

As a kid, Jake Bartlett heard about the Skull and Bones fraternity, and thought it was the coolest thing ever. The blend of fraternity life in all its glorious excess and the mystique of the occult fascinated him. His family had generations of tales going back to the Order's founding in 1832. From as early as he could remember, Jake never had any doubt he would join its illustrious ranks, soak up all the secrets like a beer-stained sponge, and pass the legends down to his own sons.

Unfortunately, Jake got started on the drinking culture a bit early. He spent too many weekends with the party crowd in high school and not enough studying, and he didn't get into Yale. He didn't get into any ivy leagues, and he barely ended up having his shit together enough to wind up at community college the following fall.

Still seeking the occult in fraternity life, Jake transferred to a rural, formerly male-only, quasi-Christian university for his sophomore year, having gotten something of a handle on his studies and his drinking problem. He joined the first fraternity that gave him the time of day but was soon disappointed with its banality.

Alcohol was losing its appeal for Jake after one too many bad decisions made while blackout drunk. He might have made a fabulous dipsomancer (if that's not an oxymoron), but for better or for worse he never found that path. And yet he did finally find magick during the intercession between the spring of sophomore year and the fall he became a junior.

Snowed in in his remote college town, with his fraternity brothers all home for the holidays, Jake met Bailey Sprouse. Bailey was the child of a sobbuster and some kind of prophetess. The outcome of that mix of mojo primed Bailey to be offputtingly strange, but also to have a knack for coming up with functional rituals.

Having grown up in the absolute middle of nowhere, homeschooled in isolation until he came to college, Bailey had no idea how weird he was, or how rare his gifts were, and generally just assumed the way people avoided or quietly feared him was normal. He and Jake met in the university library, as chance would have it, at 3:33AM on Christmas day.

Jake walked in on Bailey performing "midnight oil", one of several rituals inspired by the latter's unusual impressions of university life (see below). Confronted with his first ever unnatural phenomenon, Jake was sickened, but also enthralled.

Once the ritual ended, he followed Bailey around for days, asking what fraternity he was in, and how he could join. Bailey was bewildered, but glad to have a "friend". He had no reservations about sharing his rituals now that someone bothered to ask.

Jake learned three rituals from Bailey before cutting ties and avoiding him until graduation. This proved erroneous, because thaumaturges tend to have ways to get back at you for treating them like shit, and those ways may not leave incriminating evidence.

In the investigation of what was ultimately deemed the suicide of Jake Bartlett, the following rituals were found detailed in a notebook hidden under his mattress. The whereabouts of Bailey Sprouse, who graduated with a 2.6 GPA in 2022, are unknown.

Freshman Fifteen

Cost: 2 minor charges

Ritual action: share a meal at a university dining hall with your intended victim (fast food joints usually work too, if they're within 3 miles of campus). Make sure you both get the same non-diet soda to wash it down, and that you both eat three platefuls of food. Before your next meal, weigh yourself on a scale while eating exactly fifteen pounds of takeout or leftovers from the same establishment.

Effect: the next time your victim weighs themselves, fifteen pounds of body fat will be transferred from your body to theirs instantaneously. This can cause an Unnatural (2-4) check for them and also, potentially, you. The change in both parties is obvious at a glance in the mirror. There is nothing stopping them from losing the weight if they try by normal means.

Midnight Oil

Cost: 1 minor charge

Ritual action: starting at 11:48 PM (local time), drink twelve cans of your energy drink of choice—the original flavor—and make sure you get every last drop. You need to finish them all before midnight (hope you're thirsty). Arrange the cans in a circle around you, logos facing inward, and sit cross-legged. Make sure there are no timepieces within reach or line of sight. If you check the time, even by glancing at it when you unlock your phone to respond to a text, the ritual's effect will end immediately.

Effect: while you remain seated and oblivious to the late hour, time stretches and slows around you. For each hour that passes outside the circle, seventy minutes pass within. If someone were to observe you from outside, they'd have to strain to make sense of time flowing at two different speeds in the same area. This would force an Unnatural (4-5) check.

The effect persists for as long as you stay put, so you can knock out quite a bit of homework, as long as your bladder holds out. Oh, and a word of advice: if you fall asleep in the middle of the circle, you're very susceptible to demonic possession. So don't do that.

Noise Complaint

Cost: 2 minor charges

Ritual action: knock on the wall, ceiling, or floor between yourself and an adjacent room from which you can hear some kind of noise. The source of the noise has to be out of your control. Shout for the room's occupants to quiet down. For the ritual to work, it has to quiet down noticeably, then pick back up at least as loud as before. Repeat this process three times, then while the noise carries on, make a phone call to a recognizable authority figure (your RA, the cops, your Mentor, whoever), and hold the phone against the wall/floor/ceiling adjacent to the noisy room when they pick up.

Effect: the targeted room becomes an auditory void, completely silent, for as long as you can keep the person you called on the phone. This can cause an Unnatural (4-5) check on people caught unawares, or an Unnatural (1-2) check if you're doing it for some deliberate and sneaky purpose.