



CROSSROADER

In Brief- One who has made a deal with the Devil, gaining agelessness and other powers.

Other Names- Soul Seller, Fiddler, Faust, Jack.

Stereotypes- Selfish, shallow, arrogant, power hungry, fame hungry, myopic, impulsive, non-religious.

Becoming- European and African-American folk stories teach many ways to summon the Devil. In the 1800s and before, summoning the Devil was something young people would dare themselves to do but would rarely have the nerve to follow through with (much like kids today dare each other to say 'Bloody Mary' in the mirror three times). One way to summon the Devil is to put a shirt on backward and look in a well. Another way is to go out at night with closely trimmed fingernails, a black cat bone (see p.141) and a guitar or fiddle. If the Devil likes the music one plays, he will appear. The easiest way to summon the Devil is to go to crossroads at midnight and wait (saying a Bible verse backwards can help).

A few take Devil summoning as more than just a means to entertain and frighten young people. Perhaps they are inspired by tales of folk heroes who have outwitted the Devil and think they can do the same. Perhaps they simply want power and worldly success so much that they don't care about the later consequences of their actions. Few who set out to meet the Devil have ever known anyone else who has done the same.

Summoning the Devil is frightening and most who attempt it don't follow through. Many are so unnerved by the Devil's terrifying appearance and presence that they run away. Only the bravest actually speak with the Devil, and many do so while avoiding looking at Ol' Scratch.

Those who make it this far now face the most perilous part: negotiating a deal with the Devil. Ol' Scratch is a wily and willful haggler, although his arrogance sometimes leads him to take risks he shouldn't.

The Devil can offer all manner of wonderful things: talent, wealth, beauty, luck, even supernatural abilities. In return, the Devil asks for the Crossroader's soul. Some Crossroaders agree and sell their soul outright. Others are able to talk the Devil into including a clause in the agreement that allows the Crossroader to earn his or her soul back by completing some difficult challenge. The Devil is gambling that the Crossroader will fail, the Crossroader that he or she will win.

A few manage to talk the Devil into granting gifts with no promise of a soul but with promise of doing the Devil's

work: committing crimes, spreading godlessness or leading other souls to damnation. Even these Crossroaders may have it in their minds that they will cheat the Devil. For instance, those who promise to commit murder may plan on becoming vigilantes, murdering the world's wickedest people (including the Devil's own Hags and Loups Garoux) and thus doing the Devil a disservice.

Personal Histories- Most Crossroaders were poor Blacks or Whites with high ambition. They wanted more out of life than they thought they could get by any honest means. Many were born with clenched fists (see p.171) and knew already that they would not or could not lead an honest life. Most were impulsive, impetuous young people, full to the brim with that delusion of the young that they could get away with anything.

After the deal usually came a period of careless enjoyment of their gifts. They reveled in their abilities and filled their days with sex, drinking and gambling. This freedom was, after all, what they had taken such a terrible risk for. If they were people who buckled down and dealt with their problems first in order to have fun later then they probably wouldn't have had to resort to a deal with the Devil.

The lifestyle Crossroaders adopted usually depended on the nature of their 'gifts.' Those with invisibility usually lived as thieves. Those with gambling luck became traveling professional gamblers. Those gifted with riches become rich layabouts. Those gifted with musical talent became traveling musicians.

Eventually, perhaps decades later, their carefree lives began to lose the excitement and the Crossroaders began to think seriously about the debt they had to pay or the peril their soul was in. At last they became serious about their predicament, although few completely shed their carefree and hedonistic ways.

Agelessness- Agelessness is a common request from Crossroaders. They ask for agelessness hoping to have more time to complete their challenge or to enjoy their gifts before having to go to hell. The Devil would never grant true immortality (how would he get his promised souls?) but he is willing to grant agelessness. He is patient enough that, to him, having to wait two hundred years for a soul is no different than having to wait two years.

Those who weren't wise enough to demand agelessness as part of their bargain quickly discover that a single lifetime isn't long enough to do everything the Crossroader needs to get done, and so these Crossroaders often go off in search of the means to agelessness (often by commissioning an agelessness hand from a powerful Hoodoo).

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Methods- A Crossroader depends on whatever their particular gifts are to help them out of scrapes. Occasionally a Crossroader will get in such a jam that they will call on the Devil again and try to make another deal. However, the Devil isn't likely to give good terms, especially if he already has a stake in the Crossroader's soul.

