

PACTBOUND

Ancient texts have been unburied and studied. Chapters and paragraphs have been searched. Every new revelation brings more questions than answers. The student drops the feather and clutches her head trying to make sense of this grand puzzle. She gives up, shuts the light and goes to bed. She wakes up in a sweat, returns to her desk and connects the dots. A web of information forms a single clear image. The image burns itself into her mind and she can't help but laugh at what she has learned.

A young man finds himself in his first battle. The city guards have been overrun. The town is being raided. He stands alone against a terrible warrior in front of him. He is frozen by fear. He tries to run but falls into the dirt, too exhausted to stand up. His killer right behind him. He concentrates and prioritizes. He needs a weapon and grabs for the cold steel he finds in the mud. In a sudden movement he turns around to face his enemy. Metal strikes metal and the boy finds a black blade in his hand. An unfamiliar voice urges him to fight back.

A man has found ancient texts. Clandestinely he has gathered support among his friends and family. Hidden away in a forsaken room they prepare the ritual. The runes have been carved and the sacrifice is prepared. As they begin to chant they all lose themselves in their vision. As he opens his eyes again, his followers lie around him lifelessly, their eyes scorched away. The man steps around the corpses and walks home. The world seems brighter than before and he begins his search for more.

Very few people experience such extraordinary events. Some are manifestations of arcane talent or divine intervention, but some uncovering hidden powers and find a connection to otherworldly beings. A bond is made which often starts with but a glimpse, it continues with promises, and it is bound with a pact. A pact that offers power but requires servitude in return.

FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE

A pactbound is driven by the pursuit of knowledge and power. They have peeked behind the curtain that is the chaos of the world and have seen a greater pattern. Only understanding and insight will lead to the great truth. But this knowledge is hidden, sometimes even locked away as heretical or dangerous knowledge. Knowledge is powerful and even more so when there are but so few who have the means to grasp it. Those who know of it, will hide it and deny its existence, or they will use it and abuse it for their own goals, or their minds will tragically succumb to the maddening influence of their insights.

This forbidden knowledge cannot be perceived alone. A pactbound must find a patron for guidance.

A PACT WITH THE UNKNOWN

Anyone who sees a part of greater pattern that lies beyond, doesn't go unnoticed. Elder beings will notice and touch the lives of those that dare to perceive their realm. In order to proceed in their pursuit a pactbound needs guidance to succeed and not succumb to the madness that the forbidden knowledge can incite. This guidance however doesn't come for free.

An otherworldly being will only stand as patron if the gift is returned in kind. Thus, the pactbound and their patron must agree to a pact. A contract of servitude to the unknown being that took notice. The desires of these patrons are often unfathomable. They may be cruel or they may be benevolent, but one is rarely different from the other. A pactbound must serve but will likely never understand the wishes of their patron.

DESCENT TO POWER

The way towards insight, power and answers is a descent. One must delve into the secrets that are revealed and commit to the path taken. Every step down risks losing oneself to madness. The patron is but a guide. The pactbound must persevere on their own. They must seek to understand how the world and their powers work and they must remain in control of how it changes them.

Only those who withstand insanity and don't stray from their path may just find themselves with a new perspective of the world. A world that bends to their will.



Art: Cliffside Ritual by Eric Geusz

(<https://www.artstation.com/artwork/XGvOD>)

PACTBOUND

Level	Prof. Bonus	Features	Cantrips Known	Spells Known	Highest Spell Level
1st	+2	Manifestation, Eldritch Corruption	2	1	1st
2nd	+2	Pact	2	2	1st
3rd	+2	Occult Prayer, Invocation	2	3	2nd
4th	+2	Ability Score Improvement	3	4	2nd
5th	+3	Pact feature	3	5	3rd
6th	+3	☐	3	6	3rd
7th	+3	☐	4	7	4th
8th	+3	Ability Score Improvement	4	8	4th
9th	+4	☐	4	9	5th
10th	+4	Pact feature	5	10	5th
11th	+4	☐	5	11	6th
12th	+4	Ability Score Improvement	5	11	6th
13th	+5	☐	6	12	7th
14th	+5	Pact feature	6	12	7th
15th	+5	☐	6	13	8th
16th	+5	Ability Score Improvement	6	13	8th
17th	+6	☐	6	14	9th
18th	+6	Pact feature	6	14	9th
19th	+6	Ability Score Improvement	6	14	9th
20th	+6	Eldritch Awakening	6	14	9th

CREATING A PACTBOUND

When creating a pactbound, imagine what possibilities the character sees with the newly given powers. Think of what the character used to be and suddenly can become. What brought your character to learn of these secrets? Why would your character delve deeper and risk madness? What are the goals of your character and have they changed because of this manifestation of power?

