

THE LAYER BETWEEN

A PATRON OPTION FOR WARLOCKS

This Otherworldly Patron for Warlocks was inspired by my own life experience surviving Bacterial Meningitis and living with Temporal Lobe Epilepsy.

This patron option may be best suited to campaigns of intrigue or when traveling with a group of companions.

WRITTEN BY **FORREST G. EMERSON**



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Special Thanks

My brother Justin, who is my best friend, sounding board, morality DC, partner in crime in design, and a constant source of support and inspiration.

My family, who has always supported me and continues to support me through this adventure.

My teachers, most of which did not officially hold that title.

PREFACE

Thank you for buying *The Layer Between* Warlock Patron option! I greatly appreciate it! I hope this fantasy adaptation of my medical history suits at least some of your Warlock needs.

It only occurred to me recently to apply the game mechanic designs my brother and I talk about for kicks to tabletop role playing games. This is the first of those published works. It made sense (to me, at least) to start here: my life experience surviving bacterial Meningitis and living with Temporal Lobe Epilepsy, woven into my favorite class for which to explore design mechanics, backgrounds, and sources of power.

The Layer Between is an unusual Patron. The Warlock beneficiary did not undersign consciously. They did not research, prepare, and contact an entity; they did not ask for these powers, but often our strongest desires are buried deep. I had not seen the main feature of this subclass in any other works: early on, using the granted abilities to their full extent wears the Warlock down, and in some cases causes them to take damage. I wanted the

player to understand the fear of their condition, yet strive to survive in that mental prison.

Living with Temporal Lobe Epilepsy is challenging. I am fortunate, as my epilepsy mostly manifests as strong Deja Vu and not worse. But enough Deja Vu makes a person start to doubt things. What if those episodes of Deja Vu were all, in fact, premonitions? What if every time I knew the exact words someone was going to speak a second before it came out of their mouth, or I took a random detour for kicks only to find out later there was an accident on the usual route, or I suddenly paused at a stoplight because I had a hunch someone was going to run a red light (all of which have happened) – what if those experiences, those glimpses into other paths were gifts? What if my *Dungeons & Dragons* character could do that? What if that power could *grow*? This is the theme of the Warlock Patron *The Layer Between*.

I often go by the handle *stabbyrogue* and you can find me around the internet at the handles below. If you enjoyed this character option, my writing style, thought process, design, or you just like TTRPG podcasts, I also GM/DM *StabbyQuest*, which is available everywhere you can find podcasts (including iTunes, Spotify, via RSS, etc.).

Thank you again for purchasing *The Layer Between* Warlock Patron option. Maybe I'll see you on the internet, or tableside!

Until then, may you roll hilariously.

— Forrest (stabby)

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Update!

I have added a number of tables to allow players to personalize their journey through *The Layer Between*. You can roll on the tables or choose the traits that best fit your character's death, who found them, what strange event marked their revival, and when they discovered something was off. Enjoy!



THE LAYER BETWEEN

You suffered from a dire illness, which resulted in being unconscious for several days. If not for the constant care of family and friends or the generosity of strangers, you would have most certainly perished. You fully recovered, and those familiar with the details regard this achievement as a miracle. As the years pass on, however, you began to notice curious phenomena: echoes from dark days gone by.

Perhaps, during this near-death experience, you passed through *The Layer Between*. Perhaps it was not those who cared for your physical form that saved you... but something else entirely.

