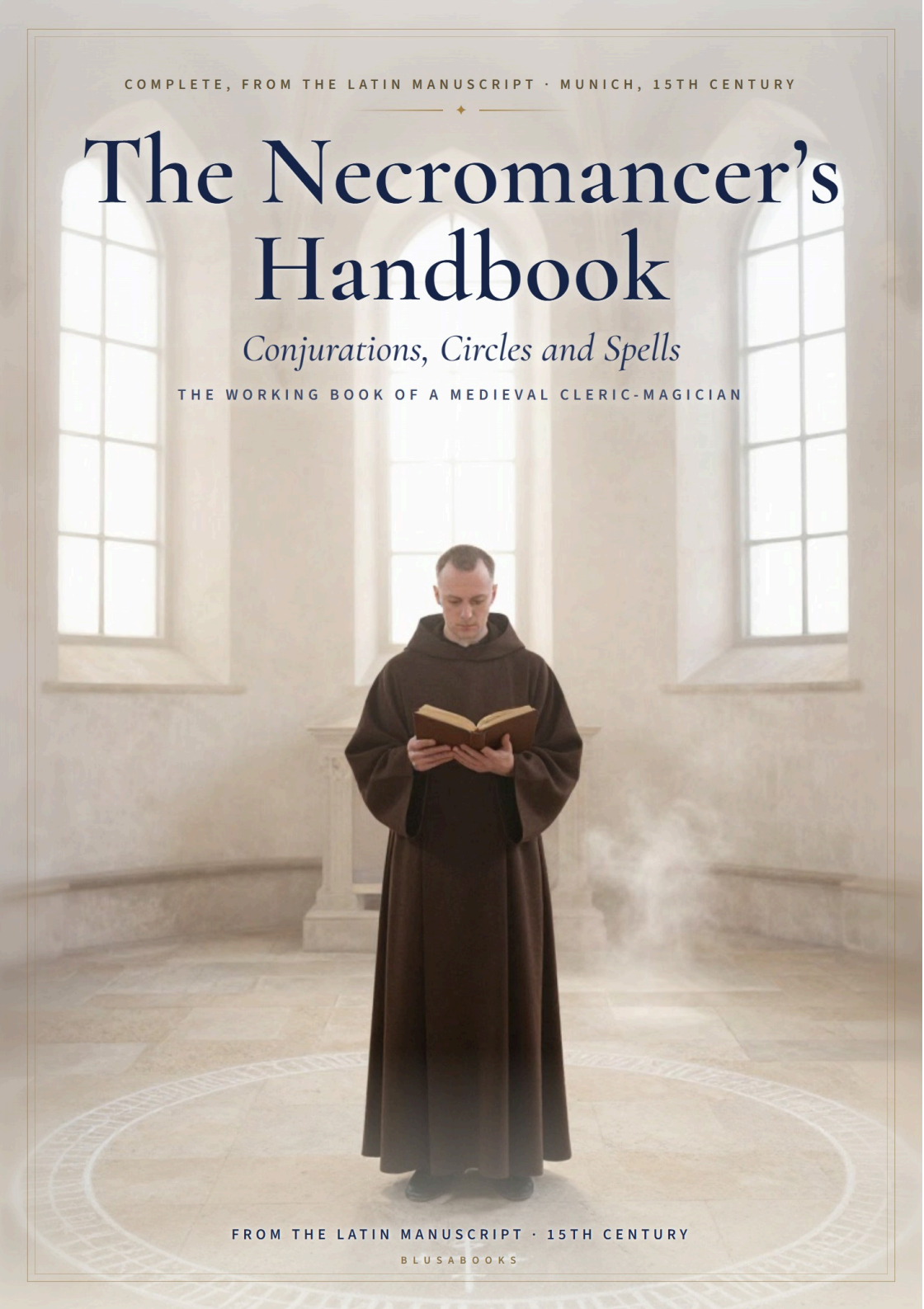
COMPLETE, FROM THE LATIN MANUSCRIPT · MUNICH, 15TH CENTURY

The Necromancer's Handbook

Conjurations, Circles and Spells

THE WORKING BOOK OF A MEDIEVAL CLERIC-MAGICIAN



FROM THE LATIN MANUSCRIPT · 15TH CENTURY

BLUSABOOKS

BOOKS OF WISDOM

The Necromancer's Handbook

Conjurations, Circles and Spells · 15th Century

The Munich *Liber incantationum* — the working book of a medieval cleric-magician, with its experiments, magic circles, seals and conjurations. Complete in modern English from the Latin manuscript

BlusaBooks · MMXXVI

Modern English text, notes, foreword and commentary © 2026 SIA "Blusa Entertainment".

Source: *Liber incantationum*, the handbook of an anonymous necromancer, a manuscript of the mid-fifteenth century (Bavarian State Library, Munich). Rendered into modern English from the Latin, German and medieval Dutch, from images of the pages of the manuscript. Magic circles, mirrors, seals and characters from the same manuscript; the colour illustrations are modern.

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CONTENTS

Foreword 8

I The Necromancer's Experiments 12

To Gain Knowledge of All the Arts 12
To Take Away a Person's Knowledge and Wits 16
To Win a Woman's Love 19
To Obtain Dignity and Honour 24
To Make Hatred Between Those Who Love 27
The Art of Summoning the Bearers of a Feast 29
A Most Beautiful Experiment: To Make a Castle and Armed Legions Appear 34
To Have a Ship 39
To Have a Horse 42
To Make a Dead Man Appear Alive 46
On the Art of Invisibility 50
For Love, with a Wax Image 53
With a Shoulder Blade 56
To Have a Horse to Ride Wherever You Wish 59
Journey on a Cloud 60