Do you know what being you are communing with? Do you know what they want? Consult with your DM to find some answers, but be prepared to leave many questions unanswered. It is the way of the pactbound to seek for hidden insights and knowledge.

QUICK BUILD

You can make a pactbound quickly following these suggestions. First, your highest attribute should be Intelligence, followed by Constitution. Second, choose the charlatan background. Third, choose the *firebolt* and *mage hand* cantrips and the *charm person* spell.

CLASS FEATURES

HIT POINTS

Hit Dice: 1d8 per pactbound level

Hit Points at 1st Level: 8 + your Constitution modifier

Hit Points at Higher Levels: 1d8 (or 5) + your Constitution modifier per pactbound level after 1st

PROFICIENCIES

Armor: Light Armor

Weapons: Simple Weapons

Tools: None

Saving Throws: Wisdom, Intelligence

Skills: Choose two from Arcana, Deception, History, Investigation, Nature, Persuasion, Survival

EQUIPMENT

You start with the following equipment, in addition to the equipment granted by your background:

- (a) a light crossbow and 20 bolts (b) any simple weapon
- (a) a scholar's pack or (b) a dungeoneer's pack
- Leather armor and a dagger

MANIFESTATION

At 1st level you glimpse a sliver of the grand tapestry of forbidden knowledge. With this insight you manifest the ability to wield magic.

CANTRIPS

You learn two cantrips of your choice from the pactbound spell list. You learn additional cantrips of your choice at higher levels, as shown in the Cantrips Known column of the Pactbound table.

Additionally, when you gain a level in this class, you can choose one of the pactbound cantrips you know and replace it with another cantrip from the pactbound spell list.

SPELL SLOTS

To cast pactbound spells you do not need to expend spell slots. Instead you can cast each spell you know only once before you need to finish a long rest to cast it again. If you cast a spell on a higher level than its own, you must additionally expend the use of a spell of that level or higher.

SPELLS KNOWN OF 1ST LEVEL AND HIGHER

At 1st level, you know one 1st-level spell of your choice from the pactbound spell list.

The Spells Known column of the Pactbound table shows when you learn more pactbound spells of your choice of 1st level or higher. A spell you choose must be of a level no higher than what is shown in the table's Highest Spell Level column for your level. When you reach 6th level, for example, you learn a new pactbound spell, which can be 1st, 2nd, or 3rd level - you learn this spell as a 3rd level spell as indicated by your current Highest Spell Level.

You can learn the same spell multiple times at different spell levels.

Additionally, when you gain a level in this class, you can choose one of the pactbound spells you know and replace it with another spell from the pactbound spell list, which must be of the same level as the replaced spell.

SPELLCASTING ABILITY

Intelligence is your spellcasting ability for your pactbound spells, so you use your Intelligence whenever a spell refers to your spellcasting ability. In addition, you use your Intelligence modifier when setting the saving throw DC for a pactbound spell you cast and when making an attack roll with one.

Spell Save DC = 8 + your proficiency bonus +
your Intelligence modifier

Spell attack modifier = your proficiency bonus +
your Intelligence modifier

SPELLCASTING FOCUS

You can use an arcane focus as a spellcasting focus for your pactbound spells. You have an additional option to choose an otherworldly brand as a spellcasting focus. This brand covers at least one of your hands (but may also cover your entire body) and that hand must be free to cast pactbound spells.

ELDRITCH CORRUPTION

Your manifestation has been noticed by some greater being. You can feel its influence on your magic.

Starting at 1st level, when you cast a pactbound cantrip that deals damage, you can add your Intelligence modifier to each immediate damage roll. You can also cause the spell to deal Force damage, instead of its normal damage type.

PACT

At 2nd level you make a pact with an otherworldly patron in which you offer your service in exchange for its guidance and wisdom. You gain features according to the pact you choose. Choose one of the following pacts: *Pact of Agony*, *Pact of Combat*, *Pact of Enlightenment*, *Pact of Haunting* or *Pact of Insight*, each of which is detailed at the end of the class description.

Your choice grants you features at 2nd level and again at 6th, 10th, 14th and 18th level.

OCCULT PRAYER

While this prayer may not be heard, it allows you to focus on the arcane weave around you. Starting at 3rd level, when you finish a short rest, you may choose two of your known spells of 5th level or lower. You regain the ability to cast these without finishing a long rest.

INVOCATION

At 3rd level you learn to invoke your patrons attention and in response you are granted impossible insight into the workings of the universe. You are forced to make sense of a chaotic vision and if you survive this traumatic experience you will find yourself with otherworldly benefits. You may choose one invocation to perform. Your invocation options are detailed at the end of the class description.

