Outer Sphere

Type: Asset (Minor 4 XP / Standard 8 XP)

Scope: A Codex holds procedures for specific Rites (Minor: 1 Rite; Standard: 2–3 related Rites).

Upkeep: The Codex uses the Asset Condition track:

Maintained (full), **Neglected** (1 die to Invokes tied to this Codex; cannot clear segments in Downtime), **Compromised** (unavailable).

In Downtime, you may *Study the Codex* to restore it to *Maintained* and clear **1 segment** on *one* associated Rite. *On-screen* reshaping via the Codex (e.g., producing the right page or cipher at a dramatic moment) costs **1 Boon** as a standard Asset activation.

Limits: While you benefit from a Codex, you cannot gain or use a Thiasos Familiar.

4.3.3 Rite Costs (Learning)

Learn a Rite: 6–12 XP. Requires either *Thiasos Bond (Familiar)* or an appropriate *Codex*. High-stakes (12–14 XP) are typically Tier-gated at GM discretion.

4.4 Rites by Patron

Each Patron lists a sample trio (Low-Power, Standard, High-Stakes). All Invocations cost **1 Boon** unless noted.

4.4.1 The Witness (Observation & Truth)

Eyes in the Shadow (Low, 6 XP) *Duration: Scene; Range: Self; Stacking: No. Materials:* Obsidian focus; a drop of blood. **Effect:** Auto-succeed on one mundane Notice this scene *or* ask one yes/no about immediate surroundings. **Push It:** Also gain +1 die on all investigation rolls this scene.

Veil of the Unseen Observer (7 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Effect:* +2 dice to perception/investigation/recall; ask one specific factual question the GM must answer if knowable. **Push It:** Pierce one mundane disguise/obfuscation once.

Gaze of Absolute Truth (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Effect:* You cannot be lied to; see through illusions/disguises in Near; ask one “true nature” question about a magically altered subject. **Push It:** Extend to allies in Close for one beat.

4.4.2 The Sacred Geometry (Order & Pattern)

Find the Pattern (Low, 7 XP) *Action; Self; Yes (investigation only). Effect:* +1 die to decode patterns/codes/systems; re-roll one 1 on math/logic rolls. **Push It:** Upgrade effect by one step on a single roll.

Thread the Loom of Chance (9 XP) *Action; Self; No. Effect:* Re-roll *all* dice on one roll *or* downgrade *Miss/Partial* to *Success & Cost*. **Push It:** Treat one zone tag as favorable for this action.

Rewrite the Fundamental Equation (High, 13 XP) *Scene; Zone; No. Effect:* Declare one physics/magic rule different within a zone (no instant kills; GM veto for scene-enders). Once/scene, downgrade one *Miss* to *Success & Cost*. **Push It:** Affect a second adjacent zone for one beat.

4.4.3 Ikasha, She Who Sleeps (Latent Potential & Shadow)

Touch the Umbral Veil (Low, 6 XP) *Action; Self; Yes (stealth only).* **Effect:** Start *Controlled* on one Stealth roll or add +1 effect to hiding/moving quietly. **Push It:** Gain brief shadow-muffling (ignore one noisy tell).

Draw from the Umbral Reservoir (8 XP) *Action; Self or Ally; No.* **Effect:** +2 dice to stealth/deception/inner-reserve or clear *Fatigue 1* from target. **Push It:** Also gain one free escape attempt (position improves by one step).

Become the Shadow Itself (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Self; No.* **Effect:** Intangible to mundane harm; pass through small openings; +2 dice to Stealth; auto-succeed one escape. Cannot manipulate normal objects. **Push It:** Interact with a single bound object once.

4.4.4 Khemesh, the Kraken (Crushing Depths)

Grasp of the Minor Depth (Low, 7 XP) *Action; Near; Yes (move/drag only).* **Effect:** +1 effect to pull/drag/pressure or on a hit against you, force attacker to generate 1 CP (their suit). **Push It:** Impose *Off-Balance* (minor condition) on a target you move.

