



Gothic Grimoires 1: The Necrotic Verses



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What You Will Find Inside Gothic Grimoires

In campaigns where horror, madness, or tragedy play a central theme, blasphemous books and tomes of terror often play a key role in unlocking sinister secrets man was not meant to know. Each *Gothic Grimoire* is evocative and richly detailed, with history and character that makes them far more than a collection of dusty pages that deliver intriguing possibilities for introducing novel applications of the rules of your favorite role-playing game. These are ***Tomes of Ancient Knowledge***, dialed up to eleven. ***The Necrotic Verses*** is grounded in the corrupted composition of a musical maestro whose otherworldly obsessions drove him to madness and beyond yet left behind magical masterpieces like the Dead Man's Frolic, Dance of the Empty Moons, and the Opus of the Golden King! Power awaits all who dare to delve into the sinister secrets contained within ***The Necrotic Verses***!

Rather than gathering a number of different magical tomes, often with somewhat dissimilar themes, into a single compilation, the *Gothic Grimoires* product line takes each tome singly, expanding its lore and developing its mechanical and conceptual uniqueness more robustly. We think every one of these tomes is terrific and deserving of this expansive treatment and we hope you'll agree, but even if a given *Gothic Grimoire* is not your cup of tea, we hope you'll be looking forward to the next one! The Legendary Games tradition is to combine rich story and background, innovative layout, beautiful aesthetics, and excellence in design that is second to none. This product is the latest in that tradition, and we hope you enjoy using it as much as we enjoyed making it. Game on!

- Jason Nelson



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The Necrotic Verses: Bardic Mythos Tome

Penned decades ago by a young musical prodigy named Zane Enreich, *The Necrotic Verses* is an encyclopedic musical treatise collecting a great variety of eerie, bizarre, and even perverse performances of every variety. Enreich was a musical polymath, proficient in virtually every instrument known, and able to record in detailed notation forms and rhythms he had heard but once. His brilliantly avant-garde tastes earned him enemies amongst the musical establishment, but his virtuosity could not be denied, nor his ability to outdo the old masters at their own music as well as his own.

His meteoric rise, however, was staggered when he began to notice one young patron who never applauded, never seemed moved by his musical mastery. Performance after performance he would sit stony-faced, driving Zane to distraction. Did this man not know he was in the presence of genius? He finally confronted the callow youth, but browbeating and insulting the lad was no more successful in impressing him than Zane's performance. Introducing himself as Leopold Pelluer, he told Zane that he saw the spark of talent in him, but that he was not willing to go far enough, to take true risks, to really revolutionize the world of music. Outraged at his impertinence, Zane demanded Leopold show him just one single thing about music that he didn't already know. Dismissively, Leopold stepped to the organ and played a pair of simple five-note patterns, resolving them into a sublime but disturbing chord. "Begin there," he said, then turned and left, never to be seen again.

Appalled, Zane at first dismissed Leopold as an armchair critic, but the figure and the chord just would not leave his mind. It gnawed his dreams and sprouted wholly unorthodox tonality, melody, and harmony that he could not resist. As months passed, Zane's compositions grew progressively stranger, first in their discordant melodies and soon after in their subject matter. In conversation, Zane began to lose his hearing. At first, it was believed his hearing was simply dulled, but some began to suspect that somehow he had begun instead hearing something else, something *other*, which began to drown out rationality and creative genius with an obsession with radical disturbia. Audiences were aghast at what they witnessed pouring forth from his tormented spirit and performers in shock and horror in the wake of what Enreich demanded of them. In short order, even his most loyal patrons abandoned him and the fallen impresario was consigned to an asylum,

where healers at a loss to treat his madness nonetheless dutifully recorded his rhythmic rhymes and ravings. Precisely 13 months after his imprisonment, the asylum and all within were obliterated by a burning star fallen to earth, brought down some say by the eldritch recitations of Zane Enreich as his final act of glory.

