



SOUL BINDER

Cost: 500 gc

Description: These small bone cages are commonly seen on the waist of a powerful bokor. Most take the form of skulls covered with withered flesh. These items capture the nearby souls of slain enemies, which the bokors use to amplify their necromantic spells and rituals.

Rune Points: 4

Special Rules: A character wearing a soul binder gains one soul token for each living character destroyed within his command range. A soul binder can hold up to three soul tokens. Soul tokens can be spent to boost attack and damage rolls at the cost of one soul token per boost.

Fabrication: The material cost of this item's body is 150 gc. Creating the body takes two weeks. The pertinent Craft skill for fabricating this item is Craft (skinner).

Attunement takes two weeks and requires a successful ARC attribute roll against a target number of 16. Inscribing the runes takes two weeks and requires a successful ARC + Craft (skinner) skill roll against a target number of 16.

LEY LINES

The ley lines within Caen are a web of interconnecting nodes that follow the natural geographic features of the land, typically moving along the spines of mountain ranges and along major rivers and other waterways. These energy flows are fonts of power that provide an additional resource for cultures living in the wilds of western Immoren. Accessing ley line conjunctions is dangerous, as most races that understand their importance keep fighting forces near or around such sacred sites. However, characters with access to a ley line conjunction will find it an invaluable tool that can aid their rituals and help them create magical items.

Ley line conjunctions are generally static positions, but catastrophic changes to Caen, such as the destruction of the ancient civilization of Lyoss, can alter these flows of energy. Similarly, the building of monumental cities across the Iron Kingdoms can choke the flow of a ley line's vital power. Additionally, groups such as the enigmatic Convergence of Cyriss and the Circle Orboros have been known to alter these flows to suit their own needs and deny others their use. Even minute changes to these flows can have wide-ranging and long-lasting effects on the world.

LEY LINE RULES

Accessing a ley line conjunction can provide a wide array of benefits to those who use magic, but they must first attune themselves to it, just as they must attune themselves to the work of creating runes. Failure to attune to a ley line conjunction can result in an overwhelming backlash of energy.

Attunement to a ley line conjunction requires at least two full rounds of uninterrupted meditation at the site. After that time has passed, the character must make an ARC attribute roll against a target number of 12.

If the roll fails, the character is having trouble attuning to the ley line conjunction but can make a new roll after an additional two full rounds of uninterrupted meditation at the site. If the second roll fails, the character is overwhelmed by a backlash of energy and suffers -2 to ARC rolls for the rest of the day. This penalty expires after a full night's rest.

If the roll succeeds, the character attunes to the ley line conjunction and can use one of the following effects each round while within its radius:

- +2 to attunement rolls
- +2 to Craft (wold) skill rolls
- +2 to rune inscription rolls
- +2 to Craft skill rolls for creating a magical item's vessel
- +2 to rolls to perform a ritual
- Boosted magic attack and damage rolls

RITUAL MAGIC

Not all magic can be commanded with a thought and unleashed with a simple act of will. To produce spells in combat, a spellcaster rapidly manifests, almost without conscious thought, a complex sequence of empowered runes to create a very specific effect. A ritual manipulates magic in a similar fashion, but it does so more slowly and requires different tools and methodology. The extended time frame allows for greater complexity and adaptability in the effect being produced, but sustaining that energy without releasing it as an uncontrolled and destructive force imposes a number of restrictions. Rather than rely solely on mentally projected runes, most rituals rely on aspects of the environment—including carefully crafted ritual sites—to channel and sustain power until it takes its final form.

Some groups are more adroit and accustomed to such things than others. The Circle Orboros, for example, has made the establishment and protection of such sites an integral aspect of the entire organization. Other groups might create a ritual space by less permanent means, though they often prefer to continue performing these ceremonies where magic is more easily contained and controlled. Sites that have played host to rituals with any regularity can become not only well suited to repeated performances of that kind of rite, but also steeped in the power harnessed through every instance of the ritual. Such sites have been favored for thousands of years by different

groups. Each major culture that possesses the gift of magic has established its own traditional practices and sites for the working of ritual magic.

