

# CODEX: Threads of Essence

## Introduction

Welcome to the *Threads of Essence* Play-By-Email (PBeM) game. If you are reading this document that is because you have expressed in an interest in this game.

First off, thanks! I hope to make this a great gaming experience for everyone involved. This game is loosely inspired on a table top roleplaying game called *Witchcraft*. But don't worry, there is no need at all for you to have a copy of that game. First off, this game is a Free Form game, meaning that you won't roll dice, or need to know any complicated rules system. You only have to tell the GM what you want your character to do, and he will take care of the rest. This gives you the player, more time and mental energy on focusing to make your emails the best you can, with vivid lush descriptions and explore the relationships with other player and non-player characters in the world.

This is a game of vivid imagination, of sex, seduction, and having your character discover the secret world that has surrounded us for eons, with most of the world in complete and utter ignorance. There are those who can see the essence that permeates all aspects of the universe, life and matter. There are those who can tap into that essence to perform feats that many may call magic. It is all around us. There are those who use this in a selfish and destructive way, while others who try to stop them and maintain the balance of order in the universe. Still others that only try to understand the passion of essence even more to bring about bliss and ecstasy in their own lives. But most of the world knows nothing of this. They don't know how to see and tease forth the threads of essence, to speak the language of the world, their own souls, whether dark or light. But your character is one who has just entered into that wide world. And now you must make choices, choices that will affect your character's life, and perhaps even their death. What kind of witchcraft will you pursue. Where will your essence lead you? Will you learn to tap into its hidden power and master it, or let it master you? Will you be drawn into the dark and forbidden passions? Will you rise above yourself and help those around you to make a better place. Will you ever be able to have a normal life again and find love and happiness? These are the questions that face your character as they take their first step into the wilder and wider world.

*A final warning - This game is an Adult game, with a capital A. It will focus on sex, suspense, and character interaction, and then some more sex. It will contain graphic (and hopefully) vivid descriptions of sex, and if the players want, pictures as well (but the GM won't include that are not sent by the players).*

## The Basics How we will run the game

I will admit that the whole PBeM is a little bit new to me. I usually run games in the Play-by-Post format. However, I think that the PBeM will give me and you a bit more freedom in our games, including the transferring of files and other advantages. This section briefly outlines some expectations and gives you some information for how I will run the game, and the etiquette expected.

**Rule 0** - Have fun! That's an order ☺ Seriously, the purpose of games is for the player and GM to have fun and hopefully make a great story in the process, not the other way around.

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Please email me if you ever stop having fun, or if other people are being harassing, not respecting your character's limits, or if any other way the game is having a negative impact on your personal life. I would rather you err on the side of caution, and email me when you think there might be a problem, rather than wait until it becomes a problem.

**Point 1** - Please email only the GM with your "in character move". I will take your moves, and the other player's moves, and then send out a message that includes all the relevant bits, plus what happened as a result, as well as NPC reactions etc. Please put in the Subject line of your email the following "IC: Character's Name". Players can email each other regarding out of character stuff, and planning things, etc, but please always CC: the GM on any emails relevant to the game. Please respect other player's wishes, and if they request you not to email them, please respect their wishes. That way, if a player is more comfortable that way, they know that only have to exchange emails with the GM.

**Point 2** - If you have out of character discussion with the GM, like clarifications and questions, telling the GM that you will be out of contact for a while, etc. Please put in the subject line "OOC: Subject".

**Point 3** - As far as writing conventions, I am not a super stickler for grammar and spelling, but expect posts to be well thought out, and readable. You should write in the third person, and when posting your character speaking, use quotes. Try to write as if it was a novel or a story, and less like a list of actions, it makes the game flow better for everyone. If you need to include out of character clarifications and questions, or exceptions, please use [] around it. For ease of the GM editing, please put at the end of the in character narrative. For example, a post could look something like - I hope it helps get the idea across. I don't use any fancy formatting for the email part of the game, as I have hotmail, and others do to, and it occasionally messes up any special formatting.

### Example Post

Bev looked around the flat. Although it was dark, and the door was locked like she left it, she still felt nervous. She turned on the lights, and scanned the flat for a second or two. She ran to the study to get the cricket bat hanging over the fireplace. She thought to herself, God how did I get here. In a meek voice, she creaks out "Hello, is anyone there?"

