

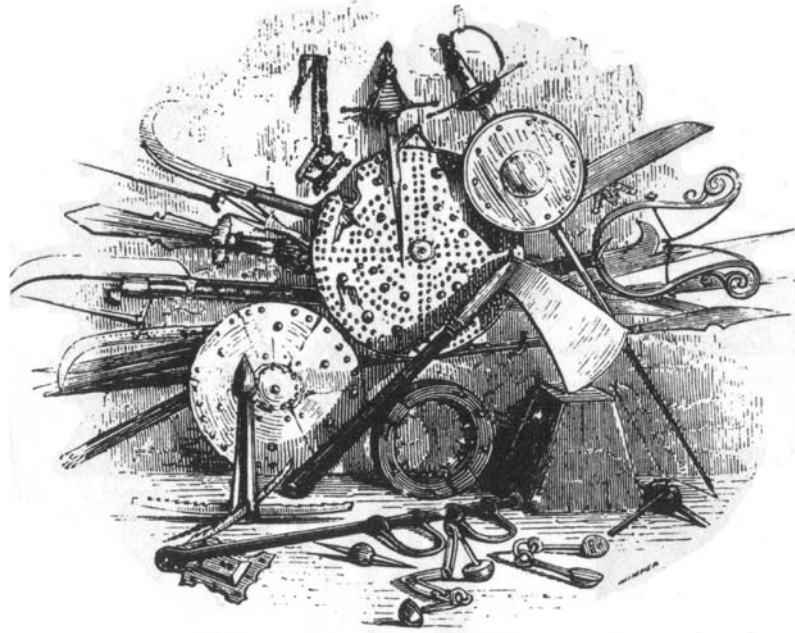
Exotic Weaponry of the Dying Earth

Author & Layout: Ian Thomson

Additional ideas: Jim Webster

Incidental Art: Dover Books (pp 1, 3, 6)

New Art: Commode Minstrels in Bullface Collective (pp 2, 4, 5, 6, 8); Ian Thomson & Commode Minstrels (p7)



Introduction

Various exotic Dying Earth weapons are described here; engineered so that the GM has the choice as to what degree she restricts their use to GMCs. The 'Restricting the Use Of...' sections are to be considered as options lists from which a GM can select those they desire to be true.

Another piece on DE weapons was also published - 'Excellent Prismatic Spray: Iss. 6. GMs can choose which descriptions they prefer, and perhaps even to allow all such weapons to exist in differing locales. In true Vancian style, different weapons may even have the same names.

Why two articles? Both articles were under development simultaneously, with neither author being aware of the other's work. The piece before you was 80% complete when Jim's article surprised me with its appearance. The differences in our interpretations, and our suggestions of weapon-use, are significantly variant, so I present my take here. (This article was originally an appendix for the long-awaited DE Bestiary, which is why it has not emerged until now.) Note that the Firestick, Arrow Gun and Diambroid here have all been influenced by the XPS article to lesser or greater degree. (Hence Jim's credit.)

¹ We can assume that the contemporary laws of Physics make larger versions impossible to produce without magical aid.

Vancian Weapons

The Arrow Gun (TDE, p482) is considered in this article to be the same as the Dart Gun (TDE, p479) since the same people carried them on the same journey. (Thus the author presumes the two titles merely to be regional variants.) This item can be enhanced with Fire Darts (TDE, p482), or Poison Go-Thithers (TDE, p479) – which are alternate missiles for the basic device. We have not included the Musket (TDE, p539), since it was only used in miniature – by a squadron of trained cockroaches¹, but mostly since its existence is the most likely of all to detrimentally affect the Vancian atmosphere. We have included the Battle Hook and the Snaffle Iron (both TDE, p479), and have considered them as the same item because the way in which they are mentioned in the story indicates this. The final listing is Explosive Diambroid (TDE, p559), simply because it has the capacity to cause much mischief.

Non-Vancian Weapons

The Boom Rock (DERPG, p166) is included to balance out the lack of missile weapons for half-men. The Firestick (DERPG, p19) is also included because of its very tantalizing mention in the DERPG Rulebook. The Erb Spear (first seen in Xolon's stories; DERPG, p39 onwards) is here just because it is such a fun concept.

The Battle Hook

"They carried spears and battle-hooks, and clearly intended harm upon the caravan."

