

Fetishistic Arcana



by Edward Lockhart

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Excepting two explanatory Sentences.

Violent Media Presents:



Ethnographische Gegenstände aus dem Kassai- und Sankurugiegebiet.

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1 Buanga, weiblicher Fetisch. Batuanpita; Baluba. (Dr. Wolf.) — 2 Löffel aus Holz mit menschlicher Figur als Griff. (Mueller.) — 3 Tabadspeije, aus Holz geschnitten; langes Mundstück aus Eisen. (Wismann.) — 4 Schwert mit reich geschnittenem Holzgriff. Batuba. (Wismann.) — 5 Gürtel aus hohl gebogenem Leder mit drei Beischlägen aus Kupferblech in der Form von eidechsenartigen Thieren. Ubagwio. (Wismann.) — 6 Halsband mit Menschenzähnen und einem Fetisch aus einem Antilopenhorn und Haarbündel; von Kannibalen herrührend. Balanga. (Wismann.) — 7 Großes Kriegssamulet aus Büffelhorn, reich geschnitten. (Mueller.) — 8 Maste, geschnitten und bemalt, mit zwei Hörnern und mit Bart aus Kaphialafeln. Batuba. — 9 Kleiner Fetisch aus Holz mit Kupferbeschlag, Pelz- und Schlangenhautbekleidung. (Dr. Vogge.) — 10 Fetisch; Widderhorn, an der Spitze durchbohrt an der Basis ein kleines Gefäß. In dem etwa 40—50 menschliche Köpfe, Knochen an den Wänden des Gefäßes.

Several Minor Objects of Magical Significance for the Sorcerously Inclined.

Magical Fetishes for OSR Rulesets...

What is a fetish? A fetish is a very minor magical item which enhances or alters spells cast through it. Typically fetishes must be worn or held to be used. A fetish will only come into play via the intent of a caster, usually. In other words, the caster must willingly cast a spell *through* the fetish.

Fetishes are powered by the ritual specificity of their composition and construction. The careful assemblage of a fetish's many parts seems to be some subtle form of spellcasting in and of itself. No additional spells of any kind are required for the construction of a fetish, only the gathering and arranging of its sundry components.

Any spellcaster may use any properly constructed fetish.

Also, I totally should have made one of the fetishes a mummified foot, because that shit's just funny.

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Roll 1d10

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- 7 Multitudinous Prism
- 8 Wizard's Mitre
- 9 Iron Rose
- 10 Ancient Fetish
Roll 1d10
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- 4-6 Lenses of Knowledge
- 7-9 Tilted Wheel of Fate
- 10 Scepter of the Frog King

Savage fetishes constructed by goblin mystics.

Construction

It begins when a human warrior is slain by treachery upon the battlefield. The warrior's weapon will have taken the life of at least one goblin on this, the day of the human's death.

Any of the Sacred Sightless - goblin shamans who pluck out their own eyes and have never seen the hateful sun - can easily smell this state of potential on a fresh corpse.

Next, the body will be desecrated and debased in all ways, split into many pieces, and scattered across the wilderness, the jawbone being kept intact and chewed free from most of its flesh.

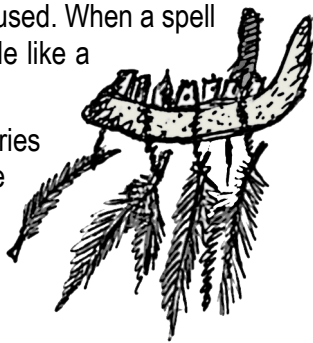
This jawbone will then be hung from a widow's walking stick in the center of the goblin encampment and dried to loosen the teeth in their sockets. Next, six raven feathers are carefully tied to the nearly complete fetish. Finally it is rung and rattled, setting the angry but patient magics into place.

Effect

All damaging spells cast at a human strike for +1 damage. That same amount of damage will be again dealt to the target one turn later as the spell rematerializes and attacks. This second spell is practically unavoidable and occurs whether or not the caster still lives.

This fetish must be held and struck to be used. When a spell is cast through it, the teeth hum and rattle like a vibraphone until the spell rematerializes.

