

## **Necromancy Path – Shroud Sense**

(by John Taber, Updated: 4/12/2002 @ 9:15 PM)

**Summary:** The place between life and the underworld is known as the “Shroud”. It is a dimension of perpetual darkness and decay. Roaming these “Shadowlands” are the spirits of those that once walked the earth. If one could peer into the Shroud one could watch the aimless wanderings of those beings trapped between the living and the dead.

This form of Necromancy deals with the study and exploration of the Shroud. In particular, it focuses on glimpsing into the Shroud from the land of the living. At the beginning the user will be only able to see into the Shroud but not hear or be able to communicate. As her mastery of the power grows more and more communication with the Shadowlands may be achieved.

This is a dangerous ability as the dimension known as the Shroud is ghastly to the extreme. Practitioners who study this art often take care not to gaze into the realm for an extended length of time less they become crazed by the visions. If this discipline is used for an extended duration or many times over a given span the Storyteller may ask the player to make a Self-Control roll at difficulty 6. Failure should mean an instable emotional state which includes intense emotion withdrawal. All dice rolls should be reduced by 2d10 and a willpower point will be temporarily lost until rest is taken. If the Self-Control roll is botched the user should be given a temporary derangement akin to severe depression as well as the above effects.

**Storyteller Notes:** This discipline was created for Jeff’s Vampire Game. It is intended for use by initially 1 PC (i.e. Eraldo). My goal was to create something that would be fun and unique for the PC to develop over the course of the campaign. I tried to stick to Thaumaturgy paths in form and function.

**John’s Notes:** Here are some comments about Shroud Sense.

- The first, third, fourth, and fifth dot are pseudo related but I think the focus is different so we should be ok. Maybe I need to work on different things and combine two levels? For example, combine the fourth and fifth dots. Still not great???
- Added new discipline to act as a sort of clairvoyance. Should be useful and make the set pretty balanced.
- Everything uses Occult so it might be a tad overbalanced. Is there one I could change? Maybe it’s ok?
- I like the way these build on the other. Makes them interesting and fun.
- (4/12/2002) I changed the order and lowered most of them by one dot. I think this version is grosser than the one in the book for a bunch of reasons but we can give it a go.

### ● **Shroud Sight**

Glimpsing into the Shroud is at first a confusing experience. Although the Shroud is another dimension it is very similar to that of the current dimension. Objects seen in our dimension also appear in the realm of the Shadowlands but they are “unclear”. The difference is that in the realm of the dead the world is merely shades of gray and levels of decay. The spirits who roam the Shroud repeat a series of endless tasks until their souls

are sent to the underworld. For example, the spirit of a woman and her child may cross a street with her baby carriage until she is struck by a passing car. This sequence would repeat until her spirit is sent to the underworld. Unless the event that caused the death of the individual was very traumatic these spirits only remain trapped in the Shroud for a relatively short length of time. On the other hand, if the death of the individual was traumatic a spirit might remain in a given location performing their task for centuries!

When using Shroud Sight the practitioner sees the realm of the unliving superimposed on the realm of the living. Objects in the Shroud appear as silent apparitions in a dull gray hue. By slowly moving while the vision is enabled the caster is able to see various spirits perform their unliving tasks. Note that while viewing the dimension of the dead the practitioner has a hard time maneuvering in the land of the living. Users should be given at least +2 difficulty on all manual tasks that are attempted in the real world while they are viewing into the Shroud.

**System:** Shroud Sight allows the user to view into the Shroud. It does not allow the practitioner to communicate or interact with these spirits in any way. By viewing into the Shroud the Necromancer can observe the unliving tasks of a given spirit. Often this task is closely related to the cause of the person's death or the trauma that surrounds it. Shroud Sight can also be used to follow the movements of wraiths that may be centuries old. As this discipline is not well known or understood members of the Giovanni clan feel that there is other information these spirits can impart but they have yet to deduce the details.

To focus on a given spirit using Shroud Sight the Necromancer must roll a Perception + Occult at a difficulty 6. Note that kindred or ghouls quickly pass through the Shroud in a cloud of dull gray mist as their souls are tainted with undead blood. Thus the difficulty is 8 when attempting to discern spirits from these type of creatures. The amount of successes determines the clarity and length of the visions seen by the caster.

