

# HACK & SLASH COMPENDIUM



## *Blog Collection IV*

A compiled volume of information for players of Classic Fantasy Role-Playing Games. Including: New ideas and esoterica regarding wizards and wands, lists of magic systems, magic and non-traditional currency, a list of genatalia found on the corrupt workers of magic, insect crossbreeds, magical side effects, and a collection of Yellow Dingus's field guides to fungi.

**CAMPBELL  
WITH TAMM**

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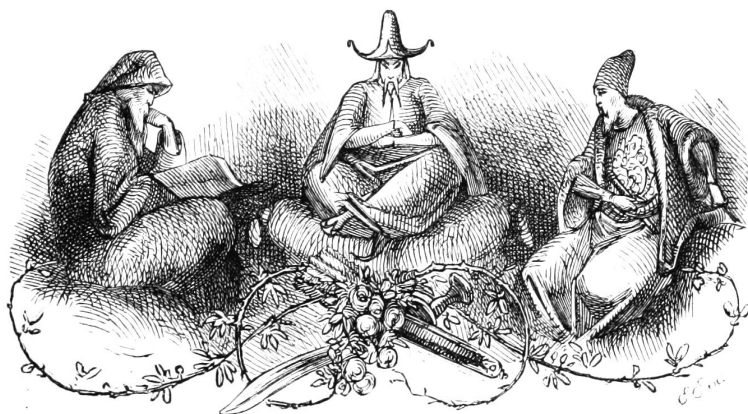


# HACK & SLASH



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

HACK & SLASH COMPENDIUM IV .....	1
WIZARDS .....	3
On the Wizard .....	4
On the Magic Abracadabra .....	6
On the Magic Bell (Curve) .....	7
On the Effects of Magic .....	8
On New and Old Ideas About Wands .....	21
On Early Tropes, Charm Person .....	24
On the Top 10 Different Magic Systems .....	26
On the Wizards Panoply .....	28
YELLOW DINGO'S FUNGI GUIDE .....	39
ARCANE ESOTERICA .....	67
On What to Do With a Dragon Corpse .....	68
On Insect Crossbreeds .....	74
On the Top Ten Types of Magical Currency .....	75
On the Top 10 Kinds of Non-Traditional Currency .....	76
On an Evil Night .....	77
On a Light and Dark Age .....	78
On Normalizing the Fantastic .....	80
On the Arrow of Time .....	82
On the Religious Fanboy .....	84
On d100 Wizard Dicks .....	86
On Unique Speech .....	88
On a Disdain for Vance .....	91





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Collected Blog Posts

A compiled volume of information for players of Classic Fantasy Role-Playing games, including: New ideas and esoterica regarding wizards and wands, lists of magic systems, magic and non-traditional currency, a list of genitalia found on the corrupt workers of magic, insect crossbreeds, magical side effects, and a collection of Yellow Dingus's field guides to fungi.

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**WIZARDS** *Esoterica*  
and a collection of their bullshit

## ON THE WIZARD

No Wizard is happy.

Imagine a doctor. Years of study. Chooses to become a proctologist. There's a reason. Money, job security, comfort. Still, to devote so much time to assholes, looking at asses of mostly older men and women, thinking about what the health of a colon really means, nobody that has the opportunity to become a doctor would choose something like that if it didn't resonate with them at least a little.

So it is with wizards.

Whatever they are into, is not a topic of interest to most people. It's off-putting and strange. They didn't get to be so knowledgeable about such topics by wiling away their hours in idle pursuits. The study, social inexperience, and strange experiments and activities push them further apart from their fellow man. They wonder how much to care about the opinion of a person that can't even read.

### YOU'RE A WIZARD

Magic never has the answer. Solitude, isolation, and the plain fact that magic is terrible for utility, why risk your very life toiling with such forces for such a meager payout? Magic leaves you destitute. Those with money or no future will seek tutelage from other powerful wizards, in exchange for either cash or servitude. Your habits of study and isolation leave you unclean—your spirit, hygiene, food even, are just annoying things that take you away from what matters.

And it does matter, when you finally bind the axial niffit from the dolorous realm to the resonant exoskeleton of the clockwork narix, allowing you to maneuver it under your control. You share your idea, only to be told the utility of such a thing is useless.

How do they not see the potential?

You have your awakenings, as all mortal creatures do. But revulsion and disgust on the face of the young man or woman you fancy, is it your stench? Unkempt hair? It doesn't matter. People speak in euphemisms. You are a 'magic-user'. You let go of the idea that you would spend hours, *hours*, every week engaged in such banal activities, just so other people found you palatable. What a waste! You have more important things to do.

The study of magic at its core is based on a series of poor decisions. The energy for it comes from other creatures and other realms, filled with powers beyond the reach of men. Those willing to traffic in such knowledge often did not have better options. Unsuccessful sociopaths, power hungry criminals, those who would just as soon see you fail. These are your peers and sources of magical knowledge. Each as unseemly and untrustworthy as the next.



You start to fathom what magic means. That people are really just harmonic wave reflections, made transparent by sacrifice of loric natodes. It is your will that you enforce upon the universe. Are people that do not enforce their will even real? More and more you discover the limits, the forms and behavior that make up your so called "peers". They are revealed and controlled just as easily as a simple narix. Well, perhaps not a simple one, but. . .

If you're lucky, you have money, and can secure yourself a homestead and an apprentice far enough away from civilization for you not to be noticed. If not, you could find yourself a group of ner-do-wells and trade your services in hope of finding enough money. Allying with a group who's best plan was to sell everything they own; to roam around try to steal lost "treasure" from deadly monsters while hiding it from the government? You soon perceive it wasn't the best plan. Like you, these people were poorly-suited for fitting in among civilized people. Except they didn't have intelligence to carry them. Assuming their poor judgement and ignorance doesn't get you killed, you put up with their abuse, because what does it matter what gnats say?

Finally, what's your success? Ultimate power and riches? Hardly. Now that magic's secrets are unfolding, you see the endless cost, and it becomes about tricks and techniques and resources to bear the weight of that cost. You see what you want, but just out of reach. Only another year or two of research. . . . If you're successful, you've created an isolated environment that allows you to actually do that research, and then you just hope a bunch of armed and heavily armored thugs don't break into your home and murder you.

Finally, when magic gives you real power, when you've twisted and folded your very being that the cost for what you want is finally enough to bear. You look around and realize you are alone. Your path leaves you few friends and many enemies. You yourself have become old. You no longer recognize the land, the songs they sing are strange, and it feels as if you walk among a cardboard stage. Any who see you whisper and those that meet you recoil in fear.

You spend an age using your power to grant all your lost desires. You form a demi-plane and within your dreams come true. You are intelligent enough to understand the base urges and simplistic ego structures that make up such a fantasy are empty and devoid of value. You live there for years after all the joy has fled.

Finally, assuming you avoid running to the unknown or other self-destructive behavior, you accept all that's left is your engagement with the mysteries of magic. All worldly concerns cease to be yours, your environment idiosyncratic, your only company those few of your peers who have survived. Your intermittent communications with them is the only telluric enterprise that remains.

Eventually, you die while at work, as your body gives into the ravages of a life unbalanced.

This is the life of a wizard.

## ON THE MAGIC ABRACADABRA

Speech is sorcery.

The origin of the word is uncertain, but there is the Arabic phrase, *avra keh-dabra*, meaning “*I will create as I speak*”.

I've surprised centipedes, acquired an ability to excrete acid through my skin, stopped pistons in a wizards tower right before getting knocked out, just in the last week. Our community talks a lot about a variety of things, but we rarely talk about how magical what it is that we do.

The dice provide an ocular power to view the reality of other realms, through auguring of bones.

Now they are plastic of course, but they auger the course of reality just the same.

We create entire realms and other worlds which we explore. Some people might consider that the Old School Renaissance is about the rules, retreating to an older style of play. Others might think it's about moving away from character builds and combat focused games. Some say it's about publishing a proliferation of rule-clones.

But that's not it at all. I make plenty of choices with my characters, have drama, and get in plenty of fights and have plenty of killing and treasure. Everyone, everywhere, runs their own personal version of Dungeons & Dragons, and always has.

What it's about is getting away from straightforward dull play, mechanical stat blocks and adventures that consist of a sequence of combats and returning to magical and evocative realms that are created by our spoken and written word. To walk in the realms of the fay, to be in the world with childlike wonder, to feel the fear of unknown murky terrors of the heliotrope toned underworld

Literally, we create as we speak.



## ON THE MAGIC BELL (CURVE)

I've been using a variant of Chainmail style roll to cast in my games for a while now. The way the basic system works is the wizard rolls 2d6, and the spell is cast on a roll of 6 or higher.

2-5 Fail

6-7 Delay

8-12 Success

Higher level spells penalize the caster, and more powerful and intelligent casters add to the die roll. You gain additional penalties on the roll for each time you cast (to represent fatigue).

The 2d6 curve is a real thing of beauty.

But there are problems. First, there is add level + stat bonus and subtract armor worn value. This is easy enough, it becomes a 'magic bonus' which works very much like a 'to hit bonus'. The real issue comes in when you have to subtract both the level of the spell and the number of times you have cast per day! That double subtraction option is a real tough pill to swallow.

Here is my new idea.

You get 2d6. You get an additional d6 to your pool for every level you have and every bonus for your statistic.

Table stays the same, you may roll as many dice as you wish to cast a spell.

Any die that comes up with a number equal to or less than the level of the spell you are casting is lost and cannot be regained till you rest. Armor reduces the number of dice you have available.

2 Spell fails. Lose the spell

3-5 Spell goes off at end of the round. Lose the spell

6-8 Spell goes off at the end of the round, you can cast the spell again

9-11 Spell goes off at the start of the round, you can cast the spell again

12 Spell goes off at the start of the round, you can cast the spell again

There are other advantages. Wild surges can happen on doubles (increasing the risk as you channel more magical power (i.e. dice) into the spell. Snake eyes can represent spell fumble. If you get hit, the spell for that round is canceled, it is only lost on a roll of 5 or less.

## ON THE EFFECTS OF MAGIC

The original magic-user had a very limited spell list with spells that were very focused on utility in a dungeon.

They only had 8 first level spells, 10 second level spells, and 14 third level spells. They have 12 fourth level spells, 14 fifth level spells and 12 sixth level spells.

This gives them a grand total of 70 spells

A magic user in a second edition game has access to over 2,174 spells.

So how do the effects of magic help solve this problem? They introduce costs into being a wizard. Yes, they also give the wizard “extra power” but they do so unilaterally, meaning, also while you are walking through town or the dungeon, not just in combat.

Do you have protection from evil memorized? Congratulations on leaving a trail of chalk dust through the dungeon. Memorize water breathing? Drooling next to the fighter while he talks with hobgoblins is going to weird them out. Do you have Wall of Fire prepared? Enjoy your walk through small villages with exclusively wooden buildings.

It can be a lot to keep track of, so the suggestion is to only allow the effects from the *highest two levels of spells* the caster knows. Upon reaching fifth level, the caster only has the effects of magic from second and third level memorized spells. This keeps the effects to just a handful, meaning they are easy to track.

This can work well in a game with specialist wizards who have limited spell lists and generalist Magic-Users. Generalists can learn any spell, but specialists can only learn spells from very specific limited lists of 8-10 spells a level. Specialists however can use or exhibit only the side effects from preparing spells when they wish due to their mastery and control, whereas generalist mages always exhibit the side effects.

## CANTRIPS

*“Do not meddle in the affairs of wizards, for they are subtle and quick to anger.”*

Wizards of any sort may do any of the following at any time:

- Touch someone to cause an involuntary bodily reaction at any time on a failed saving throw vs. paralyzation. (fart, bletch, blink, nod, yawn)
- Produce a small lighter sized flame
- Chill an object smaller than 1 cubic foot to 40 degrees.
- Clean one man-sized creature or smaller, or one 10' x 10' x 10' cube or smaller. Cleaning the cube takes the magic one turn.
- Summon one diminutive vermin or insect
- Kill one tiny vermin or insect
- Control up to 1" of hair growth or removal.
- Cause one object on his person to appear in his hand or an object in his hand to disappear off his person.
- Travel while hovering 1" off a solid surface for up to 10'
- Repair or mend small (minute) breaks or tears
- Warm or cool an area by 10 degrees F.
- Perform minor changes on small objects (change the color of parchment, turn a diminutive bat into a diminutive bird). These changes last from 1 day for very minor (color) changes, to 1 turn for subtle changes, to 1 round for drastic changes.
- Open or close a regular door. Levitate objects weighing 1 pound or less within 10' of the caster
- Cause a soft chime to ring
- Animate diminutive objects for 1 turn



## ON THE EFFECTS OF MAGIC, 1ST LEVEL WIZARD

The magical energies contained in the brain could cause side effects. When the wizard acts as a conduit there are risks. As these are first level side-effects, the results should be minor. Higher levels are more severe, both in their bonuses and penalties.

This makes wizards somewhat more unique based on the spells they know and can prepare. It also can make them more useful or somewhat of a liability.

Here is a listing of those side effects:

**Affect Normal Fires:** Light wisps of smoke rise from wizards collar

**Burning Hands:** The wizard's hands are warm and sweat oil

**Charm Person:** The wizard's voice become mildly hypnotic

**Comprehend Languages:** The wizard experiences a slight delay in hearing all auditory phenomena

**Dancing lights:** When in motion, the wizard appears to shimmer momentarily in multi-colored light

**Detect Magic:** The wizard's sight becomes slightly blurry

**Enlarge:** The wizard becomes slightly larger, and when hit his skin bulges strangely

**Erase:** The wizard's clothes become slightly washed out in appearance

**Feather Fall:** The wizard has the same mass, but weighs ten pounds less

**Find Familiar:** A strange forest scent exudes from the wizard

**Friends:** The wizard's teeth become whiter and straighter, his hair appears luxurious and rich, and he smells good

**Hold Portal:** The wizard's hair knots at the tips

**Identify:** While memorized the wizard's eyes become slightly larger

**Jump:** The wizard's skin becomes slightly elastic

**Light:** The wizard's skin becomes mildly luminescent. Not enough to illuminate his current space, but in a pitch black room, you could make out his features

Alternately, his eyes may cast a dim light

**Magic Missile:** The wizard gains a slight echo to his voice.

Alternately, flickers of force may appear across his hands and arms

**Mending:** The wizard's clothing shrinks a size

**Message:** The wizard speaks with a mild rasp while this spell is prepared

**Nystul's Magic Aura:** The wizard radiates magic if detected

**Protection from Evil:** The wizard's skin takes on a dimensional sheen

**Push:** The wizard's skin actually repulses nearby objects. His hands no longer grasp things directly, there is a very small (~1mm) invisible force surrounding the wizards skin. This does not protect the wizard from spells, weapons, or hazardous materials

**Read Magic:** When the wizard speaks, runes appear in the air for just a split second

**Shield:** The wizard's testicles/ovaries shrink to the size of peas

**Shocking Grasp:** The wizard is charged with static electricity, zapping anything he touches

**Sleep:** The wizard become tired and his voice is somewhat monotone

**Spider Climb:** The wizard's hands are sticky as if he had just recently eaten an apple or some ice cream

**Tenser's Floating Disc:** The objects carried by the wizard are weirdly supported, seeming to be held up by invisible wires. This does not directly affect the encumbrance of the wizard (although it may reduce the effective encumbrance of items with bulk)

**Unseen Servant:** Objects will fall off tables and jump up out of sheathes without warning

**Write:** The wizard's hands appear ink-stained

## **2ND LEVEL**

**Audible Glamour:** When the wizard walks, his footsteps echo, when he talks, his voice reverberates. This is somewhat intimidating

**Continual Light:** The caster radiates light enough to illuminate his space

**Darkness 15' Radius:** The caster's eyes turn solid pitch black, and he can see twice as far in low light conditions

**Detect Evil:** An orange flame appears above your head. Anyone who's aura you check shows you and any other magically aware observers a blue flame (if evil) or orange (if good). This is in addition to the effects of the spell

**Detect Invisibility:** Once prepared the talc and silver swirl around the caster through the air.

**ESP:** The caster's skull increases in size

**Fool's Gold:** The caster's nails and hair turn a rich golden hue. She can also identify real gold on sight

**Forget:** The caster will repeat himself occasionally when he speaks

**Invisibility:** The caster's skin turns translucent

**Knock:** The caster's arm is inscribed with images and runic symbols that represent keys

**Phantom Trap:** The caster gains the ability to determine if an object is locked or not via sight. The iron pyrite is absorbed into the skin when prepared and is visible on the caster's palm

**Levitate:** The caster floats an inch off the ground

**Locate Object:** An eight pointed star appears on the top of the skin on the caster's crown. If the caster has hair, only the point of the star is visible on the forehead

**Magic Mouth:** The caster's lips either increase in size or turn an odd color

**Mirror Image:** A short tracer of the caster follows all his movements within about an inch

**Pyrotechnics:** Smoke comes from the caster's nostrils and ears when he is agitated

**Ray of Enfeeblement:** The caster shrinks one inch in high and takes a mild stooped posture

**Rope trick:** Any rope held by the caster becomes agitated, moving about in unnatural ways

**Scare:** When the caster talks or smiles his face appears lit from below

**Shatter:** The caster's voice becomes more high-pitched and increases slightly in volume while this spell is prepared

**Stinking Cloud:** The caster smells like a skunk

**Strength:** The caster grows one inch in height and appears to stand up more straight

**Web:** Cobwebs cover the caster's form

**Wizard Lock:** The caster's nails sharpen and look like a substance resembling iron

### 3RD LEVEL

**Blink:** Bits of the caster phase out of reality. She must make a saving throw versus Wands every six turns or a small item she is carrying drops to the ground unnoticed.

**Clairaudience:** Caster's hearing is slightly better, +1 on hear noise checks, but -4 on any saves versus sonic effects

**Clairvoyance:** Caster's vision is better, can detect secret doors with a +1, but -4 on any saves versus illusionary figments or other gaze or visual attacks

**Dispel Magic:** While memorized, any magic item used by the caster has a 25% failure chance

**Explosive runes:** Caster has flaming rune appear beneath the skin on his palm

**Feign Death:** Caster is narcoleptic while this spell is memorized. During any non-active activity (sitting, reading) there is a 2 in 6 chance the caster will fall asleep

**Fireball:** Caster can shoot a bolt of flame out to 15'. It requires a normal to hit roll and does 1d6 damage. This can be done once a round

**Flame Arrow:** Temperature is raised 15 degrees around the caster

**Fly:** The caster's feet no longer touch the ground. Any falls are affected as if the first 10' are covered by feather fall. The caster gets a -4 save versus any attacks or saves that move or push around the caster and gets knocked back a foot for every point of damage they take

**Gust of wind:** Caster is followed by gusting winds that blow hats off, knock papers around and generally make a mess of things

**Haste:** Caster's speech becomes pressured and he begins exhibiting signs of mania

**Hold Person:** Parts of the caster's body grow numb at inconvenient times. -2 on all Dexterity related checks

**Infravision:** While memorized, caster's eyes glow red and they have low-light vision, effectively doubling the range that light makes visible

**Invisibility 10' Radius:** The caster's skin is now transparent, and objects held or worn by the caster are translucent

**Tiny Hut:** The caster feels comfortable in any temperature range between 0 and 105 degrees. His clothing and items are impervious to rain and water, repelling it for several millimeters

**Lightning Bolt:** The caster can shock any adjacent creature without a to-hit roll and do 1-3 damage

**Monster Summoning I:** Pentagrams float on the surface of the wizards clothing

**Phantasmal Force:** The wizard's clothing becomes more fancy in appearance, and his voice and footsteps echo slightly, and subtle sparkles appear in the light around the caster. If this spell is frequently memorized, the caster will begin to gain a halo, light shining from behind his head

**Protection from Evil 10' Radius:** Silver filings, chalk dust and miniscule blue flames swirl around the caster, forming shapes of protective circles and pentagrams

**Protection from Normal Missiles:** Anyone who approaches the caster feels a slight resistance. +1 to armor class

**Slow:** The caster always acts last in the round. His speech is also slightly slow and uneducated observers might believe he was depressed

**Suggestion:** The caster's voice is hypnotic. +1 on reaction rolls

**Tongues:** The caster's accent becomes flawless on any language he actually speaks

**Water Breathing:** The caster drools uncontrollably



#### 4TH LEVEL

**Charm Monster:** All reactions with non-sentient creatures are improved by 1, however sentient creatures detect something monstrous within you, and have their reaction penalized by the same amount

**Confusion:** There is a 1 in 6 chance per spell cast while confusion is memorized, that the lowest-level spell memorized is actually a different spell than the one the wizard prepared.

