

Professor Q's Guide to the Blood Mage

The Blood Mage! The last of the three “overlooked” Arcane Backgrounds available in Classic Deadlands. Probably the most overlooked since it only exists in the Black Circle supplement, and did not get the benefit of a reprint in Hexarcana.

Like everything in Classic Deadlands it's an option completely packed full of flavor. Delicious and abundant flavor. In terms of power though, Blood Mages aren't winning any awards. With the Blessed at the top of the “Arcane Background Tier List”, I'd probably place the Blood Mage squarely at the bottom. But, this is a table top role playing game and being the group munchkin should be the last thing on your priority list, so this guide will help you appreciate some of the finer points of the Blood Mage and maybe assist you in picking your spells to help you manage your hard earned BP.

The Bad

Let's start with the Cons of the class before we move on, but I'll get to the good soon, I promise.

Blood Mages are expensive

The Huckster and the Blessed have the least commitment of any Arcane Background with only a 3 character point entry fee and potentially only one major Trait commitment required. The Blood Mage shares the single Trait commitment, thankfully, but it loses a ton of value in that it absolutely requires a 6 CP investment – at least – to function at all (or 9, if you want a little extra convenience). This means no other fun Edges from the start, while the Party Blessed and Huckster will be walking around with their high falutin' Luck of the Irish or Big Ears and Purtyness.

Furthermore, unlike the Enlightened or the Shaman who similarly like to spend a lot of Character Points for their functionality, the secondary requirement of the Whatley Blood trait offers you very little in return for your points other than the privilege of being able to become a Blood Mage – it's almost like a double Arcane Background fee. It gives you knack-like blood powers which you won't want to use not just because it eats up your Fate Chips (which you can't produce on your own like the Shaman, Blessed, and Huckster can outside of Luck of the Irish) but you won't want to use them because they always saddle you with the awful burden of a Corruption point. If you're lucky, you might end up with a positive trait – but rules as written it should be completely random what you get (I'll have a section covering these traits, but I caution that they are in the “Marshal Only” section of the book, so don't read unless you have permission from your Marshal).

Also, a really minor point, but you do also need at least one point in Welsh. There isn't anything to suggest you need more than that though, but it is slightly more expensive than just maxing

out Hexslingin' or Faith.

Bounty Point costs are the simplest way to measure Arcane Background power, and the Blood Mage instantly doesn't stack up because of Whatley Blood alone.

Corruption Points

Corruption points... are BAD. Thankfully though they're pretty easily avoided, though some of the associated powers might be tempting enough to use on occasion. You can generally afford to do corruptible things, but at the hefty price of a Legendary chip, I would generally regard these powers as "Limited per campaign", since I personally would never throw up 5 BP for the trade. Without giving too much away about the actual mechanics of Corruption, a safe mentality would be "Never let it get above 5."

And that should give you an idea of just how limited you should be with allowing it.

Part of the reason I pick that number is that on the rare occasion you go bust on a Blood Magic roll, you get a free Corruption point just for your luck on top of a special backlash mechanic just for your class. If you're smart, you'll have a 5 in your Blood Magic aptitude just like every Arcane Background should with their primary casting aptitude.

Strain and Wind Limiting your Mojo

Your spells share the same strain mechanic as the Enlightened class, but you don't (necessarily) get a bunch of Martial Arts to fill in the gaps. Strain either necessitates a high Vigor stat, or you're just not going to be seeing more than 4-5 spells cast in any given day. Given that you also benefit from having a high wind, I recommend having a high Vigor (and Spirit) – but suddenly then you're running out of good dice to spread, and depending on what hand for your Traits you were dealt, this may restrict you from performing very well in comparison to your other Arcane Background peers.

And another strike against the Blood Mage – not ONLY are you limited by strain you're also limited by your wind, making you anemic if you're ever shot after a lot of casting (so definitely get your defenses up).

What all this means for Blood Mage players

It's highly recommended to really focus on something other than Blood Magic. In fact, I would consider Blood Magic secondary to whatever else you spend your aptitudes on, which I know is an ironic thing to say considering you spent all your character points becoming a Blood Mage in the first place.

So what's good about the Blood Mage?

