

Credits

Designers

Alex Riggs, Joshua Zaback

Editor

Rosa Gibbons



Necromancers of the Northwest, LLC 8123 236th St SW, Unit 102 Edmonds, WA, 98026 www.necromancers-online.com

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The boundaries between the worlds of the living and the dead are not nearly as thick and impenetrable as we are led to believe. While it may require the magic of a powerful cleric or a master wizard to allow the dead to truly return to life, or to breach the barrier of death in such an obvious and egregious way as creating permanent undead creatures, it is a much simpler matter for those who have departed to return to the Material Plane for a short time to commune with those that they have left behind, and once again leave a mark on the world of the living. In fact, not only can this be accomplished with the simple rituals shown here, which can be performed by anyone who follows the steps of the ritual, without any special magical training, but such small breaches in what we are told is the natural order of life and death occur on their own, and not as uncommonly as one might expect.

On the surface, this news is heartening to many who hear it, for they imagine that it brings them closer to the loved ones that they have lost, and also reassures them that when their own time comes, they will not entirely need to forsake this mortal coil, their spirits not truly departed. The fact that you are reading this tome is evidence enough that there is something on the other side of death's veil that you seek. However, wise readers will beware, for though the boundaries between life and death are not as firm as we are told, they are guite real, and there is a reason that each and every society has strong taboos against testing this barrier.

There are many dangers in dealing with death that may not be immediately obvious to the practitioner. Spirits that pass through this barrier are often altered by the experience, as though returning to life (or perhaps it is simply dying that does it) maddened them in a way that a living soul cannot entirely comprehend. Worse, other spirits, hungry and desperate for interaction with the mortal realm in much the same way that we desire contact with their own plane, may take advantage of practitioners, masguerading as someone they are not, or using the power of the ritual for their own selfish ends.

It is not uncommon, when performing the rituals contained within this tome, to hear whispering, cloying voices, who give dire warnings not to finish the ritual, that something has gone wrong and that it must be stopped, or else dire consequences will follow. Do not listen to these voices, reader. They are the voices of numerous disembodied souls who wish to wrest control of the ritual away from you and use its power for their own dark purposes. If you give in to their demands, if your heart wavers for even a moment, not only will the ritual fail, but far more dire things may occur. Take care in choosing which rituals you will perform, and when and how you perform them, but once you have begun the ritual, let <u>nothing</u> dissuade you from your task. Be resolute, or suffer a fate far worse than mere death.

New Occult Rituals

The following occult rituals are intended to be used with the rules for occult rituals found in *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game: Occult Adventures*.

FALSE RESURRECTION

School conjuration (calling); Level 7 Casting Time 7 hours

Components V, S, F (a black sapphire ring worth at least 5,000 gp, which must be placed on the target's finger), SC (up to 12)

Skill Checks Bluff or Disguise DC 35, 2 successes; Heal DC 35, 2 successes; Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (planes) DC 33, 2 successes; Knowledge (religion) DC 37, 1 success **Range** touch

Target dead creature touched

Duration permanent

Saving Throw Will negates, see text; Spell Resistance no Backlash Each caster suffers 1d4 points of Wisdom damage. Failure The primary caster becomes the target of a *greater possession*^{OA} effect by a shadow demon (DC 19), who attempts to inhabit the primary caster's body instead of inhabiting the dead creature. This effect lasts for 1 day per caster level (typically 10 days), rather than the spell's normal duration.

You bring the deceased body back to life, but instead of filling the empty vessel with the soul of the creature that once inhabited it, as is done in *raise dead* and similar spells, you instead invite the spirit of a shadow demon to inhabit the body. The spirit of the creature whose body is the target of this spell is entitled to a Will save to resist the effect, in which case the ritual has no effect (the target remains dead). If the dead creature's soul is imprisoned or destroyed, it does not get to make this Will save.

