

# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Acid Arrow

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. These are the spells which, if on your PC's class list, will be taken as soon as possible. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. For this issue, Maxolt relates the sorrowful tale behind this most chilling of spells—*acid arrow*.

Before we get to the usual information, I'd like to address the topic of spells which have proper names attached to them. Every arcane spellcaster knows what I'm talking about. There are about a dozen of these names, some affixed to multiple spells. This issue's spell gives me the first such occasion to expound on

these irritating nametags. I won't dignify the name in question here by mentioning it (although if you say it backwards it sounds like the disgusting mass in an ill person's throat). To make a long story short: **these names are a sham.**

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: Acid Arrow

Part scheme to achieve a kind of immortality and part arrogance, the presence of named spells in the arcane repertoire stems from the machinations of a group called the Fraternity of Unrestraint (I needn't spell out what that vulgar, yet appropriate, two-letter acronym is). Based in the metropolis of Voulani, the fraternity consisted of a dozen or so men of power. What they all had in common was obscene amounts of wealth and ego. The group was established by these men to allow them to thumb their nose at authority and life in general. Just as true back then as it is today is the fact that people with enough wealth can do whatever they want. The fraternity is the best example of this proverb.

The group hunted creatures and men alike for sport (sometimes in the city itself!), ignored any law that they disagreed with, and committed atrocities that have likely not yet been uncovered by historians. For purely selfish reasons, the fraternity kept close a group of the most promising casters of the arcane arts to be found in or around the city. These casters knew their benefactors' nature but who could turn away paid accommodations, expense-free research, and a carefree life (as long as they jumped when the group called)? One fateful night, the fraternity's membership decided that they wanted spells named after themselves. After a hasty lottery, each member would then, in order of the drawing, choose one spell created by the group's stable of mages to name after himself.

When the mages learned of this, they chafed mightily. After all, it was they who put the time and effort into creating the spells in the first place so shouldn't it be their names that live on? Well, let's just say that after the more vocal opponents were "permanently dismissed" from the fraternity, the others fell into line with the idea quickly enough. Unfortunately, many of these spellcasters had never even considered fashioning their own spells; content instead to study other aspects of magic. As a result, many of the named spells known today are superfluous oddities in arcane lore. Sure, they're sometimes useful but their forced creation lacks the spark found in classics like *magic missile* and *fireball*.

This rant is getting a bit long so I'll finish the tale quickly with an answer to this ques-

tion—How did the names of the fraternity members stay with the spells throughout the centuries? Certainly, many future spellcasters would not, in any way, want to honor these depraved men. Turns out, they had no choice. In addition to the fact that the fraternity did everything in its power to distance their group identity from their names in arcane circles for decades, they commissioned a very special spell (see the "Related Research" section below). This dweomer, after cast upon an original written copy of a spell, would magically suck enough ink from any recopied versions to form one other word which would then spontaneously appear on the page. Spellcasters who didn't know any better simply thought this a convenient time saver devised by the spell's creator. Only in the last few years has this massive subterfuge been uncovered and steps taken to remove the final taint of the Fraternity of Unrestraint once and for all.

### The Creator

Nirtis Maguvin, a thin man prone to destructive compulsive behavior, was born and raised in the great city of Voulani. The human wizard was trained at the prestigious local college of wizardry. Nirtis never graduated, however, as he was thrown out in his senior year for deliberately slaying one of the school's griffons during an unauthorized experiment. But instead of fading into obscurity, the mage was approached by the Fraternity of Unrestraint (as described above). The group wanted the wizard's talent and offered to buy the silence of the college about the facts surrounding his dismissal if he would come to work for them. Nirtis, wanting to stay in Voulani and practice his art, readily agreed (the college would not otherwise have permitted him to wield magic in the city). Unfortunately, as time wore on, Nirtis grew disenchanted with the fraternity's supervision of his activities and he wanted out of the deal.

Nirtis was no fool, though. He knew how the group worked and that getting out would require more than a formal protest. He needed his own blackmail to hold over them and happened to know just the place to acquire it. The fraternity had many safehouses of wealth and incriminating documentation pertaining to

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any Voulani resident that they either wanted something from or just considered a threat. These safehouses were protected heavily against physical and magical assault. However, the defenses had a definite weakness—they were unresistant to low-level spells (since such low-powered magic was not considered threatening). Nirtis created a spell that he could use to burrow through the mausoleum's wall without setting off the defensive magics but which still caused the significant damage due his experience in sorcery.

For about a year, twice daily as he walked to and from the fraternity's arcane labs, Nirtis used *acid arrow* on a small section of wall behind a thick cluster of bushes. Since this shrubbery was maintained by *unseen servants*, the wizard knew that only a dedicated inspection of the place would reveal his work. However, groups like the fraternity do not keep their power without a healthy dose of paranoia. The wizard's work was carefully monitored from afar and his spell proved of particular interest to a certain member (whose name begins with "M") when the group decided to name spells after themselves. Once a large enough hole was melted through the mausoleum wall to gain entrance, Nirtis was torn apart by the guardian undead waiting inside but at least the spell he created was, and continues to be, a successful endeavor.

### Spell Secrets

Every adventurer has his or her niche in combat. Clerics heal, fighters fight, thieves sneak around to a deady flanking position, and wizards reign down wholesale destructive spells. When one profession attempts the role of another, the result is not always positive. What I'm getting at is that a spellcaster has to play archer and aim the *acid arrow* properly for it to strike an enemy. The sad fact is that *every other* party member is better suited for this task. Enter the first spell secret—multiple arrows. Since even the more experienced mages can be combat klutzes, swapping increased damage for an increased chance to actually deal damage can often be a welcome trade.

Instead of inflicting multiple rounds of acid damage, a higher level spellcaster can swap them for multiple arrows. The exchange ratio is 1 to 1, meaning you get an additional arrow for every round of damage your acid is capable of inflicting. You must still succeed a ranged touch attack with these missiles. Exchanging in this way requires a successful Spellcraft check (DC 17). All arrows must be launched at the same target and emerge in rapid succession from your hand. [For example: If a 12th-level sorcerer were to cast *acid arrow*, his magical projectile would, upon impact, inflict acid damage for 4 rounds. If he decides to use this spell secret, he would have to roll the Spellcraft check and then, if successful, make four ranged touch attacks since that's how many arrows would be created.]

The thing about acid is that its effects are instantaneous. Ice can be chipped away and fire burns in stages but acid melts whatever it comes in contact with immediately. What this means for clothing, objects, and skin is nothing pleasant especially if multiple rounds of exposure are at hand. Taking the time to wash the acid from you is the only sure solution to prevent long-term damage or scarring.

Acid can be effectively neutralized with water but it requires dedicated soaking. For every round the acid of this spell persists, you can douse the affected area with one waterskin (or submerge yourself in a body of water) to avoid the damage inflicted. Dousing must be done thoroughly and is considered a full-round action. If you do not neutralize the acid, it not only damages you but eats through the clothing on whatever part of your body it has struck as well. The spell assumes an *acid arrow* strikes the main torso so armor is commonly affected (roll the damage and apply it also to the armor's hardness rating and hit points for every round of exposure).

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### *Continued from previous page . . .*

However, if there is only clothing protecting the torso, it is eaten away immediately and scarring will occur on the target as the acid eats the skin beneath. To avoid scarring, healing magic must be applied within two rounds after the acid damage or a successful Heal check (DC 17) made on the victim within one round after the attack. Note that scarring may also occur if the acid lasts long enough to eat away armor. Any scarring is superficial (does not affect game stats) unless the ranged attack roll for the *acid arrow* is a natural “20.” If this critical hit is successful, one point of Charisma damage is also applied. Such damage can only be removed by spells like *heal* or *wish* or by powerful alchemical agents costing no less than 6,500 gp.

## Related Research

When the Fraternity of Unrestraint set out to keep their names on the spells selected by the members, they knew that magical means would be necessary to keep them attached for all time. It would be a simple matter, they knew, for future generations of spellcasters to simply leave off the names in their spellbooks since only the spell script really mattered. That’s where *unwritten word* comes in. Not only did this spell give the members the immortality they were looking for but it duped those future spellcasters into believing that it was doing them a favor after the spell copying process was complete!

Acid isn’t always used to injure another creature or object. One inspired mage took the concept of long-lasting acid damage from the *acid arrow* spell and turned it into a benign, yet beneficial, spell of subtlety.

## NEW SPELL *Unwritten Word*

Transmutation

**Level:** Brd 1, Sor/Wiz 1

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 minute

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** Page touched, up to 1 sq. ft. in size

**Duration:** Permanent

**Saving Throw:** No

**Spell Resistance:** No

Upon casting *unwritten word*, you touch the (first) page of a written spell and then clearly spell aloud the word you want the spell to carry. That word, usually a proper name or other title (but cannot be magical or dangerous in and of itself), instantly appears on the page as part of the spell’s name. That page now carries the magic of the *unwritten word* and transmits the word to every spell copied from that original source. Even if someone were to copy the spell and intentionally leave off the *unwritten word* (for whatever reason), the spell’s magic drains enough ink from the other characters on the page to produce the word in its proper spot as part of the spell’s title. The magic is viral in its progress, transmitting itself to every copy of every copy of the original source. Even if committed to memory, as long as the spellcaster memorized the spell under the effect of *unwritten word* its power carries over onto any written version that caster pens.

*Material Component:* 50 gp worth of powered amber per letter of the copied word.

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### NEW SPELL *Instant Trail*

Conjuration (Creation) [Acid]

**Level:** Rgr 1, Sor/Wiz 0

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** Standard action

**Range:** Close

**Target:** One creature

**Duration:** 1 minute/level (D)

**Saving Throw:** Yes (object)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

The shoes of the target leak a slight amount of acid after a step is taken. The acid eats a footprint into the ground, leaving a slight, fleeting wisp of white smoke as it does so (Spot DC 21 to notice the smoke). The footprints are faint but allow anyone tracking the target to do so with relative ease, adding a +10 circumstance bonus to all Survival checks made to track the target. The footprints are washed away by 10 total minutes of rain. The acid created cannot harm the target. You can only use *instant trail* on a target with some kind of foot gear.

*Material Component:* A lemon peel which must be stomped beneath your foot at the end of the spell's casting.

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Animate Dead

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### The Creator

Kritak was a renowned gnoll shaman (or at least renowned by gnolls, which perhaps isn't saying a whole lot, but I digress). His power grew to such proportions that many tribes knew his name as well as the distinctive gray and black striping of his fur. Kritak's primary focus in the mystical arts was in the dead—necromancy. Spells already existed in his time which allowed a caster to speak with the dead and use their parts as components. But Kritak knew that

the dead held more potential. Unfortunately for the gnoll, his preoccupation with the dead blinded him to the schemes of the living. His clan's chief, a powerful two-headed gnoll named Xox, grew fearful that the shaman might one day wrest control of the clan from him if left unchecked. When Xox drew his lieutenants together in a plot to slay Kritak, he discovered that even these allies would not support such an action. For while these gnolls honored Xox as leader, they were more afraid of the horrific vengeance Kritak's spirit would reap if slain.

*Dedicated to Keith Parkinson—  
Inspired by his work "Arcane Summons"*

by Bret Boyd

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Now, gnolls, as a rule, are pretty cunning. And while Xox was not exceptional in this department, he had a flash of brilliance for this situation. If he could not slay Kritak outright, he would just have to fashion a plan that saw the shaman forced into permanent exile. I've researched this with no small diligence but just how Xox managed to draw the clan together against the shaman remains a mystery. The end result of the action saw Kritak branded on the head and exiled to the lands northeast of the Xox's mountainous territory. The brand took the form of a square-cornered "U" which was (and still is) the gnoll rune for betrayer. For the most part, history records the shaman as indifferent to the whole thing. He settled near a trade road that cut through the mountains. The occasional bandit raids and harsh elements claimed more than a few lives here and Kritak was quick to harvest the bodies for his necromantic experiments.

After a number of years' work, Kritak was ready to join a clan again—by creating his own. Not long before his exile, a great battle was fought between some forgotten human king's army and a fierce gnoll clan of great number. Who won isn't important—well, maybe to historians, but not to Kritak. The first field test of *corpse soldiers* (*animate dead's* predecessor) spell took place amidst the snow covered swamps not far from Kritak's home. During a ritual which lasted for a full hour, the corpses of the human soldiers slain in the battle rose from their watery graves in answer to the gnoll's call. After the spell was completed, nearly 150 skeletal warriors were assembled outside the swamp. Kritak left the troop to prepare the components for another casting of his spell. For only a scant few miles away, the forgotten graveyard of an ancient city was to be the spell's next test site.

Unfortunately for Kritak, his experiments had not gone unnoticed. An elven alliance of adventurers from that era had been keeping tabs on the shaman. Previously considered a minor annoyance by the Ef'winn Noras (roughly translated as "Watchers of Noras"), the gnoll's corpse ability to raise a skeletal army now elevated his threat potential. After a day of preparation, Kritak commanded his undead force to march to the graveyard. But the Ef'winn Noras was ready and they ambushed

the gnoll and his force in sight of the shaman's goal. Kritak used magic to strengthen his skeletons as the elves converged, some growing as tall as giants with others wielding weapons as formidably as the veteran warriors they were in life. In the end, however, the skeletons were no match for the elven adventurers. Kritak, it is said, battled to the death; but even as the final blow was struck upon him, a specially prepared wand exploded.

After his exile, Kritak fashioned the wand as a security measure. For you see, even if his body perished the prepared magics of the wand would preserve the gnoll's consciousness in a nearby body, allowing him to forever pursue his necromantic sorcery. In this case, an elven survivor became the vessel of Kritak's soul and mind. Those other elves that were not killed in the wand's blast were shortly slain thereafter by their "trusted friend." But an unforeseen side effect of the possession magic soon showed itself. Apparently, the raw power which fed the wand's magic continues in the new body, which becomes a surrogate wand itself. Not designed to contain such necromantic energies, each body Kritak jumps into slowly deteriorates. Within months, perhaps a year, the gnoll's current body disintegrates and his consciousness must jump into another living creature or be forever lost.

The shaman is rumored to still exist, within Noras no less (although that nation has been split and renamed many times since) as some form of demi-lich. You can easily tell his true nature, for even if the host body has not yet deteriorated badly, the original "U" branded on him by Xox carries over from body to body as some kind of curse. This brand no longer means "exile" to the gnolls but rather is identified with Kritak directly. Many gnolls worship the former shaman as a deity of undeath. "Was Kritak the first lich?" you ask. No, but he is probably the first gnoll lich.

## Spell Secrets

Besides creating some low-powered servants and warriors, *animate dead* tends to give evil spellcasters some clout amongst their rivals. Creating undead with this spell is akin to branding horses. A spellcaster puts his "stamp" onto the corpses—"these are mine, go



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get your own". But what if another caster tries to take control of those undead? Is such a thing possible? Turns out that it is. When you create skeletons and zombies with this spell, you form a minor mental link with them. This is what enables you to direct the undead to do

If you are of equal or greater caster level (arcane *or* divine) than the controller (the spellcaster responsible for *animating* the undead in the first place), you might be able to wrest control of some of his undead. The component required is nothing more than your own blood. After opening a wound on your hand (inflicting two hit points of damage), you must succeed a melee touch attack against either the caster or one of his controlled undead. Failure incurs no ill effects aside from likely provoking an attack of opportunity. A successful touch allows your blood to access the magical "back door" of the *animate dead* spell by making opposed Concentration checks with the controlling caster. If the controller wins, the link is never established and you must succeed another melee touch attack to try again. If you win, you automatically know how many Hit Dice worth of undead the caster currently controls. You can then attempt to take control of some or all of these undead by sacrificing one hit point per HD of undead. Any undead taken over in this way can only be controlled for one round per caster level before control reverts back to the original controller. This variant rule is applicable even to the new *animating* weapon quality presented below.

[For example: A 7th-level cleric decides to try and bond with his 9th-level necromancer foe. After succeeding both the touch attack and opposed Concentration rolls, he knows that the necromancer currently controls 28 HD worth of undead and how those HD are distributed. The cleric decides to take control of two owlbear skeletons (or 10 HD) and immediately sacrifices 10 hit points. She now has total control of those skeletons for 7 rounds, after which control reverts back to the necromancer.]

your every bidding. Now, as more and more undead are *animated*, the mental bonds multiply and create a kind of psychic "ringing" in the caster's mind. It doesn't affect him in any way but it is there nonetheless. Normally, the caster's opponents are either too worried about him or his undead to bother with anything else. But there actually is a method for other casters to tap into the "signal," if you will, that runs from undead to creator caster. This type of bonding is useful even to clerics since some undead may be extremely resistant or even immune to turning attempts.

Along the same line of thought, what happens when a caster wants to add more undead to his roster than the spell allows. What normally happens is that excess undead from previous castings become uncontrolled. But friendly casters can work to voluntarily give control of these excess undead to one another if they are lucky. I've seen this done a few times when the undead are needed to labor in dangerous areas or to cause a battle distraction.

When a spellcaster creates excess undead with an *animate dead* spell, he can designate one other caster within 30 feet to become the new controller. However, the allied caster must first succeed an Intimidation check (DC 10 +  $\frac{1}{2}$  the HD worth of excess undead) to do so. Success means the new caster has control of the undead for 1 hour per caster level. At this time, the new controller can give a single command to the undead. But if he wishes another command before the hour's duration expires (or even *when* it expires), he must succeed another Intimidation check (same DC as above). The maximum duration a secondary controller can retain control over these undead is 12 hours. At the end of the maximum duration, or when an Intimidation check is failed, the undead become uncontrolled.

## Related Research

Animating the dead is tricky business these days. The *animate dead* spell is the safe route to go since control is not guaranteed with higher level spells like *create undead*. It is

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amazing to think of the knowledge Kritak possessed (or possesses?!) as he was able to not only animate armies but control them as well. I've heard of a lesser powered version of his original spell that is making the rounds in necromantic circles.

### VARIANT SPELL: *Corpse Soldiers*

As the spell *animate dead* with the following exceptions.

**Level:** Clr 5, Death 5, Sor/Wiz 5

**Casting Time:** 10 minutes

**Range:** 300-ft.-radius, centered on you

**Target:** Any whole corpse in range

The spell's power reaches into the earth which allows even buried undead to come to the magic's call. There is no limit to the amount of undead affected by a single casting of *corpse soldiers*. All corpses within range walk, shuffle, claw, or swim their way to you after casting. No matter how many times you use this spell, however, you can control only 7 HD worth of undead creatures per caster level, instead of the 4 HD maximum as imposed by *animate dead*. In addition, each undead receives a +1 profane bonus to attack and damage rolls.

*Material Component:* A black onyx gem worth 1,000 gold pieces which you must smash at the end of the casting time.

### New Weapon Quality: *Animating*

If a weapon with this quality inflicts enough damage to bring a living target below zero hit points, the target must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 20) or be instantly turned into a skeleton or zombie (wielder's choice). The created undead is under direct control of the weapon wielder as per the *animate dead* spell. The maximum Hit Dice worth of undead that can be controlled through the weapon is 36. This number is cumulative with undead controlled by any other means.

Moderate necromancy; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *animate dead*, creator must be evil; Price +3 bonus.

Besides the knowledge locked in Kritak's mind, there is rumored to be a subterranean storehouse of items and research books and notes around the mountain pass he once called home. An adventurer named Hilben Morre claimed a prize from a slain monster's lair that may have been from the gnoll shaman's cache. The item discovered was a ledger of tattered notes concerning a special ensorcellment for a weapon. The notes were, interestingly enough, written in an ancient Gnoll dialect.

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Antimagic Field

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. In this issue, Maxolt tells us about that most effective spell of magical suppression—*antimagic field*.

### The Creator

The origins of some spells lie in times of great heroism or suspense. And then there are those, like this one, whose creation was spurred by monetary gain. Hot on the heels (at least in a broad historical sense) of the creation of the *invisibility* spell, spellcasters everywhere began to create their own spells of subterfuge and subtlety. Before this time,

innovations in arcane spellcasting were confined to new and better ways of blowing things up. Magic was certainly seen as a dangerous force but now, with the advent of stealth spells capable of hiding both creatures and their intentions, it became an even greater cause for concern amongst law enforcers.

You see, as spellcasting developed, so too did laws governing its use. Original dictums were, essentially, “eye for an eye” affairs. If

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## Behind the Spells: Antimagic Field

destructive magic obliterated someone's farm, then the caster responsible was hunted down and had his domicile destroyed. Similarly, if a spellcaster killed another person (or persons) with his magic, then he was slain (sometimes being forced into eternal undead servitude thereafter depending on the number of people killed). But how does authority deal with a spellcaster who, for example, may or may not have *charmed* someone? Perhaps the caster is just especially charismatic. Where's the proof of wrongdoing? It is this new wave of covert spells which opened up a legal gray area for casters to hide in.

Well, proof or not proof, constables tended to act on their instinct (and were more often than not correct). Guilty spellcasters were jailed for a time as decided by the officer or lord in charge. However, imprisoning spellcasters proved more problematic than anticipated. Even shackled casters could still release or even transport themselves with but a few words of magic (especially if they feared getting caught in the first place!). Now, out of control spellcasters weren't a reality at the time but some communities saw the potential for such danger to erupt.

One such community, a small coastal nation named Baltania, convened a special meeting of their top minds from numerous fields of study (not just magical theory). The nation had unwittingly acquired a thriving black market in magical bric-a-brac as well as numerous spellcasting offenders. Unfortunately, the capital city's well-maintained port made it attractive to ventures both legal and illegal. By the end of a week's worth of meetings, the group had hammered out a strict code of magical conduct to be administered alongside the normal laws of the land. But to back up the laws of magic use, the group wanted to have a unifying symbol that would tell everyone they meant business. That symbol took the form of a building.

Within the bay of Baltania, a mile-long section of rock served as a warning to ships that they were nearing shore. On that spot, the group of experts decided to construct a prison to house those magic-wielders found guilty under the new laws. The Prison of Kaltibaz required three months to construct but the finished product could be seen on a clear day along the entire coast of Baltania. Since more

than a few spells could not penetrate lead, a one-foot layer of that substance was run through the exterior walls. Much like regular prisons, however, items could be smuggled in to the inmates through bribed guards or especially sly visitors. Prisoners who did not require a spellbook to regain spells were also a problem, requiring constant supervision by guards. Unfortunately, Kaltibaz's success was comparable to the amount of funds pumped into it and Baltania's relief from chaotic spellcasters would be short-lived at the current rate of coinage use.

The solution to the dilemma brings us to the spell at hand in this issue (about time, eh?). The human warden of Kaltibaz, a former general named Kreltin Vanc, secretly sent a plea for help to the few mages he trusted implicitly. The missive, drawn up with approval from Baltania's rulers, offered a lucrative amount of gold to a spellcaster could fashion a spell to suppress magic inside the prison. Such a spell would take the place of ever-vigilant wizards with *dispel magic* items (which, while proving effective in deterring surprise spells, were not nearly proactive enough a security measure). Only one wizard answered the call with success—Cyrus "Spellbane" Noxtem.

Himself a victim of horrific magical attacks during military engagements (which left the half-elf more than one scar), Cyrus dedicated his life to controlling the magical power wielded by others. He acquired the nickname Spellbane from an alchemical substance by the same name he created. Spellbane was a fine powder which suppressed magical ability in all creatures who breathed it. After Cyrus received the request for aid sent by the warden, he jumped at the chance to experiment further with the magical theories already penned when creating spellbane powder. It took the wizard only a few short weeks to come up with, what is today known as, the *antimagic field* spell (the original name was slightly different but was changed in recent years because it sounded a bit too similar to certain clerical spells...as if casters were really having trouble!).

After a process by which several spellcasters gave up a small portion of their life essence (much like one might when casting the powerful *wish* spell), an *antimagic* field was erect-

## Behind the Spells: Antimagic Field

ed over the entire prison. [This kind of multicaster ritual is not something I'm at liberty to discuss here. Suffice it to say that it is a very old process (started by dragons, so I've heard) and, if you want to learn about it, maybe some adventurers will uncover its specifics within one of those dungeons they're so fond of.] Magic of any sort was thereafter permanently suppressed inside Kaltibaz and Cyran was hailed as a hero of Baltania. *Antimagic field* proved to be so popular a spell, even deities began granting it to their followers after too long.

Believe it or not, Kaltibaz Prison still stands today after surviving natural disasters and attacks of all kinds (from earthquakes and hurricanes to dragons and drow). The nation of Baltania has long since been absorbed into a larger sovereignty which now maintains a minimal security force on the island. Kaltibaz holds between two and four dozen spellcasting prisoners at any one time. It should also be noted that the prolonged exposure of the *antimagic field* here has leached into the very stones of the prison. It is said that bits of rock that have crumbled from the aged walls still carry the power to suppress magic for months even after they are taken from the island. Sale of such stones is rare and the price quite steep. As always, beware of imitations.

### Spell Secrets

When a caster's spells do not function, he might not automatically conclude that an *antimagic field* is to blame. Fortunately, a spellcaster of middling skill can instinctively detect whether such a spell is active around him.

Any creature with magical ability has a chance to sense if they are within an *antimagic field* by succeeding a Spellcraft check (DC 26). Success indicates the creature "feels" that magic will not function where it is standing due to the presence of another magic. The creature is free to move to another space and attempt the same skill check to see if that area is safe or not and so on.

Spellcasters who are especially adept at their craft might be able to use magic within their own *antimagic field*. The second spell secret highlights how a caster might bend the *field* in such a way that he stands within a bubble of normal space. This is especially useful if a worn magic item protects the caster from the annoying missile weapons being launched by his enemies.

Through great Concentration (DC 31), you can exclude yourself from the effects of an *antimagic field* of your own creation. You have no such control over another creature's *field*. Success indicates that you alone are immune to the *field's* effects **for that round only** (although you can make another Concentration check every round if desired). However, you may only cast spells that affect yourself because magic cannot travel outside of your space through the *field*.

There is an important distinction between suppressing magic and dispelling magic. The latter extinguishes magic entirely while the former merely delays it. Within an *antimagic field*, magic is still called upon by a spellcaster but the conjured energies disperse before they can take their true form—the energy is lost but still present. The third spell secret allows the caster of the *antimagic field* to hold that energy until it can be released to spectacular and dangerous effect.

When a spell is cast within an *antimagic field* of your creation, you can attempt to capture the energy that would otherwise harmlessly dissipate by succeeding a Spellcraft check (DC 26 + spell level). Success means that the spell's energies are trapped within a kind of arcane cocoon which hovers a few feet off the ground at the same spot the spell was cast. The cocoon, which has no physical form and can only be seen by you, can be held for as long as the *field* is in effect on that space. This requires a Concentration check (DC 26) every round after the first and counts as

***Continued on next page . . .***

## Behind the Spells: Antimagic Field

a move action (failing the check means the energies disperse as usual). When the area of the *antimagic field* is either dismissed or otherwise moved off of the spot where the cocoon is, the trapped energies explode to inflict Xd6 damage to any creature in that same space (X equals the level of the spell originally cast there). Only one spell can be cocooned and held at a time.