Command the Grasp of the Abyss (10 XP) *Action; Near; No.* **Effect:** Force one foe into *Desperate* position or +2 effect to destruction. **Push It:** Spread *Desperate* to a second engaged foe if the fiction supports it (water/pressure).

Command the Abyssal Maw (High, 13 XP) *Action; Zone; No.* **Effect:** Force all opponents in scene into *Desperate* if fictionally justified or +3 effect to pure destruction. **Push It:** Collapse cover or footing in one zone.

4.4.5 Raéyn of the Sea (Tides & Flux)

Read the Gentle Current (Low, 6 XP) *Action; Self; Yes (nav only).* **Effect:** +1 die to navigation/weather/flow or shift 1 CP (minor) to a different suit. **Push It:** Grant an ally +1 die on the next travel check.

Ride the Tides of Fate (8 XP) *Action; Self; No.* **Effect:** Shift one declared CP spend to a different suit or +1 die to water travel/change-navigation. **Push It:** Reduce one foe's effect by one step if they contest movement.

Call the Storm's Judgment (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Effect:** Name a target; environment opposes them: 1 die to actions and they generate CP on success involving exertion. Or clear all *Fatigue* in Near allies. **Push It:** Extend penalty to a second, related target.

4.4.6 The Clockwork Demon (Forbidden Tech & Entropy)

Whisper to the Gears (Low, 7 XP) *Action; Near; Yes (simple mech).* **Effect:** +1 die to simple mechanisms *or* make a broken simple device work once. **Push It:** Also gain +1 effect on this fix.

Wind the Gears of the Proscribed (9 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Effect:** Temporarily repair/enhance a device for the scene *or* +2 dice to Crafts/Engineering with forbidden methods. **Push It:** Add one extraordinary flourish (single beat).

Wind the Engine of Forbidden Knowledge (High, 13 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Effect:** Dramatically repair/create a complex device for a scene *or* +3 dice to forbidden engineering. **Push It:** Device exceeds specs for one action (obvious tell).

4.4.7 Isoka, Angel of Serpents (Change & Shedding)

Loosen the Old Skin (Low, 6 XP) *Scene; Self; Yes (resist only).* **Effect:** +1 die to resist an ongoing Condition this scene *or* re-roll one 1 on escape/evasion. **Push It:** Also ignore one minor movement penalty.

Shed the Skin of the Former Self (8 XP) *Scene; Self; No.* **Effect:** +2 dice to resist a named ongoing Condition; once/session declare a minor physical contingency retroactively. **Push It:** Clear a *temporary* identity-based minor Condition.

Complete Metamorphosis (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Self; No.* **Effect:** Full appearance/voice change; start *Controlled* on Deceive/Stealth; once/scene declare minor contingency retroactively. **Push It:** Also spoof scent/biometric for one check.

4.4.8 Inaea, Angel of the Spider (Webs & Fate)

Tie a Simple Knot (Low, 7 XP) *Action; Near; Yes (link once).* **Effect:** Declare two minor events linked; force 1 CP (suit chosen by GM) on a foe *or* grant +1 die later to a related roll. **Push It:** Pre-load the +1 as a held advantage this scene.

Weave the Strand of Inevitability (10 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Effect:** Link two actions: when A moves, B becomes vulnerable/entangled; typically forces CP or grants +2 dice to prediction/setup. **Push It:** Name a delayed beat where the link snaps tight.

Weave the Tapestry of Inevitability (High, 13 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Effect:** Name two targets; successes by one impose consequences on the other for the scene. **Push It:** Add a third minor linkage for one beat.

4.4.9 Mor'iraath, Demon of Fire (Consumption)

Spark of the Inner Flame (Low, 7 XP) *Action; Self; Yes (destruction/passion).* **Effect:** +1 effect to destruction/passion *or* ignore *Fatigue* 1 from a brief exertion. **Push It:** Add a searing tell (may shift one CP suit to Clubs).

