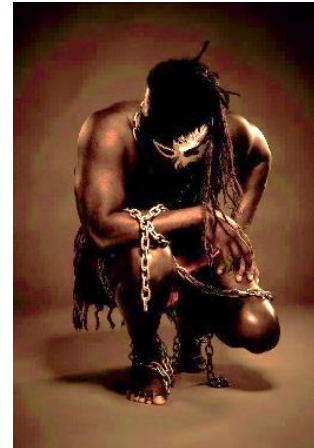


# THE CULT OF THE MERCIFUL DAWN



## Mythos and history

At the dawn of Time, Chaos exploded into existence, a new and undeniable force. It spawned further principles of Change and Discord, and the first few centuries of history tracked the results in great achievements and great tragedies. Many of history's monsters and terrors were born in Chaos, and many tales of the heroes of the Pantheon cast it as the great Adversary.

In the legends of the cult of the Good Wife (called the Queen of Night, in the north), an aspect of the goddess chose to nurture and comfort Chaos instead of fighting it. This cult was the result: a mission system for taking in chaos-touched children and raising them in service to stable social systems, as well as recovering those older people who are willing.

## The nature of the cult

The cult teaches chaos-touched people to be humble and to practice extreme self-control over their unusual abilities or features. Socially, it exerts considerable authority over their education and employment, to the point of being a shadow or minority government with its own enforcement policies. Its most recognized symbol is the Chain, represented by literal chains which control chaos and symbolizing the tradition of submission to the Good Wife/Queen of Night.

The cult's practical role in society is apparent to everyone: people who might become monstrosities and threats are taught to control and channel the forces inside them, to be obedient to social expectations and helpful to others. A cynical observer might point out that "going out of control" isn't itself a chaos feature, and that the cult primarily serves to subjugate a minority condition to the will of others, while instructing them to be grateful for it.

## Organization

From temple to temple, there is not much administration or formal connection, but due to the shifting assignments of the labor force, they constantly manage recommendations, and referrals. Therefore a lot of sensitive information makes its way through a wide area, because service personnel learn a lot more than anyone realizes.

Within a temple, authority and administration are highly organized, almost to a modern degree, and connected with all sorts of social institutions at every level and activity.

The cult specifically denies acknowledging any location as a center of power, on the claim that it does not wield any power and does not want to.

The cult includes the final day of the year as a holy day (same as the Primal Scream), but its main observance is the autumn equinox in honor of the Good Wife/Queen of Night.

## Lay membership

To join the cult, one must be touched by chaos. Most observants are born into it or adopted into it at birth. Both they and volunteer arrivals with chaos features are lay members, although the latter

must ceremonially submit to the Chain. Ordinary lay members receive a humble but adequate support system for housing and food, in exchange for permitting their behavior to be monitored.

Belonging lay members are trained and placed with clients in a formal arrangement specific to the cult. They are not slaves or even ordinary employees, but contracted assistants with well-defined parameters for their duties. Toward this end, the cult provides extensive skill training and limited battle magic teaching, as determined to be appropriate for an individual.

Expectations are straightforward: do the job, express chaos features only in service, and make sure that either a priest or one's client is always aware of your location and living situation.

### **Initiate membership**

Requirements for initiation do not include a dice roll, but instead a minimum of 55% in five skills deemed worthy by the priesthood, and formal and permanent submission to the Chain. The ritual of initiation is arduous and psychologically traumatic, as it is based on extreme penitence, but it is also fully absolving, providing immunity to all accusations or retribution for previous acts.

Initiates represent a small proportion of worshippers, compared with other cults. They do not work with clients but are sworn into service to the temple; they do so in groups with specific skills and purposes. They receive food and hospitality from the temple, but also from anyone who observes the Good Wife/Queen of Night and commands the necessary resources, so support is nearly universally available.

Initiates are subjected to the Chain permanently, which restricts their use of Power and chaos features toward the ends of the group they have defined through initiation. They are effectively a specialty squad at the command of the priesthood and receive extensive specialized training in weapons, skills, and battle magic.

### **Rune Lord membership**

A Rune Lord of the cult is often more associated with the priesthood of the Good Wife/Queen of Night, as he or she arises within a band of paramilitary initiates already in that service. They are widely known for their counter-chaos abilities, and thought of as champions against chaos, but within the cult itself, there are murmurings that a Rune Lord could be a liberator rather than a servant.

Requirements for acceptance are standard by the rules, including 90% in five skills (one of which must be a two-handed weapon), Power at least 15, and Charisma at least 15. They are not bound by the Chain, but instead by mighty oaths toward their purpose.

A Rune Lord must observe many social and personal restriction and gains many benefits to be developed later, including their special cult skill Sense Chaos.

### **Rune Priesthood**

Requirements for the priesthood are typical: initiate status, Literacy and Cult Lore at 90%, and Power 18 or higher, in addition to specific achievements and acknowledgment within the local temple hierarchy. Priests' public restrictions are also standard by the rules, with other obligations or restrictions left for later development.

The priest's responsibility is to maintain a constructive channel into other institutions; perceived as the lid on potentially upsetting realities. They hold a visible civic role and command an extensive

administrative hierarchy, and, as they receive considerable respect from others in position of social power, individual priests vary greatly regarding how manipulative they may be in these interactions.

The cult's Rune magic includes most standard rune spells, although no elementals, and its specialized spells typically bind and suppress chaos spirits and individuals' chaos features. Its most famous spell, Chain Chaos, may be cast in a wide variety of ways and degrees of intensity.

#### **Subservient cults**

The cult's Spirit of Reprisal is extremely brutal, attacking with Power 3d6+6 and combining physical damage as per the Disruption spell with Power loss. It will continue attacking until it is defeated. Cult apostates who survive the spirit of reprisal may become significant social threats, given their resentments, amplified chaos abilities, and organizing experience. The cult typically takes direct action to prevent such situations.

As a somewhat subordinated cult, it has no formal subcults, but it includes a diffuse Hero cult based on contradictory stories and themes concerning Ghar, the first Rune Lord of the Merciful Dawn.

#### **Associated Cults**

It is strongly associated with the Queen of Night, but as it is not a subcult, its priesthood operates independently of that temple.

As with all cults with the Chaos rune, it is claimed as an associate by the Cult of the Primal Scream, but it does not acknowledge or identify with the association.

It is generally antagonistic toward any cult whose runes include Discord or Luck.

#### **Notes**

The cult is most organized and widely present in the central and southern continent, but in the north, is only present in major communities. In many parts of the north, chaos features are not regarded as special or requiring specific social attention.