Thanks to the spells available to the Blood Mage, the Arcane Background excels at the following things:

1. **They are Superb investigators** – I recommend taking a d12 in Knowledge if you have it, so naturally your Blood Mage is going to have an advantage in Profession: Investigator checks, Knowledge checks, or even Science for forensics. But there are spells that let you gather information from the dead, look into people's souls, or detect life in general that make Blood Mages the most reliable diviners in the game – not held back by the random nature of Huckster Card Hands.
2. **They're beefy** – Spending wind when casting spells might make them anemic, but some of those spells offer the easiest applied protection in Deadlands. Strain is going to keep you from being a straight up tank in the same way as a Blessed with Spiritual Giant and Brawny, but if you're lucky you can even surpass those divine gifts naturally yourself just from your Whatley blood.
3. **They're sneaky** – Incredibly synergetic with the above mentioned investigation factor, Blood Mages have the best sneaking spell in the game, and they can even crawl on walls and squeeze into tight spaces. Other Arcane Backgrounds get movement options, but none of them are as potent as what the Blood Mage can do.
4. **Other miscellaneous strengths** – Blood Mages can heal in combat, rot away doorknobs, draw evil magic away from their friends, or even support combat with a debuff. They also make surprisingly good melee fighters – capable of punching through armor and hitting where it hurts the most when wielding knives like an international waters monkey fighter.

Overall while being a little expensive to get into, and relatively limited, their unique strengths completely justify a niche in many a posse.

Time to Rate some Stuff

This is the best part for me. If you haven't read any of my guides before, I use a 5 star system that's pretty self-explanatory, but here I go explaining it anyway.

I will be rating each option according to a 5 point scale:

* - This option is garbage and should never be taken except in very bizarre circumstances

** - This option has redeemable qualities, but is too circumstantial to consider most of the time

*** - This is a solid option, and is worth taking for most characters

**** - This is a great option, you'll definitely want this eventually if not right away

***** - This is an awesome option. Prioritize this.

Whatley Specific Edges

Before I move on to the spells, let's talk Edges. Besides the obligatory required ones, there are two available specific to Blood Mages that make learning spells easier.

Apt Student ()** – This isn't very BP Cost effective since 2 Character Points in the beginning equals 6 Bounty Points in the long run, but it is very time effective considering it takes a stupidly long 1d6 days to learn new spells after character creation – and you may never get the chance to sit down. It doesn't say whether an arcane tome reduces this time, so that may be a point for you to consider when considering this Edge. That said, you can't really afford both of these edges unless you have Veteran o' the Wild West (but you need Veteran o' the Wild West to be able to afford 3 more starting spells anyway since you only have 4 character points left after buying the Arcane Background and Whatley Blood.

Belongin's Arcane Tomes (*)** – This really depends on your Marshal, but if you interpret your spell finding ability to just mean you sit around in a library for a week, you might not need this at all, since if you have a d12 in your Knowledge Trait your chances of succeeding a TN 9 are a respectable 83% anyway (with 5 dice in Knowledge: Occult). But maybe you don't want that many dice in Knowledge: Occult, or maybe you don't want to put a d12 in your Knowledge trait (I wouldn't go lower than d10, since that'd screw up your casting too). In that case, even a 2 point book will boost your 3d10 Occult Roll from a 48% chance of success to a 78% chance of success. Get 3 points and you're looking at an 87% chance with that 3d10, or over a 96% chance if you take all 5 dice. If your Marshal rules that having a Grimoire lets you learn spells faster than 1d6 days, then I'd add an extra star to this Edge's rating.

The Spells (Except Marks)

In this section I'll list and rate every spell, but I'm putting Marks and the Shallow Grave spell in a later section, because I think they deserve separate consideration.

Balk (*)**: This is basically the Protection Miracle that Blessed and faithful folks get. On the one hand, there doesn't seem to be anything stopping you from picking up Faith and casting the Miracle yourself, but on the other hand, that requires another aptitude investment and a high Spirit to be worth anything. Protection has other advantages too though, like it doesn't break on hostile actions like Balk does. The one advantage Balk has over Protection is that you don't have to cast it at the beginning of every round – but you also can't do anything else either. It's a good idea, but a slightly underpowered one too.

Blood Curse (*)**: The Nemesis Knocker. Not something you'll be using often, but since it has a week's duration per Blood Magic point, it's worth consideration for adding to your toolbelt. Stopping someone from healing is invaluable if you're on a manhunt and don't want it to drag on as the chase provides opportunities for them to lick their (now salty) wounds.