Each use of this fetish by a non-goblin carries with it a 5% that the caster will awaken the next morning, transformed into a particularly weak and ungainly goblin.



[Fetishistic Arcana]

A reflective fetish of misdirection and unknowing.

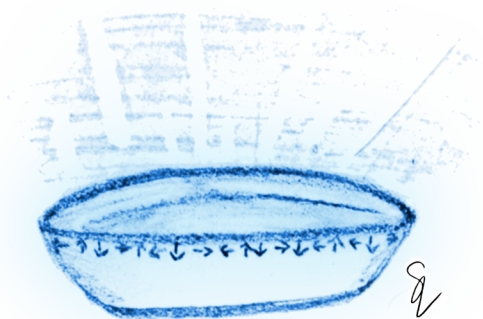
Construction

First you must polish a small but pure silver basin meticulously, until its inner surface forms a distorted mirror. Next, snake oil, patent medicine, or some other manner of inert nostrum should be kept in the basin for 1d6 days. Each day, until the fetish is complete, the creator must whisper thirteen lies into it. Finally the enchantment will be set, when the nostrum is consumed by a person believing in the strength of its healing potential.

Effect

Any spell cast through this fetish will seem to come from somewhere other than the caster. Those present must making a saving throw vs. spell to even suspect the caster of being the origin of the spell. A spell-caster need only to be within 12' of the fetish to use its power.

However, there is a cumulative 1% chance that the spell cast through this fetish will be forgotten by the caster. The spell will still take effect, but the caster will not remember casting it, nor even how to cast that spell. When the caster finds the spell in his/her spellbook, in his/her own hand with his/her own notes, it will only take 1d6 days to relearn the spell. % chance of spell loss resets each time a spell is forgotten.



A defensively cautious and overly protective fetish.

Construction

A large golden charm (30 sp worth) is to be hand-carved, forming the shape of either a holy symbol (ex. Cross, Ankh, Labrys) or an actual shield. Then it must be hidden for one lunar month in a place of safety (such as a safe, fort, cellar, or secret compartment.) If no sentient creatures have laid hold of the charm for the entire month, the addition of a simple chain or leather thong completes the fetish and sets the enchantment with a knot or a clasp.

Should the knot or clasp be untied or opened, the enchantment will be broken.

Effect

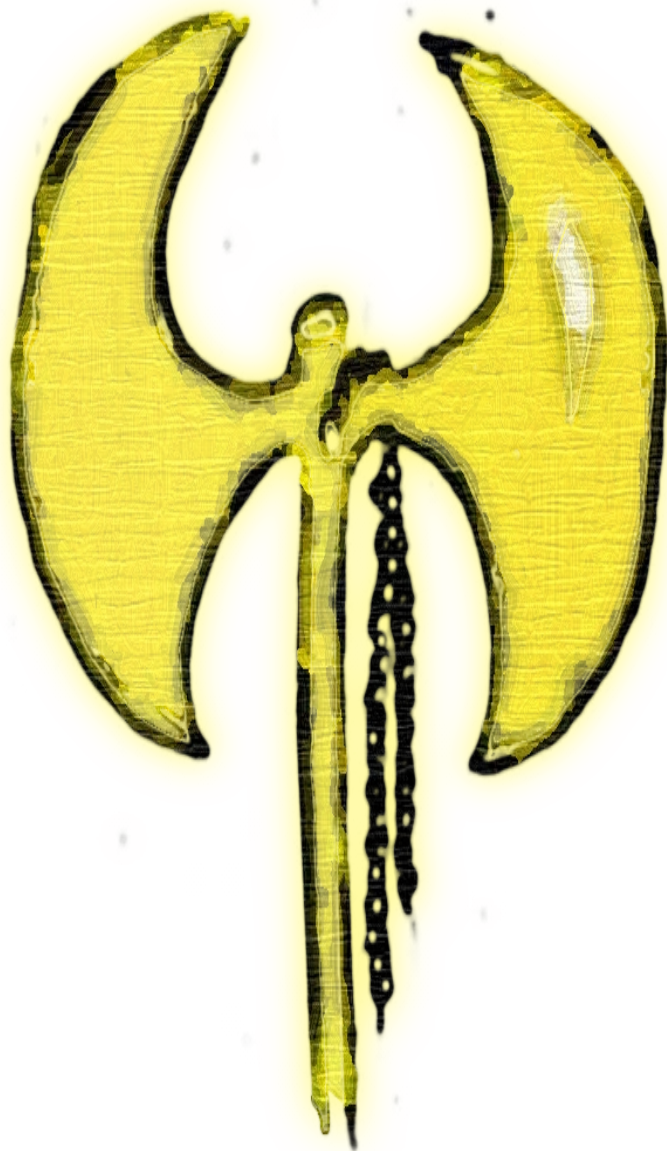
This fetish must be held in the left hand to be used.