The Battle Hook (sometimes colloquially known as the 'snaffle iron') is a parrying item - typically a sturdy wooden or metal grip, similar to the ancient flail, but topped with a wide claw-grip of tempered iron or bronze. It is intended to catch hold of your opponent's weapon, thus placing the foe at an immediate and obvious disadvantage. It is not of great use against unarmed foes (such as beasts) as it rips through flesh rather than taking a firm grip and so is just another regular weapon. However, it can be beneficial against large predators that sport armored stinging tails or the like; and of course some demi-humans use conventional weapons.

Mechanics

When used against an **unarmed opponent**, any advantage due to having two-weapons is cancelled out by the disadvantage of having to concentrate on both at once. (Hence no special rules are required, the assailant is simply assumed to be making around 1 in 3 hits with the Hook.)

However, when dealing with an **armed opponent** (or an animal with a prehensile tail) the hook comes into its own. On making an IS Attack or Parry, the Player can specify that their character has caught their opponent's weapon. The opponent must then make an IS with their next Parry to nullify this. If they do not, the person whose weapon is trapped suffers a penalty of 1 to all Attack and Defense rolls from now on. (If they have a weapon still free, this is reduced to a levy of 1.)

Only when the combatant with the trapped weapon makes an Attack success that is two or more degrees better than the responding Defense (IS vs HBS, PS vs EF, or HBS vs QF) have they pulled their weapon free.



Not to be distributed in any form without specific permission

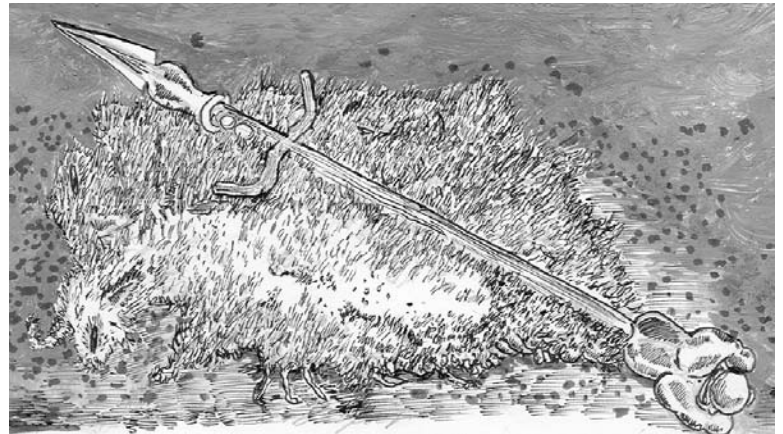
Produced and distributed by agreement with Jack Vance c/o Ralph Vicinanza.

Restricting Use of the Battle-Hook

Any wielder must have **training** (for which PCs must pay 5IP, as well as arrange it within the game). Without this training an automatic penalty of 1 is applied to any combat in which the Battle Hook is used. Additionally, use of such a weapon instantly marks someone out as a **bandit or murderer**, as the recognition of these items as legitimate weapons of war is long since ended. This state of affairs will be sufficient in a Cugel-Level campaign to keep such things in the hands of GMCs other than in exceptional circumstances. In a **Turjan-Level Campaign**, the GM may choose whether or not to allow a warrior PC to have access to this weapon without social censure. (The decision largely depends on the campaign's level of 'bloodiness'.)

The Erb Spear

'Once more I was forced to defend myself, using the erb spear for lack of an alternative'



The Erb Spear is a thick length of oak, or similar wood, with a brass head weighing some fifteen pounds and a broad counterweight of equal mass at the far end. It further has a sturdy cross-bat preventing enraged and impaled erbs from crawling along the spear to reach the wielder. Against this weapon the Erb does not so easily achieve its victory.

Mechanics

One merely prepares the spear, taunts the erb, and awaits the charge. **Taunting** requires any Persuasion success ('Action Enhancement' ruling - rolls made at a bonus of 1 if Glib, Eloquent or Forthright). Preparing and raising the spear are included in the single Attack roll, and thus the preparation is judged to be merely icing on the cake (and mechanically insignificant). On an IS the erb is gutted through the ventral slit, stone dead instantly with perfectly preserved pelt. On a PS the erb is slain but pelt rent and deeply stained. It can be cleaned with effort, but will never fetch premium price. On an HBS the erb takes two injuries but fights on. On an EF the erb takes only one injury. On a QF the erb avoids the spear completely. On a DF the spear is so badly applied that the erb attacks with a bonus of 1.

