



THE PRICE OF EVIL

Poisoned Pages for Shadow of the Demon Lord

With the world crumbling into ruin and chaos, and reality itself teetering on the brink of utter oblivion, there are those who find the temptation to embrace the darkness almost irresistible. After all, they will argue, if everything is hurtling toward annihilation, why shouldn't we all indulge every desire and engage in whatever acts we choose, no matter how wrong or evil, without fear or care of what might come?

The Price of Evil explores the costs and consequences of characters' evil actions by expanding on the Corruption rules as presented in *Shadow of the Demon Lord*. Using the variant rules in this supplement will strengthen the effect of Corruption in the game, building upon the horror of transformation and subversion by demonic influence until the characters become the very monstrosities they fight against.

This supplement joins other installments in the *Poisoned Pages* series by offering optional rules groups can use to enrich their play experience. Like the variant insanity and madness rules found in *Unhinge the Mind*, and the lasting scars and injuries in *Battle Scars*, the rules in this supplement are optional and

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should only be used if all the players and the GM are in agreement to incorporate them. Utilizing these variant rules brings the story element of the Demon Lord's shadow even more forward as an active and terrifying force that can both aid and hinder the story's protagonists.

INTRODUCTION

When I started designing *Shadow of the Demon Lord*, one of my primary goals was the creation of a tabletop roleplaying game in which the players took on the roles of flawed individuals, sometimes horribly so, struggling to survive in a world slowly disintegrating under the pressure created by a reality destroyer I dubbed "the Demon Lord." In such a situation, I imagined players might create either brave and virtuous heroes or vile and despicable villains, both of whom would find common ground by uniting in a desperate bid to drive back the ever-encroaching darkness.

But I wasn't so naïve as to think players would show restraint in gameplay when presented with the opportunity to bargain with devils, to cast hideous spells such as *part bone from flesh* or *desire's end*, or do worse when the consequences of their evil actions simply speeds up the coming end. Players love to push the boundaries, and if those boundaries are mere suggestions, in a world where amorality and evil abound, then many will be even more inclined to act accordingly if there are few in-game consequences for their actions.

The only moral structures imposed on characters are those the players choose to adopt. Rather than distill world outlooks and ethical mores into broad categories and then ask players to choose one that best fits their character concept, *Shadow* favors a more flexible structure, one in which the players make decisions from moment to moment about what their characters will do, allowing the impact of those decisions on the story to determine whether they are good, bad, or somewhere in between. The organic, evolving development of character morality within play allows for a more natural experience, one that generally reflects more realism in how people behave.

Even though *Shadow* makes no expectations about the kinds of characters players create and play, the game does pay attention to the effects of evil actions. *Shadow's* cosmology posits that dark and immoral actions have direct metaphysical consequences by burdening the soul with corruption, which becomes more stained and sullied with each evil deed. So when a person murders an innocent, poisons a town's well, burns down an orphanage, commits sexual assault, or performs some other profoundly wicked act, the perpetrator's soul darkens in proportion to the deed committed.

The reason for this phenomenon of corruption is discussed in detail in *The Hunger in the Void*. To summarize here, all reality is made from a powerful essence stolen from the divine, an entity from which the demiurge, and the genies it created, ravaged and plundered to create worlds, and the universe itself. This violent act reduced the divine to an insane, hateful monstrosity, now driven to reclaim that which had been taken from it – the Demon Lord.

Souls, then, are bits of the same essence that once belonged to the Demon Lord. Like the Destroyer of Worlds, all souls have the potential to become lost entirely to evil and themselves become demonic agents of chaos and destruction compelled to undo reality and restore formless substance back to the divine. Evil actions awaken the demonic potential within a soul, which nudges it closer to becoming a demon inside the fleshly vessel that houses it. As the soul darkens and becomes more demonic, its fleshly vessel begins to show signs of corruption, physical or cosmological transformations that reveal the true nature of all living things.

Thus, those who embrace the darkness, who indulge their hatred, wickedness, and commit evil become witting or unwitting agents of the Demon Lord, bound and driven by him to unleash mayhem and horror upon the world.

THE NATURE OF EVIL

The notion of what is good or evil depends entirely on those rules and laws adopted by various and different cultures and societies. One society might value individualism, the gathering of personal wealth and influence, while denigrating charity and community for a dependency that invariably leads to parasitism by the poor upon the rich. Another society might balk at such a selfish outlook, instead upholding community, cooperation, and sharing as the highest values, believing that none can truly thrive unless all can. While either side might paint the other as being misguided or foolish, both can agree there are certain acts that harm their societal foundations, regardless of how their society is structured. Murder, theft, arson, and other cruel acts that serve no purpose beyond tearing down and weakening society are truly evil as they make the world worse than it was before the deed carried out the deed.

