

Rites of Spring

MAGICAL CEREMONIES OF THE SPRING EQUINOX

AS THE DARKNESS OF WINTER RECEDES and the hours of daylight begin to lengthen, the life-giving forces of nature begin to reassert their supremacy onto the world, and various ceremonies are conducted to reflect this time of rebirth. These rites, both familiar and exotic, seek to channel the primal magic of spring for the benefit of those who perform them.

Unlike most other rites that commemorate other seasons, spring rites are rooted in a yearning for living beings to be surrounded by more life. It's unsurprising that history's earliest known magical rites involved the manipulation and regeneration of life itself. The depression and stasis brought about by the previous winter instinctively moves a person to celebrate once the first shard of sunlight passes through the frosted windows of her home, or when the first tiny buds of leaves grow back on the branches of his snow-covered orchard trees.

Though magic-users such as druids, warlocks, and clerics of life have long since perfected spring's energies to sophistication, ordinary folk may still harness the latent powers of spring through the following rites. They can be connected to the actions of the gods, or they can just be manmade traditions.

WRITING DION FERNANDEZ
COLOR ART JESHIELDS
EDITING JAMES J. HAECK
LAYOUT ERIC LIFE-PUTNAM



COMMON RITES

For many societies, especially rural ones, the onset of spring is cause for simple celebration. It is a season when people reacquaint themselves with each other after being isolated in their homes and share the excess supplies of last winter with those who need them. Outdoor banquets and drinking festivals are common, as well as masquerades and rowdy celebrations held under the spring rain. Households are festooned with ribbons, flowers and other symbols of rebirth such as painted eggs or figurines of baby animals. Even the simple motion of sweeping away the dust that had accumulated in houses during the winter holds mystical significance.

In larger towns and cities, a more expensive common spring rite alternately called “The Grand Carnival” or “The Fat Night” is conducted. Celebrations here often get so hypnotically raucous that many rogues use them as the perfect opportunity to apply their thieving skills.

Environmental Effects

- ▶ Simple spring celebrations usually have no immediate magical effect, though they often attract the interests of magic-users who witness them, and they may consequently grant spells that nurture and revive. A circle of druids might see it fit to grant *plant growth* on the farms around the village that “appropriately” reveres nature’s resurgence, or a powerful cleric might cast *mass heal* on a community that has suffered from sickness over the winter.
- ▶ Alternatively, a common spring ceremony might be able to harness nature’s magic in such a way that it either mimics the effects of a powerful spell or activates a hibernating artifact within the vicinity. The more people



who participate in the rite, the more potent the effects could be.

Character Effects

- ▶ A common spring rite may have no immediate magical effect, but anyone who directly participates for a full hour has advantage on Charisma checks for the whole day afterwards when interacting with locals and others who have taken a positive interest in the rite.
- ▶ Characters participating in Grand Carnival celebrations have advantage on Wisdom saving throws against being frightened, but have disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks due to the noise and chaos of the revelry.

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MARCH OF THE WILD MEN

There are places where the realm of the fey overlaps with the Material Plane, and the day of the vernal equinox sees the re-emergence of fey courts that cross the planar boundary and march across the drab landscape, bringing life and color back into the world. Living beings who participate (voluntarily or otherwise) in this enchanted procession become eventually enraptured in the process.

The March of the Wild Men is as anarchic as it is necessary; all things that stand in the way of the March are cleared or destroyed, giving the opportunity for plants to grow, for animals to roam free, and for communities to rebuild anew. The living participants thus serve as tools in the enigmatic motives of the fey courts.

Environmental Effects

- ▶ On the days during and after the March, the 1-mile radius around the area where it began is treated as if it were part of the Feywild itself.
- ▶ In that same period, plants and beasts touched by a member of the member of the March are affected as though by an *awaken* spell.

Character Effects

- ▶ Any character who participates in the March of the Wild Men is treated as a fey in addition to its own creature type, and its alignment also changes to Chaotic (Good, Neutral or Evil tendencies remain unchanged). These effects last during and after the day of the March.

LUNAR NEW YEAR

Halfway across the girth of the world, the first day of spring often coincides with the last darkening of the moon. This auspicious time is spectacularly celebrated with loud fireworks, sumptuous feasts, astrological readings, and energetic street parades called Dragon Dances. Imperial rulers bellow out a New Year's blessing to their subjects, and the roads become choked with travelers and well-wishers seeking fortunes for the year to come.

The Lunar New Year comprises a multitude of smaller rituals and ceremonies, each representing an aspect of nature or a star sign; consequently, each of these minor rites has its own effects on the person who conducts and receives them.

Environmental Effects

- ▶ For the two weeks of the Lunar New Year, living creatures who allowed the Dragon Dance to pass them by don't need to eat or drink to be nourished.
- ▶ In that same period, fiends (except demon lords and archdevils) cannot enter the boundaries of a city (or are otherwise expelled from them) where Lunar New Year fireworks have been detonated.