To Find in a Dream Whatever You Wish 62
To Obtain a Horse 64
Here Begins the Mirror of Floron 65
The Mirror of Floron in Another Way 68
In Yet Another Way 70
To Become Invisible 71
To Discover a Theft 71
The Mirror of Bylet 74
To Know About Anything You Are in Doubt Of 77
A Crystal Experiment for Finding a Theft 78
The Key of Pluto 79
To Find a Theft 80
A Conjuration into the Boy's Nail 81

On Any Doubtful Matter: How to Obtain the Truth Even of What Is Uncertain 84
The Truest Art with a Basin 86
A Conjuration by the Three Kings 87
The Boy's Hand as a Mirror 88
Conjuration in the Fingernail (Fragment) 89

II The Book of Consecrations 90

Prologue to the Book of Consecrations 90
Consecrating Other Experiments 94

III Spirits, Conjurations of the Days and Seals 100

Prayer 100
Experiment with Stones from the Cemetery 105
The Bond of the Most Wise Solomon 106
A Catalogue of Spirits 109
First — How to Write Bel and Ebal 111
Of the Answer of the Spirits 113
The Conjurations of the Days 115
The Seven Seals 119

IV Planetary Angels, Hours and Images 123

The Angels Who Rule the Days of the Week 123
The Kings of the Air Who Reign on the Seven Days 123
The Fumigations of the Days of the Week 124
On Which Day of the Week to Do What 125
The Names of the Creator 126
The Names of the Hours of Day and Night 126
The Angels Who Rule the Hours 128
On the Works of Images in the Hours of the Day 129
On the Works of the Images of the Night 134
The Angels and Names of the Four Seasons 138
On the Names of the Sun 139
On the Names of the Moon 139
On the Names of the Heavens 139
On the Names of the Earth 139
On the Names of the Four Quarters of the World: East, West, South and North 139