[Can she see anything or any evidence that someone was here like books moved or anything? If she does, she leaves immediately, and does not go and get the cricket bat. If she is attacked while getting the cricket bat, she will scream out, and try to run to the door]

**Point 4** - Please only post your actions, and feelings, etc, and not those of others. Please do not make too many assumptions or extrapolations regarding your character's powers and talents and the nature of magic. Let that develop naturally through the interaction in the game. If you have a question, just put it at the end of your "move" and I will answer it. The GM will resolve any actions using his own judgment and your character's stats (see below). For example if there was a creep in Bev's apartment. Then she could post - *Bev swings the cricket bat really hard, trying to hit the unknown assailant in the nads. She screams for help all the while, and tries wailing on him as much as she can.* She **could not** post - *Bev swings the cricket bat really hard hitting the unknown assailant in the nads, causing him to*

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*double over in pain, so she can run out of the flat.* I am sure that all of you are aware that the latter is usually considered bad form in a free form game. But I just wanted to remind you ;)

**Point 5** - To get the game moving, I will occasionally ask you to gloss over some stuff. Other wise that romantic intimate dinner conversation, could take a year in real time to play out. I try to keep it to two of three moves and then move on to the next thing. Of course sex and personal intimacy are the exception to that rule, and anything else that you the player are enjoying. So if I send you a note saying "ready to move on" and you want to continue playing, then we can. After all there is Rule 0, which overrides any Points. The other corollary here, is that with this game, the GM will be online maybe once, and perhaps twice a day to respond to messages. If you send single line moves, it will be a really slow game because of that. Consider this when posting a move, which we should maybe aim for a few paragraphs until we get the feel of the flow of the game which will come with time. If it needs to be shorter, we can make it that way, longer is cool too. Just make sure to tell me.

**Point 6** - For those of you interested in the rule system that I use to resolve actions, etc, send me an Email and I will let you in the on the system that I use. But many freeformers don't really like to know this stuff, so I left it out intentionally.

**Point 7** - There will be three documents that I send out on a regular basis. One is this Codex. I will only send it out if there any changes. It has some of the game world information as well. There is also a "Cast of Characters" document. It contains the character sheets and some information on major NPCs and locations as well. Again I will send out only if it changes. Finally, as an added bonus, I will take all the incharacter posts etc, and assemble them into a PDF file about every two to three weeks. I can send this out if you want as well. If you do not want to receive, please let me know. I plan on doing this to make it easier as the game goes on, on knowing what is going on. I plan, but cannot guarantee that I will remove all the OOC stuff from it. If you have pictures of any sort that you would like to include in it, please email them to me. But nothing illegal. Since I am running the game, I won't include any pictures, I think my energy would be better spent on trying to make the game better! ☺

I may add other points in the guide as time goes on. But this should be enough to start us off. I don't have that much experience with PBeM, any constructive suggestions and improvements are welcome.

### Characters & Character Sheets

This is a free form character driven game. The PC's form the focus of the game, and the events around them. You have a lot of freedom in the kind of character you can play. I will work with you to iron any problems that I perceive (such as if you specify that your character is a God, bunny, or pumpkin or something else that just plain doesn't work in the game).

The Basic Format for the characters are

Name  
Gender  
Age

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Description of Looks (In addition, please try to find a jpg or similar of how your character looks. That really, really helps everyone involved. And gets you on the GM's good side from the start ☺)

Background - Can be as long or short as you want. I will read and work with you on any points that need to be tweaked to be consistent with the game world)

Game Stats - give me any kind of description that you want to describe what your character is good at, or sucks at. I will translate into the following game stats:

- ❖ Body, Mind, And Soul - I will add some short notes out the side, and these are rated from 1 to 6. With one being handicapped or very poor, and five being the utmost of human achievement. A six and above is mythic and legendary.
- ❖ Skills & Talents - This will just a list of what your character is good at. It helps me when deciding if you can do something. For example if you have a Body of 2, but put down acrobatics as a skill, you will be more likely to do better when doing feats of acrobats
- ❖ Essence - This is what fuels the "magic" or powers. Some traditions draw essence from others in rituals, and try not to draw on their own personal reserve, while others only draw on their own reserves. Normally this is something like Normal. But if you have been drawing on it frequently, then I will tell you during the game, and it might become drained, or empty, or similar.
- ❖ Injury - If you receive an injury I will put it here. I will tell you during the course of the game, and expect you to know it. I will not send out new character sheets everytime you deplete your essence or are injured.
- ❖ Tradition and Talents - see traditions below, but I will put any supernatural powers that you know here. Most players start out as only having a potential that has not been developed, or discovered powers by accident. Some players may wish to have a character more developed in their tradition and know more "magic". If that is the case, I will work with you during character generation to define the incantations, formulae, oaths, bindings, etc, that you know (depending on your tradition).

