

Gregorius21778:

Examples of the Dark Arts

for OSR Fantasy RPG

Version 2.0; written by Kai Pütz

(c) 2016



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How to use this supplement:

Examples of the Dark Arts provides you with a total of 25 items, spells and weapons to use in your own OSR fantasy games. Most of the entries were inspired by folklore and the "concept of sympathy". In the folklore of old Europe, parts of the human body are attributed magical powers of their own, as all of mankind contains the spark of creation which is believed (or feared) to be a power that can be harnessed.

If not mentioned otherwise, the items and talismans found in this book can be created by non-magic-users. The components alone, along with the knowledge of the right rites (which might have been passed down from one generation to the other) are enough to create them (unless the Referee rules otherwise).

As a final word of note and disclaimer, I would like to point out that none of these entries represent any real set of beliefs or "magical practice" that me, the author, would be aware of.

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-- Magical Weapons --

#01: The Thrice Cutting Dagger [Magical Weapon]

This magical weapon is a finely crafted dagger with a slightly curved blade and a polished, featureless knob at the end of the handle. It could very well be used as a sacrificial tool, and had been used in this way for a generation before it became what it is now, as only such weapons can become a *Thrice Cutting Dagger*.

The basic stats of the weapon are the same as for a mundane dagger of its type, and it does not grant any magical combat bonus to its wielder, but every time a character receives damage from a *Thrice Cutting Dagger* a **Save vs. Magical Device** is called for. If failed, two further cuts (or stabs) will manifest on the victim during the next two combat turns, each of which deals the same damage as the original wound. This effect may only be prevented by removing the dagger from the hand of the attacker that caused the wound. Only wounds that were *directly* caused by a *Thrice Cutting Dagger* multiply, “spawned” wounds do not “spawn” further wounds of themselves.

Thrice Cutting Daggers are sought after by cultists who perform cruel sacrifices with them, where the victims literally die a death by a hundred tiny cuts.

02# The Wailing Whip [Magical Weapon]

A common cat-o-nine, with strands made of men that were skinned alive. The victim’s teeth were later added to the ends of the whip. Feint echos of the bloodcurdling screams of the victim can be heard when the whip is put to use, as the tormented soul screams out from beyond in remembrance of its agony.

The basic stats of the weapon are the same as for a mundane whip, and it does not grant any magical combat bonus to its wielder. When used in combat, the opponents have their **Morale** reduced by two. If used against the Undead, the weapon’s damage is doubled and it can even harm those that are insubstantial (e.g. ghosts) as the soul of the poor wretch that was skinned to make the whip calls from beyond for what should be with it instead of being with the living.

The Wailing Whip is the weapon of a remorseless witch-hunter, of a necromancer that fears those of his own trade or that of a lich or vampire who has enemies among his own “kin”.

-- Magical Items, Rituals & Spells --

03# Amulet of Shadow-Bats [Item]

A roughly bat-shaped pendant made of hammered, tarnished gold that is worn around the neck on a golden chain. Once per hour the wearer may release a large swarm of bats from another plane of existence. Those creatures made of shadow and magic will pour from the amulet and swarm out instantly to attack any present enemy of the wearer.

Every character within 30 feet that the wearer does not consider an ally must **Save vs. Magic** at the beginning of their next round. Those who pass may act normally but need to test again at the beginning of every combat, those who failed have to roll on the table below, and at the beginning of every round until the swarm disappears.

(d6)	Effect (while fighting bats)
1	May act normally
2	May act normally
3	Stunned
4	Accidentally (-2) attacks the nearest creature
5	Stunned; Stumbles 1d6 feet (random direction)
6	Stunned; receives 1d3 points of damage

The swarm will be sucked back into the amulet after six rounds. An Amulet of the Shadow-Bats is usually found with 1d6 charges left, recharging it takes a ritual that involves dousing with bat blood (of at least 7 bats) and components worth 50sp. An Amulet of Shadow-Bats cannot hold more than 6 charges.