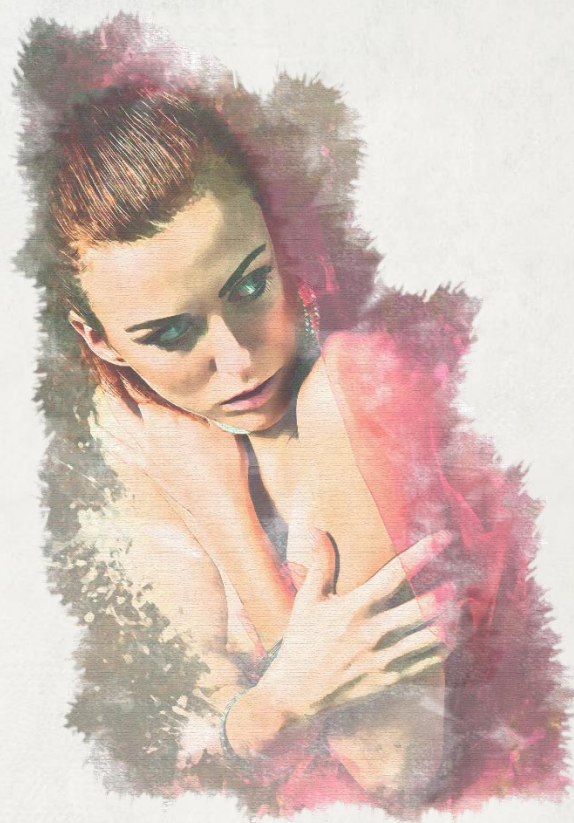
AN UNWITTING UNDERSIGNED

Your Patron does not communicate with you in words. If it *can* speak, it speaks in a language unknown to you and unlike other language of the realm. Instead, your Patron sends you messages through adjustments to your own feelings and experiences. These messages feel like layered occurrences: a dissonant harmony over the events you are currently witnessing. On Earth, folks might call phenomena like this Deja Vu or assume the person is "touched". In fantasy worlds, a struggling person could be labeled as afflicted, cursed, or even possessed after hearing these moments described. Regardless of realm, these episodes are difficult to describe to others and equally difficult to understand.

At first, your Episodes are debilitating and leave you feeling confused, vulnerable, and drained. They cause you to repeatedly gag, slam your eyes shut, put your head between your knees, or suddenly require physical support. This experience is terrible and fraught with uncertainty. As you progress through character levels, however, not only do you become more comfortable with these episodes, but you are able to lean into them— to harness the advantage they lend. Eventually, you may even accept your gift with open arms... if you manage to remain sane that long.

THE LAYER BETWEEN FEATURES

Warlock Level	Feature
1st	Episodes, Expanded Spell List
6th	Uneasy Stability
10th	Feedback Loop
14th	Ascendance, Forced Empathy



EXPANDED SPELL LIST

The Layer Between lets you choose from an expanded list of spells when you learn a warlock spell. The following spells are added to the warlock spell list for you.

Spell Level	Spells
1st	<i>detect magic, identify</i>
2nd	<i>detect thoughts, locate object</i>
3rd	<i>sending, clairvoyance</i>
4th	<i>confusion, locate creature</i>
5th	<i>modify memory, legend lore</i>

EPISODES

At first level, you have two Episode Charges. Your total Charges increase by 1 when you reach 5th level (three Charges), 11th level (four Charges), and 17th level (five Charges).

You may spend an Episode Charge to gain advantage on Wisdom-based Skill Checks and Wisdom Saving Throws (decide after you roll).

At any time and for any reason, you can lean into your condition, choosing to spend all of your Episode Charges at once.

After you spend your last Episode Charge, you suffer one level of exhaustion (PHB, appendix A) and take 1d6 non-lethal psychic damage. This damage increases when you reach 5th level (2d8), 11th level (3d10), and 17th level (4d12), but always remains non-lethal.

You can complete a short rest to regain half of your Episode Charges (rounded down, minimum 1) or a long rest to regain all of your Episode Charges.

Spending all of your regained Episode Charges after a short rest but before a long rest yields an additional level of exhaustion.



UNEASY STABILITY

Starting at 6th level, your constant exposure to these episodes grants you *resistance to psychic damage*, including any damage you receive from spending all of your Episode Charges.

Also, whenever you deal psychic damage to a creature other than yourself, add your Charisma modifier to that damage.

FEEDBACK LOOP

Starting at 10th level, when you receive psychic damage, you are able to absorb and return some of that damage as a reaction.

If the damage came from a source intending to harm you (such as an enemy spellcaster or a trap), return the *resisted* psychic damage back to the source.

If the psychic damage was the result of spending all of your Episode Charges, double the damage you resisted and use it against any target you can see. Episode Charge expenditure damage is non-lethal.

