

Wayside Shrines

*'I pay my respects to the Shrine of the River Dragon, same as anyone else. Hells, perhaps more since it pays to honour the Dragon when you're a longshoreman. I like to toss a coin to the Gods of Fortune every payday too, so's to keep sweet with them and the money coming in. And no, it wasn't me you saw burning incense down at the Shrine of Shurgapar. What would I want with a spirit that helps cure the, er, "Lazan Pox"?'
- Dashakra Vlotin, overheard in The Catfish.*

Background

There are countless Lesser Immortals who are directly in charge of the daily running of the world on a local and specific basis, whereas the Greater Immortals set policy and oversee the bigger picture. So it is believed in the Empire of Splendour, at least. Across the Imperial and former-Imperial lands there are thousands of little shrines to these Lesser Immortals, usually erected where a holy man had a vision, or where some miracle occurred that could be attributed to an Immortal. Citizens make it a matter of routine to at least pay lip service to the spirit of a shrine, just in case they cause offence otherwise.

The Temple

Most wayside shrines are simple stone statuettes with a vague resemblance to the Immortal that they are placed to honour. Some are covered by a little roof. Others are sacred trees or rocks, garlanded with yellow ribbons or paint. Shrines usually have the remains of old offerings in front of them – a bit of food, a cup of alcohol, some flowers, a woven fragment of cloth, burnt incense or a low denomination coin.

Dealing with the Temple

All one needs to do at a wayside shrine is give up a little offering, mutter a simple prayer, and be on one's way again. It is considered disrespectful to turn one's back upon a shrine when leaving. If anyone worships at a shrine, there is a slender chance that their prayer will be heard. There is a 1% chance that the spirit will notice any worship, increased to 2% if the person making the prayer is 15th level or above (such a powerful individual is more noticeable to the Immortals). If the spirit hears the prayer, and deems the offering acceptable (gamesmaster's choice), then the person worshipping gains a one-time +1 bonus to one roll relating to the portfolio of the shrine's spirit.

Since most shrines are related to fertility or healing this is most likely to be to something non-adventuring like Profession (farmer), but might be a bonus to the saving throw against a particular type of disease. Often the spirit's blessing is limited in its geographical location too. The River Dragon in Llaza, for example, would give a +1 bonus to Swim checks, but only in the waters of the Anhoi River surrounding Llaza. The Travellers Shrine in Corbasal gives a +1 bonus to a Spot or Listen roll to detect any ambush attempts that may occur on the Corbasal-Kronlordan mountain road.

Spirit blessings usually last about a couple of days before the power fades.

Should a person defile the shrine, they have an equal chance of suffering a curse as they have of gaining a blessing. This gives a -1 penalty to one roll related to the portfolio of the spirit.

Using the Temple

Wayside shrines are an opportunity to add a little colour to the world and to demonstrate the multitude of Immortals that affect the World of Conclave. They are also the chance for the gamesmaster to provide a possibility for small bonuses to the player characters as a reward for interacting with the world, or that may be useful in an upcoming adventure.

Denizens of the Temple

The spirits of wayside shrines do not interact with the mortal realm aside from bestowing blessings or curses. The upkeep of shrines is usually managed by the local people, and there is quite often a mendicant priest (Cleric or Adept 1) who looks after all the shrines in an area. Rarely, more important shrines have a resident priest to attend to them. The Shrine of the River Dragon in Llaza is one of the latter.