

# Eldritch Omens

House Rules of a Magical Nature for  
The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game



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FOR ALL

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# What This Is

Eldritch Omens is my second collection of house rules for use with The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game. The rules presented herein pertain to all things magical and serve as a companion volume to Bastard Sword, my first collection of *non-magical* house rules for The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game. While access to Bastard Sword will aid in understanding the rules presented here, it is not *necessary*. You can utilize all of the house rules presented here in your own campaigns without needing to refer to Bastard Sword.

As was the case with the rules in Bastard Sword, these rules aren't fancy or complicated. I use them because they add a unique flair to my own campaigns without complicating my life as a referee. As was the case with my previous volume of house rules, you are free to use these rules as you see fit. They are best considered as *options* and can be mixed and matched in your own campaigns of The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game, as you deem appropriate.

Boxes like this one appear throughout Eldritch Omens. Herein, I opine on the various inspirations for house rules and offer additional discussion on how they came to be.

# Character Creation Options

## **New Character Races**

Presented here are options for the inclusion of three new, magical, races for player characters in campaigns of The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game – Centaurs, Lycanthropes, and Vampires. The specific mechanics of how these races function in my own campaigns are spelled out directly below.

**Centaurs:** Like elves, as fey creatures, centaurs can begin play as either Fighting-Men or Magic-Users and freely switch between these classes as they choose, but not during the course of a single game session. The maximum levels that centaurs may attain in each class are, however, reversed (they may attain 8<sup>th</sup> level as a Fighting-Man and only 4<sup>th</sup> level as a Magic-User).

Further, as discussed in Rule Book Two, centaurs are granted two attacks per combat turn by default (one with a weapon as a normal character and one as a horse, both taken on their turn in combat). In game terms, attacks as a horse are resolved per the table on page 20 of Rule Book One, assuming AC7 and 3 Dice. If you are utilizing the rules for combat stances found in Bastard Sword, centaur characters benefit from *four* attacks on their turn when on full offense (two with a weapon *and* two as a horse).

**Lycanthropes:** This player character option exists as a kind of template added to an existing player character. The process of *becoming* a lycanthrope is detailed on page 15 of Rule Book Two. What happens afterward is detailed here. Specifically, the player character who has been transformed into a lycanthrope gains the characteristics outlined on the following page.

1. Lycanthrope characters uncontrollably transform into their animalistic form under the light of a full moon (traditionally) or when triggered by another specific external stimuli (in my own campaign, I've used lycanthropes as sleeper agents, triggered by a command word).
2. When a lycanthrope character transforms into their specified animalistic form, they gain the Armor Class, Movement, and Hit Dice for said form, as outlined on page 14 of Rule Book Two.
3. When in their animalistic form, a lycanthrope character can only be damaged by blows from magical or silver weapons (attack spells of all types *do* count as magical weapons in this regard).
4. In order to retain control of themselves when they shift into their animalistic form, a lycanthrope character's player must make a successful saving throw against spells. Failure on such a roll indicates that the character has given into their animal nature.

Regarding the last characteristic above, how a failed roll of this nature is handled is up to you and your group. Some players prefer to portray their out of control lycanthrope character, while others prefer for the referee to briefly take control of the character. I've run it both ways. My best advice is to ask the player how they want to handle the specifics of their character's condition, and act according to their wishes.

**Vampires:** Such was the case with lycanthropes above, vampires exist as a template added to an existing player character. There may well be some kind of ur-vampire in your campaign world, but this character option is not for them – this racial template applies specifically to player characters *turned into* vampires, as discussed on page 10 of Rule Book Two. Such characters turned into vampires gain most of the attributes of vampires listed in Rule Book Two, with the following additional limitations:

1. When a character of the Cleric class attacks such a created vampire in melee, it counts as a magical weapon attack (true faith is the bane of created vampires).
2. Created vampires lack the ability to summon servitors (e.g., rats, wolves, etc) to themselves, as they are not true vampires and, as such, lack mastery over creatures of the night.
3. A created vampire's charming gaze ability is weaker than that of a true vampire (the target of such a charm attempt doesn't suffer a penalty to their saves as discussed in Rule Book Two).

Note that characters who are turned into vampires do *not* have free will until the vampire who created them is destroyed, per Rule Book Two. This makes playing such a character a challenge – but it *also* provides for some great roleplaying opportunities!