On the Images of the Seven Days of the Week 140
On the Image of Sunday 140
On the Image of Monday 141
On the Image of Tuesday 142
On the Image of Wednesday 143
On the Image of Thursday 143
On the Image of Friday 144
The Seventh Image — the Image of the Sabbath Day 145
On the Times and the Angels Who Command Them 146
The Angel Princes of the Twelve Months 147
For Spirits to Come in the Form of Armed Knights 152

v The Truest and Proven Experiments 155

Here Begin the Truest and Proven Experiments 155
The First — to Find Out Whatever You Wish: Present, Past or Future 155
A Good and Proven Experiment Begins 160
A True and Proven Experiment for Theft 166
To Know Where a Treasure Is Hidden 171
The Great Name Semiforas 172
To Obtain a Horse 173
Words That Drive Out Demons 173
To Become Invisible 174
The Days of the Month for Writing Sheets 174
A Recipe with Strong Water and Quicksilver 175
Conjuration of the Spirit Mirage 176
The Flower of Flowers and the Root of All Experiments 181

Appendix A: German Blessings and Remedies 191

Appendix B: Short Experiments 210

If You Want to Learn About Thefts or Ask About Other Things 210
If You Want to Learn About Thefts: The Eye on the Wall 211
If You Want to Learn Whatever You Wish to Ask: The Glass Flask and the Boy 212
A Prayer Against Fever 213

Appendix C: The Later Copy 214

Prologue to the Book of Consecrations 214

Consecrating Other Experiments 217
A Conjuration in the Name of Jesus Christ 222
The Flower of Flowers and the Root of All Experiments 227
Here Begins the Invocation of the Place, with Its Prayers 230

Appendix D: The Days of the Moon and the Book of the Seven Planets 237

The Days of the Moon 237
The Part of Zoal 238
Discourse on Jupiter 240
Discourse on Mars 241
Discourse on the Sun 243
Discourse on Zohara, That Is, Venus 246
Discourse on Mercury 247
Discourse on the Moon 248

Appendix E: The Book of the Moon 251

The Book of the Moon 251

Commentary 254

FOREWORD

A magician's working book. There are no legends or fairy tales in this book. It is the real working book of a medieval magician — experiments, circles, seals and conjurations written down in his own hand, promising almost everything a person could wish for. How to master any science in thirty days. How to have sixteen spirits in the shape of knights lay a feast from which the guests only rise hungrier. How to conjure up a castle with walls and knights for a quarter of an hour. How to get a black horse that runs over water and land "like an arrow", and a cloud that carries you wherever you wish. How to become invisible, and how to see a thief in the fingernail or the mirror of an innocent boy. In reading it, we see the necromancer for the first time not through the eyes of his judges but in his own workshop.

The manuscript. The book survives in a single manuscript, now kept in the Bavarian State Library in Munich. It is a small, much-used book, written in the middle of the fifteenth century in the German lands, most probably in Bavaria. Its author is unknown. The text is in Latin, a language known chiefly to clergy, and the writer knew the liturgy by heart: his conjurations are made of the prayers of the Mass, psalms, litanies and the Church's formulas of exorcism. The beginning of the manuscript is missing — the first leaves are lost, so our text begins in the middle of the first experiment. At the end, too, it breaks off in mid-sentence. The pages show several hands, corrections and the notes of later readers; in one place someone wrote in the margin that he had tried the experiment long and carefully, but that it "is not true". It is a rare piece of evidence that books like this were really used.

What necromancy is. The word comes from the Greek *nekros*, a dead person, and *manteia*, divination, so it first meant divination with the help of the dead. In

the Middle Ages the Latin *nigromantia* took on a wider meaning: it was the "black art", any summoning of demons to serve a human being. The necromancer did not pray to the demons; he believed that by the power of the names of God, of the angels and the saints he was entitled to command them. This is why piety and the forbidden stand side by side in this book: a circle drawn in the name of the Trinity, the story of Christ's Passion used as a weapon against a demon, the sign of the cross that is required in one experiment and "very dangerous" in another.