Kindle the Ember of Annihilation (9 XP) *Action; Near; No.* **Effect:** Next damaging action gains *Severe* if it hits *or* +2 effect to pure destruction. **Push It:** Ignite a hazardous tag in the scene.

Unleash the Ember of Total Annihilation (High, 13 XP) *Action; Zone; No.* **Effect:** Next damaging action gains *Critical* if it hits *or* +3 effect to catastrophic destruction; may ignore first two *Fatigue* from one burst. **Push It:** Shockwave escalates collateral one step.

4.4.10 Mykkiel, Angel of Law (Edict & Process)

Invoke the Letter of the Law (Low, 6 XP) *Action; Self; Yes (authority only).* **Effect:** +1 die when acting as authority/enforcing a known rule *or* force a successful minor action against you to either accept a small narrative consequence or re-roll at 1 die. **Push It:** Name the statute; gain +1 effect on compliance.

Proclaim the Edict of the Justiciar (8 XP) *Scene; Self; No.* **Effect:** +1 die to Command/Diplomacy while enforcing a known law *or* force a foe who just succeeded against you to “pay the price” (minor immediate consequence or re-roll at 1 die). **Push It:** Your edict covers allies in Close for one exchange.

Declare the Judgement of the Justiciar (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Effect:** +2 dice to authority actions; opponents who violate clear principles generate *Hearts* CP; once/scene, force a foe to accept a significant immediate consequence or re-roll at 2 dice. **Push It:** Sanctify the venue for one scene tag (lawful).

4.4.11 Varnek Karn, the Bone King (Death & Dominion)

Whisper to Restless Spirits (Low, 6 XP) *Action; Near; Yes (death sites).* **Effect:** +1 die to recent-death investigation *or* ask one yes/no about a death in the last day. **Push It:** Sense nearest unquiet grave.

Command the Restless Dead (9 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Effect:** Command minor undead up to your *Arcana* (treat as Cap 3 follower swarm; Spades-leaning complications) *or* +2 dice to resist disease/poison/necromancy or step down one undead-themed Harm. **Push It:** Add a simple tactic to the swarm for one beat.

Awaken the Army of Bones (High, 13 XP) *Extended; Zone; No.* **Effect:** Command an undead force (Cap 5 equivalent) for an extended conflict; concentration required *or* +3 dice to death magic and immunity to fear from undead this scene. **Push It:** One formation maneuver at Great effect.

4.4.12 Mab, She of the Thorned Crown (Twilight Bargains)

Fae Fortune's Favor (Low, 6 XP) *Action; Self; Yes (luck/social).* **Effect:** Re-roll one die showing 1–2 on luck/charm *or* start *Controlled* on one whimsical charm/deceit. **Push It:** Name a fae quirk that colors the scene.

Bargain Beneath the Hawthorn (8 XP) *Scene; Self; No.* **Effect:** +2 dice to Persuasion/Deceive if phrased as a formal bargain; once/session retroactively declare a minor owed favor with an on-scene NPC (GM defines their take). **Push It:** Gain an extra +1 die for a particularly clever twist.

Courtship with the Thorned Queen (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Effect:** +2 dice to all social interactions; force one NPC who opposes you to generate *Hearts* CP; once, declare an action “blessed by the Court” (spectacular success mirrored by a later opposite consequence). **Push It:** Temporary immunity to social manipulation for one beat.

4.4.13 Nidhoggr, the World-Worm (Dreaming Antiquity)

Glimpse the Ancient's Shadow (Low, 7 XP) *Action; Near; Yes (lore sense).* **Effect:** +1 die to ancient history *or* sense ancient auras/sites in Near. **Push It:** Briefly glean a single historic image (no retcon).