**Dig:** Where the wizard walks dirt is kicked up leaving holes. These holes make rough terrain. Stone is unaffected, but eventually cracks and crumbles if repeatedly crossed

**Dimension door:** When objects are retrieved by anyone standing near the wizard, there is a 1 in 6 chance that it is any random object, and there is a 2 in 6 chance that it is a random object possessed by the party. This roll is made any time the Dungeon Master wishes to roll, not every time an object is retrieved

**Enchanted Weapon:** Any weapon held by the wizard for a single round, acts as a +1 magical weapon for the purposes of damaging monsters only damaged by magical weapons. This lasts 1 turn after the wizard releases the weapon

**Extension I:** All spells possessed by the wizard last an additional round while cast while this is memorized

**Fear:** The caster no longer has a penalty when engaged in social combat and attempting to scare an opponent. Alternately, the caster receives a +4 bonus versus fear saves, while those around him receive a -2

**Fire Charm:** The magic user's eyes turn into fire. This allows them to either cast 10' of light, or see 30' in the dark. It does not otherwise affect vision

**Fire Shield:** Flames lick from the bottom of the wizard's robe or pants. They will unintentionally catch things on fire

**Fire Trap:** A flaming tattoo of a magical rune floats underneath the caster's skin

**Fumble:** Any one rolled on an attack causes a critical failure

**Hallucinatory Terrain:** Strange weather follows the caster, covered in sunlight in the dungeon, snowing when at the inn, etc.

**Ice Storm:** The caster's clothes are covered in frost. When they walk, they leave little patches of ice. This does not alter the terrain, but does create puddles of water that trail after the caster. They receive a +1 to saves versus fire effects

**Massmorph:** The caster becomes stiff and loses 1" of movement. Everyone nearby constantly finds leaves in their clothing and armor.

**Minor Globe of Invulnerability:** While prepared, spells have a 3 - level chance of failure on a d6, i.e. a 1<sup>st</sup> level spell fails when the wizard casts it or has it cast against them 2 in 6 times. A 2<sup>nd</sup> level spell fails on a 1 in 6 chance.

**Monster Summoning II:** Pentagrams float on the surface of the wizard's clothing and flesh, moving freely between them.

**Plant Growth:** When near plants they visibly move to face the caster. Sprouts and grass grow up in the footprints of the wizard.

**Polymorph Other/Self:** The caster's form becomes unstable. He may smell like an elk, have claws momentarily, have his hair turn into feathers, or various other transitory effects. These have the side effects of attracting predators and unnerving sentient opponents. +1 on

wandering monster checks and -1 on reactions

**Rary's Mnemonic Enhancer:** There is a 4 - level chance per spell cast on a d10 that a spell when cast will not be forgotten. A first level spell has a 3 in 10 chance of being retained, a third level spell has a 1 in 10 chance of being retained

**Remove Curse:** Caster receives a +1 bonus on saving throws. Magic items and spells have a 2% malfunction/mishap chance

**Wall of Fire:** Caster's clothing appears to be coated in licks of fire

**Wall of Ice:** Caster's clothing appears to be coated in sheets of ice and frost

**Wizard Eyes:** The wizard's eyes begin to bulge, and occasionally float out of their sockets

## 5TH LEVEL

**Airy Water:** The wizard emits bubbles when he speaks, that only release his words when they pop

**Animal Growth:** This has a side effect of increasing the size of all skin parasites and bacteria between 10 and 100× their normal size. This causes the skin of the wizard to appear to crawl and large disgusting parasites constantly fall off the wizard

**Animate Dead:** The wizard's face appears to be a skull with two glowing points of light where the eyes are. He smells of freshly turned earth

**Interposing Hand:** The caster's hands increase in size 50% and her grip strength increases as if she had a Strength of 17. This doesn't affect any damage, only the caster's ability to grapple and hold on to things

**Cloudkill:** A noxious odor and haze surrounds the caster. Anyone within 5' must save or become ill

**Conjure Elemental:** Elemental forces affect the caster's clothes. A patch may catch aflame, another might become wet, some are covered in dirt, others in salt or ooze

**Cone of Cold:** This allows the caster to fire a ray of freezing cold at any target within 20'. It requires a normal to hit roll and does 1d6+1 damage. This can be done once a round. Also, anyone within 5' of the caster takes 1 point of freezing cold damage a round

**Contact Other Plane:** The caster is subjected to voices while this spell is memorized. They command him to do things and disrupt his concentration. Space around the caster seems to bend and warp

**Distance Distortion:** The caster's movement speed doubles

**Extension II:** Spells cast by the caster last an additional 2 rounds while this spell is prepared

**Feeblemind:** The caster must save versus spell when casting any spell, otherwise they forget what they are doing and stand confused for 1 round

**Hold Monster:** Ghostly chains surround the magic user. When the spell is cast they lash out towards the targets, binding them

**Secret Chest:** While prepared, the magic user is able to smell valuables, as well as disturbances in the astral and ethereal plane

**Magic Jar:** The caster's eyes are unable to focus, and she takes a -2 penalty on any attack rolls that must be made. Her skin also takes on a glassy sheen

**Monster Summoning III:** Pentagrams begin to exude themselves from the wizard's skin and clothing. They hum and hiss making it impossible to move silently

**Faithful Hound:** The caster smells like a wet dog, and happens to arouse all nearby canines

**Passwall:** The caster becomes translucent

**Stone Shape:** Any stone within 2' of the caster begins to bubble and turn to liquid, hardening in its new shape as soon as the caster moves on

**Telekinesis:** Objects nearby the caster unexpectedly rise up and float. The caster may fling one nearby object up to  $\frac{1}{10}$  the maximum weight the caster can move with the spell a round at a target doing 1-4 through 1-8 damage. The damage is dependent on the type and size of the object

**Teleport:** The caster will occasionally teleport a few inches in a random direction. There is no danger of being high or low, but occasionally the caster will stumble or become a little stuck in the ground or air

**Transmute Rock To Mud:** Any rock within 5' of the wizard maintains its hardness, but changes color and texture to that of mud. The caster's clothes look filthy

**Wall of Force:** The caster's clothing becomes translucent and exudes a purple light

**Wall of Iron:** The caster's clothing appears to be made from iron

**Wall of Stone:** The caster's clothing appears to be made from stone

## 6TH LEVEL

**Anti-Magic Shell:** The wizard receives a +4 bonus on saves versus magic or spells, but has a 10% chance of spell failure any time she casts a spell

**Forceful Hand:** The wizard's hands elongate to three times their normal length. The wizard is unable to wear rings while his hands appear this way, unless he keeps them closed in awkward fists

**Control Weather:** The sky rumbles and cold winds blow. When the caster speaks lightning may flash, clouds may roll, and thunder may punctuate her sentences. This gives her a 20% bonus on any social intimidation rolls. Occasionally a small cloud may appear and rain over the caster or someone nearby

**Death Spell:** The caster's eyes become tiny skulls and anyone touching or being touched by the caster must save or lose a life energy level

**Disintegrate:** Any normal, unmagical object held or used by the wizard must save versus disintegration or crumble apart while being held or used. The wizard's clothes are immune to this effect until removed (when they likely will be destroyed). The wizard's pack, weapons, and equipment are not

**Enchant an Item:** Emotions and events are enhanced around the user. Scary events are terrifying, critical hits are more critical, wounds are greater, and healing is more powerful. Everyone within 120' of the wizard gets +1 to all rolls, ally, enemy, and neutral alike

**Extension III:** Spells cast by the caster last an additional 3 rounds while this is memorized

**Geas:** The wizard's voice is more influential, any statement he makes has a 50% chance to be treated as a *Command*, as the cleric spell. The target receives a saving throw

**Glassees:** The wizard's skin becomes translucent, becoming ghoul or ghost-like in appearance

**Globe of Invulnerability:** While prepared, spells the wizard casts have a 4 - level chance of failure on a d6, i.e. a 2<sup>nd</sup> level spell fails when the wizard casts it or has it cast against them 2 in 6 times. A 3<sup>rd</sup> level spell fails on a 1 in 6 chance

**Guards and Wards:** The wizard causes bad luck to surround him. Bedpans and flowerpots fall from windows, mud splashes bystanders, people trip and fall, horses go wild, adventurers slip on stairs, etc.

**Invisible Stalker:** Objects nearby float in the air, move of their own accord and dance wildly. Occasionally nearby objects will smash into a wall or the ground. While concentrating for a round and taking no other action, the wizard can control this force as the spell *Unseen Servant*

**Legend Lore:** The wizard constantly has a voice explaining and describing things to him in his head. It talks about what happened, what the past was, who has died in this place, what their lives were like, untold, uncounted, useless information. This affects the wizard causing him difficulty hearing and giving him a 20% of spell failure (excepting the *Legend Lore* spell itself)

**Lower Water:** The caster causes water to run down nearby vertical surfaces, leaving the entire area damp

**Monster Summoning IV:** The pentagrams now float free of the wizard's skin and body. They provide no protection but they glow shining light out to 2". They spark and hum slightly as other planes come into contact with this one and the smell of ozone is strong in the air

**Move Earth:** When the mage walks, dirt is kicked up, and stone cracks and crumbles, leaving a trail of rough and difficult terrain over both stone and earth

**Freezing Sphere:** All water within 10" of the caster freezes over the course of 1 round

**Part Water:** The caster and the space around him is hydrophobic. Small droplets and dampness will be banished, but larger bodies of water will just move away slightly. Any exposure to water will not cause the caster to become damp

**Project Image:** The appearance of the wizard trails a second ahead or behind of the caster whenever she speaks or moves. The effect is unnerving like feedback and makes it difficult for the caster to speak

**Reincarnation:** Occasionally when speaking to the caster, they appear to be a different race or creature. The caster may find his hands have become hooves for a few moments, or that he has difficulty speaking as his form shifts transitionally to that of another creature

**Repulsion:** The caster is repugnant to nearby creatures, -4 on all social rolls. Even if the caster isn't speaking, this grants the party speaker a -2 on all rolls due to the intense dislike of the caster

**Spiritwrack:** The caster attracts demonic attention. Any random encounter has a 1% of being a demon while this spell is known

**Stone to Flesh:** Nearby rock and stone seems to writhe and shift. In addition to being disturbing, it causes all stone terrain within 3" of the wizard to be considered difficult terrain

**Tensor's Transformation:** The wizards strength if less than 17 becomes 17 and he gains a slight Austrian accent

## 7TH LEVEL

**Grasping Hand:** The caster's hands double in size, and his arms become larger to support them. He is considered to have a strength of 18 for thrusting damage, but has his normal strength for bashing and slashing weapons

**Cacodeemon:** While prepared, the caster is connected to the planes of hell. This has many and varied effects, causing a penalty versus saves from extra-dimensional entities, to being overheard by extra-planar creatures

**Charm Plants:** Plants are drawn to the caster, turning towards him as if he is the sun

**Delayed Blast Fireball:** Caster can shoot out bolts of flame to 20'. These require a normal to hit roll, take a full round to aim and fire, and do 2d8+2 points of damage

**Instant Summons:** The planar connection makes the wizard easy to locate using scrying spells

**Duo-Dimension:** The caster's dimensions are somewhat unstable while this spell is cast. At any given moment, their girth, weight, and thickness is between 20% and 200% of normal

**Limited Wish:** Powerful energy is trapped in the caster's mind. Electricity arcs off their hair and body, and their eyes glow with power. Various unusual magical phenomena manifest nearby

**Mass Invisibility:** The caster's skin and clothing fades in and out of sight

**Monster Summoning V:** The caster is surrounded by free-floating glowing pentagrams. They shed light to 10' and hum. Anyone attacking the wizard will take 1d4 + 1 damage from the electrical energy discharged by the pentagrams

**Mage's Sword:** The sword struggles to manifest. While memorized, it appears, phasing in and out on the caster's body. Nearby swords drift and tug on their scabbards, pointing to the sword of force. Anyone attacking the caster with a sword has a +1 to hit and damage with such a weapon due to the pull of the magic

**Phase Door:** Space near the caster bends and twists, other dimensions slightly different than this one fade in and out nearby. Often walls, doors, or corridors appear where another is

**Power Word, Stun:** The caster's voice becomes loud, raising in volume by 20-30 decibels. Even if attempting to whisper, his voice is loud

**Reverse Gravity:** The caster floats, and can levitate and "fly" as long as she remains within 8" of a solid surface

**Simulacrum:** The wizard's features become waxy and indistinct

**Statue:** The wizard's complexion becomes stone like, and her armor class is increased by 1

**Vanish:** Objects appear and disappear near the caster. 30% chance anyone within 10' finds whatever they are holding has gone missing, only to re-appear a few moments later

## 8TH LEVEL

**Antipathy/Sympathy:** The wizard exerts a strong influence on anyone nearby. If a reaction roll is made and the wizard is visible, any result over 7 adds 2 to the reaction roll, and any result under 7 subtracts 2. If the wizard actually deigns to speak, the increase for any rolls above 7 increases to +4 and the penalty for any rolls under 7 increases to -4

**Clenched Fist:** The caster's hands double in size, and her arms become larger to support them. She is considered to have a strength of 18, as normal for thrusting damage and bludgeoning damage, but has her normal strength for slashing weapons

**Clone:** While this spell is prepared, the caster frequently hallucinates that he is talking and seeing himself

**Glassteel:** The caster turns completely transparent, looking much like a crystal statue of himself while this spell is prepared. This effect is intermittent. His armor class is improved by 1 while the spell is prepared

**Incendiary Cloud:** Smoke billows out from beneath the caster's robe and sleeves. Her eyes, mouth and nose glow when she breathes. A strong smell of sulphur permeates the space around her

**Mass Charm:** The wizard becomes influential. Add 1 to all bell curve social rolls that the wizard attempts, and add 2 to all flat die rolls to influence, bluff, lie or convince someone

**Maze:** The pupils of the caster's eyes become a shifting maze. Anyone who locks eyes with the caster for a segment or more must save versus Paralyzation or become confused

**Mind Blank:** While this is prepared the caster gains a +2 bonus to resist all attempts to mentally or psychically, charm, damage, or influence her. Also, it makes detecting and scrying on the caster more difficult

**Monster Summoning VI:** The caster is surrounded by free-floating glowing pentagrams. They shed light to 30' and hum. Anyone attacking the wizard will take 1d6 + 2 damage from the electrical energy discharged by the pentagrams

**Irresistible Dance:** The wizard can no longer walk normally. She either floats, dances, glides, or in some way travels unnaturally when she attempts to move

**Permanency:** There is a 1% chance while this is memorized that any spell the caster casts never ends. Note that this can be very bad and usually is

**Polymorph any object:** Objects that the caster is holding or wearing change shape without warning. Once released or given away, they usually return to their basic form

**Power Word, Blind:** The caster's voice becomes loud, raising in volume by 30-40 decibels (About the level of a chainsaw). Even if attempting to whisper, her voice is loud

**Spell Immunity:** While prepared this grants the caster a +2 bonus versus the spells it protects against

**Symbol:** When speaking or attacking, there is a 1% chance that a random symbol floats from the caster's mouth, affecting a single target

**Trap the Soul:** The caster makes everyone uneasy

The magical energies contained in the brain cause side effects. When the wizard acts as a conduit, there are risks. When a wizard memorizes a 9th level spell, she gains the ability to take on a specific named aspect. This replaces part of her soul with the soul of the spell and has the effects listed below. Once taken, this aspect can only be dismissed with a successful save versus paralyzation, which at first can be attempted at the end of a turn. The next time is the end of an hour. The time after that is at the end of the day, then a week, then a month, then a year. If the wizard fails at that point, his essences has been subsumed by the spell itself and rejoins the weave of magic.

### **Astral Spell**

**Aspect of the Star:** The caster's body becomes translucent and surrounded by a glowing outline. The interior of their body appears filled with galaxies and star stuff. Caster can fly and is immune to normal weaponry. When struck, star material pours from the gash, damaging all targets in a 3" x 3" cone for 2d8 damage in a random direction.

### **Crushing Hand**

**Aspect of the Fist:** The caster doubles in size and her muscles grow to huge proportions. Her Strength is raised to 19, and her Intelligence and Wisdom decrease by the same amount her Strength increased. Her armor class improves 4 places from natural armor and her fist attacks do 1d8 damage as a base. She may jump up to 4 times her normal jumping distance. Her skin may turn a different color.

### **Gate**

**Aspect of the Overworld:** The caster's skin turns either obsidian or ivory colored, and her eyes become pools of a solid color. The wizard gains the ability to open up portals between locations in time and space. She may summon small objects or open up a pair of portals that link to each other.

### **Imprisonment**

**Aspect of the Warden:** The caster's body becomes more dense, gaining an increase of 2 to armor class and doubling in weight. Spending a round concentrating the caster can raise a permanent stone wall 5' thick, 10' high, and 20' long.

### **Meteor Swarm**

**Aspect of the Meteor:** Caster gains a fire aura that does 3d6 damage to adjacent creatures and acts as a fire shield (hot). She can throw balls of fire, one per round, doing 5d6 damage to any target she hits.

## Monster Summoning VII

**Aspect of the Summoner:** The caster has a number of floating arcane symbols that act as satellites. They can be used to attack a monster within 40', doing 4d8 damage, or they can be used defensively protecting the caster from ranged weapons and raising the caster's armor class by 8 as a shield bonus, or they can be used to support the caster allowing her to walk through the air.

## Power Word, Kill

**Aspect of the Black Bolt:** The caster's voice is a wave of destruction. She may shatter any object with her voice up to 100 pounds per caster level using the spell in this way expends the spell. Using the voice to harm a creature kills it as the definition of the spell. Otherwise the caster may not speak.

## Prismatic Sphere

**Aspect of the Universal Shaman:** The caster gains a limited ability to transmute objects into other objects. Rain can be turned into flower petals, fire can be turned into streaming paper, blood can be changed into insects. Doing so takes a full round, but the caster is limited to changing small objects into other objects.

## Shape Change

**Aspect of the Mutable Form:** Your form becomes liquid and malleable. You may spend a turn to form part of your body into a certain trait, gaining you an animals or creatures natural ability. Attacks against you do 3 points less damage than normal because of the nature of your body.

## Temporal Stasis

**Aspect of the Eternal Form:** Your skin becomes gleaming and speckled and you lightly glow a golden color. You do not age while this spell is prepared and your touch causes sleep to all creatures of 4 hit dice or less. Higher level creatures receive a saving throw versus the sleep effect.

## Time Stop

**Aspect of the Hourglass:** While this spell is prepared, you instantly experience the moment it is cast, and then live backwards from that moment. at any given time you have no idea what has just happened, but have a clear understand of what will happen. The Dungeon Master informs you of what is ahead privately and any attacks or actions you take have a +4 bonus on the roll.

## Wish

**Aspect of the Quantum:** This aspect is too powerful to be maintained for long. If the spell is not cast, every molecule of the caster's body vibrates with energy with appropriate effects.



## ON NEW AND OLD IDEAS ABOUT WANDS

Some thoughts on wands. . .

- Wands have between 1 and 50 charges that are spent to produce specific effects, such as fireballs or cure light wounds
- Wands do a certain type of damage (Fire, Shock, Ice) if the target fails a save versus spells
- Wands of a certain magic school allow the caster to make a save versus spells to avoid losing the spell
- Spell wands reduce the resistance between the wizard and the target, either making the save more difficult to resist or increasing the damage per die.
- Wizards can store a certain number of spells in the wand to be used that don't count against his daily total.
- Wands are actually physical constructs that are spells. Each one provides a very specific unique power. Without access to wands, wizards are nothing more than conjurers of cheap tricks.
- A wand provides no special bonus, but without the wand magical energy cannot be focused. The more powerful the energy, the more rare the substance needed. 1st level spells will work with heartoak, but 7<sup>th</sup> require solid pearl
- Wands all produce unique damage effects, like a 10' lightning storm or a force push that knocks someone 15', but only have a handful of charges. Then they become 'burnt out' and must be re-crafted using a variety of items and gemstones
- Wands aren't necessary, but they aim the magic like an antenna preventing its detection from nearby wizards and witches, otherwise it is broadcast like a powerful radio signal.
- Wands act like a sidearm, allowing the wizard to cast any spell he knows when out of spells or mana, but at a much reduced effectiveness

Yeah, so, 100 charges, huh. One of my players seems to think that 100 free ice storms might be a problem for me as a Dungeon Master.

So, you look at the old dungeon, Greyhawk, by Gary. Perhaps you look at the new one, with recent photographs of the Hobby Shop Dungeon by Ernie. If you'll look closely, you'll see this megadungeon only has 17 pages of content!

That's a big map to only have 17 pages!

That's the point. Players would spend a long time wandering around a very, very, empty place. Hundreds of people could go in, because it was mostly empty. And what they did was map, look for secrets, encounter rooms, and fight wandering monsters.