Cauterize (**):** Speed 1 ability to heal. Yeah it causes a light wound that can't be healed, but in the heat of combat, only the Shaman beats the Blood Mage. While with strain costs and other limitations you're not going to replace the Shaman as the best combat healer, having someone in the party that can do it is literally a life saver. Also stored appeasement heals from Shamans are kind of overpowered anyway thus no one should be playing it, so this is the next best thing (note that the Voodooist also has a combat heal through the Poultice conjure bag, but you're the only one that can seal up to Maimed wounds with a single action card).

Crimson Fire (*)**: You simply don't have the strain to be throwing this around, but unless you're a needs-no-weapon Martial Artist, you might just have the occasion to benefit from shooting a laser out of your face now and then. The relative rarity of applicability keeps me from giving this more than a "Solid" rating.

Death's Shroud ()**: Playing dead – good idea. Playing dead for less than 30 seconds, not as good an idea. Duration kind of kills this – I mean, it might let you sit out combat without bleeding to death, but in general you may just want to grab Balk if you want a "Don't help anyone and bide your time without getting hurt" combat option. Other role-playing implications are thwarted by you suddenly gasping up for air moments after you made your bluff, though I guess it could give some circumstantial bonuses to a Bluff roll if you activate this right when a doctor checks you out or something...

Decompose (**)**: I was going to throw this one in the trash because even leather needs 20 years of aging to really lose its luster, and any roll higher than 11 is actually hitting "odds are against you" levels of success regardless of what dice type you have. But then I realized that this effect is permanent, and it says nothing about accumulating multiple castings of this spell to really age the crap out of something. Add in that it has the cheapest possible strain cost and a speed of 1 and you can find yourself a pretty awesome utility when it comes up. Not a combat spell by any means, but this will break you out of Jail, screw up an infernal contraption, or disarm an enemy's gun – whatever you can get your hands on when no one is looking and you have the time. The Undead Smacking version of this power is like any other similar power – you're better off just shooting the thing.

Expel (*): At the cost of 3 strain and the general cockroach-like tendency of the weaker undead to show up in numbers greater than 1, using this on the intended targets is kind of a waste – just shoot the varmints. Being able to "Falter" more powerful undead is better, but relatively weak – you're likely to just be trading action cards to cancel theirs if you do anything at all, except you're losing 3 wind and quickly burning through your strain when you do it.

Faustian Deal (*)**: May be necessary on longer days, and this gets better if you have a Voodooist in your party (in which case add a star – Hucksters also help but Poultice is just asking for you to use Faustian Deal once a day). Taking a wound is generally very bad, and since this costs a strain to use you have a 12% chance of doing nothing but a wound to yourself, but like I said, some days you might just need it.

Hangman's Noose (**):** One of the best spells. The TN 9 basically begs you to have a d12 in Knowledge, so if you don't knock a star off this rating. The rating assumes that you can lynch up even Mojave rattlers with this, since the text doesn't give any size requirements for your target (they just have to breathe), though if your Marshal rules against that take another star off. Even still though, on a success it means you always cause a -2 to ALL of your target's actions. You can either spend your round concentrating on just this, or you can choose to maintain it with wind while you shoot them in the face. Overall it's one of the better combat debuffs in all of Deadlands assuming you've built for it and your Marshal doesn't RAI nerf it. Oh, it also deals Wind damage a lot of the time every round.

Heartseeker (**):** Melee isn't the greatest place to be a lot of the time, but this spell is so relatively cheap for how effective it is that it's almost worth building around it. Being able to modify hit locations gives this some called-shot cred without ever having to take modifiers to your to-hit roll and Armor Piercing is rare enough to make this spell stand on its own. If you have a d12 in Knowledge you have about a 75% chance of enjoying a 2 armor piercing buff (40% with d10s) which is enough to cut through most of what people are wearing as well as quite a few vehicles. Your knives aren't magical with this though – so armored abominations are still going to need a consecrated armament – hopefully your Marshal doesn't rule that this reverses the holy nature of that consecration. Since this is cast on a knife, using it on a throwing knife is kind of a one-shot deal unless you can convince your enemy to give it back so you can throw it at them again.

Life Ebb ():** 2 strain for 1 or 2d6 wind damage that can wound, or for 1 strain per dice you can fire a cool blood laser for a guaranteed 2d8 damage at 2 strain with Crimson Fire. Getting a 10 or higher is easy with the right dice type, but the strain cost strikes me as too high. The Guts roll this induces is pretty low – might stir up a crowd, but I'm not sure how you're getting around the “Don't cast in public” aspect in most of the cases where that Guts roll would be useful. If you use this on a wrapped up desert traveler you might argue you get benefits from blinding them, but overall I don't think this is worth the cost to cast it most of the time.