ABILITY SCORE IMPROVEMENT

When you reach 4th level, and again at 8th, 12th, 16th, and 19th level, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores of your choice by 1. As normal, you can't increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

ELDRITCH AWAKENING

Your patron bestows its final gift upon you. At 20th level you learn to shape reality to your own will. You can replace any attack roll, saving throw, or ability check made by you or a creature that you can see with a 1 or 20. You must choose to do so before the roll.

You can't do so again until you finish a long rest.

Art: Realms Beyond by Alexandr Elichev
(<https://www.artstation.com/artwork/aRyDVU>)
Eldritch Corruption by reddit user /u/revlud

PACTS

PACT OF AGONY

A pactbound who agrees to the pact of agony is rewarded with unparalleled eldritch powers to hurt, destroy and corrupt. Yet, overconfidence is a slow and insidious killer.

SADISTIC BLESSING

Starting at 2nd level, when you reduce a creature to 0 hit points, you gain temporary hit points equal to your Intelligence modifier + your pactbound level (minimum of 1).

ELDRITCH STORM

Starting at 5th level, when you cast a pactbound cantrip which creates a single spell attack, you can instead make two separate spell attacks. Each attack can be directed at the same target or different ones. When you cast a cantrip this way, its damage does not improve according to your character level.

You can use this feature to make up to three attacks at 11th level, and four at 17th level.

PAIN SYPHON

Starting at 10th level, when you take damage you can use your reaction to cause a friendly creature that isn't incapacitated within 15 feet of you to take the damage instead. All other effects (such as imposed condition effects) still apply to you.

ACT OF HATRED

At 14th level you learn to fuel your attacks at the cost of your own health. When you cast a pactbound cantrip that deals damage, you may choose to treat any damage die as having rolled its maximum result. When you do so, you also deal 3 force damage to yourself for each modified damage die.

If you are concentrating on a spell, this damage does not cause you to lose concentration.

ELDRITCH BARRAGE

At 18th level you learn to add fatal force to your Eldritch Storm attacks. Whenever you use your action to cast a cantrip using Eldritch Storm, you may use your bonus action to expend the use of one pactbound spell you know. If you do so, you may make a number of additional separate spell attacks equal to half the level of the expended spell (rounded up).

PACT OF COMBAT

A warrior bound by the pact of combat is the terror of a battlefield. Under the constant guidance of the patron one finds impossible resources to keep fighting and survive. The greatest warriors are more monster than man.

ELDRITCH WARRIOR

At 2nd level, you acquire the arcane knowledge necessary to effectively protect yourself for battle. You learn the *mage armor* and *shield of faith* spells and they count as pactbound spells for you, but do not count against your number of spells known. These spells can only target yourself.

PACT WEAPON

Also at 2nd level, your patron grants you the ability to bind a weapon to yourself.

You can use your action to create a pact weapon in your empty hand. You can choose the form that this melee weapon takes each time you create it. You are proficient with it while you wield it. This weapon counts as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage.

Your pact weapon disappears if it is more than 5 feet away from you for 1 minute or more. It also disappears if you use this feature again, if you dismiss the weapon (no action required), or if you die.

You can transform one magic melee weapon into your pact weapon by performing a special ritual while you hold the weapon. You perform the ritual over the course of 1 hour, which can be done during a short rest. You can then dismiss the weapon, shunting it into an extradimensional space, and it appears whenever you create your pact weapon thereafter. You can't affect an artifact or an unwilling sentient weapon in this way. The weapon ceases being your pact weapon if you die, if you perform the 1-hour ritual on a different weapon, or if you use a 1-hour ritual to break your bond to it. The weapon appears at your feet if it is in the extradimensional space when the bond breaks.

Alternatively, you can have two melee weapons as your pact weapons if both are one-handed weapons. You can perform the somatic components of spells even when you have pact weapons in both hands.

EXTRA ATTACK

Starting at 5th level, you can attack with your pact weapon twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn.

ELDRITCH SMITE

At 10th level you learn to unleash your arcane energy through your pact weapon strikes. Once per turn when you hit a creature with your pact weapon, you can expend the use of one pactbound spell you know to deal extra force damage to the target. The extra damage equals 1d8 per level of the expended spell halved (rounded up). Additionally, the target creature must make a Strength saving throw against a DC of 10 + the level of the expended spell. On a failed save the target is knocked prone.

Art: Sleep by Janna Sophia
(<https://www.artstation.com/artwork/owqaW>)
Eldritch Storm by reddit user [/u/revlid](https://www.reddit.com/user/revlid)

RELENTLESS CURSE

At 14th level you learn to fuel your combat with unholy vigor. As a bonus action, you can curse a target you can see within 30 feet for 1 minute. When you apply this curse and as a bonus action on your following turns, you can magically teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space you can see within 5 feet of the cursed target. To teleport in this way, you must be able to see the cursed target. If the target drops to 0 hit points before this curse ends, you can use a bonus action on a subsequent turn of yours to curse a new creature. Once the curse expires, you can't use this feature again until you finish a short or long rest.