04# Angelheart [Item]

The vile talisman called “Angelheart” is a foul instrument of witches and warlocks, to hide their sins and malevolent nature. It is made of the dried heart of an infant that died within a week after being baptized. The heart needs to be acquired before the infant is buried in the sanctified ground of a proper cemetery. After being dried and hexed, those who wear that “Angelheart” over their chest will never be accused for what they truly are. If worn as described above (most likely hidden under clothes), any method to detect the wearers alignment will identify the character as of Neutral alignment. Every lie the wearer of an Angelheart speaks in order to protect him- or herself will be believed unless a **Save vs. Magical Device** is passed.

After being worn for the first time, an Angelheart will lose its power after seven weeks.

05# Bone Rattle [Item]

A bone rattle is made from the bone of a human forearm, human finger bones and thin leather straps. The straps are bound around the ends of the different finger bones and are then bound to one end of the forearm bone. Holding the forearm bone at its other end allows to “rattle” the finger bones with quick movements of the wrist. The Bone Rattle is used as a ward against ghosts and foul magic.

When a bone rattle is used, all Undead within 30’ must pass a **Save vs. Magical Device** or will suffer a (-2) penalty for the remainder of the turn. A character with a bone rattle will receive a +1 bonus on all *Saves vs. Magic or Magic Device* if the bone rattle has been used within the same turn.

The item can only be created out of the bones of a holy man or woman, that of a heathen, a heretic or somebody that was excommunicated. Only Magic-Users or clerics may make use of a bone rattle, the ritual to create one demands ingredients worth 50 sp.

06# Candles of the Unseen Beyond [Item]

Candles of the Unseen Beyond are made of tallow harvested from human bodies. They must be made during the nights of the new moon, the formula includes herbs that must have grown on a grave or graveyard. When lit, such a candle reveals the presence of ghosts or other creatures of the beyond by making them visible as translucent schemes, not unlike thin smoke on a sunny day.

If used in a ritual to summon the dead or to make them answer, any percentage for success is increased by 1% for every such candle being lit.

07# Chalice of Robbed Health [Item]

These are part of a dark legend about a nobleman who turned hospitality into an act of most foul treason. The *Chalices of Robbed Health* are a set of drinking vessels whose looks are not known. All of them were hexed by a magician who sought eternal life. The chalices are presented to guests during a banquet and filled with wine. If the host calls out a toast on good health, everybody who responds to this toast will shorten his or her own life to the benefit of the host.

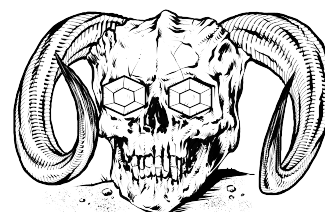
Every guest responding to the toast (see above) must pass a **Save vs. Magical Device**. Those who fail will have their life span reduced by one year and the life span of the host will be increased accordingly. People that attend to banquets and gatherings of a host with a set of the *Chalices of Robbed Health* regularly will find themselves wither away long before their time while the host seems to defy age with ease. Furthermore, it is said that if somebody who responded to the toast dies a violent death before the next sunrise, the life of the host will be prolonged by all the years that the victim would otherwise have had.

08# Door Frame of Skull and Bones [Item / Ritual]

Necromancers don’t take it kindly when somebody tries to uncover their hidden secrets or disturbs their ritual chambers and laboratories. Thereby, some of them take extreme and damning measures to protect rooms and chambers only they and their undead minions are to enter. One of this dreadful measures is a *Door Frame of Skulls and Bones*.

As the name suggests, it is a door frame made of the remains of the dead, five men in total who either guarded something in their life or were thieves. The meat is stripped from the corpses, bone glue is made from it and what remains is used to create a door frame. This one is later enchanted by the warlock. When the ritual is done, the area around the doorstep will be left chillingly cold, and faint whispers will be heard that urge any would-be trespasser not to cross the doorstep. Any living mortal but the warlock who enchanted the door frame must pass a **Save vs. Magic** the moment they walk through. On a success, the person will suffer a heart attack and drop to zero hit points, those who don’t die on the spot.