Restricting Use of the Erb Spear

Of all the weapons here this least tips the balance in a PC's favor. (And is easy to tip back again: "Oh look; more erbs!") We recommend allowing easy access to this highly species-specific weapon.

A character may come into possession of an Erb Spear in various ways. Firstly, they may specify **during character creation** that they have experience in hunting erb. For the cost of 5 Creation Points one gains not only the spear (on which one must still spend a Possession point), but also the new skill of 'Erb Spear' at a rating of 3. To increase this rating during character creation costs double the number of Creation Points as standard.

The second most likely way to gain one's erb spear is through taking or purchasing it from an erb hunter. It is also wise to purchase training (see Mechanical costs for 'Battle Hook'), as learning through practice can be a hazardous exercise.

Training not only takes into account the simple raising and lifting of the spear, but also simulated erb charges, and tips on how to obscure the spear with foliage or in depressions etc.) As an alternative to training there is also the Tweak 'Adept with the Erb Spear' (see below).

Only those with Attack: 'Strength' may use an erb-spear without suffering a Penalty of 1 on all rolls.

Tweak: Attack (any)

Adept with the Erb Spear

Situation: Facing an attacking erb with erb-spear in hand.

Description: Having previous experience in its use, the character wields the spear to best effect.

Benefit: The GM applies no penalties for unfamiliarity with this weapon.



Sometimes one must make do with what is at hand!

The Arrow Gun

"Varmous brought ten men armed with arrow-guns and fire-darts aboard the Avventura."

Sometimes also called **Dart Guns**, they are potentially the most likely of all these weapons to disrupt the Vancian atmosphere, and yet paradoxically are also the most frequently mentioned² of the canon exotic weapons. We have aimed here to create a version that makes it believable and able to be incorporated into the game, and yet easy to keep as a rarity – should the GM prefer to do so.

Targeting Notes

Arrow Guns are so swift in action that success depends entirely upon aim - the target has no means to avoid a successful shot except by noticing the user before they have chance to aim. In such a case, if cover is nearby the target moves smartly behind it, and thus no shot is possible or rolled for. (Partial cover applies a penalty to the shot – see below. Uncertainty as to who reacts quickest can be resolved by pitting Athletics against Perception using the 'Action Enhancement' ruling available on the *Violet Cusps* page.) Also note that some spells may protect from physical damage, and thus repel arrows.

Technicalities

Description: These weapons consist of a long tube that has a side-opening breech at its base. You slide your arrow, up to half an ell in length, into the breech and then put a packet of gunpowder in after it. You then swing the breech back in line with the barrel, lock and seal it, point the weapon and pull the trigger. The trigger causes a length of burning match to make contact with a train of gunpowder, igniting it. This flashes through to the powder in the breech.

Advantages: This projectile weapon propels an arrow at high velocity into one's target (usually a half-man or wild beast). It fires in a straight line - rather than in a curved trajectory - so can be used in places with low ceilings.

Disadvantages: This is a specialist craft item and is extremely expensive even where it is reasonably well-known. Only one arrow can be loaded at one time, and it takes three full rounds of doing nothing else except reloading to prepare it for a new shot. The crucial parts of these devices jam or bend out of line reasonably regularly, requiring their return for servicing.

Usage: The base ability for firing an Arrow Gun is 'Athletics' not 'Attack' (due to the cumbersome and unusual nature of the weapon). For damage, see the table below.

² By 'frequent' we mean that it was mentioned in two separate encounters, and that in both cases several men carried them.