If you're doing that, 100 ice storms make sense.

But, having played in some old school renaissance games, online and in person, I can say that if something like that is happening somewhere, it's not anywhere I've seen.

100 charges is quite a bit. Tracking the number of charges used sucks. So the new solution posited by the old school renaissance is the die roll. You roll a die, and if it comes up a certain number, the wand is out of charges.

There are variations on this, of course. Sometimes the wand may sputter or explode. The wand may have different stages of degradation. The number of dice rolled and when the wand fails may vary. The key to this is to find a number of charges the wand is expected to have, and then find a percentage in some dice combination that matches those charges.

Here are some examples:

- Rolling 3d6 for a fully charged wand against a single d6. If the single d6 beats all three rolls, the wand degrades down to 2d6. This method also stipulates that you charge up a wand via the dice, 2d4->2d6->2d8, etc. But you have to roll for the dice for the new charge level, and if you roll over a seven, you overcharge the wand and it explodes.
- Then there is this system, which tracks ammo and wand usage by having a single ammo die (1d12, etc.). If a one is rolled, it degrades down to the next lowest die.
- You can also track wand (or arrow) charges with a deck of cards. Either have a certain card indicate the end of wand charges, with the size of the deck being the limiting factor, or simply using cards (or chits) to represent ammunition or charges.

These basic methods of resolution are sound, and merely require you to decide how often, statistically, the wands will fail. Sometimes this can give you greater than the expected number of charges, and that's all right.

There are more esoteric options which allow wands to convert the magic users spell energy into other spells allowing more flexibility, or wands that don't cast spells but shoot energy instead.

Feats that allowed you to modify wand usage, including the ability to craft wands, increase the power of spells cast from wands, fire two wands in the same round (with the second wand using two charges), increase the power of the spells yet again by expending extra charges, and an effect that allows you to trigger a wands effect by slapping someone upside the head with it (smite!).

What are they, really?

At this point, we should ask ourselves what the point of a wand is, really? What does it do to the game? If a wand has nearly 100 charges, or even 20, of a powerful area affect spell, does that negate the next 15 combats? What if you're running a game where there's not a lot of fighting, that could last for months, or even years.

In earlier versions of Dungeons & Dragons, they were effectively spell batteries. A gun of cure light wounds or magic missile. Perhaps that's really what they are, an option that gives casters something useful to do every round. The *Cure Light Wounds* wand meant that you never had to fight not at full hit points, for a measly few hundred gold.

Perhaps the mechanic is wrong, really. Perhaps, everything should be charged, including that +1 sword! Or perhaps nothing should be, and the wand should just allow the caster to cast the spell. After all, that's effectively what 100 charges means.

But the key thing about wands is that they both define the role of the wizard, and the role of combat in your game. If you can load up a wand with *Cure Light Wounds*, then you are effectively saying "fight any fight that doesn't kill you". If the wizard can shoot 3d4 damage to any target and auto hit every round for the cost of a few hundred gold, it reduces (but does not eliminate) the utility of the fighter.

What was the chain of logic for wand and staff charges. 200 charges for a staff in OD&D? 100 in Advanced? This dropped down to 1d10 charges in basic, or 2d10 charges in expert. Obviously we can solve the problem, and wands should have the charges we think they should have—numerous options are in the articles linked above. I'm interested in a bit of history into how this happened—who though 100 or 200 charges was a good idea?

Here are some more interesting quirks of wands:

- The wand has a counter that counts down the number of charges left in the wand, but the counter is wrong.
- The wand has no spell of its own, but if a certain spell is cast through the wand, the wand alters the spell to have a different effect.
  - i. *Wand of Shooting Stars*, when magic missile is cast through this wand, it fires one missile of the damage total of the number of missiles available. After striking the first target for this damage, the missile streaks to a second target doing one die less damage. A wizard with 3 missiles hits one target for 3d4+3 damage, a second target for 2d4+2 and a third target for 1d4+1.
- Trapped wands often have keywords on them that disintegrate the wand or even cause it to detonate harming the wielder.
- The wand has a random effect, each time it is used. The effect isn't truly random, but is based on some variable that the players might become aware of (Day/Night, Aboveground/Belowground, N/S/E/W, etc.)
- The wand is unusual in some way, made from living insects, solid light, coherent sound, The wand is actually a sword or a shield. etc.
- The wand is represented in some fashion that communicates it's charges. Every time it is used a piece falls of, a strip is peeled away, it becomes shorter like a pencil in a sharpener.

## ON EARLY TROPES, CHARM PERSON

*Charm Person* isn't what it used to be.

In the earliest games, *Charm Person* gave the magic-user a slave. Fighters, ogres, and mages were charmed and sent forward into traps and dangerous situations.

From the Original Dungeons & Dragons text:

*Charm Person: This spell applies to all two-legged, generally mammalian figures near to or less than man-size, excluding all monsters in the "Undead" class but including Sprites, Pixies, Nixies, Kobolds, Goblins, Orcs, Hobgoblins and Gnolls. If the spell is successful it will cause the charmed entity to come completely under the influence of the Magic-User until such time as the "charm" is dispelled (Dispel Magic). Range: 12".— [Vol. 1, p. 23]*

"Completely under the influence of the magic user" with no hit die limit. Quite powerful indeed. But is this how the spell was used?

*"Mordenkainen was my first magic-user PC, as a matter of fact. In a fairly early stage of his adventuring career, Mordenkainen encountered a NPC in a dungeon, used Charm Person, and thus gained an apprentice. Bigby was then only 3rd level. After having him as a flunky for a fair number of adventures, I started playing Bigby as my PC." -Gary Gygax*

From Gary's Recollections on ENworld:

*Incidentally, I remember reading somewhere that the lone surviving PC from a party was captured by the kobolds(I think) and asked to be taken to the leader. The PC was a mage and had one spell left which happened to be charm person. Upon meeting the leader, he cast the spell, and the kobold leader failed his save miserably. It sounded like the PC befriended the head kobold and started calling the shots after that. What's the current status of that situation? -Jamie*

*That is essentially correct. A female magic-user made common cause with the goblin chief after successfully charming him, assisted in arming and equipping the goblin forces, but when more PC parties began to raid the place I determined that she took what was available and beat it. No sense in risking one's life on behalf of goblins for no more than a heap of silver. -Gary Gygax*

More from *Power Score* on Castle Greyhawk:

*Charming NPCs in the dungeon to use as henchmen seems to be a pretty common tactic in the dungeon. The heroes were attacked by three fighters in plate mail. They charmed one and were quite pleased to learn he was 5th level, possibly higher level than the PCs themselves. Remember some evil wizards may try to do the same to the heroes. -Power Score*

Over at *Blog of Holding*, Paul talks about *Charm Person* in a game with Mike Monard.

*First of all, Charm Person is a pretty cool spell, as it unlocks a new sort of pokémon-collecting henchmen acquisition system at level 1. You might not get a castle and followers until level 10 or so, but you can, like Mike's level 1 magic-user Lessnard in Gygax's game, pick up a fifth-level fighting man as a bodyguard if he happens to fail his saving throw. In OD&D, Charm Person can be long-lasting or permanent, but Mike emphasized that it didn't do more than the name implied: it made someone your buddy, not your slave. If you didn't treat your new friend fairly, they might not be your willing ally forever.*

*I mention this because, when we encountered four bandits who tried to shake us down for 100 GP each, our wizard cast Charm Person on their lieutenant. Suddenly the lieutenant was all affability: he consulted with his men and they agreed to take us to "meet the boss." "But aren't we supposed to lead them into an ambush?" asked the dumbest of the bandits. - Blog of Holding*

And of course, endless arguments about what *Charm Person* should really be capable of have raged across magazine forums and the internet since the spells inception. But it seems pretty clear from the origins of use, that it turns an enemy into a party member.



## ON THE TOP 10 DIFFERENT MAGIC SYSTEMS

10) **Spell Points** *"Mana was defined in the introduction to the mage classes in Chapter 3 as the energy which powers most of the magik used by most mages."* —Arduin, *The Compleat Arduin Book I*

9) **Sorcery** *"A sorcerer casts arcane spells which are drawn primarily from the sorcerer/wizard spell list. He can cast any spell he knows without preparing it ahead of time, the way a wizard or cleric must."* —*Players Handbook 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*

8) **Ley Line Magic** *"Ley lines are a matrix of natural Potential Psychic Energy that run in straight lines across the globe. The source of the energy is unknown and apparently inexhaustible."* —*Palladium core book*

7) **Channeling Holy Power** *"The Channeler derives his power from another being, and is in its debt. If not for his deity, the Channeler would have no power himself. This is how a Channeling spell user should view his power and ability."* —*Channeling Companion, Rolemaster*

6) **Spell Lists** *"Spells are grouped into lists. A spell list is an ordering of spells based upon the correlation of level, intricacy, and potency. Spell lists are learned in stages, as the character progresses in experience, knowledge, and power."* —*Spell Law, Rolemaster*

5) **Recharge Magic** *"In this variant, spellcasters don't have a hard limit on spells per day. Instead, it takes time to gather the magical energies required to cast a spell of a particular level, so the characters must wait a number of rounds, minutes or hours before casting such a spell again."* —*Unearthed Arcana*

4) **Incantation and Ritual Magic** *"Rituals are complex ceremonies that create magic effects. You don't memorize or prepare a ritual; a ritual is so long and complex that no one could ever commit the whole thing to memory. To perform a ritual, you need to read from a book or scroll containing it. A ritual book contains one or more rituals that you can use as often and as many times as you like, as long as you can spare the time and the components to perform the ritual..."* —*Players Handbook, 4th edition*

3) **Spheres** *"Fifteen magic arts describe your mastery of the various fields of magic: five techniques and ten forms. The techniques describe what you do, and the forms describe what you are affecting. Each spell combines one form and one technique. Thus a "Create fire" spell would produce light, heat, or fire, and a "Control Fire" spell could somehow control light, heat, or fire. Each of the fifteen arts has a Latin name."* —*Ars Magica*

2) **Fatigue Casting** "The effort of manipulating mana can exhaust or even injure a magician. . . Drain damage is usually stun damage." —Shadowrun 3<sup>rd</sup> edition core book

### 1) Vancian Magic

"Mazirian stroked his chin. Apparently he must capture the girl himself. Later, when black night lay across the forest, he would seek through his books for spells to guard him through the unpredictable glades. They would be poignant corrosive spells, of such a nature that one would daunt the brain of an ordinary man and two render him mad. Mazirian, by dint of stringent exercise, could encompass four of the most formidable, or six of the lesser spells.

. . . Midnight found him in his study, poring through leather-bound tomes and untidy portfolios ... At one time a thousand or more runes, spells, incantations, curses and sorceries had been known. Ascolais, and the white city Kaiin half in ruins, only a few more than a hundred spells remained to the knowledge of man. Of these, Mazirian had access to seventy-three, and gradually, by stratagem and negotiation, was securing the others.

Mazirian made a selection from his books and with great effort forced five spells upon his brain: Phandaal's Gyrator, Felojun's Second Hypnotic Spell, The Excellent Prismatic Spray, The Charm of Untiring Nourishment, and the Spell of the Omnipotent Sphere. This accomplished, Mazirian drank wine and retired to his couch." —The Dying Earth by Jack Vance



## ON THE WIZARDS PANOPLY

Benjamin Baugh created a post about the accoutrements of wizards on Google+. It's a great idea and I wanted to examine the suggestions in greater depth, both providing more options and ideas, collecting some of the articles written about the items so far, and expanding on the general idea. Here is what he had to say:

*"Mortals lack the capacity for too much inherent sorcery. There's a little magic there, and in the magic user, this capacity is honed and trained, but the mortal spirit can not burn bright enough by itself to light potent magics. In game terms, the unaugmented magic user can only cast first level spells. Higher-order spell slots can be used to cast lower level spells, but without aid a magic user is limited to first level.*

*Accessing higher order spells requires adding to one's panoply—the idiomatic collection of magical resources a magic user must accumulate to become a great and powerful wizard one day. Each level of spell beyond the first requires one magical thing. These are acquired during play—and can be lost during play. Each type of magical thing has some advantages and some disadvantages. If lost or destroyed, you can't acquire that particular type of magical thing again until you gain a level. You can have more than one of a particular thing, unless otherwise noted, though you can't acquire two of the same type of thing in a row."*

Attempts to cast a second level spell or higher roll 1d6 plus spell level on the following table. If you have exceptional intelligence (13+) you may subtract 1 from the roll. If an effect is rolled more than once a session, move up to the next higher effect on the list.

2. Spell functions normally.
3. Spell functions normally, but magical energies have warped your aura. -2 or disadvantage on all saving throws for 1 session.
4. Spell fails and is lost from memory.
5. Spell functions, but magical backlash occurs. Take 1d6 damage per spell level.
6. Spell functions, but magical explosion occurs. Take 1d6 damage per spell level in 30' radius.
7. Spell fails, but magical explosion as above.
8. Spell nominally fails, wild magical energy is released, roll on wild magic table.
9. Spell fails, and you have attracted the attention of an extraplanar being who has taken offense at your arrogance. It begins hunting you.
10. Spell fails and you suffer an immediate brain aneurysm and die.
11. Spell fails and you are immediately and irrevocably lobotomized.
12. Spell functions normally, but your spirit and personality are annihilated and you are possessed by a demon
13. Spell fails. Magical energies fluctuate out from the caster, instantly slaying the caster and all living creatures and beings within 60 feet.
14. Spell fails. Magical devastation strikes the surrounding lands, in a radius of 1d10 miles + 1d4 miles per spell level.
15. You are instantly erased from existence as if you never lived.



1d6 with two modifiers (spell level and a one point adjustment for high intelligence) is just about as complicated as you would want to get with something that should only come up very rarely.

This drawback makes the acquisition of a panoply meaningful (I can cast higher level spells) without immediately increasing the power of the wizard, who is already plenty powerful.

### SYSTEM ADJUSTMENTS

I'm going to note that in my B/X style games, I use a Bell Curve Magic System where casters have a pool of dice to cast spells and very limited spell lists (no more than 8 spells of each level). In that particular system, only allowing additional dice instead of higher level spells from the panoply works. In 5<sup>th</sup> edition style games since nearly every single class is a spellcasting class (Every class excepting the Barbarian class has a spellcasting option and there are three pure spellcasting classes) I'd avoid using such a system.

### RULES

- Attempts to cast magic of a level higher than 1st require a roll on the table on the facing page.
- This limit can be increased by the acquisition of accoutrements. They may be acquired in any order.
- Each accoutrement acquired increases the level of spells the caster can safely cast by one.
- No type of accoutrement can be applied more than once, even if you own more than one. Each one only counts towards spell levels you can cast once.
- These are generally acquired and lost during play.
- If lost or destroyed, that type of thing can't be used again until you have gained a level or a year and a day have passed.
- You gain access to new spells and spell slots per level as normal, you are simply restricted from casting spells higher than first level until you acquire your panoply.
- You may invest spell levels in the panoply. This spends one of your spell casting slots, with 1 spell level per level of the slot. (A third level slot provides 3 spell levels). This is consumed as long as the advantage granted persists. If destroyed or disenchanting, the caster regains access to the slot.

### *Designer's note:*

Why bother with the table?

Clearly, we could just say "No, you can't cast second level spells or above." but there are several good reasons to include such a table.

Firstly, the entries help define the setting. In the setting above, magic is likely viewed with suspicion, because of the devastation it can cause. If you change and replace entries with polymorphs and mutations, the fear becomes not of devastation, but of corruption of the soul. If anyone could attempt a ninth level spell, and cause magical devastation out to 9-46 miles, that might make the unregulated practice of magic something to pay attention to (e.g. restrict, legislate, or criminalize).

Secondly, it allows players to make stupid insane risks that really affect the campaign world. You aren't saying no, you are saying "this is the way the world works".

## TALISMANS

*"A small personal object used to concentrate magical power. You can only have a single talisman, but can make one for yourself with time and tools. Each spell level invested in a Talisman grants a +1 bonus to saving throws." -Benjamin Baugh*

The talisman allows the caster to cast second level spells, in addition to allowing/requiring them to sacrifice spell slots for a small bonus. What other types of talismans and items are there?

Adding in the cost of a spell level for an effect or increased effect (or in the Bell Curve system, assigning a die) seems like an excellent trade off for a "magic item" that isn't really magic. Some other ideas for effects from Talismans include: preservation of youth, a continuous minor protection effect from extraplanar creatures, an immunity against a specific type of effect (poisons, charms, etc.), minor damage reduction, bonuses to reactions, slow magical healing, the opportunity to reroll saves, protection from very specific attacks or a small bonus to a specific knowledge or skill.

Drawbacks to talismans can include: A malaise that affects nearby people with ennui and fatigue, a corruption of your aura, an odd smell or scent, minor physical changes (nails of iron, or pupiless eyes, for example), minor psychological effects such as hypo-mania, minor delusions, mild paranoia or phobia, increased anxiety, intrusive thoughts, or unusual visual phenomena.

Another fascinating use of talismans for higher level casters, is as a phylactery or soul storage device, providing a way for the spellcaster to take over another persons body, while leaving their own body in stasis.

Talismans can be created at a cost of 100 gold pieces per level of the spell or per hit die they are expected to contain. It takes 1 week per 100 gold pieces of the cost, and the time to create can be cut in half by doubling the expense. Note that the spell levels invested at attunement or creation cannot be recovered without the destruction of the talisman. If lost it will require "great struggle" to regain the invested power.

## EXAMPLES

**Talisman of the Domino:** This talisman prevents the touch of living things. It requires a third level spell slot to function and costs 300 gold and three weeks to create. Plants and underbrush are shoved aside at the users passing, allowing travel through brambles and briars without hinderance. Attacks and magic spells by the claws and tendrils of living creatures and plants are treated as if the user has a +1 bonus to their armor class. The users skin is affected with a black and white large checkered pattern, with a division down the center of their face, one-half white and one-half black.

**Talisman of Magical Warding:** This talisman protects the mage from enchantments and spells. It can be created providing a bonus to saving throws versus magic from +1 to +5. It requires an invested spell slot equal to the value of the bonus. A +4 bonus to saves versus magic requires a fourth level spell slot. It costs 100 gold and takes 1 week per spell slot invested. As a side effect, this talisman disrupts your magical aura. If your save bonus is +2 or higher and you are not already subject to spell mishaps/surges you now are. If you are affected by spell mishaps, you roll twice and the Dungeon Master selects the result of the effect.

## Focus

*A large obvious magical tool used to focus and direct spells, such as a staff, rod, or occult weapon. Each spell level invested in a Focus penalized a target's saving throws made against your magic by 1.*

All wizards must carry a focus, even if it is devoid of enchantment or power. Those without a focus grant their opponents a +4 bonus on all saves or they have a -4 penalty to hit the target. Without the focus they cannot effectively direct their magical energies.

In addition, foci can act as spell batteries. For every 1,000 gold spent (in the form of precious gem dust), a focus can be enchanted with temporary power, or charge. Each charge is equivalent to a single spell level. A wizard can cast a third-level spell without it being lost for three charges. Most foci limit the types of spells these charges can be spent on, depending on the individual foci.

You can also discharge your magical energy through the focus. For every spell level of the spell you discharge, you can do 1d6 points of damage to a single target within 30. This damage is considered force damage, like a magic missile, and is blocked by the same magics that block magic missile (broach of shielding, etc.).

In addition, attempting to wield magic without a focus creates an astral disturbance, detectable for dozens of miles. Considering the possible danger of people wielding magic beyond their ability, there are certainly people who look for such things.

## EXAMPLES

**Oakenhart Wand:** This is a gnarled branch, nearly 18 inches in length. It feels of livewood and is encircled by vines. A small quartz crystal is nestled in the tip. This focus connects wizards of weather and nature to the earth. Spells can be discharged through the wand to heal 1d6 points to a target per level of the spell discharged. The spell also allows the caster to transmute any of her spells of a greater level into one of the following: Pass Without Trace, Massmorph, and Plant Growth.

**Crystal Ball:** This is a translucent crystal sphere. It exudes energy that makes hair stand on end. Usually within a setting, this allows the user to bypass the line of sight requirements for targets—any target that the crystal ball scrys on can be the target of the spell. The wizard may expand a first level spell slot and the focus will levitate and orbit the user until the next exposure to dawn's light.

**Rod of Dragon Control:** This is a cold iron cylinder, with the head of a dragon on one end. The user may expend five charges or spell levels to summon a small red dragon hatchling, as *Summon Monster III*. The wearer can utter Commands, as the Cleric spell that affect only dragons. Dragons have a -4 to their saving throw versus this effect. Reaction adjustments for all dragons is at +2, and any dragons must save versus rods, staves, and wands before they can attack the holder of the rod.