The healers' notes survived, however, in correspondence to visiting scholars who consulted on the curious case. Painstakingly assembled along with copies of Enreich's most salient works, both infamous and obscure, the text is a disturbing juxtaposition of art taken to its ultimate extreme and the tales of a mind stretched beyond its limits. Several have claimed authorship of *The Necrotic Verses*, but which is telling the truth is unknown. It may be all are, and that several identical copies of the work exist, each transcribed and compiled by a strange compulsion. *The Necrotic Verses* have been burned more than once, but the book always resurfaces after a time, either the original somehow repaired or another copy taking its place.

Reading: *The Necrotic Verses* is considered a mythos tome (as described in *Tomes of Ancient Knowledge*); for those without that product, assume that reading the book for loses 1d4 points of Wisdom (DC 18 Wisdom save negates). In addition, learning any of the spells or masterpieces contained within risks development of an obsessive interest in the undead and creatures that are insane. A DC 15 Charisma saving throw negates this obsession, but the DC increases by 1 for each spell or masterpiece learned after the first. If the save is failed, as long as the curse persists the reader is at risk of developing an unnatural obsession with any undead creature or with a creature that has been mentally altered by magic or some traumatic event. A successful DC 15 Charisma saving throw resists this infatuation, but a new save is required each time the accursed reader meets another such creature. If the save is failed, the infatuation persists for 1d6 days and then turns instead into loathing for an additional 1d6 days before fading. While these unnatural feelings persists with one creature, the curse has no other effect, but once the cycle of infatuation and loathing ends, the reader may develop an infatuation with another creature he encounters.

Learning the Music of the Spheres, Opus of the Golden King, or Pnakotic Fugue masterpieces causes the reader to become obsessed with creatures with the mythos descriptor, as described in *Tomes of Ancient Knowledge* rather than undead. These creatures include the aboleth, gibbering mouter, grimlock, and intellect devourer. Other similarly alien creatures could also be given this descriptor.

Spells: This book contains the following spells not normally available to bards but which can be learnt by a bard when she gains a new spell slot of the appropriate level by spending 24 hours studying *The Necrotic Verses*. These spells are treated as bard spells of the same level

as their cleric or sorcerer/wizard spell level: *circle of death*, *feeblemind*, *gentle repose*, *phantasmal killer*, *spider climb*, and *vampiric touch*. These spells are considered mythos spells for the purpose of making madness checks, as described in *Tomes of Ancient Knowledge*.

Masterpieces: *The Necrotic Verses* contains 9 unique masterpiece performances. In place of a feat (if feats are permitted) a bard can select up to two of these masterpieces by studying the tome. Alternately, they may sacrifice a bard spell known of the appropriate level to learn one of the masterpieces by studying the tome. The bard must meet all requirements for the learned masterpiece.

DANCE OF THE EMPTY MOONS

Your music evokes an elegant waltz of dancing dream-shades.

Prerequisite: Perform skill or instrument proficiency, 14th level bard.

Cost: by Feat or 6th-level bard spell known

Effect: This arrangement for strings, first entitled *O Lunae Lacunae*, calls out to the lingering memory of dazzling balls and the dreams of fanciful soirees that never were. The shades that inhabit these dreams genuflect and whirl hand in hand, sweeping back and forth in neat lines and intricate patterns, though with a certain frenetic edge and a desperate intensity, under elaborate floating chandeliers and careening candelabra. The rushing, twirling phantasmagoria of the spectral dancers, lights, and music distracts all creatures within 30 feet automatically, causing disadvantage on any attack rolls and ability checks (blinded creatures are immune to this effect).

In addition, the swirling phantoms cling to creatures within the area and try to draw them into their dance. You can select a number of creatures equal to your Charisma bonus to be affected in this way. Each creature you target is affected by the *slow* spell for as long as you maintain the performance with an action each round, unless they succeed on a Wisdom saving throw vs your spell save DC.