### Related Research

Considering the elaborate and nearly forgotten ritual necessary to erect a Kaltibaz-style prison, it comes as no surprise that there are only a handful of such facilities in existence (and only two of them widely known, Kaltibaz included). So how are evil and/or insane spellcasters curtailed without the imminent threat of *antimagic* lockdown? Well, one common answer is death by the locals who have grown tired of the caster's disregard for property and life. Situations like this one are just the thing for adventurers eager to make a name for themselves. However, if adventurers or the locals themselves are unwilling to commit to a pitched fight, they might invest in a pair of *antimagic manacles*. These special restraints are rather cost prohibitive which is why they are mostly used by large and wealthy cities.

### NEW MAGIC ITEM

#### *Antimagic Manacles*

This set of masterwork manacles is stamped with the arcane rune for abjuration (Knowledge (arcana) DC 10 to identify) and uses an amazing lock (Open Lock DC 40 to open). When a creature is locked within the manacles, the magic blankets the creature with an *antimagic field*. The creature cannot cast, or be the subject of, spells as long as the lock is secure. There is no duration for this power.

Moderate abjuration; CL 10th; Craft Wondrous Item, *antimagic field*; Price 180,200 gp.

As spellcasters refine their mastery over spells of destruction and morale, battlefield victories because less about who has more men and better tactics to who has more spellcasters. Even the most well-trained soldiers don't stand a chance against expertly placed spells such as *ice storm* or even the standard *fireball*. Even on a small scale (i.e. a group of adventurers), spellcasters can make the difference between victory or defeat. Those groups without such power either hire some or invest in an alchemical substance called spellbane powder. Carried in stoppered glass containers, this innocuous-looking white substance has helped to lay low many a spellcaster. Fortunately for them, the substance is difficult to produce so not every sword-slinger with a grudge can pick up a batch at the local market.

### NEW ALCHEMICAL ITEM Spellbane Powder

Through a demanding alchemical process involving iron filings and frog legs (among other bizarre components), the spellbane powder is born. One batch of powder weighs a single pound and is kept in a breakable container such as glass. When thrown at an opponent, the container shatters and the spellbane powder violently erupts up and outward in a brief explosion of whiteness. The powder covers the square it explodes in as well as covering a 5-foot radius around that spot. All living creatures within the area of effect that are capable of using spells or spell-like abilities must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 20) or find their magical ability suppressed for 1d4+4 rounds. If there is a creature within the exact center of the area (the square the powder explodes in), it receives a -2 to its saving throw. For every pound of spellbane powder used, the radius of the explosion increases by 5 feet but all other properties are unchanged.

Craft DC 35; Cost 60 gp/lb.

# Behind the Spells: Antimagick Field

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Blade Barrier

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is want to do. This time around, Maxolt draws back the curtain of swirling death that is *blade barrier*.

Before I start this issue, I'd like to take this opportunity to answer the question on every reader's lips. "Maxolt," I hear you saying. "Just how can *blade barrier* have a creator since it's a divine spell? Aren't these spells granted by the gods?" Yes and no. Like arcane magic, divine magic comes from a power that must be "tapped into," if you will. Arcane magic is called by the use of components and gestures while divine magic comes from knowing someone (albeit someone *extremely* powerful). In both cases, the actual spell is determined by the caster. The very first time a spell

is fashioned, whether arcane or divine, it is a spellcaster that does it. Divine spells are granted their *power* by the gods but not their form. Of course, the method of spell dissemination to the masses is very different between arcane and divine. Arcane spells are written down and proliferate to casters who then copy them and then (sometimes unwillingly) pass them on. Divine spells are given their final form by a deity and then knowledge of them is available to those divine spellcasters powerful enough to wield them. Essentially, the deity says, "Hey, this guy's spell idea is pretty neat.

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: Blade Barrier

Here's what it does when you cast it. Try it out amongst yourselves!" With all of that said, let's dive into *blade barrier*.

### The Creator

Over the many centuries I've lived, I've discovered that any good story with an elf hero (or heroine) has dark elves as the antagonists. This well known legend is no different. An elven cleric named Fehlanna Su'Vheen spent many of her venerable years amongst the human communities bordering the elven kingdom of Shiness. She spread the teachings of her goodly Sun deity to the any who would listen and many of the humans were swayed to those beliefs. Because of her actions, many elves considered Fehlanna an oddity. "Why waste your efforts on the humans?" she was once asked. Her answer is written in many texts of the Sun deity even to this day: "Does the Sun shine only on Shiness? Nor should its teachings be restricted." Smart woman.

Unbeknownst to the elves or humans, a large force of dark elves was massing to strike Shiness. Every night for a week, the drow slipped through the passages connecting the surface to their subterranean habitat and massacred one of the human villages bordering Shiness. Their plot to sow fear in the region as well as to preemptively stop the humans from aiding the surface elves was a success. No one was quite certain what was happening except for Fehlanna, who investigated the massacre sites carefully. On that fateful seventh night, Fehlanna was ready for her hated dark-skinned cousins. During her visit to the hamlet of Iyopa, the elven sun cleric prepared the humans for the long night ahead. There was no time to send to Shiness for aid and Fehlanna knew that drow spies were watching Iyopa from the rugged terrain around the ravine-nestled community. This meant that fleeing during the day would spur the drow to attack early. Even in the sunlight, the villagers would be no match for the dark elves' finely honed combat reflexes. So, Fehlanna helped the Iyopans set up inconspicuous traps throughout the hamlet as well as orderly routes for them to flee when the time came.

As expected, the drow poured into the hamlet from every direction. The Iyopans

acted as Fehlanna had instructed, running and screaming frantically from the scene. But the retreat was organized, the humans fleeing in opposite directions in two groups along the trade path running through the community. Many were laid low by effective drow sleep darts but many more escaped while the dark elves fell prey to the tripping and collapsing traps set up earlier in the day. Fehlanna cast a massive *daylight* spell which enveloped most of the area, further sending the dark elves into a maddening advance. Almost unconsciously, the drow swept toward the area of Iyopa partially shrouded from the light—where Fehlanna was waiting for them. Dozens of the evil invaders poured into a cul-de-sac just off the trade path outside Iyopa's perimeter. Fehlanna called upon her Sun god to block the entrance with an illuminated barrier of spinning destruction. The spell, prayed for that morning by the cleric, took the form of her favored weapon, the short sword. Blades of pure force erupted into existence behind the surprised drow, an intense golden radiance surrounding them.

The barrier blocked off the cul-de-sac and blinded the dark elves while Fehlanna pummeled them from above with her arrows. One drow flung himself at the barrier after a failed attempt to dispel it and his body was sliced into pieces. His seared remains splattered over his comrades, surprising the drow even more than they were (since the sacking of Iyopa was considered an easy task!). The human refugees were told to seek shelter in Shiness and warn the kingdom of the impending drow incursion. They did so but by the time an elven contingent was sent to support Fehlanna, the battle was long over. No sign of the elven cleric remained; the barrier of golden death remained active but its blades had ceased to spin. The curtain of force-blades drew aside when the elven commander approached and revealed the corpses of the cornered drow. Not one of the monsters who entered the cul-de-sac survived.

Fehlanna's fate, on the other hand, remains a mystery to this day. One commonly held belief is that she was slain by the other drow and her body taken to their subterranean city as a gruesome trophy. Coins and magic items alike have been offered to the adventuring

## Behind the Spells: Blade Barrier

group who can bring evidence of this fate to light. Another belief is that her spirit continues to watch over all good-aligned beings in the Iyopan area, appearing as a shimmering short sword of beautiful golden radiance. To make a long story short, the elven kingdom easily repulsed the drow invasion but, because Fehlantha was considered an oddity, she was never formally recognized for her heroic efforts in Iyopa. The deadly spell she created was never accepted by other elven clerics as it was not only used in defense of humans but deemed “quite inappropriate for elven grace.” Oh, isn’t the elven hierarchy’s predisposition for arrogance wonderful?

It’s a good thing that a human cleric named Kelb Tomatt came along. Kelb was a descendant of the Iyopan refugees and took a special interest in the legend of Fehlantha’s defense of the hamlet. A cleric of a goodly War deity, Kelb prayed for the knowledge of the elf’s spell and it was granted since the War and Sun deities (and their followers) had a good working relationship. The spell, however, was a bit different than the original, lacking the intense radiance or staying power of Fehlantha’s creation. Still, the *blade barrier* granted by the War deity is an effective combat spell. And I’m sure that the original *barrier of sun swords* spell can still be received from the Sun deity if a cleric of sufficient power were to pray for it.

### Spell Secrets

Before I get into the specifics for this section, I just want to remind everyone that since *blade barrier* is a force effect, don’t hesitate to use it against those Ethereal nasties. And if they’re too dumb to fly over or around it, then so much the better for you.

*Blade barrier*’s current form is a really one of simplicity. You create a curtain of spinning destruction and then sit back and see what happens. You gain some cover behind it too but unless you’ve got foes coming from another direction, it can get kind of boring. Not to worry! When Kelb Tomatt gained this spell from his War god, the deity unsurprisingly added an offensive back door use to it. To use this function requires a bit of magical manipulation but can be easily handled by a competent caster.

Once per round, you can direct one of the many blades that compose the *blade barrier* to fly from its position at a designated foe. To do this, you must succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 16). Failure indicates that the barrier is unable to comply with your wishes that round (you may try again next round). The target must be in a direct line from the barrier (either ahead or behind it) out to a maximum range of 60 feet. If you succeed a ranged attack, the blade of force inflicts 1d6+1 points of damage. However, there are only so many blades that can be removed from the wall before it loses integrity. You can only let fly one blade per two caster levels before the *blade barrier* disperses harmlessly.

There is also an interesting, rather extreme, last ditch maneuver one can attempt with *blade barrier*. This is a little something that I like to call “self destruct” and involves wholesale destruction of the barrier, sending the blades of force out in all directions. Maybe you’ve cornered a group of foes who must be taught a lesson. Or maybe you’ve been cornered behind your own *blade barrier* and want to go out on your own terms. Either way, this spell secret is one worth dying over.

Instead of dismissing the *blade barrier* before the duration expires, you can violently disperse the blades of force with a successful Spellcraft check (DC 20). The subsequent wild flying of blades not only inflicts 1d6 points of damage per three caster levels (Reflex save for half) but also releases a wave of pressure that may stun creatures in the area for 1d6 rounds (Fortitude save negates). The radius of the explosion (and thus its negative effects) is 30 feet.

## Behind the Spells: Blade Barrier

### Related Research

Besides creating the predecessor of the *blade barrier* spell, Fehlantha Su'Vheen's lost spell may have been the inspiration for the *sun blade* weapon. I've not been able to confirm this but it seems likely that a particularly capable smithy would create such an item if prop-

erly inspired by the tale. There's also talk of variant spells that conjure mobile dagger-size blades of force or that even pull weapons from enemy hands to use in a frighteningly real "blade barrier." But until I can dig up more information on these, I've enclosed the format that Fehlantha's original spell likely took.

### VARIANT SPELL: *Barrier of Sun Swords*

As the spell *blade barrier* but with the following exceptions...

Evocation [Force, Light]

**Level:** Clr 8, Good 8, Sun 8

**Effect:** Wall of whirling radiant blades up to 30 ft. long/level, or a ringed wall of whirling radiant blades with a radius of up to 10 ft. per two levels; either form 30 ft. high

**Duration:** 1 hour/level

An immobile, vertical curtain of radiant blades shaped of pure force and light springs into existence. Like *blade barrier*, the damage inflicting for passing through the wall is 1d6 points per caster level but with a maximum of 20d6 instead, with a Reflex save for half damage. In addition, the *barrier of sun swords* throws off a great amount of light equal to a *daylight* spell in a 120-ft. radius. Once per minute, you can have the *barrier* fire a ray of *searing light* (as the spell). You must be within 300 ft. of the *barrier* to activate this power and must be able to see the target you're having the wall fire at. Lastly, the *barrier of sun swords* will part like a curtain enough to allow any creature you deem as an ally to pass through it.

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Bless

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. These are the spells which, if on your PC's class list, will be taken as soon as possible. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is want to do. This time, Maxolt chats with us about the favorite low-level inspirational spell—*bless*.

**DISCLAIMER:** As I mentioned in *Behind the Spells: Blade Barrier*, divine spellcasters are just as capable of crafting new spells as arcane casters. The only difference is that the energy for the spell comes from a deity. It is the cleric or other divine spellcaster who determines how that energy is ultimately used. We'll have no arcane favoritism here.

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: Bless

### The Creator

Before today's realm became "civilized" (and I use that word loosely), the frontier between rural and urban was a dangerous place. Well, I suppose it still is today in some places but this isn't a course in social studies. A burgeoning city-state called Ang'loria took root in the west, spreading its borders into the Thorn Hills. The latter was an area dense with shrubbery-choked foothills and home to wandering monsters and savage humans (the two groups often used interchangeably in conversation). Ang'loria was ruled by a kindly priest named Panorius Ghevin. By all accounts a spry 70-something cleric of the Goddess of Protection, Panorius founded Ang'loria as a peaceful utopia. Violence was nothing new to the human but the constant fighting so common in those early centuries of humanity was something he could no longer tolerate. Ang'loria's boundaries expanded through diplomacy and acts of kindness. If a community on the city-state's frontier required aid, Panorius provided it even if that community was a declared enemy. After several instances of this help from Panorius' utopia, such communities would see the advantage of joining Ang'loria and abiding by its strict but fair laws of nonaggression.

So it was that Panorius ruled (or, as he put it, "presided") over the peaceful city-state for many years. The human eventually retired to a frontier village in Ang'loria's northeast quadrant. This area was particularly troubled by savage bands of human raiders. These primitives wanted nothing to do with civilization, much less having the intelligence to comprehend the word. So why retire to a location rife with conflict, you ask? Because that's the kind of man Panorius was. Even though he no longer held the rulership position of the city-state, having handed that off to the next ranking priest of the faith, Panorius was still determined to make a difference in the nation he helped to establish.

His new home was the small trade town of Crestin. The populace welcomed the former ruler of Ang'loria with open arms, eager for his personal assistance against the raiders. At first, Panorius did little more than advise the local mayor, carefully watching the attack pat-

terns and methods of the primitive attackers. Like all of Ang'loria's adult population, the men and women of Crestin were trained in the rudiments of self-defense. They held their own against the raiders but could never seem to drive them away indefinitely. Nearly every week saw a new attack on the town for no obvious reasons.

Panorius prayed on the situation, asking why these humans continually assaulted the unremarkable town. The answer from his Goddess directed the wizened cleric to a small farm just southeast of the town proper. After careful examination of strange markings on the trees and rocks surrounding the fields, Panorius ordered a section of the ground excavated. As the cleric suspected, the dig uncovered a corpse dressed in the same manner as the primitive humans. They continually attacked because Crestin was built on their burial grounds!

Once this fact was confirmed, Panorius was confident he could broker a peaceful solution with the aggressor tribe. Unfortunately, the cleric's discovery was not the only epiphany occurring in the area. The primitive humans' shaman had his own prayers answered by a malevolent deity known as the Beast. The god granted knowledge of how to use fear to increase the effectiveness of the humans' next assault on Crestin. The shaman fashioned blood-colored body paint and scrawled magical sigils on his warriors to induce fear in the defenders of Crestin.

In the meantime, Panorius had gathered together a peace envoy and led them into the wilderness to find the primitive tribe. The group included several acolytes of the Protection Goddess, a handful of Crestin's martial defenders, and carried one of the corpses excavated from the discovered burial ground. Unfortunately, Panorius was unaware of how grave (no pun intended) his situation was about to become, for a force of painted warriors was shadowing the group's movements.

The ambush was lightning fast but the well-trained group from Crestin reacted with calm determination. Calm, that is, until the magic from the body paint took hold of their minds. The mind-affecting magic was augmented by the blood-curdling cries of the savage humans as they pressed Panorius and his fellows

## Behind the Spells: Bless

toward a rocky precipice. When the cleric saw his companions succumbing to the fear and retreating from the primitives' brutal strikes, Panorius realized that a little magic was needed to set his friends back on the offensive. He started to call upon his Goddess when an enemy spear struck his shoulder. Fighting through the pain, Panorius spoke the following words, "Bless your faithful to fight through their fear and strike true against the aggressors."

Those words were the catalyst for today's *bless* spell, unchanged in its form and function throughout the centuries. Today's worshippers of the Protection deity sometimes use these same words in homage to the spell's creator. As for the battle, Panorius' spell proved effective in helping to drive back the savage humans and escaping the ambush. Unfortunately, Panorius knew diplomacy could no longer be an option after seeing the sigils of the Beast on the warriors. His deity and the Beast were at odds in the pantheon and there would be no peaceful resolution. Crestin continued to be raided and Panorius never recovered from his spear wound. Clerical magic could not seem to completely heal the Beast-enchanted weapon. The former ruler of Ang'loria died barely a week before his successor decided that the Crestin situation wasn't worth the pain and expense of a drawn out conflict.

The primitives reclaimed their land after the residents retreated deep into safer territory. It is rumored that Panorius' body, despite his accomplishments in life, was left in the ground adjacent to the graveyard he discovered. That same rumor tells that his body was unearthed and then cut into pieces, his parts decorating the corners of the savages' claimed land. Today, the church of the Protection deity maintains a standing, generous reward for any or all of Panorius' corpse.

### Spell Secrets

You wouldn't think that a spell like *bless* has any secret manipulations given its tight focus. Well, you'd be wrong. Every spell has some hidden alteration the caster can activate. The first involves changing the spell's focus from boosting the mind to instead boosting the body.

Instead of instilling a morale bonus to attack rolls and saves against fear, the *bless* spell can instill another type of bonus (at your discretion) which grants different effects. The four other choices are below. The swapping of bonus types does not alter the spell's duration but does require an easy Spellcraft check (DC 11). Failing the check means the spell functions as it normally does.

- Competence bonus: +1 to attack rolls and +1 to all Dexterity-based skill checks
- Enhancement bonus: +1 to ability checks (choose one ability)
- Insight bonus: +1 to both attack and damage rolls
- Resistance bonus: +1 on all saving throws and +2 on saves against a chosen energy type

The second spell secret addresses only one facet of the bonus granted by *bless*. When facing particularly terrifying adversaries, the caster can increase the saving throw bonus against fear to his allies by channeling his own vibrant personality.

Upon casting the *bless* spell, you can opt to increase the saving throw bonus against fear effects. First, you must possess a positive Charisma bonus. Second, you must succeed a Concentration check (DC 16). If you succeed, your Charisma bonus is added to the save for all of your allies. This bonus can only be maintained through concentration, allowing only move actions to be performed.



## Behind the Spells: Bless

### Related Research

The *bless* spell has been around for a very, very long time and yet, for all those years, it has birthed very few related magics. I suppose that speaks to the spell's focused purpose and thus a lack of interest in tweaking it. "If it's not broke..." and all that. There is one variant which I can share with you though. It's fairly new (OK, new to me is a few decades old) and created by a cleric friend of mine. He's a half-dragon named Veltran who thought that *bless* could use a close-combat variant. When one uses this new spell, *mutable bless*, the bonuses can be transferred from one ally to another and be increased! This becomes especially useful when fighting in an enclosed area, like a hallway, and the front-line warrior goes down. Since the magic is still on his person, the caster can transfer the energy to the next ally in line. I thought it rather clever. Nice work, Veltran!

### VARIANT SPELL —

#### *Mutable Bless*

As the spell *bless* with the following exceptions...

**Level:** Clr 2, Pal 2

You can shift the morale bonus granted by the spell from one ally to another and they will stack. Only one transfer can be affected per round and is considered a move action. The two targets of the transfer must each be within 10 feet of you (but not necessarily to each other). The maximum bonus that can be transferred to one ally can not exceed half your caster level. The bonus can be transferred even from an unconscious (but not dead) ally as long as the spell's duration has not elapsed.

In the interests of public safety, I feel the need to warn you about the Beast deity from the creator story above. While that tale is a few millennia old, I can assure you that the Beast lives on to this day. Cults still devoted to that malevolent god hide their loyalties, performing dark rites in dank cellars and secluded rural locales. It's possible that the Beast's power was subsumed over the centuries by another more powerful deity, perhaps one of violence or destruction. But the worshippers find their spells continue to be granted so something of the Beast survives.

### NEW ITEM —

#### *War Paint of the Beast*

Imbued with a mind-affecting enchantment, this crimson paint must be applied to bear skin in the form of runes attain maximum effectiveness. Sigils of the Beast are always chaotic jagged lines, never curved. Once applied, the magic radiates a constant *cause fear* aura which affects all creatures within 10 feet that are facing the painted warrior. The *war paint's* magic lasts for 1 hour. One container of the paint is good for six applications on a Medium size creature (add/subtract two applications for every size smaller/greater than Medium). Once a creature is exposed to the paint's effects (whether he succeeds his save or not), he is immune to repeated exposures for 24 hours.

Faint necromancy; CL 4th; Craft Wondrous Item, *cause fear*; Price 1,200 gp per container; Weight 1 lb.

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS Burning Hands

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. These are the spells which, if on your PC's class list, will be taken as soon as possible. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. This time around, Maxolt shows us that truth is oft times stranger than fiction with a favorite incendiary spell—*burning hands*.

## The Creator

Forget about spells for a moment. Yeah, I know what this series is called but just humor me. Ready? Now, say the words “burning hands” aloud to yourself. What do you think of first? If you said something along the lines of “sounds like a medical condition” then you're not far off

from the origins of the spell of the same name. The story of *burning hands* begins beneath the Sapphire Forest of the elves. While the forest has been reduced in size and the elves long since moved on, the collection of blue-veined leafy trees still bears the name today. This tale takes place when the forest was in its prime.

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: Burning Hands

Seems the elves of this time period were having a problem with troglodytes. Sirok, the chief cleric and leader of the local trog band, wanted something the elves were guarding. Specifically, a mythical spring rumored to grant one wish to any creature who bathed in its waters during the full moon. When the troglodytes captured one of the elven rangers, the subsequent interrogation confirmed that rumor. The problem, of course, was how to get through the elves and to the spring. No easy feat, indeed.

To discover a solution, Sirok thought it best to commune with his dark god Wuzall. The troglodyte starved himself for three days, as was proper etiquette, before prostrating himself on the fetid watery floor of the sacrificial chamber. Now, I don't know if any of this is true, but supposedly Sirok asked specifically for a way to defeat the elven mages who so often thwarted every trog advance. Now, elves have never been known for their hardness and elven spellcasters doubly so. What, Sirok prayed, could he be granted that would target the elven mages' weakness?

The answer came (again, this whole story smacks of trog propaganda) when a blinding flash of green radiance split the troglodyte cleric's altar in half. An avatar of Wuzall himself is said to have risen from the sundered stone and spoke to his servant, "Arise, Sirok, and accept this gift from your lord and master." The avatar handed the cleric a rather plain looking waterskin. Plain on the outside, perhaps, but on the inside was a vile poison which was to be poured into the lake that served as the elves' water supply. The poison was to be delivered on the morning of the day before the next full moon. After this was done, Wuzall instructed Sirok to take every one of his followers and attack on full moon night to gain access to the spring of wishes. Well, the time came soon enough and Sirok himself poured the viscous red goop into Sapphire Forest's largest body of water. The poison dispersed seemingly without a trace and Sirok successfully returned to his subterranean lair without being discovered.

The first part of Wuzall's plan worked perfectly. The god's poison infected every elf that ingested it. While this meant nothing for most of goodly humanoids, it meant trouble for their

arcane spellcasters. Whenever an elven mage began the somatic component of spellcasting, the poison activated. Most of the casters experienced searing pain in the fingers and palms accompanied by swelling and an intense redness. As a result of the pain and inability to manipulate their digits, spells failed to come to fruition. News of the problem, "the burning hands plague" as some elves referred to it, swept through the community. By nightfall, only a handful of arcane spellcasters could work their magics. And then, right on schedule, the troglodytes attacked.

The smelly reptilians poured from newly dug tunnels and caught the elves almost totally by surprise as they struggled to deal with their mages' crippling malady. Unfortunately for Sirok's people, elven martial prowess is on the same level as their magical ability. The well-trained elves organized quickly and, even without arcane support, effectively mounted a counterattack in short order. The trogs had superior numbers but it was only a matter of time before the finely-honed tactics of the elves nullified that advantage.

Meanwhile, like any troglodyte leader worth his salt, Sirok maintained his distance from the front lines and worked his way secretly toward the spring of wishes. Accompanied by a trusted handful of acolytes, Sirok's group reached the spring just after midnight. The few elven guards stationed during this special time of the month dispatched several of the acolytes before falling. Elven reinforcements were heard moving toward the spring so Sirok moved quickly into the spring's pool, speaking the following, "I wish all of my kind could gain Wuzall's poison." While the cleric's wish was to have waterskins like the one his god gave him given to every troglodyte tribe, the result was quite different.

It seems that the same whimsical nature of the *wish* spell was also present in the spring's magic. No waterskins full of poison appeared to Sirok's brethren. In fact, no troglodytes were affected except for Sirok's own decimated tribe. The cleric and his remaining three acolytes returned underground to find only a third of their entire invading force had survived. But these survivors had been changed, although they didn't realize it for some time. To this day, any descendant of Sirok's tribe car-

## Behind the Spells: Burning Hands

ries an added power to his stench ability—the power to interrupt arcane spellcasters that succumb to their stench (see “Related Research” below for details).

As for the elves, they saw to their dead and encapsulated their lake with a shell of thorny vines only other elves could access. More injured than their people was their pride. How could the troglodytes have nearly taken control of their settlement, they wondered? And what will our fellows think of us when we tell them that a case of “burning hands” stopped out spellcasters? No, this incident had to be hidden. To that end, a mage on the community council named Alaius Veroll suggested that the name of the plague be applied to something more positive. “That way,” he explained, “no one will be able to discern the true nature of the term.” Thus was born the *burning hands* spell. Alaius took inspiration from the very disease his kind was exposed to to fashion what is today one of the most used novice-level offensive spells in existence.

### Spell Secrets

When using *burning hands* against your foes, you might not always want to burn everything he’s carrying to a crisp. In the same vein, if used in the midst of a melee, you certainly don’t want to harm your own companions if you don’t have a clear shot for the spell’s cone effect. With some experience, neither problem proves prohibitive.

If you can cast conjuration spells of 2nd-level or higher, you are able to target specific creature types with the flames from your *burning hands* (use the *bane* special ability description for creature type choices). This same knowledge also allows you to choose whether or not the flames will damage flammable items. But in order to target a specific creature type *and* not damage flammable items with the same casting, you must succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 21).

