

Island Mojo

Being a Fully Accurate Handy
Booke of Natural Philosophy
and the Black Artes for the
Rightly Acclaimed Bloode Island

By John Sullivan

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Disclaimer: DEEP 7 and its personnel in no way endorse lethal swordplay, pillaging and looting of small coastal villages, nor do we encourage the binding of voodoo loas to do your sordid bidding. It is our opinion that any teen or adult with half a brain SHOULD be able to tell the difference between reality and fiction, tribute and parody.

"Arrr! I've seen things in these islands, matey. Things'll turn your hair white. I've seen the dead get up and dance by the light of the moon. I've heard the spirits whisper the secrets of long lost treasure. I've seen curses lay strong men low. And if you want an ace up your sleeve, you could do a lot worse than a well-made charm or two. Now it just so happens that I have here, at a very reasonable price..."

To add magic to the swashbuckling world of *Bloode Island* we need one new skill. Mojo is a Brains skill, bought like any other skill. However, the only use for the Brains + Mojo target number is for knowledge checks to recognize the function of a charm, interpret esoteric magical symbols, etc. Otherwise, your Mojo level just determines what kind of magic you can perform.

Level 1 - make charms and read the oracles

Level 2 - summon and control ghosts and spirits

Level 3 - deal with the Loas to work serious spells

Although your Mojo determines what you can do, actually doing it doesn't involve your Mojo skill. When performing any kind of magic, the target number is your Presence. That's right, Presence. We're dealing with spirits here, and if you want the spirits to do your bidding, you'd better impress them. If that Spanish treasure ship you were trying to raid sends you crawling home empty handed with your tail between your legs, your magical abilities may suffer for it until you've pulled off some impressive exploits to bring your Presence back up.

That's the system. Here's the supplement.

Charms - These are simple magic items that will work for anybody, whether they have any Mojo or not. (Of course if you do have some Mojo, you'll be much better at telling real charms from fake ones.) They aren't the sort of thing you can mass produce. Each should involve some bothersome ritual or uncommon supplies: bury a raven's skull under a gravestone for a fortnight, then dig it up and soak it in a silver cup full of wine under the full moon, that sort of thing. A successful skill roll means you did it right and the charm works.

Charms typically give the wearer a +1 to a single skill. Some might be slightly more powerful, but these would probably have a shelf life, while the simpler ones keep working forever.

Examples:

- Never Be Drowned Charm: +1 swimming
- Love Charm: +1 seduction
- Steady Hand Charm: +1 shooting
- Good Luck Charm: Automatic success on any one skill roll, then throw it away

Oracles - A character with Mojo 1 or better can use a deck of cards, bag of bones etc. to divine one secret about a target (he's plotting mutiny) or predict one event in his future (he'll die by hanging) on a roll of 1 on a die. You can read the oracles for a target once per month and it tells you what the GM wants it to - you don't get to ask it questions. If the GM is feeling really generous, you may be able to interpret general omens, getting vague feelings about things from the clouds at sunset, flights of birds, etc.

Spirits - (Unless otherwise noted, any reference to spirits applies to ghosts as well.) With Mojo 2 you are aware of and can communicate with any nearby spirits. You can compel them to do your bidding. You can have them do something for you and go, or you can keep them around. You can never have more than three spirits at once, but you can let any bound spirit go at any time. So what can spirits do?

- Attack: A spirit can attack an enemy, using your Presence as its target and doing 1D6 damage on a hit. Unless the enemy has something pretty special going on, the spirit can only miss, not be harmed by losing the margin contest.
- Move things: Spirits can move, carry or throw objects up to the weight a strong man could handle. This could include things like knocking over an oil lamp, sliding the bolt on a door, or hurling a knife.
- Provide information: +1 to General Knowledge or other Brains skills. Translate languages you don't speak. Predict the weather in the area for the next two days or so. And so on.

- Go anywhere: Spirits can fly around, pass through walls, etc. They make great scouts and spies. They can carry messages to someone else if that person also has Mojo 2. This isn't instantaneous, but it shouldn't take more than an hour for a spirit to find someone.
- Send dreams: Even if someone doesn't have the Mojo to deliberately communicate with spirits, a spirit can enter their dreams, either to impart information in suitably dreamlike fashion or just scare the hell out of them and keep them from getting any rest.

What can ghosts do?

- Materialize: The ghost takes solid form and has the stats, skills and equipment it had in life. It can maintain this state for up to an hour, or until it is "killed" again. Then it goes back to being a ghost and can't materialize again until tomorrow.