Drink from the Dreaming Deep (10 XP) *Action; Self; No.* **Effect:** Learn one hidden fact (ask a specific question; suffer *Fatigue* 1 and mark *Exposure* +1) *or* +2 dice to forbid-den/ancient lore or reality-warping. **Push It:** Also gain an omen (GM banks a soft tell).

Dive into the World-Worm's Dreaming (High, 14 XP) *Scene; Self; No.* **Effect:** Ask three factual questions about past/hidden truth; suffer *Fatigue* 2 and *Exposure* +2 *or* +3 dice to deep reality work and one *Miss*→*Success* & *Cost* per scene. **Push It:** Share one glimpse with an ally (they mark *Hearts*-flavored strain).

4.4.14 The Outsider (Elsewhere & Intrusion)

Peek Through the Veil (Low, 7 XP) *Action; Self; Yes (env penalty).* **Effect:** Treat one environmental/position penalty as one step less severe *or* +1 die to detect planar auras. **Push It:** Reveal a nearby exit not previously obvious.

Step Sideways (10 XP) *Action; Self; No.* **Effect:** Treat the next zone you enter as having a favorable environmental aspect for one action *or* +2 dice to extradimensional/teleportation/resisting planar effects. **Push It:** Also slide one pursued ally with you (Close only).

Tear the Fabric of Reality (High, 14 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Effect:** For one action, ignore all environmental/position penalties; create a temporary portal to a similar location within Near (GM sets exact destination) *or* +3 dice to planar magic; immunity to non-magical environmental effects this scene. **Push It:** Leave a short-lived echo (hazard tag).

4.4.15 Maelstreus, the Red Prince (Infernal Deals)

Whisper of the Red Court (Low, 6 XP) *Action; Self; Yes (temptation).* **Effect:** +1 die to Persuasion/Deceive involving deals *or* sense when someone contemplates a dubious bargain. **Push It:** Name a small inducement that counts as leverage.

Seal with Infernal Ink (9 XP) *Action; Self; No.* **Effect:** Choose: +2 effect on one action *or* start *Controlled* on one action; then mark a fitting Condition (e.g., *Compromised/Indebted/Tempted*). *Or* downgrade a *Miss*→*Partial* *or* *Partial*→*Success & Cost*. **Push It:** The target owes a small favor (GM defines the hook).

Summon the Red Prince's Contract (High, 13 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Effect:** Bind one NPC to a significant agreement or suffer immediate supernatural consequence; *or* +3 dice to all deal-making and one *Miss*→*Success & Cost* on social this scene. **Push It:** Seed a clause that will return as a future complication.

4.5 Ritual of Severance: Exorcism of Patronage

Name: *Cut the Knot of Patronage* **Type:** Ritual (Extended)

Who: The warlock, *plus* 1–3 assistants (any Arts; distinct procedures).

Materials: A mirror veiled in salt-thread, anointed Codex page or Thiasos token, a personal sacrifice tied to the Patron's domain.

Procedure: Over an extended scene, the circle denies *names, signs, and vectors* that bind the Patron. Each helper offers a distinct symbolic inversion tied to their skill.

- **Cost:** The primary invoker spends **2 Boons**. Mark *Exposure* +1. Each helper risks 1 Fatigue on a *Miss*.
- **Test:** GM sets DV by entanglement (typ. DV 2–3). On success, **clear the Rite's Obligation Clock** to 0 and **choose one:** (a) *Dismiss* your Thiasos or (b) *Seal* your Codex (cannot be used for that Patron until re-consecrated in Downtime).
- **On Success & Cost:** As above, but the GM immediately starts a fading *Echo* thread keyed to the Patron (2–3 CP over the next scene).
- **On Miss:** The knot tightens. Mark +2 *segments* on the active Patron clock, and the GM introduces a *Geas*-like demand or intrusion.

Aftermath: You may switch paths (Codex ↔ Thiasos) once the severance is complete and the inert resource is relinquished or reconsecrated in Downtime.