There comes a time in every spellcaster’s young life when he becomes surrounded by

the enemy. Some foes have the numbers to simply break through your group’s front lines to get to the caster. Others are cagey enough to hide minions in the shadows that can jump on the rear-guard spellcasters with surprise. That’s why a wizard or sorcerer with *burning hands* must keep this spell secret in mind. The ability to shoot fire in two directions, even at reduced damage, might mean the difference between life and death.

Instead of a cone effect, you can separate the flames between each of your hands to form two lines. After a Spellcraft check (DC 16) is succeeded, you can use each hand to shoot lines of fire at the customary 15 ft. range. The damage is calculated the same but is then divided by two (round down), half the total being inflicted by each hand. As always, targets receive a Reflex saving throw for half damage.

Besides spewing flames to injure a foe, a spellcaster might be able to use the flames to instead cover a hasty retreat. A sudden wall of swirling flame should give any creature pause even if that wall doesn’t last long.

By succeeding a Spellcraft check (DC 16), you can temporarily use the flames from *burning hands* to produce a wall of flames within 15 feet of you. The magical flames swirl like in a 5-foot wide and 10-foot high area and last for only one round. A creature moving through the thin wall of flames takes 1d4 points of fire damage. The wall provides concealment from one side to the other.

### Related Research

Even though the elves of the Sapphire Forest did their best to take focus off of the poison they were exposed to, there are some historically-minded (alright, nosey) people like myself who will always discover the truth. And while the specifics of the poison’s effects are muddled by time, not to mention the

## Behind the Spells: Burning Hands

specifics of its composition, one variant has surfaced in the last few years. Searing hand poison is likely close to the original but not as powerful.

### NEW MAGICAL POISON

#### Searing Hand

This is an ingested poison (DC 19) which harms only arcane spellcasters. The poison remains in the body for 24 hours. If the initial saving throw fails, the infected spellcaster's hands turn red and swell painfully, inflicting 1d4 Constitution damage. Secondary damage is the same as the first. This special poison also has an added affect. When a spellcaster attempts to use arcane magic, he must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 15) or the spell fails. This effect lasts for 24 hours. The price per dose of searing hand poison is 2,500 gp.

Burning things and creatures can come in quite handy. Just ask any adventurer. So, when a spellcaster isn't available, sometimes you have to make do. That's where *gloves of burning* come in!

### NEW ITEM

#### *Gloves of Burning*

This pair of white silk gloves is embroidered with violet runes around the wrist and one on each knuckle. Since the runes are actually flowery arcane symbols for "flame" and "heat", someone can recognize them with a successful Decipher Script (DC 23) or Knowledge (arcana) (DC 12) check. *Gloves of burning* allow the wearer to use the *burning hands* spell as a 4th-level caster. The effect inflicts 4d4 damage and allows a Reflex save (DC 14) for half damage. In addition, the *gloves* grant a +2 resistance bonus against all fire effects.

Minor evocation; CL 4th; Craft Wondrous Item, *burning hands*; Price 5,990 gp

I'd be lying if I said I didn't believe the legend about Sirok's tribe's descendants gaining an added perk to their stench power. Although I've never experienced the stench personally, my brother's cousin's son's former party member claims to have fallen prey to the arcane-hampering stink. How can you ask for a more trusted source than that?

### NEW SPECIAL ATTACK

#### Improved Stench

Replace the troglodyte's stench special attack with the following (which increases the creature's CR to 2; these troglodytes also receive the Ability Focus [Improved Stench] feat as a bonus)...

**Improved Stench (Su):** When a troglodyte is angry or frightened, it secretes an oily, musk-like chemical that nearly every form of animal life finds offensive. All living creatures (except troglodytes) within 30 feet of a troglodyte must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or be sickened for 10 rounds. In addition, any sickened creature that attempts to cast arcane magic must succeed on the same save or have their spell fail due to the supernatural property of the stench. The save DCs are Constitution-based.

Creatures that successfully save cannot be affected by the same troglodyte's stench for 24 hours. A delay poison or neutralize poison spell removes the effect from the sickened creature. Creatures with immunity to poison are unaffected, and creatures resistant to poison receive their normal bonus on their saving throws.

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Cone of Cold

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. These are the spells which, if on your PC's class list, will be taken as soon as possible. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. For this issue, Maxolt relates the sorrowful tale behind this most chilling of spells—*cone of cold*.

### **The Creator**

Not long after my birth, a human named Wrone Kida created a name for himself by fighting in the Quicksilver Conflict. Using sword and spell, Wrone defeated the clones formed by a malevolent magical entity. As I recall, quicksilver was the name given to the vibrant silvery goo that was released from an

ancient subterranean prison. This extraplanar intelligence coated creatures with its form and then spawned replicas that were linked telepathically. Together, the quicksilver clones attempted to take over the realm of King Eltaban (for the gods' know what sort of grander scheme ahead). Wrone fought on the front lines many times and was instrumental in

by Bret Boyd



## Behind the Spells: Cone of Cold

the final battle which saw the resealing of the quicksilver in the earth.

Following the Quicksilver Conflict, King Eltaban asked the fighter-mage to stay at court and serve as military advisor. Wrone gracefully declined the offer. Now in the later middle years of life, the human felt the aches and pains of his age and wanted only to return home to his family. Fate, however, had other plans for the human. Haelburg, a town in the highlands of Scaertia, marked the halfway point of his journey. This town had a problem; one that their adventurer-in-residence could not seem to solve. So, at the request of Haelberg's council, the halfling rogue Varnet asked Wrone for his help as the human was waiting anyway for the next caravan to depart. Apparently, Haelburg suffered from weekly attacks by trolls. The gangly creatures displayed unusual cunning in their assaults and, in addition to inflicting casualties, stole construction materials and implements.

Never one to shy away from a cry for help, Wrone agreed to see what he could do. However, the fighter-mage had been feeling ill at ease since his last days of the Quicksilver Conflict. Nightmares plagued him constantly and his body was noticeably sorer than usual, reacting noticeably slower. Despite these ailments, or perhaps because of them, Wrone didn't mind stretching his muscles a bit before the long ride to his homeland. The night before Varnet was to lead him to the troll's lair, Wrone created a new spell appropriate for the encounter—"flame cone." *Fireballs* were all well and good but this new spell would allow the fighter-mage to unleash fire at trolls over a greater area and even ones close by without risking injury to himself.

Now, the rest of the story is well documented, even to the point of being immortalized in the bardic song "Silver and Cold." (I can't carry much of a tune, so I won't try and sing it for you.) The next morning, Varnet led Wrone into the foothills north of town. The trolls did little to hide their passing and the lair was easy enough to find. No need to cover their tracks for who in their right mind, after all, would go looking for a troll lair? Together, cloaked by *invisibility*, the duo snuck past the guards and into the smelly caves. Their objective was to find out why the trolls were steal-

ing building supplies. Perhaps that would provide a clue as to how to prevent future attacks. As they searched for the mystery project, Wrone felt his body grow more sluggish. The human also thought he heard faint whispers in his head. At one point, he dared to turn around and ask Varnet if he had said something.

The halfling scowled and shook his head. Wrone continued to lead them deeper into the troll's lair. At each intersection, the human never faltered. It was as if he knew exactly which way to turn, almost being pulled by an unseen force. And then they discovered their goal—constructed within a large cavern deep beneath the earth. Carefully placed sigils of magic decorated the wood and stone dome in the cavern's center. The sigil—a wavy line bisecting an oval—was like a smack in the face to Wrone. This was the same marking that decorated the summoning well used to release the quicksilver that started the months' old Conflict! As Wrone had quietly feared before heading home, a handful of quicksilver clones must have escaped destruction and fled. Now, here they were on the brink of summoning that evil goo again.

Unfortunately, Wrone also realized what had been happening to him since the final battle in the Quicksilver Conflict. During the fighting, the human had been briefly exposed to the quicksilver itself, a bit of the stuff spraying onto his bare arm. Wrone had made certain to wipe the silvery paste away quickly but some of it must have entered his body and been spreading ever since, insidiously merging with his form. That explained why his body felt less and less his own over the last few weeks. And how else could he have discovered the trolls' summoning well so easily? While the human was having his epiphany, however, a few nearby trolls had begun to sniff in the duo's direction.

"Time to go," Varnet whispered. Wrone made no move to leave. He knew the construction, which was nearly complete, had to be stopped. Destroying the trolls would be the easiest way but even as he prepared to cast his new flame cone spell the human noticed the tell-tale silvery sparkle in the trolls' eyes. The hushed voices in Wrone's head erupted into discordant cries and the fighter-mage could not

## Behind the Spells: Cone of Cold

gather the concentration necessary to begin casting. When the trolls drew too close for Varnet's liking, the rogue activated the flame enchantment on his short sword and expertly forced the creatures away from Wrone. The halfling called for the human to cast a spell as the surprised trolls prepared to regroup and retaliate. But Wrone could barely speak, much less cast a spell.

Would the quicksilver be able to bolster the troll's susceptibility to fire, he struggled to recall through the telepathic interference. His friends had seen something similar happen during the Conflict. Inspiration hit him as the trolls pressed Varnet back toward the fighter-mage. There were confirmed reports after the Conflict which said the quicksilver's mental processes could be disrupted by cold. Wrone knew the halfling's dagger was enchanted with a frost effect and called on him to use it. Varnet chanced a questioning glance at the human but obligingly drew the weapon and prepared to throw.

"Not at them," Wrone struggled to cry out. "At me!"

Confused, but not enough to doubt the man's experienced combat judgement, Varnet launched the dagger into the human's upper leg. The frigid magic of the dagger's enchantment coursed into Wrone, temporarily breaking the mental hold of the quicksilver. The human immediately began casting his flame cone spell. He could feel the quicksilver try again to disrupt his thoughts but it was not strong enough by far. At the end of his spell, Wrone reversed the effect to fire a cone of cold instead of fire. The frigid blast hit the troll charge and, as one, the monsters staggered backward, the quicksilver no longer controlling their actions. Varnet dodged a claw of the one troll outside the cone's area and headed for the exit. He turned at the cavern's mouth when he did not hear Wrone following. The fighter-mage shook his head at the rogue, saying, "I'm as good as dead." He held up his right arm and Varnet saw the limb was coated in a brilliant silvery sheen. "I'll finish this," Wrone said calmly. "Just make sure the town slays the rest of them. Cold first, then flame."

The rogue nodded in understanding before disappearing into the shadows. He was easily able to sneak out of the lair while trolls sham-

bled with purpose toward the summoning well cavern. Upon his return, Varnet recounted his tale first to the council and then to anyone who would listen. The rest is history. Wrone was given credit for casting the first "cone of cold" (although other mages had to pen the spell using Varnet's description) and the trolls were eventually destroyed by the town's forces. In a token effort to locate Wrone's body, a few Haelburg residents tried to get to the chamber of the summoning well. The entrance to that area was blocked by a massive rockslide. It is unknown whether these trolls were the last vestiges of the quicksilver to escape the Quicksilver Conflict or not. What is agreed upon is that Wrone's efforts, especially his *cone of cold* spell, ensured that the quicksilver threat ended for Scaertia.

### Spell Secrets

The basic formula for the spell *cone of cold* allows for manipulation to both the "cone" and "cold" parts. This involves tweaking the somatic and verbal components, respectively, unless a different material component is used. Sometimes when a cone is just too dangerous to use in combat, a ray effect hits the spot nicely (pun intended).

If a caster wishes to alter the shape of the *cone of cold* spell, he either must substitute a material component of approximate shape (i.e. a glass rod for a ray, or a crystal ball (nonmagical of course) for a burst or spread effect) or succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 20). In either case, the damage caused by the spell remains the same and a Reflex save is allowed. A *ray of cold* necessitates a ranged touch attack (maximum range of 60 feet) and a *burst of cold* would be a close range spell and affect a 30-ft. radius around the target. Whether or not the caster changes the shape of the spell, he can also choose to alter the damage from cold to another energy type. He must attempt a Spellcraft check (DC 20) or replace the crystal or glass cone composition with straw (fire), sulfur (acid), copper (electrical), or bone (sonic).

## Behind the Spells: Cone of Cold

Since *cone of cold* deals with the instantaneous expulsion of extreme cold, it is possible to use the spell in ways besides damaging

other creatures. By uniquely channeling the cold energy into ground, water, or air, different benefits can be gained.

When the spellcaster discharges a *cone of cold* in a certain manner, other effects occur depending on the medium the energy is released into. For any of the three substances—ground, water, or air—he need only be capable of casting transmutation spells of 5th level or greater to achieve these results. Consult the listings below for details. For this spell secret, the cone-shaped component is not required.

**Touched Substance:** Ground

**Effect:** The earth in a 60-ft.-radius around the caster (and to a depth of one foot per caster level) freezes instantly. The affected ground is granted a hardness rating of 10 and possesses no warmth whatsoever. Liquids spilled or otherwise placed on the ground do not begin to evaporate for the duration. Digging is next to impossible without magical aid as the ground is now akin to steel (30 hit points per inch of thickness).

**Duration:** 2 rounds per level

**Touched Substance:** Water

**Effect:** 10 cubic feet per level of water is turned to ice by your touch. This is a shapeable area. Characters walking on ice must spend 2 squares of movement to enter a square covered by ice and the DC for Balance and Tumble checks increases by +5.

**Duration:** 1 minute per level

**Touched Substance:** Air

**Effect:** A 30-ft.-radius of bluish mist forms around the target area (Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)). As a move action, you can direct the mist to move at a rate of 10 feet per round. The wispy cloud is extremely cold, dealing 1d6 points of lethal damage per round of exposure (no save). In addition, a character must make a Fortitude save (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. Those wearing metal armor or coming into contact with very cold metal are affected as if by a *chill metal* spell.

**Duration:** 1 round per 2 levels

# Behind the Spells: Cone of Cold

## Related Research

Over the centuries since *cone of cold's* proliferation through arcane circles (and subsequent co-opting for worshippers of Water deities), several spellcasters have tried to capitalize on the intense magical cold created by the spell. One attempt created a useful spell called *frigid enchantment*. This spell comes in handy when unexpectedly encountering hostile fire-using beasts. Your allies will thank you after the threat is extinguished!

### NEW SPELL

#### *Frigid Enchantment*

Transmutation

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 5

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Target:** Up to one weapon (or fifty grouped projectiles) per level

**Duration:** 1 minute/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates (harmless, object)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes (harmless, object)

This spell does just what it says, effectively granting the *frost* enchantment on many weapons. You can't cast this spell on a natural weapon. A monk's unarmed strike is considered a weapon, and thus it can be enhanced by this spell. In addition, the wielder can use his affected weapon as if it had the *icy burst* enchantment for one round per two caster levels. The usage of this extra power need not be on consecutive rounds. (For example, a 10th-level sorcerer can cast *frigid enchantment* on up to 10 weapons. The wielders of these weapons can opt to increase the power from *frost* to *icy burst* but only for five of the rounds during the entire duration.)

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Cure Wounds

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### **The Creator**

The beginning of this class of spell's tale is a bit broad but bear with me. After the gods created the world, the pantheon as a whole decided to take a step back. The creatures and plants seeded by divine hands were allowed to grow, flourish, interact, and die as befit them. Humanoids, possessing the most enlightened minds on the globe, asked the basic questions

of existence amongst themselves as the early centuries wore on. During this time, some civilized humanoids unearthed the secrets of arcane magic. They learned how to draw upon the ambient energies of the world through special rituals of word, action, and materials. Arcane power held obvious possibilities for those intelligent enough to harness it. All of this was well and good until the more powerful of these spellcasters began to attract

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followers. I'm not talking acolytes; I'm talking bona fide worship here. Retinues of creatures would mass around these mages in the hopes of either gaining the power to cast spells themselves or, at the very least, benefit in some way from their "master's" good will for services rendered or items given. In effect, arcane spellcasters were assuming the roles of gods themselves. Clearly, such a situation could not go unchecked.

Knowledge of the gods was widely known but displays of their power were all too sparse. The granting of a miracle here, the appearance of an avatar there; nothing that attracted widespread adoration like the flashy magics of arcane casters. It's no secret that the gods gain much of their power through worship (encompassing everything from fervent prayers to mere lip service). By this time, worship was definitely headed in the wrong direction as far as the pantheon was concerned. But what to do about this phenomenon? The answer was surprisingly simple. If mortals felt empowered by or drawn to magical power, then the gods would offer the same. The pantheon decided to structure divine magic a bit differently than arcane. Prospective clerics needn't learn obtuse rituals or gather bric-a-brac to cast a spell. All they would need would be faith (surely, an enticing lower bar for spellcasting).

To promote awareness of their new gift to the mortals, they decided to spearhead the effort with both a useful and visual spell—one that allows healing by touch (in this case, *cure light wounds*)! One deity, however, was less than thrilled with the banner spell: the god of death, Jelluk. He and his followers (not to mention his many undead servants) had virtually no use for any type of cure spell. The pantheon deliberated on Jelluk's cry of "unfair treatment" and eventually reached a compromise. The spell would retain its effects under the original parameters but now include a necromantic pattern which allowed it to be reversible. As a result, the *cure light wounds* spell could find use by any divine spellcaster no matter their moral tendencies and, most importantly, came under the school of necromancy thanks to the new configuration. This latter point was actually the intended goal of Jelluk the whole time. The death god knew that, even without this new spell available to

his followers, mortals would be even more inclined to throw themselves into dangerous circumstances since their allies had the power to heal their wounds. More foolhardy mortals inevitably made for a status quo of dead mortals despite the new spell. Oh, no, reversibility of *cure* spells was just an added bonus. For you see, Jelluk's added necromantic pattern allowed for every casting of the spell, no matter its form (healing or harming) to pay some amount of lip service to the death god. Each of these spells thus drew a very minute amount of energy from him with a reciprocal amount of "worship" returned (albeit unknowingly from the caster).

To keep secret this "pseudo-worship," Jelluk created a complex network of energy conduits around his planar home. When these bits of worship-power reached his realm, the conduit system absorbed and dispersed them to predefined locations. In the process, the energy was converted back into tiny bits of necromantic power—nothing that could be easily traced even by a deity's prying eyes, mind you. Use of *cure* spells over the many centuries has added up to quite a bit of hoarded necromantic power for Jelluk. So just what is the god doing with it? Several theories have been bandied about by mortal minds, two of which have been verified. The first is that some of the energy is creating and maintaining a number of "lich lords" whose forms do not require phylacteries and possess increased vitality and power. Jelluk always had a fondness for gnolls and the two lich lords encountered were of this variety. The second use of necromantic energy has taken the form of black pools tucked within the Ethereal Plane. Such pools are prized by necromancers and intelligent undead as their waters harm the living as much as they heal the undead. Other possible uses for this energy are limited only by the death god's cunning (which, as you can see, is considerable).

When the first lich lord was uncovered and fought only a few years back, focus on this apparently new and unique form of undead was extreme. It didn't take long for questioning clerics to bring the undead's odd nature to godly ears which prompted closer investigation of the creature's abode and subsequent discovery of an energy conduit. When news

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spread to the pantheon at large of Jelluk's treachery, all *cure* spells were immediately brought under the school of conjuration—unknowing casters would no longer power such necromantic atrocities! When the gods then began to trace the other conduits to their hidden destinations, Jelluk shattered the network rather than allow all of his creations to be destroyed. Afterward, the gods of good angrily demanded an immediate reconfiguring of *cure* spells to draw power from the Positive Material Plane so the spells could damage undead creatures. Naturally, it did not take long for Jelluk to introduce his own version—*inflict* spells—to counter the now-irreversible nature of the new *cure* spells.

Such is the insidious background of the *cure* spells. I encourage adventurers everywhere to be cautious when uncovering healing scrolls from old tombs and dungeons. It was not terribly long ago that the gods switched these spells from necromancy to conjuration. And although the secret conduit system of Jelluk's is no more, I'd hate for a divine spellcaster to get into trouble with his god by offering even a tiny bit of worship to the god of death by accident.

### Spell Secrets

Once upon a time, I sat in the corner of a tavern waiting for one of my companions to return from a shopping spree. It was here that I witnessed the first spell secret for *cure wounds* used. If you're guessing the establishment was one of those seedy locales best known for heavy booze and even heavier brawling then you've hit the mark. When this night's fight broke out, a cleric of some goodly deity cast what I thought was a healing spell on his companion *before* that person entered the fight. Intrigued, I worked my way closer to the ruckus. The "healed" man called for a stop to the fight and then, naturally, had to retreat from a knife that just grazed his cheek. But as the attacker drew back for another strike, the minor slash on his victim healed shut before his very eyes. The knife wielder dropped his weapon and fled the scene, assuming that the other man had some kind of regenerative powers (or was some other creature altogether!). After the aborted brawl, I spoke with the cleric who cast the spell. He

explained how he had tweaked a simple *cure* spell to extend over a short duration and act only when the target was damaged. Interesting and dramatic! If nothing else, such a subtle manipulation to this classic set of spells frees the cleric up for other combat tasks.

Instead of curing damage already inflicted on the target, you can imbue an uninjured creature with rapid healing potential for a short time. When you cast a *cure* spell, succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 15 + spell level), and target an uninjured creature, the magic of your spell acts as "fast healing 1" for a number of rounds equal to the number of hit points rolled for to heal. [Example: a 4th-level cleric uses this spell secret on his fighter companion before a fight. He casts *cure light wounds*, succeeds his Spellcraft check (DC 16), and rolls a 5 to make a total of 9 hit points that would normally be healed. This means that his companion receives fast healing 1 for 9 rounds.]

The advanced version of this spell secret allows you to boost the fast healing to 2, 3, or even 4 hit points healed per round. The process is the same but the difficulty increases. For every point of fast healing above 1 you want, the base Spellcraft DC increases by 5 (DC 20 + spell level for fast healing 2, etc.). In addition, the duration of the fast healing is now divided by the new fast healing number. [Example: A 12th-level cleric uses this spell secret on his rogue companion but wants to give him fast healing 3. He casts *cure serious wounds*, succeeds his Spellcraft check (DC 27), and rolls a total of 28 hit points that would normally be healed. This means that his companion receives the fast healing 3 ability for 9 rounds (3 divided by 28, rounded down).

In any of these instances, the fast healing power is considered a spell-like ability and this spell secret is usable with any of the *cure wounds* spells. This spell secret is not applicable against undead creatures.

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You can attune your *cure wounds* spell to better heal a specific damage type. After succeeding a Spellcraft check (DC 15 + spell level), you decide what damage type you wish to cure with your spell—piercing, slashing, bludgeoning, acid, cold, electrical, fire, or sonic. Once attuned, the spell can only heal damage of this type but does so at an increased efficiency. Instead of the rolled hit points adding 1 point per caster level, the roll adds 2 points per caster level (with maximums also doubled). This spell secret may require a bit more bookkeeping than normal but a cleric character can truly shine when he knows an ally has been severely injured from a specific source. A spell using this secret cannot heal hit points incurred from any other sources of damage besides the one it is attuned to.

[Example: During a battle, the party's monk took several blows from the clubs of attacking fire giants as well as being at the center of a *fireball* attack. The cleric wants to treat the monk's injuries but knows that the giants' clubs inflicted far more damage than the *fireball*. To this end, the 9th-level cleric attunes his *cure critical wounds* spell appropriately. After succeeding his Spellcraft check (DC 19), he decides to attune his spell to bludgeoning damage. This was a good idea since the monk took 36 points of damage from the clubs and only 4 from the *fireball*. The cleric's player rolls a total of 20 points to be healed and adds 18 more points for the caster level (2 points/caster level!). This gives us a total of 38 points. Remember that only the attuned damage is healed which means that the 35 points of bludgeoning damage is completely healed, leaving only the 4 points from the fire damage. Not bad considering that the number of points healed via the spell's normal use would have only been 29, leaving our poor monk down by 11 points instead of only 4.]

When you *cure* someone's wounds, the spell's energy is suffused throughout the target's body, healing multiple wounds equally if more than one exists. The source of a wound is immaterial to its healing. But whatever happened to the old phrase: "The right tool for the right job"? *Cure wounds* spells are the mainstay of healing for adventurers everywhere so you'd think that some specialization would have crept into the conjuration school by now. Nope. However, there is a spell secret out there which better focuses a *cure* spell because such specialization would be, as a wise man once said, "good for what ails ya."

### Related Research

As seen in the creator story above, today's *cure* spells are powered by positive energy. What isn't widely known is that the goddess of healing, in response to Jelluk's treachery, created similar havens for her own followers. Given the scope of the death god's machinations, the other gods did not argue against the obvious counterbalancing nature of the healing goddess' creations. These areas are referred to simply as "sacred waters." Each is a pool blessed by the goddess to impart healing upon any non-evil creature with its waters. Such pools are well protected and spread across the realms, although only a few dozen are rumored to exist in total. Jelluk has already formed several secret task forces of undead to find these pools and either taint or destroy them.



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### PLACE OF POWER Sacred Waters

These pools of water are sacred to any deity of healing or one that includes positive energy in its portfolio. Each *sacred waters* pool is a perfect circle of water measuring between two and ten feet in diameter (the depth of each is 1.5 times the diameter). The smaller versions are typically found as fountains within already established churches or inside homes of the more powerful faithful. Larger versions are more prevalent in rural locations within remote mountain valleys, sun-drenched glens, or even secluded subterranean areas. PCs might know of a nearby pool's existence if they succeed a Knowledge (religion) check (DC 20 for urban locations and DC 25 for rural). Since the rural *sacred waters* are not readily identifiable with religious buildings or persons, they can be difficult to locate even knowing their general vicinity. In all of these cases, any *sacred waters* over 5 feet in diameter have some kind of marker within one-half mile of their location. This marker, be it rock, tree, or something else, is in the crude shape of the healing deity's symbol and points in the direction of the pool. Characters succeeding a Spot check (DC 20) notice something odd about the formation. Clerics of the healing deity automatically know the marker for what it is.

Each *sacred waters* pool glows with a pale illumination because its healing ability is powered directly by a link to the Positive Energy Plane. Bathing in a *sacred waters* pool (if it is large enough for complete submersion) heals a good or neutral-aligned living creature 2 hit points per diameter per round (a 3-foot diameter pool therefore heals 6 hp per round). A flask full of sacred waters heals the same creatures 1 hit point per diameter (a 3-foot diameter pool therefore heals 3 hit points per flask). Evil creatures are harmed for the same amount of damage as non-evil creatures are healed (so in the above examples bathing in a 3-foot diameter pool inflicts 6 points of damage while imbibing a flask of sacred waters inflicts 3 points of damage). Since each *sacred waters* is powered by positive energy, undead creatures are harmed as evil creatures but for double damage. **Note that in all cases, the power of a *sacred waters* pool can only be used once per day per creature.** Any attempts to irrigate larger pools or destruction of smaller pool's basins automatically sever the Positive Energy Plane connection, rendering the waters useless.

# Behind the Spells: Cure Wounds

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS Dancing Lights

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. This time around, Maxolt lets us in on the fun and excitement behind everyone's favorite evocation cantrip—*dancing lights*.

