

# THE ENDLESS BAG OF TRICKS

*A set of tables for generating random adventure tricks in a fantasy setting*

(c) 2011 Roger S. G. Sorolla



Illustration credits:

Cover, p. 2: Great Triumphal Car and Triumphal Arch details, Albrecht Dürer. Public domain, from [wikigallery.org](http://wikigallery.org)

Page 5: Public domain, from <http://karenswhimsy.com/public-domain-images>

## HOW TO USE THE TABLES

These tables use three six-sided dice that should be distinct from each other in some way. Although they are based on a red, black and white die, you can use other colors as long as you are clear which die color corresponds to which table color. You can also roll one die multiple times in succession to get the table results.

The tables can be used in two ways:

1. A relatively simple generator for a feature with a trick (Pouch of Tricks, p. 3)
2. A more complex generator that will often require creative interpretation and design, but can result in a memorable, complex puzzles (Bag of Tricks, p. 4)

In either method, the tables are yours. Feel free to use them as an inspiration, changing and interpreting results freely. If a feature is not in theme for your setting or room, pick the one next to it (going up or down) that is most in theme.

The feature and effect tables are arranged so that rolling a die twice and taking the lowest/highest can reflect the general nature of the area and trick, as you envision it:

### WHITE DIE RESULT (Table B and Table D)

Low numbers (1-2) give features appropriate to all kinds of settings including natural ones. Medium numbers (3-4) are appropriate to an environment that has been built and furnished, whether crudely or more sophisticatedly.

High numbers (5-6) on the white die give the kind of features only found in a civilized, built environment.

### RED DIE RESULT

On Table D, higher numbers on the red die mean more complex features.

On Table E, high numbers on the red die are more likely to give a benefit; low numbers harm.

### BLACK DIE RESULT (Table E only)

High numbers on the black die mean more magic, as opposed to mundane, effects.



## POUCH OF TRICKS

This procedure works when you want to dress up an area with a simple trick.

Get three six-sided dice (d6) of different colors and decide which one of them will be “black,” which will be “white” and which one “red.”

Skip Table A. Roll the black and white dice and cross-reference them against Table B. This gives you a major feature. The lists below the table give additional random examples for each feature, if you can’t think of something more specific that’s suitable.

*Example: You roll black 3 and white 5. This gives you “trophies” as the major feature. You decide to roll a further d6 against the lists at the bottom to see what kind of trophies you have. The result, 4, is “exotic weapons.”*

If there is an associated minor feature, go to that row on table D. Otherwise, roll a red and a white die on Table D to come up with a minor feature on that major feature.

*Example: There is no minor feature associated with trophies, so you roll on table D and get a red 3 and a white 6; “mirror/glass.”*

Looking at the row of Table D you have selected, roll a black die. The result is the action that must be done to the minor feature to activate the trick result. If you roll a 6, roll a red and white die to get another row on Table D, and use the action that appears in column 1.

*Example: You roll a 6 on the black die, so you roll the red and white dice again, and get red 6, white 5: “cast spell on” according to the first column.*

Finally, go to Table E and roll a red and black die to get an effect of the action. You may roll a further die to randomize what specific kind of effect that you have.

*Example: You roll red 6, black 4: Healing effect. Your adventure is for 3<sup>rd</sup> level parties, so the maximum healing effect is 3d6. You think this is appropriate, because the action is fairly unusual (“cast spell on.”)*

Now you have to put it all together. You have a trophy weapon, with something to do with glass or a mirror, that when you cast a spell on the glass, gives healing. There are a number of ways to make this a specific and solvable trick; here is mine:

*Mounted securely to the wall in rusted iron loops is a glass khopesh sword (a straight blade with a curved section at the end). It has an ancient holy symbol worked into the design of the hilt, and the following motto/clue etched into the blade in an ancient language: “A PRIEST DOES NOT KILL”. If any cleric spell is cast on the sword, it will glow with a golden radiance for 1 minute. Within that time, if one person touches the sword they will be healed for 3d6 hp. The sword can be used any number of times, casting a spell each time; if the sword is removed from its mounting, or if the healing roll is greater than 10, the sword then crumbles into a fine crystal sand.*

## BAG OF TRICKS

This procedure is more complex, and potentially difficult to interpret, but it can lead to more satisfying adventure tricks.