Although rituals and other forms of magic developed side by side, they eventually diverged toward different ends. Most individuals who focus their efforts on magic do so with a goal of quickly and efficiently manifesting power to defend themselves or strike down their enemies. Rituals are not only more difficult to create and develop, but also inherently riskier. The accumulated power can be hard to control and can overwhelm even the most experienced practitioner. Cultures often develop specific rituals slowly over generations to meet specific goals. Innovation is rare, occurring mostly when one ritual is adapted into another. Only the most ambitious and powerful practitioners—those with a great deal of experience and knowledge—have succeeded in creating entirely new rituals. In every case, the risk of failure and destruction was significant.

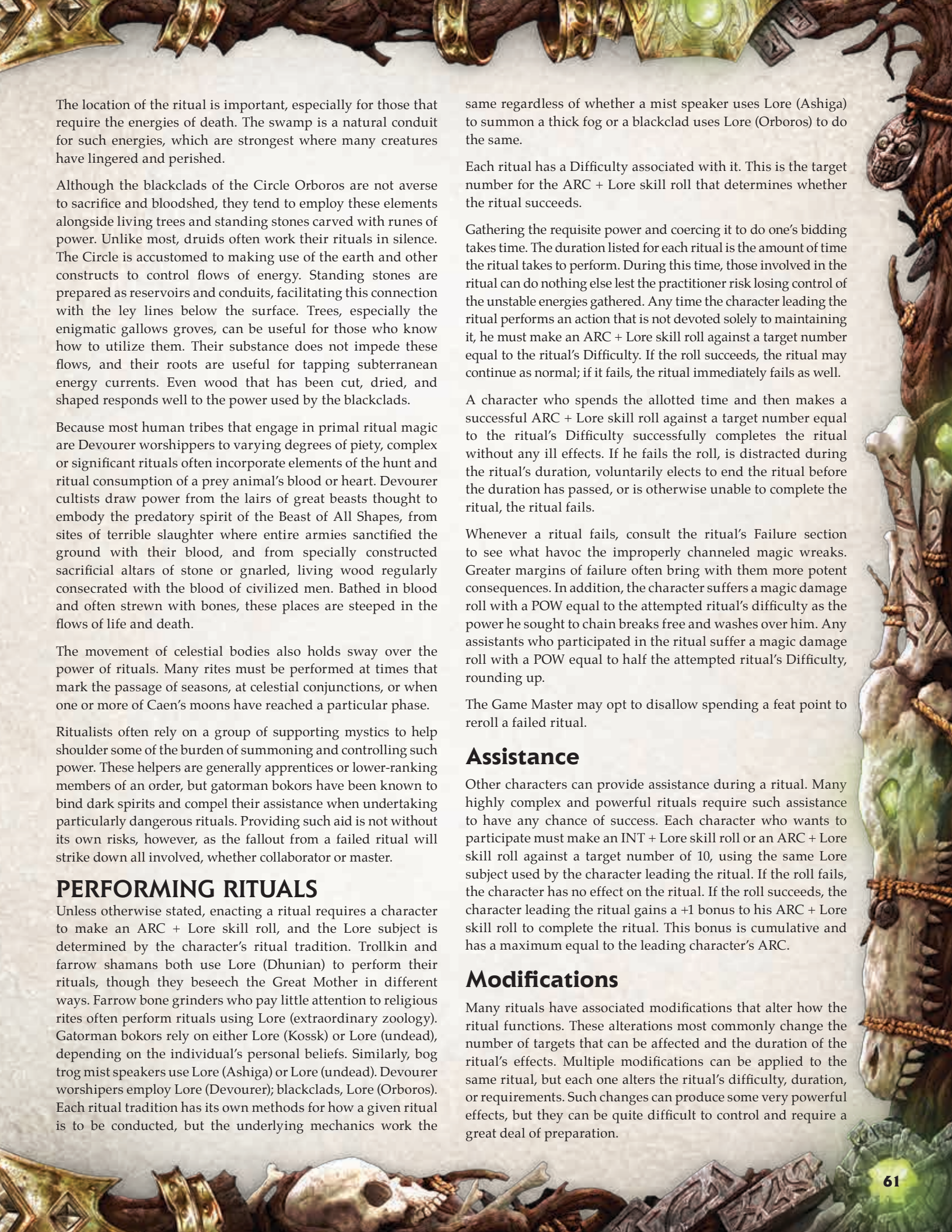
By slowly accumulating, binding, and manipulating power over the course of hours or days rather than seconds, a ritualist can build up tremendous stores of energy into highly complex forms, thereby creating a larger and more lasting change in the fabric of reality. But mortals were never meant to channel such power. Attempting to do so on one's own often results in both abject failure and a painful death as the summoned forces quickly spiral out of control and tear through both the would-be harnesser and anyone unlucky enough to be nearby.