As the referee, you may want to consider introducing some kind of plot device that lets a vampire player character make a saving throw to resist the influence of the vampire who created them. There are, of course, many different avenues you can explore with regard to this particular situation. As was the case with bestial lycanthrope characters, my advice is to discuss things with the player of the character and act according to their wishes.

Over the years that I've played The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game, my players and I, spurred on by tales of the game's creator and others involved in the early days of the game, introduced a number of new player character races to our own table. Chief among these were three new magical races – Centaurs, Lycanthropes, and Vampires.

Some brief provisions for these magical races are provided in Rule Book Two of The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game, but my players and I felt that more detailed rules were necessary to facilitate their use as player character races. These rules appear here, along with some of my own guidance for the referee who intends to utilize them.

## Alternate Magic Systems

Herein are presented three alternate magic systems for use with The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game. This is what you're here for. I have used all of these alternate systems of magic over the years, at one time or another, but rarely at the *same* time. Some of these alternate magic systems have far-reaching implications with regard to other rules in the game, which will also be discussed here. The three alternate magic systems are as follow:

- Magic-Users Cast All The Spells
- Freeform Magic Weaving
- Summoning Magic

The latter two alternate magic systems listed here utilize, at their core, the non-combat task resolution system first presented in Bastard Sword. As I promised that reference to said volume of house rules is not necessary to use *this* volume of house rules, I've reproduced an altered version of the task resolution system as it pertains to magical pursuits (see "Resolving Magical Acts" on page five of these rules).

### Magic-Users Cast All The Spells

Of the three magic systems presented in Eldritch Omens, this is the easiest to implement, the first that I used in my own Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game campaigns, and the least original. I *never* combine this magic system with any of the others presented herein. In my experience, it works best as the *only* magic system present in a campaign of The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game, supplanting both existing magic systems in the game.

Note that *this* alternate magic system does *not* utilize the rules for Resolving Magical Acts found on page five of this document (those rules apply only to the *other* two magic systems contained in Eldritch Omens, which are discussed later).

This magic system is, in truth, just a simple hack of the default magic systems in The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game, save one that has added flexibility for my players and I in terms of what kind of spell-casting characters one can play in the game (specifically, it better allowed us to model our favorite fictional spell-casting characters).

To implement this system of magic, the Cleric class is removed. Completely. There simply is no more Cleric class and its class features are completely ignored with the exception of the spell list. All spell-casters, be they priests or sorcerers, cultists or warlocks, fall under the

umbrella of Magic-User when this alternate system of magic is implemented. There is assumed to be only one source or type of magic in the campaign world.

The spells of the default Cleric class are simply folded into the existing list of Magic-User spells at corresponding levels, removing duplicate spells (with lower level spells replacing higher level duplicates, if using sources for spells other than Rule Book One). All spells are learned and used per the rules on pages 17 and 19 in Rule Book One (or page 15 of this book).

When utilizing this system of magic, what *kind* of Magic-User a character is depends upon what *spells they choose to employ*. Magic-Users who wish to serve their local temple as a healing priest will memorize spells that cure or heal. Magic-Users who wish to gain fame as a living arsenal will commit to memory those spells that cause damage. Magic-Users who wish to earn a living as thieves will choose spells that aid them in this regard. You get the idea. This system of magic opens up a number of unique character possibilities.

Worth mentioning is that this system of magic impacts the game in one *very* significant way – there is no repelling or destroying of undead per page 22 of Rule Book One. By default, this ability goes away with the Cleric class. This makes undead, even those typically considered mere nuisances, much more dangerous in play. When implementing this system of magic, it is recommended that you discuss this potential pitfall with the group before the game begins to make sure everybody is aware of the risks that it poses.

If your group feels strongly that the removal of the ability to repel or destroy undead will impact your game in a negative way it is, fortunately, easy enough to reestablish it while keeping the spirit of this alternate magic system intact. Simply reintroduce the ability as a series of appropriately named spells, each corresponding to the former Cleric class' level, as outlined in the table on page 22 of Rule Book One. For example, when casting the "Repel Undead I" spell (Level 1), simply have the player of the Magic-User roll two dice as indicated and consult the appropriate column on said table.

Finally, note that, should you choose to implement both this system of magic *and* the rules for vampire players characters (see page 2), said player characters will be granted one huge boon in combat absent the Cleric class (see the first limitation for such characters).