As a result, evil exists in degrees. There can be acts of minor evil, such as a noble heartlessly ignoring the plight of the peasants toiling on his lands, or the factory owner making no efforts to improve the poor working conditions of her laborers. Some acts considered evil might have good intentions or consequences, such as a man stealing bread to feed his starving children. The act of theft, however, is still considered evil, or at least wrong, since it deprives

one person of his or her rightful property, an affront against the social order.

As an extreme example, consider the murder of a notorious child abuser. Killing the abuser prevents young lives from being further harmed or destroyed at the degenerate's hands—but ending the life of any sentient being, even if justified, can hardly be deemed good unto itself. Similarly, a revolt against a cruel and tyrannical overlord might result in the deaths of numerous innocents, but their loss could be a necessary cost paid to gain the opportunity to build a better and more just society. Each situation creates its own moral quandary—but what evil might result from such situations falls outside the bounds of the truly wicked as the circumstances absolve the person who committed the evil action.

True evil stands apart from moral quandaries and failures of character as it is readily identifiable as both extreme and without reasonable justification. Evil actions benefit no one apart from the actor, arising from the doer's base needs and dark motives. Such actions harm and destroy lives and goods, fraying and tearing the social fabric that holds communities together, and often serve as a catalyst for even more deplorable behavior on part of the doer. The theft and hoarding of vital resources from those who desperately need them to survive, the cruel torture of the weak for pleasure, and the outright slaughter of innocents are but a few of the many possible reprehensible and truly evil acts.

CORRUPTION

Corruption results when a creature in possession of a soul performs an act of true evil or encounters the embodiment of evil. Any creature in possession of a soul can gain Corruption and become changed by its acquisition. Immortals, such as faeries, can be corrupted even though nothing divides their souls from their bodies, although they are far more susceptible to gaining marks of darkness, as Corruption is more difficult for them to conceal. Most creatures, however, are corrupted by doing something evil, so ordinary animals and most people are not likely to accumulate Corruption except through some extraordinary circumstance. Of course, there are always things in the world that can sully creatures against their wills, blighting their spirits with the taint of darkness.

Since one must have a soul to gain Corruption, some creatures are obviously exempt. Elementals, for example, have no souls, being substance formed and awakened by the genies to serve a specific purpose. Similarly, constructs, some corporeal undead, and plants lack souls and never gain Corruption no matter what they do or to what they are exposed.

GAINING CORRUPTION

Generally, there are three ways for creatures to gain Corruption: evil actions, forbidden knowledge, and exposure to evil.

EVIL ACTIONS

Shadow describes a few examples of actions worthy of inflicting Corruption, but the ways by which a soul can become sullied are many. Generally, any action resulting in an outcome that makes it worse for the world in some way, and has no justification beyond the willingness of the actor to perform the act, is one that will cause Corruption. Examples include, but are not limited to, murder, torture, rape, cannibalism,



genocide, and general diabolical mischief, such as the poisoning of a village's well, contaminating a food supply, or the malevolent burning of a building important to a community.

FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE

In some cases, knowledge of certain subjects can darken a soul. Forbidden knowledge might include the histories and practices of debased peoples, the learning of a vile language, discovery of dark magic traditions, and the understanding of certain vile relics. Simply learning these things and how they work can afflict the mind and thereby stain the soul. Likewise, possession of a dark relic can also have lasting effects on the soul.

EXPOSURE

Evil begets evil. Demons sometimes corrupt those they possess. Those who make foul bargains with devils can be corrupted. Certain lands have been so stained by dark magic that to traverse them is to imperil one's immortal soul. Similarly, spells of dark magic can attack the soul directly, twisting it into something dark and foul.

EFFECTS OF CORRUPTION

The darkening of one's soul does not go unnoticed; the effects can be felt throughout the body, though the particulars might vary from pleasurable to painful. Some find the experience orgasmic, a thrill racing through their body, stimulating all their pleasure centers before receding. Others feel a persistent chill that creeps throughout their bodies, while others experience sudden, unbearable pain that wracks their entire being. The sensation might last but a moment, but there's no way the individual can possibly mistake what they have experienced, or, more importantly, why.