Rituals provide a framework for containing this power as it builds and a focus for channeling it once enough has been gathered. Their arcane rites and symbolic reagents serve to anchor this framework, allowing the practitioner to offload some of the strain and remain focused on building and shaping the energies he summons. This often involves a place where such energies are more easily controlled, such as a site that has traditionally been used for rituals.

The traditions of the ritualist's culture determine the exact form these rites take. Devotees of the Devourer Wurm employ a great deal of fresh blood, animal sacrifice, howled exaltations to the Beast of All Shapes, and open bonfires. Devourer Wurm worshippers often perform their rituals at significant wilderness sites, such as mountain peaks, natural crevasses, and the hearts of forests. Though most Devourer cultists are not aware of the fact, these sites often coincide with ley line conjunctions.

Dhunians focus more on songs of great deeds, histories recorded on great scrolls, and the consumption and sacrifice of food and strong drink, and their rituals are often performed at a shrine to Dhunia or in the heart of a kriel near significant krielstones or the kriel's *kuor*.

Gatorman and bog trogs share the Tharn propensity for animal sacrifice and bloodletting, but these races prefer to conduct their rituals with gruesome totems and fetishes crafted from bone and preserved flesh, an abundance of candles and burning incense, and looping chants extolling the spirits of the swamps in their alternately sibilant and guttural languages.



The location of the ritual is important, especially for those that require the energies of death. The swamp is a natural conduit for such energies, which are strongest where many creatures have lingered and perished.

Although the blackclads of the Circle Orboros are not averse to sacrifice and bloodshed, they tend to employ these elements alongside living trees and standing stones carved with runes of power. Unlike most, druids often work their rituals in silence. The Circle is accustomed to making use of the earth and other constructs to control flows of energy. Standing stones are prepared as reservoirs and conduits, facilitating this connection with the ley lines below the surface. Trees, especially the enigmatic gallows groves, can be useful for those who know how to utilize them. Their substance does not impede these flows, and their roots are useful for tapping subterranean energy currents. Even wood that has been cut, dried, and shaped responds well to the power used by the blackclads.

Because most human tribes that engage in primal ritual magic are Devourer worshippers to varying degrees of piety, complex or significant rituals often incorporate elements of the hunt and ritual consumption of a prey animal's blood or heart. Devourer cultists draw power from the lairs of great beasts thought to embody the predatory spirit of the Beast of All Shapes, from sites of terrible slaughter where entire armies sanctified the ground with their blood, and from specially constructed sacrificial altars of stone or gnarled, living wood regularly consecrated with the blood of civilized men. Bathed in blood and often strewn with bones, these places are steeped in the flows of life and death.

The movement of celestial bodies also holds sway over the power of rituals. Many rites must be performed at times that mark the passage of seasons, at celestial conjunctions, or when one or more of Caen's moons have reached a particular phase.