This particular system of magic is, somewhat ironically, influenced by a product for a later edition of The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game that many of you have most likely had some exposure to (hint: it involves specialty priests). Further, this system of magic was shaped by how my group saw our favorite spell-casting characters portrayed on film and in the pulp fantasy novels that we all enjoyed reading.

I owe a special call out to Chad Chandler here who, while not playing in any of my Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game campaigns, introduced me to the product for the later edition of said game that played a large part in inspiring these rules.

Whether we accomplished our goal of opening up options for spell-casting characters using this simple hack of the default magic system is ultimately a judgement that I leave up to you. All I know is that it worked well for the folks that I played with over the years, so I felt it worth including here, lest any of you benefit from it in your own campaigns.

## Resolving Magical Acts

When a character attempts to perform a magical act using either the rules for freeform magic weaving or summoning magic described later, their player needs to roll a twenty-sided die and attempt to obtain a result lower than the ability rating that governs the act that is being resolved. For now, the important thing is to note that you want to roll *low*.

If the player rolls lower than the ability rating being tested, the character successfully performs the act being resolved. If the player fails to produce such a result (i.e., if they generate a result equal to or greater than the ability rating that governs the magical act being resolved), their character fails to successfully perform the act. Specific results are narrated by the referee, with input from the player who made the roll where appropriate.

If utilizing the option for character cultures that was presented in *Bastard Sword*, a character's cultural learning benefits them while resolving magical acts related to that culture by providing a die roll modifier to magic resolution rolls equal to half of their current character level rounded to the nearest whole number. For example, the player of a 5<sup>th</sup> level character with the Barbarian cultural background may subtract three (5/2 = 2.5) from their twenty-sided die roll when attempting to cast a spell that allows their character to talk to animals.

## Freeform Magic Weaving

This alternate system of magic, as noted on page 3, utilizes a slightly modified version of the non-combat task resolution system first presented in *Bastard Sword* (which is presented above for easy reference). If you haven't already read the section above, go do so now (it will make understanding what follows much easier).

Of the three magic systems presented in *Eldritch Omens*, this one undoubtedly requires the most oversight and adjudication by the referee. It is, as the name suggests, *very* open to interpretation, requiring that specific desired results and potential risks be presented in detail *prior* to rolling the dice (well, *die*). Similarly, it requires that the referee and the player of the character attempting to resolve a magical act (in this case, producing a magic effect) work together in good faith to find the best path forward for the narrative *after* rolling the dice.

In my campaigns, this system has purely been used to represent arcane magic (i.e., that magic wielded by Magic-Users, not Clerics). I usually implement this magic system on its own, replacing the default system for Magic-Users wholesale. That said, it can be dropped in next to *The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game*'s default system for Magic-Users without disrupting the game too much. When doing so, I simply rule that, at character creation, the player of a Magic-User needs to choose which of these two systems their character will utilize in play – and, after that, they're locked into using their specified magic system exclusively.

Freeform magic weaving is, notably, much more open in terms of what a Magic-User may attempt than the default magic system is. The downside is that it is much less reliable, requiring a roll of the die to determine if a Magic-User's attempt at evoking a specific magic effect is successful. Failure does happen and is risky. The default magic system for Magic-Users in *The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game* is both much more reliable and safe.

When the character of a player who is utilizing freeform magic weaving wants to create a magic effect, their player needs to do two things before they do anything else. First, they need to spell out the desired effect in as much detail as possible. For example:

*“I want my character to hold that door fast with magical force, preventing the hungry goblins on the other side from easily breaking it down.”*

This description tells us *exactly* what the player wants their character’s intended magic effect to accomplish in the game. Next, the player of the magic-weaving character needs to spell out, in similar exacting detail, what happens if they *fail their roll*. This should be a consequence or setback of some kind. For example:

*“If my character fails their roll to bind the door shut, they instead blast it to splinters with the magical force they summoned, allowing the goblins to pour through.”*

As was the case with the previous description, this one, also, spells out specific details. The player has stated *exactly* what happens if the character fails their magic-weaving attempt. Provided the referee is satisfied with both descriptions, the next step in resolving the magic act is to determine how difficult achieving the desired effect is. I use the following guidelines in my own campaigns where this magic system is in play:

**Trivially Difficult:** A trivial effect is of little or no real consequence, serving merely to entertain (e.g., summoning dim, floating globes of light) or to supplant a function of menial labor (e.g., opening an unlocked door). Such spells are sometimes referred to as “cantrips” in later editions of The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game.

