

Weaver at the Web

Night Magnitude 20

Performing the Ritual

Performing this ritual takes at least 2 minutes of roleplaying. This ritual targets a military unit. The character who controls the target personal resource must be present throughout. must be present throughout.

This spell is an enchantment. A target may only be under one enchantment effect at a time.

Effects

The target military unit gains a bonus to both its effectiveness when it supports a spy network. This temporary bonus increases the effective fighting force of the unit by 100, the equivalent of 5 normal upgrades.

The character who controls the military unit experiences a roleplaying effect: they feel an urge to poke their noses into other peoples' business without attracting the attention of their target. The less familiar they are with someone, the stronger he urge to find out about them, or spy on them, becomes. Regardless, they feel a sense that simply asking the target about their actions is a foolish, perhaps even dangerous, course of action.

The roleplaying effect persists as long as the military unit remains enchanted.

The effect lasts until the start of the next Profound Decisions Empire event.

Additional Targets

This ritual can affect additional military unites controlled by members of the same banner. Each additional military unit increases the magnitude by 15. The character who controls each unit must be present throughout the ritual.

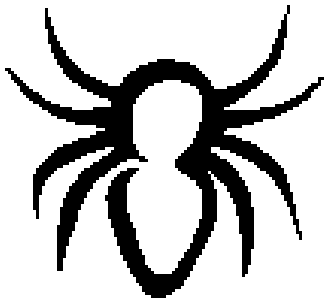
OOO note

This item is a ritual text.

Any character with the Night Ritual Lore skill can master this ritual. You must have a free slot or experience point to master a new ritual. After an appropriate period of roleplaying spent studying these pages, it should then be brought to a referee who will add the ritual to those you have mastered. Doing this does not 'use up' the ritual text.

This ritual cannot be learned by other means; it cannot be taught by a character who knows it unless the ritual is added to the body of Imperial Lore by the Conclave.

Ribbon ID: 11643

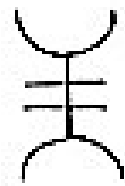


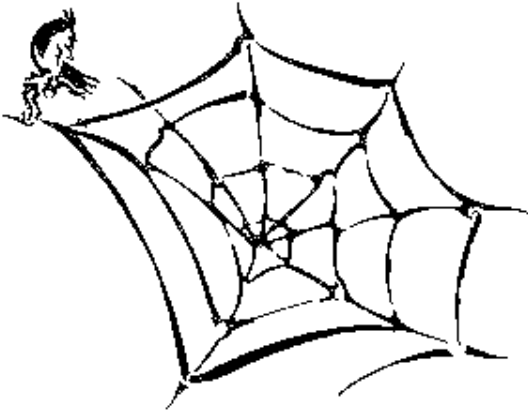
Weaver at the Web

Ritual of the Realm of Night

Codified at the Lyceum

With the guidance of Dean Simargl, Summer 380YE





Developing the ritual

Several of the core elements of this ritual were adapted from the Shroud of Mist and Shadow – a stalwart of Imperial Lore that enchants a warband with a veil of concealment. Much of the work towards codifying the ritual came in the form of refining that enchantment, and expanding it to support the gathering and communication of information, rather than enabling lethal ambushes.

According to stories, the original arcane projection was carefully examined by the eternal Sadogua, called Brother of Wizards, at the request of the Shattered Lantern. After a season teasing at the ritual, the Father of Bats was reportedly forced to admit that there were no modifications he could make to the magic that would improve it, and no suggestions that would allow it to be more effective at what it did. It was simply an excellent, well-constructed piece of magic aimed at doing exactly what it was intended to do in the most efficient way. He eventually returned the projection to the Order, admitting defeat and expressing admiration for their work.

During the codification of this ritual, there was some discussion about the idea of enchanting an actual spy network itself in the same way one might enchant a fortification or army. This fascinating area of investigation has not been widely explored, but several problems immediately presented themselves. A spy network is extremely diffuse – it is difficult to point to anything concrete and say "this is the heart of this operation." They are usually built outside Imperial borders, and at the same time there is no obvious person through which to employ the Law of Dominion. Some theoreticians speculate that it might be possible to enchant an entire territory with night magic to make spying and scouting more effective (or less effective) but doing so went beyond the scope of the current work.

The ritual was also compared several times to the Sharp Eyes of the Corsair – a ritual developed at the Halls of Knowledge in Urizen. That ritual is much less efficient than this, and created using the Lore of Day. While some were critical of the ritual, it must be remembered that the Provost's intention was to create a ritual that could be performed easily by a single master of Day magic, whereas this ritual is unconcerned with such considerations and focuses on using the Law of Scale to its best advantage.