Treat the target as though it were returned to life with *raise dead*, and then immediately affected by a *greater possession* effect originated by a shadow demon. Additionally, the shadow demon gains limited access to the deceased creature's memories. This is not sufficient to allow the shadow demon to uncover any particular secrets the deceased might have had, but it is enough to help it to say the right things and recognize the right people, granting it a +10 bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks made to pass itself off as the individual whose body it is possessing.

The body, while alive, has no soul, and dies instantly if it is ever separated from the shadow demon that is possessing it. This occurs if any of the following happen: the ritual is successfully dispelled via *dispel magic* or similar means, the black sapphire ring used as a focus for the spell is removed from the target's body, or the shadow demon chooses to leave the body. In any of these cases, the shadow demon is instantly transported back to the Abyss, and the target's body dies instantly. At the GM's discretion, other methods which can remove a possessing entity from a creature may remove the shadow demon from the target's body.

You have no direct control over the shadow demon as a result of the ritual, but may be able to control it through other means. If you desire for a particular shadow demon to possess the creature, you can name that shadow demon as part of performing the ritual, and that shadow demon can

Sidebar: Rituals of the Dead in Your Game

While Pathfinder Roleplaying Game: Occult Adventures provides detailed information on how one can learn new rituals, it does so with the assumption that rituals will be uncovered individually. This particular book contains several rituals focused on a fairly tight theme, and contains a flavorful forward at the beginning that is written from a perspective within the game world. Because of this, it is reasonable that GMs who want to make use of this book may desire to allow their players to find a copy of *Rituals of the Dead* within the game, as treasure or a similar reward. Other GMs may not be comfortable with granting access to so many occult rituals so easily, and that's fine too.

Characters with access to a copy of *Rituals of the Dead* can learn a ritual contained within after 2 days of study per level of the ritual. At the end of this period of study and contemplation, the person attempting to learn the ritual must succeed on an Intelligence check (DC 12 + the ritual level). This time period and the DC are somewhere between that of learning the ritual from a willing teacher, and that of learning it from pieced together clues or a coerced teacher. The market value of a copy of *Rituals of the Dead* is 11,000 gp.

choose whether or not to answer your summons; if it does not, a different shadow demon is still summoned to possess the target. Even though this ritual partially mimics *raise dead*, it can still work on the bodies of creatures that have been turned into an undead creature, or died of old age (in the last case, the creature's maximum age is increased by 1 year).

HAUNTBINDING

School necromancy; Level 5

Casting Time 5 hours; can only be cast during a new moon **Components** V, S, F (an object that was once a personal belonging of a deceased individual of 5 or more Hit Dice), SC (up to 9)

Skill Checks Bluff or Intimidate DC 30, 2 successes; Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (religion) DC 30, 2 successes; Sense Motive DC 30, 1 success Range touch; see text

Effect one haunt; see text

Saving Throw Will negates and varies, see text; Spell Resistance no; see text

Backlash Each caster suffers 1d4 temporary negative levels. **Failure** The spirit of the creature whose personal belonging was used as a focus for the ritual manifests as a ghost (use the creature's game statistics before it died, and apply the ghost template) and attempts to slay the casters, one by one. The ghost is active each night from dusk until dawn for one week, killing as many of the casters as it can during that time. At dawn on the final day, the ghost's spirit returns to its resting place.

You rip the spirit of the creature whose personal belonging was used as a focus for the ritual from its resting place in the afterlife, and bind it to the world of the living in the form of a malevolent haunt. You must be able to specify the specific individual whose spirit you wish to bind in this way. If that individual is not dead, or had less than 5 Hit Dice at the time that she died, or did not own the object used as a focus for the ritual, the ritual has no effect. The spirit is entitled to a Will save to resist being turned into a haunt (use its Will save modifier from just before it died), and if it succeeds on this saving throw, the ritual also has no effect.