Ritualists often rely on a group of supporting mystics to help shoulder some of the burden of summoning and controlling such power. These helpers are generally apprentices or lower-ranking members of an order, but gatorman bokors have been known to bind dark spirits and compel their assistance when undertaking particularly dangerous rituals. Providing such aid is not without its own risks, however, as the fallout from a failed ritual will strike down all involved, whether collaborator or master.

PERFORMING RITUALS

Unless otherwise stated, enacting a ritual requires a character to make an ARC + Lore skill roll, and the Lore subject is determined by the character's ritual tradition. Trollkin and farrow shamans both use Lore (Dhunian) to perform their rituals, though they beseech the Great Mother in different ways. Farrow bone grinders who pay little attention to religious rites often perform rituals using Lore (extraordinary zoology). Gatorman bokors rely on either Lore (Kossk) or Lore (undead), depending on the individual's personal beliefs. Similarly, bog trog mist speakers use Lore (Ashiga) or Lore (undead). Devourer worshippers employ Lore (Devourer); blackclads, Lore (Orboros). Each ritual tradition has its own methods for how a given ritual is to be conducted, but the underlying mechanics work the

same regardless of whether a mist speaker uses Lore (Ashiga) to summon a thick fog or a blackclad uses Lore (Orboros) to do the same.

Each ritual has a Difficulty associated with it. This is the target number for the ARC + Lore skill roll that determines whether the ritual succeeds.

Gathering the requisite power and coercing it to do one's bidding takes time. The duration listed for each ritual is the amount of time the ritual takes to perform. During this time, those involved in the ritual can do nothing else lest the practitioner risk losing control of the unstable energies gathered. Any time the character leading the ritual performs an action that is not devoted solely to maintaining it, he must make an ARC + Lore skill roll against a target number equal to the ritual's Difficulty. If the roll succeeds, the ritual may continue as normal; if it fails, the ritual immediately fails as well.

A character who spends the allotted time and then makes a successful ARC + Lore skill roll against a target number equal to the ritual's Difficulty successfully completes the ritual without any ill effects. If he fails the roll, is distracted during the ritual's duration, voluntarily elects to end the ritual before the duration has passed, or is otherwise unable to complete the ritual, the ritual fails.

Whenever a ritual fails, consult the ritual's Failure section to see what havoc the improperly channeled magic wreaks. Greater margins of failure often bring with them more potent consequences. In addition, the character suffers a magic damage roll with a POW equal to the attempted ritual's difficulty as the power he sought to chain breaks free and washes over him. Any assistants who participated in the ritual suffer a magic damage roll with a POW equal to half the attempted ritual's Difficulty, rounding up.

The Game Master may opt to disallow spending a feat point to reroll a failed ritual.

Assistance

Other characters can provide assistance during a ritual. Many highly complex and powerful rituals require such assistance to have any chance of success. Each character who wants to participate must make an INT + Lore skill roll or an ARC + Lore skill roll against a target number of 10, using the same Lore subject used by the character leading the ritual. If the roll fails, the character has no effect on the ritual. If the roll succeeds, the character leading the ritual gains a +1 bonus to his ARC + Lore skill roll to complete the ritual. This bonus is cumulative and has a maximum equal to the leading character's ARC.

Modifications

Many rituals have associated modifications that alter how the ritual functions. These alterations most commonly change the number of targets that can be affected and the duration of the ritual's effects. Multiple modifications can be applied to the same ritual, but each one alters the ritual's difficulty, duration, or requirements. Such changes can produce some very powerful effects, but they can be quite difficult to control and require a great deal of preparation.

LEARNING RITUALS

Learning rituals is not a swift or easy process. Some rituals persist because they have been passed down for generations; others are closely guarded secrets of powerful organizations or secretive individuals.

To learn a ritual, a character must first possess **knowledge** of the ritual. Once the character possesses this knowledge, he must gain **understanding** by studying the ritual and deciphering its complexities. In short, knowledge represents the obscurity of the ritual and how much of it the character knows, and understanding represents the character's ability to perform the ritual accurately and comprehend the elements that make it work.

