

The Book of Recalling One's Love

This charming tome was first crafted by Hastur, a now-deceased Calabite Captain of the Infernal Hourglass and lieutenant of Hatiphas (Demoness of Sorcery). Designed to ease individuals into Sorcery, these relics can lead someone down the path of Fate subtly -- and for the best of motives. After all, what could be more selfless than to attempt to bring someone back to life?

Needless to say, there are catches.

The text of *The Book of Recalling One's Love* can be interpreted on several levels: a cursory reading will reveal only a somewhat long-winded and baroque discussion on how remembering the dead fondly is psychologically healthy. Most people who attempt to read it will simply shrug and put it aside after a while: the thesis rambles and the language is somewhat overblown. There's too much verbiage for such a simple argument. The odd handwritten scrawls in the back of the Book are faintly disturbing, too, although one couldn't exactly explain why.

However, if the right sort of reader -- intelligent, curious, fond of puzzles, suffering from the loss of a loved one and

fairly ruthless -- picks up the Book, he or she will find themselves drawn to read it several times. Every time that they do, the subject may roll against (Perception +4): if he succeeds, he will begin to realize that certain passages are actually subtly encoded. Those passages, when looked at in the right manner, will suggest that there are ways to recreate a ghostly image of a loved one. In fact, when looked at in the right manner those passages will tell a person how to go about doing just that: all one needs are some live plants and a few fairly common substances.

Sometimes someone will even try the experiment, and be shocked to find that the method works.

Now, this is *not* the lost loved one (he or she will have nothing to do with the matter at all, actually). What happens is that the relic will scan the reader's mind and turn a Corporeal Force (that's what the plant's for) into a pseudo-ghost that looks like the lost beloved. It won't be perfect, but it hardly has to be perfect at this point. The smiling apparition will last for a variable length of time (never more than four or five minutes), then fade. If everything has gone properly, the reader will be happy to get another plant and try again. The reader will also be taking 1D6 Mind Hits as a result of the scanning process.

This will usually be interpreted as simple fatigue and loneliness.

Eventually, the reader will take enough Mind Hits to trigger unconsciousness and Ethereal Discord; specifically, the reader will get a unique (and temporary) Discord known as *Obsession*. Those suffering from this Discord will begin to focus unhealthily on a particular concept or action (in this case, the memory of the lost beloved), and must make a Will Roll to do anything that might harm or trivialize the Obsession. At higher levels (4 or above), this becomes 'anything that does not further the pursuit of the Obsession'. Worse, the apparition will stop smiling: it will instead start to look worried and, later, frightened. Eventually it will begin pleading silently, then begin to look wracked with pain.

At this point, the reader will almost certainly begin looking through the Book again for clues, and suddenly come to a revelation about a previously obscure passage. Obviously, the reader's actions have drawn the spirit back from the beyond! But spirits are too light and airy to thrive on Earth without a body. Clearly, one must be made for the beloved, and the Book can provide the necessary clues -- and list of ingredients.

Well, it isn't as if house pets are precisely *rare*, is it?

At this stage, the Book will 'explain' how to create a small simulacrum of the beloved: the ritual involves using the mass and life force of a living creature. The pages will very, very carefully explain that the only safe way to go about doing this is to use a non-sentient creature: indeed, it will make it extremely clear that sacrificing a human runs terrible risks -- and is usually unnecessary, to boot. Most readers, at this point, will probably sigh in faintly guilty relief and go looking for a cat or two.

When finally done, the ritual works, apparently stabilizing the 'spirit' in the corporeal plane. It also does another 1d6 Mind Hits to the reader, but that's another story. Unfortunately, the beloved's new form is so, well, **limited**. The Book warns against adding more life force, but by now the reader should be ever so slightly contemptuous of whoever wrote this thing in the first place. It's all becoming so clear, and yet the author felt the need to cover such useful, such necessary, such *beneficial* wisdom from the rest of humanity. True, many couldn't understand it anyway, but that's no excuse. Adding another cat or two does nothing harmful to the simulacrum: indeed, it simply makes it bigger and gives the beloved some of his or her memories back. Needless to say, what's actually

happening is that the relic is telling the reader exactly what she wants to hear. The 'spirit' has no more sentience than a computer program; but to an Obsessive, that's close enough.

There comes a limit, though, beyond which no more life force can be added; well, no more from a perfectly safe source. Anyone who has gotten this far will of course know what the next step would be; the Book's clues are only superficially obscure. Yes, it warns specifically against just this sort of thing, but the reader's so close to being reunited again with his or her beloved, forever. There are six billion people outside the reader's door: surely one of them doesn't *really* deserve to keep breathing.

It would be right about now that the aforementioned handwritten scrawls suddenly become quite clear. It would seem that there was at least **one** previous reader out there that understood what the current reader was contemplating, and had worked out a proper methodology to facilitate matters. Very, very good: now, all one needs are the right raw materials. And an iron will.

All in all, the Book is quite good at spawning Sorcerers with necromantic aptitude: the 'ritual' is actually a combination of an Infernal Pact, and Sorcerous Initiation.

When the demon shows up to make a deal, the reader is usually so wracked with Obsession that he will shrug off such trivia as eternal damnation. Besides, the 'ritual' only works **after** you've *used up* a human victim: intent is pretty clear, here. Once the bargain is made, the demon collects the Book, drops off a volume or two of mainstream Sorcerous materials and animates the victim as a zombie with the beloved's face and features. Once the Book is gone, the Discord will quickly fade away, but the new Hellsworn Sorcerer probably won't notice.

After all, they're together again. Forever and ever and ever...

As a system for allowing someone to voluntarily damn him or herself, the Book is stellar: after all, you can always put it down (any Discord resulting from its use disappears within 24 hours after renunciation of the Book and its works). Hastur rode the acclaim from his work all the way to a Distinction, and was rumored to on the short list for a Word. It was a real shame that Hastur didn't survive to see *The Book of Recalling One's Love* become part of Fate's standard sorcerous arsenal.

You see, the Calabite decided to expand the idea. Adult Sorcerers were all very well and good, but everyone

knows that the best time to teach humans is when they're young. Unfortunately, Hastur's Heart shattered within 12 hours of his ascension to the Corporeal Plane with a prototype Sorcery grimoire for children. Any doubts about what happened to him were dispelled with the discovery of his savaged vessel found nailed to the door of Kronos' primary Tether. The prototype was presumably neutralized as well, judging from the smoke coming from the vessel's mouth and the distended nature of its throat.

Kronos just shrugged. It was probably too early for that innovation anyway: besides, knowing an Archangel's reaction time was useful data, in and of itself.

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