

Уроки горной королевы

(Uroki Gornoy Korolevy - The Mountain Queen's Lessons)

History

Уроки горной королевы is a branch of blood sorcery first pioneered by Baba Yaga, and known principally by members of a few Nosferatu and Gangrel lineages. Its heartland is in the Ural Mountains and the tundra beyond them to the east, though its reach has spread as far west as the Baltic Sea at some points in history.

Уроки горной королевы shows signs of influence from the Dur-An-Ki and Koldunic Sorcery, as well as its own, local innovations - which, in turn, were stolen by the Telyavelic Tremere, and adapted to their Sielanic Thaumaturgy. A practitioner of this form of Blood Sorcery is called a Ведьма (Vedma), a Witch, if female (as most practitioners of it are). Rare male practitioners of Уроки горной королевы are called Ведьмак (Vedmak). A master of this form of Blood Sorcery (5 dots) is called a Королева (Koroleva), a Queen, regardless of gender, with a title related to the path that they have mastered (so, for instance, a master of the Way of Earth is a Королева камня (Koroleva Kamnya), a Queen of Stone). A master of four or more paths is known as a Королева ведм (Koroleva Vedm), a Queen-of-Witches. Baba Yaga herself is known by practitioners of this discipline as the Королева Квинса (Koroleva Kvinsa), the Queen-of-Queens.

Mechanics

All path and ritual activations of Уроки горной королевы are more difficult to use in areas touched by human hands. Specifically:

- Wilderness which has not been cultivated or inhabited for at least 50 years: -1 difficulty
- Other wilderness: No change
- Farmland: +1 difficulty
- Urban or Suburban: +2 difficulty.

Paths

All Paths of Уроки горной королевы use Charisma + Occult for their activation rolls and cost one blood point to activate (unless the specific ability states otherwise), as their use is rooted in the command of local spirits, enticed to serve with the promise of the Ведьма's blood. Common

primary paths include the Lessons of Mokosh's Might, the Lessons of Perun's Authority, and the Lessons of Yarilo's Servants.

- Path of Weather Control (Lessons of Perun's Authority)
- The Green Path (Lessons of Yarilo's Servants)
- Path of Curses (Lessons of Nedola's Justice)
- Path of Spirit Manipulation (Lessons of the Little gods)
- The Hearth Path (Lessons of the Domovoy)
- Path of Elemental Mastery (Lessons of Svarog's Genius)
- [Koldunic Sorcery] Way of Earth (Lessons of Mokosh's Might)
- [Dur-An-Ki] Covenant of Nergal (Lessons of Likhoradka's Cruelty)
- [Sielanic Thaumaturgy] Path of the World's Blood (Lessons of Mat Zemlya's Domain)
- [Sielanic Thaumaturgy] Path of the Shadow World (Lessons of Veles's Domain)

Rituals

Practitioners of Уроки горной королевы have access to many common thematic rituals of Blood Sorcery. Below are listed a few ones unique to this particular form. All Уроки горной королевы rituals use Stamina + Occult for their activation rolls, with a difficulty of 3 + level, as they are universally very long and involved, requiring extensive chanting, often under an altered mental state as a result of imbibing the blood of kine dosed with psychoactive fungi (or in modern nights, other hallucinogens). All Уроки горной королевы rituals take 1 hour per dot to complete (unless the ritual specifies a longer time) and cost one point of blood (unless the ritual specifies otherwise).

One Dot

Appoint the Altar

By chanting ancient hymns and marking one of her "Mark the Gathering Spot" or "Lure the Wanderer" objects placed in an appropriate place, the Вeдьма consecrates it, so that the mortals in the area may offer their praise to her and her spirits. A Вeдьма often names ghouls to oversee this ritual, and prescribes other set means of worship for these mortals (usually involving some form of bloodletting).

System: The Вeдьма marks a shrine of some manner. Old trees, stone Menhir, crafted Wicker Men, underground altars, and other such objects are common, but the only requirement is that it must not be overtly technological in nature. She anoints the shrine with a point of her vitae, and performs specific chants to do so. If she is interrupted in her Hymn, she must start over again.

As long as the people of the surrounding area offers 1 blood point a month upon the shrine, their settlement does not count as part of a "Civilized" area for the purpose of her spellcasting and Rituals, reducing the difficulty penalty by 1 (to 0 if farmland, or 1 if urban or suburban in nature).