Knowledge

Not all rituals are equally common or well known. Some are learned as a customary part of progressing in a career and mastering certain types of occult lore. Some are known only to a select few or to those who have achieved a certain degree of responsibility or esteem within an organization. A few either have been lost or are the exclusive purview of specific individuals. These must be sought out, potentially requiring investigation and research in perilous places. It is entirely possible for an individual to know a mystical ritual that he is incapable of performing, especially if he is simply safeguarding or preserving the rite so it is not lost.

The Knowledge section for each ritual represents the basic prerequisites for performing the ritual. The more rare or complex the ritual, the stricter the prerequisites. Knowledge prerequisites can include a Lore skill requirement, a career requirement, a specific connection, or a combination of such factors. Regardless of the restrictions listed in the Knowledge section, the Game Master has the final say about whether a character can know a particular ritual. Knowledge is identified as one of the following tiers:

- **Widespread:** Widespread rituals are known to multiple groups and practitioners in the wilds. Provided the character meets the listed requirements (if any), he knows the ritual, understands it, and can perform it normally.
- **Restricted:** Restricted rituals are protected secrets known only to trusted members of an organization. If the character meets the requirements, which typically involve a specific connection, he has knowledge of the ritual. A character who does not meet the requirements but who gains access to an appropriate archive related to the organization can make an INT + Research skill roll against a target number equal to the ritual's Difficulty. If the roll succeeds, the character gains knowledge of the ritual and can attempt to gain understanding of it. Gaining access to an appropriate archive may be a difficult task requiring its own investigation and research. Such an archive may not exist for some rituals, forcing the character to obtain the knowledge from someone who already has it. The acquisition of these secrets may have consequences for outsiders if it is discovered.

- **Exclusive:** Exclusive rituals are known only to a single individual or a very small subset of a larger organization. For the latter, these rites reflect their best-kept secrets. Gaining knowledge of such rituals is not the domain of a single roll of the dice—instead, it requires locating the individuals in question and convincing them to divulge their secrets. Rituals of this nature are often transformational events, and securing this knowledge can be the impetus for a whole campaign. Examples of such rituals include that used by Morvahna the Autumnblade to cure the Tharn of the Ten Ills (as well as the ritual that first cursed them) and those used by blackclad wayfarers to travel along the ley line network. Characters should not begin the game with knowledge of an exclusive ritual unless the Game Master requires it for a campaign. In some cases, a character might need to gain a certain rank or stature before learning the secrets of the ritual.

- **Lost:** Lost rituals are the rarest of all, and their discovery is not a simple matter. Recovering a lost ritual may require making difficult Research skill rolls to even learn where to begin searching, and the acquisition of knowledge about such a ritual should be the focus of a campaign. A character may need to uncover long-buried krielstones, venture into lost ruins, or discover an ancient tome unintentionally lost—or intentionally hidden away. (Though Lost rituals are not included among those presented in this chapter, Game Masters may wish to devise their own rituals based on this description.)

Understanding

A gifted individual who gains knowledge of a ritual may be tempted to carry it out immediately, but doing so is dangerous. The forces wielded during even the simplest ritual can lash back in deadly ways—or worse. A nuanced understanding of a ritual can help shield its performer against its most calamitous potential effects, but it requires time meditating on not only the ritual but also the often complex and interconnected forces that make up its constituent parts.

Once a character has knowledge of a ritual, he can spend one week in meditation contemplating its components and mysteries. At the end of this time, the character makes an INT + Lore skill roll, using the same Lore subject he plans to use to perform the ritual. The ritual's duration determines the target number for the roll. Rituals with longer durations are more complex, and processing its various steps and stages is typically more difficult.

The target number of the understanding roll depends on its overall intricacy, determined by duration.

RITUAL DURATION	TARGET NUMBER
3 hours or less	15
4–23 hours	16
24 hours or more	17

If the roll succeeds, the character gains understanding of the ritual and can perform it normally.