BATTLEFIELD TERROR

Starting at 18th level, when you use your Relentless Curse to teleport to a cursed creature, you may make a single weapon attack against that creature with your pact weapon as part of that bonus action.

PACT OF ENLIGHTENMENT

The pact of enlightenment grants powers that allow one to heal and enlighten those around you. But what heals the body does not necessarily heal the mind.

UNEARTHLY SHINE

At 2nd level, you gain the ability to channel hidden energy and cast an unearthly light into the mind of any living creature. Your access to this energy is represented by a number of shining points. You have shining points equal to your pactbound level.

You can spend these points to fuel various Pact of Enlightenment features. You start knowing the Healing Light feature. You learn more such features as you gain levels in this class.

Some of your shining features require your target to make a saving throw to resist the feature's effects. The saving throw DC is equal to your spell save DC.

When you spend a shining point, it is unavailable until you finish a short or long rest, at the end of which you replenish your pool of this hidden energy. You must spend at least 30 minutes of the rest performing a ritual to regain your shining points.

HEALING LIGHT

Starting at 2nd level, you can spend shining points to heal a creature you can see within 60 feet of you (other than yourself) as a bonus action. That creature regains 1d6 hit points for each shining point you spend. You can only spend a number of shining points up to your Intelligence modifier (minimum of one) at once.

ELDRITCH LIGHT

Starting at 5th level you can summon your light to infiltrate and corrupt the minds of your enemies.

As an action you cast a corrupted light into the mind of a creature you can see within 120 feet of you. When you do so you learn the surface thoughts of the target creature - what is most on its mind in that moment.

When you hit a creature with a pactbound cantrip or you use this ability to corrupt a creature's mind, you can additionally spend one shining point. If you do so, the target must succeed on a Charisma saving throw or be blinded until the end of your next turn. If you spend an additional two shining points, this effect ignores immunity to being blinded.

SUDDEN REFRACTION

Starting at 10th level, you learn to protect yourself by creating a false image in the mind of your attacker. You can spend two shining points as a reaction when you are hit by a weapon attack. If you do so, the attacking creature must succeed on a Charisma saving throw or the attack misses instead.

RADIANT HORROR

Starting at 14th level, you learn to expand your illuminating grasp and fill the minds of your enemies with debilitating horrors.

As an action you can spend ten shining points. When you do so, each creature of your choice in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on you must succeed on a Charisma saving throw or be stunned until the end of your next turn.

FORCEFUL ILLUMINATION

At 18th level your patron grants you the gift to use its unearthly shine to pierce the minds of your enemies.

When you successfully blind a target creature using Eldritch Light, you may spend additional shining points. The target takes the sum of 2d12 for each shining point you spend as psychic damage. You can only spend a number of shining points up to your Intelligence modifier (minimum of one) at once.



Art: Invocation by Leote Durán
(<https://www.artstation.com/artwork/DEJE9>)

PACT OF HAUNTING

The pact of haunting promises riches to the jealous, joy to the envious and satisfaction to the vengeful. There is but a thin line between determination and obsession.

FALSE VISAGE

At 2nd level you learn the *disguise self* spell. It is a pactbound spell for you and does not count against your number of spells known. Additionally, when you cast the spell it has a duration of 8 hours and creatures have disadvantage on discerning that you are disguised.

VENGEFUL HAUNTING

At 5th level you learn to channel your pain into a dark curse. Whenever a creature targets you with a spell or a weapon attack, it is haunted by you until the end of your next turn.

A creature haunted by you has disadvantage on its next saving throw against one of your spells.

MIDNIGHT CURSE

At 10th level you learn the *dream* spell and it does not count against your number of spells known. If you already know the *dream* spell, you learn a different pactbound spell of your choice of the same level instead.

If the target of your *dream* spell fails its saving throw, you are aware of its location and it is considered haunted by you until it finishes a long rest. The effects remain until they are removed by a *remove curse* spell or you choose to end the effects.

RESENTFUL JINX

Starting at 14th level, if a creature haunted by you deals damage to you, it has disadvantage on its next attack roll or ability check it makes before the end of its next turn.

CRUEL FINALITY

Starting at 18th level, when you use the *dream* spell and the target of your spell fails its saving throw, you can choose to make the effects of the spell and your Midnight Curse feature permanent. The effects remain until they are removed by a *remove curse* spell, you choose to end the effects or you apply these permanent effects to a different creature.

PACT OF INSIGHT

The pact of insight grants the pactbound further understanding into the eldritch workings behind this plane of existence. As a manifest of this insight the pactbound has a stronger grasp on the nature of spellcasting and the arcane. But unearthly knowledge comes with a price.