Individuals with small amounts of Corruption might be afraid of what awaits them in the afterlife, but suffer little to no other effects. If a soul acquires

enough Corruption, it can actually weaken reality itself around its host body, causing the boundary between the world and the Void to fray and eventually unravel. Wherever the individual goes, this distortion follows, becoming more pronounced such that people instinctively sense wrongness in the person. Eventually, the individual draws the attention of Hell itself; if unchecked by devilish intervention, inevitably the Shadow of the Demon Lord will fall upon them.

The damnation faced by those who embrace darkness plays a crucial role in maintaining the cosmological order. Devils collect sullied mortal souls and subject them to excruciating torments in order to purge them of evil. The devils feed on what they take from the souls to sustain themselves and their dark power, but also to cleanse the soul of all corrupt influence before it returns to the mortal world in a new body. Corruption's removal repairs the damage done to reality's bounds and keeps the demonic influences at bay.

Immortals face a different fate when they become corrupted. Since their bodies and souls are unified, an immortal's soul dissipates into the Void when their flesh dies, leaving nothing for the devils to harvest. Instead of facing damnation, the greater the immortal's infractions, the more active Hell's interest in them becomes until devils come to claim the creature as their own, transforming them into devils as well, condemned to serve Diabolus in Hell itself, a place of fire and pain, of boundless evil and depthless wickedness.

You can use the Corruption Effects table presented in place of the one included in *Shadow*. This table intensifies the effects of gaining Corruption and reflects the variant rules for gaining Corruption and marks of darkness. When your character gains 1 or more Corruption, find his or her current Corruption score on the table and follow the instructions. If the character is immortal, treat his or her Corruption score as 1 higher for the purposes of determining the effects of gaining Corruption.



CORRUPTION EFFECTS

Corruption Score	Effects
0	No effect.
1	Roll a d20. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your Corruption score, roll on the Mark of Darkness Severity table.
2-3	Roll a d20. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your Corruption score, roll on the Mark of Darkness Severity table. In addition, you gain the Slave of Darkness trait. <p>Touch of Darkness Other creatures can sense the evil in you. In social situations involving creatures that have 0 Corruption, you make attack rolls with 1 bane.</p>
4-5	Roll a d6. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your Corruption score, roll on the Mark of Darkness Severity table. In addition, you gain the Slave of Darkness trait. <p>Slave of Darkness The wrongness you emit intensifies. All animals are hostile to you and the number of banes imposed on attack rolls in social situations from your Stain of Darkness trait increases to 3.</p>
6-7	Roll on the Mark of Darkness Severity table. In addition, your corruption manifests in minor physical ways. You might develop marks under your skin, lose your fingernails, or develop a sore that never heals.
7-8	Roll on the Mark of Darkness Severity table. You also gain the Infernal Interest trait. <p>Infernal Interest Hell takes an interest in you. Whenever you make a fate roll from being incapacitated, you must roll twice and use the lower result.</p>
9+	Roll on the Mark of Darkness Severity table and gain the Damned trait. <p>Damned Hell comes to claim you. If you are immortal, each time you complete a rest, roll a d20. On a 1, you disappear, dragged down to Hell where you spend the rest of your days. If you are mortal, the first time you become incapacitated, you die.</p>

MARKS OF DARKNESS

The awakening of the soul's demonic nature wreaks havoc on the body housing it. Such vile influence bubbles up from the ephemeral essence, triggering both physical and mental transformations. In extreme cases, these manifestations can even influence the individual's environment, along with the people and creatures in it. These changes, called marks of darkness, identify those individuals who have chosen the path of iniquity, and are signs that cannot usually be concealed. A person bearing one or more marks of darkness often evokes revulsion and fear in those who see them, and might even draw the attention of those dedicated or sworn to purge and eradicate evil from the world.

Use the table below when directed by Corruption Effects to determine the severity of your character's mark of darkness. Find the row corresponding to his or her Corruption total. If the character is immortal, add 1 to the Corruption total for the purposes of determining the severity. Then roll a d6 to find the column for the result of which Marks of Darkness table to use.



CLOCKWORKS AND MARKS OF DARKNESS

Not all of the marks of darkness described here are appropriate to clockworks and other mechanical beings in possession of souls. If you get a result that doesn't make sense, you can always use the Marks of Darkness table included in the supplement, *Ghosts in Machines*. Alternatively, just adapt the mark of darkness so that it makes sense, given the bearer of the new foul sign.