**Moderately Difficult:** A moderately difficult effect will produce a noticeable, though otherwise unremarkable, benefit for the caster or his companions (e.g., a locked door is magically opened or, similarly, an unlocked door is magically barred) or pose an equally noticeable but otherwise unremarkable detriment to an individual or group of the caster’s choosing (e.g., a specified item worn on a character’s person is concealed from the view of a town guardsman).

**Very Difficult:** A very difficult effect will temporarily benefit the caster or his companions greatly (e.g., the caster’s friend temporarily gains a plus two to dice rolls made on their behalf for resolving attacks in combat) or, alternately, temporarily greatly hinders an individual or group of the spell caster’s choosing (e.g., a pursuing group of thugs is trapped in a giant web).

**Nearly Impossible:** The magical effect will benefit the caster or his companions greatly and permanently (e.g., teleporting the PCs across the known world) or greatly and permanently cause disadvantage to an individual or group of the spell caster’s choice (e.g., disintegrating an opponent in combat per the description of the spell in the default magic system).

After the referee has determined the difficulty of achieving the desired effect, the player of the character attempting to weave the magic effect needs to roll a twenty-sided die. The goal is, as previously stated, to roll lower than the ability rating that governs the act that is being resolved. In *most* instances, the ability in question will be Intelligence although, should the character be attempting to charm somebody, for example, the referee may have the player roll against their character’s Charisma score instead.

Based on the difficulty assigned to creating a specific magical effect, as discussed above, the player who is making the die roll may *also* be asked to add a number to their roll result. More difficult weavings levy larger roll modifiers, making it harder to produce a successful result.

Whenever I implement freeform magic weaving in my own Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game campaigns, I utilize the following die roll modifiers based on the assigned difficulties for creating a given magical effect. You are, of course, free to adjust these numbers.

- Trivially difficult effects add *nothing* to the roll result.
- Moderately difficult effects add 3 to the roll result.
- Very difficult effects add 5 to the roll result.
- Nearly impossible effects add 7 or *more* to the roll result.

When a magical effect is invoked successfully, it *instantly* manifests as described by the player and agreed to by the referee before they rolled the dice. If, for example, the purpose of an invoked effect is to inflict damage, it immediately does so, being treated as either a weapon (based upon the description of the effect) or dealing a specific injury (such was the case with the example of disintegration on the previous page).

Similarly, if a player *fails* to invoke their desired magical effect, the consequence or setback *also* instantly manifests (as described by the player and agreed to by the referee prior to rolling the dice). If, for example, the stated consequence was that a fireball explodes in the weaver's hand, causing a specified amount of damage to them and anybody in their immediate vicinity, then this is *exactly* what happens.

Finally, lest you think this system of magic is *too* powerful – there is a balance that I employ in my own campaigns. Notably, a Magic-User who utilizes freeform magic weaving may only attempt to invoke a number of effects per day equal to their character level divided by two (rounded to the nearest whole number), plus one. For instance, a given 1<sup>st</sup> level Magic-User can attempt to invoke up to two magical effects per day – after that, they are spent and must wait until the next day before they can attempt to invoke further magical effects.



The rules for freeform magic weaving presented here come from a *lot* of places – there is *clearly* some DNA from a certain “troupe style” game about magi present, with further influence from a number of independently published fantasy RPGs in the mix. The point is, very little of what you see here is truly mine. Yes, the *words* are mine. But the actual rules? They’ve been pulled together from all over – from many different games, and many different people. All of whom I owe a debt.

I’m a natural tinkerer and these rules are a result of the need to implement cool things I’ve seen showcased elsewhere in my own games. I really liked the various freeform magic systems that I interfaced with in other games, so I wanted to give them a go in my Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game campaigns. These are the finished version of the freeform magic weaving rules at the current time, although I’m never quite 100% satisfied with them, so I expect to tinker with them in the future, as well. Naturally, you’re free to fine tune them as you see fit (and I hope that you do).

## Summoning Magic

Like freeform magic weaving, this magic system utilizes a slightly modified version of the non-combat task resolution system first presented in Bastard Sword (which is, again, presented on page five of this document for easy reference). You will want to read those rules before you take up reading *these* rules.

Of the three alternate magic systems presented herein, that for summoning magic falls somewhere between the other two in terms of relative complexity, especially with regard to referee adjudication. There is plenty for the referee to adjudicate here but players, too, have a hand in defining the parameters of the system (most notably, they get to define the specifics of the entities they are summoning).