ARCANE SPELLCASTING

By studying your manifested magical abilities you are able to discover new insights and use extend your knowledge on arcane spellcasting.

At 2nd level you know one additional cantrip and 1st level spell. Further your number of spells known increases by one additional spell at 3rd level and again at 5th, 7th and 9th level.

When this feature lets you learn a cantrip or a spell of 1st level or higher, you can choose the new spell from the wizard spell list or the pactbound spell list. You must otherwise obey all the restrictions for selecting the spell, and it becomes a pactbound spell for you.

OCCULT STUDIES

At 5th level you learn to understand and decipher arcane secrets.

You can read all writing. Additionally, you gain proficiency in Arcana. If you already have proficiency in Arcana your proficiency bonus is doubled.

THOUGHT SHIELD

Starting at 10th level, your thoughts can't be read by telepathy or other means unless you allow it. You also have resistance to psychic damage, and whenever a creature deals psychic damage to you, that creature takes the same amount of damage that you do.

DESPERATE FORCE

Starting at 14th level, you learn to peek into the eldritch fabric between realities and instantly regain arcane energy. The act may leave you numb for a while and you must first reaffirm control of your own mind.

As an action you may choose one of your known spells that you have expended. If you do so, make a Constitution saving throw against a DC equal to 12 + the level of your chosen spell. On a success, you regain the ability to cast this spell and you can choose to cast it immediately as part of this action. On a failure, you regain the ability to cast this spell and you are stunned until the beginning of your next turn.

Once you use this feature you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

MYSTIC DECONSTRUCTION

At 18th level you have learned to see the mystic patterns of spells and how to rip them apart. You learn the *counterspell* spell as a 9th level pactbound spell. This spell does not count against your number of spells known. If you already know the 3rd level *counterspell* spell, you may replace it with another pactbound spell of 3rd level or keep it.



Art: Acolyte by Tomas Duchek
(<https://www.artstation.com/artwork/rn3n5>)

INVOCATIONS

BLOOD OF THE ACCURSED

The blood that flows through your body turns thick and dark. It has a horrid stench and will slowly carve through cloth, wood and even stone if spilled.

You are considered to be an undead creature in addition to your normal type.

You gain proficiency on Constitution saving throws.

When you choose this invocation your hit point maximum increases by 1 for every pactbound level you have and increases by 1 again whenever you gain a level in this class.

You can no longer die when your exhaustion level reaches 6, instead you fall unconscious and begin a short rest, at the end of which your exhaustion level is decreased by 2.

Whenever you make a death saving throw and you roll a 19 or 20, you regain 1 hit point.

BLASPHEMOUS INFLUENCE

You learn to use language from a different reality. You learn powerful words and chants that bend reality and push weaker minds towards madness. Whenever you speak, your voice is trailed by a whisper from another dimension.

You learn to speak Deep Speech.

You gain proficiency in Deception. If you already have proficiency in Deception your proficiency bonus is doubled.

You learn the *vicious mockery* cantrip. The spell is a pactbound cantrip for you and does not count against your number of cantrips known. This cantrip is affected by the Eldritch Corruption feature.

EYES OF THE ANCIENTS

Your eyes itch, burn and pulsate in pain as you granted the ability to see past your own reality.

You can see normally in darkness to a distance of 60 feet and only half as far if the darkness is magical.

You can use your action to end one effect on yourself that is causing you to be Blinded. When you are blinded you must use your action to do so.

As an action, you gain the ability to see the world differently for 1 minute. Using this ability requires you to perform verbal and somatic components and your eyes take on a noticeably unnatural appearance. You can choose one of the following effects:

- You can see the true form of any shapechanger or creature concealed by illusion or transmutation magic while the creature is within 30 feet of you and within line of sight.
- You can see through solid objects to a range of 30 feet. During that time, you perceive objects as ghostly, transparent images.

Once you use this ability, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

EMBRACE OF THE DEPTHS

You feel as your lungs fill with water and a dark green and blue muck consume everything around you. You do not fear water and its endless depth anymore. Your skin turns slightly darker, your fingers are thinly webbed and you can feel gills behind your ears.

You no longer need to breathe and you gain a swimming speed equal to your walking speed.

You are resistant against cold damage.

When you are in an area of dim light, darkness or underwater, you can use your action to become invisible until you move or take an action or a reaction.

ELDRITCH HUNGER

You suffer through torturous convulsions and when your stomach finally feels empty, an urge to feast builds inside of you. You feel the instincts of a predator replace some of your own personality.

You no longer need to eat to survive, but you have a curious appetite for raw meat. As an action you can feast on fresh raw meat (e.g. from a fresh corpse) and restore hit points equal to $1d8 +$ your Constitution modifier. If the meat is from a celestial the healing is considered to be of magical nature and additionally removes one condition effect from you. You can only benefit from the healing a number of times equal to half your pactbound level, before you need to finish a long rest to do so again.

