

THE NECROMANCER

V1.0

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Built on Caltrop Core

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Content Warnings

The Necromancer is a game of hope and wrath against an opponent who wields dysphoria and transphobia as tools. As such, it deals with transphobia and deadnaming through an allegorical lens. Body horror and classism are also present. If you are not sure whether you want to deal with these themes, I encourage you to adjust the game to suit your needs and comfort. For further guidance on safety, I recommend reading an article on safety tools, [such as the Script Change RPG Toolbox](#).

What Is The Story?

The Ritual of Affirmation is the most sacred spell of your people. The ritual burns away the body and name with which a person was born, revealing their true shape and unlocking their innate magical potential. Anybody can perform the ritual, even more than once. The ceremony is as validating for those who change multiple times as it is for those who are simply affirming the shape they were born in.

Today, the Affirmation is a common ritual, but it was not always so. When the Affirmation was first discovered, there were those who resented this magic. They could not see how the power it granted others did not diminish their own. They made jealous proclamations: they said the gods had made people as they ought to be, that the Affirmation's magic brought madness and disease, or that "ordinary people" could not be trusted with power. They promulgated lies and - when that did not work - turned to violence. For a time, there was fear they might squander the Affirmation or destroy the ritual outright. But in their time of greatest need, when it seemed like

the kingdom might fall, those who were most threatened honed their magic into wrath. They pulled a burning brand from their breasts, clothed themselves in joy and truth, and strode into battle to illuminate and cast down the vile. They won. To ensure such wicked people never regained power, they established the order of Paladins, dedicated to preserving the Ritual of Affirmation and the happiness of their kingdom.

Who Are You?

You are one such paladin, having sworn your oath in a time when once again you are needed. On the horizon of the kingdom now rises a new threat: the Necromancer. His identity is a mystery, but his power is undeniable. His dread hand reaches into the Graveyard, scrounging in that dismal realm for the names, shells, and toxic ideas that the people have cast aside. He carves and spins these scraps into his armies of soldiers and spies, and hopes to subvert the kingdom. Not since the Paladins' founding has the kingdom faced such a dire threat.

What Is Your Goal?

The kingdom will not rest safe until the necromancer is defeated and slain or banished. You sally forth in search of signs of the Necromancer's influence. Destroying these threats is your best hope of a lead to the Necromancer himself. You might need several quests to discover the Necromancer's identity and location, but your light will inevitably reveal the truth.

How Do You Play?

Players create characters with three stats: BURN, DEFY, ILLUMINATE. Each stat begins at 1. The player may distribute two additional points between any of the three stats as they see fit.

Whenever your character does something dramatic, the GM decides whether it's possible, automatic, or impossible. When the action is possible, but not automatic, you pick whichever stat is most relevant and roll a number of dice equal to its value. The highest facing number among the dice is your result (see charts below). Higher is better.

BURN

Roll Burn when you want to lay something to ruin, either by sword, insult, or literal fire.

D4	RESULT
1	You stall your rage. How do you realize that destruction isn't the answer and what opportunity does it create?
2	Your victory is fleeting. You disable the threat, but you have only a moment before it returns.

	What do you do?
	You destroy the threat, but some vile smudge remains. What is it?
4	Your fury annihilates, with no collateral damage. In what small way does it leave a permanent mark against darkness?

ILLUMINATE

You shine a light of joy and truth on the Necromancer's scheme. This could be literal illumination, but also describes your power to compel truth, expose disguises, or solve riddles.

D4	RESULT
1	Your light only shows the true extent of the darkness you are facing. How is the threat somehow greater than you at first thought?
2	Your light wavers in the face of true darkness. For this one brief moment, everyone can see the truth. Before the lies come crashing in again, what do you do?
3	You banish shadows, but one sliver of deception remains. What is it?
4	Your inner light obliterates the darkness, shattering deceptions. How does this inspire others?

DEFY

Your determination against the darkness manifests physically, enabling you to perform superhuman feats of fortitude, create barriers against evil, or help you resist mental manipulation. When you cannot Burn or Illuminate the situation, roll Defy.