Otherwise, the primary caster can choose a single type of haunt whose CR is no greater than the number of Hit Dice the spirit possessed before it died minus 4. Alternatively, if the primary caster chooses a type of haunt that is in some way appropriate to the individual spirit being used for the ritual (one which in some way relates to the life or death of the spirit, subject to the GM's discretion), the CR of the chosen haunt can be equal to the spirit's Hit Dice minus 2, instead. The haunt's area is centered on the touched point, and in addition to any means that could normally be used to destroy a haunt, the haunt is also destroyed if the focus used as part of the ritual is destroyed.

The haunt allows the usual saving throws and spell resistance for a haunt of its type. Any spell resistance that the spirit itself might possess does not apply for the purposes of this ritual.

KISS OF ETERNITY

School necromancy; Level 4

Casting Time 40 minutes

Components V, S, M (special oils and incense worth 50 gp), F (a white silk veil) Skill Checks Disguise DC 28, 1 success; Heal DC 28, 2 successes; Knowledge (religion) DC 28, 1 success Range touch Target corpse touched Duration 1 week Saving Throw none; Spell Resistance no Backlash The caster ages 1 year. Failure The caster ages 10 years, and the corpse crumbles to

Failure The caster ages 10 years, and the corpse crumbles to dust.

This ritual draws its name in part from the ritual's final act, which requires the caster to kiss the corpse through the veil used as the focus of the ritual. You suffuse the target with magical energy that protects it from the ravages of time. For the spell's duration, the corpse does not decay, and is instead held in a state of suspended animation. It can still be damaged by deliberate action, such as attacking the corpse with a weapon or setting it on fire. If the ritual is performed early enough, it can even prevent the onset of rigor mortis, or prevent the corpse from growing cold.

LAY TO REST

School necromancy; Level 6

Casting Time 60 minutes; must be cast between the hours of 11 pm and 4 am

Components V, S, M (a set of silver shackles or manacles, sundered as part of performing the ritual), F (an object of some significance to the target, either in life or in death), SC (up to 3)

Skill Checks Bluff or Intimidate DC 34, 2 successes; Diplomacy or Sense Motive DC 34, 2 successes; Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (religion) DC 34, 2 successes. Range see text Target one ghost Duration instantaneous Saving Throw Will negates; Spell Resistance yes Backlash Each caster suffers damage as though affected by the target's corrupting touch special attack. Failure The target becomes enraged against each of the casters, and gains a +4 bonus on attack and damage rolls made against them, as well as increasing the saving throw DC of any of its spell-like abilities that affect them by +2, for 24 hours.

You sever the spiritual anchors that hold the ghost in the world of the living. The target loses its rejuvenation ability, as though you had determined the reason for its existence and set right whatever prevented it from resting in peace. Depending on the ghost, it may choose to fade into the afterlife immediately upon the ritual's completion, but it is more likely, especially if the ghost was hostile or did not want to pass on, that it will remain until it is slain one final time.

This ritual can only be cast in a location where the ghost frequents, though the ghost does not actually need to be present at the time. If the ghost is particularly welltravelled, and does not have any particular places that it frequents, then the ritual must be cast in a location that the ghost was in in the last 24 hours, or within sight of the ghost.

At the GM's discretion, a ghost affected by this ritual may eventually develop a new reason for existence, allowing it to regain its rejuvenation ability, if it is not destroyed first. This takes at least a number of days equal to the ghost's CR, and usually much more time than that. Further, the ghost's rejuvenation ability can be restored with a *wish* or *miracle* spell, or by a character who performs a special inverted version of this ritual, identical in all ways except that the manacles that serve as the material component for the spell are replaced by a silver chain which must be fastened into a loop.

MASK OF THE DEAD

School transmutation; Level 4 Casting Time 40 minutes

Components V, S, M (a featureless wooden mask, worn as part of the ritual, which melds into your face and is subsumed permanently into your body), F (the corpse of a humanoid creature)

Skill Checks Bluff or Disguise DC 32, 2 successes; Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (religion) DC 32, 2 successes **Range** personal

Target you

Duration 24 hours (D)

Saving Throw Will partial, see text; Spell Resistance no Backlash The caster suffers 1d2 points of Wisdom and Charisma damage.

