

Fell Ritual Boons



FELL RITES ARE USUALLY THE PURVIEW OF NPCs—cult masters, demon-worshipping nobles, and mad priests—but not always! There are games in where engaging despicable acts or being a corrupted protagonist is intended. “Fell Ritual Boons” is for these players and GMs—if you are out to slay dragons and save princes, the following discussions and character options may not be for you—but if you’re comfortable with dwelling in the darkness, please read on for advice on running an evil game!

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CONSENT

Ambiance is important whenever evil plays a palpable central role that goes beyond simplistic motivations for NPCs and for this reason alone a GM should seek the consent of everyone in a gaming group. Jokes and quips are a frequent part of most games, but if the content of a campaign is about candle-lit rituals and gruesome acts, the tone of a session will fall apart quickly due to light-hearted commentary (no matter how funny).

Consent should also be a concern for GMs as not every player is necessarily prepared for a long, graphic description of someone having their legs slowly torn off by a monstrous demon. What if a player has actually witnessed an industrial accident where someone lost their legs? While that certainly has the capacity to be an extremely memorable and horrifying experience for that player, they (very understandably) may not want to be reminded of it. Have a group conversation of what players are and aren't comfortable with and consider the following topics when seeking the consent of a gaming group before engaging in macabre horror roleplay:

- ▶ Decapitation or Disembowelment
- ▶ Dismemberment
- ▶ Extremely Graphic Violence
- ▶ Religious Violence
- ▶ Sexual Violence
- ▶ Torture

With a baseline for what is or is not acceptable territory for the game to traverse, the GM can craft narratives and plot arcs that explore the darker sides of roleplaying games. These should create ample opportunities for players to be despicable and vile, pushing the boundaries of morality and encouraging them to walk ever darker paths. In situations like this a common problem tends to arise very quickly: teamwork. After all, why

should the cutthroat mercenary suffer the prattling of a mage that takes coin that could be hers; why *should* a power-hungry dark priest tolerate anyone other than themselves benefiting from his sacrifice? In short, avarice and greed can be just as damning to an evil game as comedy.

CIRCUMSTANCES AND PACTS

Evil PCs are naturally disposed to being, well, evil, and that doesn't exactly encourage equality and teamwork. While this can be great in the context of a narrative toolset, it makes for a challenging, sometimes difficult experience in a tabletop gaming environment. To address this issue, GMs can make use of a few different tools to help keep a group of diabolical adventurers from tearing one another's throats out.

Plot. The first and foremost route that a GM should use to unify evil PCs is the narrative one. Intertwined by fate, the adventurers need one another in order to enact a ritual that will empower them all, keep a common foe at bay, or otherwise serve everyone in a manner that attempting alone would be tacitly impossible. There is strength in numbers as well—if the world around the PCs is predicated to unveil their dark deeds, a united front will last much longer than isolated individuals that go against the grain.

Mechanical Benefits. While there can be many reasons for evil PCs to act against one another, the motivation is usually greed. A simple answer is to provide something in exchange for acting like a team player. This might be bonus experience points each session, extra gold, or inspiration rewards, but by providing an incentive to encourage friendlier play, the GM brings party unification back into balance despite the absence of morality.

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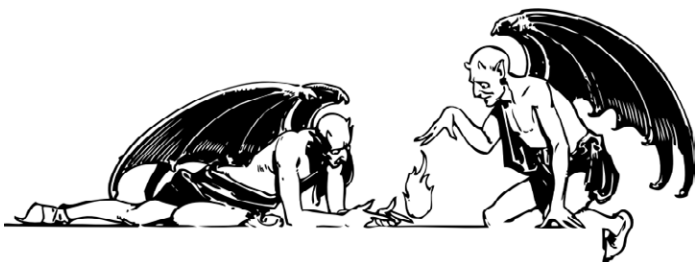


New Kit

Ceremonial Relics (15 gp): These tool kits frequently include candles, votives, reagents, esoteric dust, and all manner of occult ephemera. While none are themselves enchanted with power, by utilizing the correct invocations they can help unlock dark secrets of the otherworldly and supernatural.

Tertiary Benefits. No one person can be all things to all people at all times. The powerful necromancer might have a capacity to intimidate but turning the ear of someone in the king's court will be beyond his reach—though a malevolent and deceptive bard will have a much easier time reaching so high profile a target. Both can benefit greatly from a dark warrior able to fend off the champions of justice that seek to stop the influence of evil, and the stealthy arts of an assassin to quell witnesses will aid them all. The strong pull of greed might spur audacious characters to attempt subterfuge against their allies if they think they can get away with it, but GMs should encourage diverse and complementary character roles for PCs and design adventures that utilize a variety of strengths to reinforce the benefits of working together.

Another good way to curb group subterfuge is with contacts. These individuals can be used both to encourage the PCs they are connected with to avoid injuring their companions in any way, but also as tokens that can be targeted with hostility in revenge for slights between party members. In addition to that, these contacts can provide ease of play for other aspects of the game—one PC might know a good fence, another an esoteric collector that sells magic reagents of all kinds, and another could have a positive relationship with the local head of law enforcement.



RITUAL FEATS

All rituals have a sacrificial cost of some kind; if your group uses the alignment rules, these costs may have a mechanical impact. Moreover, most civilized settlements do not take kindly to rituals that require sacrifice and ridicule or castigate those found performing them.