Finally, please let me know if there are any sexual situations that you do not want to be involved in. That does not mean that they will not happen, it just means that you won't have to have graphic description of it, and I will try very hard to make sure that you never get in that situation in the first place. For example, if you do not want your character to be involved in same-sex graphic scenes, please tell me. Or if you don't want your character to be involved in a bondage scene, please tell me. However, to take that example, if the bad guy is a really sadistic bastard, and he captured you for a twisted ceremony, something bad might happen. You may have told me "no rape scenes please or torture scenes". Well the bad guy cultist that is going to do a ceremony with you, is probably not going to just ignore it. Instead, what I will do, is not describe it, and just gloss over it so that it happens off camera - with a post like the evil cultists takes you down to the cellar where he does unspeakable things against you violating you. And leave it at that. But in the above situation, probably, I would instead have something else happen before the ceremony, so you don't even have to worry about it. Just so you all know, the GM

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does not really like torture, rape, or similar. I am willing to play it out, if that is *your desire*, but I won't try to intentionally put anyone in that situation unless they specifically ask me to. Tell me what situations you like and I will try to set those up in the story for you. I have played in a lot of adult games, and not very much bothers me or upsets me. Also if you like something, don't be afraid to ask, the worst I will do is say no. I promise not to make any judgments or disparaging marks. After all, I want you to have fun. Rule 0 and all.

### The Game World Threads of Essence

The Game World is just like our own in 2005, except for a twist. There are those who have mastered the powers and can channel essence doing feats that would often be called "magic", "supernatural", or "witchcraft". What they are doing is no such thing. It is completely natural, they are just masters of the Supreme Nature of the Universe. There are different traditions of these powers, with the fact that the Wicca are the most public, leading to the name of it being called "Witchcraft".

Most people don't believe in witchcraft or magic, or any other such silliness. They just can't see it. Or when they do their minds block it, and they ignore it or explain it away, trying to get it to fit into the modern scientific model of the world. While the normal model of the world is good for figuring out to get your car to run or put a man on the Moon, it does not accurately reflect the true Supreme Nature.

For millennia since Adam, humankind has been exploring and developing the threads of essence which has led to the major traditions followed today. They have fought against each other, and the denizens of other places that are hidden by shadowy fog of essence. Some seeking a way to master the universe, while others only pursuing their own mad dreams. But be wary, new initiate. Essence attracts essence, and once you have finally opened your eyes and can see, you will attract those that seek to prey on the weak, meek, and frail. That want to feed on your very soul and being.

The following section scratches the surface on the different traditions, a brief highlight of the type of essence channeling (witchcraft) they practice, and their organization. Your character should be one of the following types, or at least have the potential to enter into one.

### Wicca - The Witches

By far the most public tradition of any of the essence chanllers. Although most who claim to be Wicca, are just new age types exploring a different way of life. But behind the public veil of this way of life, there are True Wicca. Men and women who can see and feel the essence in all living things. Wicca are masters of the *hexes*. Using traditional methods, and channeling both their own internal essence and those of the living world around them, they can call forth the power of the *hexes*. Most *hexes* affect people more than things, but some can as well. They are very good at seeing the strands of fate and the threads of essence that bind all things in the world. Often they are good scryers and fortune tellers as well. Hexes usually are more subtle than some of the powers of the other traditions but no less powerful. The true power of the Wicca are the Covens. When Wicca gather into

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groups they can channel essence in a way that the sum is great than the parts allowing more powerful magics. Most other traditions fear powerful covens, and will try to break them up if they can. Wicca covens are motivated by their own motivations, and have no central tenets or agenda. A similar tradition to Wicca is Shinto-ism of Japan, silently different but very similar in how they draw upon essence.