MARK OF DARKNESS SEVERITY

Corruption	—D6 Roll—					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Moderate
2	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Moderate	Moderate
3	Minor	Minor	Minor	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
4	Minor	Minor	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Major
5	Minor	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Major	Major
6	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Major	Major	Major
7	Moderate	Moderate	Major	Major	Major	Unspeakable
8	Moderate	Major	Major	Major	Unspeakable	Unspeakable
9+	Major	Major	Major	Unspeakable	Unspeakable	Unspeakable



MINOR MARKS OF DARKNESS

Roll	Mark of Darkness
1	You have a rattling cough. Sometimes you expel bloody maggots in your fits of coughing.
2	The inverted names of the gods of the Old Faith appear just under the surface of your skin in a band around your left arm.
3	You weep blood.
4	Your skin bloats and becomes feverish to the touch. When you perspire, you give off a foul, sweetish musk.
5	You lose the nails on your hands and feet, leaving raw and bloody flesh behind.
6	Your sexual organs are always engorged and painful.
7	You lose the sense of smell, taste, or touch.
8	You have constant noisy, noxious flatulence.
9	You sweat all the time and your body odor is profound, bullying the sinuses of everyone near you.
10	Your teeth lengthen and twist in your mouth.
11	Thick fur grows in the palms of your hands.
12	Your skin assumes the consistency of fried bacon.
13	Flowers and small plants within short range of you wither and die.
14	The product of your bowel movements slithers and writhes for 1d3 minutes, almost as if it was alive.
15	Your body hair falls out in clumps.

- 16 You see awful things about the people you value while you sleep.
- 17 Your ears either become flaps of skin that hang down to your shoulders or shrink up into small wads of flesh.
- 18 You cannot help but pepper your speech with insults and profanity. You make attack rolls in social situations with 1 bane.
- 19 You have a suspicious mole on your face. Each time you complete a rest, you discover the mole has moved to a new location.
- 20 You enjoy pain and cannot stand pleasure. Whenever you take 5 damage or more, you make attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 boon for 1 round.

MODERATE MARKS OF DARKNESS

Roll	Mark of Darkness
1	You never cast a reflection in mirrors.
2	Your shadow appears enormous and monstrous. It never quite matches your movements.
3	You can eat only rotting or spoiled food; you vomit up anything else within minutes of consuming it.
4	When you speak, a faint cry accompanies your words, almost as if your soul was in pain.
5	You grow a sixth finger on each hand and a sixth toe on each foot.
6	Animals are always hostile to you, attacking you if you come within 6 yards of them.
7	You grow a second row of teeth in your mouth and a new row of teeth in an unexpected place.
8	A silver inverted pentagram appears in the center of your forehead.
9	Your tongue lengthens until it can no longer fit inside your mouth. A hard bony nail or claw forms on its tip.
10	Centipedes infest your bladder and cause you intense pain when you urinate.
11	Your tongue bifurcates, causing you to hiss when you speak.
12	Your pupils become slits and your irises assume an unnatural color.
13	Each finger on your left hand grows 1d6 inches.
14	You always wake up screaming. When you complete a rest, make a Will challenge roll. On a failure, you gain 1 Insanity.
15	Fine black scales cover your arms from the elbows down to your fingers and your legs from your knees to your toes.
16	A ghastly, shuddering bulge forms on your body. Whenever you're injured, a wide, leering grin stretches across its surface and barks laughter.
17	If you're male, your ejaculate is black and smells like dung. If you're female, once a year, you birth a blackened, knobby lump of wood.

- 18 Most of the hair on your body blackens and stiffens, becoming needle-sharp. You cut or abrade yourself, or anyone who touches you, all too often.
- 19 The air temperature around you drops by thirty degrees. Although the cold does not discomfit you, your breath steams.
- 20 Your facial features assume a melted, drooping appearance. You slobber a lot.