## ●● Phantom Parlay

When the Necromancer reaches the second level of mastery of Shroud Sense they are able to fully communicate with wraiths in the realm of shadows. The practitioner may even ask individual wraiths detailed questions about their lives, their death, the area they frequent, etc. If a Necromancer is able to find an ancient wraith they can ask the individual where other distinct wraiths may be located. By careful use of this power a practitioner can gain considerable information. Note that even though this ability is powerful it does not allow the Necromancer to force the wraith out of its given cycle.

One thing to remember is that every wraith the Necromancer may encounter in the Shadowlands is not necessarily friendly. Difficult wraiths may be encountered just as difficult people are encountered. It is not unheard of for particularly stubborn wraith to actually bargain for information. For example, a wraith of a man trapped in a burning building may ask the Necromancer to find his wedding ring and deliver it to his grave before revealing his information.

**System:** To communicate with a given wraith the Necromancer must first view into the Shroud using Shroud Sight. This is done with a Perception + Occult roll at a difficulty 6. Note that kindred or ghouls quickly pass through the Shroud in a cloud of

dull gray mist as their souls are tainted with undead blood. Thus the difficulty is 8 when attempting to discern spirits from these type of creatures. The amount of successes determines the clarity and length of the visions seen by the caster.

To convince a particular wraith to aid the user the character should be asked to role-play the situation as appropriate. Depending on how the character approaches each particular wraith various skill rolls should be made. For example, Papa Doc peers into the Shroud in a deserted bar. He finds a local barmaid wraith with a ghastly slash in her neck and attempts to ask he who has been in the bar. Papa Doc attempts to sweet talk the barmaid using Phantom Parlay. After role-playing the scene for a few minutes the Storyteller calls for a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll. Depending on the success of the roll the GM will convey information to the PC.

Communicating with a wraith is done openly although the caster can whisper if the situation warrants it. Whispering in inopportune situations should reduce the Necromancers chance of success. Thus the Necromancer must hold a complete conversation with the wraith although others in the room hear only one side of the conversation.

### ●●● Spectral Quest

As practitioners become more acquainted with communicating into the Shroud they develop certain powers to aid those trapped in their never ending cycles. By using Spectral Mission a Necromancer can force a particular wraith to deviate from their endless cycle and perform a mission for them. This mission must be short in duration and must have a definitive ending. For the Necromancer to force the wraith from her given path he must breach into the realm of the shadows using his force of will. After the quest is completed the practitioner can even offer the wraith their desire of journeying to the underworld and a peaceful rest.

**System:** To use Spectral Mission the user must first communicate with a wraith using Phantom Parlay. After the wraith is contacted the practitioner uses his arcane might to force the wraith out of its cycle. This is done using a Self-Control + Occult roll against a difficulty of 6 for normal wraiths and 8 for kindred wraiths. If the Necromancer botches this roll the Shroud has resisted and the Necromancer becomes subject to a 2d10 aggravated attack that cannot be soaked. The amount of successes on the Self-Control + Occult roll determines the efficiency of the wraith in their assigned task and the amount of time they will stick to the mission before returning to their cycle. With a complete success (i.e. 3 successes) the wraith will stay on the mission for up to 1 week and report the results as accurately as it can. The accuracy of the result should vary based on the skill set of the wraith. For example, commanding a wraith that was a baker in a former life to watch a social party is not going to notice too many idiosyncrasies. Also remember that some wraiths have been trapped on a given cycle for a very long time. Thus asking an ancient wraith to meet the caster for his report at a new night dance club might not be a good idea as the wraith will not understand where that place is located. Wraith will act in the best of their ability to comply with the mission set by the Necromancer.

Once the mission is complete the wraith may be let loose by the Necromancer to journey to the underworld. In many cases this can be used as a bargaining chip to help

convince spirits that partaking of missions for the caster. When the practitioner wants to free a wraith under his command and free them to the underworld he simply releases the lock gained by Spectral Quest.

### ●●●● Decay Sense

At the fourth level of mastery the practitioner may view into the realm of the shadows and carefully focus on the amount of decay present in given objects not just wraiths. This information allows the user to determine where objects are weak or prone to damage. For example, if the practitioner uses this ability to examine an old sword they will be able to determine where it is fractured or in need of repair. On living creatures Decay Sense can reveal permanent scars, places of fracture, or the extent of open wounds.