## **FAMILIAR**

*You form a magical bond with a small intelligent magical creature. Familiars can't fight, but can scout, distract, and provide other useful aid. Each spell level invested in a familiar allows the creature to aid you in performing some task, adding a 1 point bonus to your roll.*

The familiar is your constant companion. By the very nature of the magical bond between the caster and the animal, the animal is protected. When on your person it has access to a small, nest like, interdimensional space, rendering the familiar immune to damaging fireballs, exposure to the vacuum of space, drowning while the party spent 8 turns under the influence of a water breathing spell, and other fridge logic moments.

Familiars are usually small, normal animals. A robin, a small snake, a black cat, a toad, owls if you're creepy etc. Sometimes wizards desire more powerful aids. For every spell level sacrificed to the familiar, the wizard may have a more powerful familiar, with hit dice equal to half the level of the spell level sacrificed. Classic more powerful familiars include pseudodragons, imps, quasits, hell hounds, and shadows. For the cost of an additional spell slot, the wizard can see through the eyes of the creature.

In any case, because of your bond with the familiar you are effectively one creature. During combat, you and your familiar share actions. If your familiar dies, you lose 1d4 hit points permanently.

## CABAL

*Join an occult society, mystery religion, circle of conspirators, or cult and sign magical bonding oaths and compacts. The force of the cabal's collective power backs your actions, but you will sometimes be called upon to act in the interests of the cabal. Investing in the Cabal improves your status and position in the fraternity, allowing you to call upon it for aid (the loan of magic items, borrowed retainers, support in battle). Such requests are honored with a 1 in 6 chance, plus 1 for each spell level invested in the cabal.*

Though wizards bristle at the need for anyone else, the cabals serve multiple purposes. The ritual frequently attracts 'cultists', those who follow the wizard in the hopes of accessing true or real power. They are normal humans, and beyond what power the wizards allow them to access from the cabal, they have no magical ability or potential.

Minimal membership in a cabal is fairly painless, costing nothing more than yearly dues. Investing more in the cabal attracts followers and power. Though cabals are joined in general principle, there are many schisms and fractures within them. They may provide both allies and foes.

## EXAMPLES

**Order of the Falling Star:** The order of the falling star serves the visitors, who visit the world from the astral plane, to collect followers to join them on their journey throughout the planar spectrum. The travelers hope to save as many people as possible before something they call the 'scourge'. Initiates live an ascetic life and are rather humorless.

**Guild of Naturalists:** This society of wizards is devoted to the discovery and cataloging of natural specimens. Members join for various reasons, crossbreeding research, prestige, a love of the outdoors, access to monster information or resources. Prestige within the society is gained and lost based on new research and facts, and there are longstanding rivalries between members. This guild is open to any classes.

**Pax Draconis:** This society attempts to reach a true source of magic, draconic power. They are usually in service to the nearest old (or older) usually chromatic dragon nearby, granting their devoted service in exchange for whatever power they can manage to siphon. The dragons often find these arrangements palatable until they are not. Once initiated the mage is brought before the dragon who both asks a service and grants a gift.

**Students of the Pearl Tower:** This is an academic group of researchers who seek out and collect magical power. In exchange for new magics, students may access the vast library available in the enchanted pearl tower.

## RAIMENT

Your garments and costume, the working clothing or finery which declares your profession and power not just to mortal observers, but to the Unseen Realms as well. This is quite expensive, but protects from all natural extremes of heat and cold, and keeps you comfortable even in thunderstorms. Each spell level invested in Raiment improves your AC by 1.

This garment must cost at least 100 gold, though some of the most powerful and famous garment can be priceless.

## EXAMPLES

**Robe of Eyes:** This option costs little to create, but requires the collection of 100 eyes from beholders, basilisks, and gibbering mouther. Mouthers are relatively easily controlled and harvested, but they won't grow new eyeballs without being fed people. Anyone who wears the robe of eyes can no longer be surprised, and can see in the dark, as well as into the ethereal and astral planes.

**Robe of the Archmagi:** This is a robe costing at least 100,000 gold pieces. Once the base material has been enchanted, the wizard may invest spell slots for various effects. Common ones include a +4 bonus to armor class from the investment of a single spell level. Granting the user 5% magic resistance per spell level investment. A bonus of +1 to saves per 2 spell levels sacrificed (capped at +4 for a 8th or 9th level spell, being the highest level investment), Or granting an opponent a -1 to saves per 2 spell levels sacrificed. They are specifically tailored to the creating wizard. Anyone trying on the robe who is not the wizard takes 11d4+7 damage and loses a similar amount of experience times 1,000.

## PACT

*Make a magical agreement with some otherworldly power, demon lords, demigods, ancient alien entities like mountains made of meat and mouths. Pacts grant you power in exchange for service. When you patron makes a demand, you must act to accomplish it or you lose its magical support and will never again be able to form a pact. Each spell invested in the Pact gives you the power to demand a direct intervention from your patron once per month.*

**Bargain for Service:** Each spell level granted to such a creature shows your devotion. As long as you adhere to the general ethos of the creature in your service, the creature can grant you static boons. This could be an inspiration use, a small permanent bonus, access to a special spell like ability, or other power within the purview of the patron.

## EXAMPLES

**Solar:** Assuming you can capture their attention (which is the primary difficulty in acquiring a Solar as a patron) and you are pure of heart, a solar may accept your devotion. Examples of boons a solar might provide include: granting the caster the ability to detect any time a lie is spoken, the ability to detect evil at will, the ability for your spells to do radiant damage instead of fire damage, The ability to use Shield of Faith once a day, or the ability to restore 8d8 + 4 hit points to any creature once a day. The direct intervention is generally either asking the solar to restore someone to life, or the solar appearing and taking a shot at an opponent with a Slaying Longbow (if a target is hit, they must save or die).

**Dragons:** It is not difficult for a magus to form a mutually advantageous relationship with a dragon. The danger is that the dragon may turn on you. Examples of boons dragons might provide include secret dragon magic, acting as defender of a building or property within its domain, a magical bonus to your charisma, the ability to utter a *Suggestion* three times a day, or the equivalent of a *Legend Lore* spell, once per week.

Dragons grant their owner rods, which are designed to call them. 85% of the time(5 out of 6) when held, the dragon will teleport to the bearer when the bearer calls for aid, once weekly. They will assist with one battle or task before leaving.

**Kraken:** Wizards who travel amongst the waves will frequently serve a monster of the deep. The disadvantage being that the influence of such creatures doesn't extend far on the land. Boons provided include the ability to control the weather while on the surface of the water, the ability to extend an obscuring cloud out to 60' in every direction once a day, In the water, the actual creature itself will come to the aid of the wizard weekly, but on land the aid is restricted to a *Call Lightning* as an 11<sup>th</sup> level caster (with a sixth level spell slot).

**Pit Fiend/Devil:** Wizards find that devils are only too eager to grant them service. The devil is able to grant a wide range of boons, access to spells, arcane tomes, problems solved. They are eager to extend their services, and they only ask for such small things in return like your soul, or the corruption of your friends. It's a small price to pay. When requesting boons from a devil, the character may bargain his soul as if it were equal to half his level in spell slots. This has no effect, except that if the caster dies, the soul becomes the possession of the devil and he cannot be raised.

## SERVANT

*Form an agreement of service with a creature—demons, angels, elementals, dragons, fairy, and similar naturally magical creatures. The creature must agree to serve you as a retainer - or be intimidated, threatened, bribed, or similar—and after, you can use its magical nature to reinforce your own. Each spell level invested in the servant gives you one service you can request of it each day which it must obey. A servant may agree to perform actions on your behalf, but only with investment can you ensure they obey in good faith.*

These creatures will act as a hireling with the investment of a spell level. They will follow the caster around, and during combat, the caster may use his action, move, or bonus action to cause the creature to take an action, move, or bonus action.

## EXAMPLES

**Hell Hound:** These beasts are excellent servants. Having one of these increases your bond to the infernal planes and the fire elemental plains. This grants you +2 damage on any spell that does fire or necrotic damage.

**Shadow:** Famously Venger, son of Tiamat had a shadow servant. This creature is an excellent spy. It increases the power of ice, cold, and shadow spells, all acting as if they were cast a level higher than the slot used to cast it.

**Fairy:** This category includes nymphs, slyphs, and other delicate fragile forest creatures. Because the very nature of these creatures is that they already have a bond with another being, the only way to secure their aid is to capture and imprison them. Only by imposing your will upon them can you make use of their power. Unlike normal servant relationships, they do not travel with you, and instead of investing levels in such a creature, they provide an additional spell slot of a level equal to their hit dice. Note that abusing and torturing such a creature is an inexorably evil act.

**Quasit:** Such a creature loves spell energy and will willingly serve any master who provides it. Though they provide no special bonuses, invisible, flying, intelligent creatures who can shapeshift make excellent servants.

**Mounts:** Although few wizards choose too, this also allows them to secure the service of magical beasts, such as an owlbear, winter wolf, phase spider, giant scorpion or griffon.



## SANCTUM

*Fortify a place of power, and stock it to your requirements. This can be done earlier, but you get this gratis when you level enough to found your stronghold. So long as your sanctum remains secure, you can draw on its power even at a distance. Spell levels invested in a sanctum grants you the ability to cast a chosen spell of level equal to the investments at will when you reside in your sanctum, or to put such spells on a conditional release so they 'go off' when conditions are met.*

This requirement is frequently described by your system of choice. If your system has no rules, then simply requires the expenditure of 100,000 gold pieces to create a sanctum will function. Any spell levels invested may be used to create permanent enchantments that do not require material components. For example, a Wizard could enchant a room with a *Identify* spell, obviating the material requirement of a pearl. This would allow them to identify items within their sanctum. Spells of up to 6th level can be enchanted in this way.



**YELLOW DINGO'S  
FUNGI GUIDE**

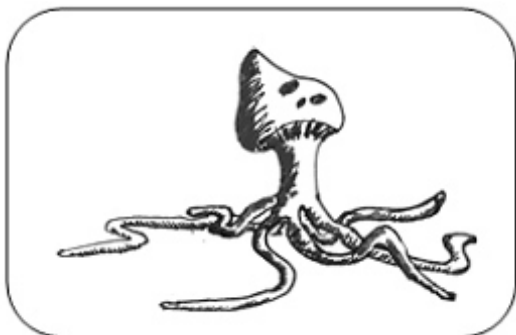
A long time ago, a blogger, Yellow Dingo posted many weird and wonderful things. Sadly (s)he is no longer with us. The best work by yellow dingo was a series on dangerous fungus that was posted to his blog. Sadly, that blog is now lost. However, some members of our community managed to save that information.

In the spirit of archival and rejuvenation, I am entirely without permission, reprinting that wonderful series here. All writing and art is credit to the original poster at Yellow Dingo. All fungus started up for Labyrinth Lord, but easily convertible to any system from Original Dungeons and Dragons to 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Anyone who feels strongly that this is a bad (or good) idea, feel free to contact me with your concerns. Enjoy.

From the defunct Yellow Dingo Appendix blog:

## DEATH-KAP

Environment	Caves, Dungeons, Fungi Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	7
Hit Dice	4
Move	20' (8')
Intelligence	1
Attacks	2 Tentacles / 1 Bite
Damage	Grapple / 1d6 + Special
No. Appearing	1
Save As	Fighter: L3
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	75
Morale	12



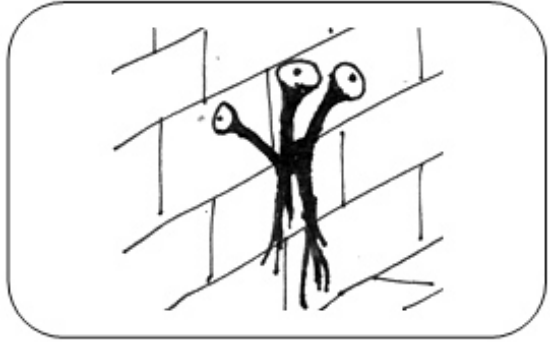
**Description:** Also known as the Cave Kraken, these large fungi come with heavy root like appendages extending from the trunk of the plant. Any foe entering within ten feet of the plant will be grappled by two of the tentacles (or one tentacle each if two or more foes can be attacked at once). A beak exists under the cluster of limbs which when a grapple is successful (any successful hit roll against the target) the Death-kap will bite – infecting the victim (save vs. poison) with spore that will germinate in 7-10 days as a new Death-kap (killing the victim).

*Colossal Death-kap:* These are known to exist in fungi forests in huge numbers and are often mistaken for trees though their prey is more on the scale of giants and dragons.

## EYE-STALKERS

Environment	Other living hosts
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	9
Hit Dice	1 hp / eyestalk

Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	nil
Damage	Special
No. Appearing	1
Save As	Normal Human
Treasure Type	nil
XP Value	6
Morale	12



**Description:** These fungi are parasitic in nature and will infect any open wound as spores. They grow into a mature eyestalk at the rate of one per week connecting into a host's neural network and functioning as an actual eye. The host will eventually die after a number of eyestalks equal to his/her/its hit-points have grown to maturity. The infestation can be removed by fire and remove disease and remove curse though it will leave the victim blinded for many days until the brain gets used to decreased neural transmitter activity. This particular fungus is capable of functioning with the Oozers as their 'eyes'.

## OOZERS

Environment	Caves, Dungeons, Fungi Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	9
Hit Dice	1 hp
Move	0'
Intelligence	Varies
Attacks	Ooze
Damage	Special
No. Appearing	1-100
Save As	Normal Human
Treasure Type	nil
XP Value	6
Morale	12

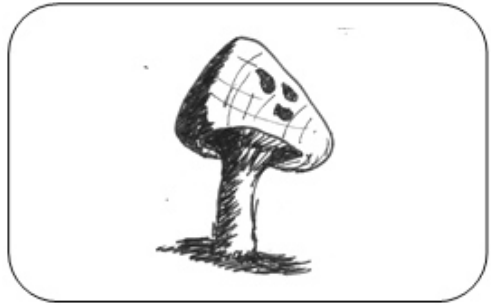


**Description:** These fungi are unusual in that even though they are individually weak they are a collective intelligence. Depending on the scale of intelligence they are as smart as a door-knob or as brilliant as an Immortal.

The Ooze they give off is a mind control agent on par with a mass charm spell. As a consequence they have the ability (depending on parallel neuron capacity) to manipulate an entire region by simply infecting victims with ooze (save vs. spell). The needs of the plant are very specific— survival—and given the capacity of these particular fungi to infect and control other host are capable of being an unbeatable horror that most Adventurers are incapable of comprehending.

## STALKER

Environment	Fungi Forest
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	Mushroom: 4 Body:-8
Hit Dice	4-7
Mushroom:	8-14 hp
Body:	32-59 hp
Move	Burrowing 30' (10')
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Bite
Damage	1d6xHD
No. Appearing	1(1)
Save As	Fighter: L4-7
Treasure Type	I
XP Value	75, 175, 275, 450
Morale	12



**Description:** Officially it isn't a Fungi, it only looks like one. It is actually a kind of giant worm with teeth. The four to seven foot tall 'Mushroom' is a lure/mouth with bone teeth which is pushed to the surface by the worm in order to breathe and feed on prey.

When prey enters within fifty feet of the 'mushroom' the trunk of the mushroom stretches out to fifty feet and the mouth takes a bite out of the target. A successful hit will swallow anything up to Halfling size.

## SMUDGER

Environment	Caves, Dungeons, Fungi Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	8
Hit Dice	1/2*
Move	20' (7')
Intelligence	2
Attacks	Special
Damage	See Description
No. Appearing	1 (1 mature and 1-10 immature)
Save As	Fighter: L1
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	6
Morale	12



**Description:** They may look like cute little mushroom people about a foot tall but they are nasty little buggers. They like to rub themselves against any adventurers (or other prey) swanning through their habitat coating their prey in an attractant that will draw aggressive species to the

target in a frenzied attack (ML 12, +2 Hit Roll Bonus). They then lay spores in the carcass which germinate into 3d4 new Smudgers. Outdoors/Fungi Forest the Attractant will draw predators to the victim from up to a mile away so the DM may consider any encounters with attracted predators to be at maximum population.

## FAIRY LIGHTS

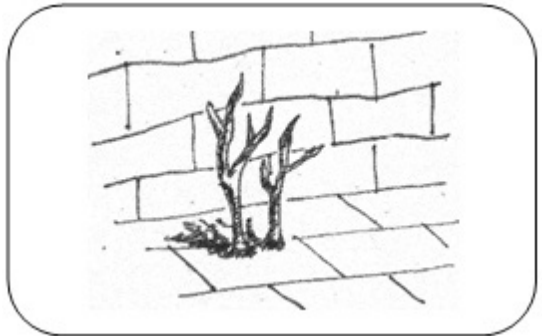
Environment	Other living hosts, Mushroom Forests, Caves, Dungeons
Alignment	Chaotic
Armour Class	9
Hit Dice	1/2*
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Special
Damage	Special
No. Appearing	1
Save As	Normal Human
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	6
Morale	12



**Description:** These annoying glowing fungi charm Pixies in large numbers (as *Mass Charm* spell) and cause the Pixies to act as a chaotic alignment.

## LIGHTNING BRUSH

Environment	Caves, Dungeons, Mushroom Forests, Heavy Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	9
Hit Dice	1 hp/stalk
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Lightning Discharge
Damage	1 hp/stalk
No. Appearing	1-100 stalks
Save As	Normal Human
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	6 xp/stalk
Morale	12



**Description:** These Amber stalks will discharge a lightning bolt through any foe within one hundred feet. They take a day to recharge before a second electrical strike can be discharged. Outdoors: A huge lightning brush can be mistaken for a dead tree and will kill all other trees out to a hundred feet radius with its lightning creating a region of 'lightning-struck' trees.

## MONARCH'S CROWN

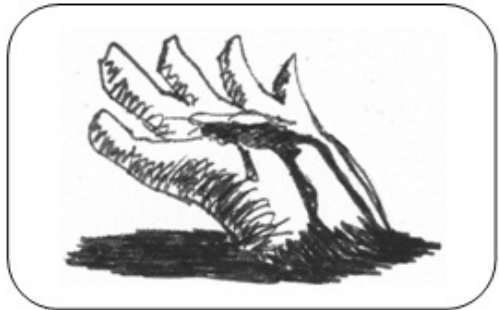
Environment	Other living hosts
Alignment	As Host
Armour Class	As Host
Hit Dice	As Host
Move	As Host
Intelligence	2x host
Attacks	As Host
Damage	As Host
No. Appearing	1
Save As	Fighter: L7
Treasure Type	As Host
XP Value	As Host
Morale	As Host



**Description:** Monarch's Crown is in fact the final stage of these fungi. The victim having been infected with spore has experienced loss of bone and marrow as the fungi uses it to grow the crown from the victim's skull. Unfortunately the victim develops a need to suck the marrow from bones of freshly killed victims and should he/she/it be exposed to sunlight will germinate into spores as though the whole body was a spore pod. Not even killing the Host will kill these fungi. The Monarch's Crown has one advantage—it doubles the existing intelligence of the victim. Consequently some subterranean cultures deliberately infect their ruling class with the Monarch's Crown.

## DEATH'S HAND

Environment	Other living hosts, Dungeons, Caves, Fungal Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	9
Hit Dice	1
Move	15' (5')
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Special
Damage	1d6/round
No. Appearing	0 (1)
Save As	Fighter: L1
Treasure Type	As Host
XP Value	13
Morale	12



**Description:** The Spores of these fungi are breathed in. It will then grow in the lungs until it can dig its way out in to the chest cavity and grab the heart which it will crush—feeding on the blood like a sponge—until the victim is dead. It will then rip its way out of the chest and find some place to plant itself until it goes to spore.



## MIASMA TREE

Environment	Caves, Fungal Forests, Green Dragon Lairs
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	8
Hit Dice	1*
Move	0'
Intelligence	2
Attacks	Up to six branches / Poison Cloud
Damage	1d6 per branch / Special
No. Appearing	1-10 (1-100)
Save As	Fighter: LX
Treasure Type	K
XP Value	13
Morale	12



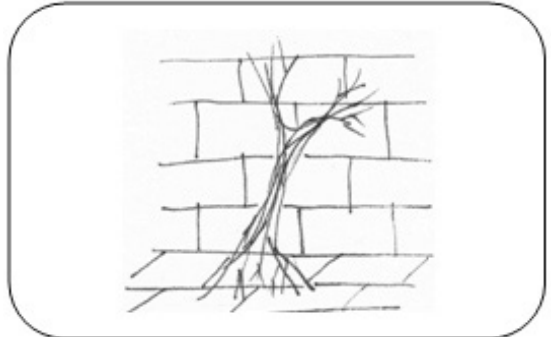
**Description:** Also known as the Miner's Tree, these fungi will bludgeon any foe who damages the gas bladder. The Gas Bladder in its branches is how it absorbs poisonous gasses found in deep dungeons crystallizing them into gemstones and refined metals of highest purity.