Beasts can identify you as a predator by your smell. You have advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks against beasts.

Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with a cantrip spell attack, you can move that creature in a straight line 10 feet closer to you.



Art: The Seer by Inka Schulz
(<https://www.artstation.com/artwork/RA3Dm>)

FUNGAL GROWTH

You connect to an element of nature and in turn it embeds itself within you. Your body grows a flower, a mushroom, roots, or leaves. This growth is part of your body and sensitive to pain.

You are resistant against poison damage and immune to being poisoned and diseases.

You learn the *druidcraft* cantrip. It is a pactbound cantrip for you and does not count against your number of cantrips known.

You learn the *speak with plants* spell. It is a pactbound spell for you and does not count against your number of spells known. Additionally you gain advantage on all cantrip and weapon attack rolls made against creatures that are being hindered by the plants imbued by this spell.

OTHERWORLDLY CHAIN

In a vision a cold ring of metal closes around your neck and a chain appears in front of you. The chain finds its target and shows you a creature shackled to its other end.

You learn the *find familiar* spell and can cast it as a ritual. The spell doesn't count against your number of spells known.

When you cast the spell, you can choose one of the normal forms for your familiar or one of the following special forms: imp, pseudodragon, quasit, or sprite.

Additionally, when you take the Attack action, you can forgo one of your own attacks to allow your familiar to make one attack of its own.

You can communicate telepathically with your familiar and perceive through your familiar's senses as long as you are on the same plane of existence. Additionally, while perceiving through your familiar's senses, you can also speak through your familiar in your own voice, even if your familiar is normally incapable of speech.

When you sleep you can see the world through your familiar's senses. Additionally you can't be forced to sleep by any means. To gain the benefits of a long rest, you can spend all 8 hours acting through your familiar and spend your time reading or keeping watch.

SCARS OF HELLFIRE

Flames consume your minds and scar your skin. The power of hellfire has been shown to you and the price one has to pay to summon it.

As an action you can borrow power and strengthen your inner hellfire. As part of the action you burn yourself to gain one hellfire charge. When you deal damage with a pactbound cantrip, you deal an additional 1 hellfire damage for each hellfire charge you hold to each target of the spell. This does not consume the hellfire charge.

You can only hold one hellfire charge. The hellfire charges expire when you finish a long rest.

Whenever you gain a hellfire charge, you take 9 hellfire damage and you reduce your maximum hit points by the same amount. This damage bypasses temporary hit points, and cannot be prevented. If your hit point maximum is reduced to 0, you die. Your hit point maximum is restored when you finish a long rest.

The number of hellfire charges you can hold increases to two at 5th level, three at 11th level and four at 17th level.

PLANAR DISCONNECT

The world around you turns transparent and blurred. In rapid succession it is replaced various confusing and near inconceivable worlds. As the normal world reconstructs in front of your eyes you feel a connection to more than just this one plane.

You cannot be moved to another plane against your will. If you are the target of such an effect you feel a pull, which you can choose to follow.

Additionally, as an action you can vanish from your current plane and appear in the Ethereal Plane. While on the Ethereal Plane, you can see and hear the plane you originated from, which is cast in shades of gray, and you can't see anything there more than 60 feet away. You can only affect and be affected by other creatures on the Ethereal Plane. Creatures that aren't there can't perceive you or interact with you, unless they have the ability to do so. While in the Ethereal Plane you may cast a spell which has a target in the plane you originated from that you can perceive. You may cast a spell in such way as a reaction to anything you perceive. You immediately return from the Ethereal Plane when you do so or after 1 hour.

When you return, you return to an unoccupied space of your choice that you can see within 10 feet of the space you vanished from. If no unoccupied space is available within that range, you appear in the nearest unoccupied space (chosen at random if more than one space is equally near).

Once you use this ability to vanish to the Ethereal Plane, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

VOICES FROM BEYOND

Your mind fills with foreign voices mingling and merging with your own. Whenever you have a thought, you are unsure if it is your own or one imposed on you by someone else. Yet these voices bring new information and share forbidden secrets.

You can communicate telepathically with any creature you can see within 30 feet of you. You don't need to share a language with the creature for it to understand your telepathic utterances, but the creature must be able to understand at least one language.

You learn the *speak with dead* spell as a pactbound spell. This spell does not count against your number of spells known. You can only cast this spell without it's verbal, somatic or material components, using your ability to communicate telepathically instead. When you cast this spell the target cannot be tricked by illusions or disguises, and recognizes you as who you are if it knows you. Additionally, the target of the spell cannot speak a deliberate lie, but it can be evasive in its answers as long as it remains within the boundaries of the truth.

