

Tattoo Magic in Shadowrun

These are the house rules I've implemented in my game to introduce Rifts tattoo magic. It works similarly to the Adept magical skill power.

How they Work

This form of magic is a cross between known talents. While it allows the character to focus some (or all) of the magical energy coursing through his body inward, it can also direct that energy outward to effect the physical plane.

Who can learn them.

Technically, any magically active individual can learn to use this form of tattoo magic, assuming they have the karma, teacher, and time. The character must have learned the Meta-magic "Tattoos Magic" before being able to use the tattoos. The lack of this technique does not prevent the character from receiving the tattoos, just from using them. There are a few limitations, first off; the use of tattoos is progressive. That is that you can't learn to use all the tattoos at the same time. The more intricate a pattern, the more difficult it is to learn how to control it. Secondly, since the tattoos are active on the astral plane at all times, and are tied to the character's body, they represent a way to be attacked from the astral without being aware of the threat. Thirdly, the tattoos' astral presence may interfere with spell casting. If a character has more than one-half his magic attribute in tattoos, the drain for any spells he casts is increased by +2 Power, +1 Drain level. If he reaches his magic attribute, he cannot cast spells at all. Initiation can help alleviate this problem if it occurs. This last limitation ONLY affects spell casting, not an adept's powers, or the ability to conjure.

How to learn them.

Learning a tattoo is a little like learning a new adept power; the character can either pay karma directly, or initiate. Tattoos come in "levels", and each level has tattoos that you have access to. For example, if you learn level one tattoo magic, you have access to 4 types of tattoos, what you pick among them only matters in that they must conform to the rules. To gain access to a new level of magic, you need a teacher, and can either pay the flat rate of karma, or initiate. A character that chooses to initiate and learn a new level of tattoo magic gains a geased magic point that is bound directly to the tattoo meta-magic.

The tattoo itself

The tattoo itself is sometimes more difficult than the rest of the process. Special materials must be used in the ink's construction, and only a master inker can actually create the tattoo and make the magical incantations that will activate them. In game terms, the creation of the ink needs to have an exotic material. Roll on page 43 MitS and consult the table. The whole object rolled need not be in the ink, just part of it. But all the material must be present at the ink's creation.

Receiving the tattoo

Now that you've gone through and got the ink, found someone to put the tattoo on, and found someone to teach you how to use it, comes the really hard part. Actually getting it done. The process thankfully is very brief, as the men doing the tattoo are quite good at what they do. For some reason, extremely large amounts of pain are caused and near permanent damage dealt to the recipients. The damage codes and length of damage are discussed in the tattoo category section.

Using the tattoo

Tattoos are relatively simple to use. A series of mental exercises help facilitate this process (that's what the training is for). For the first 4 levels, the character must physically touch his tattoo to activate it. After that time, a simple thought is all that is necessary to activate a tattoo. Then comes the drain. Regardless of whether or not he survives the drain, the ability is active. Drain varies with powers themselves, and with both the number of tattoos, as well as the level of ability possessed. All drain is considered physical. (Note, if a drain code would be reduced below 2L physical by modifiers, it loses half its modifiers and becomes stunned. I.e. A 9M would be reduced to -1L physical drain, instead of taking no drain at all, the drain becomes 4M stunned.) Always round against the player.

Tattoo Duration, dissipation, and total active levels.

A tattoo's duration is variable, but can be turned off at anytime by the user. In the case of unconsciousness the ability will continue to function up to it's duration limit. If a tattoo is destroyed, nothing happens (except in the case of an animal or paranormal) to the character unless he tries to use that tattoo again within (8-level) hours. If he does attempt this, he makes an unmodified drain test. A character can only have 6 tattoos active at any one time.

Special Rules

Adepts seem more able to learn the technique than anyone else. They can "trade in" adept powers (and there by the magic points associated with them) in order to gain further levels of the technique. Each full power point that is given up grants access to another level of powers. The points CAN be geased per the regular rules.

Multiple Tattoos

While for some more then a few tattoos aren't worth the trouble, for others, it's essential. It is found that the more tattoos one has, the more resilient he becomes to the energies that are being pumped through his system because of them. Mechanics wise, this grants a reduction of the drain they impose of -1 Power for every three tattoos one has. This benefit DOES stack with the level drain adjustments.

Tattoo Categories

Each of the following is the different categories a tattoo can come from. The tattoo does not provide knowledge of how to use the tattoo. All wounds caused by receiving a tattoo begin to heal after the time period is up.