When I’ve implemented this magic system in my own Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game campaigns, I’ve used it to replace the default arcane magic system (i.e., spells for Magic-Users). It is, for me, a better option for lending a classic Swords & Sorcery feel to my game worlds. I don’t feel that it works particularly well as a companion to the default arcane magic system or the freeform magic weaving rules discussed previously. You are, naturally, free to use it in such a capacity if you see fit. So, what is summoning, anyway?

Summoning, as a magic, traditionally requires drawing circles, pentagrams, or other shapes upon the ground but may employ many other audible, gustatory, olfactory, tactile, or visual cues. Having said that, summoning is really about the summoner. In fact, the title of “summoner” is a misnomer. It is better to refer to individuals who practice summoning magic as *evokers* (in game terms, they’re still Magic-Users when it comes to delineating classes).

What such practitioners *actually* do is evoke — call forth, call out — an autonomous part of their subconscious mind with access to arcane secrets and powers unknowable to their waking self. An angel, a demon, a spirit. These entities have many names, many forms, and are drawn out in many different ways. For example, a spirit of nature may be drawn out by the scent of freshly fallen rain and the song of caged birds, while a demon of boundless rage may be drawn out by the spilling of human blood and burnt offerings.

As users of traditional magic in The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game begin knowing spells and users of freeform magic weaving begin with a world of potential magical effects at

their fingertips so, too, does an evoker begin with a magical edge – notably, their player gets to define an evoked entity with whom the evoker is initially intimately familiar.

### Defining Evoked Entities

First, all evoked entities have true names that must be intoned to summon them. The player of an evoker should choose the name of one such entity that their character is intimately familiar with. There are no restrictions upon names that may be chosen, although something appropriately mystical or arcane should be considered.

Second, all evoked entities, when evoked, take a physical form. The player of an evoker should define this form. Does the entity appear as a majestic, glowing, angel? A cloud of thick, dark, smoke with glowing red eyes? A wood sprite? The evoker's player should choose the physical form of the entity with whom they are familiar, using the nature of the evoked entity as inspiration during this process.

Third, all evoked entities have a known temperament – they are tricksy, haughty, or stoic. The player of the evoker should define a temperament for the entity with whom they are familiar. Are they arrogant? Envious? Gregarious? Stubborn? The player should choose one word to define the temperament of the entity that they are defining.

Fourth, the player of the evoker should choose three spheres of influence for the entity to master – one primary sphere of influence, one secondary sphere of influence, and one tertiary sphere of influence. As the names suggest, a primary sphere of influence is one that an entity has the most control over and a tertiary sphere of influence the one they hold the least sway over, with the secondary sphere of influence falling in the middle. For example:

*Foras, a President of Hell, appears as a strong, able-bodied, man with choleric temperament, that presides over the spheres of Logic (Primary), Herbs (Secondary), and Gems (Tertiary).*

Finally, the player of the evoker should choose 1d6 special powers for the summoned entity to possess – special powers are, conceivably, anything beyond the abilities of mortal beings. For instance, returning to our example of Foras:

*Foras can make things (including people) invisible, bestow wit, elegance, and long life to evokers, discover hidden treasures and recover lost things.*

The player of the evoker in this case rolled a result of six on a d6 to determine the exact number of special powers that the entity she is familiar with can wield. The referee should take time to examine and approve any special powers that a player proposes, seeing as how such powers can be *extremely* potent (as discussed later, on page 11).

### The Art of Evocation

The art of evocation requires doing some *very* specific things, as it so happens. First, you have to make a successful *Evocation* check. Second, you need to *Bind* the entity that you summon to a circle, object, or to the summoner herself (the latter of which is very risky), Third, if you want the summoned entity to do anything for you, you will *probably* need to *Compel* it. And, finally, to get rid of the entity, you need to *Banish* it.

Each of these things, naturally, requires a roll. And, yes, that's a lot of rolls. As it turns out, evoking your innermost self is a complicated process fraught with peril.

The actual act of evoking an entity requires that you make an Evocation (Wisdom) roll. If you succeed at this roll, your character has successfully evoked the entity that they intended to evoke. If you fail that test, well, they *probably* didn't evoke anything. Or they *may* have evoked something they didn't intend to evoke. Either way, you probably won't know right away. The risk here should be obvious but, in case it isn't, let me make it clear — people have some horrible things inside of them and, given the opportunity, they'll harm you if they get out in an uncontrolled environment. Which brings us to...