All defensive spells (Shield, Protection for Normal Missiles, Protection from Evil, etc.) have twice their normal duration when cast through this charm. Additionally, in any combat round when no offensive actions have been taken (neither attacks nor damage causing magic), the holder of a Shielding Charm receives an additional +1 AC.

However, each time the Shielding Charm has a spell cast through it or grants a +1 AC bonus, there is a 2% chance that paranoia sets in...

The afflicted will be convinced that something is trying to harm him. To simulate this, periodically declare to the afflicted character's player, that something is trying to attack his/character. Roll a d20. On a 1-19, tell the player it seems to have missed and disappeared. Give him/her no further details. On a 20, tell the player the fiend has hit for 1 hp, but fled [random direction]. Give him/her no further details. Other characters present will see nothing except the afflicted character suddenly jerking, diving, or flinching violently. This is of course because there is nothing more to see. The destruction of the fetish is the only way to resolve this state of paranoid delusion.

[Fetishistic Arcana]



Mouth of Many Teeth

500-1500 Silver Pieces

A fetish both communicative and macabre.



Construction

First gather you together a set of dead folk's teeth, each tooth from a different mouth. Put them all firmly into an artificial jaw of the best construction you can muster; it must be closed off by a backing of sturdy, black fabric. Then sew into the fetish a tongue from a great orator.

(The better crafted the fetish is the longer it will last: Crude Construction 1d6 uses, Good Construction 3d6 Uses, Masterful Construction unlimited uses. Note that the tongue rots normally, though this will not affect the fetish. Removing the tongue before it sloughs off on its own, however, ruins the enchantment.)

Effect

When Speak with Dead is cast through this fetish, an intact mouth is not required, just some piece of the dead person or an extremely valued possession.

With each use of this fetish, there is a 2% chance that the spirit of the deceased will permanently inhabit the artificial mouth.

A spider-inspired fetish for spidery spells.

Construction

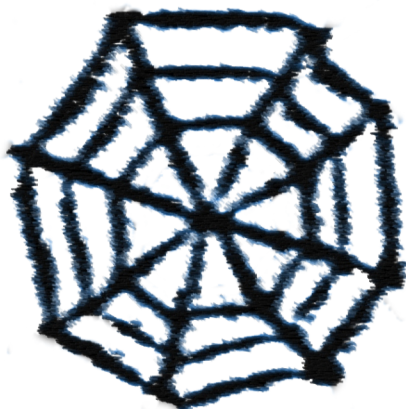
You must weave a net from strands of the finest silk; each knot and every strand is to be meticulously measured and tied into a perfect octagonal geometry. All weaving of the fetish is to take place behind the creator's back. (This will take a great deal of trial and error, mostly error and wasted time/resources.) The Net should then be laid out and covered completely in spider webs. Each midday thereafter there is a cumulative $\frac{1}{8}$ chance that a nearby spider will die, thus setting the enchantment into place.

Effect

The duration of the spells Spiderclimb, Web, and all other non-instantaneous spider themed spells are increased by 1 turn when cast through this fetish.

The fetish must be worn or held to be used.

All spiders and spider-like monsters will feel a strong antipathy towards any character in possession of a Net of Eight Legs. Given the opportunity, those in possession will be attacked first and with a heavy preference.



An obsidian wand of obstinance and reversal.