PACTBOUND SPELL LIST

CANTRIPS

Acid Splash
Blade Ward
Chill Touch
Create Bonfire
Fire Bolt
Friends
Frostbite
Light
Mage Hand
Magic Stone
Minor Illusion
Poison Spray
Prestidigitation
Ray of Frost
Shocking Grasp
Thunderclap
True Strike

1ST LEVEL

Armor of Agathys
Arms of Hadar
Cause Fear
Charm Person
Command
Comprehend Languages
Dissonant Whispers
Expeditious Retreat
Hellish Rebuke
Hex
Illusory Script
Protection from Evil and Good
Sleep
Unseen Servant
Witch Bolt

2ND LEVEL

Alter Self
Blur
Cloud of Daggers
Crown of Madness
Darkness
Earthbind
Enthrall
Hold Person
Invisibility
Knock
Lesser Restoration
Locate Object
Mind Spike
Mirror Image
Misty Step
Phantasmal Force
Ray of Enfeeblement
See Invisibility
Shadow Blade
Shatter
Spider Climb
Suggestion

3RD LEVEL

Counterspell
Dispel Magic
Enemies abound
Fear
Fly
Gaseous Form
Hunger of Hadar
Hypnotic Pattern
Magic Circle
Major Image
Remove Curse
Thunder Step

Tongues
Sending
Summon Lesser Demons
Vampiric Touch

4TH LEVEL

Arcane Eye
Banishment
Blight
Charm Monster
Dimension Door
Dominate Beast
Elemental Bane
Evard's Black Tentacles
Hallucinatory Terrain
Locate Creature
Shadow of Moil
Sickening Radiance
Summon Greater Demon

5TH LEVEL

Contact Other Plane
Danse Macabre
Dominate Person
Dream
Enervation
Far Step
Infernal Calling
Hold Monster
Negative Energy Flood
Scrying
Synaptic Static
Wall of Light

6TH LEVEL

Arcane Gate
Circle of Death
Conjure Fey

Create Undead
Eyebite
Flesh to Stone
Investiture of Flame
Investiture of Ice
Investiture of Stone
Investiture of Wind
Mass Suggestion
Mental prison
True Seeing
Scatter
Soul Cage

7TH LEVEL

Crown of Stars
Etherealness
Finger of Death
Forcecage
Plane Shift
Power Word Pain

8TH LEVEL

Demiplane
Dominate Monster
Feeblemind
Glibness
Maddening Darkness
Power Word Stun

9TH LEVEL

Astral Projection
Foresight
Imprisonment
Power Word Kill
Psychic Scream
True Polymorph
Weird

APPENDIX A: DESIGNER'S NOTES

CORE DESIGN INTENT

This class has been designed with the intent to turn the existing warlock class into a class that gives the player less, but more valuable choices in character creation.

ASPECTS OF THE WARLOCK CLASS TO KEEP:

- Powerful damage cantrip
- Limited spellcasting
- Short-rest spell slot regeneration
- Full-caster spell slot progression
- Customization (i.e. through invocations)
- Lovecraftian flair

ISSUES OF THE WARLOCK CLASS TO REMOVE OR REDESIGN:

- Too many features that require player choice (patron, spells, invocations, pact boon)
- Eldritch Blast is optional
- Poor balancing of invocation choices
- Invocations are used to counter low spell slot count
- Mix of spell slots, at-will spells and single-use spells
- Class assumes pact has been made at 1st level
- Subclasses (patrons) connect mechanics to lore
- Subclasses (patrons) have little effect on playstyle

SUMMARY OF DESIGN DECISIONS FOR THE PACTBOUND CLASS:

- Player choice reduced to spells, subclass (Pact) and a single (more powerful) invocation.
- Patron choice is disconnected from mechanics
- Eldritch Blast is removed and other cantrips are used as basis to produce similar power
- Agonizing Blast is a class feature (Eldritch Corruption)
- Eldritch Blast's property to target multiple enemies is subclass feature (Pact of Agony)
- Weakened cantrip power is balanced by extended spellcasting
- All known spells are single-use spells
- Abandon use of spell slots
- Keep (but limit) short-rest spell regeneration (Occult Prayer class feature)
- Spells learned through invocations are merged into number of known spells
- Spells learned through mystic arcanum are merged into number of known spells
- Pact (subclass) choice is moved past 1st to 2nd level
- Pacts (subclasses) are mechanically more varied and largely disconnected from patron lore
- Keep customization through single invocation choice at 3rd level
- Invocation choices are designed as stronger feats
- Invocation choices are used to add more lovecraftian flair

DISCUSSION OF DESIGN DECISIONS

Some decision were difficult to make and deserve additional reasoning.

ON INTELLIGENCE-BASED SPELLCASTING

While the warlock subclass uses Charisma as it's core attribute, this redesign uses Intelligence instead. The reasoning has multiple aspects:

First, it shall be considered critical for a pactbound to understand the powers that are granted, instead of using them through willfulness.