What you will find in it. The manuscript contains some hundred and fifty experiments, prayers and recipes. Experiments of illusion promise a feast, a castle, armed legions, a ship and a horse. Experiments of the mind promise love, hatred, honour at court, or take away a person's wits. Experiments of divination promise to reveal the truth: a boy acting as medium looks into a mirror, a crystal, a fingernail or a basin of water and sees spirits who answer questions. There is also the "Book of Consecrations", with which the necromancer "charged" the book itself, a catalogue of spirits with their ranks and powers, the seals of the seven planets, the angels of the days and hours, image magic from Arabic sources and the long conjuration of the spirit Mirage. We have included 25 drawings from the manuscript — magic circles, mirrors, seals and characters — as they appear in the original.

Languages and hands. Most of the book is in Latin. In the middle another hand has written, in German, charms against the worm, the plague and wounds, household medical recipes and a conjuration against elves; in one short experiment the words to be whispered to the boy are in Italian; and the last leaves hold the "Book of the Moon" in medieval Dutch. A later copy is bound in at the end of the codex, in which the "Book of Consecrations", the "Flower of Flowers" and the invocation of a place are written out once more. We have kept the order of the manuscript and divided it into five parts and five appendices; at the head of each part a short sentence tells you what it contains and in which language it is written.

The clerical underworld. Who owned books like this? Historians believe they were mainly lower clergy — clerics who knew Latin and had access to the altar, the Mass and the liturgical books, but often had no secure position. The scholar Richard Kieckhefer, who made this manuscript widely known in 1997, called this milieu the "clerical underworld". The manuscript itself bears this out: the experiment of the feast opens by addressing a nobleman to whom the writer says he had shown this art at his court, and the German recipes were given, a note says, "to my gracious dear lord". The owner of the book lived in great houses and served their masters.

The Church's prohibitions. Theologians from Thomas Aquinas onward taught that any summoning of demons is an open or hidden pact with the devil — even when it is done with holy words. On 19 September 1398 the theology faculty of the University of Paris, under its chancellor Jean Gerson, condemned 28 propositions about magic, among them that demons can be compelled by magical arts and that images and characters serve this end. Clerics found with books of necromancy could be removed from office, imprisoned and brought before a Church court, and the books burned. That is why very few such handbooks survive, and this is one of the most complete.

How to read this book. The text is complete, sentence by sentence, in modern English from images of the pages of the manuscript. The names of demons, angels and spirits, and the long strings of "barbarous words" in the conjurations, are left as they are written in the manuscript, in italics — they are not translated, because in the necromancer's eyes their power lay in their very sound. Names spelled inconsistently in the manuscript have been made uniform, and the other reading is given in a footnote. Some places in the manuscript are faded or abbreviated: they have been restored from the context, and where a word cannot be read, an ellipsis stands in its place. The repetitions of the manuscript are kept, as in the original. Footnotes at the foot of the page explain persons, Bible passages and terms; at the end of the book there is a commentary on each part in plain words, on the necromancer's world and on what we know about this manuscript today.

The colour illustrations are modern; the black-and-white drawings come from the manuscript itself.

A warning. This is a historical document, not a manual for practice. Many of the experiments are cruel to animals and directed against other people's will and health, and the German recipes call for poisonous substances — quicksilver, lead and meadow saffron. We have translated them so that the reader can see how a person of the fifteenth century thought and what he desired, not so that they may be repeated.

PART I

THE NECROMANCER'S EXPERIMENTS

The main part of the manuscript, in Latin: experiments for knowledge, love and hatred, an illusory feast and castle, a ship, a horse and a journey through the air, invisibility, mirrors, the fingernail and the shoulder blade. The first leaves of the manuscript are lost, so the text begins in the middle of an experiment.

To Gain Knowledge of All the Arts

Then let him say: "Apolin*, Astaroth†, Berith‡, I, So-and-so, exorcize and conjure you on behalf of the divine Godhead, who for your own choosing commanded you down into the midst of the depths of the earth, that you send me a spirit skilled in the teaching of all sciences, who will be kindly, faithful and gentle toward me, to teach me every science I wish§, and who will come in the form of a master, so that I need feel no fear. So be it, so be it."

