

Tales from the Cotting House Player's Guide

Part Three: Adventuring

16.4 The Patrons

The First Patron wrote the Written Word, creating the world and all the things on it. He created the realms of fairy, the mists, the Slumberlands and even Anathema, home of demons. He is the author of all things.

Other Patrons followed.

Patrons were once men and women, but are now something both more and less. They can sometimes be seen walking the world, but they do not interact with the world, and nothing at all seems to affect them. Only on some far away level do they seem to hear or see the world around them.

On rare occasions, wisdom may be gleaned from a patron's words, but this is tricky because the patrons never speak directly to the people around them.

It is usually best to leave the patrons alone, when experiencing them or not. It is most likely true that they can sense the world without being present, and to that end people will try to direct their attention, either to them or away. Patrons are often known to embody the kinds of stories that they write. At the same time, it isn't absolutely certain if the patrons write the events of the world and so those events occur, or if the events occur and are then written down.

As with fairies, it is sometimes best to leave patrons well enough alone.

The Greater Patrons

There are countless patrons who roam the world, ghost-like with their eyes glued to the pages of their tomes. Below is a list of some of the better known patrons, and how they are associated.

Mother Goose

The Mother is considered by many to be the second patron. Some believe she is called the Mother because to her, all others are like children, and others believe it is because she favors tales for children or about them. Her tales are the oldest of any other Patron, and although there have been no new ones discovered recently, most suspect she is still around. Mother Goose rides an enchanted goose through the sky, and some believe that she lives in a comfortable cottage on the side of the moon.

Longstride, The Wanderer

The Wanderer is thought to have been to every place on the Written World. His tales typically involve much travel, or take place over a very long time. More often than not, they end without a satisfying conclusion, and it is very clear that the journey, to him at least, is what is important. He is well known for his attention to detail, and his pages often begin with a detailed map of his protagonist's route. He left markers called the Footprints of the Wanderer to announce his passing, or maybe just to remind himself of where he has been. Historians pay handsomely for the location of these places.

The Harrow

The Harrow is a patron to be avoided. He is attracted to the macabre, or perhaps he just writes that way. His characters typically meet unsavory ends. When a death is very painful or drawn out, most believe that Harrow penned it. Soldiers might ask that he sharpen their blade before battle, but even then they fear the same blade will be turned against them. Harrow is believed to be a scarecrow-thin individual, cloaked in shadows and accompanied by ravens.

Noss (the Curious)

Noss is not an exciting patron, which, in a patron, is often a good thing. Those who catch his attention often lead unexciting yet still fulfilled lives. He tends to write stories that explain things -- how they work and why. There's little action in a Noss tale, and ultimately, sometimes with persistence, the focus of his tales discover what they are after, and often end with a deeper understanding of the quieter dramas that unfold in the subtext of their lives.

Cupid

Cupid writes loves tales with a child-like innocence, and prefers stories of love and deep, throbbing emotion. Sadly, he seems to lack much understanding of how men and women act when thought is not involved, and his characters get themselves in a great deal of trouble that, ultimately, could have been avoided. The wise tend to want to avoid Cupid's notice, while the foolish or young at heart try very hard to seek him out.

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Johanna the Warrior

Johanna is a free spirit. Her stories typically are of high adventure and derring-do. Those she writes about typically have no cause to be bored, and to that end, she is another patron that most would rather avoid. That said, her stories are filled with reward, and those who embark on adventure on purpose could do worse than to have her write their tale.

Humphrey

It is a matter of some speculation as to how Humphrey found his way to become a patron. While his tales tend to cover a wide range of topics, they tend to ramble, and more often than not they end abruptly without any resolution. It cannot even be said that, as with the Wanderer, it is the journey that matters to Humphrey, because even those tend to be rambling and introspective without a process. Those who would embark on projects would do well to avoid the notice of Humphry, or face the more than likely possibility that that project will never see fruition.

Other Patrons

There are hundreds, maybe thousands of other patrons. Their names are not all known, even to the Church of the Word. Many of these have the same level of fame or infamy as the patrons listed here, but most are far less well known.