This functions only if every inhabitant of the area worships at this shrine, and does not offer worship in any other way or to any other god(s).

For the Ritual to work, every member of the community above the age of 6 must offer a token amount of their blood upon the shrine, once per month. As long as at least one person offers their blood monthly, the ritual's effect continues indefinitely, but it fades if left unused for a full lunar cycle. So long as it is maintained in this way, it can even outlast the final death of the Вѣдьма who created it.

Mark the Gathering Spot

Used by the Вѣдьма to call forth their covens for gathering, and to mislead and waylay travellers, this ability allows them to call others to a location of their choice.

System: The Вѣдьма anoints, bathes, or marks an inanimate object or plant with a point of her blood, and designates a specific type of creature. This can be broad, such as wolves, humans, or werewolves; or it can be more specific, such as women, red-haired individuals, maidens, travellers going east along a certain road, and so on. Anyone fitting the description who enters within one mile (or a lower range, if the Вѣдьма chooses such at the time of the ritual) automatically becomes aware of the marked object and its location. This ritual lasts one month, though if the object is marked with an additional point of the Вѣдьма's blood before that time, the ritual may be extended for an additional month from that time, without an additional roll. The ritual ends early if the object is destroyed or moved more than 10 feet from the place of the ritual. For each additional success on the roll beyond the first, the Вѣдьма may increase the range of this ritual by up to 1 mile.

Two Dots

Guard the Innocent Lamb

This ritual allows the Вѣдьма to set a watch over her flock, protecting them from misfortune and other kindred.

System: At the site of one of her "Mark the Gathering Spot" or "Lure the Wanderer" objects, the Вѣдьма bathes an "innocent" human child under 13 years of age in water mixed with a point of her vitae. This imbues the child with a protective ward; they become more resistant to disease and misfortune (mechanically: they gain one dot of stamina and additional one health level). Additionally, if any kindred other than the Вѣдьма (or another kindred they name at the time of the ritual) attempts to feed from the child, they are unable to gain any nourishment from the blood, and the Вѣдьма becomes instantly aware of the attempt.

When the child turns 13 years old, or if the child leaves the area of effect of the object, this enchantment breaks.

Set the Sacred Markers

This ritual allows the Ведьма to mark her territory, by infusing trees of the region with her blood. Some would argue that this is, in effect, ghoul-ing the plants.

System: The Ведьма marks a large tree of at least 50 years of age with at least one point of her vitae, allowing her to sense all that happens around it in a 10-foot diameter. By concentrating she is able to hear and see everything that happens around it in that range. This effect must be renewed every Month, as per the blood bond. For each additional success on the roll beyond the first, the Ведьма may either extend the range of her vision from the tree by 5 feet. By spending two successes, she may enable herself to use a mental discipline (Animalism, Auspex, Dominate, Presence, Dementation) or one path of her Уроки горной королевы powers through the tree as well. None of these effects may exceed the range of her vision through the tree.

Three Dots

Investing the Altar

With this ritual the faithful calls their Ведьма to their aid. Shouting her name, they summon her wrath upon their foes and for her magic upon their fields.

System: The Ведьма spends 3 blood points to anoint a shrine she has designated with "Appoint the Altar". She then imbues the shrine with either an activation of a power from one of her Lessons, or one of her known Уроки горной королевы rituals, performing it and spending blood and any other required resources as normal. If it is being imbued with a power, she must also designate an appropriate ritual for its use through the altar. The ritual must last at least a number of hours equal to the power's dots.

The shrine gains a blood pool equal to the Occult Level of the Ведьма, which begins empty. The ordinary blood given to the altar through the worship of her flock associated with "Appoint the Altar" does not count as restoring this pool, but the Faithful may sacrifice additional blood points to it to restore it by spilling it upon the altar (which absorbs the blood like a sponge), with appropriate worship and ritual. Human and animal blood are both sufficient for this purpose. If the power is of fourth or higher level, she must also spend a point of permanent willpower to imbue the altar with this power.

By spilling 1 Blood Point worth of fresh blood upon the altar (which is lost, and does not fuel the ritual or power or replenish the altar's blood pool), spending sufficient blood from the altar's blood pool, performing the appropriate ritual, and beseeching the Ведьма, anyone that has given blood to the altar as part of an act of worship within the last month may call upon her aid and cast a ritual that has been stored in the altar. This is not a single use; so long as sufficient blood is available, a ritual may be cast from the altar so long as it remains consecrated in this way.