If you do not wish to immediately channel the damage from spending all of your Episode Charges, that psychic energy dissipates and cannot be stored or used later.

ASCENDANCE

Starting at 14th level, *gain immunity to psychic damage*, including any damage you would incur from spending all of your Episode Charges.

Additionally, you no longer suffer from exhaustion as a result of spending all of your Episode Charges.

FORCED EMPATHY

Starting at 14th level, you can coerce others to live through your traumatic experiences. As an action, you force multiple creatures to pass through *The Layer Between*, causing them to question their understanding of the world around them and their own existence.

Select one creature per unspent Episode Charge that you can see within 30 feet of you. These creatures must make a Wisdom saving throw at disadvantage. On a failed save, each creature takes 4d6 plus your Charisma modifier in psychic damage and is paralyzed (PHB, appendix A) with overwhelming doubt (as if under the effects of the *hold person* spell). On a successful save, these creatures take half damage and are not paralyzed.

You cannot use this feature again until you finish a long rest.



OPTIONAL TABLES

Use the following tables to vary the history of your character's experience and when they noticed their gift, or to better-align this subclass choice with one of the many available official or homebrew character backgrounds. You can roll on the following tables or choose one result from each table to craft a story that best fits your character concept.

While it's best to work with your DM to integrate your character into the world, feel free to roll multiple times on any of these tables. You can also pick and choose multiple options from the available situations, or create your own story to craft your perfectly imperfect revival.

HOW DID YOU DIE?

Not even you, the revived, understand that *The Layer Between* intervened in the natural processing of your death. In a fantasy setting rife with malicious villains and greedy or careless adventurers (all responsible for civilian casualties), there are many paths to the afterlife. Which path did you take?

D6 Your Path Through The Layer Between

- 1 A great illness befell you.
- 2 You fought heroically in battle, but were eventually cut down by the enemy.
- 3 You were captured, tortured, and abandoned.
- 4 An assassination attempt was made on your life.
- 5 You were supremely injured in a freak accident (optionally hilarious).
- 6 You attempted to make a pact with a powerful entity, but were rejected and smote on the spot.

WHO FOUND YOU?

Someone or something discovered your near-lifeless body and either performed a miracle on you or alerted someone who could. Who do you thank for saving you?

D6 Your "Savior"

- 1 A family member you live with.
- 2 A roving band of hunters or mercenaries.
- 3 A member of an enemy faction who took pity on you.
- 4 A visiting friend or neighbor.
- 5 Your romantic partner.
- 6 Your faithful animal companion.

REVIVED AGAINST ALL ODDS

Even in a fantastical world it should have been too late to revive you, but the ritual surprisingly worked - a point widely regarded as a miracle of miracles by those involved. Something marked your revival ceremony, what was it?

If your "Savior" performed the resurrection, replace any instance of "Cleric" with that entity if you roll on this table.

D6 An Ominous Revivification

- 1 The resurrection ritual was interrupted, but the Cleric managed to succeed - barely.
- 2 A sudden lightning strike, a flash flood, a snow storm mid-summer, or another improbable event occurred during your resurrection.
- 3 You were brought to a stable condition, but could not be made conscious for a long period of time.
- 4 The Cleric responsible for your resurrection would later (hesitantly) admit that during the ritual, they felt something on the other side - pulling you back.
- 5 A number of elderly citizens in the town in which the ritual took place suddenly passed away at the moment of your revival.
- 6 When the resurrection ritual was complete and you awoke, the Cleric's holy symbol exploded.

WHEN DID YOU NOTICE THE EFFECTS?

Your gift can reveal itself in a number of ways. When did you discover something was wrong? If the result of this table notes a particular event, be sure to define that event. If someone pointed out the strange change in you, who was it?

D6 When You Realized Something Was Wrong

- 1 Slowly, over a long period of time, you started to piece things together.
- 2 After a particular experience.
- 3 On the first annual eve of your "death".
- 4 On one unremarkable day, someone pointed out your odd behavior.
- 5 Immediately.
- 6 You haven't, yet.