Lightnin' Rod (*/*):** I like this power since it's kind of unique to the Blood Mage, but I don't know if it will come up that often. However, you can actually build your Blood Mage as a sort of tank to support your party in that regard. If you ended up with any Traits or Edges that increase your size, you'll take the damage of a spell better than your friends – and you can even increase your armor using Sanguinary Ward. Also, taking positive buffs can turn a situation around faster than you can say “hit me!” so when this power does come up – if you're built for it – it can be awesome and I think that's the best kind of design for a spell.

Mesmerize (**):** As a combat spell, taking yourself out of combat to lock out another enemy can often be the best possible strategic choice. There will be a lot of discussion about whether this will work on certain creatures, so I suppose the more limited this becomes depending on your Marshal adjusts its score accordingly always. You'll have to plan on doing this before combat starts though since it sort of restricts it in the heat of a battle. Combat isn't the only thing this is good for though – you'll be a master of distraction and this is one of those spells that you

can cast right in front of someone else without any consequences since it explicitly wipes their memory afterward. The primary balancing item attached to this spell is the speed of 2, but that is actually a non-issue within the terms of the spell's best uses – everything else about it is perfect assuming you have a d12 in Knowledge.

Mouthpiece o' Hell (*)**: Scares the hell into someone. Won't work on Abominations, and how often will you need to straight up scare someone? It's not bad for a combat if you're not worried about letting the skeletons out of the closet in front of your enemies, but it seems like Hangman's Noose is a better choice for most situations – unless you're just trying to end combat without anyone dying. But in that case you're not winning any merits of trust by using this method. Essentially this is a Test o' Will that uses your Knowledge stat – but maybe you should have another party member use an actual Test o' Will instead and not expose your dark ties. Overall I think it's solid, just a little dubious.

Necrology (**)**: The number of mysteries that include dead bodies are almost as numerous as mysteries themselves. The information you can gather from the bodies isn't terribly broad, but there are enough points available to really kickstart your quest in ways that only a spell like this can. I love spells like these.

Pox ()**: A role playing spell only. Even then it's just mean, and there are a couple of things that bother me about it. 1. It as a reach of touch, so yeah, the "Burn the Witch" factor of being a Blood Mage is a little unavoidable here. 2. How often do you need to ruin someone's reputation? Depending on the campaign, that could be a lot – the Voodooist is much better at it but maybe you don't have a Voodooist. In that very oddball campaign, consider picking this up. Otherwise it's pretty much useless.

Sanguinary Ward (**)**: Actually a pretty solid armor spell – maybe one of the best in Deadlands. The strain cost is reasonable, and so is the wind per round cost. You're not likely to get a lot of raises with that TN of 7 (it's about 35% to get one raise if you have 5d12 in the aptitude), but even one point of universal armor is a good point.

Scuttle (**)**: None of the other Arcane Backgrounds get really impressive movement options. Blessed can float, Enlighteneds can fly (sorta), and arguably Hucksters can fly too (if they're really lucky), but you're the only one who can reliably crawl on ceilings and squeeze through cracks. The Strain cost is high, but it's balanced out by the solid duration. It's a duration long enough that by spending more strain with a decent Vigor you can be a literal fly on the wall for up to 20 minutes assuming you don't want your strain for anything else that day. This will help with sneaky subterfuge, getting into range with your heartseeking knives, breaking in and out of places with the right gap... Overall I think it's a really great spell.

Shadow Weave (**)**: Another great spell. Maybe not as good as Scuttle, but you can switch back and forth between concentrating and spending wind per round, so you can sneak or assassinate as needed while still maintaining your shroud. The bonus vs. Ranged attack is also very nice candy, and between this and Sanguinary Ward, the Blood Mage can actually be a very

defensive Arcane Background. And as far as sneaking buffs go, Shadow Weave is the best spell in the rules written down since it can theoretically be kept up indefinitely and it doesn't require concentration like the Huckster's option.

Spirit Walk (*): Basically gives you the physical benefits of being a Harrowed for a short amount of time. At the cost of 2 wind per round, 5 strain, and the risk of screwing your body over both because it's in an unsafe place (since how far are you really going to get at 2 wind per round for the duration?) and because it can get possessed while you're out, I'd steer clear of this spell entirely. You have plenty of other ways to buff your defenses without putting on a new Edgar suit.