Several spells may be stored in a single altar using multiple castings of this ritual, but the blood pool of the altar cannot increase beyond the Вѣдьма's Occult rating. This ritual does not need to be renewed so long as the altar remains consecrated by "Appoint the Altar".

Lure the Wanderer

This ritual operates identically to Mark the Gathering Spot, with one important addition - it calls to those meeting the criteria. Some use it to lead those seeking their aid safely through the forest, while others use it to hunt prey with ease.

System: Exactly as Mark the Gathering Spot, except for the increased difficulty. Additionally, the marked object exerts an attractive urge on those meeting the description, as the Presence power 'Summon' - though rather than the Вѣдьма rolling to successfully entrance them, the subject may roll Willpower against a difficulty of 6 to resist, requiring one success. For each additional success on the roll beyond the first, the Вѣдьма may increase the range of this ritual by up to 1 mile, or increase the strength of the attractive impulse. This second option both increases the strength of the attraction (as additional successes of 'Summon') and increases the number of successes required to resist by one. If a victim succeeds on their roll to resist, but not enough to fully overcome the ritual, instead reduce the strength of the attractive force by 1 for each success which was rolled. For instance, a victim rolling 2 successes against a lure which would normally require them to "approach with reasonable speed" (a three-success ritual) must instead only "approach slowly and hesitantly" (a one-success ritual).

Sense the Innocent Mind

This ritual grants the Вѣдьма knowledge of the minds of the 'innocent' within her area, allowing her to easily track such beings. This serves both as a means of tracking potential intruders and finding lost children or animals.

System: The Practitioner makes their ritual roll and spends a blood point. They gain knowledge of all 'innocent' minds within a 1 mile radius of themselves.

Innocent minds are children and young animals, though some creatures like reptiles and insects may not count, based on the storyteller's discretion. Particularly 'saintly' humans, and kindred with a Humanity (or other, humane Path rating, at Storyteller's discretion) of 8 or higher are also considered innocent. The Вѣдьма may choose to focus on only innocents of single species or set of species.

The Вѣдьма may spend additional successes beyond the first to either increase the range of the ritual by one mile, or gains greater knowledge of these individuals as below:

- 1 Success: Gain knowledge of the rough location of any creatures fitting the description within range.
- 2 Successes: Gain precise knowledge of the location of any creatures fitting the description within range.

- 3 Successes: Gain precise knowledge of the creature's location, and remain aware of their movements for the remainder of the night or until they exceed the ritual's range.
- 4 Successes: As 3 successes, as well as learning the name of the individuals.
- 5 Successes: As 4 successes, as well as learning their current emotional state, state of health, and state of hunger.

Four Dots

Bind the Innocent Lamb

With this terrible ritual, a Ведьма may bind a human child to her, enabling her to redirect any harm from herself to that child.

System: At the site of one of her "Mark the Gathering Spot" or "Lure the Wanderer" objects, the Ведьма bathes an "innocent" human child under 13 years of age who is already under the effect of her "Guard the Innocent Lamb" ritual in water mixed with three points of her vitae. From that point, so long as the child remains innocent and within the area of effect of that object, whenever the Ведьма would take damage, they may have the child take that damage instead. When the child turns 13 years old, becomes a ghoul, is embraced, or if the child leaves the area of effect of the object, this enchantment breaks, and the Ведьма loses a point of permanent willpower. She may recover this point of permanent willpower without spending XP if she drinks the child dry and kills them within one year of the enchantment's breaking. While under the effect of this ritual, the child does not count as a human inhabiting her territory for purposes of the Ведьма's path and ritual difficulty adjustment.

Craft the Lesser Волколак

Through this ritual, the Ведьма transfers a living (or unliving) soul from a person into an animal. It is named for what is likely the most common of its applications: taking the souls of willing, loyal worshippers of the Ведьма, and turning them into a Lesser Волколак (Volkolak), a war-ghoul with the intelligence of a man, in the form of a fearsome beast such as a wolf (the most common), mountain lion, or bear. It is also used for other purposes, however; transferring the soul of a person into a small, weak animal such as a rat or frog as a form of torment to extract information, for instance, or trapping a fledgling in this form as a lesson.