"Likewise I conjure you by the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and by these holy names by which you are bound, namely: *Dobel, Urigel, Sabaoth, Semoni, Adonay, Tetragramaton*‖*, Albumay, Siloth, Moveth, Sadabin, Rodobel, Domiel, Parabiel, Platuel, Noiem, Noiam, Asobel* — that you, the three greatest kings, joined to me and ready for me, send one of your subjects who is master of

* In medieval grimoires the pagan god Apollo has become a demon; here, with Astaroth and Berith, he is one of the "three great kings".
† One of the chief demons of medieval grimoires; the name comes from the Phoenician goddess Astarte.
‡ A demon whom later demon catalogues describe as a duke dressed in red and wearing a golden crown.
§ For the same promised "all sciences" sought by the more Church-acceptable road of prayer, see our No. 63 "Golden Flowers" (Ars notoria).
‖ The four-letter name of God (YHWH), which Jews do not pronounce; in books of magic, the mightiest of the divine names.

all sciences and arts. Let him come in human form, gracious, agreeing with me and hearing me with love, in such a way that within thirty days I may acquire such a science. And promise him that you will then give him leave to depart."

And this too must be said just as many times. When it has been said, lay down the sword and wrap it in the said cloth. When the bundle is tied, lie down on it and sleep a little. After sleeping, get up and dress. For once the bundle is tied, a man undresses and goes into his bedchamber, putting the said bundle under his head.

You must know that after these conjurations sleep comes upon you by divine power. In your sleep three of the greatest kings appear to you with countless servants, horsemen and footmen. Among them a certain master also appears, to whom these three kings give their orders. Before him you will see the three kings, shining with wondrous beauty, and in that sleep they will speak to you with a living voice, saying: "Behold, we give you what you have asked for so many times." And they will say to the master: "Let this man be your disciple. We command you to teach him any science or art he wishes to hear. Teach and instruct him so that within thirty days he holds the highest place among all others in whatever science he wants." And you will see him answer: "My lords, I will most gladly do what

you wish." When this has been said, the kings will depart and the master alone will remain, and he will say to you: "Rise, behold your master." At these words you will wake. Open your eyes at once, and you will see a master, very finely dressed, who will say to you: "Give me the sword you keep under your head." But you will say: "Behold, your disciple, ready to do whatever you wish."

You must, however, have a writing tablet and write down everything he tells you. First you must ask the master his true name, and he will tell it, and you write it down. Second, ask of which order he is, and write that down too. When this is written, you must ask him for the sword. Once he has it, he leaves, saying: "Wait for me until I come." You say nothing. The master goes away and takes the sword with him.

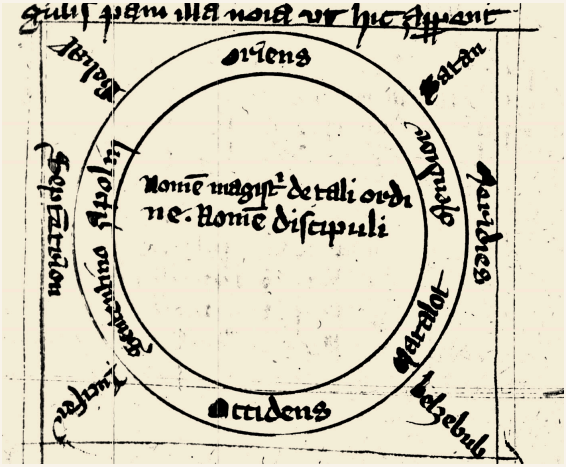
After he has gone, unwrap the cloth, and below, in the said circle, his name will also appear, just as you wrote it; and you must write it yourself with the aforesaid blood. When it is written, roll up the said cloth and hide it well. When this is done, you must eat only bread and pure water, and that day you must not leave the chamber. And when you have eaten, take the cloth and step into the circle facing Apolin, and say this:

Prayer

"O King Apolin, great, mighty and venerable,

I, your servant, greatly believing and wholly trusting that you are strong and powerful, beg your incomprehensible majesty that your servant and subject, the master So-and-so, come back to me in the manner in which you commanded him, by your virtue and power, which is great and greatest for ever and ever. Amen."