Secondly, (in general) a patron has more use for a servant that isn't confident and self-reliant, but instead relies on the power and knowledge granted - which motivates a change away from Charisma.

Furthermore, it is a common lovecraftian theme that curiosity and forbidden studies bring one closer to these otherworldly beings (i.e. the patron).

Finally it is also a common lovecraftian theme to punish insight with madness. This further supports the need for intelligence and a sane mind to hold up against the insanity.

ON SPELL SLOTS AND SPELLS KNOWN

The warlock class has a very powerful cantrip (Eldritch Blast with Agonizing Blast) which is equal in damage output to that of a fighter with extra attacks. On top this class is given a limited spellcasting ability, an array of at-will utility spells, and single-use spells of higher levels. This strikes a complex balance, where skipping Agonizing Blast (or even Eldritch Blast) makes the class significantly weaker.

This redesign makes Agonizing Blast a class feature (Eldritch Corruption) to keep the player away from this spot of weakness.

Further this class reduces the complexity of the limited spellcasting, which however goes hand in hand with an extended ability to cast spells. As a consequence the ability to target multiple targets with Eldritch Blast has been attached to a single subclass (Pact of Agony). This is done to keep the base class balanced, but still allow players the choice of the iconic Eldritch Blast ability.

The redesign of the spellcasting technically gives the warlock more spellslots without the need for a short rest. To reduce the power of this approach all learned spells are single-use and costly to cast at a higher level. The balance is struck between giving the player more spells to cast, but none can be cast twice without a short rest.

ON BALANCING PATRONS, PACT BOONS AND INVOCATIONS

The warlock class adds major mechanical options through pact boons and strong lore related options through patrons. In addition a multitude of minor choices are offered through invocations.

This redesign merges these choices into a single subclass choice and a single invocation choice. The subclass (pact) choice aims to offer mechanical options that fit a certain approach to problemsolving (Pact of Agony for magic damage dealing, Pact of Insight for utility, etc). The invocation choice is intended to be a way to add flair to the character. Both choices are disconnected from any patron, which gives the player and DM more freedom in backstory design.

APPENDIX B: CHANGELOG

1.1

CLASS

- Changed spellcasting ability from Charisma to Intelligence (see discussion in Appendix A)
- Changed introduction text to shift focus to pursuit of forbidden knowledge
- Improved wording in various places
- Fixed inconsistencies in Quick Build description
- Added new pact option: Pact of Haunting
- Extended Pactbound spell list with some spells from warlock's patron-specific extended spell lists

PACT OF AGONY

- Pain Syphon uses up a reaction now, but isn't limited to once per rest
- Act of Hatred now deals damage for each modified roll of a damage die
- Act of Hatred damage does not break concentration
- Eldritch Barrage now grants additional spell attacks for expended spell uses

PACT OF COMBAT

- Pact Weapon now supports dual-wielding
- Eldritch Smite deals less damage, because the pactbound has more spells to burn than the warlock
- Relentless Curse can now be used immediately when cast
- Relentless Curse can be used between short rests now (instead of long rests)
- Battlefield Terror now grants an additional attack on Relentless Curse usage instead

The player is only given a single invocation choice to allow for the design of more impactful invocations and avoid the need to worry about combinations of them. Invocations are designed to be comparable to feats but stronger and distinctly connected to a lovecraftian or supernatural theme.

PACT OF INSIGHT

- Arcane Spellcasting no longer uses a book, and simply grants additional spells from the wizard spell list
- Improved wording of Desperate Force

PACT OF ENLIGHTENMENT

- Redesign of Pact of Unity
- Uses mechanic similar to ki points
- Stronger theme based on insight into reality, life and death
- 2nd level feature keeps focus on healing
- 5th level feature keeps focus on blinding enemies
- 10th level feature replaces temp hp with damage avoidance
- 14th level feature keeps focus on death and death saving throws
- 18th level feature keeps enhancing 5th level feature with *detect thoughts* and damage

INVOCATIONS

- Eldritch Hunger uses reduced to a number of times half your pactbound level
- Fungal Growth grants *druidcraft* cantrips and immunity to diseases
- Scars of Hellfire reduces max hp by a fixed value of 9 (average of two hit dice)
- Planar Disconnect grants immunity to unwanted planar travel

1.2

CLASS

- Clarified how spells are learned

PACT OF AGONY

- Act of Hatred now deals a fixed 3 damage to the user

PACT OF ENLIGHTENMENT

- Eldritch Light now incorporates *detect thoughts* if used as an action
- 14th level feature replaced by Radiant Horror, which acts as an area-of-effect stun
- Forceful Illumination now only deals damage

PACT OF INSIGHT



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