### The Hermetic circle - the Alchemists

The hermetic circle is a just a single circle of a snake eating its own tail. Through out the centuries men and women, have found the power of essence in matter, and seek to understand the Supreme Nature of the Universe through the elements. The Alchemists are the scientist combined with the mystic. Often Alchemists, are taught by a master - apprentice system. They seek to unlock the ultimate Nature. They seek the Master Work - the single work that will spell out and describe the Ultimate Nature in words and symbols alone, that can be understood by all, even mundanes. They are akin to the physicist searching for the Unifying Theory. Being masterful of the elements and matter, Alchemists can do incredible feats with their *formulae*. Which are representations of parts of the ultimate Nature, that by studying they can unleash by thought and will alone, changing the nature of the world. Some of them simply want to turn lead into gold. Others want to fling bolts of fire to smite their enemies. Some Alchemists organize into groups, such as the Sons of Solomon or the Templars who have been pursuing their secret goals for thousand of years with others trying to stop them or hinder them. Some Hermetic Circles coming close to unlocking the Master Work, suddenly turn on their brethren trying to destroy all of them and their works, some thing they know scares them and want to ensure that the Master Work is never found. But what, we don't know yet.

### Diabolism - The Fallen

Throughout humankind people have been drawn to darker paths. Some may have just started wanting more power, or to see what was behind *that* dark door thinking that no secret should be hidden from them. Some are just drawn to the darker side of life. Diabolism is the study of the darker forces of the Ultimate Nature. Of the horrific side of sex, madness, and dark forces. The Diabolists understand that essence is fluid and can not only be harnessed, but stolen and taken. Sometimes called blood magic or devil magic. The Fallen make packs with darker elements of the universe either with their own corrupt nature or with demonkind. They seek to steal the very nature of life from people. They communicate with "demons", beings formed from the darkest nature of the universe. Some make packs with these beings who in return give them power, so that their own essence is never tapped, while others seek to steal the essence of life from the blood of others. Either way, the *incantations* they work draw upon the essence of others and usually not their own. Although there is a very small group that believe that Diabolism in and of itself is not evil. These strange souls use their own blood to fuel their powers. Diabolism is very good at twisting people's minds, spreading discord, and destruction whether it is summoning hellfire or warping the mind of powerful politician to wage war and send thousands of innocents to their death, or the

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summoning of a horrible plague to a city, or the rape of innocents, not just their body but their soul as well turning them in gibbering idiots. Fortunately for the world at large, the Fallen tend to sometimes self-implode. They are usually organized in cults, and most who come to learn at the master's feet are usually raving mad by the time they learn anything useful, soliders of the master to spread his dark deed. Please work with the GM a lot if you want to play a Fallen. I want to make sure we get some ground rules established and thrashed out. But having said that if you want to explore the darker side of your fantasies this the tradition to follow.

### Enochian - The Magus

The youngest of the traditions, established in the Elizabethan era by the Magus John Dee, the Enochian tradition is almost the exact opposite of the Fallen. The Magus have learned through Dee and others, how to channel the essence of Light. They seek truth through supplication to a higher power. They have the power of *Oaths*. Through their own conviction and belief in what many of them call the "the Light", "Angels", or a "Higher Power" they have learned how to channel their own essence. The Enochians are very good at healing a troubled mind, shielding someone from the harmful effects of essence channeling, or cleansing an area. They travel in their mind's eye to the "Light" or the "Heavens" or the "Inner Planes". There they understand the world better, to the point that problems and solutions become clear. Some Enochians also claim to see with their third unseen eye the true nature of the world. Sometimes they are called mystics, and simply can channel their powers by self-contemplation alone, unique among the traditions that way. A similar tradition are the Dream Mages. Instead of the Light, they sail the dimension of dreams, but with a similar although some differently directed effects. Most Magus gather in brotherhoods. They seek others that have a similar viewpoint. The Enochian way cannot be taught, only fostered. Making them some of the rarest of the traditions.

### The Solitaire

Some people discover that they have supernatural powers. They either discovered through their own self-discovery, or just happened to be in the right (or wrong depending on how you look at it) place at the right time. Essentially they are a tradition of one. And this is how many traditions have started as people pass on what they learn. Please note however, that many "independents" actually practice one of the other Traditions as the nature of the other traditions to some extent have filtered into popular culture. For example a man who has spent his whole life looking for various obscure texts from Egypt, Moorish Spain, and Southern Europe might actually be an Alchemist, he just doesn't know that others are out there. The Solitaire is for players who want a character who does not fit in the above Traditions. Please work with the GM to develop what you can and can't do. Also please recognize that the GM may veto some ideas, please understand that he does so for the game world, not to intentionally make the game unfun for you.

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## The Afterward

So Rev A of the Codex gives you all a lot to chew on. There is still a lot unsaid I am sure, fueled by your questions and wanting to know more. Please send me any questions, comments, ideas, whatever, which will direct the nature of what goes into future revisions of the Codex. I hope you enjoy the world, your character, and the game. I know I am looking forward to it!

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