Firing the Arrow Gun

GM: If using 'Weapon Failure' restriction, GM makes a Functionality roll before proceeding - see "vi" below;

Step 1: Using the character's Athletics ability rating, refer to the 'Action Enhancement' ruling. Remember that should the character be unfamiliar with this weapon, an additional penalty of 1 is applied to the accuracy roll. (GM decides when someone has had enough practice to allow this unfamiliarity penalty to be ignored.);

Step 2: Refer to Range Table below for any bonus/penalty;

Step 3: Refer to the Target Size table to the right to calculate further bonuses or penalties;

Range in Yards

Arrow Gun	Short	Medium	Long	Extreme
	5-10	11-20	21-30	31-40
Bonus/Penalty	+1	0	-1	-2

Damage

Larger creatures will take less relative damage from this weapon, so damage is meted out in direct loss of Health pool points. IS: 12pts; PS: 8 pts; HBS: 4pts; EF: 2pt. Also, whenever missile damage brings the loss of Health pool points to another full third of total points, an Injury is sustained. (GMs may choose to slightly reduce pool loss if the target is wearing some kind of armor, or is otherwise unusually robust. Standard armor reduction range: 1-3 points.)

Restricting Use of the Arrow Gun

In Cugel-Level campaigns it is quite possible that Arrow Guns will have no place at all. However, if they do appear, rather than relying on their likelihood of self-destruction to make them unviable in the game, it is far better to employ one or more of these main strategies:

- i) The parts required for their functioning are **extremely expensive**. For instance, gunpowder is not mentioned directly in any of the stories, and we can assume from the level of technology illustrated that it is not a product with which people are familiar. This fact alone means that Cugel-Level characters will rarely be able to even find sufficient powder. It is possible that only those familiar with magic can make gunpowder and fashion the guns themselves with sufficient precision. (And in most cases, these are the very people who are least likely to – since a man firing an advanced projectile weapon may well be able to slay a magician before spells are cast.)
- ii) Knowledge of these weapons is **highly specialist**. Arrow Guns are only mentioned in one story (though in two separate encounters), where Varmous' Caravan is travelling between Port Perdusz and Kaspara Vitatus. However, since neither Varmous nor his men treat these items as if they were experimental objects, they must have

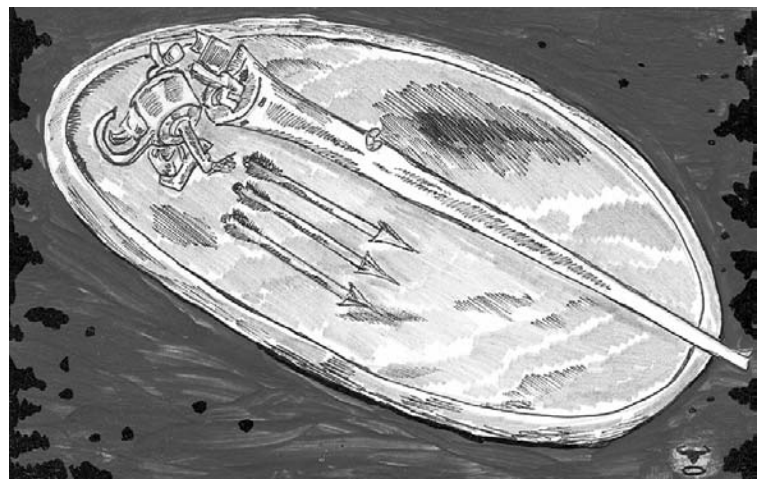
Step 4: Fire!

Target Size	Bonus/Penalty
Fist	-3
Tea Tray	-2
Small Chair	-1
Human	0
Riding Beast	+1
Carriage	+2
Building	+3

(If the target is partially obscured, use the size of the target that is presented.)

been known and used before. Therefore we can imagine that some eccentric magician-scientists in Kaspara Vitatus produce such things, perhaps as an amusing hobby. It is even possible that one of these is related to Varmous, and that is why the wagoner is capable of affording such things. However things go about, one thing is clear, you as GM have every right to restrict knowledge of gunpowder and weapon maintenance to one small workshop in Kaspara Vitatus. This works well for restricting these items even at Turjan-Level.