The effect of this ability is actually pretty broad but its application is focused. For example, the Necromancer could use this ability on chains that bind someone's wrists giving him knowledge on where they are weak. Another use could be to determine the extent of active wounds and how they can be treated.

**System:** In game terms Decay Sense adds to the effect pools of actions where it is utilized. If it is used to determine the structural weakness in chains the additional dice go towards Str rolls. If the information is used to treat wound it goes towards Medical rolls. The effect should be worked out with the Storyteller at the time of use.

To use Decay Sense the Necromancer first opens Shroud Sight then focus intensely on the object in question. The difficulty is based on Perception + Occult at difficulty 6. Note that penalties to this roll should be applied if the object under scrutiny is far away, minute, or obscured in some fashion. If the practitioner can actually handle the object for a few moments the difficulty should be reduced. The amount of successes on this roll determines how effective the power will function. For every success the user achieves on this roll they may add 1 dice to their effect pool to a maximum of 4 dice. The minimum effect is 1 dice.

By using Decay Sense the practitioner may tell others the location of the weakness. For example, the Necromancer could determine where a door is weak and point the area out to a friendly Brujah. In this situation the effect from the additional dice is halved. The minimum effect is always 1d10 and the maximum effect is still 4d10. Thus if the Necromancer rolls 8 successes they can impart 4d10 of this effect to their partner.

Using this ability on active living targets is difficult because even an exploited weakness must be precisely struck by the attacker to be effective. In this case the normal rules apply for the power and it's affect but the attacker must make a targeted location strike against a Precise sized object (i.e. +3 difficulty) to utilize the additional dice.

### ●●●●● Ghostly Transference

When the fifth level of mastery has been reached the Necromancer has a fearsome array of powers related to the Shadowlands. This level of Shroud Sense allows the user to actually attach four of her five senses to a wraith who is under a Spectral Quest. By doing this the Necromancer is able to see, hear, taste, or smell anything that can be observed by the wraith under her command.

This is a powerful ability as it allows the practitioner to actually sense the things seen by the wraith while they are on their Spectral Quest. Note that this does not allow the Necromancer to communicate with the wraith while it is performing its mission. This ability allows the user to “piggy back” with the wraith.

**System:** To perform Ghostly Transference the Necromancer must first gain the assistance of a wraith using Spectral Quest. Once that is done the caster commands the wraith to merge with his spirit form by moving to his location and imposing his head over that of the casters. The caster then forces his five senses to the wraith. This is done using a blood point and willpower roll from the caster. If this roll is botched feedback from the Shroud will impact the caster performing a 2d10 aggravated attack that cannot be soaked.

Note that when the caster performs Ghostly Transference they attach their senses to the wraith. This leaves their living body without any sense of hearing, sight, taste, or smell. For all practical purposes the Necromancer is in a near comatose state where touch is their only remaining sense. The caster’s sense of touch is not taken from the caster so they know if their body is getting damaged.

To return their senses from the Necromancer the wraith must again superimpose his form onto the caster’s. When the senses are returned no roll is required but a blood point must be expended. If the practitioner’s body has been moved while this power is in use the Necromancer and wraith must recover the body. If the body is not immediately found the caster may be forced to stay with the wraith for a prolonged length of time. See the information below for the effects of staying with a wraith for a prolonged length of time.

If the Necromancer is forced to stay with the wraith for a prolonged sense of time they may become overwhelmed with the sense of rot and decay that forms the backbone of the Shadowlands. If this happens the Storyteller will ask the practitioner to make a Self-Control roll at difficulty 6. Failure should mean an instable emotional state which includes intense emotion withdrawal. All dice rolls should be reduced by 2d10 and a willpower point will be temporarily lost until rest is taken. If the Self-Control roll is botched the user should be given a temporary derangement akin to severe depression as well as the above effects. If the user continues to stay in the Shadowlands the Storyteller should increase the difficulty of these rolls by 1 to a max of 10. Once all the practitioner’s willpower is temporarily lost they will give up all ties to the mortal world and be forever attached to the wraith. This could lead to a quest by other PC if they wish to free the Necromancer from the effects of Ghostly Transference.