Only a Magic-User of at least 5th level can create a *Door Frame of Skull and Bones*, and undead are not affected by it. Neither are Elves. This magical trap can be neutralized by destroying more than half of the door frame. Those who practice the black arts are known to secure the entrances to their personal or hidden chambers with this kind of ritual, or the secret passages into their escape tunnels...



09# Ear of the Henchman [Spell / Item]

Magic-User Spell Level 2

Duration: Permanent

Range: Touch*

The Magic-User cuts off the ear of a willing person during a ritual (that takes 1 turn). The ritual will instantly dry and preserve the ear. As long as the Magic-User is in possession of the ear (which is usually worn like an amulet), he or she may talk to and be heard by the henchman it belongs to, no matter the distance. All the Magic-User needs to do is to speak and concentrate on the henchman. The henchman is treated as being within earshot if the severed ear is. The ear will only work this way for the Magic-User. If the Magic-User wears more than one "ear", the character can either talk to one of the henchmen, all of them at once or just to some of them. While the henchman hears the Magic-User, it does not work the other way around.

10# Evil Eye [Spell]

Cleric Spell Level 3

Duration: Instantaneous

Range: 0

With the *Evil Eye* a cleric is able to *Bestow a Curse* onto another character without touching the target. If the next Spell the Cleric casts is *Bestow Curse*, it is enough to make eye contact (at up to 15' range). The may **Save vs Breath Weapons** to break eye contact before the curse is successfully cast. In that case, the curse is still within "the gaze" of the Cleric, and will hit the next person that makes eye contact (unless the Cleric decides to drop the curse spell).

11# Eyes of the Seer [Item]

The mighty and the desperate alike seek out men and women known to be seers: people gifted (or cursed) with the ability to scry the future. Sometimes, seers are hunted by ruthless men and women who want to steal their gift from them, no matter how.

The *Eyes of the Seer* are kept in a jar with alcohol after they were taken from their former owner (post-mortem or not does not matter). A character that takes both eyes into the mouth is able to use the Cleric 2nd Level spell *Augury*. Before the spell can be cast the character needs to pass a **Save vs. Magical Device**. If the test is failed the character suffers from nightmarish visions brought upon him by the remaining essence of the seer the eyes belonged to,

and has to roll on the table below to determine his or her behavior for the next five rounds.

(d6)	Effect
1	Attacks the nearest creature for 1d6 rounds
2	Babbles incoherently for a full turn
3	Meanders aimlessly for a full turn
4	Receives a completely false vision
5	Tries to claw out his/her own eyes
6	Swallows the eyes

Creating *Eyes of the Seer* takes ritual material worth 50 sp ...and the eyes of a seer.

12# Icon of Never-Ending Servitude [Item]

The *Icon of Never-Ending Servitude* is a tool of powerful necromancers to bolster the strength of their undead servants by turning them into truly eternal guards. The actual icon can take many different forms, but it must always be shaped like a column or monolith, at least 7 feet high, and must depict dead or symbols of death. Undead that were created near the icon will be resurrected again and again by it as long as they remain close.

Every undead that was raised within 60 feet of the icon and is destroyed while being within 60' of it will rise again after 1d4 rounds with twice that many hit points. Parts and pieces that were smashed or separated slither back into place, and the corpse stands up anew. The only way to stop this is to topple or destroy the icon, as the spell is broken when it is brought down or destroyed. A Magic-User of 5th level or higher needs about three days and 500sp in ritual materials to create such an icon (the costs for the icon itself not included). Those of lower level cannot create it.



13# Mark of the Wizards Touch [Spell]

Magic-User Spell Level 4
Duration: Permanent
Range: Touch*

The Magic-User marks a willing target with a touch. When the spell is cast, the Magic-User places the left hand onto the bare chest of the target (above the heart) and chants for a turn. At the end of the spell a mark in the form of the caster's hand is burned onto the target's skin.

From now on the Magic-User can cast "Touch"-Spells onto the target at any range, and the target treats its own level as one step lower when it comes to *Save vs. Magic* in regard to spells of the Magic-User. A target can only receive one "Mark", and a Magic-User can only have a number of "subjects" up to his or her level. If the Magic-User wants to mark further subjects he chooses an existing mark to lose its power, from that moment on and forever.