Construction

Begin with a long, thin chip of very pure snowflake obsidian. Carefully tumble it smooth into the shape of a wand. Finally, the fetish must be kept in a brightly lit room each night and a light proof box every day for 1d20 days until the enchantment sets in.

Effect

All spells cast through the wand are reversed if reversible. Possessing the wand also grants one a +1 to Saving Throws against all magic cast at him/her.

This fetish must be held to reverse spells; however, the saving throw bonus is granted so long as the wand is in the character's possession.

Additionally, The +1 bonus applies to all spells cast towards the possessor; he/she must actually fail a save to benefit from helpful magics (such as curative spells).



[Fetishistic Arcana]

Multitudinous Prism

1100 Silver Pieces

A scintillating fetish of many colors.

Construction

First you must seek out a large rock crystal of exceeding and unfaltering clarity.

Then cut that priceless stone into an exactly perfect prism. Further it is to be stored for one year in a silver box along with polished stones of these varieties: Carnelian, Citrine, Aventurine, Blue Chalcedony, and Amethyst.



Carefully remove the crystal in total darkness and bury the silver box along with the colored stones deep beneath the earth. Finally, expose the prism to the noontday sun and the enchantment shall be set.

But take care, should any of the colored stones find their way into the light of day, the enchantment will be broken.

Effect

If the spell Light is cast through this fetish while it is held, a brief, violent burst of aurora-like multicolored light will flash forth. All within 30 yds must sv. or be stunned for 1d4 rnds. Those forewarned can shut their eyes and save automatically.

If Continual Light is cast through the prism, the light show is permanent. This is a favorite trap of light focused wizards. At the end of the every 4 rounds, those affected by the Prism's lights must save again or suffer another 4 rounds of being stunned. Those who fail three saves in a row are permanently stunned unless removed from the light's presence. Most wind up starving to death.

The prism must be kept immaculately clean to function properly. Even meticulous care comes with a 1% chance of overheating per use. Overheating causes 1 point of damage to the holder and ruins the fetish. There is a 10% chance of overheating when some amount of care is taken, and a 40% chance otherwise.

Finally, a reason for Wizards to wear pointed hats.



Construction

In the midst of a storm's great tumult, on the night of a new moon, ashes from a sleeping volcano are to be mixed into a crucible of molten electrum. Before the full moon, the alloy must be drawn into wire and shaped into arcane symbols. Finally sew these glyphs onto a conical hat, using a needle made from the pointer finger of a long dead wizard, thus will the enchantment be set.

Effect

All spells cast through this fetish are cast as though 3 levels higher so long as the mitre is worn openly.

Each use of a Wizard's miter carries with it a 2% chance that a ghost* of the long dead wizard is angered by the desecration of his/her remains. You do not want one* of a wizard's ghost mad at you.

*That's right wizards can have more than one ghost.

A charming fetish of elegantly swept iron.

Construction

When the fires of the forge are stoked to their hottest, toss into the coals a still living rose bush. As it renders into to fine gray ash, speak the word love in seven separate tongues. Then let the master of that forge make for you a rose, wrought of dead gray metal. Within a fortnight, you must cause a beautiful youth plant a single kiss upon the iron bloom. Then shall the enchantment be set.

Effect

All charm spells cast through this fetish are saved against with a -4 penalty.

However, if a charm spell cast through the rose is successfully saved against there is a 10% chance that the caster will instead fall in love with subject of his/her spell.



Archaic fetishes lost to the modern age.

Construction

In certain ancient places, filled with much danger and many riches, lay dust covered rams' horns. These silver gilt spiraling horns measure a few feet in length and are tipped with silver and carved in starburst filigree. Ramshorns often adorn graves of storied wise men and wizards.