Green Dragons keep these in order to farm their own poisonous gasses into gems and precious metals. Rupturing the gas bladder requires a save vs. poison or death ensues.

## WEB OF SOM

Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Mushroom Forests
Armour Class	9
Hit Dice	1/2*
Move	0'
Intelligence	17
Attacks	Special
Damage	Special
No. Appearing	1 (1)
Save As	Normal Human
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	6
Morale	12

**Alignment:** Neutral



**Description:** This white fine fungal web can be found growing in pretty much any cave, dungeon or subterranean wilderness.

It has the ability to analyse environmental changes and counter them with *Weather Control* (as the spell). If a warm body of a PC is detected (raising the temperature of the room) it will counter the temperature increase with cold. A *Fireball* spell will be countered with an ice storm out of nowhere followed by a tornado to bring in non toxic air.

## GOBLIN'S MOTHER

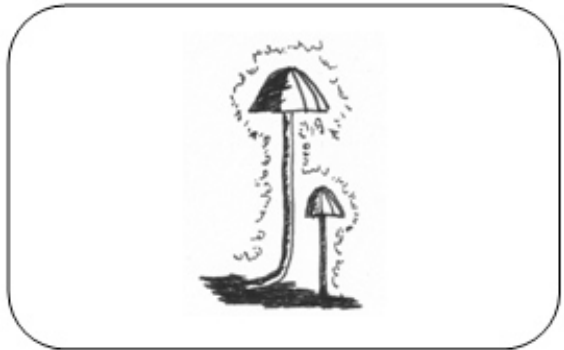
Environment	Mushroom Forests, Caves, Dungeons
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	9
Hit Dice	7*
Move	0'
Intelligence	0
Attacks	Special
Damage	Special
No. Appearing	1 (1-100)
Save As	Fighter: L9
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	850
Morale	12



**Description:** This large 'cup' is filled with primordial ooze from which Black Goblins are born at the rate of one an hour. This mushroom is very popular with fiends that dwell in the deepest caverns who are raising an army of black goblins as their minions. Black Goblins are a lot like Kobolds except they have no fear (12ML) and can move twice as fast.

## HOB'S NAIL

Environment	Caves, Dungeons, Fungal Forests, Heavy Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	2
Hit Dice	1*
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Special
Damage	Special
No. Appearing	1
Save As	Normal Human
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	13
Morale	12



**Description:** Also known as the Coffin Nail, his iron-like purple 'shroom' will cause undead who have been destroyed by a cleric to return to the world of undeath. Some intelligent undead (vampires, lich, etc.) will cultivate the fungi for the purpose of a second chance at undeath although few are willing to become the 'minion' of a mushroom for the centuries it takes the 'shroom' to produce offspring and become an Odic. Elves can use it to return as Banshee.

## BLACKWHEAT

Environment	Caves, Dungeons, Fungi Forests, Swamps
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	9
Hit Dice	1/2
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Hallucinatory Pollen
Damage	See description
No. Appearing	1-4 stalks
Save As	Normal Human
Treasure Type	nil
XP Value	6
Morale	12



**Description:** Blackwheat is rather poisonous in that it will release hallucinatory Pollen that will cause anyone who approaches within fifty feet and fails to save vs. poison to see terrible things for as long as they continue to fail a daily save vs. poison check. Victims of Blackwheat might become enraged or violent out of fear at what they are seeing.

## GOILROOT

Environment	Caves, Dungeons, Fungi Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	2
Hit Dice	4
Move	0'
Intelligence	2
Attacks	up to six spines
Damage	1d6/spine + 1/spine/level
No. Appearing	1-6
Save As	Fighter: L4
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	75
Morale	12



**Description:** Goilroot is found hanging from the ceiling of caves and dungeons. The Fungi will sense the approach of any foe and when they are beneath the goilroot it will erupt into violence causing spines to grow at an impossible rate downward through the foe (even armoured) seeking moisture from the victim's body. Unless the victim is freed quickly and healed they will die. Once done drinking the victim dry the spines will break off allowing the fungi to begin again as a stubby root cluster growing from the ceiling.

## HORNS OF AEROTH

Environment	Living Host
Alignment	Chaotic
Armour Class	3
Hit Dice	4*
Move	As Host
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Special
Damage	As Host
No. Appearing	1 Pair per Host
Save As	Fighter: L4
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	125
Morale	12



**Description:**The Horns of Aeroth are fungi which grow from the skull of the victim. They have a nasty side effect in that they will force the victim to make a charisma check every time he/she is insulted. A fail to save results in a temporary shift to chaotic alignment and the victim will fly into a violent rage attacking the source of the insult. The alignment shift will remain until the source of the insult is dead (Basically little Timoth better mind his tongue when the demon horned man walks by).

## SHADOWSHROOM

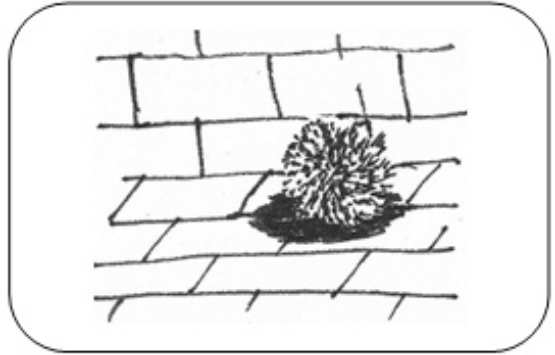
Environment	Caves, Dungeons, Fungi Forests, Heavy Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	8
Hit Dice	5*
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Special
Damage	See description
No. Appearing	1 (1)
Save As	Fighter: L5
Treasure Type	A
XP Value	300
Morale	12



**Description:** Anyone foolish enough to make physical contact with this shroom will lose levels at the rate of one per round until they reach zero. The Victim then becomes a shadow which is tied to the Shadowshroom that turned him/her/it into a shadow. A Shadowshroom will have 0-3 previous occupants who can attack any foe entering within ten feet of the shadowshroom. The Shadowshroom can only house up to three shadows—old victims will be ejected and be able to wander freely in order to make way for a new victim.

## TUMBLEBRIAR

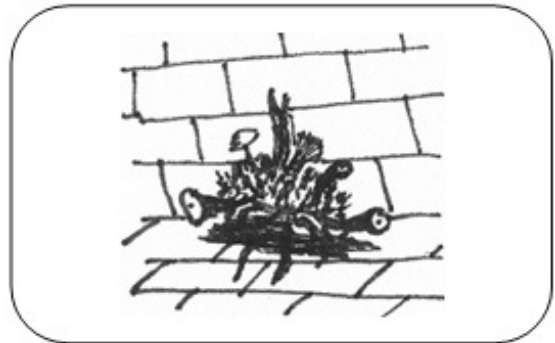
Environment	Caves, Dungeons, Fungi Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	8
Hit Dice	1
Move	60' (20')
Intelligence	3
Attacks	Special
Damage	Special
No. Appearing	1-100
Save As	Fighter: L1
Treasure Type	(as victim)
XP Value	3
Morale	1 (12)



**Description:** The Tumblebriar is the epitome of strength in numbers. One briar alone will simply flee any attempt to kill it but larger numbers will gather and attack the only way they can—by snagging on loose clothing or fur until the opponent is immobilized. They then wait until the prey dies of hunger and becomes nutrients.

## KRABBES

Environment	Any at night, Any subterranean
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	7
Hit Dice	As Fungi Total*
Move	20' (7')
Intelligence	1
Attacks	1 Bite + Special
Damage	1d4 + Spore
No. Appearing	1 (2-5)
Save As	As Fungi Total
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	6xp / fungi total
Morale	12



**Description:** Krabbes serve as the spore bed for future fungal colonies and might be encountered anywhere. Made up of 3-6 types of immature fungi and spore, the Krabbes is a little mister bitey looking to infect anyone it can take a bite out of as it travels outward to create new colonies.

## PUFFBALL

Environment	Caves, Dungeons, Mushroom Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	8
Hit Dice	1 hp
Move	20' (7')
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Crush/Explode
Damage	1d4 / 3d6
No. Appearing	1 (1-10)
Save As	Normal Human
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	6
Morale	12



**Description:** A Puffball will roll around its environment but will not actively pursue prey. Any Damage will result in an explosion of air and fungus spore inflicting 3d6 damage to everyone in a fifty feet radius. Victims of an explosion will need to save vs. Disease or become host to a Puffball growing in their stomachs causing bloating. Death is certain but may be averted by a cure disease.

## BRAINSPIDER

Environment	Living Host
Alignment	Chaotic
Armour Class	as host
Hit Dice	as host
Move	as host
Intelligence	17
Attacks	as host
Damage	as host
No. Appearing	1 per host
Save As	Fighter: L8
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	as host
Morale	12



**Description:** The Brainspider will grow out of the top of the skull forcing its way to the surface through cracks in the bone. It exerts considerable influence over the host and poses a significant threat to others as it has the ability to take control of the host when its survival is concerned. The things that look like legs of the spider are in fact numerous feeding tubes through which the fungi breaths air. Any attempt to damage the brain spider or the host will result in violence. Its removal requires a death spell and cure disease.

Fully grown (a year old) the Brainspider simply lifts itself out of the skull—brain and all—abandoning the host corpse.

## FAERIE WINGS

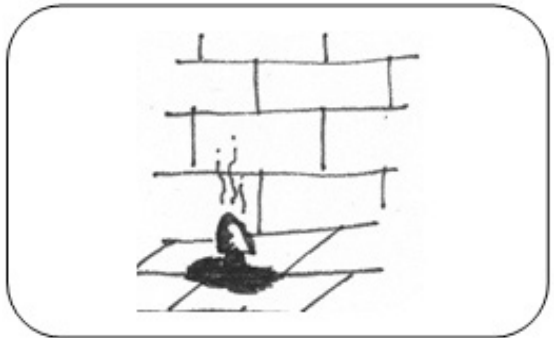
Environment	living host
Alignment	as host
Armour Class	as host
Hit Dice	as host
Move	Fly 60'(20')
Intelligence	as host
Attacks	Special
Damage	Special
No. Appearing	1 pair per host
Save As	See Description
Treasure Type	as host
XP Value	as host
Morale	as host



**Description:** The fine membrane grows from the shoulders of the infected host. While it grants the great boon of flight, it is a prize that comes at a cost. For anyone larger than a brownie, every time the infected takes flight the wings glow with a poisonous light that slowly kills the host (-1 constitution) causing the victim to vomit blood. This will continue to reduce the host's constitution until it drops below three at which death will occur. Faerie wings can only be removed by a wish.

## FIRESHROOM

Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Fungi Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	9
Hit Dice	1 hp*
Move	0'
Intelligence	0
Attacks	Special
Damage	Special
No. Appearing	1 (1)
Save As	Normal Human
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	6
Morale	12



**Description:** This little mushroom gives off a faint blue gas which when presented with an open flame will burn like a firestorm through the atmosphere of all the accessible parts of the dungeon feeding on the very air as the source of fuel. Fortunately it requires considerable atmospheric pressure so will not burn the air in dungeons above a hundred feet deep. Fireshroom are sometimes found at the bottom of wells causing a pool of fire to burn where the atmospheric pressure is high.

## MONK'S HALO

Environment	living host
Alignment	as host
Armour Class	as host
Hit Dice	as host
Move	as host
Intelligence	Collective (1/host)
Attacks	as host
Damage	as host
No. Appearing	1 per host
Save As	Fighter: L5
Treasure Type	as host
XP Value	as host
Morale	12



**Description:** This odd fungus seems harmless enough as it simply grows as a ring of glowing fungi about the skull of its host, but it is its ability to connect the brains of the infected when in sight of one another has seen many monks actively seek infection through consumption of the fungus. Entire monastic orders are known to have been infected.

It is uncertain what the collective agenda this fungi has but an increasing number of Monks have become vocal in political circles. This spreading heresy has not gone un-noticed by the Church.

## DEADWOOD

Environment	Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	4
Hit Dice	As height of host tree (in feet)
Move	2' x height of host tree (in feet)
Intelligence	1
Attacks	1-4 Strangling Roots
Damage	As height of host tree (in feet)
No. Appearing	1 (100-1,000)
Save As	Fighter: Level as height of tree (in feet)
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	Varies
Morale	12



**Description:** This looks like a dead tree with some sort of large black growths all over it. The Fungi animates the old tree causing it to move about on its roots and attack animals and other living creatures in an attempt to drink them for nutrients needed to maintain the fungi and its host tree. There are rumours of a wandering wood of dead trees that descends on rural farms and consumes the stock and farmers before moving on. Legend has it the Bough of Deadwood is looking for revenge.



## FOREST GUARDIAN

Environment	Fungi Forests
Alignment	Chaotic or Neutral
Armour Class	7
Hit Dice	8*
Move	30' (10')
Intelligence	14
Attacks	2 Fists + Miasma Breath
Damage	4d6/4d6/Special
No. Appearing	1-10
Save As	Fighter: L8
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	1,200
Morale	12



**Description:** This ten feet tall fungal aberration is a conglomeration of pretty much every fungi type into a single collective organism capable of surprising intelligence and power. It dominates the forest because it shares a link with the fungi forest that spawned it. Perhaps most terrifying is the hallucinogenic miasma that it breathes out (functioning as a hallucinatory terrain for any fool who engages in melee with a forest guardian at a -4 save vs. Poison penalty).

## DEVOURER

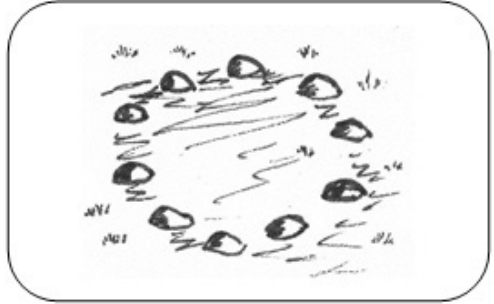
Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Mushroom Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	8
Hit Dice	2*
Move	20' (7')
Intelligence	2
Attacks	1-4 Tentacles
Damage	Paralysis
No. Appearing	1 (1-4)
Save As	Fighter: L2
Treasure Type	A
XP Value	25
Morale	12



**Description:** Often encountered as a large mushroom atop a pile of dead and rotten things they will attack with their tentacles, paralyse a target, and wait on the corpse until the corpse rots into nutrients. When a Devourer leaves a Fungi Mound it is to seek a new food leaving behind a spore bed from which new offspring will germinate.

## FAERIE RING

Environment	Forests, Woodlands
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	9 - 2
Hit Dice	1* - 8*
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Special
Damage	Special
No. Appearing	1 (1)
Save As	Fighter: L1-L8
Treasure Type	A (1*HD)
XP Value	13/25/50/125/300/500/950/1200
Morale	12



**Description:** The really big and old ones are known as Stone Circles. The smaller faerie ring is none the less a dangerous foe. They both gate anyone entering the circle of fungi into the pocket dimension from which the fungi emerged. Arriving in what appears to be a colossal subterranean chamber they are left to die and break down into food for the fungi. Having accumulated many victims they can be filled with centuries of treasure.

Fairy races will use these pocket planes to create a fairy realm. If killed the gate to the pocket plane closes permanently. The Pocket plane will contain considerable wealth of previous victims if the current victim can only escape with it (a wish or gate spell should do the trick).

## STRANGLING HORROR

Environment	At night or any dark place
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	6
Hit Dice	As Summoner (or previous form)*
Move	Cloud of Spores: 300' (100')
Intelligence	See below
Attacks	Spore Cloud or Claws
Damage	Special/3d6+4/3d6+4
No. Appearing	1 (1)
Save As	Fighter: L4
Treasure Type	Any Guarded or Nil
XP Value	determine as for summoner or previous form
Morale	12



**Description:** Usually summoned from its Plane of Decay with a *Gate* spell to guard an object, or place for a specified time, or hunt a victim by some powerful wizard this fungi has two forms: As a huge cloud of spores it may travel great distances at incredible speed and the choking cloud can infect any victim with spores - forcing the victim to make a save vs. disease or turn

into a strangling demon in 10 days. Only a Wish will reverse this prospect. DMs not prepared to have their PCs become a Strangling Horror should fudge any failed saving throws.

As a Humanoid it is ten feet tall and has incredible physical strength—23 and dexterity—18 (other stats are as its summoner or the stats of the previous life if spore infected) and solidifies into this form with hands around a victim's neck from spore cloud form as it always takes surprise. It is however vulnerable to a combination of Silver and Fire in humanoid form – and invulnerable to non magical attack in cloud form.

It is because of its ability to infect others that only the most insane wizard will risk summoning a strangling horror—damn the risks of opening a beach-head for otherworldly fungi.

## HAMMERHEAD

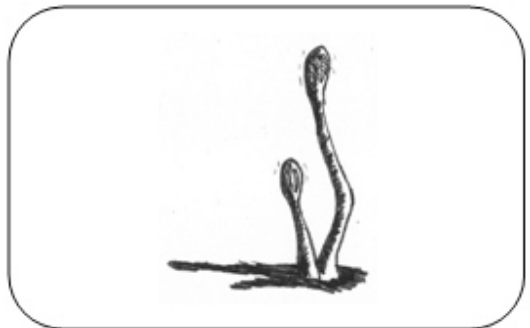
Environment	Caves, Fungi Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	5
Hit Dice	3
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Bludgeon
Damage	2d8
No. Appearing	1-4 (10-100)
Save As	Fighter: L3
Treasure Type	S
XP Value	35
Morale	12



Description: This fungi will attack any in 5-10 feet range with a bludgeoning head with the intent of killing their prey. Hammerheads will pulverize even large skeletal remains leaving no evidence as to how they get nutrients.

## HOLY WATER SPRINKLER

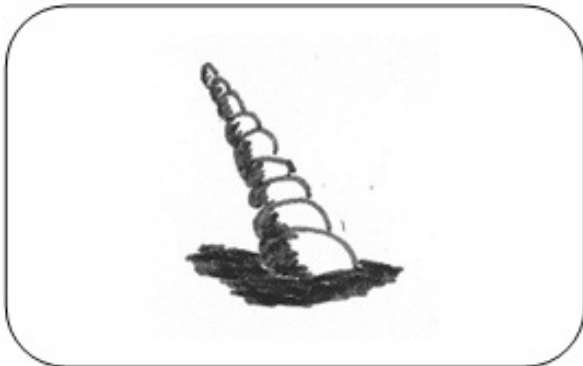
Environment	Fungi Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	-5
Hit Dice	6*
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Special
Damage	See below
No. Appearing	1-4 Sprinklers (1)
Save As	Fighter: L6
Treasure Type	S
XP Value	500
Morale	12



**Description:** This fungus does not sprinkle holy-water; rather it sprinkles flammable oil which explodes as a 5d6 Fireball when exposed to an open flame as prey approaches within its range. The oil sells at a hundred gold pieces per undischarged sprinkler to Alchemists and Wizards.

## SPIRAX

<b>Environment</b>	Caves, Mushroom Forests
<b>Alignment</b>	Neutral
<b>Armour Class</b>	2
<b>Hit Dice</b>	2
<b>Move</b>	0'
<b>Intelligence</b>	1
<b>Attacks</b>	Entangle
<b>Damage</b>	1d10/round
<b>No. Appearing</b>	1(1)
<b>Save As</b>	Fighter: L2
<b>Treasure Type</b>	V
<b>XP Value</b>	20
<b>Morale</b>	12



**Description:** This appears to be a large conical seashell however when any prey approaches within ten feet it will uncoil and attempt to tangle its prey. It will then proceed to coil back up crushing the victim in an attempt to drink the prey for nutrients.

## BANISHED ONES

<b>Environment</b>	Caverns, Fungal Forests, Plane of Decay, Swamps
<b>Alignment</b>	Chaotic (Neutral)
<b>Armour Class</b>	-2
<b>Hit Dice</b>	20**
<b>Move</b>	10' (3')
<b>Intelligence</b>	23
<b>Attacks</b>	Claw
<b>Damage</b>	1d4 + Poison
<b>No. Appearing</b>	1 (1)
<b>Save As</b>	Fighter: L8
<b>Treasure Type</b>	A
<b>XP Value</b>	5,975
<b>Morale</b>	12



**Description:** The M'aal Toroc is a 20' tall shroom with a 10' diameter cap are horrors that crawls about on small crab-like legs. These legs are coated in a poison which will result in death of any who is scratched by one (and fails to save vs. poison). Having fled the Plane of Decay (or in the case of those that are Druids - having been banished for heresy) these Sentient

Fungi are mostly Chaotic Magic-users of 20th level or better (1% are Neutral Druids who chose to worship Nature).