Get three six-sided dice (d6) of different colors and decide which one of them will be “black,” which will be “white” and which one “red.”

Roll one d6 against Table A, to determine the number of minor features, major features, and whether any minor features are associated with the major ones.

*Example: The roll is 5: major feature with one associated and one random minor feature.*

If the result requires a major feature, roll the black and white dice and cross-reference them against Table B. This gives you a major feature. The lists below the table give additional random examples for each feature, if you can't think of something more specific that's suitable.

*Example: The roll is white 5, black 5: Tomb. Its associated minor feature is Bones/Corpse.*

Now, for each minor feature, roll on Table C to see how many actions it has.

*Example: We have two minor features. For minor feature 1 – the associated feature (Bones/Corpse) – we roll a 2. It has one action. For minor feature 2 – which will be rolled randomly – we roll a 6. It has all of three actions.*

For each random minor feature, roll a red and white die on Table D to see what it is (if you have an associated instead of random minor feature, you already know what it is.)

*Example: Rolling the random minor feature on the tomb, we get red 2, white 6: a handle.*

For each minor feature, roll a black die on Table D for each action it has, and record what the action is. If you roll a 6, or get a duplicate result when rolling multiple actions, you may choose an unusual action, or just roll a red and white die against the first column of black die results (black die 1) and use the action there, derived from some other feature.

*Example: We first roll the one action for the bones/corpse. Black die is 1: Bury. Next, three actions for the handle. The first one is black 3: Slide; then black 4: Grasp; then black 3 again, so we roll a red and white die against column 1 of the table, which gives us red 3, white 1: Clean (an action more usually associated with Dirt/Dust/Webs).*

Finally, for each action, roll a consequence on Table E, with a red and white die.

*Example: In list format, the actions and the consequences rolled are:*

*Bury Bones/Corpse: red 2, black 5: Mental effect. A further roll to determine which kind gives 2: insanity.*

*Slide Handle: red 5, black 2: Key object for different area.*

*Grasp Handle: red 6, black 3: Clue leading to different adventure site.*

*Clean Handle: red 3, black 4: reveals hidden minor feature, roll again on Table D. We roll a Protrusion, with one action – Slide – and the consequence, Trigger with positive effects in another area of the adventure.*

Looking back at this set of effects, a couple of things need to be determined.

- *How does the tomb have handles?*
- *Why does cleaning them reveal a protrusion?*
- *Why does burying the corpse make you insane?*
- *The handle's effects all seem keyed to opening up another area and maybe even another adventure, so how do we make this work?*

This is one way to resolve all the questions, with a little interpretive license and an additional function for the handle included.

*In the middle of the room is a stone sarcophagus, austere carved, with a 2 foot long lever-like metal handle mounted at the right end of a long groove on the base at the far side. A burned-down candle stub is on the end of the handle. It must have illuminated some kind of vigil for a corpse on the floor – a young woman, perfectly preserved through magic, dressed in an elegant white gown.*

