

Quell the Thief of Secrets

Night Magnitude 24

Performing the Ritual

Performing this ritual takes at least 2 minutes of roleplaying. At the end of the ritual one of the contributors is chosen to deliver the curse with a pronouncement of doom.

This effect is a curse. A target may be under more than one curse at a time.

Effects

This ritual creates a curse that is delivered to a target with a pronouncement of doom: one contributor is chosen to deliver the curse, and they must do so within fifteen minutes or it falls on their own head.

While under the curse the target is prevented from reading or writing in any language - they cannot access the skills that allow people to perform these tasks. The sole exception is that when they make use of the Insight skill they may still understand any Testimony they encounter.

While under the curse, the target experiences a powerful roleplaying effect; they have the unpleasant sensation of being watched, especially when they are alone or when they are in the present of a mirror or other highly reflective surface.

The effect of the curse lasts for a year (until the start of the Profound Decisions Empire event four events from now).

Removing the Curse

The curse can be removed by certain powerful creatures or items. It can also be alleviated by powerful rituals that involve revelatory light, including Piercing Light of Revelation performed at magnitude 60 and focused on the victim of the curse. It can also be removed by a piece of writing in the Primal Tongue (whatever that is).

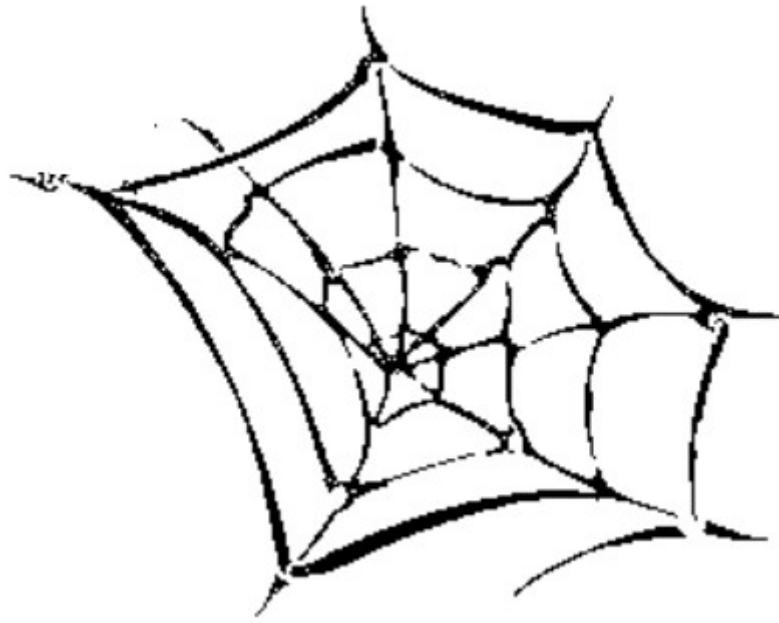
OOC note

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: 11642



Quell the Thief of Secrets

Ritual of the Realm of Night

Codified at the Lyceum

With the guidance of Dean Castegaine, Winter 235YE



The wonder of words

The ability to communicate with language is one of the most powerful secrets known to mortals. It is the primal secret that differentiates them from the mute beasts, stones, trees, water. The ability to create certain shapes with pigment within which ideas are contained and stored beyond the ravages of time or frail mortality.

More than the physical symbols themselves, the subtleties of language are endlessly mysterious. A sentence written on a wall carries different meaning to the same words in a different order, or the same word on a perfumed letter, or the same words carved into the stone base of a statue. Two mortals can read the same words written in the same place and experience an understanding that is diametrically oppositional.

Some symbols are shaped so that mean different things depending on context... other words mean similar things but are shaped wildly differently. So many secrets locked within for the ages – a form of benign necromancy that allows the words of the dead to influence generations unborn with the power of their ideas.

But some... some see the wonder of words and instead of the beauty of carefully crafted thoughts preserved in the amber of pigment on paper, on stone, on wood... they see the chance to ruin wonder, to unmake mystery, to slaughter secrets. They slander the virtuous and scatter their slanders like leaves across the walls of our cities. They repeat scurrilous rumors and fictional scandals, they expose intimate dealings... NO MORE!

They have sown the wind and now they shall reap the hurricane and the typhoon.

Secrets are to be nurtured, not spewed out into the world.