Soul Sight (**)**: Life Vision that exposes abominations (including Harrowed) and might even find you hidden treasure with ghost rock. To top it off (basically just icing on the cake) it gives you a solid buff to regular Cognition. These kinds of divination spells are often usable and almost always useful in any given campaign. And the price is right on this one – and you can probably get away with using it in town since it's not particularly spectacular (it says nothing about how it might change your own physical appearance while you're using it).

Steal Life ()**: Gets you some wind back after killing something. In a major battle, this could be a lifesaver, but in a lot of cases your opportunity to use this is after the need has passed – you can just shake it off the regular way by resting. Since almost every other Arcane Background in the game – including the Mad Scientist with Vigor Potions! – can help you heal wind, I think you should rely on your party a little more than wasting the BP here.

Window to the Soul (**)**: Another divination spell to add to the Blood Mage's repertoire. I'm not sure how this works as far as concealing the spell goes, but the effects are marvelous. The buff to Scrutinize almost negates the need for a high Cognition entirely. Being able to act before an opponent in combat like you're cheating cards is also powerful. And of course, finding out the target's darkest secrets will facilitate many a campaign mystery along its merry way.

Marks, Zombie Control, and Blood Powers

In this section I'll be looking at each of the options that get you Corruption Points, since they really should be compared against each other. Since my recommendation is "Don't cast more than 5 of these EVER" I'll be rating them assuming you're going to stay within that limit. If I give something here 5 stars, that's because I think it's the best way to spend your 5 Corruption points, not because I think you should be using it often.

Each of these should be treated as a last ditch effort, but you might want to keep one or two around to save your life when you need it (since the spells cost 5 BP, I think one might be enough) – and in the Weird West, that occasion probably WILL come up.

Blood Power – White Chip – (****) +4 to a single Vigor roll. When you need this it will save your life, and the cost is little. Since you WILL have this, just remember that you do and pull the ace out of your sleeve at the right moment.

Blood Power – Red Chip – (**) Balk spell does the same thing but it goes against your Knowledge instead of your Spirit. Every Cowpoke is going to want a high Spirit, but you're probably always going to have a high Knowledge. This just isn't worth the Corruption point when you have other options to prevent this situation from happening. It does have a long duration though, so if it weren't for that Corruption point, this would be a great power (assuming you have the spirit for it to actually work).

Blood Power – Blue Chip – (*) Would be good, but the chip is too high, and not worth the Corruption point. This is especially good against Black Magic users, but I'd still never waste it unless the final boss is Dr. Wily and the thing you're causing to malfunction is a nuclear bomb he has strapped to his back.

Blood Power - Legend Chip – (****) Straight up become a Harrowed if you die. Being a Harrowed Blood Mage kind of sucks, but being a dead character is worse. This 1-up will save you from rerolling if you've actually kept a Legend chip around just in case. At least you didn't spend BP specifically to get this benefit.

Mark of Death – (***) If your Marshal has gotten a lot of Fate Chips, this can really help take down a big abomination. Just plan far in advance so you can get your defensive powers up before dropping the option to block wound with your own Fate Chips.

Mark of Famine – (**) VERY rarely is this ever a good deal overall. If you're Brawny or have other size modifiers, you can probably afford the size decrease. The best time to use this is probably when you're dealing with more than one creature of enormous size (like 10 or higher) since it will assist with actually dealing a wound or two to them. Or you can use it to make sure everyone dies if you blow up a mine (you should probably get another Corruption point if you do that though).

Mark of Pestilence – (***) Wounds your targets by one extra wound. If you're dealing that was hard to hit in the first place, this could nudge the odds of the combat in your favor since that extra wound also gives them a -1 to all their rolls – just make sure you're not near any wounded friends when you use it.

Mark of War – (**) This really just turns the area into a blood bath, and unless you're sporting some pretty hefty protection, your blood is going to be spilled just like the rest. Being a lot less controllable compared to the other marks – and far more dangerous – I'd say this might be the worst of the bunch.

Shallow Grave – (**) Permanent duration – good. Little to no control – bad. It's not really a minion as much as a liability. There might be some instances where it'd be helpful strategically,

but doing this is generally counterproductive to what you normally want to be doing as the heroes (which is probably why it gives corruption).

