Sorcerer: Modern Gothic

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You said I killed you — haunt me, then! The murdered do haunt their murderers, I believe. I know that ghosts have wandered on earth. Be with me always - take any form - drive me mad! only do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you!

— Wuthering Heights

This is the first draft of a handout for a setting called Modern Gothic. Almost everything in the document is negotiable, please read it as such.

1 Setting and Colour

This setting comes in two parts. The first is *Modern*. The game is set in 1994, in and around the city of Bamberg. The city is in Bavaria, Germany. It is a historic city of 70,000 people, like Rome it is built on seven hills, and like Venice is criss-crossed with canals. But, crucially, it is a modern city. You should remember that Germany is a highly developed industrial country and the birthplace of much of modern science. Today, it forms the economic core of the European Union.

If there was a universal psychiatric center to provide therapy for the nations of the world Germany would have been a guest on its couch long ago and immediately diagnosed with a hopeless case of multiple personality disorder. One day in the country is all you'll need to verify this assessment. Towering Gothic masterpieces stare down raver enclaves and glossy nightclubs.

— Let's Go Germany 2004

The second part of the setting is *Gothic*. Gothic literature was born near the end of the 18th century, and draws upon a landscape of dark forests, imposing castles, ruined churches and monastries and haunted graveyards. It is characterised by extremes of emotion. The best known example would be Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. The Gothic noovel is often associated with the alluring antagonist, whose evil characteristics appeal to ones sense of awe, or the melodramatic aspects of romance, or more specifically in the Gothic motif of a persecuted maiden forced apart from a true love. This part of the setting does not have to be real in any sense, it refers to a world that does not necessarily exist. (I know nothing about Gothic literature, most of this was plagerised from twenty minutes on the web. Sorry to any experts in the field.)

2 Theme and Premise

This setting focuses on a clash between emotion and rationality. When is reasonable to give oneself over to emotion? Is okay to live in your own fantasy world? Do you lose something of yourself by focusing only on what is understandable and solid?

The default themes of Sorcerer revolve around the sorcerers defiance of the rules of the Universe. Do the ends justify the means? Can one achieve a desirable outcome using dangerous, flawed means?

These questions are the most important element of this document. You should be able to find some element of these questions that interests you. Refer to the first paragraph of this document if you can't.

3 Humanity

Humanity is the ability to focus on what is real. It is also tied to the default Sorcerer definition of Humanity as empathy. In empathising with another you are paying real attention to the feelings of another and the world outside yourself. Whenever the character acts to reinforce a fantasy world for themselves, exagerates, or reacts in a melodramatic way this leads to a Humanity check. Humanity is gained by recognising the feelings of others and the ordinary pressures of a big world.

Demons are creatures of pure emotion, they do not consider the needs and emotions of others, and their very existance challenges the concept of a rational universe. A demon will inevitably put you at odds with the rational, normal world.

A character with zero Humanity has lost his grip on reality and is too caught up in his own emotions to make rational decisions. This character can no longer resist the control of his demons, and is no longer a PC. It should be stressed however, that a character with non-zero Humanity is not restricted in any way in terms of the decisions she is allowed to make.

4   Sorcery & Lore

Sorcery in this setting is about shear emotion cutting through the fabric of reality and drawing forth demons. It is not about study, though it is certainly useful to know that demons exist, what forms they take and how to deal with them. Sorcery does not involve arcane languages and musty textbooks. Sorcerous texts are likely to emotional descriptions written for oneself, or communications to a loved-one. These documents are not instructions on how to carry out sorcery, but the story of a person's experiences with it. Sorcerous texts might include love letters, diaries and lab notebooks.

The traditional sorcerer's apprentice image is totally inappropriate. There is also no strong link between new-age occultism and sorcery, though some may have dabbled before they found the real thing.

Rituals involve things, concepts and actions that are highly emotionally charged. Death, sex, blood, knives, crying, screaming, pain, loss, nakedness, sacrifice, birth, marraige, mad science, betrayal, hunger, wealth...