**Binding.** Binding is the act of magically anchoring an evoked entity to a location, an object, or even the evoker herself. A bound entity can be controlled, whereas an unbound entity cannot be compelled to act in accordance with the wishes of the evoker. To bind an entity, a successful Binding (Intelligence) roll is required. A failed binding test doesn't indicate anything other than a failure to bind, although such an attempt may anger an evoked entity. In the event that a location or item an evoked entity is bound to is destroyed, the binding is immediately broken and the entity is unbound.

Now, speaking of perils, binding an angel, demon, spirit, or other thing to the evoker herself is *very* risky. The danger here is that, once evoked, if the summoner binds such a thing to her physical body, it shares control of that physical body. You're probably going to have to make frequent *Resist* (Constitution) rolls to keep the bound entity from having its way with your character's body (see the discussion of possession starting on page 11). If an entity is bound to an evoker and the evoker is killed, the entity is immediately *banished*.

Some evoked entities will happily obey the evoker, as long as the evoker's goals align with theirs. Other evoked entities will fight the will of the evoker with all of their might. To *compel* an evoked entity to act in accordance with your will, it first *must* be bound and you succeed at a Compel (Charisma) roll, indicating that you achieve magical dominance over the entity. Failing such a roll only indicates that you fail to compel the entity to bend to your will and, as was the case with a failed binding, possibly anger the entity.



As a brief side note here, compelling an evoked entity to do the bidding of the evoker may not be strictly necessary. As mentioned above, a summoned entity may happily follow an evoker's commands if they align with their own. Similarly, many evoked entities will happily trade favors. You have, probably, heard tales of such things in old folk stories or songs. In this case, whether a summoner gets the sharp end of the stick or not depends on how good they are at bargaining (which can be rolled or roleplayed, depending on your preference and house rules in play).

Finally, when the evoker wants to rid themselves of an evoked entity, they need to banish it. A successful Banish (Wisdom) roll indicates that the entity has been sent back to

wherever it came from, while a failed Banish roll indicates that the evoker has not rid herself of the entity as she desired. When a banishing attempt is failed, it is possible that a previously established binding is broken as well, leading to more potential problems.

### What Are Evoked Entities Good For?

So, what can evoked entities do for the evoker? What's the payoff for all of this? Why bother with this peril fraught profession at all? Well, if you recall, when you defined your most familiar of summoned entities, you filled in some pretty specific blanks (notably, spheres of influence and special powers). These are, assuming a successful summoning, binding, and compelling, the powers that an evoker has at her disposal.

Does your summoner want somebody to fall in love with them? Then evoke an entity whose spheres of influence include love or, perhaps, romance. Would your summoner like to be healed (or heal somebody else) of physical ills? Then evoke an entity whose powers include the healing of illnesses or curing of diseases. What if your summoner desires material wealth? Evoke an entity with the power of finding lost treasure. You get the idea.

Now, just how *well* do evoked entities perform their duties? At their core, summoned entities are only as good as the evoker — they are, after all a part of them.

The efficacy of an evoked entity to perform its assigned duties as they relate to its spheres of influence is determined by a test of the most relevant sphere, with the player of the evoker rolling a die as if resolving a magical act (see the top of page five for details). For the purposes of making rolls, the evoked entity's primary sphere of influence has a value of 15, their secondary sphere of influence has a value of 10, and their tertiary sphere of influence has a value of 8. Treat these as ability ratings. For example:

*An evoker successfully compels an entity to do her bidding. The evoked entity's primary sphere of influence is The Sea. The evoker specifically requests that the entity calm the seas surrounding her liege lord's ship on its journey to the Southern Lands. In this instance, a test of the entity's primary sphere of influence (with a value of 15) will determine whether it is successful in doing so or not.*

Special powers are the real payoff for being an evoker. Special powers *just happen*. If an entity is successfully compelled to use one of its powers (or it does so without being bound because it considers acquiescing to the evoker's demands to benefit itself), whatever the power says it does... *it just does*. Does the entity have "can teleport the evoker" as a power? If so, it can just do that, *no roll required*.