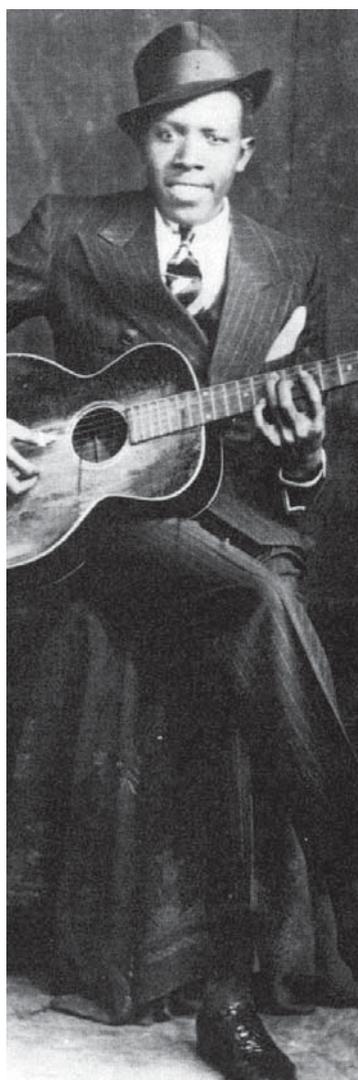
Those trying to complete some task to get their souls back find that it takes a lot of hard work and luck. Many have spent lifetimes trying over and over again to complete their task, failing each time because of a tiny mistake or bit of bad luck.

Others find that, to complete their tasks, they must become schemers as patient as the Devil: pulling the strings in dozens of century-long plots that will, under the right manipulations, come together to achieve amazing ends.

For those who have sold their soul unreservedly to the Devil and who have come to regret it, their only chance is to find something they can offer the Devil that he wants more than their soul. To find such a thing the Crossroader may be forced to travel the world and to move in the most obscure occult and conjuring circles.

Relations- Crossroaders, who have taken the shortest route possible to power, are usually the polar opposites of Hoodoos, many of whom spent years in self-deprivation and decades in study to earn their powers. Even though many come from the same communities, they have little in common.

Crossroaders are often lumped in with Hags and Loups Garoux as servants of the Devil. Crossroaders, especially those who think they are 'pulling one over' on the Devil, try to resist this association. In general, Crossroaders think Hags and Loups Garoux are stupid for not making their own terms with the Devil. Hags and Loups Garoux think Crossroaders are stupid for thinking they can outsmart the Devil.



Robert Johnson, Blues Man

I sold my soul, sold it to the Devil and my heart done turned to stone

I sold my soul, sold it to the Devil, he won't let me alone

Said I'm hateful and I'm evil, I carries a Gatling gun

I drink carbolic acid, be darned if I will run

But I sold it, I sold it

Sold it to the Devil and my heart done turned to stone.

-Sold It To The Devil
by Black Spider Dumping

Crossroader Payments

Here are some different payments a Crossroader may have made in a deal with the Devil:

Unreserved Soul Sale- This is the most common payment in a deal with the Devil. The Devil owns the Crossroader's soul entirely, with no reservations and no escape clause. The only hope the Crossroader has is if the Crossroader can find the leverage to make a new deal with the Devil. Yet because the Devil already has the Crossroader's soul, there's not much the Crossroader can offer that will make the Devil want to reconsider.

The Favor- The Crossroader must do one task at some unnamed point in the future, whenever the Devil asks it of the Crossroader, within a set period of time. Generally, if the Crossroader fails or refuses the task, the Devil gains unreserved ownership of the Crossroader's soul. If the Crossroader succeeds at the task, the Crossroader is now free and generally gets to keep his or her gifts. The Crossroader may have negotiated for restrictions on the favor (e.g. "I won't kill people").

Service for Powers- The Crossroader has not made any promises about his or her soul. Power is contingent only upon regular "service" to the Devil. If the Crossroader lapses at any point, his or her powers go away instantly and the Crossroader must renegotiate a new deal with the Devil to get them back. Types of service may include: commit a regular schedule of murders, deflower virgins or lead people to have extramarital affairs; steal or con people out of money; burn down houses; kill livestock animals; maim or cripple people.

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