Say the same facing Astaloth, changing the name, and likewise facing Berith. When this has been said, take some of the said blood and write your own name in the middle of the circle with the aforesaid heart, as shown below. Then, with the said heart, write in the corners of the cloth the names as they appear here.



In the manuscript — "To Gain Knowledge of All the Arts": a double circle in a square with the four quarters, the names of the three kings and demons in the corners; in the centre "the master's name" and "the disciple's name"

- Between the rings: Oriens (East) · Occidens (West) · Apolin · Astalot · Gendior
- Outside: Septentrion (North) · Meridies (South)
- In the corners: Belial · Satan · Belzebul · Lucifer
- Centre: "Name of the master, of such-and-such an order. Name of the disciple."

If the blood of one bird is not enough, you may kill as many as you like. When all this is done, you will sit in the circle all day, gazing at it and saying nothing. When evening comes, fold up the said cloth, undress, and go into your bedchamber, putting it under your head. Once you have put it there, say this in a quiet voice:

Prayer

"O Apolin, Astaloth, Berith, Sathan, Beliath, Belzebuc*, Lucifer, I beseech you to command the master — here name his name — to come to me tomorrow before sunrise and teach me such a science without any deceit, through Him who will come to judge the living and the dead and the world by fire†. Amen."

So take care and beware not to make the sign of the cross‡, for that is very dangerous. Know that in your sleep you will see the master talking with you all night, asking you which science you wish to learn, and you will name it; so that, as has been said, you will talk with him about this all night long.

When you wake, which will happen that same night, get up, light a candle, take the said cloth, unroll it and sit on it — that is, in the circle where your name is written — as is comfortable for you, and call on your master's name, saying:

Invocation

"O So-and-so, of such-and-such an order,

whom your greater kings have given me as master, I beg you to come in a kindly form to teach me this science, so that I may learn it beyond all mortals, with great

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* Hebrew Baal-Zebub, "lord of flies"; in the Gospels, "the prince of demons" (Mt 12:24).

† A standard closing of exorcisms and church prayers; the necromancer lifts it straight from the liturgy.

‡ The sign of the cross would drive the spirits away and wreck the whole operation — which is why it is forbidden here.

joy, without any toil, all weariness cast aside. Come, then, in the name of your greater ones, who reign for infinite ages of ages. Amen. So be it, so be it, so be it."

When this has been said, look toward the west. You will see the master coming with many disciples. Ask him to order them all to leave, and they will go at once. Then the master himself will ask which science you wish to hear. You will name it, and then you will begin. But remember: as much as he tells you, so much you will learn and keep in memory, and you will master any science you wish within thirty days.

When you want him to leave the chamber, fold the cloth and put it away, and he will go at once. When you want him to come, open the cloth, and he will appear there at once and continue the lessons. After the term of thirty days, when you are thoroughly taught in the science, have him give you back your sword, and tell him to go and depart in peace. If you like, you may ask him again for other such sciences, and he will tell you them at your pleasure, and so on in order. Here ends the chapter on knowledge.

To Take Away a Person's Knowledge and Wits

So that knowledge or skill can be taken away from someone, pay careful attention to the following. First you must go, on a Saturday when the moon is waning*, to the person you want to drive out of his mind, and in his presence say in a loud voice:

"May Mirael† subdue your brain and all your wisdom, sense and discernment, and dissolve and destroy your thinking."

"I conjure you, Mirael, by all the princes and the greater ones and the powers you will want to act, that you remain in this person I am looking at for as long as I

* Saturday is Saturn's day, a time for dark and destructive magic; in the beliefs of the age a waning moon helps anything that is meant to shrink or be destroyed.
† A demon named here as "the taker-away of wisdom and knowledge"; it is almost unknown from other sources.