- iii) **Professional jealousy** from fellow adventurers, and **professional curiosity** from proficient thieves, makes holding onto these weapons aggravatingly difficult. The thieves in particular know that anyone who can afford such things must have a stash of valuables. Professional pride from the manufacturers means that nobody teaches outsiders how to make the repairs themselves.



iv) **Unfamiliarity** with the weapon means that without training or sufficient experience one operates it at a penalty of 1. To be fair, since this is a point and activate device, half a dozen successful shots may cover this requirement.

v) **Slow-loading times** means that for every shot one could get in three good rapier thrusts on a target.

vi) **Weapon Failure:** Each time an Arrow Gun is stated as being fired, the GM immediately rolls a dice for 'Functionality' before the user rolls for their shot. If the 'Functionality' roll is a 1, the weapon misfires. In such cases, inform the player of this fact and ask them to roll another dice. (Or if user is a GMC then the GM does this too.) If the user also rolls a 1, the weapon explodes, causing them an instant injury – and destroying the device. If the user rolls 2 or 3 for the misfire, the weapon typically makes a 'whoomping' sound and belches smoke - but does not release the arrow. This is because it has critically damaged its own interior workings, and now requires expert dismantling and repair. (Which will almost certainly be beyond any PC's competence.) On a user's roll of 4-6, the weapon merely malfunctions; perhaps wheezing smoke as the missile 'plops' pathetically out of the end - falling to the ground only feet away. In this last case the weapon is salvageable. It can be cleaned and reset in just a few minutes of vigorous work – providing someone has appropriate tools, a large bowl of warm water, and a workbench - or other clean and level platform - at least three-foot square.

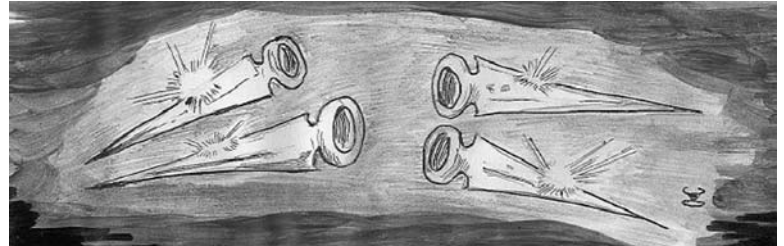
Practical Availability Example

A player who knows the stories well, and knows that such things are not available in Almere finally reaches a point in the campaign where their PC is in Port Perdusz. He casually inquires about exotic missile weapons, and finds that nobody has heard of them. Everyone assumes that the character has heard some strange rumor about such things. (Often the best way of handling the ideas of those with extensive knowledge of the stories.) The GM plans to have some weapons feature in a later adventure, and knows that some people in Port Perdusz *must* be aware that Varmous' caravan guards carry such things. However, it is not unrealistic to assume at this stage that the PC simply does not talk to the right people³. Later in Kaspara Vitatus, the PC (whose player has made it clear that his character is keeping out a watchful eye for such things) is finally rewarded when he notices that guards on a caravan departing the city carry such items. After other inquiries he finds the price is far beyond his limits in any case, and more specifically that the weapons take several rounds to load and often jam. Disheartened by the GM's cunning ploys he gives up on the idea.

³ By which we mean people who can be bothered to tell the truth to a foreign ignoramus.

Poison Go-Thithers

Mentioned only by name in the Dying Earth stories, and only once, this item is an adjunct to the Dart Gun (Arrow Gun), alongside which it is described. These expensive items are cunningly manufactured glass-tipped projectiles for use with the Arrow Gun. Within the glass is a poison, which is driven into a living target on impact. The benefits are obvious, and the main disadvantage is expense. Since Varmous could afford several of these they are obviously available, nonetheless probably only in that part of the world. The GM designs the effects of this poison at will.



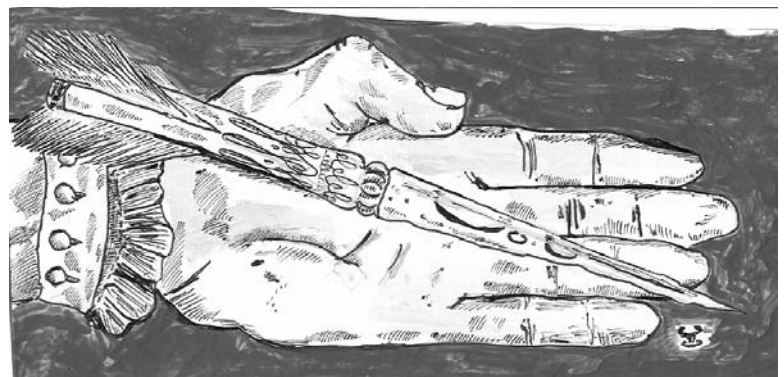
Fire Darts

Again, mentioned only once, and without detail, the only clue is that the same guards as were equipped with Arrow Guns carried these items. Therefore, we can assume these are also adjuncts to the Arrow Gun. (This is also the link suggesting Arrow and Dart Guns are one and the same).

