

The Advancements of Thaumaturgical Diffusion

NEW HEXES FOR DEAD LANDS

by Ralph Dula

Salt Lake City, the capital of the Mormon nation, is known as the most technologically advanced city in the world, courtesy of the vast collection of mad scientists that reside there. However, only a few people know that it is also the home of Percy Sitgreaves, the first man to combine the mystical skills of the huckster with the otherworldly knowledge used by mad scientists, a mixture Sitgreaves has named Thaumaturgical Diffusion. As discussed in *City Of Gloom*, Sitgreaves has combined the two arts to create a whole new class of huckster magic, one he attempted to share with the world in Autumn of 1876, hiding his mystical knowledge in the pages of a Smith & Robards catalog he published.

It has been more than a year since that catalog was released, and in that time many hucksters have deciphered Sitgreaves' hidden message, and using that knowledge have created hexes of their own that combine mad science and hexslinging. What follows are six new hexes created based on Sitgreaves' work.

Crystalline Sheen

Trait: Smarts

Hand: 1

Speed: 2

Duration: 5 rounds/hex level

Range: Self

Percy Sitgreaves created a useful hex called Bulletproof, allowing a huckster to literally grow armor. Unfortunately, while providing excellent protection, the mystical transformation greatly reduced the nimbleness of the huckster, making it harder to defend against enemies. Christina DeRose, a huckster and mad scientist who studied the science of geology, created the Crystalline Sheen hex as an alternate means of defense, inspired by the way several of her crystal and rock specimens caught and reflected light.

Crystalline Sheen causes a physical transformation in the caster's skin, causing the huckster's entire body to be covered in a semi-transparent crystalline substance. The altered flesh catches any light that strikes it, magnifying it tenfold as it reflects the illumination, making it painful to look at the huckster. The Target Number for any attack against the huckster is increased by one, plus one for each hand above the minimum the caster gets, as the attacker is unable to focus his vision upon the huckster without suffering incredible pain.

If there is very little light in the area (less than that found at twilight) than the hex provides no benefit, except making the caster look inhuman. Additionally, abominations which do not use vision to find their prey are unaffected by this hex.

Fusion

Trait: Smarts

Hand: Jacks

Speed: 2

Duration: 1 round/hex level

Range: 10 yards

The huckster who created the Fusion hex was something of a bookworm, reading any scientific text that he could get his paws on. In a text on metallurgy he came upon the term fusion, which the book defined as "The merging together of objects via heat." Having been robbed at gunpoint the day before, the huckster was inspired to create this hex, to deal with anyone else who waved a gun in his face.

Casting this hex upon a gun-toting individual causes a feeling of intense heat to rush over the victim, followed by the weapon he is holding merging into his hand, with no way of removing it before the hex expires! While no permanent damage is done by this hex, the victim is in extreme pain for the entire time it lasts, having a +1 added to the Target Number of any action he attempts, with an additional +1 for every hand the huckster got over the minimum. Needless to say, the merging of man and machine makes the victim unable to use his gun (or his hand) for the hex's duration. At the Marshal's discretion, the victim of Fusion might have to make a Guts check (TN 7) due to the shock of having his body temporarily mutated.

Once the hex is over the gun detaches from its bearer, with neither suffering any permanent damage, though a gunslinger might be a bit leery of picking up his piece again. Note that this hex affects only firearms, so casting it upon a knife or club-wielding foe is just a waste a time and a risk of backlash. Also, the hex only affects one gun per casting, so a fellow with a gun in each hand can still blaze away with one while the hex affects the other.

Iron In Your Blood

Trait: Smarts

Hand: Pair

Speed: 1

Duration: Instant

Range: 5 yards/hex level

This hex was created by one of the few hucksters who also studied the mad science art of alchemy. In her studies of the human body she learned that minute traces of iron can be found in the blood of humans and animals. Always looking for ways to drum up business she created this hex, convincing those she used it on that they had suffered a poisoning or heart attack, and making a tidy sum selling them her elixirs to cure the damage she had caused.

Casting this spell upon a person causes the iron in a person's bloodstream to grow for a brief second, blocking the flow of blood and putting incredible pressure on the victim's arteries, before shrinking down to normal. Naturally this is very painful, inflicting 1d6 Wind, +1d6 for every hand gotten over the minimum. Unlike many damage-causing hexes, there is no visible magical energy streaking from the huckster to the victim, nor is there external signs of injury; a well-concealed huckster can use this spell to wear down a target with the victim never having a clue as to the source of his injury.

Note that abominations do not have blood as normal creatures do, and so are immune to this hex, as are Harrowed.

Lead Feet

Trait: Spirit

Hand: Pair

Speed: 1

Duration: 1 round/hex level

Range: 5 yards/hex level

Sometimes you have to make a hasty exit after being accused of cheating at cards or consorting with the devil. This hex allows a huckster to slow down the Heel-Toe Express of his opposition, giving him a chance to escape.

The target of this hex literally finds his feet and legs have turned into supernaturally heavy lead, reducing his speed dramatically. Base success with this hex increases the level of load the victim is carrying by one step, with every hand above the minimum increasing the load level by one, as per the "Carrying a Load" table in the Deadlands rulebook. If this takes a character's load level above Heavy he cannot move until the hex is over, his legs now literally too heavy for him to move.

Note that while a victim may not be able to pursue the huckster until the effects of the hex is over, his hands and mind will be working as normal, allowing him to shoot, throw things, or even cast magic. Also, the victim of this hex suffers no actual damage, his legs returning to normal at the end of the hex none the worse for wear.

Lead Poisoning

Trait: Knowledge

Hand: Pair

Speed: 2

Duration: 2 rounds/hex level

Range: Touch

Some hucksters realize that displays of their mystical talents in public will eventually get them strung up with a hemp necktie. Those same hucksters also realize that sometimes using their talents in public is the only way to keep their fat out of the fire. Lead Poisoning is a hex designed to give hucksters an edge in combat without letting everyone know they have powers beyond those of normal men.

The huckster casts this spell upon a loaded gun, infusing a manitou within each bullet in the firearm for the duration of the hex. When one of the bullets strikes a target the manitou becomes active, causing the round to break apart inside the target and sending its fragments to burrow through the victim's body, causing an additional +1d4 damage, +1d4 for every two hands gotten over the minimum during casting. Several hucksters using this hex have astonished onlookers with the amount of damage they have inflicted with a simple derringer.

While the hex is active the bullets are considered to be magical weapons, meaning they affect abominations immune to mundane weapons just fine. Also note that only the bullets that are in the gun when the hex is cast are enchanted, so if a huckster fires off a few rounds from a gun upon which Lead Poisoning is cast and stops to reload while the hex is still active, the newly loaded rounds will not be enchanted, unless the huckster decides to cast Lead Poisoning again.

Steel Grip

Trait: Smarts
Hand: Pair
Speed: 2
Duration: 1 minute/hex level
Range: Self

Steel Grip transforms a huckster's hands, making them into metallic talons with razor-sharp edges. Base success with this hex increases the huckster's Strength by one step, +1 step for each hand above the minimum the huckster gets, but this bonus to Strength only applies to doing damage in Brawlin' combat. This damage is considered lethal damage, as per the rules on Brawlin'. Additionally, the huckster receives a bonus to his Climbin' Aptitude equal to the increase in Strength. This reflects the talons' ability to punch through material to create handholds while climbing. This does leave an easily-followed trail of vast holes, however, so this hex is not recommended who wish to keep their vertical travels a secret.

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