Character Effects

- ▶ A character who wears predominantly bright red clothing (or another culturally auspicious color) during the two weeks of the Lunar New Year may use an action to gain advantage on saving throws against aberrations, fiends, and undead for one hour.
- ▶ A creature who meditates for an hour at a holy site during that same period has all the coins on its person turn to gold coins. This can only happen once per character per year.



WATER FIGHT

In tropical regions where winter never brings snow or ice, spring begins when the monsoon rains cease. The water that has been collected during the winter is so excessive that celebrants gather it from ponds, lakes and rivers into buckets and merrily throw it at others on the first day of spring as a well-intended, if slightly rude, gesture of luck and prosperity. The more that a person gets drenched in water thrown by others, the more she is believed to be blessed in the year ahead. Holy men and women say that this tradition grew from the act of pouring water on statues of the gods, and became a symbol of purification and cleansing.

In regions where water is less plentiful, powdered herbs are used in the rite instead. These powdered herbs, which come in many different colors, are then thrown around to create dazzling clouds.

Environmental Effects

- ▶ Water specifically taken from natural sources and used in the Fight is considered holy water, and remains so until the end of spring.
- ▶ If a certain area (such as a village square or a house) has been significantly drenched in water from the Fight, or covered in a mottle of colors from thrown herbs, that area is considered under the effects of a *hallow* spell until spring's end, with the extra effect of Courage granted on anyone who permanently resides there.

Character Effects

- ▶ A creature who gets drenched by an entire bucket of water from another creature in the Fight, or who gets hit by a fist-sized clump of colored powder, is considered as having received the benefits of a short rest, except the creature may not spend Hit Dice to regain hit points.
- ▶ All participants of the Water Fight have advantage on saving throws against exhaustion for the next week.

DANCE OF THE FLYERS

In climes where water is scarce and isn't just a luxury to be thrown about, spring is welcomed in the abrupt change of the patterns of the wind. Such changes are welcomed by brave souls, who climb to the tops of high ritual poles and, with ropes tied to their ankles, jump in mimicry of birds. Along with three others, each person falls to the ground in a revolving motion around the pole, symbolizing the moist winds touching the parched earth. A character can spin around the pole a number of times equal to 15 + its Dexterity score.

Environmental Effects

- ▶ There is a 5% chance during each performance of the Dance, with an increasing 5% chance for each succeeding Dance in the day, for a rainstorm to be summoned by the rite. The storm lasts for an hour, and cannot be summoned again until the next day.

Character Effects

- ▶ A creature who participates in the Dance can communicate with birds for a number of days equal to the revolutions it completes during the ritual, as if affected by a long-lasting *speak with animals* spell.

RITUAL OF FLAYING

Not all spring ceremonies have benevolent rites. Certain societies where evil and bloodlust reign practice a gruesome rite known as the Ritual of Flaying, which involves the mass sacrifice of living souls to appease their wrathful gods. Just before dawn on the first spring day, sacrificial victims are dragged to a predetermined place such as a barren field. They are then each decorated with flowers, bound to an ornate ritual pillar, and then shot to death with arrows, allowing for their blood to drip to the ground. Their skin is then flayed and worn like a second skin by participants as a symbol of the "new" skin of the earth that grows after the desert-dry "old" skin has peeled away.

Environmental Effects

- ▶ The area within 60 feet of a sacrificial victim becomes enriched as if affected by a plant growth spell. Until whatever first fruits could be harvested from that area, it becomes immune to mundane weather and even weather-affecting spells such as *sleet storm* or *control weather*.
- ▶ At next dawn, the sacrificial victim rises as a wight that serves as a guardian scarecrow for the area which it was sacrificed in, and remains as such until the harvest.

Character Effects

- ▶ A creature participating in the sacrifice (even one who does not wear the victim's flayed skin) receives the benefits of a long rest upon completing a short rest for the next 3 days, but the experience leaves the character suffering from a long-term madness effect that persists for the same length of time.
- ▶ Any character who dons the flayed skin of a sacrificial victim is immune to damage from nonmagical attacks for as long as the skin is worn. The skin also gives the abilities of a *wand of fear* while worn, though they fade after 3 days as the skin decays.

THE CANDELARIA

Finally, there are far places in the world where the winter never ends. The people who live here nevertheless can spot the subtle changes that mark the faint arrival of spring, no matter how brief it may be: the return of the reindeer and mammoth herds, the first rise of the sun above the horizon, or a shift in the intensity of the boreal lights.

At sunrise on the vernal equinox, celebrants channel the power of the weak spring sun by lighting hundreds of candles at a common ritual spot, such as a ceremonial altar. The candles are left to burn for an hour, after which each family takes a candle and brings it back to their own homes as a living symbol of the season.

Environmental Effects

- ▶ Until the flame from the last candle offered is snuffed out, animal meat hunted by locals, as well as milk gathered from local sheep, is always fresh and doesn't spoil.

Character Effects

- ▶ Each person within 1 mile of any flame lit during the Candelaria is affected as if wearing a *ring of warmth*. This lasts until the final candle flame dies.