Fire Darts are ordinary projectiles save that they too are tipped with relatively fragile glass tips. Inside this is a semi-liquid compound that ignites in a ball of flame on contact with the air. This compound is a trade secret known only by some of the manufacturers of the Arrow Gun - who turn good profit selling enhanced missiles.

The flame is not magical, and the same effect could be gathered by using adapted regular arrows and lighting their oil-soaked tips before firing. However, the manner of the flame's sudden appearance seems magical, and this effect is well-known for demoralizing half-men and other creatures of the wilds - thus a limited demand still exists amongst cautious, wealthy travelers.

Mechanically the result may merely be to set the target alight (see DERPG p56), and/or the GM may award extra Health points loss of 3 (IS), 2 (PS) or 1 (HBS).



Boom Rocks

Eventually one of the boom rocks fell at his feet, and sent him sprawling into an ancient cistern.'



The legendary 'Boom Rocks' are items used (according to Scholarly Conjecture) by a certain subgroup of erbs. This item is not canon, but nonetheless proved too enticing to resist. These rocks may be of **volcanic or magical origin**. Either way the effect is the same, because any magic dissipates in causing the explosion, thus the explosion itself is a purely physical effect.

Erbs are strong enough to **throw a rock** with accuracy up to ten yards, or twice that far if throwing from a high vantage point. For simplicity, roll a single dice: IS/PS – the boom rock strikes target square doing two injuries; HBS/EF – it strikes the ground/wall adjacent, causing one injury; QF – it lands nearby and the target is stunned with shock for one round; DF – the boom rock goes wide. [Optionally on a DF roll another dice. If the second result is also a QF/DF the erb has dropped it at its own feet and injured itself. If the second roll is a HBS/EF the erb has – if applicable – injured one of its own kind. On a IS/PS if applicable some incidental item nearby is struck and destroyed instead.]



Sometimes the old and tested ways are most effective.

Boom rocks are **primed with a cantrap**, regardless of their origins. They are found only within a certain cave, deep within erb territory, though from there they may slowly spread in small numbers through trade with other erbs. (But never with any other creatures.) Should PCs uncover the whereabouts and existence of this cave, it would be quite an adventure to go there and collect rocks, or even attempt to destroy the place. (Mind you an unusually well organized group of erbs lives nearby. Aided by a human demonist, they worship subworld entities, and the smartest of them are learning magical abilities.)

The Firestick

These items are essentially **large fireworks**, mounted on a wooden grip and housing (the 'stick' part). This adjunct allows the sensible user to fire them directionally and in relative safety – although it is best to wear nothing particularly flammable during the process. One merely lights the oil-soaked fuse, braces oneself, aims the device, and awaits results. The wooden grip and housing is relatively lightweight, and can be reused numerous times. The Firestick incendiary itself is clearly one-use only.

Rules sticklers amongst you may notice that although it was originally listed as relating to the **Finesse Style** (DERPG, p19), the Firestick does not seem to equate with Finesse particularly well (unless mere ownership of such a flashy item is considered a stylish move). It may be simpler for all concerned to overwrite the offending word in the basic rules with 'Throwing Knife'; and to retain the weapon described here as an exotic item only. Such a version requires use of the **Quick Fingers** ability for safe and accurate operation, in the same way that the Arrow Gun requires 'Athletics'. (Use the same Bonus/Penalty table in conjunction with the 'Action Enhancement' ruling.). The use of Quick Fingers indicates the unusually high precision required for safe and effective operation.

Mechanics

For simplicity we can assume that the mechanical range and effectiveness of the Firestick is identical to that of the Arrow Gun. Thus use the same mechanical tables as that earlier described weapon, remembering that in this case Quick Fingers is the base ability.

As with the Arrow Gun, it is impossible for a creature or person of conventional capability to dodge this missile after it is fired, due to its **great speed**. However, lighting the Firestick takes a moment. Thus the GM must adjudicate each situation as to whether the target notices and comprehends the danger as the wielder prepares to fire. If so, this allows the target to use Athletics ('Action Enhancement' ruling) to **leap behind cover** if such exists adjacent to their position - if significant solid cover does

exist. A resultant HBS subtracts one level from the damage table below, a PS two, and an IS subtracts three levels.