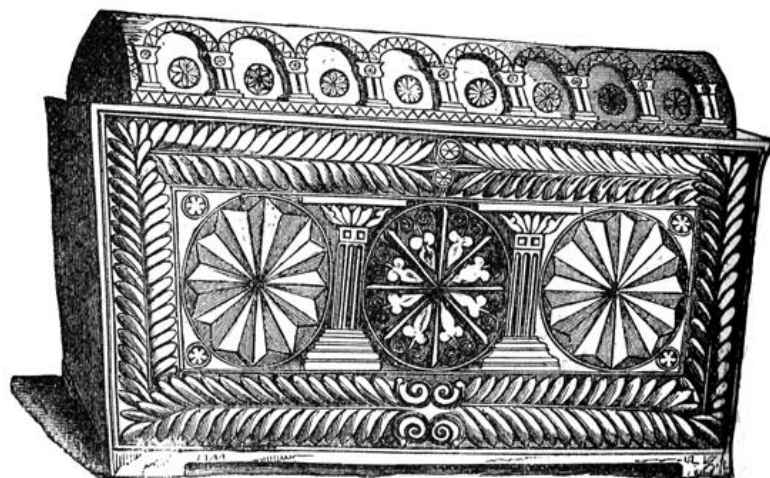
*The lid of the sarcophagus is slid open, revealing the top 1/4 of the empty tomb. Sliding the handle to the left will move the lid half open, making it possible to deposit the corpse within. However, anyone who observes this process will be deeply disturbed by the entombment of such a seemingly living person; the scene will haunt their dreams, with a % chance equal to 20-Wisdom of going insane each night, and only an exorcism, cure insanity or removing her from the tomb will reverse the process.*

*Sliding the handle to the right will move the lid over the tomb, revealing a piece of parchment with a poem on it – an elegy to the dead woman. The first letter of each line spells out “OPEN NIGHTSHADE” which is the password that will open the secret door in room 25.*

*Cracking the candle off the handle will reveal a button on the end, that when slid into the handle, will cause a far-off rumbling. This is the plaster coming loose, revealing the secret door in room 25.*

*Finally, grasping the handle with an ungloved hand will cause a vision of the far-off mansion once inhabited by the poet and the lady, and of the treasure buried in a certain room in its cellars...*

Of course, some judicious editing may give you a more logical trick. For example, the madness can come from **not** burying the corpse, while the vision can come from burying the corpse and then pushing the hidden button on the handle to permanently seal the tomb.



**TABLE A. What is it?**

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Minor feature, alone                      | 4 | Major feature, 2 random minor features                  |
| 2 | Major feature, 1 random minor feature     | 5 | Major feature, 1 associated and 1 random minor feature  |
| 3 | Major feature, 1 associated minor feature | 6 | Major feature, 1 associated and 2 random minor features |

**TABLE B. Major Features**

Numbers and result below the description refer to associated minor features and their die roll on Table D. If Table A indicates an associated minor feature, then use the numbers given in the Table B result to determine it, instead of rolling dice on Table D. If the table B entry has no associated features, use a random feature instead.

	<b>WALL</b>	<b>PILE</b>	<b>CHASM</b>	<b>STREAM/ CANAL</b> 2;2, Liquid	<b>STONE FORMATION</b>	<b>DEAD THING</b> 4;1 Bones/ Corpse
	<b>FLOOR</b>	<b>SPRING/ FOUNTAIN</b> 2;2, Liquid	<b>PIT/WELL</b>	<b>POOL/ BASIN</b> 2;2, Liquid	<b>LEDGE/ NICHE</b>	<b>PLANTS</b> 5;1 Plants
	<b>ARCH/ DOOR</b>	<b>COLUMN(S)</b>	<b>ALTAR/ SHRINE</b>	<b>LIGHT SOURCE</b>	<b>STAIRS</b>	<b>MAGIC</b> 6; 5, Magic Effect
	<b>PLATFORM</b>	<b>STORES</b>	<b>FIREPLACE</b> 4;2 Fire	<b>CRUDE FURNITURE</b>	<b>CAGE/ PRISON</b> 3;3; Grille	<b>WEAVING</b> 1;5 Cloth
	<b>STATUE</b> 6; 3 Statue	<b>DÉCOR- ATION</b>	<b>TROPHIES</b>	<b>GALLERY/ BALCONY</b>	<b>TOMB</b> 4;1 Bones/ Corpse	<b>ART</b> 5;3 Painting
	<b>MUSIC/ NOISE MAKER</b>	<b>DEVICE</b> ?, 6 – roll red die, use 6 for black die	<b>FANCY CONTAINER</b> 2;3 Container	<b>FANCY FURNITURE</b>	<b>WORKSPACE</b> 5;5Tools	<b>UNIQUE</b>