## The Creator

A wizard by the name of Haydin Proi is generally acknowledged as the creator of *dancing lights*. However, recent research by yours truly has found evidence to challenge this preconception. After the first two issues of this series touched on the group known as the Arcane Triad, I decided to call in a few favors (you can thank me later). Not only do I now know that the Triad was far more than a trio of mages but I also know that they sponsored numerous evocation schools across the lands.

Proi, as it turns out, is responsible for the **game** Dancing Lights and not the spell. *Dancing lights* the spell was originally known as “distracting glow” but its current name comes from the wizardly game of the same name (see below for details). The spell's predecessor was commissioned by a human general. This man wanted the Arcane Triad to fashion a spell of distraction; one which would momentarily fool one or more opponents and yet be versatile enough to fool the same target upon repeated exposure. Apparently, this general's kingdom trained *all* of its troops in

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the rudiments of arcane casting; enough so that every soldier could utilize cantrips and perhaps one or two more potent spells.

The payment presented to the Triad was enough so that all three founders became involved in the spell's creation. Surprisingly enough, you can still see their choices reflected in this standard cantrip. *Dancing lights* can take one of three forms. The first (lanterns or torches) was suggested by *fireball* creator Santik Ri'Hesh. The second form (spheres of light) was suggested by *magic missile* creator Mirtanin Moldao. The third form (a glowing humanoid shape) was suggested by *fire shield* creator Onryn Duratius. As expected, the spell proved to be a sound tactic for the general's warrior-mage foot soldiers.

Unfortunately for the kingdom, its enemies wised up after a few battle and speedy word of mouth. No longer were enemy soldiers distracted by the "mysterious charging lights" or "phantom flankers." In fact, the defeat of the general who commissioned the spell caused *dancing lights'* predecessor to be shelved for many decades. It is my understanding that the spell became generally circulated when the Arcane Triad needed funds for a new school (at least that's what one faded document mentions). By this time, their reputation was such that even the sale of a new cantrip garnered heaps of coins. This was only a few years before the Triad disappears altogether from historical records. Fortunately, *dancing lights* was able to escape historical oblivion and be enjoyed by spellcasters ever since.

### Spell Secrets

Besides its obvious use as a general distraction, *dancing lights* has two possible combat applications. The first uses the spell's form as glowing spheres. When these lights come into being and are immediately hurled at a target, it's quite possible he believes them to be *magic missiles* (or worse) and acts accordingly.

The second tactical use comes from the spell's form as a vaguely humanoid glow. By quickly moving this form into melee range opposite your position against the same target, it may cause him to momentarily believe he is being attacked on multiple fronts.

To attempt this maneuver, you cast *dancing lights*, choose the vaguely humanoid form, and then keep it out of sight until you move into melee with an opponent. In the same round you enter melee, you direct the *dancing lights* humanoid (up to 100 feet, so you should be able to hide it until needed) to fly quickly, but obviously, around to the opposite side of your foe. Unless the target succeeds a Will save (DC 10 + caster's Cha modifier) he believes for that round only that he is being flanked; granting you a +2 bonus to attack. On the following round, the target is able to quickly glance at the *dancing lights* form and know it to be harmless. You cannot fool the same target again in this manner for another week.

### Related Research

I'm always fascinated by the types of spells that are inspired by "standard" spells. *Dancing lights* brings to mind a host of variants and spin-offs. I've even seen one bard spellcaster take the name literally and produce "dancing lights"

in the form of gyrating humanoids every time a certain song is played. But one of my favorite relatives of *dancing lights* is a certain low-powered defensive spell. Combining a little *protection from arrows* with a little *shield, projectile interceptors* can provide limited protection against ranged attacks. It's kind of a

When you cast *dancing lights* in the form of glowing spheres and immediately direct them in a group at a target, that foe must succeed a Will save (DC 10 + caster's Cha modifier) or believe he is under magical attack. Failure means that the foe has momentarily ducked, blinked, or even shielded himself with an arm. Because of this, the target has a -2 penalty to attack rolls made in that round. Success indicates the target is not fooled and acts normally. In addition, any target with minimal Intelligence (2 or less) does not receive a Will save.

## Behind the Spells: Dancing Lights

### NEW SPELL – *Projectile Interceptors*

Evocation

**Level:** Brd 2, Sor/Wiz 1

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Personal

**Effect:** Four gelatinous globs

**Duration:** 1 minute/level or until discharged

This spell creates fist-sized balls of clear gelatinous material which float about your upper body. The spheres maintain a slow orbit until a ranged weapon is fired in your direction (not necessarily directed at you). When a missile comes within 10 feet of you, one of the *interceptors* flies unerringly into its path. Each sphere is capable of absorbing 5 hp worth of damage from any single ranged attack including stones, bolts, arrows, and even *magic missiles*. Missiles which inflict 5 points of damage or less become lodged in the goo and fall to the ground harmlessly. Those missiles inflicting more damage than this actually destroy the sphere and proceed on their previous course (which may or may not score a “hit” in the first place). You cannot pick and choose which missiles will be intercepted. The *interceptors* require no concentration to direct or maintain.

*Material Component:* Four marbles caked in mud.

dumb spell name but I suppose it’s better than “Floating Miniature Shields” or “Missile Weapon Blocking Orbs.”

As I mentioned above, the current spell name *dancing lights* is taken from a game of the same title created by Haydin Proi. The

*Dancing Lights* Game was originally a great way for less experienced spellcasters to understand the nuances of evocation magic. Today, the game is used to settle disputes, conduct non-lethal mageduels, and is just a great way to spend time!

## *Dancing Lights*—The Game!

Although its use by colleges of wizardry is officially one of “training,” it’s clear that the *Dancing Lights* Game is nothing more than harmless fun for arcane spellcasters of all stripes. Any arcane school worth its salt has at least one set of *dancing lights jars* in its possession (see below for statistics). Think of this game like Musical Chairs. The *jars* produce a simple tune while the players’ *dancing lights* swirl above them. When the music stops, the casters try to beat their opponents’ lights into the jars. There is always one light without a jar and it is removed from play. The next round sees the removal of one jar and so on until the last caster with a *dancing light* wins.

### ***Dancing Lights* Game: Official Rules**

#### **What You Need to Play**

One set of *dancing lights jars*

Two to four spellcasters capable of casting *dancing lights*

One referee who officially pronounces the winner of every round and removes the jars as play progresses.

#### **Setup**

Arrange the jars (four per player minus one; so three players would require 11 jars) in a haphazard fashion within a 10-foot by 10-foot area. Players stand outside this area.

## Behind the Spells: Dancing Lights

Each player casts *dancing lights* and chooses one of four colors—blue, gold, green, or red. Their lights then shine with the chosen hue for the game’s duration.

### **How to Play**

**Step 1:** Once the referee has arranged the *dancing lights jars* he stands inside the play area. Each player moves their *dancing lights* to swirl slowly just above the referee’s head. The game begins when the referee says “Play” which causes the jars to begin emitting a particular dance tune. [For example: Bob and Jack are the two players so the number of jars arranged by the referee is 7.]

**Step 2:** When the music stops at a random moment, the players react by rolling Initiative (using his Charisma or Intelligence modifier instead of Dexterity, whichever is greater). The highest initiative roll denotes which player’s lights move toward the jars first. [For example: Bob the sorcerer is playing against Jack the wizard. Bob rolls initiative and adds his Charisma modifier but Jack rolls initiative and adds his Intelligence modifier.]

**Step 3:** The players secretly choose which jars to direct their individual lights into. [Write this information down and pass it to the GM now.] To direct his lights into the jars as quickly as possible, each caster makes a Spellcraft check (DC 10 + 2 for every light he has in play). Success means that all of his lights enter their chosen jars. Each jar shines with the hue of the first light to enter it so two lights directed at the same jar does not fool the referee. The result of a failed Spellcraft roll is dependant on how poor the roll is. For every two numbers below the target DC, one of the caster’s lights misses the target. [For example: Bob’s initiative result of 14 beats Jack’s 10 so he directs his lights first, choosing which four jars are to be his targets. Since both players have four lights in play to begin, their Spellcraft DCs are 18. Bob rolls his check and gets a total of 15. Since he missed the DC by 3, one of his lights zips past a target jar while the other three successfully hit their marks. These three glow with Bob’s chosen blue hue. When Jack acts next, he rolls a Spellcraft check of 19. All four of his lights are on target. Unfortunately, one of his target jars is already

host to one of Bob’s blue lights. This means that each player still has one light in play with only one jar remaining free.]

**Step 4:** The casters reroll both initiative and Spellcraft checks if any of their lights are still in play and open jars remain (Spellcraft DCs being modified by the number of lights each still has in play). [For example: With one light left in play for Bob and Jack, they reroll their initiatives—Bob rolls a 14 while Jack rolls a 15. Jack now acts first, confident of his victory. But when he makes his Spellcraft check (now a DC 12) he only gets a total of 9. Bob follows up with his own Spellcraft check (the same DC 12 for one light) and gets a total of 13. Bob’s light enters the final jar and it turns blue. Bob is the winner of this round!

**Step 5:** The light without a jar vanishes. The players move their lights out of the jars and return them into the air. The referee removes one jar from the playing area before commanding the jars to “play” again. [For example: Jack’s lonely light at the end of the first round vanishes. But there’s still plenty of time for a comeback. Jack moves his three remaining lights into the air while Bob does the same with his four. The referee picks up a random jar and places it outside the playing field. The referee returns to the middle and says, “Play.”

**Step 6:** Go back to Step 2 and continue until only one light remains. That light’s player is declared the winner!

### **New Magic Item: *Dancing Lights Jars***

This set of 15 glass jars comes in many different styles depending on the crafter’s tastes. The decorative nature of the sets may increase their value but their function is always the same. The *dancing lights jars* play music when commanded to do so and control the hue of *dancing lights* both around and inside them as dictated by the *Dancing Lights Game* above. The jars have no use outside of the game itself.

Minor illusion; CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, *silent image*; Price 3,600 gp.

# Behind the Spells: Dancing Lights

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Disintegrate

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. For this issue, Maxolt tells us about a spell guaranteed to wipe out the competition—*disintegrate*.

### The Creator

Many historians would have you believe that *disintegrate* was created by a half-elf wizard who had a phobia about seeing blood. The wizard supposedly created the spell to effectively eradicate his foes without any mess to clean up or see afterward. While this tale is grounded in fact, the spellcaster in question did not create the *disintegrate* spell. He found the schematics for

it within an old treasure chest belonging to one Habib Al'Wasti. Habib was a witness of the attack which destroyed his sultan. He saw the real creator of the spell use it to deadly effect on his master and then wrote the likely gestures and words down later—they being engraved securely into his mind after seeing its effects. I say "likely" arcane components because he witnessed a divine version of the spell. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

by Bret Boyd



## Behind the Spells: Disintegrate

In the sandy wastes of the Artanis Desert twelve centuries ago lived a number of primitive tribes of humans. Forever at odds with each other over water sources and slaves, these tribes came together once a year to celebrate the moon goddess who, they believed, created them in the first place. The sensibilities of today's human would not call the orgy of drink and sex that comprised the gathering as a "celebration" but that's what was done. The tribes' sultans knew that, despite their open suspicion and occasional hatred for one another, the Night of moon goddess was a perfect excuse to truly rest and share information about the desert regions they respectively inhabited. There was an unspoken peace at the celebration between tribes (but woe be to the woman who became pregnant by someone from another tribe!) and sometimes a threat against all the tribes would need to be discussed. Of course, when the tribe who solved the problem or fought the outside foe was victorious it was always that sultan's idea from the start.

It was at one fateful Night celebration that sultan Abdul Ra'hib broke the unspoken peace agreement. His own daughter had become pregnant at the hands (or I suppose loins) of the Shareeka tribe's first warrior. The host rotated for each Night so that the tribe's would not become overly familiar with one region. On this Night, the Shareeka tribe was to be host. Sultan Abdul made certain that his tribe was at the meeting spot first. As was the custom, Shareeka's sultan emerged alone from his camp to greet the arriving caravans. Instead of being greeted by Abdul, the Shareekan sultan was trampled by the war camels that burst out of hiding amidst the caravan's mass. Abdul and his warriors slew many of the Shareekans before they realized what was happening. Those who were not slain (and there were not more than a handful) dispersed alone into the desert.

One such survivor was Marwan Itaya, *alyap* (or "second-cleric") to the Shareekan sultan. His master bade him to flee when Abdul's warriors broke through the first-cleric's line of conjured sand elementals. And flee he did. The alyap cautiously retreated to a short unassuming collection of rocks kept as a secret retreat by the first-cleric for the divine students of the Shareeka. Marwan waited for days in the

hopes that even one of his fellow clerics survived the attack but no one came.

For weeks after the massacre, the alyap numbly rehearsed his daily rituals, subsisting on the stored rations and underground stream there. Clearly, vengeance for his tribe's destruction was necessary. But how could he bring justice to the Shareeka as one man? Then Marwan remembered the sand warriors conjured by his master. If he could construct enough of the elementals, then he could send such an army against sultan Abdul and his treacherous kind. After some searching through the first-cleric's belongings (and being injured by one of the shelter's spell wards), Marwan discovered the divine foci needed to create and sustain the sand warriors.

Weeks became months as the alyap tried to summon an army of elementals. Try as he might, however, the sand would not sustain cohesive form for more than a few hours. The alyap grew so frustrated that his spell became warped. An elemental formed, collapsed into sand, and then repeated the process again and again. Marwan attempted to dismiss the magic but was too agitated to succeed. In utter frustration, the alyap threw himself to the ground and watched helplessly as the sand warrior formed and collapsed...formed and collapsed...became whole then dissolved...

The sight suddenly inspired the second-cleric. "That's it!" he cried aloud. "I need not conjure an army. To strike a beast most effectively all one need do is cut off the head." Marwan immediately hurried inside to pray for an entirely new spell. He knew it would push the limits of his knowledge but vengeance demanded the destruction of sultan Abdul. Surely his god would not turn a blind eye to such a worthy goal?

Indeed not. Armed with his new spell, Marwan set off to find Abdul's tribe. The alyap used a spell to become like the air and flew swiftly across the dunes. On the third evening of his flight, Marwan spotted the standard of Abdul next to a former Shareekan oasis. Another slight to repay him for, thought the alyap. The cleric-as-wind landed just outside Abdul's tent and retook human form. No guards were present. Why should they be, he thought. He must be so secure in his new territory!

## Behind the Spells: Disintegrate

Suddenly, sultan Abdul himself emerged from the tent, a naked woman laughing at each arm. The man sneered as he saw Marwan, trying to ascertain identity his identity through a drunken haze. “Sshtand asshide,” the sultan slurred. The not-so inebriated slave girls saw the burning look in Marwan’s eyes and froze in place, annoying the sultan even more. “Guardssh!” the sultan cried as the two women squealed in fear.

Unfazed by the voluptuous beauties, Marwan, the alyap of tribe Shareeka, raised a finger at Abdul and calmly stated, “You cast my tribe to the sands. So will it be with you.” A green ray emerged from his finger after a quick casting and struck the sultan full in the chest. Unseen by all, Abdul’s wizard vizier, Habib, was approaching his master’s tent when Marwan appeared. Now all he could do was stand open-mouthed as sultan Abdul, crying out in pain, collapsed into a pile of faint gray ash. The sultan’s attacker sprinted away before the guards arrived. Instead of giving chase himself, Habib moved to collect the ash left by his sultan’s demise. But by that time, the naked women were trampling the area in their fright. What they didn’t bury in the sand was blown away by a mysteriously strong wind that followed the assailant’s retreat.

After the spell’s transcription into an arcane format, *disintegrate* remained in the desert, unseen by any (Habib’s tribe was destroyed by a blue dragon soon after the wizard completed his work) until the half-elf wizard with the gore phobia uncovered it on an expedition. Only in recent years has the spell come into the awareness of the Destroyer’s faithful. You can be sure that its origins (and usage by) in that faith will not go unheralded for long.

### Spell Secrets

The first spell secret has been referred to as “caster’s bane” or “final 30” referring to the 30 seconds granted to the target before massive damage and possibly imminent death. Some casters use it as a means of brief torture, enjoying the suffering of the target.

By succeeding a Spellcraft check (DC 31), the damage inflicted by *disintegrate* is divided evenly over a 5-round period (an odd amount has the remaining die of damage added onto the final round). You may increase or decrease the damage inflicted to the target (never more than 5 additional dice) each round but doing so requires a move action. If the target succeeds its Fortitude save, the sustained damage is 1d6 per round. A failed save means that the damage is inflicted as above *and* at the end of the duration the target is disintegrated. However, if the caster wishes to halt either the round-by-round damage or the actual disintegration he may do so (but the decision cannot be reversed). A caster receives a bonus to Intimidation against the target under this effect equal to one-third his caster level. Failure of the initial Spellcraft check means the spell is cast normally.

As impressively destructive as the *disintegrate* spell is, a caster may not want to take the chance in using its power against a valuable target. When subdual magics are unavailable, you can possibly tweak this spell to cripple a target or remove a particular section of a larger object.

With this spell secret, you can tighten the spell’s disintegration area. First you reduce the damage inflicted by succeeding a Spellcraft check (DC 26). Failure means the spell functions as usual. Success means that the target struck your ray now takes 2d4 points of damage per caster level. In addition to suffering damage, if it fails its Fortitude saving throw, you choose to disintegrate a part of the target (a hand/foot, limb, or nonliving matter of up to 6-cubic inches per level). Just want to take off a creature’s hand? Great! Or perhaps you want to obliterate one book in a larger stack of books? No problem!

## Behind the Spells: Disintegrate

### Related Research

Hated monarchs, notorious killers, and unlucky adventurers have all fallen prey to the first spell variant presented below. The power to not only destroy a target's physical form but the impression of it in the minds of others is a formidable one. *Eliminate* should not be used lightly. It's also worth mentioning that it is of the universal school (since it combines multiple schools—namely transmutation and enchantment). For the dangers inherent in this school of magic, see *Behind the Spells: Prestidigitation*.

### VARIANT SPELL

#### *Eliminate*

As the spell *disintegrate* but with the following exceptions:

Universal

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 9

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 round

**Saving Throw:** None (object)

This powerful spell not only allows you to *disintegrate* a target but to completely remove all knowledge of it from other creatures. Without a saving throw, it is almost a certainty that the struck creature or object will be turned to dust. When, and only when, complete disintegration occurs, the real threat of the spell manifests. When a target's form is lost, your magic actually warps reality to wipe all knowledge of it from the minds of those creatures who knew about it (except the caster, who retains that knowledge) currently on the same plane of existence you are. Even if the target played an important role in a creature's life, he does not remember it. The one drawback is that *eliminate* does not erase or otherwise destroy written documents (or any other physical record) so evidence of the now-missing creature or item might still exist.

*Material Components:* A lodestone, a pinch of dust, and a lotus blossom.

The second variant of the already potent *disintegrate* spell wreaks greater destruction but may bring an equal or greater amount of collateral damage. When a wizard friend of mine used this spell without recalling its enhanced nature, he not only slew his foe but ate a hole through the constable's house, destroyed a precious marble statue, and slew a horse as well!

### NEW SPELL

#### *Disintegrate, Greater*

As the spell *disintegrate* but with the following exceptions:

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 7

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Saving Throw:** Fortitude half (object)

The ebony ray which springs from your finger extends to the maximum limit of the spell's range. The ray is so intensely focused that it punches through all creatures or objects between you and the range limit. The difference in damage inflicted between this spell and the more common *disintegrate* is that it diminishes as the beam strikes multiple targets. For every creature or object struck by your ray beyond the first, the damage inflicted is reduced by 1d6 (but never falls below 2d6 damage). Note that a successful Fortitude saving throw inflicts half damage instead of 5d6 as per the original spell. When an object fails a saving throw, the ray disintegrates a 1-foot cube of nonliving matter per three caster levels.

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Dispel Magic

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Before I tell you about *dispel magic*, I have to acknowledge that this, the 36th pdf of the series, is the final issue. “But there’s a plethora of spell yet to cover,” I hear you cry. Perhaps, but it is time to move on to other things. This old dragon isn’t getting any younger and I feel the need to return to my true form and fly once again. However, you needn’t despair quite yet. Within the next few weeks these issues will be compiled into a hardcover book that will include some extra goodies for your perusement. Watch for information from Ronin Arts concerning that limited edition volume! On that upbeat note, I offer a heartfelt “thanks!” for having a look at *Behind the Spells* and hope you enjoy this finale.

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: Dispel Magic

### The Creator

This particular issue deals with a story element presented in a previous issue (see *Behind the Spells: Light*). For those who neglected to take note of that nugget of knowledge, I'll give you the short version of the relevant information. After the world was formed and its creatures given life, the gods secretly stored different types of knowledge within extradimensional pockets accessible only by casting the correct unlocking spell. Back in this early stage of the world, spellcasting itself was in its infancy and the civilized creatures were expected to better themselves (of which spellcasting was apparently one such hurdle) before they were allowed to tap into these hidden bastions of knowledge and power.

"I see where you're going with this, Maxolt," I hear you claim. "Dispel magic must have been a spell developed to open one of those lore-filled vaults." To which my quick reply is, "Don't jump to conclusions, my impetuous young human."

In fact, the spell of our discussion was developed specifically to fight against the lore uncovered in one of the vaults. Now, I know that I previously stated that no more than one storehouse has been uncovered in mankind's history but it seems even I can be wrong at times (don't let that go to your heads). In researching the origins of *dispel magic*, I came to a former elven refuge known as the Twilight Circle. I had hoped to find some historian investigating the tribe of elves that vanished from the site millennia ago and planned to pool his or her knowledge together with my own. What I found, however, proved equal parts exciting and alarming.

Instead of a fellow researcher, I was greeted by several dark skinned, violet-eyed elves. The group was armed but their weapons were not raised—yet. I expected a tense period of diplomacy wherein I would have to explain my presence at this sacred site and hope that combat was not imminent. Thankfully, and more a little surprisingly, these elves saw through my human guise and discerned my true draconic form. The warriors greeted me with the respect and proper obeisance due my form and, feeling I owed them the same courtesy and honesty, I bowed and identified them as "gloom elves." Before my arrival, I made special efforts researching the Twilight Circle's history and the small community of elves who disappeared from the site soon after the time of *dispel magic's* creation. Such knowledge did not come cheaply but it was apparently coin well spent since I was now standing amongst them.

After swearing me to secrecy for what was about to be revealed (my word is good no matter what form I'm wearing of course), one of the elves sketched arcane runes in the air in front of one of the Circle's standing stones. The moss-coated slab hummed with power and suddenly a purple-hued portal opened within the side facing us. We stepped through it into a landscape matching the one we left except that everything here was eerily lit by the rays of an unseen sunset; a sunset, I later learned, that never moves. When the self-styled gloom elves retreated from the natural world into this artificial recreation of a dozen square miles around the Twilight Circle, the time of day here was frozen at the exact time the dimensional pocket was formed. But now I'm really beginning to stray from the tale at hand.

Somehow, the gloom elves had learned of my interest in the creation of *dispel magic* and, by extension, their own history. For reasons I was about to be made aware of, they did not try to stop or detour my investigation. Citing thinning resources and numbers, the gloom elves decided to reveal themselves to the world at large through me. It is through this revelation that *dispel magic's* history appears.

During the world's early centuries, these elves maintained good relations and open trade with their non-elven neighbors. Because of this, they noticed the plague immediately. Refugees from nearby human and halfling settlements staggered into the Twilight Circle's community looking for aid against a virulent infection that was striking down their kin. The elven wizard, Lorash Na'Faem, offered to go to one of the infected areas and study one of the afflicted despite the elven race's lack of resistance to disease. Two elven men-at-arms and a druid journeyed with Lorash. The elven quartet discovered a human village full of people too weak to stand or even speak without slurring.

Fearing that the disease might infect them sooner than later, the elves established a triage tent where humans of different ages and gender were studied side by side. No matter the healing ministrations provided by the druid, the humans were clearly losing the battle against the strange plague. Lorash could identify no cause for the infection or any clear symptoms besides extreme fatigue and unresponsiveness. Much to the elves surprise, only one of their number succumbed to the disease. When the sun fell on the first night in the village, the victims finally slept. Lorash was about to conduct further tests when all of the humans and the single infected elf rose to their feet and started shuffling out of town. Nothing short of holding the victims down stopped their slow but steady march to the south.



## Behind the Spells: Dispel Magic

Lorash ordered the victims left alone, for how could they three hope to stop the parade of living zombies. The wizard was one of the most learned of his community, which meant that he not only knew the most number of spells but had toiled in the arcane arts (such as they were at this early age) for a long time. Lorash knew this plague could not be a natural phenomenon and confirmed as much to his companions after using a *detect magic* cantrip on the retreating figures. The wizard sent the druid back to the Twilight Circle to report their findings. In the meantime, Lorash and the lone elven warrior would find out just where these walking victims were headed to.

The humans from the first community joined many other groups throughout the night and even the coming day as the horde of shambling humanoids made their way cross country toward the shores of the Inixi Ocean (although I believe that body of water is called something else today). Their destination was a volcano (thankfully extinct) cresting at the point where the Eljin Peninsula meets the mainland. A clear line of humanoids snaked up the volcano's side to its apex. The line didn't seem to be moving and the humans Lorash was tracking simply stood in numb silence with blank stares toward their destination.

Lorash needed to see what was happening there. After ordering his companion to blend in with the other victims, the wizard activated a single-use talisman that changed his form into that of a falcon. The wizard flew high over the heads of the sea of enchanted humanoids, coming to rest on the volcano's eastern lip. The line of plague victims descended over the northern rim and down a sloping manmade hill to the volcano "floor" (cooled lava and ash leftover from the previous eruption decades earlier) some hundred feet below. Lorash-falcon saw a grotesquely fat human in arcane dress manipulating a large sphere with glowing mist inside it. With each gesture and word of power, the disgusting figure coaxed the power of the sphere while ordering the next plague victim to be brought forward. Waiting robed skeletal figures grabbed the victim, a human woman, and slammed her against the glowing sphere.

In the next instant, the human leader chanted aloud and the sphere pulsed with arcane energy which elicited a shrill scream of pain and terror from the victim. A flash of light encompassed the pinned female before shooting into the sphere. The woman died before her scream echoed outside the volcano. The newly made corpse was then dragged to a pile of other bodies that filled the curve of the western wall.

Almost inconceivably, the next humanoids in line watched the ritual without movement, although they must have assuredly knew what was coming. As the fat human waved for the next victim, Lorash quickly flew lower into the volcano to have a better look at the equipment arrayed on the southern portion of the floor. Even through his avian eyes, Lorash knew arcane symbols, components, and relics when he saw them. Some of the writing on the books and chests here was beyond the scope of anything the elf had ever encountered before. Surely, the mysterious plague had its genesis from the knowledge stored here!