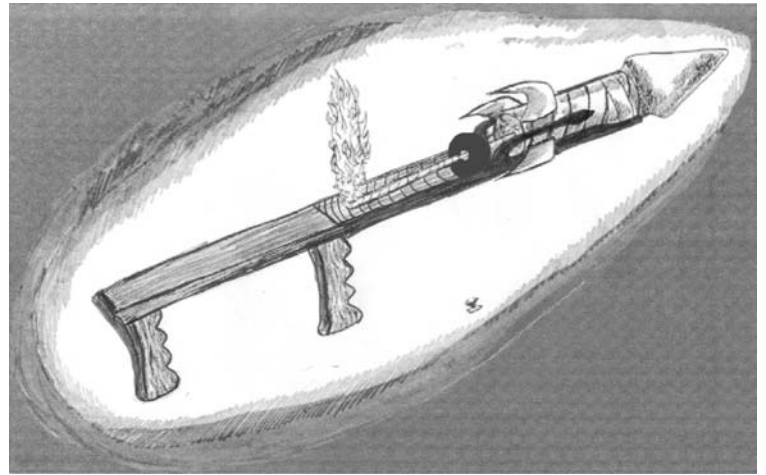
Damage is applied to Health points - so the size and robustness of the target is automatically considered. Depending on the Health rating of the target, this loss is easily translated to injuries, with each approximate third of original points lost indicating one injury sustained. The GM decides if beings adjacent to the target also take damage - depending on their precise degree of proximity.

Restricting Use of the Firestick

Only **some apothecaries** can make Firesticks. (Exactly how many, and where these enlightened persons operate their businesses, is up to the GM.) GMs may choose it to be a one-shot weapon that cannot be reloaded - since it is purchased/found in a sealed state ready for activation (and contains strange and intricate **internal components**). If PCs wish to buy one, also make sure that the price is extremely high. After use, see if they ever buy another.

GMs of a sensationalist bent may also wish to rule that whenever a '1' is rolled during operation of a Firestick, the DF options must be explored with no opportunity for a re-roll. Even when PCs have bonuses due to high Quick Fingers ratings, the GM may decide that the device still misfires when a straight '1' is rolled - and then call for a second roll to determine the exact failure level (1-2 = DF, 3-6 = QF).

The imaginative list of Dismal Failure results below is intentionally diverse in order to avoid the default 'it explodes in your face every sixth use' option that is too often favored. Rather, the **divergent possibilities** of DF should be described graphically in play, especially (but not exclusively) the option where it begins to consume itself in flame. For instance, first time users might be required to explain why their PC who knows virtually nothing about explosives instantly throws the thing away or leaps for safety. (Successful Pedantry rolls or failed Wherewithal rolls may be required to allow such a course.)



IS	Direct Hit: Subtract 14 Health from the target, as a result of burns and concussive force.
PS	Good Hit: Subtract 11 Health from the target, as a result of burns and concussive force.
HBS	Peripheral Hit or Very Near Miss: Subtract 7 Health from the target, as a result of burns/ concussive force.
EF	Near Miss: Subtract 3 Health (projectile explodes prior to striking the target, or hits adjacent to the target).
QF	Roll a second dice: 1: The projectile veers off target, and if any object (no matter what size), that it would be unfortunate to hit, is anywhere remotely in the line of fire, the missile strikes it (or next to it). 2: The projectile veers off target, and if something large, that it would be unfortunate to hit, is anywhere remotely in the line of fire, the missile strikes it. 3-6: The projectile veers significantly off target, spiraling away through the air. Nonetheless it may distract unprepared or non-sentient targets for a round.
DF	Roll a single dice: On 1-2 roll again on table below; On 3-4 the Firestick gushes forth a huge amount of stinking, clinging, black smoke with forms a cloud five yards in diameter, centered on the Firestick. (DERPG, p54: rules for Drowning and similar Suffocations); On 5-6 the Firestick emits a loud 'carrumph' noise and begins to rapidly consume itself with flame - after a number of rounds indicated by a single dice roll it explodes (as '1' below). 1: Explodes in housing, Direct Hit (IS) on person holding it, Good Hit (PS) on anyone in a 5ft radius, and Peripheral Hit (HBS) on anyone in 6-8ft radius; 2: Explodes as it launches, Good Hit (PS) on user, Peripheral Hit (HBS) on anyone in 5ft radius, and Near Miss (EF) on anyone in 6-8ft radius; 3: Explodes a moment after launching, Peripheral Hit (HBS) on user, and Near Miss (EF) on anyone in 5ft radius of user; 4: Explodes after traveling a few feet, Near Miss (EF) on user and anyone in 5ft radius of explosion; 5: As 5, but Near Miss (EF) on user only; 6: As 5, but user takes only minor burns (no loss of Health) Note that those just outside blast range take minor burns (though no loss of Health) and may be startled to inaction for a round.