Unless they're materialized, ghosts can also do all the things spirits can do with a couple particulars. The information ghosts can provide is more specific than what spirits can offer. If you want to know if a storm's coming, you can find some wind or water spirit that can tell you, but a particular ghost knows what it knows. On the other hand, the right ghost will have information spirits won't. Ghosts' movements are also likely to be restricted to the places they haunt.

Summoning ghosts may be more difficult than summoning spirits, again because you frequently need to find the right ghost. If you're willing to talk to the shade of any crewman from the doomed privateer *Furious*, you can probably do that on a straight roll. But if you need to talk to the Captain, there should be some small minus to summon him. And of course you'd have to be where the *Furious* sank, or perhaps where they hid their treasure, etc.

Spells: These are more sophisticated magical rituals. Spells can produce more powerful effects over greater ranges of time and distance. You can send a curse down on an enemy that might strike him days later and hundreds of miles away. However, spells can be more dangerous to work with. Spell effects come from the loas and you don't summon them up; you petition them and hope they don't like the intended victim more than they like you.

Most spells cast on an unwilling target are resisted by a Presence roll. The caster must make his roll by a greater margin than the subject does for the spell to take effect. An effigy, used in most spells if the target is not present, must include something connected to the target (a piece of clothing, lock of hair, etc.) A caster can end his own spells whenever he wishes. Spells have a difficulty modifier based loosely on how powerful and complicated they are. Most spells that don't have a fairly obvious duration built in (one battle, as long as you're concentrating, etc.) last until the next new moon.

Examples:

- ◆ Evil Eye (-2): The caster inflicts a slow, wasting curse on the victim, either by making eye contact or using an effigy. The target feels weak and ill, suffering aches, cold sweats, nightmares, etc. He loses 1 point of blood per day until the spell is broken or he dies.
- ◆ Lift Curse (sp.): Breaks a spell cast on the target by someone else, preventing further effect, but not undoing anything that's already done. The modifier is the margin by which the original caster made his roll. Can also be placed pre-emptively on a target. Anyone trying to place a curse on the target until the next new moon must then beat your margin rather than just succeed.
- ◆ Scrying (-1): Lets the caster see what is going on in a particular location right now, or converse with another willing Mojo worker no matter how far away.
- ◆ Leader's Voice (-1): Grants the target a temporary +3 to Oratory and to Presence for purposes of inspiring and leading people **only**. Any magical work uses the target's original Presence.
- ◆ Watch Over Me (-2): Protects the target from the miscellaneous dangers of battle (musket volleys, grapeshot, falling yardarms, etc.) Deliberate attempts to attack the character are unaffected.
- ◆ Fair Winds (-2): Lets you subtly influence winds, currents and weather in a localized area. This can increase a ship's speed, or becalm it, as well as give the helmsman a +/-1 to his Pilot skill.
- ◆ The Cold Chills (-3): The target is assailed with self-doubt, sudden frights and the titular cold chills, becoming a jumpy, nervous wreck. This goes on for three days, after which the target permanently loses a point of Guts if the spell hasn't been broken by then.
- ◆ Zombie Curse (-3): Turns the target into the caster's slave. The victim can only follow very simple commands and cannot speak. Zombies have stats of 1, no skills, do 3 pts. of damage on a successful attack and have double their original Blood. They last until destroyed, so a not very nice person could make an army of them to compensate for the fact that they're pretty harmless by themselves.

The Power of Faith (optional) If you choose to use this option, then all things of the church are anathema to Mojo. Spirits cannot enter churches or holy ground. A character with the Priest background is immune to curses and other spells. Spirits cannot approach within arm's length of a Priest, or a lay believer carrying a religious item (crucifix, saint's medal, bible) recently blessed by a Priest with a successful Presence roll. Thus they can't attack these characters or meddle in their dreams. Priests can make a Presence roll to banish (and only banish) summoned ghosts or spirits by beating the summoner's margin.

For the GM - Keeping Mojo Under Control

At first, these rules seem to make Mojo workers pretty darn powerful. How to keep the munchkin in your group from buying Mojo 3, hogging the spotlight and spoiling everyone's fun? First, don't worry. Mojo is largely self-regulating since failing a magical Presence roll means a Guts check which eventually means less Presence. Once one spirit stands up to you, the others will figure they don't have to grovel at your feet either. Once a Mojo worker's Presence gets worn down to around 1 or 2, they'll have to lay low for a while to build it up again, and they'll soon learn to save their Mojo for when they need it.

