



Demonic Rituals for *Unknown Armies*

by Bevan Thomas

The figure crouched in the pentagram, preparing his offerings of pornography, money, fried chicken, and pillows. As the sun set, he lay down and spread his limbs, yelling out, "I call to thee, spirits from beyond the Veil!" Then the figure began to shake, as if victim of some strange fit. When the shaking ended, his eyes appeared brighter and more energetic, and his face was likewise transformed in style. He laughed with a feeling of pure, crazed joy, and reached towards one of the offerings. "I really missed chicken," said the figure as he picked up a drumstick and bit.

Demons and revenants are some of the most prominent unnatural beings in *Unknown Armies*, spirits of the dead that have been pulled back to the world of the flesh by mortal magick or the power of their own obsessions. Though these unnatural beings are often an excellent source for information, they are also usually lying, selfish bastards who are obsessed with recovering their lost sensations, and anyone who deals with demons does so at his own peril.

Though certain magick schools such as Dipsomancy and Entropomancy - - as well as the occasional avatar (for example, the Merchant) -- incorporate the summoning and binding of demons, most adepts and avatars prefer to keep the demonic world at arm's length. Through their seductive pacts, demons often lead their associates into taboo-breaking (not to mention amoral) situations, and there is always the worry that too much interaction with the dearly departed will attract the attention of the enigmatic Cruel Ones (a force that no adept is ready to deal with).

However, Thaumaturges generally lack the luxury of avatars and adepts to dismiss demonic assistance out of hand. Rituals are few and far between, and their uses are usually very specific. Frankly, there is only so much unnatural stuff a proud possessor of Back Money, Plague of Hiccups, and Angel of the Animals can pull off. If he doesn't want to mess with his opponents or watch for any magick placed upon him, then he has to rely on natural means to get things done. However, demons are often useful sources of information on the occult, can serve as astral spies, and may have other useful skills or abilities. With regards to

demons, one simple ritual can open the door to a lot of possibilities (and a lot of danger, but many Thaumaturges don't really understand this until it is much too late). Furthermore, rituals that summon demons are much more common than most other rituals, because demons actively spread them around to increase the demons' potential access to the physical plane. This means that many of the rituals that Thaumaturges are likely to find are demonic summonings. Conversely, rituals that banish or bind demons are very rare, since demons do their best to destroy or distort them (demons enjoy people using distorted binding rituals, since it makes the Thaumaturges believe that they have far more control over the demons than they actually do).

Thaumaturges that involve themselves a lot with demons are commonly known as diabolists. Diabolists are an eccentric and idiosyncratic group even by occult underground standards. Though not bound by taboos, they are often directed by the whims and needs of their demons and need to fulfill all sorts of bizarre pacts unless the diabolists have the good fortune of knowing the Command Demon ritual. They often spend a lot of their time reading the obituaries and investigating graveyards, getting information on potential demons. Particularly ambitious and amoral diabolists will sometimes have people killed in particularly traumatic ways in the hopes of transforming them into demons. Naturally, the diabolist in question will do his best to make the demon unaware that he was involved in its demise, as demons are generally unwilling to help their killers. The more magickally experienced a diabolist becomes, the more demons and the less humans he generally associates with. Particularly potent diabolists are often isolated from normal human contact, feeling a stronger connection to the dead than the living. Because they focus so much on obsessive, driven demonic personalities, they become unused to the subtleties of human interaction, and often become blunt and insensitive as a result.

Occasionally people are able to conjure demons without resorting to rituals, spells, or anything else that extravagant, instead using special Soul skills. An example of this is Rebecca DeGhoule and her Summon Demons & Send 'Em Away skill from the *Unknown Armies* core rulebook. These individuals have often developed these skills through contact with demons or pure focus of their will. The skill will often duplicate a demonic ritual, its advantage being that the skill does not require charges nor time. However, the skill is less versatile than a magick school or even Authentic Thaumaturgy would be. Those who rely on a special skill to summon demons are often disdained by the ritual diabolists for lacking intellectual rigor and a true understanding of the Statosphere, and are often called "hobbyists" or "hedge conjurers" by those who are unnaturally "in the know."

The following rituals are a sample of various demonic rituals that can be included in a campaign. It is suggested that the Game Master customize them for his campaign to help keep the players guessing. Particularly in

the case of summoning rituals, it is likely that there are many different kinds in existence with their own particular ritual actions.

Attract Demons

Power: minor

Cost: 2 minor charges

Effect: Attracts all demons within a five-mile radius to the skull and they must remain within five feet of it for one hour. If the skull moves, the demons must follow it. Though the demons must follow the skull, they are not restricted in any way from affecting the person holding it, or even killing him.

Ritual Action: Dig up the skull of a woman who died while pregnant and cover it with honey. Hold the skull towards the setting sun while making the sound of a whippoorwill. After the spell ends, the skull becomes worthless for this ritual, and a new skull would need to be found if the ritual was going to be repeated.