Lore Descriptors

A character's sorcerous ability is defined by her Lore stat, which carries with it a description of how the character gained her knowledge. Each player should choose one of these, but the details of how it applies may be invented to suit the character.

Apprentice   The teacher is most likely to be a family member or lover. There should certainly be an intense relationship. The main challenge is to think about why someone would teach this type of sorcery. (Suggested Lore, two or three.)

Coven Member   Sometimes two or three people get together, often inspired by a strange diary or other form of writing, it often starts as a group of friends who mess around with a oujii board. These groupings rarely last long as one member's will is usually much more powerful than the others, and she strikes out on her own. (Suggested Lore, two or three.)

Mad   A particularly strong emotional trauma can cause a person to spontaneous make contact and draw something into the world. The person may then choose to bind the demon to them, learning their sorcery directly from the demon. With no humanising influence, these sorcerers are likely to be the least emotionally stable. (Suggested Lore, four or more.)

Naif   A person can sometimes wind up binding a demon through some one-off sorcerous dabbling. (Suggested Lore: One.)

Solitary Adept   Even in this setting, some people approach sorcery through study rather than emotion. This is often the path of the mad scientist, who starts off carefully studying some cryptic book of seemingly impossible scientific work, only to find that it really works. The more she learns, the more obsessed she becomes with learning more and more. (Suggested Lore: Four or more.)

It should be stressed that binding a demon is not something you can do accidently. At some point, all sorcerers make a decision to bind a demon.

5   Demons

There are many type's of demons and the player is free to invent their own types. The following are some exam-

ples which seem particularly suited to the setting.

Weapons Object demons in this setting are nearly always weapons and summoning them into a weapon nearly always involves the use of the weapon. These can be powerful artifacts, but they always Need to be used.

Vampires The vampires of legends are in fact sorcerers who are bound to parasite demons. These demons grant considerable power, but also confer many weaknesses on their hosts. Summoning them involves having your blood drunk by a vampire, binding drinking that same vampire's blood. This act is a sorcerous ritual, and is only successful if the new vampire understands and intends what they are doing. Their need is naturally for human blood.

Monsters These are passer demons, created from the body parts of dead humans, or simply as an attempt to resurrect a single human. The same type represents Frankenstein's monster, and a desperate attempt to bring a loved one back from the grave. In either attempt the result is pure demon, and is not the original or original(s). It may pretend though. The sorcery involved is quite varied and might be mad science.

Beauties These demons represent ideals of human beauty, and are summoned through lust or lonelieness. They come in two forms, passer demons or inconspicuous demons, ghostly spirits which can normally only be seen by the sorcerer. In either case they appear as incredibly beautiful humans. They are likely to have a need which involves a demand on the sorcerer's love and attention. They may also appear as doubles of a real person the sorcerer knows.

Spirits These are inconspicuous demons associated with anger. They are typically associated with poltergeists, ie. a tendancy to throw objects around. They are very varied though. This is weak, I know, but I'm leaving it in anyway.

6 Characters

Your character is a sorcerer with a demon. Here are some things to be considered.

Interesting Your character should be interesting to observe. Part of your job is to interest the other players in your character, to have them wondering where the story **you** are telling is going. And of course, interesting enough to keep yourself involved. The character should have the potential to change, think about defining the character in terms of questions "can this character accept the loss of his wife?" rather than answers "this character can't accept the loss of his wife."

Kicker The Kicker is the first event that happens to your character. It is something that upsets whatever sense of routine the character has developed, and forces her into the action. Perhaps it's "finding out that your sister is dabbling in sorcery" or "you find a suitcase full of money on the bus" or "the body of the boy you sacrificed turns up in your house." This must be an event that has significance to the character, which the character cannot ignore, and to which there are a number of possible reactions. The Kicker does not dictate the character's reaction. The Kicker defines the initial direction of your character's story, and forces her into action.

Premise Remember the premise? Try and work whatever element of that appealed to you into the character in some way.

7 Sorcerer

Anything from Sorcerer belongs to Adept Press (`http://www.adept-press.com/`). The Sorcerer website is at `http://www.sorcerer-rpg.com/`. Everything else has been plagerised from the web.