

The Binding of Willow

This is not something that demons *do*; it is something that is *done to them*, invariably by more powerful demons (the phrase 'more sadistic' is redundant, in this context). This lethal punishment is typically given out to those who have just climbed their way out of imphood, if for no other reason that no demon is foolish enough to give the talking monkeys even a taste of the power available to a mature, experienced Hellspawn. Even a limited amount of Infernal might is risky. Risky, yet ultimately rewarding.

The Binding works like this: the hapless demon is taken and imprisoned -- quite painfully, and this is deliberate -- into an elaborately and tightly woven wicker bracelet made of willow. The bracelet is then given to a suitable human. Hell very much prefers that the human be one looking for Infernal power, as it makes things so much easier, but there is no actual requirement that the human be evil for the Binding of Willow to work.

After that, it's up to the human. As a general rule, a Binding of Willow can manipulate chance in significant ways a few score times, murder a few people, and / or heal someone at the brink of death **once**. It does this by

converting the demon's own substance into energy (this, again, is exceptionally painful) to power the human's desires. The demon cannot contact the human in any way, as the binding process is deliberately designed to excise the demon's ability to communicate; and while the demon's substance can heal itself a little between uses, even its mere existence is an endless torment. Eventually the Binding of Willow consumes all of the demon, forever, and the bracelet becomes useless -- leaving a human who has had a good, solid dose of the pleasures of evil magic, and the awareness that he can go back and make another deal.

Demon Lords **love** these artifacts, honestly. Bindings of Willows are excellent in encouraging humans to seek self-damnation without coercion, while at the same time providing Hell with a remarkably effective, degrading lethal punishment for weaker demons. What Demon Lords don't love is the fact that Binding of Willows cannot be made for the exclusive use of evil people. Theoretically, a moral person could use the Binding with no problems -- and with no stain on his or her soul, either (well, as long as the Binding wasn't used to commit any sins). Even if the person happened to know where the power was coming from; apparently the Almighty is not overly concerned about demons being tortured to oblivion. Which all seems

rather, well, *Old Testament*, but where were we when He laid the Earth's foundation, hey?

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