Failure The caster's dreams are plagued by haunting nightmares in which he is accosted by the spirit of the creature whose corpse was used as a focus for the ritual. This functions as the spell *nightmare*, and goes on until he succeeds on a saving throw to resist the effect, or until he dies. The saving throw DC for this effect is equal to 15 + the caster's Charisma modifier.

You alter your body, causing your flesh to twist and warp until your appearance resembles that of the creature whose corpse was used as a focus for the ritual, as they appeared moments before their death. This change also affects your voice, scent, and all other physical characteristics, although you do not gain any of the creature's mannerisms or memories. You gain a +10 bonus on Disguise checks made to appear as the individual whose appearance you gain with this ritual.

Repeated use of this ritual to assume the appearance of the same creature can take a heavy toll on the mind. Each time you cast this ritual, if you have cast it before in the last 7 days using the same focus, you must succeed on a Will save at the end of the ritual's duration. Failure indicates that you begin to believe that you actually are the creature in question.

NOCTURNE'S EMBRACE

School necromancy; Level 5 Casting Time 5 hours; the ritual must be coordinated so that it ends within a few minutes of midnight Components V, S, M (a pinch of grave dirt, 13 teeth from

rats, bats, or wolves), F (a silver bowl, a ritual dagger worth at least 50 gp)

Skill Checks Bluff or Disguise DC 32, 2 successes; Knowledge (religion) DC 32, 2 successes; Knowledge (arcana) or

Spellcraft DC 32, 2 successes Range personal Target you Duration instantaneous Backlash none; see text Failure none; see text

With this ritual, you offer up your blood and your soul to the demigoddess Nocturne, and if you please her, and are of strong spirit, you are granted the gift of immortality as one of her vampiric children. In order to perform this ritual, you must grind up the material components in the silver bowl that serves as a focus, then use the dagger to bleed yourself, spilling your blood into the bowl as you chant Nocturne's praises. You must continue to do so until you pass out (and are reduced to -1 hit points and dying). Once you reach this point, you have only to awaken and drink the blood in the bowl, but you must do so without interference. Each round, you can make a Wisdom check (DC 15) to awaken, at which point you are still dying, but are conscious and staggered. Drinking the blood from the bowl stops the bleeding and completes the transformation. If you are healed, are awakened by another creature, or die, the ritual fails.

If the ritual succeeds, you are granted a form of vampirism. You can change your race to either dhampir or revenant, if desired. Additionally, if you choose to become a revenant, you may exchange any number of class levels for levels in a class with revenant in the name. You must meet any and all prerequisites of the chosen class.

At the GM's discretion, instead of becoming a dhampir or revenant, you may be allowed to exchange 2 or more class levels in order to gain the vampire template from the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*.

Sidebar: Revenants and Liber Vampyr

More information on revenants and revenant classes, as mentioned in *Nocturne's embrace*, can be found in *Liber Vampyr: Secrets of the Blood*, a vampirefocused book for the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* which is available for free at www.necromancers-online.com/ downloads.html.

RESTORE SOUL

School necromancy; Level 8

Casting Time 8 hours; see text **Components** V, S, M (an item from the desired creature's childhood; or two items, each of which belonged to one of the desired creature's parents; various oils and herbs worth 1,000 gp), F (an onyx cauldron)

Skill Checks Bluff DC 38, 1 success; Craft (alchemy) DC 38, 1 success; Diplomacy DC 38, 1 success; Heal DC 38, 1 success; Knowledge (arcana) DC 38, 1 success; Knowledge (religion) DC 38, 1 success; Perform (oratory) DC 38, 1 success; Spellcraft DC 38, 1 success.

Effect one soul

Duration instantaneous

Backlash The caster suffers 1d4 points of Wisdom damage. **Failure** The caster creates a new soul, which is antithetical to the one you intended. The new soul manifests as a ghost, with statistics identical to those possessed by the creature whose soul was to be replaced, except that its alignment and attitude are exact opposites of its normal alignment and attitude, as though it had been affected by a *helm of opposite alignment*.