System: The Ведьма prepares the animal that is the target of this rite. She then exsanguinates the human or kindred to be transformed in the ritual and collects their blood in a basin carved from natural stone, killing them (if human), or putting them in torpor (if kindred). She mixes three points of her own vitae with the blood, and compels the animal whom the target is to inhabit to drink the mixture. Their consciousness then moves into the animal, inhabiting it. They maintain their own mental attributes, Charisma and Manipulation, discipline ratings (if any), and skills that they can use in the animal form, but take on the animal's physical attributes and appearances.

The Волколак crafted in this way counts as a ghoul if kine and must be fed the Ведьма's vitae regularly, like any other ghoul. If they run out of vitae and are not fed for a full month, they die - though vitae from any kindred will do, not only the Ведьма who created them. Furthermore, there is no returning to their (now dead) body. If, on the other hand, they are kindred, the Ведьма may release them to return to their body at any time (though the animal dies). Additionally, a kindred Волколак gains the ability to consume raw, fresh flesh and convert it into blood points while in this form, like a Nagaraja (though they do not rot if they do not eat flesh). Whether kindred or ghoul, the Волколак cannot speak, but can use the Celerity, Fortitude, and Potence disciplines, if they know them. If a kindred with the Protean power "Shape of the Beast" spends at least a year in another animal's form in this way, they may replace one of their "Shape of the Beast" forms with that of the animal whose form they took. A Ведьма may not cast this ritual upon themselves.

Ennoias Bark and Bite

This fearsome ability is what allows the Ведьма to truly defend their land, making its plants and trees rise up against the intruders. Some say they stole or learned it from the Kolduns - others claim the reverse.

System: The Ведьма crafts an effigy of branches and brambles from plants in the area around a tree already enchanted with "Set the Sacred Markers", and anoints it with a point of her blood. Often the plants and branches of the marked tree form together into a dryadic servant, which enters and conceals itself in the tree, being able to emerge whenever it is threatened. The Dryad cannot speak, and has three dots in each attribute, and two dots in brawl, stealth, alertness, athletics and survival. It is considered to have 2 points of Armor, does +1 Lethal damage, and takes double damage from fire. The Dryad is reasonably intelligent, and will telepathically inform the Ведьма (if they are awake) whenever they see an individual matching simple criteria which she may provide to it (or whenever it sees any person, should she request this). The Ведьма may choose to directly control the dryad when she wishes and support it through disciplines cast through the tree, though it may not travel further than her range of vision from its tree. Finally, like "Set the Sacred Markers", this ritual must be renewed each month.

For each additional success beyond the first, the Ведьма may either increase an attribute by one dot, or give the Dryad 2 dots in any ability.

Five Dots

Calling the Королева

There are times where the enemies of the Faithful fall upon them during the hours when the Королева cannot protect them. As the wolf stalks the lamb during the night, the predators of her flock strike during the day. This ritual teaches them the mistake of thinking themselves safe from the shepherd's wrath.

System: The Королева marks the Altar consecrated by "Appoint the Altar" with 5 blood points and makes an extended Stamina + Occult roll. Rolling every hour and seeking a total of 15 successes. Should she fail to complete it before it becomes dawn, she fails the ritual and must attempt it the next night from scratch.

From that point, if a worshipper of the Ведьма sacrifices a human being (willing or unwilling) upon the altar and spills their blood upon it, they will call upon the Ведьма's aid. She instantly wakes from Daysleep if need be, and may choose to attempt to wake from torpor. Further, the Ведьма may choose to teleport to it, from wherever she may be. Many Ведьма pair this with Set the Sacred Markers around the village, so that she may know what is teleporting to.

If summoned during the day, the Ведьма can remain awake for a number of hours equal to half her Permanent Willpower Score, rounded down, before sleep once more claims her. During this time, she may channel damage from sunlight to anyone who has worshipped at her shrine in the past year who is within range of the shrine. She may reduce this damage using her Fortitude rating as normal, if she has one.

Craft the True Волколак

Through this ritual, crafted in mockery of the Lupines, a Королева is able to not merely transfer a soul from a human or kindred into a beast, but transform them fully. There are many benefits to this variation upon the ritual - chief among them, the fact that it can be reversed. Of the two Волколак rituals, this is the original, the other having been made later as a simpler and easier form.