And that's exactly where these fetishes would stay, were it not for violent, grave-robbing vagrants

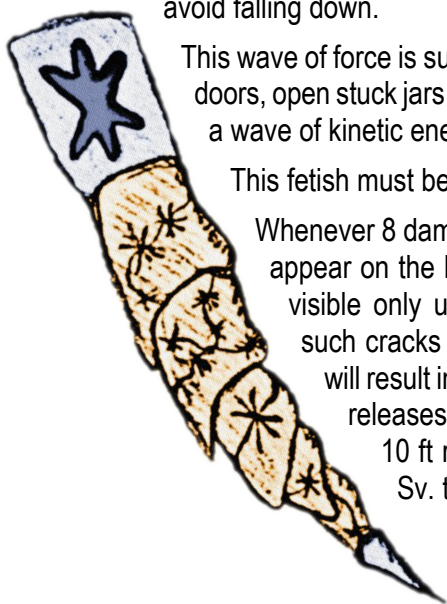
Effect

Oddly all spells cast through this fetish result in a unidirectional wave of force bursting outward from the caster. The wave begins at about 5' feet wide and blasts forward for 30 yards growing to 8' wide. All in its path take 1d8 damage (same damage roll for all victims, save for half). Additionally, a save vs. paralysis +/- dexterity modifier must be made to avoid falling down.

This wave of force is sufficient to bust down most wooden doors, open stuck jars of jam, and anything else for which a wave of kinetic energy might be useful.

This fetish must be held to be employed.

Whenever 8 damage is rolled, a very fine crack will appear on the Ramshorn. These cracks are only visible only under close examination. When 7 such cracks appear, the next use of the fetish will result in it being shattered. This, of course, releases an explosion of 2d6 damage to a 10 ft radius, centered on the possessor. Sv. to remain standing.



[Fetishistic Arcana]

A visioning fetish of horrible truth.

Construction

The exact means by which this singular fetish was constructed are lost in the annals of time.

These appear to be unremarkable and surprisingly plain spectacles until one notices the frames are made of blue-black slate, carved with subtly moving sigils.



Effect

When worn all detection spells cast through this fetish are doubled in range and duration. All information gathered from such spells cast through the lenses will be rendered visually to the caster, even if the spell normally does not work in this fashion.

1% cumulative chance per use that the spectacles will fuse to the face of whomever is wearing them. Removing the fetish (which would literally require them to be cut away from the victim's skull), cause the lenses to shatter inward blinding the victim horribly. While the lenses are fused, the caster will always see the truth. Always.

When his mother says "I'm so happy to see you," but she isn't because he reminds her of his dead father, he will know the truth. When her betrothed says, "I love you, just the way you are," she will see the lies exit his lips. The beautiful monuments of the world will be shown to be soaked in the blood of the countless slaves who died building them. Few can live with this reality. Few can stomach this much truth.

When broken, the Lenses of Knowledge slide into so much empty dust; they then reform 3d100 yards away.

The Wheel never turns for you only against you.

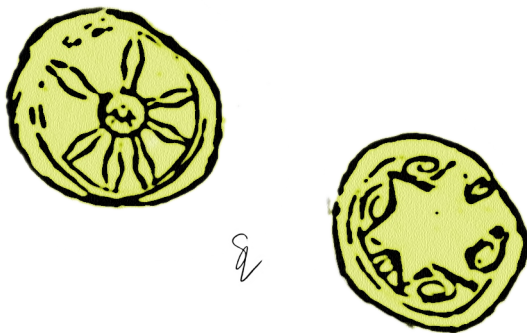
Construction

A bent and patinaed ancient gold coin with the image of a seven spoked wheel of chance on one side and a six pointed star on the other. The origin of this deceptive relic is unknown.

Effect

Anyone holding the coin will feel it to be lucky. Spell casters will sense it to be a powerful focus for their spell casting.

In reality possessors are -2 on all saving throws. Spells cast through the fetish are saved against with a +1 bonus. However, spending the coin will gain one a permanent +2 on all saving throws.



Scepter of the Frog King

2500 Silver Pieces

From the storied times before the coming of men.

Construction

According to Legend:

Deep within the First Swamp, there was a bullfrog so unimaginable huge that his great bellowing croak shook the very world. This Frog King ruled his watery demesne until he and the Scorpion ventured to cross the Waters of Time. Betrayal saw them both rent asunder.

The Scepter itself is a staff formed from a twisted tangle of mangrove roots. Tied to its top are bones of the Final Frog, the last creature that ever will live.

Effect

All spells cast through the Scepter will be twisted into a mud soaked, damp, and primordially oozy version of the spell. Sometimes this will result in a more beneficial version of the spell, sometimes it won't.