Then Lorash spied what he was looking for. An open scroll depicted the very sphere now in use to be some type of soul collector. From a brief scan of the document, Lorash determined that this evil wizard was harvesting the humanoids' souls to then power a spell that would raise their corpses as undead under his control. Reverting back to his elven form, Lorash knew that this scheme had to be stopped now before more souls could be harvested. This situation seemed like a good a chance as any to use a new spell gained from a visiting human wizard months earlier—*lightning bolt*. Several of the fat human's undead servitors saw the elf as he rose to cast his spell. But before the evil forces could move to stop him, Lorash flung his powerful bolt into the soul collector itself. The sphere exploded in a dazzling display of colors, sending crystalline shrapnel everywhere.

Lorash moved to the fat wizard, who had taken the brunt of the explosion. The human's eyes met the elf's own with an intense stare despite the shard of crystal that had pierced the human's neck and pinned him to the earth. Although he would die in seconds, the wizard wheezed in mirth and gurgled a final haunting statement: "You have no idea what's begun here." With that, the wizard breathed his last and suddenly his body erupted into a crimson bubbling mass and before vanishing entirely. Lorash turned from that odd experience to find that the plagued humanoids were shaking off the effects of the magical contagion, apparently released by the sphere's destruction. Pieces of the soul collector were scattered everywhere and, as Lorash moved amongst them, they glowed with an inner radiance; almost as if calling out to him.

After the wizard explained to those humanoids around him what had happened (the news of which carried back quickly along the horde), he returned to the Twilight Circle to tell his story. But it wasn't until the end of his story that Lorash realized what the glowing of the sphere shards represented. The wizard

## Behind the Spells: Dispel Magic

ordered for word to be sent to all communities collecting the corpses for burial to instead preserve them as best they could. Lorash returned with several apprentices to the volcano to collect as many of the shards as they could find. As before, when an elf neared a shard it glowed with an inner light.

“These are souls,” Lorash stated, holding one of the shards aloft. “If the magic binding them can perhaps be negated, the life inside each one might be reunited with the body to achieve a kind of resurrection.” Unfortunately for the souls involved, the collected shards represented about half of the total sphere’s original mass. Either the others were vaporized in the explosion (an unlikely occurrence) or someone else had come to collect them (to mention nothing of the ones embedded in that grotesque wizard). Better some than none, however, and the elves returned to Twilight Circle. The type of spell Lorash had in mind had never been attempted. The concept of “dispelling” magic had never occurred to anyone before. Indeed, why would magic—a here one moment, gone the next practice—need to be negated? Obviously, this early age of history was before mainstream magic item creation or even the concept of counterspelling.

The process of developing *dispel magic* (originally called “negate magic” by the elves) proved quick enough as the spell was ready for its first test within a week’s time. Since no one could say just which soul belonged to which body, all of the shards were brought to the closest community’s corpse storage location. Inexplicably, the bodies of the soulless victims showed absolutely no signs of deterioration. The elves laid the soul shards around the first subject and stood back as Lorash cast his new spell. At first, no one believed the effort successful but a few moments later one of the shards vibrated and shattered. The radiance inside it rose straight into the air before darting into the human’s forehead. A moment later the man gasped as if he had been holding his breath for a long time. He remembered nothing of the volcano or the sphere, only that he and his family had been coming down with some kind of illness.

Lorash was ecstatic and he and his apprentices used *dispel magic* on corpse after corpse until all of the souls they had collected were reunited with their bodies. Even after that, however, some one hundred corpses remained in their preserved state. More groups searched for the shards at the volcano but came away empty handed. While the arcane resurrections were taking place, the elves of the Twilight Circle thought it best to confiscate the treasures left behind

by the evil human wizard. Careful study of certain documents soon told them that Lorash was correct in his field analysis of the sphere and also correct in the need for its destruction. Nearly all of the knowledge and equipment from the cache was necromantic in nature; a primer, if you will, to all things necromancy.

Perhaps the most disturbing discovery happened a few months after the incident. By then, the preserved corpses of the humanoids were moved to a safe location within the Circle until such time as their soul shards could be recovered. Since the elves had the ability to keep them the safest, the respective families did not object. At this time, Lorash was studying a rather profane tome from the cache and came upon a familiar description. The passage exactly detailed what happened to the fat wizard’s corpse when he died. The ritual such a death was detailed in was but the first step to becoming a deity. The human must have performed the ritual before evoking the plague. According to the text that was not torn from the tome, that human would arise again and again after each successive death in different demonic forms. As the former human was reincarnated into more and more powerful creatures, the ritual’s magic would also expand his knowledge and power to match until, finally, he would achieve a measure of divine power. That’s what the human’s final words had meant, Lorash realized with shock. The elf had unwittingly started the grotesque human on a path to godhood! Lorash instructed his people to keep alert for this human’s return; a human whose name he later discovered was Orcus.

After an inventory of the necromantic cache was taken, the elves discovered several missing items and other works of power. The awesomely dangerous potential of the remaining documents and materials was too great a threat to leave outside elven purview and it was highly likely that Orcus would return for the cache when he was able to. This led to the creation of the shadowy pocket realm I described at the beginning of our tale. The elven community unanimously agreed to shunt their lives into that dimension in order to keep the dangerous knowledge Orcus used from the eyes of any other evil creatures. They call themselves “gloom” elves because they live eternally between the light of the world and the dark times their hidden knowledge might unleash.

Adventurers have a chance of encountering gloom elves when one of two situations occurs. First, if minions of Orcus are gathered in large groups; and second, if a soul shard is uncovered. Over the centuries, the gloom elves came to believe that the shards hold some



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kind of power over Orcus and that each restoration weakens the demon prince in some fashion. Today, over three dozen bodies are still preserved within a secret vault inside the Twilight Circle's pocket realm, waiting for their souls to be returned thanks to Lorash's famous spell—*dispel magic*.

### Spell Secrets

Non-spellcasters see *dispel magic* simply as a “spell that snuffs out other spells” but even those who merely dabble in magical lore know better. *Dispel magic* can actually function in two different ways—to fuse or scatter magic—but it depends on the individual situation. Left unaltered, as is normally the case, the spell uses the most efficient method it can to nullify the magic it comes into contact with. The first method mentioned works against targeted magical items by temporarily “fusing” the energies that inhabit them and allow them to function. Fuse is the technical term but most spellcasters refer to this method of dispelling as “stalling” a targeted item since its energies are only inhibited for a short time.

The concept of fusing an item brings us to the first spell secret. Under normal circumstances, magic items that are successfully dispelled are suppressed for a standard amount of time. However, a spellcaster who is more experienced in the ways of abjuration might be able to considerably lengthen that duration.

If a spellcaster knows two or more abjuration spells of 4th level or higher, he can attempt to lengthen the duration of a suppressed magic item. After a targeted magic is successfully dispelled, the caster must immediately succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 20). Failure means the item is suppressed for the usual 1d4 rounds. Success means the item is suppressed for 1d4 rounds **plus** an additional round for every two caster levels of the dispelling caster.

The second spell secret involves the scattering method. For every situation not involving targeted magic items, *dispel magic* attacks a spell by attempting to unravel its component energies (much like you might free a knot by tugging at one of its strings). When successful, the spell's energies fly intangibly in all directions and dissipate back into the nothingness from whence they came. But these rogue energies need not dissipate right away. Practiced spellcasters can not only *dispel* magics but keep

their faintly charged component energies in the same area for a brief time. Now, such energies are too weak for spellcasters to use directly but the resulting area becomes so saturated with magic that it actually weakens the resistance to magic some creatures possess. In a sense, a creature's spell resistance becomes confused by the constant magical barrage (no matter how weak the saturation may be) and its overall effectiveness is reduced.

A spellcaster must announce that he is attempting to use this spell secret before he casts *dispel magic*. After the dispelling is successful, the caster must succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 20 + spell level) for each spell/effect so dispelled. Failure means the dispelling worked normally. Success means that, along with dispelling the spell/effect(s), the magic from these is now scattered throughout the immediate vicinity. Note that a caster cannot scatter a spell without first dispelling it. The radius of the scattering and its effects on a creature's spell resistance depend on the way the dispelling is cast and the number of spells negated (respectively, see below).

**Targeted Dispel:** An object or creature dispelled and scattered successfully saturates a 5-ft. radius area around the object or creature's location. This area lowers a creature's spell resistance rating by 2d4.

**Area Dispel:** Successfully dispelled and scattered spells/effects using this method saturate the same 20-ft. radius area which lowers a creature's spell resistance rating by 1 + number of spells/effects affected (maximum of +6).

**Counterspell:** A spell successfully dispelled and scattered creates a saturated 10-ft. radius area from a random location between the two casters. This area lowers a creature's spell resistance rating by 1d4+1.

Creatures with spell resistance are not allowed a save but are only affected while inside a magic-saturated area. Using *detect magic* (or other means to see magical effects) reveals a floating cloud of faint golden motes. Multiple spell scatterings in the same area are not cumulative in their effects on spell resistance. In all cases, an area remains saturated for one round per two caster levels.

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The third spell secret is for **specialist wizards only**. For these spellcasters, it is only natural to learn, recognize, and exploit the “weak spots” of spells that fall under their school of specialization. When using *dispel magic*, the specialist unconsciously tweaks the spell to be more effective against his particular school. This unconscious altering of the spell also makes his *dispels* more powerful against lesser spells as the specialist grows more powerful. Note that while *dispel magic* can be improved in this way, it cannot suffer from a specialist’s lack of knowledge of opposing schools (in arcane terms, *dispel magic* cannot perform below its established parameters).

If a specialist wizard maintains maximum ranks in the Knowledge (arcana) skill, he automatically gains a competence bonus to his dispel checks against spells that are of his specialist school. The specialist’s bonus is +1 against spells of certain levels as shown on the table below. However, this bonus *is* cumulative, meaning that lower level spells have a higher bonus applied to them. [Example: A 6th-level conjurer gains a +1 bonus to his dispel checks against conjuration spells of 3rd level, a +2 bonus against conjuration spells of 2nd level, a +3 against conjuration spells of 1st level, and finally a +4 bonus against conjuration spells of 0 level.] Should a specialist’s Knowledge (arcana) ranks not be kept at maximum, he loses this bonus until such time as they are maxed out again.

Specialist Level	Spell Level Affected
1st	0
2nd	1st
4th	2nd
6th	3rd
8th	4th
10th	5th
12th	6th
14th	7th
16th	8th
18th	9th

## Related Research

Since the creation of *dispel magic*, the gloam elves and their allies have kept watch for the missing souls as detailed in the above backstory. The shards of the soul collector used by Orcus are hunted even more ardently by the descendants of the families to which the individual souls belong. As a result, adventurer lore is more familiar with these shards than any other aspect of the *dispel magic* story. Throughout the centuries, *soul shards* have more often than not been in the possession of creatures who had no idea of their true origin; sometimes using a shard as light source, traveling companion, or just as a curiosity piece.

## NEW UNIQUE MAGIC ITEM—Soul Shards

Measuring between one and four inches in length and having a uniform one-inch thickness, *soul shards* are smooth crystal fragments of a destroyed artifact known as the soul collector. Each of the 38 shards still in existence contains the soul of a person harvested by the collector centuries ago. The soul is unaware of its plight and its personality is dormant but it does retain the basic knowledge from its life (including aspects of its profession/craft, if any, and other common sense basics at the GM’s discretion).

*Soul shards* are not usable in a conventional sense. They provide little in terms of actual powers a character can wield but may come in handy nonetheless. Each shard has the following abilities:

- Glows as a candle if a living creature is within 30 feet. If the creature is of the same race as the imprisoned soul (see below for random determination), the glow intensifies to torch-like illumination and occurs when the creature moves to within 60 feet.

*Continued on next page . . .*

## Behind the Spells: Dispel Magic

- When a creature holds the shard for one minute, it bonds with the soul to the point where telepathic conversation is possible (although such an exchange is language-dependant). The bearer can converse with the soul as long as desired so long as contact with the skin is maintained. Knowledge that a soul possesses is limited to its former living existence. The soul mentally answers using its former “voice” but has no personality or emotion and does not elaborate on its answers unless so asked by the bearer. Souls have no knowledge of how they came to be inside their shards.

Determining the specifics of a soul’s former life can be done deliberately by the GM or they can be rolled for randomly by rolling a d20 for each of the tables below. In all cases, a soul’s character level should be equal to or less than the party’s average.

### Race

1-3	Dwarf
4-6	Elf
7	Gnome
8-10	Half-elf
11	Halfling
12	Half-orc
13-20	Human

### Gender

1-10	Male
11-20	Female

Age	
1-2	Young
3-14	Adult
15-17	Middle Age
18-19	Old
20	Venerable

### Class

1-2	Adept
3	Aristocrat
4	Barbarian
5	Bard
6	Cleric
7-11	Commoner
12	Druid
13-14	Fighter
15	Monk
16	Ranger
17	Sorcerer
18-19	Warrior
20	Wizard

### A

### lignment

1-3	Lawful good
4-6	Chaotic good
7-8	Neutral good
9-11	Lawful neutral
12-15	“True” neutral
16	Chaotic neutral
17-18	Neutral evil
19	Chaotic evil
20	Lawful evil

Strong necromancy; CL 19th.

## Behind the Spells: Dispel Magic

In every magical treatise that describes *dispel magic*, the fact that a spellcaster can dispel his own magic (be it targeted or area) is always emphasized. Most apprentice casters just take this for granted and then promptly forget about it because, let's face it, how often does dispelling your own magic really come up? However, one wizard a few centuries ago looked at this part of the spell and asked, "Why is this so?" The answer lies within each individual caster. When a spell is cast, the energies emerge from wherever magic comes from and are then channeled through the caster before taking form as the desired spell. It is in this channeling process that a spell is imbued with

the essence of the caster; a faint trace of his soul. Call it a magical "signature" if you will (a more refined form of the alignment aura generated by creatures). As a result, when a spellcaster casts *dispel magic* on his own magic, the dispelling signature and the signature of the target magic "recognize" each other and negate without difficulty (unlike every other situation where the caster's dispel must fight against the signature of a foreign magic). The half-elven wizard who researched this phenomenon thought he could perhaps broaden the application of this dispelling loophole with the creation of *essence tokens*—objects imbued with a caster's magical signature.

### NEW MAGIC ITEM—Essence Token

When you craft this magic item, you use an already existing item for the base. The chosen item can be no larger than one foot in diameter. Once chosen, you imbue that item with a minute portion of your essence. The *essence token's* sole purpose is to help the caster who creating it overcome another creature's spell or effect by masking the latter's signature with that of the item's creator. It does this by granting a bonus to the creator's dispel check (see below) against the spell or effect on whomever or whatever space the token rests in. The *essence token* remains active after creation until its creator successfully dispels an effect the token is inside of (whether that effect is an area spell the token sits in or is a targeted spell on a creature that is carrying the token). Once expended, the token returns to its normal nonmagical state. Having more than one *essence token* together in one spot does not make the dispel bonus cumulative. Only one token is effective per dispel attempt.

One popularly imbued item is a coin of the local realm surreptitiously given to an enemy caster before an expected combat. There are ten different strengths of *essence tokens* depending on the power of the creating caster as given with the prices below.

Faint abjuration; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *dispel magic*, creator's caster level must be at least two times that of the bonus placed in the token; Price 300 gp (+1), 600 gp (+2), 900 gp (+3), 1,200 gp (+4), 1,500 gp (+5), 1,800 gp (+6), 2,100 gp (+7), 2,400 gp (+8), 2,700 gp (+9), 3,000 gp (+10).

# Behind the Spells: Dispel Magic

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Fire Shield

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. For this issue, Maxolt expounds on a spell that gives as good as it gets—*fire shield*.

### The Creator

If there is one combination in the realms of mortals that is most dangerous, it is that of power and ambition. Onryn Duratius possessed both. It is believed that Onryn was the very first evoker, blazing that trail of a specialist wizard for every generation after him. If there is one mantra attributed to this human which has survived the ages it is this: "Magic

should both have a purpose and be wondrous to behold." The power to conjure obviously dangerous magics was a thrill to Onryn. But the evoker knew that, even in a magically prolonged lifetime, one man could not pursue the various avenues magic itself (much less just evocation) had to offer. Onryn traveled the lands to find two like-minded individuals of similar talent to his own. Together, the trio would found a magical organization dedicated

by Bret Boyd



## Behind the Spells: Fire Shield

to exploring the infinite possibilities of magic. That organization was the Arcane Triad (see previous issues of this series such as *magic missile*, *fireball*, and *shield* for more details).

My investigation into this relatively obscure group has yielded only danger to myself. I have finally found out why and it connects directly to Onryn, the creator of *fire shield*. After the Triad began to found schools and laboratories across the globe, Onryn turned the more powerful students to a pursuit of sorcery best suited for the battlefield. Oh, the evoker was careful not to let his co-founders in on his special project and to not have a singular locale experimenting on more than one facet of a battle spell at a time. You see, the Triad needed funds to keep the schools running. These funds came from legitimate sources at first but when coins started to become scarce, Onryn took it upon himself to find other avenues of revenue. One such avenue was magical war weapons.

In those days, it seemed human kingdoms were sprouting all over the place, unchecked by the elven and dwarven nations who had their own problems to deal with. These infant kings, as a rule, wanted something to establish their dominance and power in the regions they held. Manpower was an issue as well (which indirectly led to the Quicksilver Conflict—see *Behind the Spells: Cone of Cold* for further details—but that’s another story) but something loud and awe-inspiring would work better than more troops. To gain this type of magical power, Onryn knew the kings would be willing to pay a hefty price. Thus, select Triad-founded sorcery academies unknowingly labored on different components of complicated battle spells as theorized by Onryn.

But even as the evoker worked to make contacts within various kingdoms while keeping his secret projects from his Triad comrades, knowledge leaked out like juice from a tangled grapevine. Word of the covert development of military magics eventually reached the ears of Korahnik Falgar, an outspoken opponent of the Triad and its worldwide expansion efforts. The human sorcerer knew that Onryn had to be stopped. After several diplomatic envoys were sent to the Triad co-founder and rebuffed, he recognized that stronger methods would need to be taken. Falgar was not a young man any-

more but he had considerable respect and support from non-Triad arcane groups as well as the monks of the Silent Strike (an order to which his five daughters all belonged).

For all of its apparent corruption, however, Falgar recognized the necessity of spreading magical appreciation and knowledge to all peoples. To the sorcerer, though, the Triad worked too recklessly. His sermons to the Triad, back when he was a welcome guest, apparently fell on deaf ears. Diplomacy was no longer an option. Works, as usual, needed to be enforced by actions. It just so happened that the Triad school closest to Falgar’s home city was being visited by Onryn himself within a few weeks time. Falgar was familiar with the facility and formulated a plan to break into the building and destroy whatever dangerous magics they found plans for. With luck, the sorcerer hoped, such an action would make Onryn think twice about his plans.

As often happens, information leaks both ways. Onryn became aware of Falgar’s plot well in advance but knew that attacking the man, who was still a respected colleague in the arcane field, would not do his organization any favors. Instead, he prepared a surprise for the agents of Falgar, who would no doubt be comprised of monks gathered and led by his daughters. Thus, mere hours before he left for his inspection of the facility, Onryn completed the *fire shield* spell, perfect for repelling the expected close-combat attacks. The details following the attack are sketchy at best, at least according to my source. Apparently, the assault on the facility not only saw the deaths of many initiate monks (thanks to Onryn’s new spell) but also Onryn himself when an unexpected spell collided with wild magics in a lab and exploded.

Falgar, not a participant in the attack, was so incensed by the loss of life (especially that of one daughter) that he used the explosion as an excuse to attack the Triad itself. He vowed that the group’s corruption from within needed to be weeded out and the only way to do so would be a total dismantling of the infrastructure. The upper echelon of the Triad was still attempting to figure out what Onryn had been up to when Falgar’s accusations were first hurled. But they could not deal rationally with the grieving father and so the Triad decided to

## Behind the Spells: Fire Shield

quietly disband, allowing local authorities to take direct control over any Triad facilities in their domains.

Before his death, however, Onryn wisely sent word to his special project managers to hide their work for him within already-established safehouses. These complexes, little more than trap- and ward-infested vaults and dungeons, were prepared early in Onryn's schemes to store the finished products of his labors. Some projects were, indeed, finished but many were only half-completed when the order came to store them away. Some of these safehouses have been discovered over the centuries but many others remain hidden, their contents still waiting to be either completed or released. Because of the move against him, Onryn's sole legacy to the arcane lexicon remains the *fire shield* spell.

### Spell Secrets

The *fire shield* is a purely reactive spell. Unless someone attacks the caster, its magic is wasted unless you like pyrotechnic aesthetics. The spell senses the angle of an attack and responds immediately by projecting heat or cold damage in the reverse direction. Although it packs its own punch, the spell is limited to a mere 5-foot distance (as represented by its inability to damage attackers with reach weapons). But there is still one way to have *fire shield* affect creatures at a distance. The first spell secret can be quite a surprise to spellcasters hoping to unleash fiery or chilling damage on the caster and his companions.

By decreasing the damage potential of *fire shield*, the caster can alter the spell's standby energy to be a "watchdog" for certain spells and possibly defeat them. If a spell bearing the fire or cold descriptor is targeted either on the spellcaster or within an immediate 5-ft. radius of him, the *fire shield's* energy launches out to counterspell it. The triggering spell must be of 3rd level or lower. The *fire shield* continues to perform its usual reactive damage function but the damage inflicted is reduced to 1d4+1 point per 2 caster levels (maximum +7) for the duration (and cannot be changed from this partial counterspell mode once cast). The counterspell occurs immediately but the caster must succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 19) to set it up in the first place when he casts the spell. The counterspell effect is a visible phenomenon as the wispy flames leap from the caster's body to intercept and envelop the offending spell in midair. In addition, when this spell secret is in effect, the half damage rules do not apply (the caster makes saves and takes damage as normal instead of half or nothing).

Even with a *fire shield* in place, a spellcaster's durability in a pitched melee is not good. If struck down with the spell still active, the caster's own willpower might be able to sustain the magic to guard his prone form from aggressors.

### The Daughters of Falgar

During the dismantling of the Arcane Triad, Falgar somehow discovered the existence of Onryn's many safehouses of magic. He made his surviving daughters promise him that they would use their resources to seek out these vaults and, if they could not enter them, guard them against those that would use their contents. To this end, the daughters spun off a secret society from the Silent Strike order. A group comprised solely of women, the Daughters of Falgar are today spread across the globe. If they are encountered, it means they are either guarding a Triad safehouse or are searching for one. I have it on good authority that senior members, after surviving an intricate test of skills and will, are branded with an arcane sigil which grants resistance to spells [SR 15]. The Daughters are a group of few words and subtle power which they wield with cruel efficiency when necessary. This is the group which has been hindering my hunt for Triad information. Given these new developments, I've decided it best to leave that ancient organization's secrets remain hidden. Others will not be so easily persuaded.



## Behind the Spells: Fire Shield

If a spellcaster falls unconscious, the magic of the *fire shield* might be able to protect him from further harm. When the caster falls, he must immediately succeed a Concentration check (DC 19 + number of hit points dealt by the attack that caused unconsciousness) to keep the *shield* active. If successful, the wispy flames maintain their humanoid outline over the caster's prone body. If any creature not considered an ally by the caster attempts to touch him, the humanoid-shaped flames lash out as per the spell's normal effect (inflicting 1d6 points of damage +1 point per caster level) but must succeed a melee attack roll using the caster's base attack bonus. This protective measure remains until the spell's duration expires or the caster regains consciousness, whichever comes first. The flaming humanoid cannot move from its spot astride the caster's body.

### Related Research

The *fire shield* spell used to have a "back door" which allowed attackers to exploit the energy type not protected against. The opposite type, if used against the caster, inflicted double damage (i.e. protection against fire meant more damage from a cold attack). Thankfully, this glitch has been patched in recent years (but be cautious as older scrolls of this spell may yet hold this side effect!). In an unlikely twist, this facet has evolved into its own spell as detailed below.

### NEW SPELL

#### *Susceptibility to Energy*

Transmutation

**Level:** Clr 3, Sor/Wiz 3

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** Standard action

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Target:** One living creature

**Duration:** 1 round/level or until discharged

**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

You cause the target to become more susceptible to the energy type you choose (acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic). When the target is damaged by the chosen energy type, this damage is doubled unless a Fortitude save is successful (this save is made before any other save that might be applicable for the damaging effect). *Susceptibility to energy* increases the damage in this way a number of times equal to half your caster level.

*Fire shield* is for spellcasters who are certain melee combat is imminent. A prominent spellcaster generations after Onryn decided to take this one step further and give the spell a bit more utility. The variant presented below is the perfect spell for those casters who know what kind of danger they're walking into.

### VARIANT SPELL

#### *Baneful Fire Shield*

As per the spell *fire shield* with the following exceptions...

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 5

You can use this specialized version of *fire shield* to better protect yourself from a certain type of opponent. In addition to choosing the fire or cold version, you choose one creature type (use the *bane* special quality list in the DMG for these options). When attacked in melee by a creature of this type, the damage from your *shield* is enhanced and inflicts 3d6 points +1 per caster level (all other creature types suffer the normal damage). In addition, when a creature of your chosen type is within 30 feet of you, the *bane fire shield's* flames become a deep shade of purple to alert you.

# Behind the Spells: Fire Shield

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Fireball

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the SRD that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. These are the spells which, if on your PC's class list, will be taken as soon as possible. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is want to do. This time, Maxolt chats with us about the spell "voted most likely used in combat"—*fireball!*

### The Creator

Anyone who has been around the kingdom a few times knows that a robed figure carrying bat guano and sulfur means only one thing—*fireball* capability. Not surprisingly, this offensively-minded spell was developed by the same minds that devised the *magic missile*. And although Mirtanin Moldao is credited with the latter's creation, it is his involvement with the Arcane Triad that is most relevant, for it is another of this group's membership who can

lay claim to the *fireball*. Santik Ri'Hesh, a half-elf with fiery red hair and a temper to match, was a founder of the Triad. He was an evoker of reportedly great skill who never shied away from a fight.

From what I've come to understand, half-elves of Santik's day were a rare occurrence. And when they do appear in the annals of ancient history, they are not figures of tolerance or diplomacy. Half-elves were considered a sub-race which had to earn the respect of others usually through violence. At first, Santik

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was more proficient in mastering alcohol than in spellcasting. Potent drink became the escape he needed amidst the hostility of the school for mages he attended. It didn't help matters that Santik was raised by one of the school's professors and received free training amidst the bulk of financially struggling classmates. Since running to his father after every hostile encounter would only worsen his status in the eyes of his peers, Santik instead hid amidst the city's many taverns.