Explosive Diambroid

This silvery-gray substance is usually fabricated and stored in long thin flexible filaments like wire. When required for application it is carefully cut to suitable size with enchanted snippers, bent to shape and secured using special adhesive 'cement'. It quickly sets into a tough yet brittle form, exploding when subject to **deforming physical stress**.

Diambroid is measured out in quantities known interchangeably as ounces or **minims**. When detonated, diambroid implodes in a most contained fashion, utterly destroying everything within a certain radius. One minim will destroy everything within a one-foot sphere centered on the exploding diambroid, two minims everything within two feet. This simple yet harmonious relationship continues up to three minims.

After this, one finds that an increasing proportion of the implosive force is wasted – technically annihilating what the same detonation has already destroyed. Hence if you wish to obliterate an area five feet in diameter it is wise to plant three smaller concentrations in a triangle.

Restricting Use of Diambroid

The observant will note that we include various standard diambroid features here. This is intentional, as diambroid **by its very nature** defines its own limits and hazards.

Any scholar with access to an excellently equipped workroom, the correct raw materials, and the **ancient texts** describing its fabrication, can make diambroid. It merely takes Pedantry success, followed by Craftsmanship success. It takes a full day to make five minims.

The **unstable nature** of 'set diambroid' makes it difficult to safely transport in a way that allows rapid deployment. Ideally, one must have several minutes of undisturbed concentration to set the diambroid into place and then (presumably) further time to disguise its presence.

Snipping and cementing diambroid is part of the skill of its use. Detonation is most commonly achieved when the unsuspecting target exerts force upon the diambroid by pulling against this adhesive fastening. The

diambroid, now being unstable, reacts to this opposing stress by violently imploding. (GMs with an eye for the dramatic may call for 'Quick Fingers' rolls when the process of *snipping and cementing* is underway.)

Should someone travel with 'ready' diambroid (for instance as part of the binding securing the ornamental clasp to one's hat) this plucky person risks a relatively weak focussed blow **detonating** the material. Nonetheless, such is a huge uncertainty. For instance, you might fall on your face and the hat impact with the ground – and yet the diambroid remains inert 9 times out of 10 (or at least 5 times out of 6). Then later as you pass through the forest and a young green branch springs smartly at your brow, the diambroid may well become agitated - and your head dissolved in an **intense localized anti-blast**. GMs with dramatic flair may roll randomly to simulate cruel chance.

It is also worth noting that some young bucks have attempted to create small spheres of diambroid, suitable for throwing at a target, with the idea that these missiles **discharge upon impact**. The problem with this innovation is that statistically almost as often as the diambroid strikes a soft spot on the target and thus fails to activate, it reacts to the stress of simply being thrown - and **annihilates** the thrower's arm.

Although Bazzard's fathers discuss and use diambroid (TDE, pp559-562) with casual aplomb, such is typical of the offhand way that major items are wielded in the Dying Earth stories. This reference does not establish that diambroid is common; it can be as rare as the GM desires. It also is not easy or cheap to manufacture, and it may well cost a **small fortune** merely to obtain enough raw materials to create a minim or two.

Finally, although it can be used to bait traps for predators, standard uses of diambroid are usually of a **defensive nature** against humans. Distrustful magicians or rich merchants apply the substance to the inside of intriguing doorframes that lead nowhere, or to the edges of lids of reinforced chests contain nothing but rocks. Before a campaign begins, point out this state of affairs and ask your players if they wish diambroid to be anything more than extremely rare in your version of the Dying Earth.