14# Nailed Tongue [Item]

The might of a spellcaster is always routed in the might of the word. Invocations and summons need to be spoken, and a warlock that has been gagged is a warlock that is bereft of his or her powers. Those learned in the dark arts can hinder a Magic-User from speaking a spell without laying hands on him or her. All they need to do is to lay hands on some other spellcaster first...

The *Nailed Tongue* is a talisman made of the actual tongue of a Magic-User, Cleric or Elf (any character class that is able to cast spells will do). After the tongue has been cut out (if the "donor" is alive or not does not matter), it has to be dried and preserved. During the dead of night, before the dawn of a high holiday, a pin, nail or needle is driven through the tongue while a hex is spoken. If a spellcaster of any class targets the wearer of a *Nailed Tongue* with a spell, he or she needs to pass a **Save vs. Magical Device**. If the test is failed the spellcaster feels a sudden sharp pain in the tongue and fumbles the spell (but can try to cast it again later).

Depending on how well it was preserved, a *Nailed Tongue* loses its power within one to three month. None is known to have served its purpose for longer than a season.

15# Necklaces of Demise and Passing [Item]

One of the prime reasons for the study of the arcane and the occult is the search for eternal life. Men of every walk of life are unwilling to accept the ultimate fate of all that is, and seek to trick, escape or to banish death. Very few of them seem to have qualms about ending another's life to achieve that aim.

The *Necklaces of Demise and Passing* are a set of paired necklaces, each made of small gold plates connected by a tiny golden chain. One of them is the *Necklace of Demise*, one of them is the *Necklace of Passing*. If the wearer of the *Necklace of Demise* dies (and only if the item is worn on that very moment), the soul does not leave this world but is instantly transferred into the *Necklace of Passing*, just like it would be the case with a *Magic Jar* spell. The *Necklace of Demise* ruptures when this happens. When somebody wears the *Necklace of Passing*, the soul contained in it may possess the body of said character unless the victim passes **Save vs. Magical Device**. If passed, the victim is forever immune against further attempts of possession by this soul. If failed, the soul is transferred just as it would be the case with a *Magic Jar* spell.

It takes a Magic-User who knows the *Magic Jar* spell to create the *Necklaces of Demise and Passing*, and the ritual material necessary cost 5000 sp.



16# Ratpelt Cloak [Item]

A hooded cloak made of rat pelts can be enchanted to become a method of escape for the wearer. One of the rats the pelt is made of must be white, and the ritual to empower the cloak must be conducted in the middle of a crossroad during a night where the moon is full.

When the wearer pulls the hood of the cloak over the head, he or she may transform into a swarm of rats for one turn, together with all items up to light encumbrance. The total number of rats is roughly equal to twice the character's CON, and the swarm cannot disperse or scatter but must move as one wave of rodents. It is possible for the swarm to move in a column, so. While the character has enough control over the swarm to guide its direction, he or she cannot have it attack or perform any complex tasks aside from movement. If for some reason half of the rats are killed before the turn expires, the character is forced back to normal form that very instance.

A Ratpelt Cloak has a number of charges equal to the level of the Magic-User who created it, and there is no way to recharge it. When the final charge is used up, the cloak comes apart when the character transforms back. When the character has to transform back into its original form while the swarm is trapped in a place that will not fit the original form (and its constraints are too solid to allow the original form to "burst" out of it), the character is doomed to die a horrible death.

17# Shared Wounds [Spell]

Magic-User Spell Level 4
Duration: 6 Turns
Range: 0

This spell can only be cast if the Magic-User has placed the *Mark of the Wizards Touch* upon at least one character that is still alive. If the Magic-User receives damage, a number of the actually taken damage (loss of hit points) is removed from him or her at the beginning of the Magic-User's next round and transferred to the marked characters, no matter where they currently are. One point per marked character is transferred while minor wounds will appear on the body of the receiving character. The same moment, the wounds of the Magic-User lessen visibly. Of course, only marked characters that are still alive are taken into account. Undead characters are not.