You restore a soul that has been destroyed or consumed, brewing it in the cauldron with a stew consisting of the spell's material components. You must be able to clearly specify the creature whose soul you want to restore. This ritual has no effect if that creature's soul has not been destroyed (including if their soul is intact and imprisoned). If the ritual is a success, a cloud of mystic vapor forms over the cauldron, which briefly takes the form of the creature whose soul was restored, before fading into nothingness. If the creature whose soul was restored is alive, despite not having their soul, their soul immediately returns to them. Otherwise, the soul departs to the afterlife, but the creature can later be resurrected as normal.

This spell is particularly easy to cast near the spring and autumn equinoxes. If cast within 15 days of either equinox, the DCs of all skill checks made to perform the ritual are reduced by 4. If cast on the night of one of the equinoxes, the DCs of all skill checks are reduced by an additional 2, and you may choose a single skill check made to perform the ritual to automatically succeed on.

RITE OF ETERNAL SLUMBER

School necromancy; Level 5 Casting Time 50 minutes Components V, S, M (100 white lilies, 5 doses of holy water) Skill Checks Diplomacy or Intimidate DC 33, 1 success; Knowledge (arcana) or Spellcraft DC 33, 2 successes; Knowledge (religion) DC 33, 2 successes Range touch Target corpse touched

Duration permanent

Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance** no (harmless)

Backlash None

Failure The caster suffers 1d4 points of negative energy damage. There is a 20% chance that the target spontaneously rises as a skeleton or zombie in 1d4 x 5 days.

You suffuse the target's body and spirit both with wards that protect them from the energies that empower and animate the undead. The target cannot be made into an undead creature. This includes attempts to animate his corpse and attempts to animate his spirit separately from his corpse (such as to transform him into a ghost, shadow, or other incorporeal undead). This ritual has no effect if the creature has already been animated as an undead creature, nor does it have any effect on creatures that are currently alive. If the effect is dispelled, the target can be animated normally.

SHROUD OF THE RESTLESS

School necromancy; Level 4

Casting Time 40 minutes; can only be cast after sunset **Components** V, S, M (nine black candles, 10 grams of salt, spread in a circle), F (a white linen shroud which has never been exposed to sunlight), SC (up to 5)

Skill Checks Diplomacy DC 30, 1 success; Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (religion) DC 30, 2 successes; Sense Motive DC 30, 1 success

Range see text

Effect call the spirit of a single willing deceased humanoid creature

Duration concentration; see text

Saving Throw none; Spell Resistance no

Backlash The casters suffer 2 points of nonlethal damage per Hit Dice of the summoned spirit, divided evenly amongst all casters.

Failure The ritual conjures a different spirit from the intended one. A malevolent ghost appears instead of the intended spirit.

You call into the afterlife, conjuring forth the spirit of a willing, deceased humanoid and allowing you to converse with it, in a limited fashion. In order to perform this ritual, the shroud that serves as the ritual's focus must be laid inside the salt circle, with the candles spaced evenly around its perimeter. The caster must be able to specify the individual whose spirit is to be summoned. If the spirit is unwilling, is not dead, or is otherwise unable to be summoned, the ritual has no effect (and there is a 30% chance that the ritual is treated as a failure, even if the casters succeeded on enough skill checks to make it a success).

If the ritual is a success, the linen shroud slowly rises up in the air, as though someone crouched underneath it were slowly unfurling and standing up, until eventually, the shroud appears to be draped over a featureless humanoid creature standing underneath it. The casters may take turns asking questions of the spirit. The spirit does not speak, and cannot make gestures which would disturb the cloth draped over it, so typically these questions must have a yes or no answer (allowing the spirit to nod or shake its head), or some other answer that can be expressed with simple body language (such as pointing in a certain direction, holding up a number of fingers, and so on). As a group, the casters can ask up to 1 question per caster level, plus 5 questions per secondary caster. The spirit is under no compulsion to answer these questions truthfully, or at all, and can choose to ignore individual questions if it desires.