Part of the codification involved finding volunteers familiar with scouting and stealth to work with the magicians in testing the ritual. This led to the creation of several "exercises" on the Lyceum island in which icewalkers, bounders, unconquered, and Navarr attempted to learn certain facts or reach specified locations without being observed. A number of students enthusiastically played the roles of guards and wardens, using padded rods and staves to "hunt" the scouts through the grounds. There has been some talk of continuing these exercises as an excellent way to stay in shape, practice Vigilance, and to keep the faculty on their toes.

The Veil

A warband working with a spy network often needs to be able to move quickly and surreptitiously through enemy territory. They need to be able to observe without being detected; to be able to approach key locations – often well guarded – without alerting the enemy to their presence.

They need to be able to bypass or even infiltrate settlements occupied by people who think, act, and look very different. For the Empire, this often means orc settlements – complicated by the fact that the overwhelming number of Imperial spies and scouts are humans.

The veil created by the ritual must be adaptable enough to provide the right protection or support at the right time. As with the Shroud of Mist and Shadows, the enchantment usually works through natural phenomena such as mist or rain, or by warping the forces of synchronicity in the local area. Lamps and torches gutter or flare at just the right moment to help a spy evade detection. The subtle influence of Night may gently urge guards, soldiers, and watchmen to relax or indulge a physical need for a moment. A watcher may coincidentally choose just the right moment to refill their pipe, or turn towards the fire for warmth, or feel a pressing need to empty their bladder.

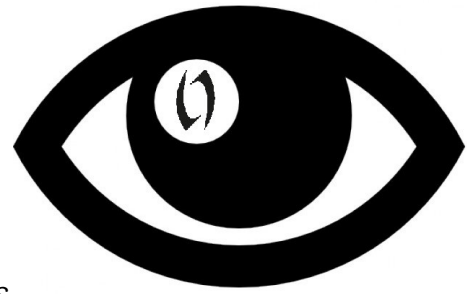
The divination elements of the ritual also aid in avoiding detection. A scout may experience a sudden sensation of being watched, or of imminent danger, or spot omens that warn of immediate threats. During experiments, the Suaq icewalker reported hearing the cry of an owl moments before someone came upon her position, for example. A bounder visiting the Lyceum who volunteered to help with the research described a creeping sensation at the base of his spine whenever there was an unseen observer nearby.

In addition to hiding and warning the warband, the ritual also helps guide the enchanted scouts toward places of interest, in a similar fashion. Omens and subtle signs abound, along with the most gentle urges to go *this* way along a path rather than *that* way. Some questions were raised as to how the magic "knows" what the enchanted scouts will find interesting – questions that were the source of private mirth among the Night magicians involved.

For a little over a month, they amused themselves at the expense of some of their fellow faculty members, claiming that this was surely an exciting new breakthrough in Imperial understanding of the realms before finally admitting that what the ritual was doing was enhancing the intuition and insight of the soldiers themselves. Helping the scouts "listen" to the voice of their own experience was a powerful way to improve the impact of the enchantment.

On the rare occasions when a warband protected by the veil must fight, the magic is less effective but still helps by deepening shadows and twisting local weather – helping the scouts to launch attacks from ambush, and escape quickly once their objective is reached.

RKZZNKRGFUETKCNUZNOTMYZNEGXYUIRKBKXHKYZATMUTZKNVXOBGZKYHECGVYGTJZNKTLGRRROTZUUDYNOZ



Regarding the Spider and the Web

The astronomantic sign of the Spider resonates with this ritual. "Things are watched by a hidden eye" encapsulates the role of the scout and the spy, and incorporates both the idea of observation and doing so unseen. The spider reacts quickly to events, but separate from them.

The symbol also represents things outside the Imperial sphere of influence. This makes it ideal for an enchantment that is most useful when employed on those who will travel outside the Empire to observe the actions of non-Imperials. It also has resonance with the idea of the manipulator – the one who places their thumb on the scales of fate – which represents the magicians who perform the ritual or the commander who gives orders for a spy network to be created and supported.

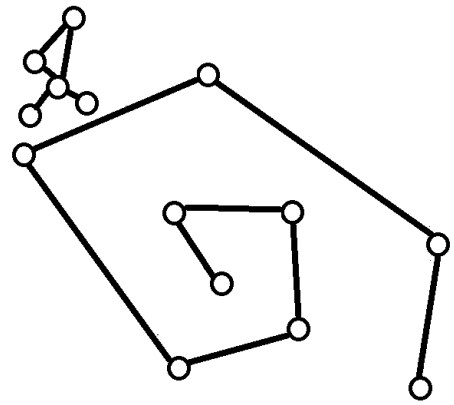
The spider also has a more sinister aspect of course – today's spy is often the assassin of tomorrow. Stealth is often the precursor to violence, whether literally or metaphorically in the case of diplomatic or economic "attacks" against the thing that has been observed. As the teachings of the Spider warn, one that is a friend to you today may be a foe to you tomorrow; or may draw you into schemes that you wish you had never heard of.