Also, NPCs can use Mojo too. Any other character with Mojo 2 will notice the PC's spirits, and may even take them away. If they send a spirit to spy on an enemy ship that has a Mojo worker aboard, he can make his own presence roll to "summon" their spirit before it's finished its job. If he makes his roll by more than the PC made his, it's now his spirit. He can ask it about the PC and his friends, send it back with false information, etc. You shouldn't have every single NPC protected by blessed items or capable of tampering with spirits, but just knowing those things are possible should keep PCs on their toes.

Remember, this is voodoo, not AD&D. Mojo workers shouldn't be hurling fireballs into each others' rigging or launching similar magical pyrotechnics. Spells should be subtle, slow to cast, and may not take effect for some time. When they do take effect, they may go completely unnoticed until it's too late.

Finally, here's your GM's trump card. Mojo 3 is really a trap. PCs are meddling in the affairs of the loas now, and they're just as likely to show up unbidden, demanding sacrifices and favors, as the PCs are to get spells out of them. Basically, the character has gotten himself involved with a group of very, very powerful NPCs who have their own motives and vendettas, and who know how to get what they want.

For spell ideas, details on the loas, and general atmosphere, a couple great sources are *GURPS Voodoo* from Steve Jackson Games and the novel *On Stranger Tides* by Tim Powers. There are plenty of other sources on voodoo out there as well. Have fun, and arrr.

Adventure Seeds to Give Your Players a Taste of Island Mojo

And Death Bring No Escape

When one of the characters first started having nightmares, they didn't connect it with the antique compass they'd won at a dice game. But the dreams got so bad - full of strange sounds, dark slithery things, and pleas for help from a beautiful, terrified woman - that the victim sought a mojo man's help. A reading of the oracles revealed that the compass held a curse. It brings the dreams and, every night around midnight, it points north, but toward the place where the curse originates. The mojo man knows something of the dark spirits from the nightmares, and the legendary island where they dwell. He insists that the party must follow where the compass leads, and that he must come with them to destroy the growing evil at its source.

The party sails for several days, each midnight taking a new bearing on their destination. The dreams grow stronger, and spread to all the characters. The woman admits that she is a ghost. She tried to confront the dark forces of the island and was killed. Only for the hour around each midnight can she materialize and use her former mojo powers to call for help.

The cursed island is not on their charts, the sea itself resists carrying them there and the hulks of dozens of wrecked ships surround the place. Spirits dance and cry in the rigging as they enter the harbor. Ashore, the island throws everything it has at the mojo man while he prepares the rituals that will drive the evil back out of our world. If the characters can't protect him, he can't protect them, and the island will torment their souls forever. Mysterious powers crash in a magical battle full of evil spirits, monsters, and terror. Worse, someone is feeling the stirrings of love for the beautiful, doomed ghost who brought them here. If they succeed, how can a love affair with a ghost not end in tragedy? If they fail, that problem at least will be taken care of...

You Know, He Actually May Be Smarter This Way...

Well, it finally happened. Captain "Hapless Jack" McKenzie has gotten himself and his crew captured by the Royal Navy and thrown in prison on St. Bartholomew. The Governor there is the kind of man you can reason with though, and an unfortunate escape can be arranged for £10,000 under the table. Hapless Jack has eight days to come up with the money before he and his men are hanged, and the Governor certainly isn't going to let him out to get it. So Jack's sent word to some friends that if they'll raid his largest treasure cache and bring the money to rescue him, they can have the rest of it. The loot's hidden deep in the jungle on Pirate Island. Fortunately, Jack's second mate, "Slow Tom," missed the luckless voyage due to a bout of malaria. He's waiting back on Pirate Island, and is the only man who can lead the party to the cache.

Unfortunately, while waiting for his mates to come back, Slow Tom got hungry and tried to steal a couple chickens from Queen Ida, the local mojo woman. Since then he's been seen working in the old woman's garden and drooling a lot. Nobody's gotten close enough to the place to make sure, but apparently she's made a zombie of him.

Just rescuing him won't solve the problem: all he can do is weed and groan. The party needs Slow Tom back to his former self, and fast. They could try getting someone to cure him, but Queen Ida's mojo is pretty strong. Another option would be to flatter and cajole the mojo woman into letting him go. This will be humiliating, even more so if they have to come back red-faced after nabbing him. This kind of stuff is exactly why the characters didn't ship with Hapless Jack in the first place.