D4	RESULT
1	Through brute force and numbers, the Necromancer gets their way. How will your scars make you stronger?
2	You get your way, but at great sacrifice. What do you lose, and how will it make the next part of your quest more difficult?

3	You withstand the horrors of the Necromancer, but at some cost. What minor impediment remains with you?
4	You shrug off the Necromancer's challenges. How does your casual defiance cause the Necromancer to make a mistake?

You automatically succeed as though you rolled a 4 on any action involving mundane opposition or where there is no threat from the Necromancer. You do not need to roll Burn to create a campfire (unless a Wind of Cold Words blows through), Illuminate to force a mortal foe to speak the truth (unless they are infected with Mind Toxin), or Defy to leap a chasm (unless it's to get past the hordes of False Skins).

SETBACKS

A die roll should never cause your paladins to fail their quest outright. There is always a way for them to bounce back. Characters may get injured or suffer mental stress as a narrative consequence, but the character cannot be permanently taken out or killed without their player's permission.

Opposition

The Necromancer is the primary antagonist, a powerful and shadowy force who seeks to squash all light and happiness in the kingdom. He draws his power from the Graveyard, a dimension where old ideas go to die. His minions are numerous: opportunists and sympathizers, false skins and sentient mind poisons, and fell weapons forged from disgust and self-loathing. The identity of the Necromancer is up to the GM, or the GM may roll on the following table.

D4	RESULT
1	The former king, exiled and seeking to reclaim his throne.
2	A fallen member of your order, given over to despair.
3	A horror of the Graveyard, congealed from mind toxins.
4	A spy for the Static Church, trying to destabilize your kingdom.

Egg Shells are what remains of bodies that people of the kingdom were born into. They look like ordinary people, but are hollow-eyed and fragile-skinned. They have an exaggerated imprint of their former owner's personality at the time they were cast off and an obsession with feeling whole. They clasp themselves over peoples' bodies, suppressing their victim's true identity and

subverting it into a monstrous parody. It is never a satisfying fit and the Egg Shell eventually leaves its host, exhausted and in dire straits. An Egg Shell's greatest joy is recapturing their original owner, the only person they can bond with permanently. When the Necromancer calls upon an Egg Shell, it is either as saboteur (for an empty shell) or shock troops (for a filled shell). Empty shells hide their hollow nature behind closed visors and the brims of hats or scarves. Filled shells have no need for such deception.

Story Hook: An Egg Shell has claimed a victim, its original owner. In confusion and rage, they have caused damage and fled the town for the forest. You need to find them and free them before they hurt themselves or others. Unfortunately, they aren't the only Shell haunting the woods.

Cultists have committed their souls to the Necromancer in a short-sighted grab for temporal power. They are found at all ranks of power, but are small in number and prone to infighting. They are also bigots. They whisper lies and aspersions about those who performed the Affirmation. They question the safety and purity of the ritual, look for ways to subvert or sabotage the good, and - in desperation - resort to attacking directly with power borrowed from the Graveyard.

Story Hook: The party happens upon a massive book burning in the middle of town. If asked, the people say these poems about the Affirmation contain subversive lies. Who has put this deception in their head and how do you stop the burning without creating a riot?

Vile Egregores are spirits of the Graveyard. They can possess human corpses or the bodies of people heavily infected with necrotic essence. All Vile Egregores respond only to the dead name of somebody who has performed the Affirmation. Their touch is toxic: even brief contact fills the victim with a subtle necrotic poison. This poison gradually eats away at the victim's mind, hollowing out their identity so that another Vile Egregore can enter this world. In its native form, a Vile Egregore looks like an oily shadow, bubbling like a tar pit. They can be slain by ripping the name out of them, sending them and the name back to the void. The Necromancer often calls upon the Vile Egregores to infect supporters of the kingdom, a move that requires great patience on the awful spirits' part.

Story Hook: A miasma has settled over a small community, a sure sign that a Vile Egregore holds sway. The people are infected. They have turned suspicious and grown closed-minded, unwilling to give up whoever is spreading the infection. How do you root out the truth while dealing with hostility?