As legend has it, one night Santik's enemies caught up with him at one such tavern. The young half-elf evoker was challenged to a wizard's duel by a younger illusionist. This was Santik's chance to prove himself to everyone, including himself, that he was worthy of the magical schooling given to him (and not simply a privileged half-breed). After the enacting of defensive spells, Santik's foe cast *mirror image* to confuse the half-elf. Santik knew of the youth's predilection for this spell and countered with the simple, yet effective, *burning hands*. The illusionist was circling a table at the time, the patrons having hastily vacated that spot and left their glasses of alcohol behind. When the fan of flames skimmed the table, the glasses exploded from the heat. To make a long story short, while Santik lost the duel (strategy won out over force), he won the last laugh as this encounter was the stimulus for the historic *fireball* spell. It took some months to perfect, but Santik eventually settled on the infamous guano and sulfur combination after attempting many times to use alcohol as a component (much to his disappointment, or so I've read).

The Arcane Triad, from what I've been able to piece together, was based in Santik's home city of Artannis (more than likely an old name long since changed). A few decades ago I unearthed a clay tablet bearing evocation symbols and the name "Triad" in an old Common dialect. Besides emanating magic, I'm certain the tablet had cryptic directions chiseled onto the back. But I had to leave the relic in the safekeeping of a monastery and by the time I returned from my mission the structure had mysteriously burned to the ground. None of the monks survived the fire and yet the tablet was missing. Very odd. As for Santik, the evoker hired himself and the organization out to

fight many a war using his "ball of fire" spell as a deserved claim to fame. Over the centuries, as the spell was transcribed and refined even further, the name itself was streamlined into today's simplistic *fireball*. It's a wonder some industrious scribe hasn't taken it upon himself to shorten *wall of fire* into "firewall." I mean, what's wrong with the classic names? But, I'm not paid to rant, so on with the information.

## Spell Secrets

As a rule, *fireballs* detonate with a low roar. While this sonic window dressing has no effect on creatures, that need not always be the case. By swapping out sulfur for a more musical component, the damage can be tweaked away from fire. Casting in such a manner is more often employed by hedge wizards as opposed to casters taught in more traditional venues.

By replacing a *fireball's* sulfur component with a small hollow reed, the damage inflicted by the spell is altered. One-third of the *fireball* damage (rounded down) is sonic while the remainder is fire. For example, a 10th-level wizard can alter his *fireball* in this manner to inflict 3d6 sonic damage and 7d6 fire damage (to equal the normal 10d6 damage) with the same spell. A PC spellcaster who is not an adept must succeed a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 25 minus caster level) to see if he or she knows of this component replacement. Adepts gather their information from a variety of source and stumble across this fact with far more frequency (so they are already assumed to have this knowledge).

Early impacts are a danger to *fireball* casters which is so rarely exploited. Every basic treatise written about this spell includes the "early impact" clause but so few casters take note of it, hell-bent instead on needlessly overcooking their next foe. I'll be the first to admit my guilt to this pride as well. There was a time, not long after I mastered the *fireball* spell, when I was in pursuit of a dangerous Krie'lat

## Behind the Spells: Fireball

assassin (an evil organization from the far eastern realms). The rugged mountain terrain was foreign to both of us but the assassin's agility gave him the edge in the chase. After hopping atop an elevated boulder, I cast *fireball* at the fleeing human, even knowing that he was about to descend over the next rise. The pea-sized bead of flame struck the ridge just after he leapt past—not a precise hit but I knew the blast had caught him.

Sure enough, by the time I reached the top of that rise, the assassin had just tumbled to a halt perhaps fifty feet down the rocky slope,

his left side still smoldering. Before I could reach for my axe and work my way down the hill to finish off this murderer of children, the man struggled to his feet. So instead of closing the distance, I began the chant for a second *fireball*. Well, the assassin must have recognized the verbal component from those moments before because by the time I raised my finger at him, he had already hurled a piece of shale in my direction. The assassin's aim proved true and the rock impacted the *fireball* bead only ten feet from me. The resulting explosion of flames, while proving little

If a PC wishes to cause the early impact of a foe's *fireball* he must first ready an action to identify it as it's being cast. If he has heard or seen a *fireball* being cast previously, then he needn't be a spellcaster to identify it (but without previous exposure to the spell, the character cannot attempt this maneuver). A nonspellcaster identifies the *fireball* by succeeding a DC 20 Intelligence check. Failure means that he can still attempt to distract the spellcaster with a readied weapon even though he isn't sure what spell is being cast. Successful identification means he can use a ranged weapon readied for this situation (because if a PC is close enough to use a melee weapon, it's likely an early impact isn't going to help much). After readying an action and correctly identifying the *fireball*, the next step is to accurately strike the bead of flame that shoots from the caster's fingertip. To do this, the character must succeed with a ranged attack against the bead's base AC of 15. The PC's attack roll is modified by the size of his projectile (weight is not important except in knowing whether a character is physically able to lift and throw the item or not):

Huge (16 to 32 ft.)	+8
Large (8 to 16 ft.)	+4
Medium (4 to 8 ft.)	+0
Small (2 to 4 ft.)	-4
Tiny (1 to 2 ft.)	-8
Diminutive (6 in to 1 ft.)	-12
Fine (6 in. or less)	-16

Note that if a character has the strength to throw something larger than Huge size, getting hit by a *fireball* isn't likely going to mean much anyway. A successful hit with the projectile means that the *fireball* detonates at least halfway between caster and target. Lastly, when one character has a greater Dexterity score than the other, the detonation point is closer to the latter by 5 feet for every two Dex points difference.

Let's use Max's story as an example. The assassin (Dex 17, Int 14) readies an action to hurl his rock when he hears Maxolt casting. Since he just heard the spell cast, the GM should grant a +4 bonus to the assassin's Intelligence check. He rolls a 17 and correctly identifies the spell. When Maxolt lets loose the pea of flame, the assassin's chunk of stone is already in flight. The assassin makes a ranged attack and rolls a 14. His shale is nearly 2 feet in length so it qualifies as a Small projectile (causing a -4 attack penalty). But the assassin's Dex and BAB more than make up the difference to beat the pea's AC of 15. Now, the *fireball* is definitely going to experience an early impact, but the question is where? Halfway between Maxolt and the assassin is 25 feet. But since Max has an average Dexterity score of 10, the assassin is the quicker hurler and the impact occurs closer to the warrior-mage. How close? The assassin has 7 more Dex points so that means the *fireball* detonates 15 ft. closer to Maxolt ( $17 - 10 = 7 / 2 = 3 \times 5 \text{ft.} = 15 \text{ft.}$ )!

## Behind the Spells: Fireball

more than an inconvenience for me, actually blocked my view of the assassin long enough for him to leap into a cave I hadn't seen from my vantage point. Thus, did I learn the hard way *fireball's* early impact clause.

### Related Research

I'm fairly certain that *fireball's* early impact clause was one of the primary motivations in the development of *delayed blast fireball* but I'll discuss that spell another time. One of the early variants of the original "ball of fire" was also an attempt to avoid the possibility of early impact. Called simply "ethereal blast," this variant just wasn't worth the extra effort to channel magic through the ethereal to avoid early impacts. It is presented below with the name most closely associated with it today.

#### VARIANT SPELL: *Ethereal Fireball*

As the spell *fireball* with the following exceptions.

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 4

The bead of flame which shoots from your fingertip immediately enters the Ethereal Plane. The projectile flies true to its selected burst point without risk of an early impact against any creature or item on the Material Plane. Once at the selected detonation point, the bead exits the Ethereal and explodes normally. However, in addition to harming creatures and items as a normal *fireball*, this spell damages any creature or item on the Ethereal Plane within range as well.

*Additional Material Component:* A small silk veil.

One of the great attractions of *fireball* is its long range. Spellcasters needn't put themselves anywhere near the front lines when employing it. Even so, some casters have attempted to capitalize upon that range and get more bang for their bat guano. The embarrassingly named *firebuds* is one such attempt. While this spell does succeed in making an impressive display, its effectiveness is limited by a reduction in damage and area of effect.

#### VARIANT SPELL: *Firebuds*

As the spell *fireball* with the following exceptions.

**Area:** Two 10-ft.-radius spreads

When your bead of flame reaches the midpoint of its path, the bead separates, or buds, into two equal parts. These lesser *fireballs* proceed to the range (distance and height) you determine upon casting. The damage inflicted by each *firebud* is half the normal *fireball* amount rounded down (i.e. a 7th-level caster inflicts only 3d6 damage with each *firebud*).

*Additional Material Component:* Two marbles.

Of course, when a spell highlights one type of energy, some copycat mage is waiting in the wings to change that energy hoping to cash in on the next big spell. Bad news, guys, but the "fire" of *fireball* is not replaceable with ice, ooze, wind, light, water, or flatulence.

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Guards & Wards

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### The Creator

Challenge-filled labyrinths are the mainstay of most adventurers. Traps, monsters, and worse are set into place to safeguard some kind of valuable(s). But more often than not, the courageous treasure hunters never discover, much less encounter, who actually erected these hazards in the first place. Oh sure, legends abound concerning the “insane sorcerer

Meltan” or the “wild witch of Eastfen” but such legendary figures are soon forgotten by the adventurers once the dungeon is penetrated. More on this line of thought in a moment.

The origin of *guards and wards* can be traced back to that illustrious group of evokers called the Arcane Triad. I reported way back in the *magic missile* issue that the Triad kept its evocation secrets within a hidden desert safehouse. I followed up on that information in

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## Behind the Spells: Guards & Wards

the *fire shield* issue that this was only half true; for while that one does exist it has many companions across the world housing all kinds of arcane bric-a-brac. Sometimes these havens of magical storage were constructed from scratch while other locations used existing constructions of natural or man-made origin. There were simply not enough (trustworthy) members of the Triad, however, to keep watch over these hoards. The not so surprising solution was to turn to magic but a second, more insidious, protection was also approved. Enter the legends I just mentioned above.

Even in those early years, ghost stories and other such rumors attached to an area proved an ample deterrence to visitors wishing to visit the site. Today, these dark tales of danger have survived the centuries (sometimes in different forms) and continue to perform the task of frightening away the common folk. Otherwise, anyone with half an inkling would think nothing of visiting a Triad safehouse. I just wanted to give this second precaution of the Triad's a brief moment of attention in case you adventurers out there hear a similar rumor and decide to pass. You never know when you're going to score a Triad hoard! Of course, it's just as likely that the horrible ghost story is true so take proper precautions.

Assuming that you are dealing with a Triad-related labyrinth, there is a good chance it will be guarded by some variation of the current *guards and wards* spell. The group of evokers decided to hire an independent abjurer to fashion an appropriate spell of protection for these sites. Half-elf Lamdin Fouz was their first and only choice. Already famous for his energy-draining "spell nets" (see below for details), Fouz was well known and respected in arcane circles. Although something of a recluse, the half-elf nevertheless agreed to stay at the Triad's headquarters in the city of Velslev while he developed the spell that is our topic. The Triad's request for a "dweomer of building protection" was broad enough to allow Fouz great latitude in *guards and wards* creation which is why, I believe, there are so many effects inherent to it. In fact, pages from Fouz's diary that have survived the centuries indicate that mages would frequently drop by his laboratory and suggest spells that could be useful in his work. "Fill the spell's area with fog" and "hide some

of the doors" were two of the most requested effects. Fouz went so far as to track the most requested effects on a chalkboard. The ones that suited him (like the two just mentioned) went into the spell while others (like "place a fireball at every intersection") were immediately discarded. Harmful effects were especially frowned upon as Fouz feared that they might damage the very items they were established to protect.

The end result is a literal hodge-podge of protections with even the name *guards and wards* seeming, to me at least, a bit indecisive. Although not stated in his diary, I think Fouz eventually tired of having his days interrupted by "helpful suggestions" and simply treated his task and his employers as diplomatically as possible. In any case, the half-elf was well compensated for his time and the spell continues to be used in a very utilitarian sense—nocturnal watchdog for businesses and warehouses mostly. Nothing spectacular but also nothing even an experienced thief enjoys encountering.

### Spell Secrets

Although today's version of *guards and wards* is essentially the same one presented to the Arcane Triad, it is most certainly not the only version available to casters. To be able to market his spell to others, Fouz made certain that the spell was as modular as possible—flexible locations being the highlight. The standard version of *guards and wards* is all well and good if you're protecting a building or similar construction. But what can you do to similarly protect an area that is not a building? Before the abjurer could promote this hidden quality to non-Triad organizations and individuals, he met with an untimely (and somewhat suspicious) demise at the claws of a red dragon. I discovered the first spell secret when I found the ruins of Fouz's squat stone tower nestled amidst the tall pines of Northkill Mountain.

## Behind the Spells: Guards & Wards

By succeeding a Spellcraft check (DC 26), you can “restructure” the spell’s effects so that they need not conform to the standard enclosed area of effect. This spell secret is no way changes the area of effect (200 sq. ft./level up to 20 ft. high **but not shapeable atop each other**) or the duration (2 hours/level). What it does change is how the spell’s effects can be placed within the area as stated below.

### Static Effects

*Fog:* You can place one *fog cloud* per 2 caster levels within the area of effect. Structures that are within the protected area also have their ground floor corridors filled with fog.

*Arcane Locks:* If there are doors within the area of effect, they are *arcane locked*. Structures that are within the protected area also have their ground floor doors *arcane locked*.

*Webs:* You can place one *web* per 3 caster levels within the area of effect (but as per the spell these webs must be anchored to two or more diametrically opposed points). This can include inside ground floor rooms (but not staircases) of structures within the protected area.

*Confusion:* As normal but occurs whenever a choice is made to move to a particular object (“I move to that tree/rock/door”).

*Lost Doors:* As normal but can also include other “closed portals” such as sewer grates or covered wells. Structures within the protected area can only have their ground level doors so hidden.

### Chosen Effect

(As stated in the PHB except for the two revised below)

1. *Dancing lights:* As normal except choose four specific spots instead of four corridors (unless the corridors are on the ground level of a structure within the protected area).
4. *Gust of wind:* Can choose one ground floor corridor or room or one exterior spot within the protected area.

The protection afforded by *guards and wards* is substantial but what happens when an ally of the caster needs to retrieve something from the area of effect and the caster is not around to dismiss the spell? Enter the second spell secret. Experienced casters can enchant a special token during the spell’s casting that enables the bearer to ignore most of the effects. Take heed, spellcasters, and make certain that you implicitly trust whoever the token is crafted for. More than one tale of woe has reached my ears concerning duplicitous token carriers who stole as many valuables as they could carry from an enspelled area. Of course, these thieves may well have stolen the token from its legitimate bearer so keep that in mind too!

A spellcaster can fashion a token that makes its bearer immune to the static effects of *guards and wards* (the effect chosen from the five options **cannot** be so protected against). To accomplish this crafting, the caster must have the Craft Wondrous Item feat and succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 31) during the casting. Success means that a small non-magical object (such as a feather, rock, or bit of jewelry) is imbued with its own abjuration energy. The token protects the bearer for the spell’s duration and is only useful against the specific *guards and wards* spell cast during its creation. Following the duration, the object returns to its normal state.

## Related Research

Before his creation of *guards and wards*, Lamdin Fouz developed a magic item known simply as a *spell net*. This is one of the few dozen ideas nearly lost to the ages after the abjurer’s untimely demise. Tomes stuffed with arcane notes and theories went unopened because no one at that time could undo the protective enchantments laid on the chest the books were kept in. Centuries later, the magic faded on its own and the grandson of a Triad outcast who was in possession of the knowledge sold it to the local sorcery academy. These original documents

## Behind the Spells: Guards & Wards

of the abjurer are displayed with pride at the school and would fetch quite a price in any market (rumors abound that the ones on display are fakes and that mages are still secretly poring over the extensive notes with the authentic tomes somewhere). The Arcane Triad supposedly stewed for many years after losing Fouz's research following his death. In fact, the only scrap of his genius they were able to snatch for themselves was a spell left on his work table when the abjurer came to work for the group. Triad mages developed this arcane sketch into the spell that is today

known as *contingency*. But I digress.

Now, where was I? Oh yes, the *spell net*. This item takes its name from the net-like appearance it has after being successfully used on a creature. In its unused form, the item resembles a tiny sphere of iron. The user need only throw the sphere at an opponent to activate its magic. Victims become entangled in a glowing net of energy that works to incapacitate them. I know, it sounds like a normal net but there's a twist—proficiency in the net is not a must and the target's magic items may work against him.

### NEW MAGIC ITEM *Spell Net*

This single use magic item takes the form of an iron latticework sphere approximately one inch in diameter. To activate the item, the wielder must throw it and succeed at a ranged touch attack against a target creature. If the sphere misses its target, it can be retrieved and used again. Upon a successful hit, the sphere explodes with a flash of green light and coats the target's form in a field of glowing energy that resembles a skin-tight net. The *spell net* immediately inflicts 1d6 points of nonlethal damage on the target and may inflict 1d6+3 points of Strength damage unless a Fortitude save (DC 13) is succeeded. Creatures who are immune to nonlethal damage are unaffected by the *spell net*.

The *spell net's* duration is 6 minutes unless dispelled earlier but it in no way hampers movement (the target can act normally but gives off light equivalent to a torch). However, if the target attempts to use any type of magic (be it from a spell, wondrous item, weapon, etc.), the *net* has the potential to absorb energy from the magic and turn it against the target. The source of the magic (be it caster or item) must succeed a caster level check against the *spell net* to activate normally. Failing the check means that the *spell net* harmfully redirects the energy back into the target in the form of nonlethal damage. The damage inflicted is Xd6 where X is the spell level of the failed magic.

For example, a 7th-level sorcerer needs to help his allies in the middle of a battle but has somehow found himself caught within a *spell net*. A well-placed *fireball*, he determines, will send the orc foes running scared but he must first cast it successfully. A caster level check now occurs. The GM rolls a 13 (add 6 for the caster level of the *spell net*) while the sorcerer's player rolls a 10 (add 7 for the sorcerer's level). The *spell net*, unfortunately for the sorcerer, wins out and redirects the spell energy back into the sorcerer, who now takes 3d6 nonlethal damage (since *fireball* is a 3rd level spell).

Moderate necromancy; CL 6th; Craft Wondrous Item; *cure light wounds*, *ray of enfeeblement*, creator must have at least 10 ranks in Spellcraft; Price: 1,200 gp.

## Behind the Spells: Guards & Wards

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS Hold Person

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. These are the spells which, if on your PC's class list, will be taken as soon as possible. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is want to do. For this issue, Maxolt gives us the lowdown on a spell everyone should stop and appreciate—*hold person*.

## The Creator

Born to a female human and a male orc, Xuteq Olmarren began life with but one advantage. After the half-orc was abandoned by both parents he was rescued from certain death by an old hedge mage named Kiara Olmarren. She gave the child her family name but decided his first name was better suited as an amalgam of

the nature deities she venerated. The human adept raised Xuteq as her own child, teaching him the ways of magic and nature while instilling a healthy respect for life in all its forms. Despite his quick-tempered orcish side, Xuteq managed to keep from fighting with the local children his age when they invariably taunted him for his obvious heritage.

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: Hold Person

The Olmarren's village was one of many on the fringe of human civilization in that early time of the world. Because of these communities' distant locations, there was no proper venue for mass education. If a family did not teach its children, then they simply remained ignorant farmers. Early on, Kiara observed eagerness and a competence in sorcery in Xuteq. She knew that a connection to the mystical arts would be one of the only ways her adopted son would get a fair shake in the land of men. So, when the *juras* (rough translation as "sorcery talent scout") visited the village after the half-orc's sixteenth birthday, Kiara made certain that Xuteq was ready. The kingdom's *juras* toured the frontier settlements every other year to gather potential students for arcane training. Those chosen few would then receive basic arcane tutoring and possible apprenticeship after graduation (only one person from each geographic area was accepted for apprenticeship) but be required to serve in the military for a number of years (usually five). If a youth could cast three different cantrips without difficulty and pass a relatively easy physical exam, then his admittance at least to the arcane academy was assured.

Xuteq cast the cantrips her mother had shown him and had no problem with the physical part of the test considering his brawny form. Unfortunately, the half-orc's young nemesis, a human boy named Rotex Vercoa, was also eager for an arcane apprenticeship. The word most used to describe the human was "quick" as he was fleet of foot, hand, and mind. The *juras* not only accepted them both into his potentials, he gave additional kudos to Rotex for managing to disrupt one of Xuteq's cantrips while it was being cast. It took the half-orc hours of scrubbing to clean the resulting bright pink stain from his hands. He secretly vowed to avenge the public humiliation against the longtime childhood bully.

The only thing holding Xuteq back from pummeling Rotex right then and there were the teachings of his adopted mother. Kiara tirelessly kept the half-orc's anger in check and admonished him for any harsh words or actions when they did emerge. Before the *juras* left with the village's two arcane aspirants, Kiara spoke one final piece of advice to her son. "It's not what you are that defines

your life," she said, looking pointedly at Rotex, "it's how you choose to live it." Xuteq would use these words to comfort him during those first weeks at the kingdom's sorcery college. Rotex proved popular among the duo's classmates and, as bullies often do, he soon had a gang of like-minded students taunting the half-orc at every opportunity.

Five years of schooling passed without too much trouble for Xuteq. Sure, the moronic antics of Rotex and his cronies subsided a bit but the half-orc never forgot his promise to take vengeance on the human. This was not an all consuming lust but rather something kept in the back of Xuteq's mind as he waited for just the right time to present itself. As the years progressed, these two adversaries kept consistently good grades, neither one beating the other for first place for very long. But it would be the average of all the years' grades, plus the weighty final exam, that would determine who would move on to an apprenticeship from his region. In the end, it was announced that Rotex won but only by a slight margin.

How could this be, thought Xuteq. The half-orc was certain he scored perfectly on the final exam. Rotex had not even shown up for the test, claiming to have come down with a serious illness. The professors did not fully believe the human was so incapacitated but gave him the benefit of the doubt, allowing him to take the exam the next day. When the instructor administering the exam to Rotex left for a few minutes near the exam's end, it was a deliberate calculation on the professor's part. He was certain that the human was not a better student than Xuteq and so decided to *scry* the classroom while Rotex finished the exam in private. Sure enough, the human had hidden notes in his pocket and proceeded to cheat while the professor was gone.

The faculty was made aware of the situation but they decided to not directly intervene. Xuteq was an accomplished student, yes, but how the half-orc would deal with this unexpected situation was of greater interest to the group. Instead of directly intervening, they allowed Rotex to be publicly announced as the winning apprentice from his region all the while letting slip through a custodian that Rotex had cheated on the final exam. The

## Behind the Spells: Hold Person

half-orc's reaction to this travesty would ultimately prove to the faculty whether or not the half-breed was worthy of apprenticeship and eventual military service.

Xuteq was understandably furious at the news from a "trusted source" and wanted nothing more than to kill the human outright. Correspondence with his foster mother confirmed what he already knew—it didn't really matter. For even though official apprenticeship was out of reach, Xuteq was already marketable as a spellcaster just by virtue of attending the academy. Apprenticeship was an added perk but not something worth fretting over. Still, it would have been icing on the cake to show up Rotex in front of everyone.

Since it was unlikely that the half-orc and his nemesis would ever meet again after the graduation ceremony, Xuteq knew that his time for vengeance had come. Nothing dangerous, mind you. Something embarrassing would do nicely. The faculty secretly marveled at Xuteq's restraint after receiving the news of Rotex's cheating. They were about to step in and officially reverse the decision of Rotex's apprenticeship when Xuteq began to sneak into the senior laboratory and use some of the spell components and equipment there. Clearly, the half-orc was up to something and the faculty sent their custodian in to snoop for information.

Xuteq would not reveal any more than to say that he was planning something for graduation. So it was on graduation night that the students and families gathered to congratulate the various apprentices. Like his classmates, Xuteq sat near the front of the audience hall to listen to the apprentices' acceptance speeches. When it was Rotex's turn to approach the podium, Xuteq was ready. He had heard the human preparing his speech earlier in the week and knew just when to spring his trap. After Rotex thanked the school for the fine education it provided and his family for their support, he was going to say, "And I'd now like to announce that..." But he got no further than those words before Xuteq's spell took hold of him. The "hold human" spell the half-orc had been working on all week had worked! Rotex was paralyzed in mid-sentence, which Xuteq then finished with a quick *ventriloquism* spell with the words, "...I like to dress up in women's clothing."

Sudden gasps at Rotex's pause were replaced with gut-busting laughter from all in attendance. No louder laughter was heard than in the faculty section as the half-orc's plan was finally revealed. After the ceremony, the group decided to let Rotex have an apprenticeship, knowing that his "fondness for female garments" would haunt him in his public capacity moreso than the humiliation of expulsion for cheating ever would. The faculty offered Xuteq his own apprenticeship, the only year in the academy's history which saw two such placements from the same region. Xuteq's spell was claimed by the academy for its archives and the story of its creation was penned for future generations to read and enjoy (as I did before repeating it here). To play down any racial bias, the half-orc's spell was renamed to *hold person* by the academy's president before being disseminated to the arcane community at large.

### Spell Secrets

The spell *hold person* is, at its most basic level, a more powerful and more specialized version of the *command* spell. The latter attempts to force the target to perform a quick, decisive task. The former takes this concept and narrows it—telling the target's mind to freeze the body—for a likely longer duration. The first spell secret comes at *hold person* from the opposite direction and engages the ambulatory process of the target.

By succeeding a Spellcraft check (DC 17), you can use *hold person* to actually move the target in a chosen direction. If the target fails its Will save on the first round, it begins to walk in the direction chosen by you. The creature can perform no other action and does not stop walking until it reaches its maximum running distance (normally four times the walking distance). However, as with normal use of *hold person*, the target may attempt a new saving throw to end the affect (which is a full-round action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity).

## Behind the Spells: Hold Person

There are certain instances when you might want a person to be able to move but not be able to perform other actions. The second spell secret speaks to this desire, allowing the target to not even know he is under an enchantment unless he attempts the forbidden action.

After you cast *hold person*, if the target fails his Will save you can opt to delay the paralyzation effect until he attempts to perform a certain action (this modification requiring a Spellcraft check (DC 22) after the failed save). The action must be a clearly defined one, often including “if you draw a sword” or “if you cast a spell.” If the target does attempt the forbidden action, he is instantly paralyzed for the duration and cannot attempt a new save every round for the rest of duration.

### Related Research

“If you can’t stop someone, you should at least be happy to slow them down.” These words are from Merrik Iltavick, the creator of the new spell shown here. Merrik based *cause doubt* on the *hold person* spell and used the above statement to market it to novice mages who, as he put it to me, “always seem to possess more gold than they do experience.”

The next new spell presented is often used as a secondary precaution after an *arcane lock* spell. *Threshold barrier* is often employed by

dragons who lair in caves. Once this spell is cast, they can safely leave their lairs in search of lunch (or perhaps stay inside and wait for lunch to be caught by the spell).

### NEW SPELL

#### *Threshold Barrier*

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 4

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** Standard action

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** The door or portal touched, up to 30 sq. ft./level in size

**Duration:** Permanent

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** No

The object you touch becomes imbued with an invisible field of mind-affecting magic. When a humanoid creature attempts to pass through the warded area, he must succeed a Will save or become paralyzed in that exact spot for 1 hour. Even if moved out of the way by another creature, the magic remains in place and can paralyze any other humanoids that try to cross (up to one humanoid per caster level). You and any allies you designate at the time of casting can pass through your *threshold barrier* without affecting it. Only a successful *dispel magic* can deactivate the spell.