MAJOR MARKS OF DARKNESS

Roll Mark of Darkness

- 1 The contact of any holy symbols, icons, or other religious paraphernalia on your skin burns you. When you touch or are touched by such an object, you take 1 damage per round of sustained contact.
- 2 A pair of horns grows out from your forehead. Strange runes appear on their surface as if they have been carved.
- 3 A red weeping eye appears in the palm of each of your hands.
- 4 You develop a nasty wound in your side that oozes stinking black sludge when you become angry. This wound never heals and imposes a -1d6 penalty to your Health.
- 5 Your nose rots away, leaving a dark crater in your face that leaks bloody mucus.
- 6 Your eyes become pools of darkness; in the dark, they glow with an evil red light.
- 7 Your reproductive organs shrivel and fall off or out of your body.
- 8 You can no longer see faces.
- 9 Your eyes slide together to form a single bulging orb.
- 10 Whenever you take damage from fire, you automatically catch fire.
- 11 Gills grow on your neck. They do not allow you to breathe underwater, but they do let you breathe when you're submerged in blood.
- 12 Webbing appears between your fingers and toes. Your flesh becomes mottled and moist, and your eyeballs bulge from your head.
- 13 Dozens of dripping orifices appear all over your body, periodically soaking your clothing, or, if you're uncovered, spraying the air around you with pungent brown mist.
- 14 Winking eyeballs replace your nipples and the surrounding flesh.
- 15 Your fingers thicken until they resemble penises.
- 16 Your lips grow heavy and hang off your face like meat curtains.
- 17 A writhing tentacle sprouts out of your abdomen. You have no control over this appendage and you must tie it down lest it violate your orifices, or those of anyone near you, with its never-ending depraved explorations.
- 18 Your skin assumes the color and texture of mucus. Unless you keep your flesh moist, your skin becomes crusty, breaking off with the slightest touch and causing you to bleed.
- 19 Small, black, leathery bat-like wings break free from your back and flap about uselessly.
- 20 Your spine gives birth to a fleshy, hairless tail that ends in a knob.

UNSPEAKABLE MARKS OF DARKNESS

Roll Mark of Darkness

- 1 Once each week, a child within 1 mile of you sickens and dies.
- 2 Void larvae nest in your guts and sometimes peek out from your anus. You die when you become incapacitated and your body releases 1d6 + 1 **void larvae**.
- 3 Living maggots replace your blood. Whenever you suffer a laceration, the vermin spill out from the wound.
- 4 Your facial features slough off, leaving smooth pink skin behind. You can still see and hear, but you no longer need to eat or drink.
- 5 All the fat in your body rushes out from orifices, leaving you as a living skeleton draped in loose skin. Reduce your Health by 2d6.
- 6 Your teeth transform into tiny centipedes that chew your food for you. At night, you hear them whisper terrible things.
- 7 If you spend more than one hour around anyone or anything pregnant, you cause the life in the womb to fail.
- 8 An unending stream of liquid filth spills from your anus.
- 9 All the skin on your face pulls away from your skull, giving you a ghastly appearance. You gain the frightening trait.
- 10 The bones in your body become brittle. You can still hold yourself upright, but only just. You fall prone whenever you take damage.
- 11 Six monstrous faces appear in different places on your body. Whenever you are injured, the faces hoot, bark, and screech.
- 12 Hard, knobby growths appear all over your body. Reduce your Agility by 1.
- 13 Your fingers, toes, nose, ears, and genitals rot away. Your skin turns an unhealthy shade of gray and you make an awful croaking noise if you talk too much.
- 14 Shadows swirl around you, always turning light within 1 yard of you to shadows, and shadows within this range to darkness. You heal half damage.
- 15 Whenever you rest, your soul, or your mind if you're immortal, goes to Hell. When you complete a rest, you gain Insanity equal to your Will score.
- 16 The Demon Lord's shadow falls on you. Whenever you start a new adventure, the GM rolls for a random Shadow of the Demon Lord. Its effects center on you and extend out from you in a 1-mile radius.
- 17 A crack appears in the center of your skull and you are compelled to seize each side and pull it apart so that your tear your head into two pieces, each resting on your shoulders. Your brain, eyes, and flapping tongue hover in the gap between them. Although you are incapable of coherent speech, your tongue can still utter incomprehensible syllables that still allow you to cast spells.
- 18 Your navel sinks inward, dragging and stretching the flesh with it. Eventually, your navel reaches the Void. When you become injured, roll a d6. On a 6, 1d6 **tiny demons** come crawling out from your navel to land in the nearest open spaces to you. The demons are hostile to everything that is not a demon and take the next available turn. Once you spawn demons in this way, you cannot do so again until after you complete a rest.
- 19 Your body warps and twists, becoming a mess of emaciated limbs and bulging bags of skin. Take a -4 penalty to your Speed.
- 20 You gain a demonic talent. You can use the table provided in *Shadow* or the tables in *The Hunger in the Void* to determine what talent you gain.