18# Skin-Ink of Diverted Wizardry [Ritual]

Fear of witchcraft and curses is widespread, and rightly so. Occult formulae have been discovered to divert spells, and scholars of the arcane have found a way to turn a living soul into the likeness of a lightning rod by tattooing said formula and magic symbols onto the chest, back and the palms of their bodyguards... or onto helpless captives they then drag along, shackled and often lead by a leash.

If a spell is targeting somebody or something within 10' of a character that has received the *Skin-Ink of Diverted Wizardry*, the spellcaster needs to pass a **Save vs. Magical Device**. If it is failed, the "inked" character becomes the new target of the spell. Creating the tattoos takes a Magic-User or Cleric of at least 3rd level, seven hours of time and 250sp worth in ingredients (that are either mixed into the ink or administered to the character that receives the tattoos). The bearer of the *Skin-Ink of Diverted Wizardry* has his **Saving Throws vs. Magic** value permanently increased by two.

19# Snakes for Blood [Spell]

Magic-User Spell Level 4
Duration: 3 Turns
Range: Touch

Many a witch-hunter will claim that those who practice the dark arts are vile down to the bone, and that their nature is that of the viper, before they continue to explain how this is the reason for why one should step upon their heads to crush them. It is unknown if witch-hunters witnessed how vipers slithered out of the wounds of a witch or if it was a disguised witch who listened to the claims of the witch-hunters and later sought out the power to make their words come true. But as such detail only interests those who are far removed from the very real testimony of this (now) actual truth, it shall not be given unjust attention here.

When the target of this spell receives a wound (actual hit point loss), a small and nimble viper will slip out of it at the beginning of the next round. The small, copper colored snake will seek to bite the one who caused it. The combatant who did will need to pass a **Save vs. Breath Weapons** at the beginning of every turn. If the test is failed the combatant is bitten by the viper and has to pass a **Save vs. Poison** to avoid 1d6 points of damage. The viper itself has AC: 18 and may be killed with one hit. No matter how many vipers have been created by striking wounds, only

the combatants who caused a wound need to pass Saving Throws, but each viper over the first causes a (-1) penalty. If the wounds are healed, the snakes disappear immediately.

20# Staff of the Bound Imp [Item]

When it comes to wizards, summoners are a breed of their own. They are not content with “merely” harnessing the powers not home to this plane of existence, they want to call forth things who are utterly alien to our world in order to enslave them to their own will. The *Staff of the Bound Imp* is always a staff created by a summoner. A tiny winged entity, akin to a caricature of a cherubim, is forced into a form that makes it look like it would have been stuffed and planted onto the tip of a staff. In truth, it just waits for a spell to release it.

When a Magic-User who wields a *Staff of the Bound Imp* passes a **Save vs. Magic** against a spell that targets him or her, the Magic-User may choose to channel the energy of the resisted spell into the staff to release the imp. In this case, the imp will come to life at the beginning of the Magic-Users next round and will fly off the tip to attack the caster of the spell that brought it to life.

The imp is about six inches tall and flies quickly with its little bat wings (AC:16). It attacks like a 3rd level Fighter, but one hit is enough to squash it. Its claws, as tiny as they might be, are wicked enough to deal one point of damage when they hit. When a turn has passed or the spell-caster who released the creature was killed and the imp is still not destroyed, roll a d6 to determine the imps behavior.

(d6)	Effect
1	Returns to the staff and becomes „inactive“ again
2	Returns to the staff and becomes „inactive“ again
3	Disappears with a PUFF, never to be seen again
4	Darts about screeching for a full turn (roll again)
5	Attacks the nearest creature
6	Attacks the wielder of its staff

If the imp did not disappear with a PUFF, the wielder of the staff can try to call it back with a successful **Save vs. Magic Device** (one per round allowed). If the imp gets killed, it can be re-attached to the staff if it’s remains are touched with the tip. The little creature turns back into the form of the macabre staff tip, but cannot be called upon for the next 1d6 days.