In addition, after spending your actions to maintain the performance for at least 3 rounds, you can draw a creature that has been slowed by the phantom promenade wholly into a tiny pocket of the Dimension of Dreams, affecting the target as *geas* to continue dancing. Unlike the *geas* spell, however, a Will save (DC as above) is allowed to resist the effect at the end of each round. To all observers, a creature trapped in this way becomes transparent and intangible, joining in the dance with the other phantom shades and wholly unresponsive and unreachable until she resists the effect.

Use: 1 use of Bardic Inspiration

Action: 1 bonus action

DEAD MAN'S FROLIC

Your capering antics cause the dead to dance in time to your necrotic rhythms.

Prerequisite: Perform skill or instrument proficiency, 5th level Bard

Cost: by Feat or 2nd-level bard spell known

Effect: This creepily catchy performance is simultaneously madcap and macabre, combining tribal rhythms with cultic masks, eerily luminescent glowing face and body pigments and whirling paint, and all manner of bizarre dangling fetishes and talismans. This performance lasts for one minute, during which you can use your spells to charm undead that are immune to the charmed condition, though undead who were not humanoids in life have advantage on saving throws to resist these effects. Undead that were considered humanoids in life are subject to the *charm person* spell if you cast it during your performance. In addition, you cannot charm living targets during your performance, as these mock rites that fascinate the dead hold no appeal to the living.

In addition to the above, you can induce a frenzy of wild dancing into undead creatures that you have charmed. Beginning this type of performance requires 1 use of your Bardic Inspiration per 2 creatures that you target, all of which must be within 30 feet of you, though maintaining the performance costs only 1 use of Bardic Inspiration per round it continues.

Targeted undead that fail a Charisma saving throw against your spell save DC have disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks. In addition, an affected undead creature that begins or ends its turn adjacent to another creature attempts to dance with it. If the adjacent creature is another undead affected by the dead man's frolic, both undead creatures gain the grappled condition. If an adjacent creature is not an affected undead, this attempt to dance with it should be resolved as a grapple contest that provokes an opportunity attack from adjacent enemies. This grapple maneuver is not an attack and deals no damage to the creature with whom the affected undead tries to dance. If multiple creatures are adjacent to an affected undead creature, it chooses other affected undead if possible, followed by humanoids, dancing with other creature types only if those of the first two types are unavailable. If multiple creatures of the same category are adjacent, choose randomly.

Special: Generally speaking, the cultic and fetishistic talismans of a dead man's frolic are figments created by the magic of the masterpiece; however, you gain advantage to any associated Perform checks and increase the saving throw DC against the performance by 1 if you use at least two different genuine cultic items. These should be treated as high quality tools, costing 55 gp or more, but fakes are far more common (90% of such items available for purchase) than genuine tribal relics. A DC 20 Intelligence (History) check can detect such counterfeits.

Use: 1 use of Bardic Inspiration to initiate the performance, and 1 use of Bardic Inspiration per two targets to initiate the dance (can spend up to Charisma bonus at one time)

Action: 1 action.



MASQUE MACABRE

Your shifting appearance twists through inhuman guises to bring terror and horror in equal measure.

Prerequisite: Perform skill or instrument proficiency, 3rd level Bard.

Cost: by Feat or 2nd-level bard spell known

Effect: When you cast an illusion spell that targets you, you may use this masterpiece to twist it into a Masque Macabre, shifting your appearance in subtle and frightening ways as you choose, such as eyes that weep blood or lack pupils, sagging or melting skin and features, vermin crawling on or under the skin, or any kind of rot, tumor, or disfigurement. The effect is entirely illusory but horrifying in the extreme, granting advantage on Intimidate checks and disadvantage on Deception and Persuasion checks as long as the spell persists. This modifier does not apply if the creature with whom you interact cannot see you. The spell you create otherwise functions normally for a spell of its type.