REDEMPTION

One merely needs the will to commit evil acts to gain Corruption, but no amount of remorse or pleading can rid the soul of its stain. Corruption clings to the soul, bound so tightly to the creature's essence that even if immediate regret drives the corrupted to perform some noble action, the darkness still remains, wearing away at the creature until it finally succumbs to temptation and embraces its fate among the ranks of the damned.

Despite Corruption's infamous resiliency and inevitable pull toward damnation, some redemption is possible. Hard work and dedication in the service of good, and some potent spells can cleanse a soul, thus sparing it from the fires of perdition that await. However, no matter how pure the soul might be remade, any marks of darkness acquired remain until death.

GOOD DEEDS

For those with small amounts of Corruption—no more than 3—the surest and least risky way to cleanse the soul comes from embracing virtue and committing one's life to doing good in the world. However, simply being nice to other people and absenting oneself from evil actions are insufficient for achieving redemption. One must strive in all things to improve the world, to affect lives in positive ways, and to do all this with no expectation of reward. The following deeds represent some, though not all, of the behavior one might expect a penitent soul to adopt in order to expunge the taint upon his or her soul.

- Be wholesome and pure in all things. Be chaste, temperate, and free of anything that would sully your body.
- Be generous in your dealings with others. Give away your riches to those in need, share your food, water, and anything else to care for the people who would otherwise go without.
- Protect the innocent from harm, shield others who are weaker than you to safeguard them from danger, and be willing to sacrifice yourself and your possessions to do what is right. Always strive to do what is right and just. Never give in to your hatred, frustration, or greed.

- Show mercy to those who deserve it. Destroy evil in all its incarnations, but do everything you can to save those who might be redeemed.
- Be compassionate in your dealings with others and tolerant of other beliefs, attitudes, and lifestyles.
- Show humility in all your doings. Give credit where it's due and seek no rewards for your actions.

When a character with 3 Corruption or less demonstrates a number of the above behaviors or similar ones equal to or greater than the character's Corruption score, you can let the player make a Will challenge roll with a number of banes equal to his or her Corruption total. On a success, the player can reduce his or her character's Corruption total by 1.

MAGIC

The truly desperate might find relief from the burden of their foul deeds through magic. Powerful practitioners of Theurgy magic might have access to spells that can lift some or even all of a mortal's Corruption, such as the *atonement* spell presented in the *Demon Lord's Companion*. The spell is most often circulated as an incantation, inscribed in holy books or imbued in icons of Astrid and other holy figures. Since the spell's power prevents all but the most accomplished users of magic from learning it, casting the spell as an incantation usually has a not inconsiderable chance for failure; any misstep on the caster's part can cause the magic to fail and the spell to be wasted. Even if successfully cast, *atonement* offers no guaranteed outcome and might harm or even kill the target and the caster if the Corruption proves too strong. The spell's hazards and difficulty in casting, combined with the Cult of the New God's opposition toward ridding souls of their Corruption, means finding someone to cast the spell, let alone finding the spell itself, is extremely difficult.

SIN-EATERS

A heretical branch of the New God's cult works to save souls by more direct means. Called sin-eaters (see *Kingdom of God* for the master path), they devised methods for taking the burden of iniquity from others unto themselves, thereby freeing afflicted mortals to return to light and goodness. The Cult of the New God declared these priests apostates and viciously persecutes them, dispatching witch hunters and inquisitors to track them down and consign them to torture and immolation. The Matriarch asserts that the process used to cleanse the souls enables mortals to escape justice for their wickedness. Those

who commit evil should descend to Hell to pay the ultimate price for their misdeeds. Cleansing a mortal soul housed in a living body is an act reserved only for the divine. Thus, absolving anyone of their sins is considered an act of ultimate heresy.

With nearly the entire Cult of the New God positioned against them, sin-eaters live fraught lives. They must always look over their shoulders lest the witch hunters catch up to them. Despite this, sin-eaters believe themselves to be doing the work of their god and set out to help those who have been led astray, either by moral failing or through manipulation by dark forces. Most sin-eaters reserve their gifts for those who show true remorse for what they have done, and who would return to the light by any means possible.

With this in mind, they closely question the people they would help to gauge their intent and the degree of guilt they feel for having fallen so far. Sin-eaters are under no obligation to help, so if they detect any prevarication or deception in their subject's confessions, they withhold the deliverance they would otherwise give, and might even try to destroy them in order to dispatch the offending soul to Hell, thus ending the threat it poses to the world.