Simple Weapons

Creates weapons illustrated in the tattoo out of thin air. The weapon is light weight, perfectly balanced and indestructible. Weapons with complex moving parts can not be created, but weapons such as bows and cross bows can be. The projectiles for such weapons, however, are not provided.

Receiving a simple weapon tattoo causes a permanent Light wound for d6 days with a total modifier of +2.

Magic Weapons

The weapons are exactly like simple weapons except for one difference. They can be drawn to be enchanted. Extra damage, armor piercing and extra range are among the most common modifications.

Receiving a magical weapon tattoo causes a permanent Moderate wound for d6+2 days with a total modifier of +4.

Animals

Animal tattoos have the ability to come to life, leap off the body, becoming full size, and fight for their master. The animals are completely obedient to their masters and will fight to the death. They respond to verbal commands. Different size animals are available at different levels of knowledge. If an animal is destroyed at any time while it's active, it causes a 9M physical wound to the master that is resisted with unmodified body only.

Receiving an animal tattoo causes a permanent Light wound for d6 days with a total modifier of +2.

Paranormal Animals

Paranormal animal tattoos work similar to animal tattoos. The only difference is that these are more powerful and are just as they sound, paranormals. They, too, are available at different levels according to strength. If a paranormal animal is destroyed at any time while it's active, it causes an 11S physical wound to the master that is resisted with unmodified body only.

Receiving a paranormal animal tattoo causes a permanent Moderate wound for d6+2 days with a total modifier of +4.

Powers

Possibly the most versatile grouping of tattoos, they can grant adept like powers, summon elementals, and even bring back the dead.

Receiving a power tattoo causes a permanent serious wound for d6+4 days with a total modifier of +6.

Levels

Levels are progressive in strength. The first level grants the most basic of powers, while the 6th (and so far considered final) grants the most powerful. Upon reaching a new level of power, character will find it easier to wield the magic they are using. Each level beyond the first grants a Drain Modifier. This modifier is active to all levels of tattoos granted to the character. Drain modifiers are NOT cumulative. Each level contains a different tattoo that the character has access to, or new combinations of tattoos from former levels. It is said that there are beings that can create a tattoo and make it do as they wish, so far, we've been unable to do this. All we can do is work within the confines of the teachings we have.

Level 1

Drain Modifier: None

Tattoos:

Simple Weapons Drain- 2L
Lasts 30 minutes per level
See category above

Minor Shield Drain- 4L
Lasts 30 minutes per level
Creates a shield illustrated in the tattoo out of thin air. It appears on the arm that the character is not (if he's a righty, it appears on the left. If he's ambidextrous, it appears on whichever he designates upon activation). It is lightweight, and perfectly balanced. In any combat phase, it can accept up to a moderate wound (before staging). If it takes more, it shatters and breaks. If the shield does break, it still soaks its share of the damage. This only works on physical objects that are causing you damage (bullets, swords, and people). You have to be aware of the attack and be in a position to get the shield up (if your arms are bound or otherwise restricted it won't work). It imposes no penalty to use.

Animals Drain- 9L
Lasts 1 hour per level
Size level: Nothing bigger than a common house cat or small dog.

Heart with tiny wings Drain- 9L
Lasts 30 minute per level
The user can RUN at superhuman speeds, allowing him to keep up with most automobiles. The character can run at a speed of 30 mph + (10 mph per level).

Level 2

Drain Modifier: -1 Power Level

Tattoos:

Magical Weapons Drain- See Below
Lasts 15 minutes per level

- Weapon covered in Flames Drain- 9L
The weapon is considered armor piercing (AV).
- Weapon Dripping in Blood Drain- 5L
The weapon's damage is increased by +2 power level.
- Weapons Crossed Drain- 5L

The wielder gains an extra die whenever using the weapon depicted (real or tattoo). Does not include crossbows, bows or arrows.

-Weapon with Wings Drain- 5L
The weapon can be thrown or fired three times its regular distance and returns to the user if he misses. This can be combined with one of the above.

- Wings & Flames Drain- 10M
- Wings & Blood Drain- 9L

Animals Drain- 6M
Lasts one hour per level
Nothing bigger than a wolverine (now includes flying animals)

Greater Shield Drain- 6M
Lasts 15 minutes per level
Like the simple shield, but can withstand up to a deadly wound each round.

Eye of Knowledge Drain- 6M
Lasts 15 minutes per level
Allows the user to read and understand any language that isn't magical in nature (dragon speak and the like)
NOTE: Looks like an eye with three equal length lines. One line is directly centered over the eye and point up, the other two radiate horizontally from each side of the eye.