In addition, if you create a fear effect (including using Intimidate to demoralize an opponent) while you are shrouded in a spell affected by a Masque Macabre, any target you affect becomes sickened (treat as poisoned) with horror and revulsion for a number of rounds equal to the level of the effect (1 round for an Intimidate check). If the target rolls a natural 1 on its saving throw against your fear effect, it is instead stunned with horror until the start of their next turn.

Use: 1 use of your Bardic Inspiration per illusion spell affected, plus 1 Bardic Inspiration use each time you create a fear effect (including using Intimidate to demoralize).

Action: 1 action to activate the Masque Macabre.

MORDANT CODA

Your eerie melodies can thwart, scourge, or entice the lingering spirits of the damned and bind their suffering to your convenience.

Prerequisite: Perform skill or instrument proficiency, 5th level Bard.

Cost: by Feat or 3rd-level bard spell known

Effect: When you encounter an incorporeal creature, you can spend a use of your Bardic Inspiration to make a performance that harms incorporeal creatures within 30 feet, dealing 1d6 points of damage per two bard levels at the end of each action you spend performing.

In addition, if you reduce a creature's to 0 hit points with your performance, you can attempt to capture the creature and store it away within your instrument. This requires a Charisma check with a bonus equal to your bard level against a DC equal to 10 plus the Creature's CR. You must then spend one use of Bardic Inspiration to trap the creature. You may not use this ability on a creature whose CR is greater than your level in the bard class.

You may keep the creatures trapped within your instrument as long as you wish. As long as you do so, it cannot reform. However, every night you must make a Will save (DC 10 + the creature's CR) or be affected by a *dream*. At any time, you can release the trapped creature as an action costing 1 use of Bardic Inspiration, causing the creature to manifest immediately at your location, with full hit points. Each time the creature manifests in its new location, there is a 10% cumulative chance that it disappears and returns to its original location.

Special: If you have learned this masterpiece, you can use your countercharm ability to protect against an incorporeal creature as a bonus action rather than as an action.

Use: 1 use of Bardic Inspiration or more (see text)

Action: 1 action to activate

MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

Your haunting and otherworldly melodies conjure visions of far distant planets and the endless wheeling sky.

Prerequisite: Perform skill or instrument proficiency, 5th level Bard.

Cost: by Feat or 2nd-level bard spell known

Effect: This beyondist music slides from ethereal to eruptive as it evokes falling skies and twirling stars. You may choose to affect a single creature or if the nighttime sky is visible you may affect all creatures within 30 feet. If you choose the latter effect, all creatures within 30 feet are affected as per the *enthral* spell. Rather than devoting their attention to you, however, affected creatures are swept up in a rapt contemplation of the heavens, keeping their eyes to the skies. The duration of the effect is not limited to 1 minute, however, but rather lasts as long as the nighttime sky remains visible. If their view is obstructed, enthralled creatures will stand up and move elsewhere in search of a better view, but each round they do not find a view of the night sky they may attempt a new saving throw to end the effect.

Alternatively, you can affect a single creature within 30 feet with this masterpiece at any time to implant a curse based compulsion within the target's mind. The creature must make a Charisma saving throw against your spell save DC to resist the effect. A failed save has no immediate effect if the nighttime sky is not visible, but any time the cursed creature can see the night sky she is constantly distracted with gazing up at the sky. She has disadvantage on perception checks and additionally becomes enthralled as above. A Charisma saving throw is allowed the first time he sees the night sky negates the enthralled effect for that night; however, she must save again on subsequent nights. This is a curse effect that is permanent and cannot be dispelled; however, it can be removed with spells that can remove curses or any effect that cures insanity.

Special: If you have learned this masterpiece, you can use your Bardic Inspiration to impose disadvantage once per short rest.

Use: 1 use of Bardic Inspiration

Action: 1 action

OPUS OF THE GOLDEN KING

You instigate unhinged revels that descend into insatiable debauchery in the midst of erratic mood swings from despair to exultation.

Prerequisite: Perform skill or instrument proficiency, 7th level Bard.