Chapter 5

Closing Words

The Price of Knowledge

As I set down my pen and watch the ink dry on these final pages, I am struck by the weight of what I have recorded. Each ritual, each warning, each whispered secret represents not just power gained, but power that has been tested, measured, and found wanting. For knowledge without wisdom is merely dangerous, and power without purpose is merely destruction.

Rukhir has been silent for hours now, his black eyes reflecting the candlelight like twin stars. Even he, ancient as he is, seems wearied by the cataloging of so much darkness.

In my years of walking the shadow-paths, I have learned that the greatest magic is not in the spells we cast or the rituals we perform, but in the choices we make when the candles burn low and the whispers grow loud. Every ritual in this grimoire has been tested—not just for its efficacy, but for its cost. And make no mistake, dear reader, each one demands a price that would make merchants weep and kings tremble.

The Bonding Ceremony can unite hearts, but it can also chain souls. The Sanctuary Consecration can offer protection, but it can also become a prison. The Memory Reconstruction can reveal truth, but it can also unleash madness. Each path we walk in shadow leads both toward power and toward peril, and the wise witch knows that the difference lies not in avoiding the darkness, but in understanding it.

A Word to the Keeper

If you have read this far, then perhaps you are ready for what lies ahead. But readiness is not the same as wisdom, and wisdom is not the same as safety. The rituals I have shared with you are not toys for idle amusement or tools for petty revenge. They are the accumulated knowledge of those who have walked before you, paid their prices, and lived—or died—to tell the tale.

"Knowledge is a burden," Rukhir finally speaks, his voice like rustling leaves. "And every burden leaves marks upon the bearer."

Use these rituals with respect for those who taught me, for those who suffered for this

knowledge, and for those who may yet suffer because of it. The shadow-magics are not evil in themselves—they are tools, like any other. But tools in the hands of the unworthy become weapons, and weapons in the hands of the desperate become destruction.

Remember always that Ikasha, She Who Sleeps Within Shadow, is not a goddess of chaos or evil. She is the patron of those who understand that truth often hides in darkness, that power often comes at a cost, and that sometimes the only way to fight the monsters is to become something monstrous yourself.

The Path Forward

For those who would continue down the shadow-roads, I offer these final pieces of advice:

First, never trust completely. Even the most faithful familiar has its own agenda, and even the most loyal companion may be swayed by greater power. Trust, but verify. Love, but protect. Hope, but prepare.

Second, always remember that power is a responsibility. The ability to influence others, to bend reality, to peer into hidden places—these are not gifts to be used lightly. With each ritual you perform, with each spell you cast, you write your name deeper into the ledger of consequence.

Third, know when to walk away. There are secrets that should remain buried, powers that should remain unfound, and paths that should remain untrodden. Wisdom is as much in knowing what not to do as in knowing what to do.

Rukhir spreads his wings, and in the candlelight, they seem to hold fragments of every shadow I have ever seen. "The end of one path," he says, "is always the beginning of another."

Finally, remember that you are not alone. The Tulkani have a saying: "No shadow falls without light to cast it." In every darkness, there is the potential for illumination. In every ending, there is the seed of beginning. The rituals in this grimoire are not the end of your journey—they are merely the next step upon a path that has no final destination.

The Eternal Whisper

As you close this book and prepare for whatever comes next, remember the fundamental truth that Ikasha taught me in my first communion with her shadow:

*The deepest shadows
Are cast by the brightest flames.
The greatest powers
Come from the deepest sacrifices.
The strongest magics
Are born from the most profound understandings.
And the wisest witches
Know when to let the darkness
Consume them completely.*

May your shadows be deep, your flames be bright, and your wisdom be greater than your power.

Rukhir caws once, sharp and final, and I know that our work here is done.

Until we meet again in the spaces between the words, dear reader, may the shadows keep you safe, and may the light never burn too brightly for your eyes.

Finis

But in the world of shadows, nothing is ever truly finished. Only... paused.