MARSHAL TERRITORY

Whatley Blood Taints

This section is squarely placed in the Marshal section of the guide. I was originally going to put this in white text, but I realized that might make it hard to read on mobile devices. So here's your warning – don't read this section if you're a player unless you have your Marshal's position. My ratings here are for Marshal use, and in case a Marshal decides to let their player pick their taint. Spoiler Warning ended.

Below is a list of taints that can come up randomly for anyone who has the Whatley Blood trait. In some cases "Taint" is a bad word to use, because they're straight up beneficial. I'll be rating these based on benefit vs. drawbacks.

Deuce: Albino (*) Sun sensitivity and Mien roll penalties make this straight up a bad deal, and really drives home what I said about Whatley Blood taking more than it offers for your character points.

Three: Hindered Black (*): Black is just bad, obviously,

Red (***) Red is an even deal. Lowering Nimbleness while raising Strength is kind of raw since you kind of want both Nimbleness AND Strength in most cases. But if the character drew a d4 in the first place, dumping Nimbleness means a free massive amount of BP in his Strength stat – and Strength isn't just good for brawling things – that's just what it's primarily good for.

Four: Unnatural Blood Black (**)**: I actually think this is a better help than a Hindrance. Blood Mages have a few ways to avoid wounds entirely, and they have a spell that straight up cauterizes bleeding. And, a lot of those same spells REALLY benefit from that lowered TN and the potential additional raises that come with it. I'd be happy if I was saddled with this.

Red (**) – And the reverse is also true – raising TNs is really crummy, especially for powers like Hangman's Noose. However, it's not a game breaker, I think, since the benefit is still good, and there are still a lot of good spells that only have a TN 5 where a single success is enough.

Five: Extra Digits (*) Black: Lowers Deftness by one dice type, which is the worst thing ever – lowering dice types is a ton of relative BP as a hindrance.

Red (****) – The best thing ever for the same reason. If you let your player pick their Whatley taint, I'd almost pick Whatley Blood with any character to get this. This is why there's a fair

argument for not letting your player do that (or, I'd append the houserule to require a Hindrance taint to go with it).

Six: Disfigured (**):** Especially good if you have Ugly as Sin, and even if not, getting a +2 to negative Test o' Will is well worth the penalty to your friendly rolls since your party can handle that aspect. It does turn the Blood Mage into an Igor figure though and the Player might not like that.

Seven: Deranged (*): A potpourri of Hindrances that give no other benefits, making this a bad draw.

Eight: Birthmark Black ()**: Not the worst thing that can happen to the player, but not really a benefit either.

Red (*)**: Makes it completely a non-issue unless streaking becomes a main staple of your campaign.

Nine: Untouched (*)** Better than worse than nothing I guess.

Ten: Dull Nerves (**)**: Ignoring two levels of wound is great, especially if you stack it with Thick skinned... The character is practically Harrowed at that point. I'm kind of ambivalent about the drawback though – it does represent a large BP cost, but you can also technically dump Deftness entirely if the player drew a 2 on his trait draw –and I think the benefit here kind of balances it out.

Jack: Brutish (***)** +1 dice type to TWO relevant stats, AND a Size Increase by 1? The player hits the jackpot with this one. This is literally the best thing that can happen, especially if combined with Brawny.

Queen; Unhinged ()**: Another trade-off. Spirit is generally better than Cognition thanks to Scart mechanics, though Cognition is still very good. The addition of the Clueless hindrance forces this down from a neutral rating.

King: Conjoined ()**: This taint is hilarious enough that I'd be tempted to fudge the card draw just for the antics. Since you still have to purchase Side Kick to make this good, I'm thinking this is overall a drawback. I mean, the twin could tank hits for you but with that size of 2 and the "If he dies you die" aspect that's a pretty huge liability attached to you... I seriously can't get enough of the flavor here though.

Ace: Genetic Cesspool (*)**: Neutral. You could end up with a Jack and anything else and still come out on top, or you could get completely steamrolled with negative traits. If you make it so the player can choose his taint though, if they want the Jack, they need to pick something really bad to balance it out using this option.

Joker: Corrupted Black (*): All the Bad of being a Harrowed with none of the good. This is actually a good option to pair with the Jack benefit I think.

Red (****): AMAZING for Hucksters just for the backlash mechanics, and still very good for Blood Mages and the other classes. If you get an ace with this and Unnatural Blood, Blood Mages wouldn't even have to roll to succeed TN 5 spell casts, it's like a free raise.