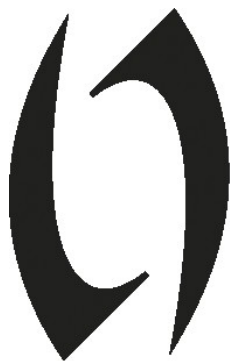
Of course there is more to the spider than its role in astronomancy. In Varushka in particular, it is a potent symbol of Wisdom. Stealthy, cunning, dangerous, and omnipresent in nature, there is almost no part of the world that is not within sight of an eight-legged observer. Tales with spiders in them often present the little insect as a wise counsellor, and occasionally as a companion whose silken threads can magically provide assistance to the protagonist when they need to enter or leave a dangerous environment.

The Spider is positioned close to the Web, the constellation whose law is "Things are concealed." The nature of spying itself is innately connected with concealment. If the scout is uncovered, their work is made more difficult or potentially even impossible. The things they most wish to observe are the things others most wish to see concealed.

The Web also represents interconnectedness. By observing one thing, a scout can infer other things. The movement of white granite along a road toward a contested territory suggests the creation of a fortification. Fewer workers in the field suggests they are employed elsewhere – or have been recruited as soldiers. Seemingly irrelevant scraps of information may reveal vital intelligence when laid side by side – the Web reflects the idea that the observations of the scout, while valuable, reflect only the base materials from which true espionage is constructed.

The Web also helps to weave in the powers of coincidence and synchronicity that help the enchantment remain subtle. A minor nudge to the tapestry of the world in one place may directly influence events in the future, or in an other location. This is especially true when a single performance of the enchantment includes multiple warbands – the magic is capable of working through the web to mean that something one of the targets does in one part of a territory might serve to later help one of the other warbands many miles away.





Performing the Ritual

This ritual enhances a small military force, using a connection to its leader to spread magic through the entire group. While many such enchantments include a banner or standard representative of the warband, when performing this ritual it is ideal if all symbols identifying the band are covered or concealed. For example, the captain who serves at the focus may wrap tie strips over rank insignia, turn tabards or surcotes inside out, and may even veil themselves to hide their faces. "Girding" the captain in a hooded robe, veil, or mask as part of the ritual further enhances this resonance; so would "capturing" the identity of the captain in a mirror or other reflective surface so that enemies cannot be entirely certain who or what they are dealing with once the scouts go to work.

Indeed, all the ritualists contributing to the enchantment should consider hiding their identities in a similar fashion, enhancing the resonance of secrecy, stealth, and concealment. The ritual itself is ideally unobtrusive; speech, music and drumming should be quiet, movements understated, lights muted or covered.

Theurgists might evoke the names of paragons and exemplars of vigilance and wisdom, focusing on those elements of the faith that resonate with gathering information before taking action or protecting oneself against unseen threats.

The runes of mystery and secrets are ideal for this ritual – Wyr and Diras both represent ideas that simultaneously enhance the preservation *and* the uncovering of hidden things.

li brx vhdglaj wklv nqrz wkdw vlpdujo lv d whvuleoh odc bghdq zkr zrxog vdwkhu vshqg klv gdbv gdchg dqg klv qljkwv lqgxojlaj klv dsshwlwhv wkda dqvzhu vlpsoh txhvwlraqv derxw wkh odz ri vfdoh li d ulwxdo grhv qrw layroyh pdgqhvv ru hskhphud ru fxvvlaj shrsoh zlwk prwkv kh kdvd qr lqwhvhwv l kdyh ehq vslwvlaj lq klv irrg iru wkuhh prwkv qrz dqg lw vhuylv klv uljkw.

Of the dramaturgical personae, the Mountebank has the strongest resonance with this ritual. While it may appear on the surface to represent the fiction of the debonair spy – the fast-talking rogue who gathers information through misdirection and clever word-play – it is also the character whose actions are not to be taken at face value. The Mountebank might be a character invisible to others who observes and comments wryly on the folly of the other characters. They might seek to prosper by using underhand techniques alien to the uptight Bishop or the proud Prince. It is an adaptable symbol that empowers espionage, especially in the aspect of Vassa or when coupled in some fashion with the Witch.

Several of the eternalists of Night resonate with this ritual – the Whisper Gallery in particular might be evoked to aid in the uncovering of secrets and in helping the enchanted warband to remain unseen. Interestingly, the Autumn eternal Basilus Flint also has some resonance with this enchantment. Even though the power of the ritual is drawn from the Night realm, the Sovereign Lord of the City of Locks resonated with ideas of espionage in a way that may still prove useful to the ritualists.