## COFFINSCREW

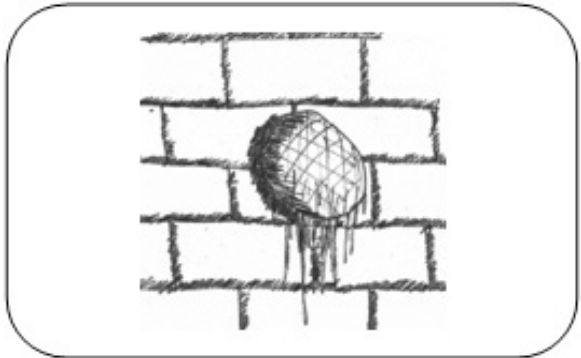
Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Fungi Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	9
Hit Dice	1 hp*
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Age
Damage	1 year
No. Appearing	1-10 (1-100)
Save As	Normal Human
Treasure Type	A
XP Value	6
Morale	12



**Description:** These nasty fungi will when their prey is within ten feet begin to twist—aging a single victim by one year. Once a year has been taken from a victim the shroom will twist its cap off and die becoming spore for the next generation. While a year may not seem much of a loss multiple shrooms could age even a dragon to death.

## WHARTS

Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Fungi Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	5
Hit Dice	1/2
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Explode
Damage	2d6
No. Appearing	1-10(0)
Save As	Normal Human
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	5
Morale	12

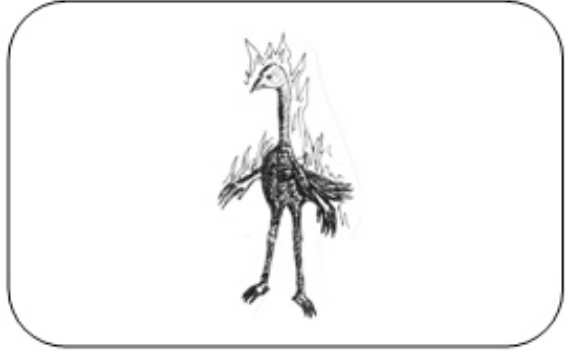


**Description:** These fungi sacks grow to one foot in diameter on the walls of Dungeons and caves. When they detect heat within ten feet or are attacked they explode releasing spores for the growth of the next generation. Kobolds like to scrape them off the walls with ten foot poles and run with them at adventurers like a hornet hive on a stick.

## ASAWI

(THE BURNING BIRD, LORD OF DECAY)

Environment	Swamps, Any Morning Mist
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	5
Hit Dice	9*
Move	60' (20')
Intelligence	18
Attacks	2 Claws
Damage	3d6+2
No. Appearing	1 (1)
Save As	Magic User: L25
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	N/A
Morale	12



**Description:**Asawi wanders the Plane of Decay and can only rarely be encountered on the Prime Plane—And only in the morning mist. From a distance it appears to be an Ostrich up to ten feet tall but it is only closer that the differences become apparent—the illuminating fire in particular. Asawi is one of the dominant forces on the Plane of Decay. It is a Magic-user of considerable power though it seems entirely focused on Charm and Quest Magic. Asawi is a Bard with considerable talent in Singing, Music and Mimicry. It is also a skilled Tracker.

**Stats:** Magic User L25; Claws 3d6+2; Str (22), Dex (18), Con (9), Int (18), Wis (11), Cha (18); Skills: *Tracking* (I+2), *Mimicry* (I), *History of the Plane of Decay* (I), *Alertness* (D), *Danger Sense* (W), *Singing* (CH+2), *Musical Instrument* (Ch+2)

## BATHER'S LIGHT

Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Mushroom Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	9
Hit Dice	1/2*
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Special
Damage	1d6/round
No. Appearing	1(1)
Save As	Fighter: LX
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	6
Morale	12



**Description:**This Primordial fungi looks more like a flower yet atop its clustered ash-gray stalks a collection of fluorescent white heads illuminate the darkness with their iridescent glow.

Bathers Lights can often be found in proximity to a pool of still water of absolute purity as it causes contaminants to settle out. This is the problem with the fungi - it will do the same to water in living organisms within ten feet of a fungi.

## BLACK SMOKER

Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Mushroom Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	7
Hit Dice	4*
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Foul Poisonous Miasma
Damage	See Below
No. Appearing	1 (1)
Save As	Fighter: L4
Treasure Type	V
XP Value	125
Morale	12



**Description:** Growing 4'-7' tall, these fungi grow partly on the Plane of Decay and give off a black smoke which causes any victim unable to save vs. Dragon-breath to change to a chaotic and evil alignment until cured with a wish.

## COCKATRICE FODDER

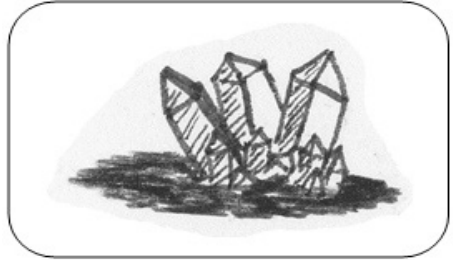
Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Mushroom Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	6
Hit Dice	4-7
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	4-7 Tentacles
Damage	1d4 per tentacle
No. Appearing	1 (1-10)
Save As	Fighter: L4-L7
Treasure Type	Special
XP Value	75, 175, 275, 450
Morale	12



**Description:** Amber tentacles growing from the soil can stretch up to 10 feet to attack prey in an attempt to strangle them for nutrients. Its real value is as a food source. Anyone consuming Cockatrice Fodder should save vs. disease or they gain the ability to move fast (triple their current movement rate). Some Barbarian tribes are known to chew this fungus when they need to travel great distances quickly.

## CRYSTALSHROOM

Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Fungi Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	-5
Hit Dice	5*
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	1 explosion
Damage	5d6
No. Appearing	1-10 (1-100)
Save As	Fighter: L5
Treasure Type	As seed gem/number appearing
XP Value	300
Morale	12



**Description:** This fungus contaminates gems with its 'spore' causing them to grow into large 'false crystals' of that particular gem type. The 'crystalline Gem' Explodes on contact unleashing terrible damage. Adventurers don't get experience points for this one unless they can prevent it from exploding with something along the lines of a hold monster spell.

## EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Mushroom Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	9
Hit Dice	1 hp
Move	Rolling 3' (1')
Intelligence	10
Attacks	Disease
Damage	See Below
No. Appearing	2 (as a pair)
Save As	Fighter: L1
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	6
Morale	12



**Description:** The spore of this fungus causes the eyes to fall out (save vs. Disease to avoid) and continue to live on as fungi stalks rupture from the eyeballs and cause the eye to swell and bloat to a huge size. The fungus stalks become eye stalks as the eye becomes a beholder. Consequently when an adult Beholder dies it will eventually dry out and become a ball of spores that will explode and disperse. It takes a while for the ability to fly to kick in - they are unable to do so until they become beholders after a year rolling about.



## GLAMMOUR

Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Mushroom Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	9
Hit Dice	1 hp/spore
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	special
Damage	see below
No. Appearing	1-100 spores
Save As	Normal Human
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	6
Morale	12



**Description:** This fungus contaminates the pollen of certain rare flowers and is harvested by wee folk. Sprinkled on the eyes it causes the victim to be vulnerable to illusion magic—making the ugly reality a more palatable beautiful dream—by lowering the victim's wisdom to three (save vs. Poison to avoid).

Fairies use it to lower their own wisdom so they will believe in any old rubbish—like their own existence—indeed a fairy free of glamour might think their selves out of existence.

## ICHOR

Environment	Plants (mostly)
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	9
Hit Dice	1 hp/square ft*
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Smother
Damage	1 hp/day
No. Appearing	1 (1)
Save As	Special
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	6
Morale	12



**Description:** The mother of all fungi is a refugee from the Plane of Decay this white slime spreads on living things (particularly plants) slowly causing damage and discharging a foul smell (save vs. Disease or vomiting the first time it is encountered).

It's immune to everything but fire. And will spread unchecked to devour the countryside reducing entire forests and crops to a rotten slimy mass. It is because of this immunity to damage that Trolls will deliberately coat themselves in this—making fire their only vulnerability.

In the end a policy of scorched earth will destroy this fungi—leaving agricultural, forest, and even swamp reduced to badlands.

## IRONSHROOM

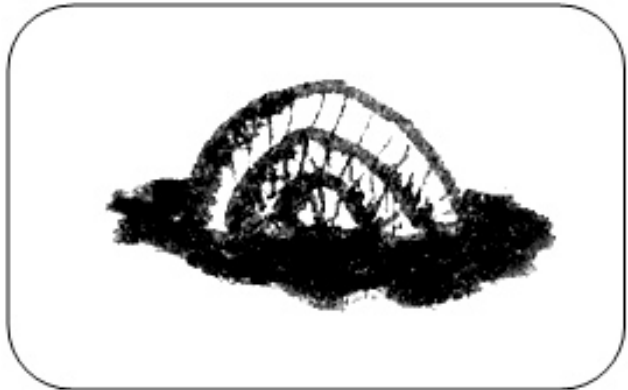
Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Mushroom Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	1
Hit Dice	7*
Move	0'
Intelligence	2
Attacks	6 fungi-stalks/round
Damage	1d8
No. Appearing	1 (1)
Save As	Fighter: L7
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	850
Morale	12



**Description:**The main body of this shroom is below the surface. It erupts from the surface and smacks against ankles of feet that are putting pressure on the Fungus from the surface like a War-hammer.

## MATNARN'S GILL

Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Mushroom Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	7
Hit Dice	4*
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Special
Damage	See Below
No. Appearing	1(1)
Save As	Fighter: L4
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	125
Morale	12



**Description:**Matnarn's Gill is a strange fungi—it doesn't pose a threat until the Victim exposed to its invisible Miasma attempts to swim underwater then it adapts the victim to a water-breathing environment making any attempt to return to the surface world near-impossible. Only a wish can reverse the effects.

## POISONER'S CUP

Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Mushroom Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	9
Hit Dice	1/2*
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Poisonous Splash
Damage	See Below
No. Appearing	1(1)
Save As	Normal Human
Treasure Type	Special
XP Value	6
Morale	12



**Description:** This fungus produces a black juice in its 'cup' which it will deliberately spill in the direction of its prey in an attempt to splash a victim with the poison. The poison itself is a cruel death—the victim will age a year every day they do not make a save vs. Poison. Making the Saving throw only staves off the effect for twenty four hours—in the end only a wish can cure this poison though the effects are forever. The poison is worth 5000gp per cup though it is impossible to get at.

## ROT-IRON

Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Mushroom Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	9
Hit Dice	1/2*
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Special
Damage	Special
No. Appearing	1 (1)
Save As	Normal Human
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	6
Morale	12



**Description:** This fungus has come from the Plane of Decay. Its food source is Iron so Swords and Armour are an obvious meal which it will cause to decay and rot quickly (a turn per pound weight). Its real threat is to Iron in blood—quickly infecting open wounds and the whole body with rotting fungi—reducing the Constitution at the rate of one per turn until constitution drops below three and death occurs. Only a wish can cure a victim of this fungus as it is immune to all else. It will also feed on Ironshroom.

## TOTEM-SHROOM

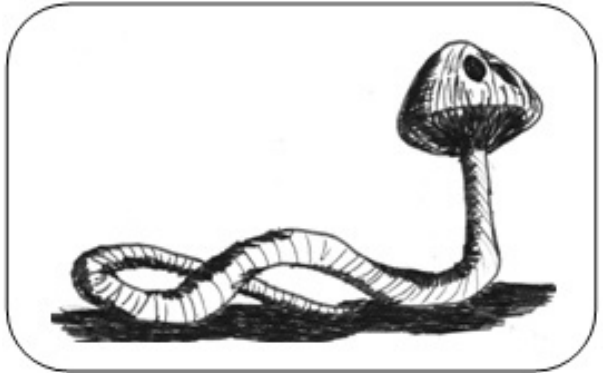
Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Mushroom Forests, Plane of Decay
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	6
Hit Dice	1*
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Special
Damage	Special
No. Appearing	1 (10-100)
Save As	Normal Human
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	950
Morale	12



**Description:** These are used by the lords of Decay to isolate a region of interest. The Totem-shroom serves as a symbol of insanity—though non-magical in nature. Any looking upon them is driven mad (requires a charisma check to avoid madness).

## CONSTRUCTOR

Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Mushroom Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	5
Hit Dice	5
Move	90' (30')
Intelligence	1
Attacks	1 Squeeze
Damage	1d10
No. Appearing	1 (1-10)
Save As	Fighter: L3
Treasure Type	U
XP Value	175
Morale	12

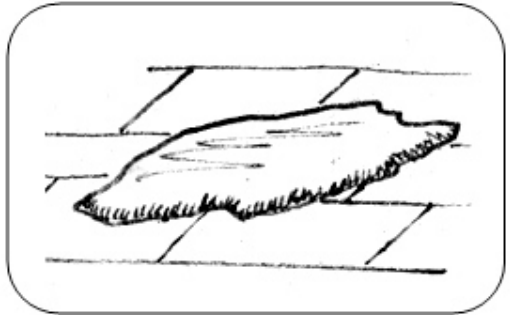


**Description:** What initially appears as either a short mushroom or a Long Stalked Shroom will in proximity to a foe cause a root-like tail to erupt from the soil to entangle and squeeze the victim or in the case of the long stalk cause the upper half of the shroom to wrap around the victim. Either way the Shroom will constrict until the victim is nutrients. It is also possible that the constrictor will be travelling when encountered.

A Strength Roll to escape its grasp is required otherwise it will exert squeeze damage each round.

## TOUCHMOLD

Environment	Dungeons, Caves, Mushroom Forests
Alignment	Neutral
Armour Class	9
Hit Dice	1 hp/square ft*
Move	0'
Intelligence	1
Attacks	Special
Damage	See below
No. Appearing	1(1)
Save As	Fighter: 1L/8 square feet
Treasure Type	Nil
XP Value	6
Morale	12



**Description:** This leathery yellow mould patch can often be found growing in moist conditions on wood or stone. Its insidiousness is its curse—any fool touching this patch of mould will be marked for life. Fungi of all types will go out of their way to respond with hostility toward the Victim.



## ARCANE ESOTERICA

## ON WHAT TO DO WITH A DRAGON CORPSE

I am a terrible dungeon master.

My players were about to leave Thundertree, near Phandlever, when they decided to look around to find a certain missing amulet. Instead they found a strangely attired group of humanoids.

Failing their stealth roll, they were invited in for tea and a strongly worded offer.

Thull explained how the dragon cult helped his sick grandmother out and provided for his every need. He explained that they quite successfully recruited dragons, he himself having never heard of a dragon refusing an offer of the dragon cult. And he strongly suggested that the players that had been spotted come inside, because he'd much rather be their friends than have to offer them to the dragon also.

This plan lasted about as long as you would expect. The players agreed and the cultists got to walk outside of the door before the rest of the party attacked.

The bard put dissonant whispers in the mind of the leader, who fled screaming.

Obviously the murder of several dozen cultists is not the quietest activity, especially not when one of them has taken psychic damage and is screaming as loudly as he can in draconic, (which iirc, no one in the party can speak).

Shortly, the ground shakes as Venomfang roars, quite upset about having being woken from his slumber.

The raging reckless frenzied barbarian, tired of the shrieking madness and yelling, runs up to Thrull the dragon cult leader and splits him in twain. The Dragon climbs to the top of the tower and flies towards the party, landing right in front of the dead cult leader and the barbarian standing over his corpse.

It is the secret quest of the raging reckless frenzied barbarian to slay Venomfang.

Venomfang (Hostile) says ***"WHO DARES DISTURB THE SLUMBER OF THE MIGHTY AND POWERFUL VENOMFANG?!"***

The bard, being the bard, attempts to talk Venomfang down. She says *"Oh, great and mighty dragon, we come only to bask in awe of your mighty form."* Using the updated 5<sup>th</sup> edition modifications to the "On the Non-Player Character" social system, she rolls for the Honor action and gets a 26, changing his mood from hostile to neutral.



Then it is the raging reckless frenzied barbarian's turn to act. She, of course, attacks twice. Combat is joined.

So the thing is, it doesn't matter how powerful your dragon is. When you lose initiative against six players, you're going to have a bad time.

By the time I actually got to act, I had already lost nearly 100 hit points. The dragon took flight, and breathed on as many targets as he could. At this point, only being the barbarian and the 1/2 orc monk. I did 56 points of damage. You'd think this would be deadly to a 1<sup>st</sup> level monk and a 3<sup>rd</sup> level barbarian. They both save. 28 hit points leaves the barbarian with 10, and the monk, being a half-orc, is not killed outright, so remains standing with 1 hit point.

How upset is Venomfang at this point?

Not nearly as upset as when he fails his saving throw against *Tasha's Hideous Laughter* when he's 30 feet in the air.

So, the point of all of the above is here's an article on what you can do with a dragon corpse.

## ESSENCES

There is very little value in fighting monsters, except for the value of the monster itself. ACKS using something similar to value monsters called "Monster parts" that's defined as having a value in gold equal to the experience point value of the monster, arbitrarily assigning each unit a weight of 5 stone for 300 gold.

Essences are simpler in that you can acquire 1 per hit die of the creature you kill. They are worth 100 gold towards crafting a relevant item or spell research, or may be sold for half price to recoup some value. In a system that is essentially on a silver standard such as *Lamentations of the Flame Princes* or 5th edition, then this value is reduced to 100 silver.

This is what I use, and it is awesome.

Dragons, being magical creatures, can provide up to 3 times the normal essence as a more mundane creature. That means a 16 hit die creature like Venomfang can produce up to 48 essences. You may extract essence from the blood, the flesh, and the brain. Note that this is an all or nothing affair. You can either have the corpse, or you can reduce it to essence. Turn the flesh into essence, no dragon armor for you.

This means totally breaking down the dragons corpse grants 480 gold, which is just in line for the amount of treasure handed out in *Phandlever and Hoard of the Dragon Queen*.

## **ARMOR**

Dragon Hide makes excellent scale mail armor. It can also be used to craft a shield. It cannot be used to make other kinds of armor, select the rationale for such a decision from the following list: verisimilitude, balance, simplicity.

A medium dragon produces 1 hide-unit of armor. A large dragon produces 3 hide-units of armor. A huge dragon produces 5 hide-units of armor. A unit of armor produces a medium sized shield, helm, or mantle (cloak). Two hide-units produce a medium sized suit of scale mail armor.

This is assuming the dragon was slain in normal melee combat. If the party takes care to do as little damage to the hide as possible (blunt weapons, sleep spells), then add 1 hide unit to a medium dragon, 2 to a large, and 3 to a huge dragon. If the party is particularly vicious in their attack on the dragon (arrows, many sword blows, violent spells), feel free to reduce the hide-unit values appropriately.

Dragon hide armor is resistant to the element the dragon breathes, and is easily enchantable. This can work however your rules system manages, but generally I reduce the costs to enchant dragon hide armor, helms, shields and cloaks, by half.

Dragon hide is consumed if the flesh of the dragon is converted into essence.

Note that good or evil, no dragon looks favorably upon someone wearing their skin.

## **BLOOD**

The blood is a deadly poison if ingested, causing death if eaten or swallowed on a failed saving throw versus poison at -4, (or a DC 15 Constitution save, or DC 18 Fortitude save, depending on your system.) It has no poison effect via contact, inhaled or injury, although it is strongly corrosive against most metals and rocks, causing them to become brittle and prone to breakage over time (weeks).

If you bathe in the blood (requiring 40 gallons for a medium creature, half that for a small creature) you are cured of any diseases, any poisons are neutralized, and you gain 1d12 years of life, as a potion of longevity. After a single bath, the blood is useless for any other purpose.

There are 2 gallons of blood in a medium dragon, 10 gallons in a large dragon, and 500 gallons in a huge dragon.

Blood sells for the same price it breaks down into if transmuted into essence, 50 gold pieces per hit die. The Dragon blood is consumed if the dragon blood is broken down into essence.

## BONES

Dragon bones, horns, teeth, and claws, can be used to create staves, wands, rods, weapons and trinkets. A medium dragon produces 4 bone-units, a large dragon produces 16 bone-units, and a huge dragon produces 256 bone-units. Why don't I include stats for a gargantuan dragon? Because get out of here. If you're killing a CR 24 gargantuan dragon, you don't need to be scavenging it for parts, leave that for the mortals.

As with other dragon parts, these reduce the cost of enchantment of items by half.

A wand or trinket (amulet, etc.) or small weapon costs 1 bone unit.

A rod or medium weapon costs 2 bone units.

A staff or large weapon costs 4 bone units.