System: The Королева kills an animal and skins it, producing a hide (or, in the case of animals too small to produce a hide large enough to cover a person, kills and skins enough animals to sew together a composite hide that can). Over three nights, she washes the hide(s) in her blood, spending three blood points each night and making a Stamina + Occult test which must succeed. If the process fails on any night, the hide is ruined. This process keeps the hide supple, and imbues it with her vitae. This hide will then keep indefinitely, until she wishes to use it by throwing it over the individual she wishes to transform, making a final ritual check (also ruining the hide on a failure) and spending a further three points of blood. Upon doing so, the hide rapidly contracts around the individual, binding to them and transforming their body to take on the form of the animal in question. They maintain their own attributes other than appearance, discipline ratings (if any), and skills that they can use in the animal form, but take the animal's Appearance attribute, and may choose to take on the animal's other attributes if they would be greater.

Like the ritual "Craft the Lesser Волколак", a kindred transformed in this way gains the ability to eat raw flesh, and a human transformed in this way becomes a ghoul bound to the Королева. Unlike that ritual, however, the Волколак retains its speech, and its ability to use all its disciplines, not just the physical ones. Additionally, a ghoul True Волколак does not die if not fed its domitor's vitae, but instead gains the ability to consume flesh and convert that into blood points within itself, like a kindred True Волколак. They still have a ghoul's maximum blood pool,

and cannot drink blood to gain blood points, only consume flesh. They die if they run out of vitae and do not replenish it within three nights. Such a True Волколак is a dangerous thing that blurs the line between ghoul and kindred, and has no need to serve a domitor.

A Королева may use this ritual upon herself. This ritual requires the Королева to spend one point of permanent willpower to cast, unless she specifies sufficient criteria under which it may be broken (such as "true love's kiss" for a use of this upon an unwilling subject, or "wrestle them into submission barehanded and unarmored" for a willing subject or herself), at Storyteller discretion. They may also end the ritual early by choosing to break the enchantment.

Home of the Королева

It is said this ritual was first created by the dreaded Nosferatu Blood Sorcerer Baba Yaga in the creation of her infamous home. By marking her dwelling with blood, it becomes an extension of the Королева, granting her complete control over it.

System: The Королева makes an extended Stamina + Occult test at a the normal difficulty of 8, needing a total of 20 successes. Each check can be done only once per night, and requires spending 5 blood points per attempt. The Ritual must be done under the full moon and is often done naked and painted with arcane symbols. If the Королева fails to gain enough successes before the moon begins to wane, she will have to wait until the next full moon to continue the test. If she fails to gain any successes during any given full moon, the ritual collapses and must begin again from the start.

When complete, her home (which may be a cave, a hut, a grove of trees, or some other such location) becomes hers fully, and she is able to choose one of the following options for it, or another appropriate power at storyteller discretion:

- The Grove is guarded by spirits, as per storyteller discretion.
- The lair can become mobile at her command, tearing itself from the ground, and growing long legs with chicken feet. It has a speed of 10 miles per hour for every dot of Occult she has.
- A number of trees up to her Occult rating within 100 feet of her home which have been enchanted with "Set the Sacred Markers" and/or "Ennoia's Bark and Bite" do not need to be renewed monthly while this enchantment lasts.
- The Королева may teleport to any "Mark the Gathering Spot" object within 1 mile of her home, from her home, and back again.
- The Королева knows instantly if anyone enters her home, and knows who they are and what their intentions are, regardless of her location. This will even wake her from daysleep, and give her an opportunity to wake from torpor.
- The Blood Sorcery rituals cast by the Королева within the home do not expire so long as the Home remains enchanted.
- The Home disguises itself to fit with its terrain. This may make a cave look like a mountain side. Or it may make a Hut that has snuck into the city look like a normal

home. This ability fails if the Home is doing something obviously supernatural, such as moving.

The Королева may do this ritual several times to reinforce her home further, adding a new ability each time. The Bond must be renewed each year, at the Winter Solstice, in a night-long ritual requiring the Королева to sacrifice 10 Blood Points. However, this single ritual serves to extend a number of castings of Home of the Королева up to her Уроки горной королевы rating, provided they are all on the same building or location.