### NEW SPELL *Cause Doubt*

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

**Level:** Brd 1, Clr 1, Sor/Wiz 1

**Components:** V, S, F/DF

**Casting Time:** Standard action

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Area:** One creature

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This spell causes the target to doubt his capability in combat, constantly second-guessing his actions. Because of this unwillingness to react appropriately to the actions of others, the target is considered flat-footed for the duration (even though he is free to act regularly otherwise).

*Arcane Focus:* A wilted honeysuckle flower.



# Behind the Spells: Hold Person

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Invisibility

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. In this issue, Maxolt exposes the secrets of that most secretive of spells—*invisibility*.

### The Creator

As long as there have been official bodies of government, there has existed a shadowy opposite for each. Many times, these evil coalitions took the form of thieves' guilds vying for control of a city through whatever means necessary. There were a few, however, whose aspirations of dominion spread beyond one meager city to encompass kingdoms and

even whole continents. These power groups had a few vast storehouses of treasure and other resources to keep the group in motion should one be lost. Such groups had members from all echelons of society, many unaware they even worked for a shadowy overseer. One such group was the Nox Imperium.

About 13 centuries ago, the Imperium silently controlled the kingdoms of Thelgrat and Femtry. While the first kingdom was held

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## Behind the Spells: Invisibility

in the group's grip because an agent sat on the throne, the second fell under Imperium control because of trade. Femtry was a coastal kingdom but nearly all goods came by way of the trade roads from Thelgrat (trade by sea was dangerous and costly due to an overabundance of violent sea creatures (which many scholars believe were dumped there by the Imperium)). For years, the Nox Imperium trafficked slaves, drugs, and worse cargo within the two kingdoms with impunity. But after King Lambosi of Femtry perished from natural causes, the Imperium found itself under attack from the new liege—Queen Vetra.

*Wait a second, Maxolt, I can hear you thinking. Just what the heck does all of this have to do with the invisibility spell? Just keep your breeches on. I'm getting to it. Why must the young learn patience as rapidly a slug learns to run?*

As I was saying, after the king's death, his politically savvy wife invoked a seldom used law. A widowed queen was allowed to absorb her husband's authority if, firstly, she desired to rule, and secondly, there were no direct male heirs. Normally, a widowed queen was uninterested in governing and stepped down, leaving the closest male in the king's extended family to take the throne. In this case, the steely eyed Queen Vetra wanted nothing more than to use the power of her station. Vetra kept her ear to the people and she knew about the machinations of the Nox Imperium. Vetra met with her advisors and laid out all of the truths which she knew about the sinister organization. The time had come to remove the Imperium from Femtry and, if possible, from existence.

Word of the queen's crusade did not take long to reach the upper echelon of the Nox Imperium. The group's mysterious masters argued over just how to stop Vetra's plans. Of course, it did not take long to reach the obvious conclusion—Vetra had to die. Historically, the Imperium's power came from secret manipulations and not from direct force. Everyone could be kept silent by the right means but it was clear that Vetra would be the exception to the rule. The problem with a direct assault would be that such action would tip the organization's hand, acknowledging its existence to the public eye. They needed one

unswervingly loyal and competent person to carry out this assassination.

Direct assassination was also a problem because, after her directive to ferret out Imperium members and safehouses, Vetra retreated to her castle's interior and rarely emerged. The castle was heavily guarded and had long ago been enchanted to resist the powerful evocation magics wielded by mages in that age. You see, arcane magic was still a relatively young art in this time. When one spoke of magic, they spoke of flashy displays of destruction. The idea that magic could be used for subtler ends was only starting to be researched. With this in mind, let's turn to the wizard Dariux Nothlorian.

Before his rise to power within the Imperium, Dariux was the chief overseer of one of the group's mining operations in the mountains northwest of Thelgrat. (The wizard's control of the riches from these mines, by the way, was one of the factors in his rise to power.) For many years, Dariux had been toying with the notion of developing a spell based on a race of unusual dwarves that routinely attacked the deeper mine areas. Like many projects of any crafter, Dariux had the ability to develop the spell but never seemed to find the time over the years. During the Imperium's discussions, the spell jumped to the forefront of his mind.

Without preamble, the human took the floor of the chamber and described his plan. "An assassin will succeed," he stated, "if given the proper tools." The thought that one man could penetrate the castle's magics and manpower was nearly preposterous to many members until Dariux explained how he once witnessed the troublesome gray dwarves (called "duergar" he later discovered) turn themselves invisible. "I am confident that I can harness this power and fashion it into a spell to cloak our assassin from detection. Queen Vetra will perish within her own bed chambers which will secure more respect and fear for our group than could ever be accomplished normally."

The Imperium's leadership agreed to give Dariux the time he needed to develop his new spell. It was a simple matter for the wizard's forces to capture a duergar (the dwarves were previously slain on sight when a security force

## Behind the Spells: Invisibility

caught one). After imprisonment, the dwarf turned invisible right in front of Dariux. The wizard had seen the power employed in the mines whenever the creatures retreated. He did not know how long the ability lasted but pretended to be puzzled by the apparent disappearance. After a few hours, Dariux left the room but continued to watch the cell from a secret room with a small viewing hole. After approximately 24 hours had passed, the dwarf finally became visible once again.

During the viewing period, Dariux noted a slight rippling effect as the invisible dwarf moved within its cell. The wizard correctly deduced that the effect must be some sort of illusionary glamer and not, as he had initially theorized, some type of partial etherealness. Not long before the dwarf reappeared, a tiny ceramic vial bounced out from between the cell's bars, appearing out of thin air. The invisibility effect, Dariux realized, affects only the dwarf and its immediate area. If something is dropped, like the vial, it becomes visible. Unfortunately, when Dariux reentered the room the dwarf was quite dead. The vial had been filled with some type of poison. Apparently, the duergar would rather die than face torture or further imprisonment.

No matter, since the wizard was going to dissect the dwarf eventually anyway. That procedure yielded a tiny organ connected to the brain just below and behind it which radiated faint magical properties even with the body deceased. News of more Imperium losses came to the wizard's laboratory and Dariux knew that time was of the essence. The group had decided upon an assassin and the spell was needed immediately. The wizard used his observations to fashion the spell *invisibility*. The spell was crude but the one test Dariux had time for was a resounding success. Within a few hours, the assassin who would save the Nox Imperium was enspelled with *invisibility* and sent on his way.

Regrettably for the Imperium, Dariux was never witness to a key condition that ended the *invisibility* effect. Since the spell-like generator organ of the duergar was attached to the brain, it was also regulated by the brain. If the dwarf wanted to be hidden, it was immediately shrouded in *invisibility*. However, if the duergar wanted to strike at a foe, this action

caused it to become visible again. To attack someone directly is the polar opposite of remaining hidden so the brain instinctively shuts the spell-like organ down. The unfortunate assassin found out first hand about this condition of the spell. After dispatching several guards without notice at the castle's entrance, the man was quickly cut down by arrows launched with deadly precision by nearby archers.

News of the assassin's demise angered the Imperium so much that Dariux himself was put to death and his arcane research confiscated. The wizard who took possession of the materials quickly amended the *invisibility* spell with the "attack and be seen" clause. History is unclear as to the fate of the Imperium but, as one can well imagine, a group with such resources and ingenuity does not become extinct easily. I personally believe that as Queen Vetra's forces moved closer to victory, the Imperium went deep underground (perhaps literally) if not splintering into different sects altogether after retreating.

At the very least, enough members survived to introduce *invisibility* into the world's arcane lexicon. The spell's appearance and widespread use became cause for concern among many authority figures. Naturally, the ability to disappear from sight is a powerful one and so sparked the creation of spells such as *true seeing* and *invisibility purge*. But for every spell designed to thwart *invisibility*, there was another created to improve upon it. Spells such as today's *greater invisibility*, *mass invisibility*, and *invisibility sphere* have certainly broadened the concept of the original. In fact, *greater invisibility* was one of the first to be developed to remove the dreaded "attack and be seen" clause of the original spell (albeit at a reduced duration).

### Spell Secrets

When Dariux Nothlorian created the *invisibility* spell, he envisioned it as a skin-tight, intangible shroud of magical energy. This "shroud" wraps around the target of the spell and anything carried or held by the target (if a creature). As items are dropped or picked up, the shroud alters in form to accommodate the change. Note that the original version's maximum duration was 24 hours (as observed by

## Behind the Spells: Invisibility

Dariux). In recent years, however, the duration has diminished to accommodate a change in the spell's target to allow for invisible objects as well as creatures. When you find an *invisibility* scroll inside an old treasure chamber, make sure you know which version you've got before casting it. The first spell secret deals with this concept of stretching the figurative shroud. It can be especially useful for moving injured or incapacitated allies away from danger.

Whether you are the target or the spellcaster of *invisibility*, you can attempt to extend the field of invisibleness to one other creature you touch (who must be of the same size category as you or smaller). Such a task requires a successful Concentration check (DC 22) and the *invisible* creature gains a +2 competence bonus to this check if he has five or more ranks in the Spellcraft skill. Failure can have two effects depending on the skill check roll. If the check fails by more than five, it causes the *invisibility* to cease altogether. If the check fails by five or less, both the original target and the secondary creature are protected by only partial *invisibility* which appears as a wispy white veil that circles both creatures. This effect only causes random shifting sections of the creatures to become *invisible* as the shroud circles them, granting each concealment (20% miss chance). This effect is akin to the *blur* spell but is shorter in duration and can be overcome by a *see invisibility* spell. Success of the Concentration check means that both creatures are *invisible* but the spell's duration then drops to rounds instead of minutes. "Symbiotic invisibility," as it's called, uses the spell's normal rules except that the creatures cannot move apart from each other more than 5 feet or the spell ends.

Even *invisibility* is not foolproof in avoiding detection. A creature still makes sound, displaces water, has an odor, and is susceptible to *detect* spell. For this last situation, the second spell secret comes in handy.

If you can cast two divination spells of 2nd level or greater and succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 17) after casting *invisibility*, you can tweak the spell so it protects the target from certain magics. Success means that the target cannot be noticed by any *detect* spells of 0 or 1st level.

## Related Research

The *invisibility* spell really has had its share of related research over the years. *Mass invisibility* was created for army troop movement while *invisibility sphere* was created for careful adventurers. But then there's *invisibility purge*. I really pity the poor inexperienced cleric who tries to use this against an *invisible* archer. The limited warning a low-level cleric gets usually isn't worth the breath it's prayed for. Savvy opponents are not going to go anywhere near the cleric who casts this, which I thought immediately after seeing the spell in action. Apparently, so did the cleric who prayed for the improved version (see next page).

There are times when a quick illusion buys one just enough time to get out of a sticky situation. Created by a human bard, the spell *ray of wondrous disappearance* is one such illusion. I've seen fear thrown into many foes who think this spell is some type of quick and dirty *disintegrate* variant. My advice is to use it wisely because you'll only fool the same opponent once.

## Behind the Spells: Invisibility

### **VARIANT SPELL** *Invisibility Purge, Greater*

As the spell *invisibility purge* except for the following changes...

**Level:** Clr 4

**Range:** Personal; 10 ft./level burst

**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)

**Saving Throw:** See text

**Spell Resistance:** See text

You surround yourself with a sphere of power with a radius of 5 feet per caster level that negates all forms of invisibility. Every two rounds, an energy pulse bursts outward in all directions to a distance of 10 feet per caster level. Anything invisible that is caught in either the burst or the personal sphere of power becomes visible (the former being visible for that round only). In addition, invisible creatures struck by the burst (and not just affected by the sphere of power) must succeed a Will save or become dazed (as the spell *daze monster* except the maximum Hit Dice affected equals the caster level) for one round. Creatures with spell resistance can only use it against the daze effect. Note that this spell cannot be used to daze already visible creatures. It is because of the spell's destabilizing effect on a creature's invisibility that plays havoc with its senses.

### **NEW SPELL** *Ray of Wondrous Disappearance*

Illusion (Glamer)

**Level:** Brd 1, Sor/Wiz 1

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Effect:** Ray

**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)

**Saving Throw:** Will negates (object)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes (object)

When you cast this spell, a pale green ray fires from your fingertip toward one object of your choosing (weighing no more than 50 lb. per caster level). You must succeed on a ranged touch attack to strike the object. On a successful hit, the target vanishes from sight in a brilliant flash of green-white smoke. In reality, you have rendered the object *invisible* to everyone but yourself for the spell's duration. You can see the object normally. If the target object is held by a creature, it receives a Will save to avoid the effect. If the target object is a weapon which is wielded by a creature after it disappears, the wielder receives a -2 penalty on attack rolls with it.

# Behind the Spells: Invisibility

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Levitate

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. These are the spells which, if on your PC's class list, will be taken as soon as possible. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. For this issue, Maxolt details the high and low points of the spell sometimes referred to as "poor man's *fly*"—*levitate*.

### The Creator

Due east of the central plains of the realm, a mountain range was once home to a goodly community of cloud giants called the Clan of the Setting Sun. They were often at war with a gang of hill giants who laired a few miles to the south. It was during one of these scuffles,

rocks flying fiercely from both sides, that a family of gnomes was passing by. After visiting friends in the neighboring province, the gnome patriarch decided to take the scenic mountain route home. Unfortunately, the small humanoids went unseen by the preoccupied cloud giants. The gnomes were caught in

by Bret Boyd



## Behind the Spells: Levitate

the middle as the battle erupted around them. Since the hill giants considered gnomes (and dwarves, halflings, elves, etc.) as little more than insects, they launched their boulders with unabated strength even after spotting them.

Once the battle ended near late afternoon, the cries of the only gnome to survive wafted up to cloud giant ears. Once they found smashed adult gnomes and the lone surviving infant female, the giants realized what had happened and took her into their community. Since her given name was unknown, the clan took to calling the infant Ogam which is Giant speak for “a gnome” or “one gnome.” Despite not being raised by her own kind, Ogam’s upbringing could not have been better-rounded. For while some of the giants would occasionally think of her as the clan’s pet, all standard education was made available to her. When Ogam displayed an early talent for magic (as gnomekind is wont to do), she was placed into the class of Ragnax, the clan’s arcane tutor.

Ogam’s story is one of the classic underdog. Raised by a people not her own (some of whom constantly reminded her of their “superiority,” at least physically), the gnome endured more taunts than any other giant classmates, I can tell you. No special treatment was given by Ragnax either. The sorcery tutor, an even-mannered giant, told all his students that they must look into themselves to accomplish tasks before them. “The gift of magic is a special one,” he lectured. “Granted by the gods to all races, your sorcery gives you an unseen ally as you travel life’s road. Where the body fails, magic may provide the answer.”

In a world of giants, this last sentence rang especially true for Ogam. Nothing she might do physically could compare to the giants’ capabilities. Because of this, she knew that she would never be accepted by the clan as an equal. Without that equal status, she would also never be allowed to witness the *saltor’-faan* (loosely translated as “sunset gathering”). The gathering was a weekly event which took place across a wide rocky plateau balanced high atop a thin, yet solid, stand of boulders. Climbing up the rocky column would prove difficult to impossible for any creature considering the some 300 feet needed to reach its peak. The sunset gathering was a time of

music and religious observance, when the cloud giants celebrated life and the beings that granted it to them. I’ve heard that every giant clan, even to this day, has a similar weekly gathering. If you want to piss off a bunch of giants, visit one of these uninvited. My, they’re a touchy bunch sometimes.

Since it was the clan which essentially gave Ogam her life, she so wanted to participate in the gathering. “Not until you can reach the top on your own,” she was told on more than one occasion by the Elder. The giants simply floated to and from the top using an innate power they possessed. Ogam considered this problem one evening as the gathering was taking place. Now in her third year of magical training, the gnome had mastered the basics of spellcasting and identification of the most common components. She knew of the spell to make someone fly but was not yet ready for that level of sorcery. And waiting until then was out of the question. She wanted to participate in the gathering and she wanted to do it now. Then the idea came to her. *I don’t have to fly*, she thought, *I just have to go up and down*.

Rushing back to her dwelling, Ogam began to create her first spell from scratch. By the time of next week’s gathering, she stood beneath the spire among the other giants about to ascend. A few hearty guffaws were launched in the gnome’s direction but these quickly silenced as she cast her new spell—*levitate!* So it was, at the tender age of 30, adulthood still 10 years distant, little Ogam created a spell used by mages to this day and likely for eternity. This act also solidified Ogam’s membership in the Setting Sun clan.

Years passed before Ogam eventually rejoined her kind in the same province her family came from but she visited her adopted giant family often with other curious gnomes in tow. A special pact of friendship formed over time between the Clan of the Setting Sun and the gnomes of Rikantha. Today, this ancient pact is still binding and declares that gnome will come to giant aid and vice versa if called upon; a pact which has seen use several times over the centuries.

## Behind the Spells: Levitate

### Spell Secrets

Charging monsters are a problem every adventurer faces. Many a hearty hero either leaps to the side or meets the creature head-on. But what happens when the enemy is gigantic?! I've seen no less than three casters attempt to *levitate* unprepared allies out of harm's way only to have an overlarge axe cleave the poor fellows in two. This maneuver works fine when fighting like-sized foes but when the opposing creature is twice your height this spell fails to deliver the desired escape. However, with a bit of tweaking, an experienced spellcaster can send his companions hurtling to safety in no time.

You can move the target of the *levitate* spell faster than 20 feet per round but doing so requires a full round action and a successful Spellcraft check (DC 17). For every four caster levels you have, the speed can be increased by 5 feet. The spell functions normally if the skill check fails.

All manner of nasty traps are built into a dungeon's floors. Sometimes these traps occupy entire hallways that adventurers must navigate. To save time and minimize bodily harm, the spellcaster can use *levitate* to give all of his companions just enough lift to pull themselves along a wall over hazardous ground.

Instead of moving one target, you can opt to affect multiple targets in a 30-ft. radius (including yourself) by succeeding a Spellcraft check (DC 17+1 for every target beyond the first). Failure means that the *levitate* spell is wasted. A successful check means that all chosen targets rise *only* 1 foot off the ground for 1 round per level. As per the spell's description, no movement is possible (not even at the whim of the spellcaster) unless the target(s) are able to pull or push against a solid body such as a wall or ceiling.

While this spell doesn't allow a creature to fly, it is definitely the next best thing to it. Sure, you can't maneuver while under its effects but you can, when using *levitate* creatively, move diagonally from point A to point B. It's all about momentum.

A creature can make greater long distance jumps than normal when under the effects of a *levitate* spell. The caster must delay the action to move the spell's target (which could very well be himself) until after said target has begun a long distance jump. Once the target's feet have left the ground, the caster promptly starts to move the target vertically. This effectively negates the normal pull of gravity which would otherwise drag the jumping target down. Mechanically, this means that the target's Jump DC is cut in half. A DC of 25 now gets the target a jump distance of 50 feet instead of the usual 25 feet. If the Jump check is unsuccessful, the caster can keep him from falling into a chasm or other hazardous area by keeping him afloat normally with the spell if necessary. This spell secret allows the target to appear to onlookers as if he could float across the air.

### Related Research

Part of the *levitate* spell is about stabilizing a target who becomes unstable while acting under its effects. Enterprising mages have taken this concept in the other direction. What happens when this quality is reversed and used on already stable targets? The result is a jostling of equilibrium and possible sickness. (See next page.)

A *levitate* variant which is fairly obvious yet one folks seldom use is *glide*. I suppose that's because its use is limited to getting something or someone across a wide chasm but it's in the arcane repertoire nonetheless. (See next page.)

## Behind the Spells: Levitate

### NEW SPELL

#### *Cause Vertigo*

Transmutation

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 1

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** Standard action

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Target:** One living creature (total weight up to 100 lb/level)

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Fort negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This spell throws off the target creature's center of gravity. Unless the target succeeds a Fortitude saving throw, it is nauseated for the duration. The weight requirement indicates that any creature heavier than the maximum is too much for your magic to off-balance.

### VARIANT SPELL *Glide*

As the spell *levitate* but with the following exceptions...

Instead of moving one object or willing creature vertically you move them horizontally. While being moved by this spell, the target does not succumb to natural gravity.

Far more useful is the item known as the *lift stone*. Often found in pairs, these stones allow for *levitation* without the need for a spellcaster. I've seen single *lift stones* used at massive construction operations where a monument or large building is being built. Such a stone allows large amounts of raw materials or tools to be moved to an upper level without risk of injury. As a pair, *lift stones* have been used everywhere from dungeons to personal residences of the filthy rich.

### NEW MAGIC ITEM *Lift Stone*

This device is a block of smooth stone measuring from 5 ft. by 5 ft. to 25 ft. by 25 ft. and anywhere in between (but never more than two inches thick). A *stone* causes anyone or anything atop it to rise at the rate of 10 feet per round to a predetermined distance. If a *lift stone* is encountered at random, roll 1d10 and multiply the result by 10 feet to determine the height. A *lift stone* bears magical runes etched in a circle at its center. These markings denote the item's purpose for any who can read them (Knowledge (arcana) check at DC 20): "controlled levitation." A unique command word is also with the runes, allowing an arcane spellcaster capable of casting *levitate* to alter the levitation speed, height, and weight as desired (although the command word is in no way needed to use the *stone*). The speed cannot be greater than 20 feet per round and the weight cannot exceed 1,000 pounds. Normally, the levitation speed is set at 10 feet per round and the height brings the target(s) up to a ledge or similar construction which can then easily be stepped onto. If a *lift stone* is moved more than a few inches, its magic ceases until the command word is spoken while touching it.

When a pair of *lift stones* are encountered, each is "aware" of the other when aligned and form a vertical shaft of *levitation* activity. What this means is that if a creature were to step into the upper *stone's* area of activation (into the air just beneath the stone), he would descend at the predetermined rate until touching down on the lower *lift stone*. Since the lower one knows the creature just descended from the upper one, it does not automatically send the creature back up again.

Moderate transmutation; CL 10th; Craft Wondrous Item, *levitate*; Price 80,000 gp (per 5-foot square); Weight 35 lb.

# Behind the Spells: Levitate

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS Light

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. In this issue, Maxolt tells us about that basic spell of illumination—*light*.

## The Creator

The *light* spell might just be the very first magic developed by man. This story goes way, way back to the beginnings of humanoid life. Alright; maybe not that far but pretty far. You see, when the world was created the gods used not only their magic but also called forth great elementals to tweak the landscape as desired once the basics were in place. Upon

completion, rather than being dismissed, these elementals were instead stored away in extradimensional pockets along with other documents and bric-a-brac which could be learned by the curious lore seeker. These areas could only be accessed by casting the proper spell. Since no humanoids could yet cast spells, the gods knew that only when the time was right could these storehouses be opened. Apparently, magic in the world

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: Light

was not something freely given but rather a talent and a privilege that had to be earned (makes sense to me).

Enter our protagonist Saegen, one of the first human druids. Back in this time period, druids were referred to as “mystics” but to eliminate confusion we’ll go with today’s vernacular. As one of a handful of druids across the globe, Saegen was responsible for tending to the natural world, ensuring that no creature was overly abusing its resources or destroying same. Druids were also entrusted with knowledge of the “God Tongue” (or the language used by the world crafters). This was a written language handed down from druid to druid. Why written? Well, why attempt to speak a language no one would understand? This was the prevailing thought amongst the druids who knew the Tongue. Knowledge of the language was kept alive because mankind was expected to grow and learn on its own. As incentive, the gods left certain caches of knowledge and tools (as mentioned above) for humankind to discover. What’s learning, after all, without a little incentive? It was this language which would, supposedly, unlock these treasures and is why knowledge of it was handed down.

It just so happened that Saegen was the first to stumble upon one of these storage areas while idly exploring a network of rocky ravines. At an apparent cul-de-sac, the druid brushes his hand across the dirt as he sat to rest. When he stood again, his hand and body had uncovered something hidden beneath the layer of dirt—runes; specifically, runes of the God Tongue. After excitedly brushing off the entire phrase, Saegen went to work translating the inscription. After an hour or so, the druid thought he finally got it right. He spoke the words aloud, “When true light touches the doorway at night, magic for all will be within sight.”

It was only then Saegen realized why the inscription was carved into the form of an archway. The faint line of a doorway could definitely be seen now beneath the runes. But what did it mean? How could true light touch anything at night? In this time, “true” was used to denote anything of natural or godly origin. Saegen knew true light to mean either sunlight or magical light. But man could not summon

true energy. Or could he? Until this point in early history, magic was the ken of the gods, unreachable by human mind or conception. Could such a power, Saegen wondered, be wielded by him? It seemed ludicrous but here was the riddle in the Tongue. As a druid, the human knew that mankind would face tests to better itself during its existence. Solving this riddle had to be one of them.

Saegen returned to his grove to meditate. Perhaps true light could be summoned by mimicking the natural form of it. To this end, the druid located a roughly sphere-shaped stone and placed it in an open area. On the next morning, and throughout the day, Saegen rolled the stone across a section of ground as the sun moved across the sky. That night, he took the stone, which he hoped would be imbued with the sun’s rays, back to the sealed doorway in the ravine. He translated the inscription aloud again and held the rock out in front of him. Nothing happened. The druid then rolled the rock, as he had done throughout the day, in front of the doorway. Again, nothing.

The druid sat and pondered some more. He could almost feel the power as he had tried to coax the light from the stone. But there seemed to be one vital component missing. He needed to return to his grove, center himself, and meditate further. Saegen decided to focus on the sun again the next day. Its light shone down on the earth, warming and illuminating. Where it went at night wasn’t a concern for it always returned the next day. Perhaps, the druid theorized, it merged with the earth to regain its energy for the next day’s journey through the sky. While it rested, could its energies be somehow called upon? It was the method of that calling which vexed Saegen. Force of will was not the answer or the stone would have lit last night, he thought.

What about the God Tongue? He had never spoken the runes but surely words were associated with them and could be spoken aloud. So the druid reviewed all the knowledge given to him by his tutor. There *had* been something, he realized suddenly. It seemed simple to him now, but there was one phrase used by all druids to greet someone which was unique. Could those words be of the God Tongue and no one had realized it? During the day, Saegen

## Behind the Spells: Light

reviewed the phrase, picked its words and syllables apart, and then determined which runes created which sounds when spoken. It took many hours and much concentration but he was finally able to piece together an alphabet of sorts. Between sunset and midnight, the druid committed to memory an incantation in the God Tongue which asked nature to give him the power to create light.

After memorizing the complex intonations and phrasing, Saegen returned to the ravine. The silent inscription seemed much less intimidating now than it had the previous night he failed to gain entrance. With confidence born of knowledge, the druid spoken aloud his request to nature for light and felt a tingling deep inside him. The druid realized he was summoning true power and would need a vessel to transfer the energy into. He scooped up the rock he had used before and directed the energy into it with a gesture of his other hand. Saegen nearly jumped back in surprise when light burst from the stone. It worked! Again, the druid displayed the stone toward the runes and they immediately glowed in response. The doorway beneath them scraped open and Saegen triumphantly walked inside.