DEAD THING: Bones, skeleton, corpse, body parts, hair, skin (6)

DECORATION: Carved designs, moldings, hanging ornaments, painted designs, tiles, engravings (6)

DEVICE: Pendulum, clock, elevator, automaton, loom, mill, orrery, war engine, contraption, vehicle, execution machine, wheel, manufactory (12)

FANCY CONTAINER: Chest, cabinet, bookcase, wardrobe, desk, display case (6)

FURNITURE: Table, seats, throne, benches, bedding, couch (6)

GALLERY/BALCONY: Observation area looking over another area

LIGHT SOURCE: Shaft to surface, bright magic light, lantern, torches, glowing plants, dim witch-light (6)

MAGIC: Illusion, apparition, unnatural phenomenon, perpetual motion, summoning circle, magic lab (6)

MUSIC/NOISE MAKER: Hand instruments, organ, drum, gong, horn, bell (6)

PILE: Of refuse, rubble, dung, earth, treasure, powder (6)

STORES: Food, drink, equipment, or raw materials (4); in barrels, crates, sacks, shelves, stacked, loose (6)

TROPHIES: Stuffed animals, hides, horns and bones, exotic weapons, exotic apparel, collectors' items (6)

UNIQUE: You decide – egg, ship, giant hand, maelstrom, telescope, acorns ... anything.

WEAVING: Carpet, tapestry, curtain, screen, net, blanket (6)

WORKSPACE: Cooking, mining, alchemy, metalwork, research, embalming, torture, bookkeeping (8)

The number in parentheses after each list is a die type to roll for a random result from the list.

**Table C: Number of actions to roll (table D, black die) for each minor feature**

1	Non-functional (but may give clue)	4	One
2	One	5	Two
3	One	6	Three

**TABLE D: Minor features and possible actions leading to outcomes**

Feature						
<b>Bump/Knob</b>	Touch	Push	Rub	Hit	Pull	
<b>Hole</b>	Insert any	Touch	Insert kind	Insert "key"	Fill	
<b>Slab/Surface</b>	Lie on	Jump on	Push	Place kind	Place "key"	
<b>Plank/Beam/Log</b>	Jump on	Push	Pull	Break	Assemble	
<b>Cloth//Padding</b>	Wrap	Move	Cut	Touch	Wear	
<b>Brick/Block</b>	Pry	Push	Touch	Slide	Assemble	
<b>Crack/Slot</b>	Insert kind	Pry	Insert any	Insert "key"	Fill	
<b>Liquid</b>	Drink	Dip/Wash	Mix in	Drain	Gaze	
<b>Container</b>	Close	Open	Push	Insert "key"	Fill	
<b>Tile/Flagstone</b>	Break	Push	Slide	Touch	Pry	
<b>Ornament/Regalia</b>	Move	Wear	Put in place	Break	Turn	
<b>Handle</b>	Turn	Pull	Slide	Grasp	Push	
<b>Dirt/Dust/Webs</b>	Clean	Sift	Smear	Dig	Dig	
<b>Rope/Cord/Vine</b>	Tie to	Touch	Cut	Pull	Loosen	
<b>Grille</b>	Insert "key"	Pry	Break	Pull	Insert any	
<b>Wire/Chain</b>	Loosen	Touch	Swing	Tie to	Pull	
<b>Clothing</b>	Wear	Touch	Cut	Dress	Move	
<b>Mirror/Glass</b>	Gaze	Touch	Break	Push	Pry	
<b>Bones/Corpse</b>	Bury	Break	Move	Open	Assemble	
<b>Fire</b>	Burn "key"	Touch	Gaze	Burn kind	Douse	
<b>Protrusion</b>	Slide	Push	Turn	Break	Pull	
<b>Writing</b>	Complete	Gaze	Speak to	Decipher	Erase	
<b>Seat</b>	Sit on	Break	Open	Turn	Slide	
<b>Wheel</b>	Pull	Push	Turn left	Turn right	Break	
<b>Plants</b>	Water	Gaze	Pull	Burn	Cut	
<b>Substance</b>	Taste	Touch	Burn	Clean	Mix	
<b>Painting</b>	Erase	Touch	Decipher	Cut/Break	Gaze	
<b>Door/Hatch</b>	Knock	Push	Slide	Pull	Break	
<b>Tools/Weapons</b>	Put in place	Move	Break	Use	Pull	
<b>Lever</b>	Jam	Pull	Push	Turn	Break	
<b>Beast</b>	Feed	Touch	Move	Fight	Speak to	
<b>Carvings</b>	Push	Touch	Slide	Turn	Pry	
<b>Statue</b>	Assemble	Touch	Slide	Turn	Speak to	
<b>Face</b>	Speak to	Gaze	Push	Insert any	Insert "key"	
<b>Magic Effect</b>	Cast spell on	Touch	Speak to	Insert "key"	Gaze	
<b>Mechanism</b>	Oil	Insert any	Pull	Break	Assemble	