Now, there is an important distinction here. If an entity is bound and compelled to do something, whether using its powers or exercising its spheres of influence, it will unquestionably act in the best interests of the evoker. An unbound entity may use its powers however it sees fit, which may not necessarily be to the benefit of the evoker. Evoked entities serve their own interests first, almost without exception, hence the many necessary tests to utilize them safely. Dealing with unbound entities is, as a result, risky. For example:

*The evoker has successfully summoned an entity whose spheres of influence include "Travel" and whose powers include teleportation (since I mentioned it above). The evoker has*

*not bound the entity because she is hurried and needs to be teleported out of the immediate area quickly. She requests that the entity teleport her just outside of the city walls. This can have several outcomes, given that the entity is unbound.*

Possible outcomes of the evoker's request in this specific situation include:

- The entity refuses the evoker's request outright.
- The entity does exactly as the evoker requests.
- The entity happily agrees to teleport the evoker but, because the entity is unbound, it can teleport the evoker wherever it pleases. *Anywhere. Definitely not where they requested.*
- The entity agrees to teleport the evoker as requested, but demands a favor in return. The evoker must bargain to see if the pact favors them or the entity.

The disposition of an evoked entity, the specific circumstances of a request, and the evoked entity's own interests should all be carefully weighed by the controlling player (see page 14) when determining how an unbound entity responds to demands and requests.

### **Possession**

Possession, mentioned earlier in these rules as a risk, is discussed here. If an evoker has been possessed by an evoked entity as a result of failing a Resist (Constitution) roll after binding the entity in question to herself, their player loses control over their character's body. Instead, the evoker is portrayed as controlled by a summoned entity (with either the referee or another player controlling their actions during actual play as discussed on page 14). Further, an entity in possession of a physical body will, typically, not give it up willingly.

In order for an evoker who has been possessed to regain control of their earthly body, one of three things needs to happen — the possessing entity needs to willfully relinquish control of the body (i.e., the boring option), the possessed evoker's player needs to make a successful Resist (Constitution) roll, or another summoner needs to lay hands on the possessed individual and make a successful Banish (Wisdom) roll. In the case of making Resist and Banish rolls, such attempts may be made once per hour of time in the game world that passes.

### **Evokers and Combat**

So, what about evokers in combat? This question is inevitable, given the nature of The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game, but the truth is that evokers and evoked entities don't fight (at least in physical combats). If an evoker has gotten into a knock down, drag out, fight — things have gone *horribly* wrong.

One deft attack is usually all that it takes to knock an evoker out of the action during combat. Evokers talk quick and flex their magical might, but they do *not* engage in melee or ranged combat as a Magic-User traditionally might. They are support characters in combat situations, rather than actual combatants, and their abilities (as well as those of entities under their control) are best applied in such a manner.

Having said that, it may be necessary to determine when a summoned entity acts during a combat (if, for example, an evoker wants it to teleport the party away to a safe location, the order in which the evoked entity acts becomes important).

As first discussed in *Bastard Sword*, during combat, the character with the highest Dexterity always acts first, with all other participants acting in descending order of Dexterity ratings. Should two characters have the same Dexterity rating, the DM should roll 1d6 for each and the character for whom the highest result is produced acts before the other (re-roll ties). Referees should treat evoked entities in this regard, rolling their Dexterity ratings on the spot, using the standard 3d6 method described in *Rule Book One*.



## Who Portrays Evoked Entities?

Now that we've discussed the core mechanics that govern evocation and evoked entities, let's talk about who portrays these entities during actual play. There are basically two options available to you here: The Traditional Option and The Cooperative Option.

If you choose to use The Traditional Option, the referee plays all evoked entities. This is the most straightforward of the options presented here and will probably appeal to more players than the Cooperative Option will.

If you choose to use The Cooperative Option, a player *other* than the referee and other than the player of the evoker plays the evoked entities. Who controls an evoked entity can be determined by seating arrangement, by dicing off, or even drawing cards.

I think the latter of the two options presented here can add more to your campaign, but it's very much a high trust option that will only work well with the right group of players. It's definitely not the right option for everybody.

In either case, an evoked entity is portrayed like any other character, except they are defined as discussed on pages eight and nine of this document (and, yes, they lack the standard ability array that physical beings have).

## Evoker Growth

Evokers do not gain new abilities, nor do the ratings of their current abilities change over time. Instead, they grow through research and study, specifically by discovering the names of new evocable entities, learning what spheres of influence those entities hold sway over, what powers they possess, and what components may aid in their evocation. An evoker's Intelligence is tied directly to their advancement in this regard.

In order to research and study evocable entities properly, an evoker must have both access to tomes or libraries that contain such knowledge, as well as dedicate an amount of study time in hours equal to their current character level multiplied by the result of a 1d6 roll. Should both of these requirements be met, the player of the evoker may define a new evocable entity, per the rules laid out on pages eight and nine of this document.