ANCESTRAL SACRIFICE

Prerequisites: Arcana or Religion proficiency, Ceremonial Relics

Using dark rites and primordial chants, you draw out the life force of a creature similar enough to you that the energies of their soul can be gathered up as it leaves the Material Plane and warped to reinforce your own.

You are able to make ancestral sacrifices. Making an ancestral sacrifice requires a creature that is both older than you and of the same race (and if applicable, subrace). After spending 10 minutes preparing the ritual space, you may kill the elder creature to gain one of the following benefits. You are only able to benefit from one ancestral sacrifice at a time.

- ▶ You regain all spell slots and limited use abilities as if you had taken a long rest.
- ▶ You gain a number of temporary hit points equal to half the elder creature's maximum total hit points or half your maximum total hit points (whichever is greater). These temporary hit points last for a maximum number of hours equal to your proficiency bonus.
- ▶ You gain the use of a feat, class feature, or trait that the elder creature possessed, or you gain proficiency in the skills the elder creature had proficiency in. After a number of hours equal to your proficiency bonus, the knowledge fades.
- ▶ You gain proficiency in a type of saving throw the elder creature had proficiency in. After a number of days equal to your proficiency bonus, this resilience fades.

AUROMANCY

Prerequisites: Arcana, Religion, Proficiency Bonus +3

You learn how to read and manipulate the subtle impressions left by souls as they travel across the Material Plane. By gathering up a bit of a creature's physical embodiment you can manipulate their aura from afar, working an effigy of your victim to diabolical ends.

- ▶ After a long rest choose either Investigation or Perception. The passive score for the skill you choose increases by 5.
- ▶ After collecting at least 1 ounce of hair, skin, blood, or other part of another creature's body you are able to fashion it into a small effigy tied to the creature's life force. So long as the creature you make the effigy from is within 100 feet per diabolist level (or 100 feet per proficiency bonus, whichever is higher) and you are able to see it, you may cast cantrips, make melee weapon attacks, or use the Necromantic Touch ability against the creature by targeting its effigy. After damaging a creature through the effigy a number of times equal to its Hit Dice, the effigy is destroyed if you do not make a Wisdom saving throw (DC 10 + Hit Dice of target creature).

MASTER OF RITUALS

Prerequisites: Arcana or Religion proficiency, Ceremonial Relics, Proficiency Bonus +3, ability to cast ritual spells

You have delved deeply into the secrets of ritual magic and are able to beseech powers from beyond the veil to gain supernatural gifts, though never without cost.

By performing an hour long ritual that costs 50 gp in materials, you are able to grant yourself or one willing creature one of the following ritual powers. A creature may have a number of ritual powers equal to one-third its proficiency bonus.

If a ritual power lets you cast a spell, you are able to do so without spending a spell slot or providing any components (verbal, somatic, or material). In any case, a ritual power can't be used in the area created by an *antimagic field* or a similar effect, and a ritual power's effects are susceptible to *dispel magic* and the like (the ritual power itself can't be removed from a creature by anything short of divine intervention or a wish).

Power of Bloodletting. Boil an amount of blood (hit points) equal to double the target's total hit dice. When you deal damage with a melee weapon attack, you may choose to deal between 1d4 and 1d10 additional damage but you also take the same amount of damage. This ritual power fades after a number of days equal to your character level.

Power of the Beast. Sacrifice a beast. You gain the benefits of an enhance ability spell to one ability of your choice so long as the sacrificed creature has a higher ability score than the affected ability score. This ritual power fades after a number of days equal to your character level.

Power of Mana. Sacrifice a fey. This ritual power has 6 charges. You can use an action to expend some of its charges to cast the following spells: *detect magic* (1 charge), *identify* (1 charge), or *dispel magic* (3 charges). This ritual power fades once all its charges have been expended.

Power of Negation. Sacrifice an aberration. This ritual power has 6 charges. You can use a reaction to expend a charge to gain advantage on a saving throw against a spell or other magical effect. This ritual power fades once all its charges have been expended.

Power of Summoning. Sacrifice an innocent humanoid. You can summon a fiend or undead creature of a CR equal to or less than half the CR of the sacrificed creature. This effect otherwise functions as the *conjure elemental* spell. This ritual power fades after the summoning is completed.



RITUALISTIC SLAUGHTERER

Prerequisites: Arcana or Religion proficiency, Proficiency Bonus +3, Evil alignment

You have a capacity for killing en masse, slaughtering fellow humanoids with the same disposition as a farmer culling livestock—or possibly even reveling in the bloodshed.

- ▶ Choose a weapon to become your ritual slaughter weapon. While wielding your ritual slaughter weapon, you gain a bonus to critical hit damage equal to your proficiency bonus.
- ▶ When you kill a creature of a CR equal to at least half your character level, you gain a +1 bonus to damage rolls made with your ritual slaughter weapon for a number of rounds equal to your proficiency bonus. This bonus stacks with itself and the other bonuses from Ritualistic Slaughterer.
- ▶ When you kill a creature of a CR equal to or greater than your character level, you gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls made with your ritual slaughter weapon for a number of minutes equal to your proficiency bonus. This bonus stacks with itself and the other bonuses from Ritualistic Slaughterer. 