Truth and lies

The magician of Night understands that Truth is a concept whose shape changes depending on where one stands in relation to it. Truth is inconstant, created by the loudest voice. Once everyone who has seen an event is dead... who can say for certain what the truth might have been? The truth becomes a secret known to the few.

The Empire has a tool that allows it to perceive events that no living mind recalls directly – the true liad. They can establish the truth about events that nobody knows the truth of; and reveal the secrets that they uncover thereby to any who might listen. But most visionaries are sensible in this regard and keep the intimate details they have discovered to themselves.

A magician who masters the rites of Day, blinded by the light of revelation, sees things differently. They say that Truth is a quality that is indivisible – it either is or it is not. It is like weight, or distance. Two truth added together always become a greater truth. Magicians who master the rites of Day are idiots.

A lie can hold the kernel of a truth, a truth can be deceptive and misleading. How much more so, a written truth a written lie? Stripped of context, presented as certainty where only opinion is found. An opinion shared by an expert who knows the truth, dismissed as conjecture.

Truth and lies echo round and around. I can infer the truth from your lie, you can use the lie to make my truth greater. The Highborn in particular know the value of a lie that comes in the guise of truth, and by doing so makes truth stronger and more true.

So it is with words. Let words never be written without careful thought. Let the truth of them shine through – but let them not be mired in uncertainty as to the weight of that truth.

Let those who write scandal and present it as fact, let those who write words designed to spoil the untrue truths of the world, let those who spew the secrets of the world like the rutting dog... let them quail in fear for with this curse we will take from them the ability to write their truths, and the ability to read their comforting lies. Let them learn a lesson thereby.

Developing the Ritual

The ritual draws on the power of the Whisper Gallery, the Cimmerian Shades, their Sole Majesties, the Courtiers of the Drawn Palace, the Whisperers in the Hidden Garden, the Ministers of Annulment, the Masquerade of Freedom and Delight, the Dervishes of the Broken String, the Spinners of Slander, the Repairers of Reputation, the Carnivale of Watchers.

It uses their power to deny the target a portion of the “first secret” – the ability to understand written language. Their ability to speak is not impeded, but they cannot comprehend any communication that is not verbal. It does not matter if the communication uses words, or letters, or numbers; it does not matter if it is plain-text or cipher. It is enough that it is written (or painted, or carved) and that it attempts to convey meaning.

It is interesting to note that the ritual does not interfere with the use of the Insight ceremony, or the use of Testimony. While the ceremony of Testimony is sometimes spoken of as if it were a method of “writing” on the spirit of the subject, it seems that there is something even more profound going on here. Quite what is going on is unclear, but this ritual proves conclusively that it is not “writing.”

Several of the volunteers exposed to the curse spoke of a feeling of being “watched” – but Dean Castagne maintained that his was irrelevant and instructed the other magicians working on the ritual to ignore it.

Removing the Curse

The Whisper Gallery possess the ability to remove this curse, and it seems that none of the other Eternals of Night are prepared to do so. It is perhaps unsurprising – with the exception of the Gallery they are largely unconcerned with written communication anyway.

The librarians of Phaeleron have the ability to remove this curse, but seem loathe to do so. It apparently involves exposing the subject to words written in the Primal Tongue (whatever that is) – and the library is always reticent about sharing actual words from its archives. Anyone who had the curse removed in this fashion is likely to find themselves owing a boon to Phaeleron.

It can also be removed by a potent, revelatory light. A powerful coven might invoke a potent Piercing Light of Revelation to remove it prematurely, but there is also speculation that if the victim were to deliver the power of the Revelatory Light of the Empyrean Spheres that this would also be sufficient to burn away the effects of the curse.

Performing the Ritual

The ritual removes the ability to read and write. A resonant element to include would be writing something significant – especially a secret of value to the magicians – and destroying it in some ceremonial fashion. Words are written with pigment – the finer the pigment, the longer the words remain. Ink made from iridescent glaucum is an excellent companion to the performance of this ritual – as is a bleach made from beggar’s lye.

The ritual is one that conceals a part of the targets self – as such it is appropriate to perform the ritual in darkness, speaking quietly, and with masks, cowls, or hoods to hide the identity of the magicians.

The rune Diras, the rune Querus, the constellation of the Web, and the dramaturgical persona of the Witch all resonate well with this ritual.