Eye with Tears Drain- 6M
Lasts 15 minutes per level
Grants the use of the phys. Ad. ability empathic sense.

Heart Pierced by Stake Drain- 6M
Lasts one hour per level
The character is impervious to Essence Drain of any type. It also prevents the Infection power of critters.

Thorns or Ball of Thorns Drain- 6M
Lasts 15 minutes per level
Impervious to all forms of poison and gains 2 extra body dice against drugs, chemicals and gases.

Level 3

Drain Modifier: -2 Power

Tattoos:

Magic Weapons Drain- See Below
Lasts 15 minutes per level

This allows the combination of powers into on tattoo. (i.e. A pair of crossed flaming swords dripping blood)

Possible Combinations:

- Weapon flaming with a coiled snake Drain- 10M
Deals massive amounts of damage to dragons, sea serpents, giant reptiles and paranormal reptiles.

Increase the damage code of the tattoo by +4 Power +2 Damage.

- Blood and Flames Drain- 6M
- Blood, Crossed Drain- 9L
- Blood, Snake Drain- 7S
- Blood, Flames, Crossed Drain- 10M
- Blood, Snake, Wings Drain- 11S
- Blood, Crossed, Snake Drain- 11S
- Blood, Flames, Wings Drain- 11S
- Flames, Crossed Drain- 6M
- Crossed, Snake Drain- 7S
- Snake, Wings Drain- 11S

Animals Drain- 10M
Lasts one hour per level
Nothing bigger than a horse

Chameleon
Lasts 10 minutes per level
Level: 3
The character is able to blend into the background, gaining a +8 against visual perception tests.

Drain- 10M

Dragon Claws
Lasts 5 minutes per level
Level: 3
This tattoo increases the amount of damage unarmed strikes do. The unarmed damage is considered regular (not stun) and the damage code is adjusted by +2 (+1).

Drain- 7S

Eye of Mystic Knowledge
Lasts 10 minutes per level
Allows the use of astral perception, and grants a bonus to Astral Perception Checks equal to one half the level. NOTE: The tattoo is an eye with two equal length lines. One Line is directly centered over the eye and points up, the other one radiates horizontally from the tear duct part of the eye. In many cases the eye may be inside a pyramid.

Drain- 10M

Eyes: Three
Lasts 10 minutes per level
Allows the user to have perfect vision, plus Night Vision at up to 1200 ft. in total darkness; See the invisible, and gives a +2 to perception tests.

Drain- 10M

Heart with Large Wings
Lasts 30 minutes per level
The user can fly at a rate of 50 mph plus 10 mph per grade (i.e. a 5 grade initiate using this power would fly at 100 mph) Maximum altitude is 4000 ft.

Drain- 10M

Shark or Dolphin
Lasts 30 minutes per level
Allows the user to swim underwater as a fish. Also allows user to breathe underwater.

Drain- 10M

Level 4

Drain Modifier: -4 Power, -1 Damage Level

Tattoos:

Chain with Broken Link
Lasts 10 minutes per level
Increases the character's strength by 6 when active. In addition, the unarmed attacks of the character deal regular damage (as opposed to subdual damage) equal to (STR+4) M

Drain- 11S

Eye with a Dagger in it
Victims are blinded for one combat round per experience level. The character can effect one person for (level) actions
Completely blinds one opponent by activating the tattoo and touching the victim. This also prevents astral perception, but not projection.

Drain- 7S

Figure Projecting Light from Hands
Lasts 5 minutes per level
Level: 4,5,6
Range 250 ft, plus 50ft per level
This tattoo allows the character to fire bolts of concentrated light from his hands. This beam will effect creatures that have protection from normal weapons. The damage depends on the level the character has attained, as does the drain. At 4th, the damage is equal to 3M, and drain equals 10M. At 5th, damage equals 6S, and drain becomes 5S. At 6th, damage equals 14D, and the drain equals 10S.

Drain- Variable

Knight in Full Body Armor Drain- 7S

Lasts 30 minutes per level

Creates a glowing field around the character. This field acts as hardened armor equal to a +1 ballistic/+1 impact per level. The benefits from this tattoo only exist when not wearing mundane armor, spells, other tattoos, etc... are fine.

Lightning Bolts Drain- 11S

Lasts one combat turn per level (or until dispelled)

The character's hands begin to glow with electrical energy. The character can fire off two bolts per round as a complex action. Each bolt deals 6S Damage at level 4. At level 6, they deal 11S. The skill to use with this tattoo is whatever the highest ranged weapon skill the character possesses. If he doesn't have any, he defaults to quickness (with no penalties).