Examples:

Cure Light Wounds would cause the character's wounds to be filled with muck and maggots. The maggots quickly work to clean the wound and fuse them shut. The mud then crusts over, forming a natural bandage. Instead of being instantaneous, the spell will take one round to work, with the added benefit of the maggots preventing any poison in the wounds from entering the bloodstream of the character.

Fairy Fire additionally causes the target to stink like rotting vegetable matter for the duration of the spell + 1d4 days.

Gaseous Form causes you to be made of swamp gas, meaning open flames can make you explode.

Identify returns results in the form of a series of smells and splorching sounds, requiring an additional 1d4 days of study to interpret.

[**Fetishistic Arcana**]

Scepter of the Frog King

But how could there be stories before the coming of men?

Magic Missile causes a wad of mud to be flung unerringly at the face(s) of the target(s). Save or be blinded for 1 round in addition to the damage.

Unseen Servant is unchanged, save that all the things the spell manipulates will have wet, webbed handprints left all over them.

Wall of Fog results in the ground underneath it being swampy and treacherous to cross.

When in doubt as to how to make a spell swampy, ask the player what he/she is trying to accomplish by using the fetish. At the very least a foul, swampy stench will surround the caster with each casting.

There is a cumulative 2% chance with each use, that the spell caster's magic will be tainted and swampish, forever more.

Further frogs and amphibians will have an unusual affection for the possessor. However, should the possessor kill any amphibian (outside of self-defense) and not consume it, the swamp dwelling creatures of the world will revolt against him/her. An unending barrage of cranes, herons, frogs, salamanders, snakes, bears, wolves, and jaguars will attempt to slay the unrightful fool pretending towards the Frog King.

[Fetishistic Arcana]

[Fetishistic Arcana]



[Further Words]

Some closing thoughts and design notes

I'd like to begin this closing with some thank-yous.

First, thank you to my wife, Sharaya Lockhart, who proofreads my shit, tolerates a great deal of my time being spent daydreaming and/or staring at a monitor, and also drew some pictures for this thing to boot. (Hers are all signed, and she totally drew what is now my favorite drawing of a frog's skull. [The unsigned illustrations are mine.]

Secondly, thank you to my uncle Mark. He has always been a big supporter of all my odd ambitions.

Thirdly I read all these blogs (and more) pretty often. They jumpstart my brainbox in a number of ways: [Dyson's Dodecahedron](#), [False Machine](#), [Goblin Punch](#), and [10 Foot Polemic](#).

And while I'd done things similarly to the drawback of the Shielded Charm before, [reading this article](#) really cemented my methods for these types of situations.

(All these are clickable hyperlinks. Please do click away...)

Now, on to other things.

About the value in silver pieces attached to each fetish, that's pretty much just for XP purposes. Each fetish would be invaluable to magic slinging folks.

Also, I tried to make sure that every fetish came with some sort of potential drawback. I like my magic dangerous and soul shattering.

But why do fetishes at all?

Because being a low level Magic User sort of sucks. One or two spells per day, then your character stops being awesome. Meanwhile, the thief-type is still picking locks/pockets, and the fighter is still murdering away. I don't think more spells is the answer; though, getting more out of those few spells may well be. Plus the esoteric and symbolic construction arcane spell foci just feels magical. Burying boxes of gems, whispering lies into bowls, and burning rose bushes are just plain wizardly.

These are exactly the sort of devices you want your players dreaming up. Once the Magic User starts doing weird shit to try and imbue random objects with mystical potency, the game can only get better.

- Edward

[Fetishistic Arcana]

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Beware the wise wizard wrapped
inelegantly in his esoteric
miscellany; he knows many things
you do not.

Sneer not at his trinkets and twigs...

The smallest things may be the keys
to greater strengths.

The tiniest pieces may turn the tide.

Fetishistic Arcana may be your
undoing.

Seek in this tome the secrets of
small things, the making of odd
objects, the bringing of sundry
pieces into a larger whole.

Carry each fetish with care; the
wheel never turns for you, lest it
turn the wrack in the end.