Cost: by Feat or 3rd-level bard spell known

Effect: Recitations, arias, and scenes from the scandalous and forbidden grand opera of the deranged Golden King, with its intimations of possession from beyond and feasting upon the unloosed emotions of his guests even as they descended into every carnal pleasure, drive your audience beyond the bounds of reason and control. You can spend a use of your Bardic Inspiration to target one charmed creature per three bard levels. All targets must be within 20 feet of you, and each target is affected as *suggestion* (you must issue the same suggestion to everyone). Those who fail the saving throw see themselves transported in their mind's eye into the Palace of the Golden King, inflamed by the raw orgiastic fervor of this phantasmal court but also sensing that they are deeply enmeshed in the clandestine intrigues of the court or discovering some awful blasphemous truth about the doom engulfing all under the jaundiced alien eyes of their inhuman overlord.

Creatures that fail their saving throw against the *suggestion* can be driven to further heights of hysteria and depths of depravity if you spend actions performing. During your performance, creatures within 20 feet that are already affected to make an additional Charisma saving throw. On a failure they are afflicted with a deep emotion, and are compelled to act on it, depending on how long you spend performing: 1 round of performance, 1 minute duration; 2 rounds of performance, 10 minute duration; 3 rounds of performance, 1 hour of duration; 4 rounds of performance, 10 hours of duration; 5 rounds, 1 day of duration. The emotions that you can convey are as follows: fear, desire, happiness, anger, sadness, or frustration. These emotions do not have a mechanical effect. You can have only one such emotion in place at a time; if you begin another, it replaces the previous emotion. A successful save against the emotion does not end the effect of the *suggestion*. The *suggestion* effect ends when the performance ends, but the emotional effect lasts either for the duration set by the performance, or until the affected creature is targeted by a *remove curse* or *dispel magic* spell.

Use: 1 use of Bardic Inspiration, and one additional use per target

Action: 1 action to activate

PNAKOTIC FUGUE

Your song seems to unmask an alien presence among you, drawing the wrath of the deceived.

Prerequisite: Perform skill or instrument proficiency, 9th level Bard.

Cost: Feat or 5th-level bard spell known

Effect: This ululating drone of otherworldly counter-harmony feels almost as if it tears the veil of inner thoughts of creatures within 30 feet. Those failing saving throws perceive the appearance of a single creature you designate within range to shift and shimmer, suddenly being revealed as an alien creature of a type you choose. This "alien" must be an aberration or outsider (of a type other than the target's own, if already an outsider or aberration), or a creature with the mythos subtype. Affected creatures become compelled to attack the creature. At the start of their turn, they must roll a percentile, having a 1-50% chance of moving towards attacking the designated "alien" creature you have supposedly revealed, if the affected creature is able. This is considered to be a charmed and frightened effect.

Use: 1 use of Bardic Inspiration

Action: 1 action

SCARE CHORD (STRING, WIND)

A sudden jagged shriek punctuates your performance at the precise moment to inspire maximum terror.

Prerequisite: Perform skill or instrument proficiency, 3rd level Bard.

Cost: Feat or 2nd-level bard spell known

Effect: A terrifying screech of unnerving sound shocks and creatures to the edge of fright and beyond. When you activate the scare chord, the save DC of any frightened condition you impart until the end of your turn is increased by 2. If you use the Intimidate skill before the end of your turn, you have advantage on the check. In addition, any creature frightened by you has disadvantage on further checks to resist or end fear effects for 1d4 rounds.

Use: 1 use of Bardic Inspiration

Action: 1 bonus action



Music and Madness!

The Necrotic Verses is a book of mystic secrets grounded in the corrupted composition of a musical maestro whose otherworldly obsessions drove him to madness and beyond yet left behind magical masterpieces like the Dead Man's Frolic, Dance of the Empty Moons, and the Opus of the Golden King! Power awaits all who dare to delve into the sinister secrets contained within *The Necrotic Verses*! Grab this **8-page** 5E supplement today and **Make Your Game Legendary!**

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