

# The Tale of Grey Feathered Anya

## Night Magnitude 12

### 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 of the contributors is chosen to deliver the curse, and they must do so within fifteen minutes or it falls on their own head.

While under the effect of the curse, the target dreams of being attacked by a Mora with grey feathers and golden eyes each night. Each morning they wake, covered in fresh, painful welts and scratches, as though they have tried to scratch their own skin off in the night. These scratches are painful, but cause no harm and where possible should be phys-repped with make-up.

While the curse persists, the target is subject to a roleplaying effect: *you believe you are being hunted by an unseen predator, even in your waking hours. This feeling fades entirely whenever you are a guest in a Varushkan camp or settlement.*

This curse lasts for one year.

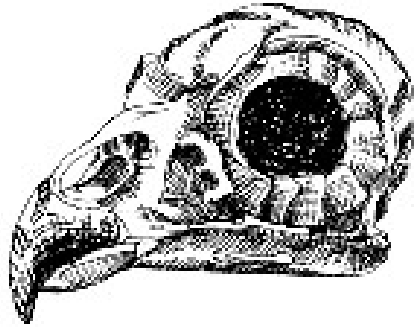
### OOO note

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: 16344**



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# The Tale of Grey Feathered Anya

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Ritual of the Realm of Night

Codified at the Lyceum

With the guidance of Dean Simargl, Winter 381YE



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## Developing the Ritual

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This ritual was developed at the Lyceum under the auspices of Dean Simargl of the Circle of Zulgan-Tash, and completed shortly before the Winter Soslstice 381YE. The original design was undertaken by the Varushkan volhov Casomir Dobromelskyj.

There is an obvious inspiration for the ritual – the shapeshifting mora of Varushka. A less obvious inspiration is a ritual known as *The Painted Cave* which causes a story to come alive in the minds of the audience, allowing them to experience visions of the people, places, and events described to them. This straightforward Night magic, however, is here turned to a darker purpose.

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## On the nature of the Mora

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The Mora are Varushkan creatures that stand midway between the savage, unthinking Wolves and the sinister, villainous Sovereigns in power. They are shapechangers, who assume pleasing shapes to go among humans or lure travellers to their deaths. In their "true" form – if a shapechanger can be said to possess such a thing – the Mora appear as a hybrid of human and bird, although the precise balance between the two varies dramatically by individual.

The Mora are able to bypass many protections to visit human settlements in Varushka, but by doing so they become tightly bound to the rules of hospitality and cannot directly act against gracious hosts. This weakness in their nature is apparently shared by all shapeshifters; as long as one treats them as the role they have assumed they are unable to act in a way that would be against the accepted nature of that role.

Mora are not the only shapeshifters in the Empire – the folk of Wintermark are familiar with the seal-aspected hylje for example – nor are they the only shapeshifters in Varushka – as the existence of the Rushalka proves. There are also occasional stories of Mora ranging beyond the borders of the darkest nation, usually in roles such as traders, pilgrims, or messengers. Usually when they do this they maintain their hidden identities without difficulty, but should someone challenge them they assume their true forms and devour the foolish accuser. Why they do this is not clear; perhaps they are simply capable of forgetting themselves when they spend too long in a role, until some outside force reminds them.

The Thule also know the Mora – although they are much rarer north of the mountains. According to Thule stories, the Mora dwell in the high peaks and take the form of orcs. Rather than travel like their Varushkan cousins, they live in small settlements. Woe betide the orc hunters who mistake a nest of Mora for a village of their own kin! These tales claim that the Mora maintain the illusion of being orc villagers until one of their visitors accidentally transgresses one of their unknown taboos, at which point the village shifts en masse into a nightmare crowd of bird-orc horrors that torment and ultimately devour the interlopers.





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## Delivering the Curse

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The ritual encourages the one delivering the curse to do so as part of a story, song, or other piece of performance in the presence of the target. The narrative includes a cautionary tale about the Mora, often a warning that dark powers walk unrecognised among the people of the Empire.

Obviously, the time constraints on delivering any ritual curse make this more tricky, but the original theorist behind the ritual suggested this can be addressed by weaving the tale into the ritual itself and performing it in the presence of the intended target.

The victim knows almost immediately that something is awry, but it is not until they next sleep that the true horror falls upon them. Once they have had their first dream of the Mora with grey feathers, they suffer paranoiac delusions that the creature is hunting them in their waking hours as well. Only when they are among Varushkans, enjoying the status of their guests, does this feeling of being pursued fade.

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## On the nature of Grey Feathered Anya

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Those who suffer the curse describe the same kinds of dreams – visions of a grey feathered mora hunting and attacking them, tearing at their skin with sharp bird claws. There is some speculation among the magicians who helped codify the ritual that this represents an actual Mora – or possibly a role that different Mora may take on – rather than being a purely fictional construct. There were several hours lost to debate about whether it was possible that Casamir had unconsciously evoked the spirit of Grey Feathered Anya, or whether through thinking about her and weaving the idea of her into a ritual he has somehow made her real.

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## Performing the Ritual

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The ritual was developed from the work of a Varushkan, so it should come as no surprise that it was designed to work with a storytelling performance. Indeed the initial recommendation is to weave the ritual and story together and culminate with the delivery of the pronouncement of doom on a member of the audience.

Other elements that are obviously resonant with this ritual include bird feathers, the bones of birds, and bird-like masks. Interestingly, the dramaturgical persona of the Doctor seems to work well with this ritual, especially in her Vassa aspect. This is perhaps understandable given she is a persona associated with sinister secret knowledge and judgement.