A single bone unit can produce 10 arrows or bolts.

The dragon bones are consumed if the dragon bones are broken down into essences.

## BRAIN

It is *possible* to consume a dragon brain to gain great power. It is also possible to die horribly. Make a saving throw versus poison when eating the brain or regurgitate the brain, ruining it and losing all benefit. (Constitution DC 15 save for medium, DC 20 for large, DC 25 for huge, or DC 10 + Dragon's hit die Fortitude save). On a success, violent changes occur inside your body. Make a system shock roll or die. (Constitution DC 3 for medium, DC 5 for large, or DC 10 for huge, or DC 2 +  $\frac{1}{2}$  dragons hit die Fortitude save). If you live roll 2d8 on the following table:

- 2 You believe you are the dead dragon. Act accordingly
- 3 You gain 1 hit point per hit die permanently
- 4 You gain 1 point of Strength and Constitution. This can exceed your normal maximum
- 5 You gain the ability to smell gold (As *Treasure Finding*)
- 6 You gain magic/spell resistance of 10% (SR of 5 + Character level, or advantage on all saves versus spells)
- 7 You gain 1,000 experience points times your level
- 8 Gain 1 point of Intelligence and 1 point of Wisdom. This can exceed your normal maximum
- 9 Gain 1-4 points of Intelligence. This can exceed your normal maximum
- 10 Gain 2 points of Wisdom. This can exceed your normal maximum
- 11 You gain 1d10 x 500 experience points
- 12 You gain the ability to cast *Charm Person* 3 times a day
- 13 You gain 1 point of Dexterity and Constitution. This can exceed your normal maximum
- 14 Your eyes glow red, and you gain a 10 foot aura of dragon fear activatable at will
- 15 Your skin becomes tough. Gain a +2 natural armor bonus to armor class
- 16 Gain immunity to the dragons breath weapon type

The dragon's brain is consumed if the dragon's flesh is broken down into essence.

## EYES

The dragon's eyes may be swallowed. This follows the same procedure for swallowing the brain above. If successful, the eyes replace (painfully) the eater's natural eyes, granting them dragon sight. This has several effects.

The eyes bulge unnaturally, extruding from the face. The orbs are the color of the dragon with vertical pupils. You gain blindsight out to 15 feet, and darkvision out to 30 feet per size of the dragon, i.e. Medium is 15 /30, Large is 30 /60, and Huge is 45 /90. Also, roll percentiles:

01-10 see into ethereal plane

11-30 see invisibility as the spell

31-70 no additional effect

71-90 detect magic as the spell

91-00 true seeing as the spell

The dragon's eyes are consumed if the dragon's flesh is broken down into essence.

## GALLSTONES

There is a chance that a dragon has magical stones in its kidneys, gall bladder, or gut.  $1d4+1$  stones may be found. There is a 40% chance of a medium dragon, an 80% chance for a large dragon, and a 20% for a huge dragon to have  $2d4+2$  (huge dragons always have  $1d4+1$  stones). These are loun stones and their effects are generated randomly.

The dragon's stones are consumed if the dragon's blood is broken down into essence.

## HEART

Eating the heart of a dragon has different effects depending on the size of the dragon.

Eating the heart of a medium dragon affects the eater as if they were under the effects of a *Haste* spell. There are two servings of the heart.

Eating the heart of a large dragon affects the eater as if they were under the effects of a *Haste* spell and a heroism potion (of the appropriate class). There are 4 servings of the heart.

Eating the heart of a huge dragon affects the eater as if they were under the effects of a *Haste* spell, a super-heroism potion, and the spell *Aid* cast by a 15th level cleric. There are 8 servings of this heart.

In any case a system shock roll (Constitution DC 3 for medium, DC 5 for large, or DC 10 for huge, or  $DC 2 + \frac{1}{2}$  dragons hit die Fortitude save) must be made after the effect ends to avoid dying.

The dragon's heart is consumed if the dragon's blood is broken down into essence.

## TONGUE

A character may sever their own tongue, and attach a dead dragon's tongue in its place. This process is dangerous due to the bleeding risk, but rarely fatal. The person attaching the tongue must succeed at a DC 7 Healing check (DC 20 Medicine check, DC 25 Heal check) on a success, roll on the following table:

- 1 Saving throw difficulty of your spells increased by 1.
- 2 Blindsight 10' radius.
- 3 Ability to detect poison in a 5' radius.
- 4 verbal charisma based skills (persuasion, charisma, bluff) increased by 2 points.

On a failed healing/medicine check, the attachment was botched, and you speak with a lisp or slur. This causes you to fail casting spells with a verbal component 1 in 5 times (20% spell failure chance).

The dragon's tongue is consumed if the dragon's flesh is broken down into essence.

This conversion and these rules are heavily inspired by Hackmaster 4th edition, which just goes to show you what you've been missing.



## ON INSECT CROSSBREEDS

Traditional humanoid progression got you down? Goblin, orc, hobgoblin, not doing it for you today?

Cross those fuckers with insects. (I know scorpions and spiders aren't technically insects. Spider-orc is in charge of the complaint department).

Pick an insect breed and then pick to traits that have crossed over. Or just make it up!

### ANT CROSSBREED

**Antennae:** Blindsight, Only surprised on a 1 in 6.

**Carapace:** Increase armor class by 3

**Ant Mind:** Does not check morale, immune to illusions and mind affecting effects

**Ant Legs:** Can walk on walls and ceilings at  $1/2$  movement rate

**Ant Strength:** +2 to hit and +4 on damage

**Ant Toughness:** +4 hit points

**Sting:** Injects poison that on a failed save does 1-4 damage a round for 1-6 turns

### WASP CROSSBREED

**Segmented Eyes:** Infravision out to 60' (or increased by 60') Only surprised on a 1 in 6.

**Chitinous Plates:** Increase Armor Class by 2

**Hivemind:** Immunity to mind affect effects

**Wings:** Fly with a speed of 30'

**Swarm:** Attacks draw 1-6 reinforcements and drive victims into a frenzy, + 2 to hit and damage, -2 armor class

**Sting:** Poisonous sting, save versus poison or lose 2 Dexterity

### SCORPION CROSSBREED

**Scorpion Senses:** Blind, but has tremorsense, immune to surprise

**Scorpion Mind:** Immune to mind affecting effects

**Pincer Claws:** Gain 2 claw attacks, each doing 1-4 damage. If they both hit, do an additional 2-8 damage.

**Scorpion Stinger:** Poison, causes Enfeeblement (Strength 3) if save versus poison is failed.

**Caveborn:** Surprises on 4 in 6 if underground or in a cave

### SPIDER CROSSBREED

**Web:** Fling a web at a target. On a failed save versus petrification, their movement is set to zero and they are considered restrained (-4 to hit/damage/armor class)

**Poison Bite:** Save versus poison or become fatigued (-2 on all rolls). Fatigued creatures become exhausted (-6 on all rolls) and exhausted creatures sleep.

**Multiple Spider Eyes:** Darkvision out to 60'. Also, creature will never ever get a date.

**Spider Climb:** Can move across vertical and upside-down surfaces at full speed.

## ON THE TOP TEN TYPES OF MAGICAL CURRENCY

You know, after a certain point, money just doesn't cut it anymore. When you have access to limited wish, can summon outer realm creatures and have any enchantment you wish on your weapon, what exactly motivates you to adventure? When gems are just so much dross, platinum is too heavy to bother with or goes in limitless bag, and even a kingdom is more trouble than it's worth, what is worth having.

The top ten types of magical currency

10.) **Quintessence or Residuum:** The collected essence of magic. The magic item is less useful than what you can do with the energy it contains! This is what you get when you break down already bound magic. Look at essences for raw magic, usable before it is shaped.

9.) **Prestige or Fame:** Better than the responsibility of a domain, this is a way to have the world provide what you need without having to carry anything at all.

8.) **Fairy Dust:** Because it's pretty difficult to get your hands on, and those that do usually snort it up before finding something more useful to do with it. Comes from the Xanax Fairy, the Ativan Fairy, and the Valium Fairy.

7.) **Dragon Scales:** Only useful if removed from the dragon first.

6.) **Monster Essence:** Alchemists draw these out of monsters, usually worth about 100 gold per hit die or more. Useful in the enchantment of new magical items, as well as consumable.

5.) **Raw Chaos or Pure Planar Essence:** These are often condensed into physical form, planar pearls or astral diamonds. These can be traded at 10,000 gold to the pound.

4.) **Concentration:** Once you can survive in the outer planes, you discover what's really valuable there. Ideas can take physical form. They appear solid, but actually are liquid that flows so slowly as to be imperceptible. It trades at 50,000 gold a pound.

3.) **Hope:** In the realms even further from the prime material emotions may be found and hope is the rarest of all. It has plenty of mass, but actually removes weight from those that carry it. It sheds light and is worth upwards of 100,000 gold a gram.

2.) **IOUN Stones:** Though the value of each stone varies, they are rare enough that when collected, they fetch a much higher price.

1.) **Souls:** are usually valued at the hit dice of the creature squared, times 1000 gold.

## ON THE TOP 10 KINDS OF NON-TRADITIONAL CURRENCY

What are the top 10 Non-Metallic Currencies? Inspired by a post via Jez Gordon.

10) **Runic Arcanite**: It works a lot like Bitcoin, only using actual labor and value. It can be used to power magic items and enchantments, but must be mined and constructed from raw materials (Dallas M)

9) **Ceramic Coins**: Originally from Dark Sun, these are glazed, hampering counterfeiting. (Geek Ken)

8) **Boon Debt**: Mimicking the relationships of the eternally damned, every good transferred also transfers a specific labor debt. The value is equal to what you can provide. In underworld economies, this has indebted thousands of goblins, orcs, and ogres to overlords. After your debt exceeds twice your lifespan, your very life is at their disposal. (Geek Ken)

7) **Light**: Anything that produces illumination is of value underground. Magical light is not at the top of the list; instead ranking near bioluminescence and other sources of uncontrollable light. The candle is the basis for such a system, with lanterns and lantern oil near the top. Torches are less useful than candles for the degree to which they foul the air. (Jeff Russell) (Jacob Hurst)

6) **Animal Parts**: Usually of rare or dangerous creatures. This follows one of the key functions of economic materials, which is that the more people that seek to acquire the substance the more rare and difficult to acquire the substance becomes. Feathers, scales, teeth, preferably of dangerous beasts all work quite well as currency. (Jacob Hurst) (Jeff Russell)

5) **Occultum**: Psychic particles bonded with gold that makes shadowy weightless high value coins that cost nothing to carry, but that lose value every time they are counted or observed as they shift back to gold. (Patrick Stuart)

4) **Letters of Credit**: For when you want to just say 'to heck with it' and have everyone use paper money. (Barry Blatt)

3) **Mushrooms**: Or fungus or mold, or other rare delicate plants that can be traded, smoked, and or consumed when dried. Tobacco, Coffee plants, and other natural drugs are also sporting commodities.

2) **Water**: on a crapsack world, in a grimdark era, basic water is the exchange unit in the world. Difficult to transport, in constant need and use. Other examples from this type of currency include steel, weapons, armor, food, threats of violence, and other basic expectations in a civilized society.

1) **Gems**: Nothing is more portable, rare, beautiful, difficult to acquire and valuable than shiny rocks. Strange but true.



## ON AN EVIL NIGHT

What day is it?

Well, most of the time, it doesn't matter, even if you keep a calendar. That makes it very easy to make tonight (or any night soon) an evil night in your game. This is just like adding a holiday or festival except instead of never doing it because it adds work, you can easily do it because it adds adventure.

Every so often, the town knows an evil night occurs. What happens on this evil night?

- Every object inside every house animates and seeks to punish or protect those who have cared or abused them. The only place to stay is in a blessed dwelling, that remains uninhabited for the rest of the year.
- Ghosts of ancestors return and traverse the streets, wailing the deeds of the living and begging to hold them accountable. They cannot enter houses, unless some enormity large enough has driven them into a frenzy. Many who listen on that night will hear things they wish they could unhear.
- Beastboon. Everyone is taken over by their inner animal nature and transform into half-man half-animals. They spend the night fucking, fighting, and feasting. Not all survive.
- The goblin council. This night, each goblin becomes 10, each xvart 100, all of the same mind. A peace takes over their minds and they visit human communities united. Hordes and thongs of them. They cannot damage property, but woe unto anyone who discovers that they are outside. For they have little interest in quickly killing their prey
- Gates to hell quietly open at night fall and devils party in the street. Braver people leave their homes. Some may survive with their souls intact, though few do.
- A fog comes over each person at nightfall as the realm of dream crosses over with reality for but a night. Each person lives their own waking nightmare or fantasy for the night. Few awake the next day unchanged.
- Beastrise. Each animal, bird, and reptile in the village grows into a humanoid shape the size of an ogre. Many take what they wish and redress grievances during this time. Others, loyal to kind masters prevent them from any wrongdoing.
- Bells toll at dusk, and everyone splits into two halves, one containing a certain set of skills and the other containing the rest. What happens between people this night is beyond the rule of law.
- At night, all the people in the town fall into furious torrid lovemaking until dawn. Few of them desire it (though there are always some that don't mind), but it's forced upon them due to a curse from a nearby wizard in a tower who seeks more female concubines for his harem.
- A god descends from heaven. Which one is always unclear. Some may choose to petition her, but the gods are fickle and prone to violence.

## ON A LIGHT AND DARK AGE

We should not be afraid of the dark.

Historically there has been a division between two types of ages.

Light ages are typically represented by good communication, large, unified, monolithic forces bringing both knowledge, information, and change unilaterally to most of the world i.e. global evolution. Change tends to be in one direction for the entire civilization, whether that be progress or decline.

Dark ages are represented by poor communication, diverse entities (city states) and multiple conflicting forces and entities all changing independently of another. Historically, a sign of 'dark ages' is the lack of a comprehensive, consistent written history or records. The actual progress or decline of the period is separate from the presence or absence of records.

Once you separate out the idea of progress from the idea of a light and dark age, and instead view it as a societal structure, you gain a powerful tool in figuring out how to represent not only a traditional 'points of light' campaign, but also in how to run a game in a forgotten realms like place without it turning into "magic is a science substitute".

Some differing traits of the two types of ages:

There is a single large default widely spoken language (common) in a light age era, versus regional languages based on a variety of different cultures or city-states.

There are a collection of various empires controlling most of the known world in a light age era, versus decentralized collections of tribes, clans, or city-states.

In a light age, communication, symbols, construction, and the like will likely be highly codified, regimented and therefore easy to understand. Dark age variations on such will likely be highly idiosyncratic.

Light age citizens will fear a disease, idea, or other contagion that will destroy their way of life, while their dark age brethren will fear their neighbors and trust in safe-holds, castles, and fortresses to keep themselves safe.

Light age systems and governments will be organized around hubs and hierarchies. Dark age systems of management will likely be direct interactions and agreements between individuals.

Light age populations will likely be competing for ideals, attempting to convert various cultures. Dark age populations are exclusionary, insular, and ritualistic, outright rejecting conversion attempts.

One important thing to note here, is that whatever the trend is for the light age, it is universal. Whereas, in a dark age, some people will do well, some will do poorly, and many are going to be doing average.

This means that your light age game setting the trend can be a decline, not one of growth and order. It can be a decline similar to our current decline, where there simply is too much data to be illuminated and tracked all at once, or a decline similar to the decline of the roman empire, individual leaders, with out of date knowledge, doing whatever they did before until they hear again from the capital.

A large part of the cognitive dissonance when dealing with fantasy settings is handling how a light-age setting can fit with traditional fantasy assumptions (which often assume dark age settings).

I also find it kind of interesting that instead of assuming a dark age, Dungeons and Dragons carries many light age assumptions with it (single unified language, large empires controlling most of the world, etc.)

Understanding functioning light age structures (Discovery and settling of the new world, fall of the roman empire, explosion of information beyond human abilities to process) in light of the fact that light ages are never stable, but always on the rise or in decline, can assist with adding verisimilitude to those environments.



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## ON NORMALIZING THE FANTASTIC

So I was watching the excellent, under-rated film *John Carter* the other day.

It is a fantastic, strange movie. You know what gets only a single descriptive phrase?

The mobile city of Zodanga

Oh, by the way, our city walks. That's all.

It is this "Normalization of the Fantastic" that makes adventure into high adventure. All too often we focus on the dull and pedantic laboring under the mistaken belief that somehow adding truly fantastic elements reduces their splendor.

If that weren't the entire point, we might be in trouble!

It's high adventure because of the fantastic environment. The adventurers live in a world where the cloud castles strafe the land and a 'giant' giant sits by the sea. These fantastic things are normal to the characters that inhabit the world. We spend all this time on monsters and magic items to have plain 'ole medieval cities, societies, castles and dungeons.

I think this is from two great fears as creators of games.

First is the fear of complexity. We feel that to introduce a fantastic element, we must suddenly do a great deal of work.

Second is the fear of the rational modern mind. We feel that if we can't explain or understand something thoroughly we won't be able to explain it to our players.

### THE EASY ROUTE TO HIGH ADVENTURE

The first fear is complexity. This concern has always been greatly overstated. There are dozens of pages of articles in early dragon magazines talking about the power of guns to unbalance your game. It's not that different from a bow or wand. The rules for any new item can be as complex or as simple as you want.

The angst over rules for a waterfall that falls up is just that. *Angst*. You have water rules. You have falling rules. What else do you need? Most games contain the building blocks of whatever you need to handle things as unique and complex as you wish.

What's more, is even most of that effort is wasted. If you just put a giant stone face the size of a mountain that weeps boulders and rocks in your game, you probably won't ever need any rules for it at all, much less any that are so complicated they can't be handled immediately during play. If you know it's ok to stop the game for a moment and say "I'm not sure, give me a second to think about how I should handle this." then even very difficult issues are solved simply.

The second fear is of the endless advantage a player with a rational modern mind can derive. The key to handling this is to remember that the worlds we describe aren't driven by physics and science. Once you go down that road, every giant collapses and suffocates under his own weight. When players start trying to use the scientific method and experimentation to take undue advantage of a situation, that's the time for them to encounter the fantastic reality they are exploring.

This doesn't mean, of course, that if they show interest you should shut them down. It just means that when they start trying to make black hole artillery to conquer the world because they can manufacture bags of holding and portable holes that it's totally possible to address this with applied, logical, and natural consequences. Why hasn't anyone done it before? Because the gods kidnap you. Because manufacturing astral equipment changes your 'smell' making you attractive to astral creatures, because the land itself begins to decay, or is sentient and takes revenge, because if the objects are in motion they repel each other.

Because fantasy.

## **THE BALANCE**

The suggestions above aren't about stymieing the players. If they show enthusiasm about an idea, that's the time to put in the thought about the way a fantastic thing works and ways that it can be non-disruptive to the game. But after years of play, I have very rarely found fantastic elements to be disruptive. This type of engagement is wonderful and can produce very interesting games. If they want to find out how something works to take advantage of it, they just told you what quest they want to do! You couldn't ask for a better opportunity.

It isn't our world and things don't work the same. Very few people today understand exactly how capacitance screens work and certainly not how to repair them -- in a fantasy world influenced by magic and with no global communication system, everything is rumor, darkness, and practically unknowable. Your characters are specialists of a different sort. Specialists in survival, seeking the easy route to money, not the long arduous one of research in a lab.

## ON THE ARROW OF TIME

Eggs do not unbreak themselves.

Or do they?

There is the anticipation and dread or excitement before a game, the heady excitement of play, the exhausted denouement.

Those are pale words to describe what sitting down to game is like. It's a good human experience. You are often learning new things, solving new problems, and being presented with these multi-dimensional situations, something the old school renaissance has really pushed for—factions, elements in play that give you new resources.

### DECODING

The game is about decoding what the Dungeon Master says. This drives much of the discussion in the blogosphere. Is boxed text good or bad? (p.s. it's bad). Railroad or sandbox? How do you respect player agency? What's a good format for presenting information?

The thing is, that isn't the game. What the Dungeon Master says is only part of a game. Everything that occurs at the table has value. The players speculate wildly, the Dungeon Master emphasizes the important points, the players refocus on the solving the current problem, choices are made. Play is more than just decoding what a person says.

It turns out, it's even more interesting than that!

### ENTROPY

Until recently, humanity labored under the assumption that eventual all energy would be dissipated throughout a dying universe as we moved forward in time, doomed to universal equilibrium, the universe grinding to a halt.

This view, of time moving inexorably forward, created a lot of problems for people trying to solve how the universe worked. Why does it flow one way? Why doesn't it flow in reverse?

It turns out, we may have been misunderstanding the problem.

The idea is, energy doesn't dissipate.

The idea is, objects in proximity become entangled and become more like each other.