If the summoned spirit desires, it can attempt to break free of the spell's effect. This typically occurs when a different spirit than intended is summoned by mistake, but if you attempt to summon a spirit that is malicious in nature (whether you know that or not), the spirit may consent to be summoned simply so it can attempt to break free. The spirit can make one attempt to break free for every 1d4 questions it answers. Doing so requires a successful Charisma check (DC 15 + the primary caster's Charisma modifier). The spirit is aware of how many questions it must answer before it can next attempt to break free, but you are not. Alternatively, if the salt circle is broken while the summoned spirit is still present, or if the linen shroud covering the spirit is removed, the spirit breaks free immediately. Once the spirit is freed, the ritual's duration no longer requires concentration, and the spirit remains summoned and able to act for up to 10 minutes per caster level. A spirit freed in this way has the statistics the creature had before it died, with the ghost template. Unlike a normal ghost, the first special attack it gains is corrupting gaze, rather than corrupting touch. If it gains a second special attack, it gains corrupting touch, and if it gains further special attacks, it may choose which ones it gains.

TOMB LORD'S CORONATION

School necromancy; Level 6

Casting Time 6 hours; can only be cast on the 13th day of a given month

Components V, S, M (a snake liver, a pair of dog eyes, a rat tongue, a bird's brain, and a monkey's heart), F (gold jewelry and ornaments worth at least 250 gp), SC (up to 3) **Skill Checks** Appraise or Knowledge (nobility) DC 34, 2 successes; Knowledge (arcana) or Spellcraft DC 34, 2 successes; Knowledge (religion) DC 32, 2 successes **Range** touch

'Target humanoid corpse touched

Duration instantaneous; see text

Saving Throw Will negates, see text; Spell Resistance yes Backlash Each caster suffers 1d4 Con and Wis damage. Failure Each caster is afflicted with mummy rot.

You lay a powerful curse (or, in the eyes of some, a protective ward) over the target, so that if its grave is ever disturbed, it will return from the dead to seek vengeance against those who would defile its final resting place. If the target's grave, tomb, or similar final resting place is ever opened, entered, or otherwise disturbed (subject to GM discretion), the target immediately animates as a mummy and is compelled to attack or destroy the ones responsible for its awakening. When animated in this way, it gains an intuitive understanding of the direction and relative distance of each creature that disturbed its grave. It remains animated until each of the desecrators has died, then returns to its resting place (or closest proximity, if its resting place no longer exists) and returns to being a simple corpse. You do not have any direct control over the mummy created by this spell, although it can be controlled through other methods that can be used to control the undead.

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Mysteries From Beyond the Gravel

Occult rituals, from Dathfinder Roleplaying Game: Occult Adventures, bring magic to the masses, with lengthy and difficult to perform magical rites which can be performed even by non-spellcasters, but which come with cost, as well as the risk for terrible backlash to occur for those who meddle in things they do not understand. Unlike traditional spells, only a handful of occult rituals made it into that book however, which begs the question of what other strange and unknowable rituals might be lurking about in obscure tomes lost to history and memory. Tomes like this one:

This book presents a collection of 10 brand new occult rituals for use in your game, all of which are thematically linked to death, the afterlife, and the undead. Presented in the guise of a fictitious tome that player characters might stumble across, the book also includes a flavorful introductory section that can be read aloud or handed out to players, and suggestions for how to incorporate the book into your game. The rituals in this book allow players for nefarious NDCs) to:

• Anchor the spirits of the dead to the Material Plane, using them to create haunts of whatever type the caster desires.

• Conjure the spirit of a shadow demon into the body of a deceased, seem ing to restore them to life, but actually just allowing the demon to use their body as a puppet.

• Steal the appearance of a corpse, allowing you to look and sound like the creature did when it was alive.

• Transform yourself into one of several different kinds of vamping

• And much, much more!

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