Pentagram with a weapon in its center Drain- 12S

Lasts 1 minute per level

Level: 4

When activated the tattoo enables the user to attack twice as many times as he'd normally be allowed. Only melee weapons can be used.

Rose and Thorny Stem & Dripping Blood Drain- 11S

Lasts one minute per level. Effects are permanent. As many as three touches can be performed in one minute.

Heals 1 box of physical damage per level. Can only be used once per target per wound.

Level 5

Drain Modifier: -5 Power, -1 Damage Level

Tattoos:

Chain Wrapped Around a Cloud Drain- 12D

Duration varies with powers

Allows the character to control the elemental effects of air. The character can summon air elementals following the standard rules. If the character doesn't have conjuring the character's Charisma is used instead of the skill. If the character DOES have conjuring, he is allowed to have (level) more air elementals. The services from the elementals last as normal. Other powers include:

See Invisible- Lasts five minutes per level

Levitate- Sustained

Wind Rush, 60 mph gust of wind- Instant

Call Storm (same as storm power MitS p99)- Sustained

Heart Encircled by Chains Drain- 9D

Lasts 10 minutes per level

Grants Immunity to Normal Weapons. Instead of essence, use Magic Rating.

Skull Engulfed in Flames Drain- 12D

Duration Varies with powers

Allows the character to control the elemental effects of fire. The character can summon fire elementals just as the tattoo Chain wrapped around a Cloud.

Other powers include:

Heat Shield- Lasts five minutes per level

All forms of heat (magical or otherwise) are prevented. Any other form of energy (including elemental side effects) is halved. Also provides some protection from bullets (+3 ballistic)

Flame Bolts- Lasts 5 minutes per level

The character can release bolts of fiery energy at targets, causing damage, and catching them on fire.

Damage equals 10M (using the highest ranged weapons skill). Targets get half impact to resist.

Level 6

Drain Modifier: -6 Power, -2 Damage Level

Tattoos:

Figure phasing into a line of energy

Drain- 11S

Lasts 6 hours per level

Level: 6

The character gains the abilities of a Ley Line walker (minus the spells) These powers include:

- Sense Ley Line and Magic energy- This power allows the character to sense ley lines, nexus points, and rifts. He is limited to a range of 25 miles. He not considered astrally active for this ability.
- Read Ley Line- This allows the character to know what direction the line runs, how long it runs, whether there are any nexus point along it, or if there are any rifts currently open on it.
- Ley Line Transmission- This power allows the character to send verbal or visual messages directly along the ley line to another person so long as that person is on that ley line. This message is only one way (no reply)
- Ley Line Phasing- This power allows the character to instantly teleport from one place to another on a specific ley line. They cannot pass through a nexus point, although they can stop at one, come out of the line, and move to another line.
- Line Drifting- This allows the character to float along the line at a little more then 3 mph

Ley Line Rejuvenation- This allows the character to heal himself at double the normal rate.

Large circle with many mystic symbols

Drain- 14S

Lasts 6 hours per level

Level: 6

This tattoo creates an instant astral barrier (rating equal to the characters level) that is 24 ft. across. The barrier acts just like an astral barrier. When getting this tattoo, the character must expend 18 karma, this is so the barrier can be brought time and time again. If he doesn't want to pay the karma, he can spend 3 karma per activation.

Phoenix Rising from the Flames Drain- 18D

Duration is instant, effect are permanent.

This tattoo has two uses. The first completely heals one target. Not only does it do that, it heals diseases (magical or not), toxins, derangements, and other ailments.

The second use is even more powerful. The character has the ability to raise the dead. If performed on someone who's been dead less the six hours, the magic restores him to a box below a deadly wound, regenerates limbs and heals all wounds without scarring. Use of this tattoo is taxing though, as the character loses a point of body and must make a second drain test (after the resurrection). He is granted a willpower point. These penalties and benefits only apply to the resurrection, not the healing.

Level 7

Drain Modifier: -7 Power, -3 Damage Level

Tattoos:

Open Rift

Drain- 15D

The effects of this tattoo are instant

Level: 7

Opens a rift at a nexus point. The rift may be to anywhere/when. The character loses a point of magic when opening a rift.

Close Rift

Drain- 18D

The effects are instantaneous

Level: 7

Closes a rift. The character loses use of tattoos for a period of days equal to (14-level) if the rifts closes. It gets a resistance test equal to the rift rating against the characters magic attribute.