**Slab/Surface** – including bed, bier, platform    **Protrusion** – including torch holder, arm, branch, peg, antler

**Substance** – including slime, crust, powder, paste    **Ornament/Regalia** – including crown, sceptre, jewelry

A "key" is a specific object, probably found elsewhere in the adventure. A "kind" is a specific kind of object which may be available in the location or brought by the party – examples: flour, gold coins, a sword.

On a "Black 6" result, or a duplicate result when rolling multiple actions for the same feature, choose an unusual but appropriate action, or roll red and white d6 against the list of actions in column 1 of this table.

**TABLE E: Trick effects**

Roll	Feature
d6;d6	
1;1	Major unavoidable damage (average 2 hp/difficulty level) or poison
1;2	Major avoidable damage (average 4 hp/difficulty level)
1;3	Monster (at or above difficulty level)
1;4	Confinement or trapping
1;5	Permanent curse – lose 1d6 points to random ability, combat penalty, attract monsters, can't keep items or treasure, changed form, geas (6)
1;6	Cursed magic item
2;1	Minor unavoidable damage (average 1 hp/difficulty level)
2;2	Minor avoidable damage (average 2 hp/difficulty level)
2;3	Minor monster (lower than current difficulty level)
2;4	Physical effect – slow, sleep, paralyze, blind, deaf, mute (6)
2;5	Mental effect – confusion, insanity, paranoia, rage, compulsion, feeblemind (6)
2;6	Temporary curse – see 1;5, above
3;1	Trigger that closes a passage
3;2	Trigger with negative effects in a different area of adventure
3;3	Alarm
3;4	Reveals hidden minor feature, roll again on Table D
3;5	Reveals hidden minor feature, roll again on Table D
3;6	Chaotic effect – create a table with 6 of these effects, random every time
4;1	Reveals hidden minor feature, roll again on Table D
4;2	Reveals hidden minor feature, roll again on Table D
4;3	Trigger that opens a passage
4;4	Trigger that opens a passage
4;5	Trigger with positive effects in a different area of adventure
4;6	Mixed magic effect – not all good or bad (size change, blessing with curse)
5;1	Minor treasure (up to 50 gp/difficulty level)
5;2	Key object for different area
5;3	Clue to this area
5;4	Clue to different area
5;5	Benevolent or neutral being or spirit
5;6	Temporary blessing: +2d6 hp, +1d6 ability bonus, +1 level, combat bonuses (4)
6;1	Major treasure (up to 200 gp/difficulty level)
6;2	Key object for different area
6;3	Clue leading to different adventure site (treasure map, etc.)
6;4	Healing effect (up to 1d6 hp/difficulty level)
6;5	Permanent blessing: experience points, +1 hp, +1 ability bonus, “mutant” power (4)
6;6	Magic Item

“Difficulty level” : the character level the trick is suitable for.

“Avoidable” damage uses an attack roll or saving throw

Clues can involve a map, passwords, or advice for solving a trick or problem elsewhere.

The number in parentheses after each list is a die type to roll for a random result from the list.