Banish Demon

Power: significant

Cost: 1 significant charge

Effect: Sends a demon or revenant back to whatever passes for the afterlife, unable to return for six months. Some spirits give up their rebellious ways, and decide to pass on, but most are even hungrier to return and gain vengeance on whoever banished them.

Ritual Action: Collect a decent amount of material from the place that the demon's body is (so a handful of its grave-dirt if it was buried, or a some water if it was dropped into the ocean). Toss the material into the spirit's face while calling out, "You are dead and no longer welcome on this world! Go back into the eternal night!"

Command Demon

Power: significant

Cost: 2 significant charges

Effect: You can control a summoned demon.

Ritual Action: Grow a tree, constantly watering it with your own semen (or menstrual blood) and urine. When it has become old enough to grow strong branches, cut off a branch that's at least one foot long and sharpen the end to a point. With the point, prick your left index finger enough to draw blood. This branch is now able to be used as a "command wand." It can be used as many times for this ritual as desired (and can even be used by other people), though if it is broken then it becomes permanently useless and a new one must be fashioned.

When performing this ritual, point the command wand at the demon and call out "By my will and by this wand, obey!"

Determine Demon

Power: minor

Cost: 1 minor charge

Effect: Reveals if a dead person has become a demon, revenant, or simply passed to his or her final reward.

Ritual Action: Cut up a photograph or picture of your target and drop the remains into a glass of milk. Drink the milk and all the pieces of the picture.

Exorcism

Power: minor

Cost: 2 minor charges

Effect: Forces an unnatural being to disconnect itself from its victim.

Examples include ending a demonic possession, removing an entropic, or unlatching an astral parasite. The unnatural being is able to directly affect its former victim for 24 hours.

Ritual Action: Tie the victim's hands and feet together with thin rope and place them within a circle drawn with chalk. Splash the victim with water from a mountain spring and then whip him for thirty-three minutes and three seconds while demanding that the spirit leave the body. The spirit's nature must be named (such as "be gone, demon," or "be gone, astral parasite").

Summon Random Demon

Power: minor

Cost: 2 minor charges

Effect: Summons a random demon that speaks to you telepathically.

This ritual does not grant you any special control over the demon.

Ritual Action: On the second Sunday of the month, draw a pentagram on the ground in white chalk without the chalk ever leaving the ground or the line being broken. Then at four of the five points, place a symbol that represents a pleasure of the flesh (which demons long so much to experience). Place a sexual image (such as a pornographic magazine) on the bottom left point to symbolize lust, a large amount of money (such as a \$100 bill) on the right for avarice, an incredibly unhealthy yet enjoyable piece of food (like a greasy hamburger with all the trimmings) on the top left point for gluttony, and a pillow on the top right for sloth.

After all the preparations are complete, walk counter-clockwise around the pentagram three times and spit on all four the objects placed with it. Then lie down inside the pentagram so that each limb is at a point, and touching the relevant object and your head is at the pentagram's highest point. The moment the sun sets, say "I call to thee, spirit from beyond the Veil."

Summon Specific Demon

Power: minor

Cost: 5 minor charges

Effect: Summons a specific demon that speaks to you telepathically. Many of the dead have gone on to whatever final reward awaits them, and have not become demons. Any attempt to summon one of these people automatically fails. This ritual does not grant you any special control over the demon.

Ritual Action: On the desired demon's birthday, draw a pentagram on the ground of a place where the person slept at least three times in life. The pentagram must be drawn in white chalk with the chalk ever leaving the ground or the line being broken. Then at four of the five points, place a symbol that represents something precious to the person in question (examples include photographs of loved ones, favorite book, treasured mementos, etc.). At the minute corresponding to when the person was born, burn a picture or photograph of him and eat the ashes. Then lie in the pentagram with your limbs and head each at the appropriate point and call out the desired demon's name three times.

Ward Against Demons

Power: minor

Cost: 3 minor charges

Effect: No demons or revenants can cross the circle for 333 minutes, even while possessing someone else. Therefore if they are inside the circle, they cannot get out and if they are outside the circle, they cannot get in.

Ritual Action: Mix the flesh from a three-day old corpse with 33 drops of your own blood and the juice from overripe green grapes. Use a brush with bristles made from a dead donkey to paint the circle with the mixture.

Article publication date: March 24, 2006

65 *Pyramid* subscribers rated this article **3.17** on a scale of 1 to 5. Visit the [ratings page](#) for more info.

Copyright © 2006 by [Steve Jackson Games](#). All rights reserved. Pyramid subscribers are permitted to read this article online, or download it and print out a single hardcopy for personal use. Copying this text to any other online system or BBS, or making more than one hardcopy, is *strictly prohibited*. So please don't. And if you encounter copies of this article elsewhere on the web, please report it to webmaster@sjgames.com.



[Home](#) - [Subscribe!](#) - [Current Issue](#) - [Playtesting](#) - [Chat](#) - [Advertising](#) - [Index of Advertisers](#) - [Feedback](#)