The rules for summoning magic presented herein are *primarily* informed by modern hermetic magic (which has as many permutations as it does practitioners) and my own belief system regarding the fundamental nature of magic, summoning magic in particular, and the spirit world. That said, this is a roleplaying game, so, these teachings and beliefs have been greatly refined with the goal of providing simple, playable, rules. Please do *not* take what you read here as a scholarly dissertation of any kind.

If you have an interest in magic, there are much better resources available to you than roleplaying game supplements (this or any other) and my own thoughts on these matters will also be available for free download at some point in the near future (*not* as a roleplaying game supplement). That said, I encourage you to research these things, as I believe that accumulating knowledge of different belief systems, the metaphysical, and spirituality are all worthwhile pursuits.

# The Acquisition of Spells

The rules of The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game aren't entirely clear on how spell users acquire spells or record them under the default magic systems. In my own groups, we've used the following guidelines to address such issues.

## Acquiring Magic-User Spells

In the case of Magic-Users, spells are acquired by way of physical discovery – reading found or purchased scrolls, researching another Magic-User's spell book, deciphering ancient glyphs carved into the walls of a timeless ruin, and so on. Once a Magic-User has learned a new spell in this manner and recorded it (see below) it can be memorized and cast per the rules at the top of Page 19 in Rule Book One.

These rules also apply to Magic-User characters created under the Magic-Users Cast All The Spells variant discussed earlier. Magic-User characters created under either this system or the default system begin play with one recorded instance of a spell (representing their Level 1 spell as indicated on the chart at the bottom of Page 17 in Rule Book One).

## Recording Magic-User Spells

In order to memorize a spell, a Magic-User must first have access to a physical copy of that spell to study. This may be a scroll, a spell book, an ancient engraving, etc. Players are encouraged to get inventive when describing how their character records spells (I've seen more than one Magic-User who tattooed their spells on their body, for instance).

## Acquiring Cleric Spells

In the case of Clerics, spells are acquired through prayer and bestowed by the deity (or deities) the Cleric worships. Following an amount of prayer equal to the level of the Cleric character in hours, the Cleric is granted a number of spells to cast per day as indicated on the table at the top of Page 18 in Rule Book One. Once all of these spells have been cast, a Cleric must again devote themselves to prayer and does not receive any more spells to cast until the dawn of the next day.

The rules presented here for acquiring spells were inspired directly by later editions of The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game, although they have been greatly simplified to bring them in line with the tone and design of the Original Edition. These rules aren't really innovative, they've just been put to paper here in order to codify them for the purposes of maintaining consistency when implementing them in actual play.

The rules for *recording* Magic-User spells here were inspired by a conversation I had with my friend Chad Chandler years ago. We had frequent and long discussions about rule design, and the topic of one such discussion was what exactly the "chance to know" spell percentage indicated and how the learning and study of spells was tied into that.

I ultimately don't know how Chad ended up handling these things in his games, but the rules you see here are how I ended up handling such things (these rules being back-ported to The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game from a newer edition).

## Parting Shots

These are the *secondary* house rules I utilize when running campaigns of The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game that I alluded to in Bastard Sword. These rules impact the base game quite a bit – hence why they were omitted from Bastard Sword. The rules for new character races and new systems of magic found herein can *drastically* alter the fabric of your Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game campaigns, impacting the makeup of your campaign world in a number of different ways.

The astute among you may find that certain options can be implemented to better represent genres not typically considered the domain of The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game. For example, some of the new character races are commonplace in Gothic Horror, while some of the alternate magic systems presented are more representative of Swords & Sorcery (or Swords & Sandals) media than the medieval fantasy typically associated with The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game. And this is 100% intentional.

The main reason that The Original Fantasy Roleplaying Game has long stood as one of my favorite games is that it is *extremely* easy to modify. Bastard Sword and Eldritch Omens are merely representative of how *I* have modified the game – many other people have also modified it to suit *their* needs, represent *their* campaign worlds, and free *their* imaginations. I encourage you to track down the house rules and campaign notes of others! There is a *ton* of excellent, imaginative, game-changing content out there on the Internet.

Kind Regards,  
James D. Hargrove



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All *rules* text in this game, starting with the section entitled “New Character Races” and ending with the section entitled “The Acquisition of Spells” is hereby declared Open Game Content.

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