21# Teeth of Madness [Item]

Madness is contagious. This is not only a principle the superstitious abide to but a fact for those who twist reality to transfer one aggregate of existence to another, or change the very state of mind by occult means. All it takes is something to transmit the disease...

The *Teeth of Madness* are a powder that is created from thirteen teeth that were pried out of the mouth of one or more who are ravening mad. It is later hexed during a night with a waxing moon while a tuft of hair of a virtuous man or woman is burned over a candle flame. To take effect, a victim must either inhale or ingest at least some of the powder. It can be mixed into a snuff box, poured into a drink or simply be blown into the victims face. If the victim fails a **Save vs. Magic**, the pour soul will be overcome by insanity for the next 1d6 days. The character will babble incoherently and will not be able to perform any meaningful action, but may be led with ease by friends and family. If left unsupervised there is a 20% chance that the character will walk away and rove about aimlessly. If involved in a fight, roll a d6 for the character to determine the action on each round.

(d6)	Effect
1	Attacks the nearest creature
2	Attacks the nearest creature
3	Attacks those the player wants to be attack
4	Babbles incoherently
5	Babbles incoherently
6	Meanders aimlessly for a full turn

22# Vial of the Final Breath [Item]

Woe to those who seek the company of wizards and witches, for their very soul is in danger. A wizard at the deathbed is an unwise arrangement, and witches are feared to seek out the dying in their final hours. For their very final breath is an ingredient for the dark arts.

A *Vial of the Final Breath* is a small glass vessel that was prepared to capture the last breath of a dying man or woman. “Prepared” means that it was buried in a grave on Sunday and be dug up again on a Sunday night when the moon could not be seen in the sky. The warlock or witch then spoke an incantation and spitted into the vial, before sealing it with cork.

If said vial is later opened in the presence of a charater who is going to die within the same hour, the vial will suck in the last breath (without anybody noting it), but must be sealed with cork again within

a minute lest the final breath will escape. The captured breath has the following uses:

If the vial is shattered in front of an animated corpse (3rd level or lower), the escaping final breath will destroy the undead immediately as the breath's passing into the beyond unravels the spell that animates the dead body.

If the final breath is inhaled, one can ask the person it belonged to one question, as per the *Speak with the Dead* spell.

The final breath can be used as a (minor) sacrifice in ungodly rituals (+1 as a sacrifice according to the rules for the LotFP *Summon* spell).

23# Watchful Skull [Item / Spell]

Magic-User Spell Level 2

Duration: Permanent

Range: Touch

Those practicing the forbidden are known to gather the strangest of objects, so nobody wonders when they see a human skull grinning at them from the shelf or desk of a warlock. Yet they should wonder why it is placed there...

The spell turns a mundane, intact human skull into a *Watchful Skull* for the Magic-User. If any living soul is found within 20' of the Watchful Skull, the Magic-User it "belongs" to will automatically be aware of this, no matter the distance between the skull and the character. The Magic-User cannot discern any further information, just that one or more living souls are close to the *Watchful Skull* at this moment. Destroying the skull ends the spell.

24# Witchhair Knot [Item]

"A hair of the dog that bit me" is a core principle of many hexes and spells found in folklore, but not many take the connotation as literal as the creators of the *Witchhair Knot*.

As the name implies, it is a talisman made of the hair of a repenting witch or warlock (usually shaved off before the sinner was put upon the pyre) or from a cleric that renounced his erstwhile faith. A tuft of it is spit upon by the person to later wear the talisman and then bound into a knot. If it is worn on person while the character becomes the target of a spell that allows a Saving Throw and said Saving Throw fails, it is treated as passed. If this happens, the *Witchhair Knot* will go up in smoke just like it would have been consumed by fire.

25# With my last breath... [Spell]

Cleric Spell Level 5

Duration: Instantaneous

Range: 0

A wounded or dying cleric that casts *With my last breath...* may call a curse upon anybody within a 15' radius. The effects are the same as under *Bestow Curse*, but the Saving Throw against it suffers a (-3) penalty and the cleric ends his or her own life with this spell.



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