So when you put a cup of coffee in the room, the cup doesn't cool off because of high energy atoms flying into the larger room. The high energy atoms are becoming entangled with the atoms in the room, sharing information and becoming more alike! The longer the cup of coffee sits in the room, the more entangled with the room it becomes.

All objects are constantly being entangled with the experiences, places, ideas, and objects they are being exposed to. You don't remember the future, because you form memories by becoming correlated with your surroundings. When you read a book, your brain becomes entangled with the new information and then you can recall it from that point forward.

The universe isn't cooling and dying. It is all becoming one.

## **GAMING**

We really are all fractured creatures, again seeking to become whole. Which is what makes breaking the egg of gaming really special.

When you sit around a (possibly virtual) table with your friends, playing Dungeons and Dragons, something amazing is happening. You are becoming entangled with something new—something that doesn't exist.

And when that happens, when you take someone's setting, you are taking an object their experiences, ideas, and internal impulses have somehow produced and through the magic of contextualizing information under pressure it becomes a real thing where nothing had been before. That setting idea that has become entangled with you, making you more like it, is now becoming entangled with several minds at once.

This idea is not a real thing. And yet, as you become entangled with it as a group, it becomes real. It is a part of you and you a part of it. It is guided and organic. It changes, thrives, lives and dies.

Hey, look, a Dungeons and Dragons Ride!

You are Dungeon Master, their guide in the realm of Dungeons & Dragons in a very real sense. The world during play is not a winding down of spent energy in the universe as you sit at the table, exhausting that rather healthy vegetable tray that shows up every week.

You are literally becoming entangled with a place that never was. A new realm is given life, and is real as anything that exists. In fact, it is made more and more real the more that it is experienced; it becomes more and more a part of the universe as the idea spreads.

And eventually, at the end of time, when the universe is again whole, something new will exist where nothing existed before. The breaking apart and reforming of all that was will be more than it was originally. The egg will be unbroken.

## ON THE RELIGIOUS FANBOY

Should you get rid of clerics in your game?

This question is a unique intersection of crucial information in the campaign.

Are they known gods? New gods? Should they have a selection of Judeo-Christian inspired cleric spells? Does their existence explain away literally any mystery in the campaign? Are they not gods, but just powerful humans? Do they dictate right and wrong?

Are you going to have an alignment conversation?!?



## ON GODS AND SUPERHEROES

In the upper right is a picture of Yahweh, the israelite god of weather (or possibly divine winds) and war. He is a holy warrior, riding a chariot, wielding a honking huge sword and slaying the enemies of the country. His army is a host of stars and planets that smash his enemies. At various times he was associated as married to Anat or Asherah. Eventually, as we all know, he took the place of El, becoming a single god, shedding his pantheon containing thousands.

Captain America, is the avatar of America. He is a patriotic warrior, wielding a shield and riding a steel horse. He leaps into battle against the enemies of America, smashing them with the stars and stripes of his shield, torn from the woman he loves, a man out of time, he struggles to find how the values of America fit into a hostile future—

Clerics were (and always have been!) the comic fanboys of their nations.

They gather in comic book shop temples, gather at huge comic-cons to worship, and war endlessly online with members of other faiths. Can Superman beat Batman? Is the new DC line awesome or terrible? Will the new new DC line be terrible or awesome? (Protip: Don't get hopes up.)

People have always been talking and telling stories about characters that are greater than men are. Is a god popular? Then his legend changes, with a heel/face turn, or perhaps the opposite when they fall out of fashion.



Time passes, and these stories get co-opted by societies, changing as the societies themselves change. Superman goes from being an alien in a human costume to an alien who is a man that puts on an alien costume. Iron man becomes alcoholic in the 70's. Someone important dies. And then they come back to life. What's popular is what resonates. What resonates is what hero, what myth, represents the struggle of the people.

That's what the cleric is doing. He's reading the latest issue and arguing over it with the other members of the clergy. The higher ups are crafting new stories and tales and altering the old ones for new people in changing times.

The interaction with the pantheon is much the same. A fan of Captain America doesn't disbelieve in Thor. Thor and Cap hang out together all the time. Sometimes they are on the same side, and sometimes they fight. What's important is that you're a fan of Marvel and not those crappy DC heroes or vice-versa.

### **CLERICS IN THE GAME**

The above is a perspective that makes the idea of cleric more palatable. And really, that's what we are talking about every time this comes up. Gods, clerics, and holy spells cause logistical problems. If you can heal, cure disease, and resurrect, then do leaders die? Are their epidemics? Does each god have a portfolio? Is that a lot of extra work? Are gods, gods or just beings on a power-level beyond characters? Does Healing magic just waste everyone's time, devaluing hit points as a resource and shoehorning in a character "because we need a healer"? Are armored spellcasters really a good idea?

These are a lot of annoying work-heavy questions for elf-games.

It's possible I'm understating the problems with the cleric. How do the common people react when every god can perform miracles on the street? Open access to an entire spell list? Turn undead neutralizing a whole class of monsters which become overwhelming otherwise? How about their paucity in fantasy literature?

Clearly a lot of these problems have been surmounted. Someone wants to play a cleric in 5<sup>th</sup> edition, I just hand them the deity list, along with the convenient "additional deity specific" spells. It works. That plus spending hit dice during a rest plus being in the Forgotten Realms addresses most of the points against clerics made above. But the fact that changes were made, shows that it was a fairly common issue for groups to come up against.

Really, the problem isn't surprising, considering the entire class is a reaction to a single player, running around an ancient castle playing as a vampire, causing everyone grief. Nearly half a century later and we're still dealing with the fallout from that.

## D100 WIZARD DICKS

- 01 Dragon dick shoots d3 micro fireballs when aroused, sleeps if covered
- 02 Tentacle dick—one foot long prehensile
- 03 Slobbering tongue dick, one foot long
- 04 talking dick verbally offers advice on how to get laid constantly
- 05 Detachable dick will wander off on own if neglected for 24 hours
- 06 Tree dick is made of wood and has tiny green leaves
- 07 Newt dick is slime and tries to escape when aroused, causes hallucinations if licked
- 08 Fire dick bursts into flame if aroused and is immune to fire, fire elementals like it
- 09 Water dick turns into bubble of water when aroused mostly useless
- 10 Earth dick turns into stone when aroused with no feeling but elementals like it
- 11 Air dick turns invisible when aroused but air elementals can see it
- 12 Necrodick is rotting and smelly but undead ladies might like it
- 13 Crystal dick is 12" colourful crystal formation
- 14 Rabbit dick tries to escape and bites you if you touch it. Makes rabbit noise
- 15 Ethereal dick can only affect creatures on the ethereal plane, looks like a ghost dick
- 16 Snake dick can eat mice or rats and bites anything in front of it. 1 in 6 is a cobra
- 17 Insect dick not terribly appealing
- 18 Echidna dick has multiple heads
- 19 Bat dick has wings, screeching bat head
- 20 Rhino dick 5' long when aroused; save vs unconsciousness each round
- 21 Prismatic dick changes every colour with various dangerous magic effects
- 22 Duck dick is a writhing worm like tube as long as wizard is tall normally inside body
- 23 Footlong demon penis tries to convince you to cut it off with horrible lies
- 24 Has mothers face and hair on end berates you when aroused and gives advice
- 25 Cactus dick covered in inch long spikes
- 26 Displacing dick actually 4" inches away from where it appears
- 27 Spider dick has spindly legs and horrible poison fangs that bites any who come near
- 28 Yard long elephant trunk dick rolls up when not in use
- 29 Skeleton key bone dick can pick locks and is very enjoyable
- 30 Lute dick can play popular bardic tunes
- 31 Chimera dick has a lion and a goat head that are jerks
- 32 Hook dick can support wizards weight effortlessly, not very appealing
- 33 Raven dick a squawking bird that repeats phrases like "nevermore"
- 34 Plutonian dick can travel in time to primordial past when aroused
- 35 Frill necked lizard dick when aroused opens its frill and hisses aggressively
- 36 Rose dick has thorny green shaft and bud opens when aroused, attracts bees
- 37 Volcano dick of obsidian when aroused leaks molten rock and smoke
- 38 Squid dick has ten barbed tentacles and latches onto anything and tries to bite
- 39 Dog dick is friendly furry and woofs lots
- 40 Cat dick furry and temperamental but bites when happy
- 41 Moray eel dick snaps at strangers
- 42 Shark dick chomps gobs of meat from anything near by if aroused
- 43 Trumpet disk blows revelry every morning and when aroused
- 44 Roper dick has one eye, four tentacles is hyper intelligent and evil
- 45 Cave fisher dick has lobster claws, lowers long sticky proboscis to trap small creatures
- 46 Lamprey dick is a blood sucking horror
- 47 A small iron cannon dick when aroused fires a tiny cannonball with loud bang
- 48 Flute dick very enjoyable when played
- 49 Icicle dick has a deadly point tip
- 50 Ghoul dick is a rotting glowing dick that causes paralysis on touch

- 51 Candy cane dick is a sweet striped mint flavoured candy treat
- 52 Devil penis has sulphur spitting face that will become normal for price of your soul
- 53 Drill penis enjoys boring through wood or meat d4 damage
- 54 Scissor penis enjoys cutting things
- 55 Lamp penis has brightly glowing head
- 56 Lotus pipe dick like a pipe stem if smoked has addictive lotus smoke
- 57 Golden holy dick covered in holy symbols ejaculates holy water on climax
- 58 Boat dick is a tiny galleon with crew of micro seamen on board
- 59 Metal robotic dick can interface with advanced technology
- 60 Knife penis enjoys stabbing things
- 61 Bagpipe dick makes horrible loud noise when aroused
- 62 Ovipositor tube deposits wizard clone eggs in victims that hatch and eat way out
- 63 Goblin dick is green a foot long and ejaculates a gallon of green slime at a time
- 64 Mushroom head opens on arousal and releases mushroom spores when ejaculates
- 65 Screeching monkey face dick makes annoying noises
- 66 Prehensile dick can elongate to ten foot long and can be used to swing and climb
- 67 Acid dick urinates corrosive fluid that can cut metal or inflict a d4 damage
- 68 Milk dick urinates cow milk and ejaculates butter
- 69 Bee dick shoots out angry bees when ejaculating and pees honey
- 70 Electric dick ejaculates a d6 lightning bolt
- 71 Gore dick urinates blood, ejaculates clots
- 72 Rope dick can elongate to 100 foot of rope but cutting it unappealing
- 73 Hammer dick only feels pleasure when hammering nails, spikes, or stakes
- 74 Flesh flower dick when aroused opens like a flower releasing calming pollen
- 75 Wand dick can shoot a magic missile per round while masturbating
- 76 Web dick is a monstrous flesh trumpet that can shoot a web on climax
- 77 Butterfly dick that ejaculates butterflies
- 78 Rust monster cock works like a rust monster tentacle
- 79 Unicorn horn dick can purify water on contact, urinates pure spring water
- 80 Negadick fires bolts of life draining energy for d4
- 81 Ghost dick is semi-transparent and ejaculates masses of ectoplasm
- 82 Party dick urinates beer
- 83 Troll dick two feet long and regenerates unless burned or damaged with acid
- 84 Basilisk dick turns lovers to stone on climax
- 85 Manna dick glows when aroused and ejaculates d4 healing potion
- 86 Polymorphing dick turns sex partner into random animal on climax
- 87 Abyssal dick ejaculates demon ichor that turns lovers into lesser demons
- 88 Witch dick allows you to fly when erect and naked with no baggage
- 89 2' Bronze penis unfeeling always erect
- 90 A 12" foot extends from wizards groin
- 91 A forearm extends from the wizards groin with a functional hand
- 92 A duck neck and head grows from wizards groin and quacks frantically
- 93 Wizards dick can sing and likes to set the mood with popular folk songs
- 94 Wizards freakish demon dick can shoot a live bat each round
- 95 Wizards freakish dick with elder sigils can ejaculate one pound micro shoggoths
- 96 A mass of tentacles with a eye and a beak
- 97 Fully functional enormous male and female genitals and functional womb
- 98 A 2' golden jewel encrusted royal sceptre
- 99 A gorgon's face on a scaly dick with glowing eyes that can turn people to stone
- 100 Chaos dick—reroll daily on this table

## ON UNIQUE SPEECH

Anyway, voices, right?

Well, that's super important. Everything or nearly so should talk in a fantasy game. I'm sure I can't recall the last time I played where someone couldn't speak to animals or plants or rocks or something. In a 4e game I played, someone figured out speak with dead along with the ability to speak with animals/insects allowed you to have access to effectively infinite sensors as long as you had enough access to mice or insect corpses.

The point is, if players can talk to stones, well, they are going to want to do it. The question is, how do you portray such creatures in game. This has an interesting intersectional tangent to my own beliefs, which is that pretty much all creatures have the same experience of life, even if they lack certain higher order functions. So, I'm asking a real question here, When the dogs can speak, what will they say?

Luckily, I'm preeety sure I can answer that question.

*"Throw the ball? What are we doing now? Are we going somewhere? Did you say you were going to throw the ball? Is it time to eat? You're the best. I can get the ball for you. Or the stick. What's that over there? Here's the ball."*

I mean, anyone who owns pets communicates with them all the time. Let's look at how to portray these things in game.

### SPEAK WITH ANIMALS

**Dogs, Pets:** Happy, hedonistic, insecure. Seeking approval from pack leaders. Poor at making judgements or decisions. Can perform basic but insightful analysis of interactions. Unsure of answers. Can't count higher than two. Sees in black and white. Concerned with primarily relating scent information: Will talk about garbage, what people ate, what animals were nearby, in preference to what people are doing or saying.

**Dogs, War:** As pets, but more rigid and disciplined. Can count to three. (One, Two, Three, Many). Speaks laconically and loudly, like a drill instructor. Calls all soldiers sir, doesn't take civilians seriously.

**Cats:** Selfish. Give no f%&\*\$. Want to know why they should tell you anything. Acts superior, often bluffing. Haughty. Very self centered, when relating stories, every one is how about what happened affected them and their day. Secretly and urgently desires praise and attention.

**Mice:** Skittish. Nervous. Somewhat compulsive. When they've learned something, they can only relate it by rote, from the beginning each time. Everything is large or large and dangerous. Focused on the immediate world in front of them.

**Rats:** Focused on their needs. Totally convinced that they are part of the coolest organized crime group in the world and everyone should be terrified of them.

### **SPEAK WITH PLANTS**

**Moss:** Totally unmotivated. Unconcerned with things. Not stupid, just lazy. Big plan of growing here, gonna keep it up. Speaks normally, but talks like a depressed person. ("That doesn't matter. I didn't pay attention, no one cares about that.")

**Slimes/Algae:** Observant. Talks like sleezeball in a bar. Offers to grow on intimate places. Fond of damp, wet, organic matter.

**Grass:** Communal. They are all part of a drug-free commune, and are just not concerned with your petty concerns, man. Complains about being walked all over, but foolishly thinks that their marxist unity will elevate them.

**Trees, Coniferous:** Stoic. Slightly arrogant. Terrified of fire. Talks a lot about the sky and clouds. Completely uninterested in creatures on the ground.

**Trees, Deciduous:** Varies based on the season. Bright and happy in spring, full of excitement and promise. Talks about the future a lot. Becomes very slow and relaxed in summer, taking a long time to say anything. In the fall, becomes morose and vexing. Threatens and plays tricks on people. Whines and moans when not doing that. During winter, wails and moans constantly, is acutely depressed and apocalyptic.

**Baby Shoots:** They speak with the enthusiasm of a powerpuff girl.

### **SPEAK WITH STONES**

**Igneous:** When new, these rocks are violent, and their voice is inconsistent and constantly changing, and they speak of change and revolution and tearing down the old order in fire and suffering. Older igneous rocks speak in a deep gravelly voice, that comes across as restrained power. They are jaded and have little insight into the world around them. Granite, especially cut granite, longs for the past, and believes things were better back then, and comes across as depressed and slightly lonely like old men.

**Sedimentary:** Constantly contradicts self. Personality suddenly changes frequently. Disagrees with self. Confused. Clipped speech.

**Metamorphic:** Slightly paranoid. Insightful but worried. Talks about instability and unpredictability. Cautions against depending on anything that it says. Believes the world is hostile. Somewhat pleased with itself and its own traits and beauty, but then immediately falls back into paranoia.

**Flagstones:** Lots of different opinions, but all in the same voice from people who have identical experiences as them. Complains constantly about how nobody does any hard work and how they get taken advantage of by other people.

**Gemstones:** Narcissistic. Haughty. Spoiled. Throws tantrums.

**Pebbles:** Infantile wonder and amazement. "Whaaaaaat?"

This article isn't meant to be a reference, but rather a starting point for thinking about the nature of things that normally don't speak. It's straightforward because mostly, the fact that the cat talks is the interesting thing. If, for whatever reason, that's expected, then it's no longer interesting. Players won't have thought about these characterizations; when they hear them, it will make sense. "Of course grass is a communal creature!" They will think. But if they are expecting it, then feel free to play against type to break expectations, once the thing talking is no longer the interesting thing.

Also, seriously, speak with rocks? Whoever invented that one was a jerk. Everything is made out of rocks. It's as difficult to manage as Psychometry is in game!



## ON A DISDAIN FOR VANCE

There was a time when I held a disdain for Vancian magic.

It was before I had read Vance.

On the surface, it doesn't make sense. How can you put one spell into your brain? How can you forget it after you cast it? Shouldn't magic be like a force or a tool? Once you know how to do something, how do you unknow it?

I worked in a building built in 2008, state of the art. I've worked there since they opened in 2009. It was very cold on my unit, always. 64 degrees (17c) at the floor, around 68 (20c) at chest level. They say "adjust the thermostat". Adjusting the thermostat did nothing. Room 200 is 74 (23c) degrees, pretty much constantly. Room 201 is 58 degrees (14c). Yes, they are across the hall from each other.

Did a diagram exist of the building at some point? The building was built so I assume it must. But there isn't a copy in the building. I know this, because before we were open, I had a large part in preparing for our opening. I had to count and mark the exit signs and sprinkler nozzles because there was no document containing their number. The position of building manager had changed hands at least 4 times in the intervening years. Whatever knowledge one had, had to be relearned from another, from arcane texts, oral history, and inductive reasoning.

They continue to complain about the temperature. Why is it so cold?

They go to reference their books, to seek out the answer. They return.

It is because of the baffles in the building! said the balding man, with the shirt opened down to his belly, greying hair curling out from his chest. Some are open, he says, and others are closed. His cologne stinks of a different fallow age.

Well, I asked, can you fix them?

No. He said. We don't know where they are or how to get to them. The baffles in our buildings are lost. See, the only way for him to find the baffles to correct the problem is empirical and arbitrary. He has to literally poke around and attempt to find where they are and how to adjust them inside the buildings superstructure. He has no idea how many there are nor how they are controlled or adjusted. Any knowledge he acquires and passes on is didactic, oral secrets passed from one person to another.

This building was built less then 7 years ago, and already the knowledge of how it works is lost.

Soon, our power and control over our environment will become even greater. And our knowledge of how it works will be lost even faster.

I think Jack Vance is a visionary, because in a few short paragraphs, he managed to foresee that this is the way of power in the far future. Yes, if you know engineering, you could rig a vacuum to give an electric shock or alter its construction from pulling air to blowing air, but the most anyone will ever know is to turn it on or off. Those who use it frequently might find some setting switches. Many of those who experiment without knowing the principles will shock themselves or break the vacuum beyond all repair. This is the future, the way of all technology. didactic, empirical, arbitrary.

In Vance's own words:

*"In this fashion did Turjan enter his apprenticeship with Pandelume. Day and far into the opalescent Embelyon night he worked under Pandelume's unseen tutelage. He learned the secret of renewed youth, many spells of the ancients, and a strange abstract lore that Pandelume termed "Mathematics".*

*"Within this instrument," said Pandelume, "resides the Universe. Passive in itself and not of sorcery, it elucidates every problem, each phase of existence, all the secrets of time and space. Your spells and runes are built upon its power and codified according to a great underlying mosaic of magic. The design of this mosaic we cannot surmise; our knowledge is didactic, empirical, arbitrary. Phandaal glimpsed the pattern and so was able to formulate many of the spells which bear his name. I have endeavored through the ages to break the clouded glass, but so far my research has failed. He who discovers the pattern will know all of sorcery and be a man powerful beyond comprehension."*

So Turjan applied himself to the study and learned many of the simpler routines.

*"I find herein a wonderful beauty," he told Pandelume. "This is no science, this is art, where equations fall away to elements like resolving chords, and where always prevails a symmetry either explicit or multiplex, but always of a crystalline serenity." - The Dying Earth by Jack Vance*