If the roll fails, or if the character chooses not to attempt to gain an understanding of the ritual, he suffers -2 on rolls to perform the ritual and cannot apply any modifications to it. Each time a character attempts to perform the ritual with this penalty, he may make a new roll to gain understanding.

BRINGING RITUALS TO LIFE

These occult rites are more art than science, and individual practitioners—even those with the same mystical tradition—may harness power in very different ways. The variance in both the required elements and the outward manifestation of a ritual becomes even greater when contrasting different traditions. The Game Master and the players should integrate the characters' performance of a ritual into the ongoing story and customize the elements described accordingly. Rituals are spectacular displays of rarely witnessed magical forces, and they should have a corresponding impact.

Some aspects of conducting a ritual will invariably be less essential than others, including remnants of religious practices and superstitious beliefs. Because those who learn and perform a given ritual are usually not in a position to evaluate which elements are vital and which are mere trappings, all steps should be performed to guarantee success. This accounts for some of the tremendous variance among performances of the same underlying ritual.

The underlying laws of reality are bent, twisted, or outright ignored during the performance of powerful rituals, and this may lead to any number of environmental effects. The gathering of mystical energy might produce eerie flows of light, shifting sequences of runes and sigils, or a gathering of howling spirits. It may even cause changes in the weather, including swirling winds, localized tremors, thick fog, or sudden downpours. Some rituals are accompanied by strange and ominous sounds or require loud chanting or musical accompaniment. Most side effects should be superficial and should manifest only during the ritual's duration, but at the Game Master's discretion they may be lasting effects, such as changes to the surrounding landscape.

All this spectacle might draw unfriendly attention. Aside from the obvious manifestations of a ritual, the very manipulation of these vast energies can be sensed by certain supernatural and gifted individuals, some of whom might be motivated to intervene. A lengthy ritual intended to be completed without interruption might require defenses and sentries. Characters are just as likely to need to stop their enemies' rituals as they are to defend their own.

RITUALS

The following attributes define how rituals function in the game.

Difficulty: This is the target number of the ARC + Lore skill roll to perform the ritual.

Knowledge: This is a measure of the obscurity of the ritual, including any prerequisites the character must meet to have knowledge of the ritual.

Duration: This is the amount of time needed to perform the ritual.

Description: This is a description of the ritual.

Special Rules: These are the special rules for the ritual.

Modifications: This describes any modifications to the ritual.

Failure: This describes the consequences of failing the roll to perform the ritual.

BIND SPIRIT

Difficulty: 14

Knowledge: Widespread. This ritual is known primarily by characters with the Bokor, Mist Speaker, Bone Grinder, Swamp Warlock, or Extoller career, as well as characters with Lore (undead) 1 or higher.

Duration: 1 hour

Description: The backwater mystics, bokors, and witch doctors of the peoples who inhabit the deep swamps are famed for their ability to bind wayward spirits to specially prepared totems, extracting services or drawing upon their otherworldly knowledge for insight. The swampies of Cygnar's numerous marshes include many practitioners of this art, but the gatorman tribes they often share territory with might be its greatest masters.

Although binding spirits is technically an act of necromancy, many of the spirits are not those of sentient beings, but rather naturally occurring entities left behind when other living creatures die amid the wilds. They haunt stagnant waters and swirl through fetid mists, and some of them grow stronger as they consume and absorb the weakest among them. Most civilized religious organizations ban the binding of spirits and may hunt down those who perform such rites, but wilderness cultures are more tolerant of this practice to varying degrees. Members of the Circle Orboros are discouraged from binding spirits other than purely natural ones such as the feralgeist (see "Call Feralgeist," p. 66). Other cultures, including those of the Nyss and the trollkin, take a dim view of the practice but often ignore those who deal with spirits that are clearly unintelligent. On the other hand, many witch doctors dally in the darker aspects of the craft and have no qualms about enslaving the souls of intelligent beings. Neither do the mystics of gatorman and bog trog tribes, which have no taboos against interacting with the dead and see nothing wrong with forcing the weak to serve the strong.