Besides a collection of mighty earth elements, dormant shells at this point, Saegen discovered a multitude of scrolls, each explaining how to pronounce and use true magic. As the druid suspected, it was written in the God Tongue—the language of magic. He knew that knowledge of this could now be spread to others. More people could share in the exultation of using the true power. Surely, this was the beginning of a golden age for mankind.

As it turned out, Saegen had uncovered the language of magic for druids only. But as time went on, that knowledge was adapted to draw power not from nature but from the latent energies that comprise arcane magic. It all started with Saegen. There is a phrase which comes from this story: “Light equals illumination equals knowledge.” As far as I’ve been able to discover, this was the only storehouse to ever be uncovered in mankind’s history. There may be two others. There may be twenty; each holding a fundamental power to be discovered and used when the time is right. New forms of magic, new (or very old) creatures, or even new ways to exist might be

found inside. Only time will tell but, you can be sure, that opening these areas will require great dedication and could bring about a fundamental change to our very existence.

### Spell Secrets

*Light* is just about as basic as a spell can get. As such, there hasn’t been a whole lot of variation or experimentation with the basic “I can see now” theme. That said, two spell secrets are presented here. With each, a failed Spellcraft check means that the spell functions as it normally would. The first deals with using *light* to disorient foes (and possibly allies). Use with caution.

By succeeding a Spellcraft check (DC 15), you can create a strobe effect with the *light* spell. The illumination blinks on and off in rapid succession, causing all creatures within a 20-ft. radius who depend on sight to become dazzled unless they succeed a Fortitude save. The strobing must be used in an otherwise dark area to be effective. This effect lasts for the duration but can be dismissed sooner. It cannot be stabilized to produce light as per the spell. It must be cast one way or the other.

The second spell secret is a defensive measure often used by inexperienced adventurers while they sleep. It’s useful but can really scare the hell out of you when you’re on watch and not expecting it!

After casting *light*, you can delay the spell from functioning until a certain condition is met. This requires a Spellcraft check (DC 10) and the caster must be able to cast two abjuration spells of 1st level or higher. If successful, the light of *light* activates only when a creature or object of Small size or greater enters the 30-foot radius around the enspelled object. The duration is measured by when the spell is cast, not from when (or if) the light activates.

## Behind the Spells: Light

### Related Research

Likely the product of a Sun deity worshiper, the *mantle of light* is a great item for any adventurer. As useful against darkness as it is against the undead, the cloak is worth the hefty price tag.

#### NEW MAGIC ITEM

##### *Mantle of Light*

This golden silk cloak with purple trim adjusts to fit any Small, Medium, or Large creature that wears it. The wearer can use the *daylight* spell at will. He can either target an object or cause the mantle to glow at his discretion. In addition, the wearer can cast *searing light* up to three times per day as an 8th-level caster.

Moderate evocation; CL 8th; Craft Wondrous Item, *daylight*, *searing light*; Price 86,300 gp.

If magic has a byproduct, light is most certainly it. Take a look at magical arms and armor. Even when they're sitting unused they have a chance of giving off a faint glow. Magical fields, no matter their size, generate a kind of charge which can give off light. This is why many spells have visible theatrics. To give a spell that extra little something, consider the new metamagic feat presented here. Illuminate Spell is also useful for those underground locales adventurers often find themselves in.

#### NEW FEAT Illuminate Spell [Metamagic]

Your spell and/or its wake glows with torchlight intensity.

**Benefit:** An area spell not targeted on a creature illuminates that area as per the *light* spell in addition to its normal effect(s). Ray and line of effect spells illuminate all spaces they pass through but the light does not affect the target (or targets') space(s). The duration of the *light* is 1 minute per level. An illuminated spell uses up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's actual level.

**Special:** No spell with the evil descriptor can be illuminated by this feat.



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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Lightning Bolt

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### The Creator

Inarguably a classic among classics, *lightning bolt* has likely caused more aspiring spellcasters to pursue their craft than any other spell. The image of a white-bearded old wizard flinging a brilliant bolt from a mountaintop is the standard evocative image for spellcasting. But is that image faithful in any way to the true origins of the spell? The answer is “no.” In fact, the tale of *lightning bolt's* creator, Lilleth Voran, encompasses important issues such as spellcaster and gender equality.

Although there were most certainly sorcerers before her, Lilleth is the first one of note in recorded history. The fledgling arcane community (comprised solely of wizards) of this early age had an extremely narrow view of their craft—magic was only to be acquired through careful research and methodic execution. The fact that some humanoids were naturally able to wield a power which this circle of wizards had to work hard to acquire justified their anger and distrust of sorcerers. What solidified Lilleth's name in history was the fact that she fought back against “the

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: Lightning Bolt

establishment,” if you will; although she did not do so for selfless reasons.

While born a human female, Lilleth was actually the great-granddaughter of a blue dragon’s union with a human. The same cunning and power inherent in that unknown relative ran through the sorceress’ veins and she desired the recognition and power that came with such ability. Besides her natural talent with magic, Lilleth was also possessed of natural charm and beauty and, as such, attracted many other sorcerers to her banner. From a young age, the sorceress plotted the downfall of the wizards-in-power all the while claiming she fought for “equality for spellcasters.” Naturally, the established wizards did not want to share any power with these “second class” casters (much as specialist wizards would be regarded in the future—see *Behind the Spells: True Seeing* for more on that). The fact that Lilleth was a woman in a “man’s world” did not help her cause either.

But there was no stopping Lilleth’s ambition, for while she not only wanted to be master of arcane matters among humans (the other races would fall under her sway eventually) the sorceress desired the secrets of fashioning magic items (a process developed by the more orderly minds of the wizards). As Lilleth’s influence strengthened, the wizards decided to hold a secret conclave to discuss the matter of what to do with the hostile sorcerers. Unfortunately for them, one of the apprentices had come under Lilleth’s control and reported news of the upcoming meeting to her. The sorceress knew then that the time had come to strike and gathered a troupe of her most trusted (and power-hungry) allies together.

You see, for some months before this time, Lilleth was developing a new spell which would be only usable by sorcerers (not “usable” in a casting sense, mind you, just that sorcerers would hide its creation from wizards). She wanted it to be destructive in nature and unrefined in appearance just as its casters were untrained in magic. Fortune smiled on the sorceress one week before hearing of the wizards’ conclave in the form of a violent storm front that swept through the valley near her abode. Although sheets of hail had made their marks on the homes nestled there, the true damaging force had been the persistent strokes of lightning. The fierce blasts had shattered stone homes, set fire to wooden huts, and slain animals and humans alike. Yes, she thought, lightning blasts would serve her purpose nicely.

After demonstrating “lightning blast” (the original spell name) to her assembled followers, even the moderately talented among them had little trouble

mastering its casting. “This spell,” Lilleth supposedly declared to them, “will unseat the wizards from power and bring supervision of magic back to those of us whom the gods meant to have it.” The days after that were spent preparing for their strike against the wizards when they would hold their conclave within the home of one of the first wizards to exist—the stone tower called Khaeldin’s Spire—now serving more as an arcane museum than an actual domicile. Even had they known an attack on them was imminent, the wizards could not have chosen a better site for their meeting. Khaeldin’s Spire housed not only unique magics but also secret defenses that would have been unknown to Lilleth’s band since no sorcerers had ever been allowed entrance to the structure. As a result, the attack was a failure and Lilleth did more harm to the cause of sorcerous equality than anyone could have imagined.

The wizards who survived the assault (one perished while two were permanently maimed) became utterly convinced of the depravity and vileness of sorcerers. The conclave publicly decreed that sorcerers would be hunted down and forced to register themselves in a kind of “sorcery census.” Registration meant that these individuals would abstain from magical practice forever unless they submitted to do so under the “proper” methods of wizardry. Those refusing to register were either slain or managed to successfully go underground (sometimes literally). With that process underway, the wizards then had to contend with the lightning spell used by Lilleth and her “Storms” as the other attackers came to be called.

Despite the isolated area around Khaeldin’s Spire, word of the sorcerers’ spell of attack (and of its obvious power and flashiness) spread amongst apprentice wizards everywhere. The rapid word-of-mouth of the spell was due in no small part to Lilleth’s apprenticeship but I suspect people would have heard about it all the same. In any case, the masters knew they had to keep secret the origins of the spell if they were to permanently stamp down sorcery as a viable alternative to wizardry. They announced that their secret conclave was actually held to develop this new spell and that the attackers were merely after its secrets. The wizards only required a few short days to take what they had seen used by the Storms and put it down on paper. To further distance the spell from Lilleth, they renamed it to today’s more familiar *lightning bolt* and one of their own posed for the first of many artworks depicting a lightning-throwing wizard (as mentioned above).

So what happened to the world’s sorcerers? Well, we all know that there’s no kind of registration for

## Behind the Spells: Lightning Bolt

that particular class of caster today. After two generations or so from the initial incident, specialist wizards became recognized as a different, yet perfectly accepted, part of arcane circles. At the same time, women spellcasters and sorcery were both officially, albeit quietly, recognized as well. But by this time, sorcerers were either deep in hiding or simply refused to use their inherent powers altogether; the tale of Lilleth having been effectively used as a frightening bedtime story. It has taken many centuries for sorcerers to be comfortable enough to publicly wield their powers and reach the acceptance they enjoy in today's society.

What about Lilleth? According to wizardly accounts of the time, all of the attackers were slain at the Spire. But I have it on good authority that Lilleth and a handful of her Storms escaped into the mountains. From there I'm forced to rely on the bevy of ghost stories that rose over the centuries. The most common element to each tale is that Lilleth embraced lichdom and continues to develop an alternate way of casting spells that defy orderly/wizardly attempts to learn it. It is also whispered that Lilleth gathers new Storms to add to her scattered followers by somehow "blessing" a child before its birth with "dark sorcery." To be honest, I have no idea what this means. But the legend of this is prevalent enough that, even today, in some rural communities evil sorcerers (and sometimes not just the evil ones!) are said to be tainted by the "touch of Lilleth."

### Spell Secrets

Spellcasting devices like the spell secrets are things that were actually developed by Lilleth herself either before or after her entrance into lichdom. Changing spells on the fly is exactly the type of fluid spellcasting

sorcerers embrace. This is not to say that wizards cannot or do not use them, only that the concept ties in closely with the above tale. The first secret presented here was actually created by one of the Storms that went into hiding with Lilleth and was used to good effect in caravan raids where wholesale damage of materials wasn't necessarily a good thing.

Although natural lightning appears in a few different shapes, the classic spell only allows for one form—the bolt. The second spell secret presented allows the caster to take advantage of two other forms—jagged and forked—at the price of reduced range and, in the latter case, reduced damage.

By succeeding a Spellcraft check (DC 18), you can change the effect of your *lightning bolt* to either a jagged or forked bolt. A jagged bolt's maximum range is 30 feet but the effect is a 10-ft. wide line hitting all creatures within those spaces. The forked bolt launches two blasts of electricity in different directions but not directly opposite from each other (meaning a caster cannot throw one ahead and one behind him as both fire from the same fingertip). Each bolt inflicts half the normal damage of a regular *lightning bolt* and has a maximum range of 60 feet.

### Related Research

An earlier version of *lightning bolt* allowed for the bolt to both reflect and rebound in certain situations. Such a clearly dangerous occurrence is thankfully missing from today's version. However, someone decided to take it upon themselves to craft another version of

Against living creatures with a discernable anatomy, you can modify your *lightning bolt* to affect the nervous system. After succeeding a Spellcraft check (DC 18), the bolt is treated as a ranged touch attack (30 ft. range). Upon a successful hit, the electricity continues to pour from your hands into the target who must then succeed a Fortitude save (DC 13 + caster's Intelligence modifier) or become slowed (different from the spell—move at half speed and can only take a single move action or a standard action each round (no full-round actions). No matter the outcome of the save, the electricity still inflicts 1d6 damage. You can maintain the stream of electricity from your hands at the same target for a number of rounds equal to one-half your caster level. This requires a standard action to maintain and you cannot move further than 30 feet away or the bond is severed. For every round of electrical contact, the target takes an additional 1d6 points of electrical damage and must make another Fortitude save to determine whether or not he is slowed.

If another creature or object of Small or larger size moves into or through an ongoing electrical stream, the caster must succeed a Concentration check (DC 20) to maintain the effect.

## Behind the Spells: Lightning Bolt

the spell that does endorse this safety hazard. I've seen *reflecting bolt* used recklessly by particularly chaotically-minded casters and strategically by casters protected from electricity. But no matter who is casting it, be sure you're not stuck within an enclosed space when it happens!

### VARIANT SPELL— Reflecting Bolt

As the spell *lightning bolt* but with the following exceptions...

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 4

**Range:** 180 ft.

**Area:** 180-ft. line

As its name suggests, when *reflecting bolt* strikes a solid surface (which it causes no damage to) it bounces off it at an angle equal to the angle of incidence. The bolt continues to reflect off of such surfaces until its total range is reached.

Sometimes an inexperienced spellcaster finds himself outnumbered or his companions otherwise occupied and needs to make an escape route for himself. The creator of *pounding bolt* must have been in a similar situation before he developed this spell. Taking a cue from *lightning bolt*, the effect produced by *pounding bolt* is still electrical in nature but also has some oomph behind it.

### VARIANT SPELL— Pounding Bolt

As the spell *lightning bolt* but with the following exceptions...

Evocation [Electricity, Force]

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 2

**Range:** 30 ft.

**Area:** 30-ft. line

**Save:** Reflex half or none (see text)

Besides inflicting 1d6 points of damage (maximum 5d6 and half is bludgeoning), ground targets are knocked prone where they stand while flying creatures are thrown back 1d6 x 5 feet if the Reflex save is failed. Creatures larger than Medium size are unaffected by the bludgeoning effect and therefore take no damage on a successful Reflex save. The *pounding bolt* cannot set fire to combustibles or melt metals.

*Material Component:* A bit of fur and an iron rod.



# Behind the Spells: Lightning Bolt

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Magic Missile

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the SRD that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming.

These are the spells which, if on your PC's class list, will be taken as soon as possible and include such quintessential favorites as *magic missile* and *fireball*. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Oh, and did we mention that there is a tour guide? Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. His qualifications? "How about being an ancient gold dragon?" he snapped at us before quietly adding, "But don't tell everyone you meet that little fact. I don't need a stream of adventurers at my home-of-the-week asking for help, thank you very much." That was good enough for us! Please note that any new rules information is contained in boxes within the text. Yes, there is more here than a disguised dragon's ramblings here. So, as Maxolt himself is fond of saying, "Think you know your favorite spell? Think again!"

### The Creator

Mirtanin Moldao lived in a secluded village amidst the foothills of a large mountain range. Although Mirtanin was human, it was widely whispered amongst the villagers that his ancestry hid at least one relation of elven blood. Of course, that wasn't all that was whispered about him but that's another story. I didn't have the good fortune to meet Mirtanin per-

sonally, as he lived a goodly number of centuries before I was hatched. But as the story goes, Mirtanin's village was beset by all manner of goblinoid nuisances. Mirtanin had already developed a spell which enchanted a projectile to never miss its target. Unfortunately, the application of this spell, "magical missile," to multiple weapons took too long to be truly effective against the numerous goblinoids. After a few trials,

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: Magic Missile

Mirtanin emerged triumphant from his laboratory with a variation of the spell. This is what spellcasters today know as *magic missile*, a spell which can launch missiles of force at multiple targets for a modest amount of damage. Mirtanin's original spell was lost to the ages until another mage discovered his original notes and came up with his own variant: *true strike*.

Today, Mirtanin's village is long since gone. Even the mage's new spell could not stem the tide of goblinoids that threatened his home and neighbors. Without a mine or other commercial reason to visit the site, no one has walked the ground the village stood on in over three centuries. The mage who was able to retrieve Mirtanin's works was still alive during my younger days and confided in me that he left quite a bit of Mirtanin's research behind. When I asked him why, he whispered, "The place is haunted. I saw both human and goblin spirits engaged in silent battle on the single night I slept there. I won't go back." While I can't say that the undead frighten me, I haven't gotten the chance to search, much less accurately locate, the lost village. But I'm certain a group of adventurers will uncover it and its secrets before too long.

Before my source lapsed into frightened silence, I was able to coax from him a description of Mirtanin's home. The wizard's squat stone tower now lies on its side, unearthed some say by elementals conjured by invading goblin sorcery. The center section has remained mostly intact. The laboratory inside is in shambles but everything, according to the discovering mage, is still there. Magical scroll cases have preserved Mirtanin's work over the millennia. Aside from *magic missile* and its variants, my source also took note of several prototype formulae for evocation spells that are standards today including *fireball* and *shatter*.

Faded documents describe Mirtanin as being part of a group of evocation wizards known only as the Arcane Triad. What this trio of spellcasters might have accomplished is unknown to me. I've been keeping an eye out for any other references to them but information has not come easily. They appear to have maintained a desert safehouse from which new evocation

spells were conceived, tested, and refined. Like Mirtanin's village, I'm certain adventurers will uncover this place and its secrets eventually. With any luck, I'll be with them when they do.

### Spell Secrets

When cast, *magic missile* creates one or more missiles of magical energy. It simply astounds me that more casters seem uninterested in adding a personal touch to this spell which sees so much use. For example, by adding a stated color to the verbal component, the missiles created shine with the chosen hue. Another added word causes the missiles to appear like spinning chakrams or daggers. Changes like these neither change the effectiveness nor lengthen the casting time of the spell. "So why do it" you ask? Because spellcasting is as much an art form as painting or sculpting. Without that personality to a spell, the caster might as well be a spell-slinging golem.

If a spellcaster does decide to change the appearance of his *magic missile*, it might serve to confuse an enemy caster who is attempting to counterspell it. The enemy caster's Spellcraft check DC is increased by +1 (or +2 if both color and shape are modified).

Independent thought also enters into my second secret about the *magic missile* spell. One of its constants is that the caster must see the target for the missiles to be effective. However, "seeing" the target doesn't mean what everyone assumes it to mean. We can cheat a bit with this rule. For example, if a spellcaster is chasing a fleeing orc through a dungeon, he might not be able to get a clear view of the orc due to the overwhelming number of quick turns in the environment. However, the spell still works if the caster can target a direct representation of the target. What does that mean? It means that if our orc in the example casts a shadow or casts a reflection in a hallway mirror, then the caster can target him. Granted, this necessitates a change in the spell's semantics (which brings the above rule into effect), but can be cast nonetheless.



## Behind the Spells: Magic Missile

A viable target of the *magic missile* spell is any target the spellcaster can see, including the target's direct shadow or reflection. In order to effectively target in the latter situations, the spellcaster must succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 15). Success means the caster has correctly calculated the trajectory needed and the spell functions normally. Failure means the spell is wasted.

Beyond damaging opponents, *magic missile* can be used against items. Now, I know what you're thinking, "Why bother since the spell cannot damage inanimate objects?" Who said anything about damaging them? What's that old saying—It's never the fall that breaks things, it's the sudden stop. This spell creates tangible bolts of force. And while a caster cannot target held or carried items, it can unerringly strike items on a shelf, for example. Fragile items can be sent tumbling to their doom. Keys can be knocked from a table to land closer to a companion's cell. Certain traps can be sprung from afar. The multiple benefits of *magic missile* are limited only by the mind of the caster.

For every point of damage inflicted by a *magic missile*, an unattended item moves six inches in the same direction as the missile's path.

### Related Research

*Magic missile* is a very basic spell that some spellcasters have altered in interesting ways. Here's one example I saw relatively recently. When it came time to harvest his crops, a farmer employed the aid of a local sorcerer. It seems this mage was resourceful enough to refine the *magic missile's* damaging ability. Instead of inflicting damage on creatures, the missiles from this variant spell are sickle-shaped and damage only plant life. What a marvelous time saver for the farmer. Sure, it might cost a little gold up front for the spellcasting fee but the time and labor saved more than makes up for this initial payment. This variant spell may not seem adventurer-worthy but it can aid in encounters against hostile plant monsters or when a trail needs to be blazed through dense vegetation.

### VARIANT SPELL: *Magic Sickles*

As the spell *magic missile* with the following exceptions.

**Range:** 60 ft.

**Area:** Cone-shaped burst

*Magic sickles* creates a cone of swirling sickle-shaped energies. Only living plants or plant type creatures within the area of effect are damaged. The damage inflicted is 3 points for every two caster levels—3 points of damage at 1st level, 6 points at 3rd level, 9 points at 5th level, 12 points at 7th level, and the maximum of 15 points at 9th level.

Besides the above spell, my source claimed to have skimmed no fewer than five other variants of the classic *magic missile*. One sees the missiles continuing to push against their target after the first round, burrowing into the creature in an attempt to impale the foe over subsequent rounds. Another variant supposedly attenuates the force to a certain element and thus change the nature of the damage to fire, cold, and such. Interesting concepts, to be sure. Perhaps one day someone will put these ideas to parchment.

**About the Author:** Maxolt Alberiim is indeed the alter-ego of an ancient gold dragon. He's lived many centuries and seen many things in his guise as the muscular human fighter-mage. The dragon's real name is Furnokaletchinobilus, or "Furnok" for short. We at Ronin Arts were delighted to put Furnok's teachings "onto paper" as it were. He approached us about doing the series when he became dissatisfied about the way the humanoid races continued to approach magic. "It's not one way and done," he proclaimed. "If you can help me get the word out that spells are more than the sum of their parts, then I'm in. Eh...what's an 'internet' anyway? A new tool for fishing I haven't heard of?" Uh, we'll tell you later, Maxolt. Much later.

# Behind the Spells: Magic Missile

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Mirror Image

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. These are the spells which, if on your PC's class list, will be taken as soon as possible. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. This time, Maxolt gives us the lowdown on a favorite defensive spell of low-level mages—*mirror image*.

### The Creator

Aldomin Sarrt is the first documented user of the *mirror image* spell (or at least the prototype of that spell). It isn't clear if the human was the creator but the academic community regularly attributes it to him. The youngest of five siblings, the Sarrt family resided as upper class merchants in a busy port city called Marinspeak. Aldomin often sat at the docks as a youngster to watch the traffic of goods and people there. Each day he returned home with

tales of the more unusual things he saw, regaling anyone at home who would listen. Unfortunately for Aldomin, his siblings were old enough to work a specific task in their family's shipping business and the Sarrt's as a whole had little time for the young daydreamer.

Left to fend for his own amusement, Aldomin turned his daytime dock experiences into fanciful tales of high adventure. In later years, he set these stories to music, which served him well in his chosen career as a bard. After studying for years with the elven Master

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: Mirror Image

Bard Silverfox, Aldomin returned to the Sarrt home in Marinspeak. By this time, the Sarrt's had clawed their way to the second wealthiest position in the city's locally based merchant companies. On the night the Sarrt's were to seal the most important deal in recent history, Aldomin came home expecting a heartfelt reunion. What he received was a pat on the head and a meal in the servant's kitchen.

After an adolescence of being ignored, this patronization was the last straw. Once his parents had dismissed the servants for the evening, the bard threw open the dining room doors and marched into the hall. All eyes in the room turned to take in Aldomin in his brightly-colored performance outfit. What happened next is the stuff of bardic legend. Aldomin began to sing. With each of the first six steps he took, a duplicate of the bard emerged from the original. Each copy sang a harmonic counterpart to the bard's melody. Together, Aldomin and his copies sang the lowliest ballad in the bard's repertoire (which included no less than six prostitutes, one old dwarven barkeep, and three broomsticks—use your imagination!).

I need not elaborate on the reactions this unexpected entertainment elicited from the Sarrt's and their guests. For Aldomin—mission accomplished. His family would never again ignore him. Now, as I understand it, not only did the business deal fall through, but the repercussions of Aldomin's performance saw the Sarrt family reduced to a shell of its former prominence. The Sarrt patriarch excommunicated Aldomin but the bard didn't care. He went on to have a successful career touring the cities, towns, and villages southeast of Marinspeak. The Sarrt's still exists today but, because of Aldomin, each generation of the family has been hostile to bards. I've even heard stories where a certain disturbed Sarrt son organized a religious order dedicated to destroying music and those who would practice it. True or not, I have it on good authority that the *silence* spell was created not long after Aldomin's excommunication. Coincidence? You decide.

As for how Aldomin's original spell (called "Sarrt's Sudden Chorus") became today's *mirror image*, well I'm not quite sure. I've spoken to a direct descendant of Silverfox who claims

his ancestor developed the current version. On the other hand, bardic tales which mention the Sarrt's (besides being uncomplimentary in the extreme) attribute *mirror image's* development to Aldomin himself, claiming it is the final great achievement in the bard's life. Aldomin leaves a considerable musical legacy including 12 ballads (half adventurous epics and half sexual in nature), 29 pieces for harp (one for each community he stayed for more than a few days in), and four choral works for mass choir and orchestra (all celebratory and performed for coronations, popular feast days, and the like).

Also, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the value of Aldomin's original manuscripts. Half of the harp works have been recovered as have four of the ballads and one of the mass choral works. Many of these now reside in private collections but if one were to be discovered and sold in the right venue, that seller should expect no less than 5,000 gold pieces and up to 25,000 gold pieces depending on the work and its condition. This is to say nothing of the bard's arcane notes. If Aldomin did indeed sketch out the arcane workings for *mirror image*, the price for them would be incalculable.

## Spell Secrets

*Mirror image* is an effective screen against attacks used by low level casters. So how do you go about defeating the illusionary field of duplicates? There are a few methods I've used in the past which have proven effective. One of the most obvious is to hit as many images as possible without inflicting area damage. After all, lobbing in a *fireball* only makes the images look burnt. What we're going for here is direct hits since, as the spell's description states, "Any successful attack against an image destroys it." Well, what better way to accurately strike something than to use out old favorite *magic missile*? Granted, without multiple missiles it's a bit of a waste, but at least one image is guaranteed to vanish. In addition, if a caster has the ability to launch multiple *magic missiles*, then he's just as likely to have a *dispel magic* which can eliminate the problem altogether.

## Behind the Spells: Mirror Image

Let's assume, however, that higher level magics are not at one's disposal. What do you do then when the images fool vision and hearing? I've personally seen three methods used to detect the real caster. The most obscure of the trio is the scent ability. If you're lucky enough to have the scent ability, you level the playing field a bit and benefit from close combat with these mages. The images created by *mirror image* are only figments and have no substance, much less odors.

A creature with the scent ability can detect a spellcaster using *mirror image* as it would normally track another creature. Subject to the normal rules for scent, a creature with this ability gains its Wisdom modifier to hit when attacking an image. If, however, the creature using scent moves to within 5 feet of the caster, it detects him immediately and can attack normally.

The second method to uncover a spellcaster amidst his illusory duplicates is to cast *detect thoughts*. This spell only achieves its full effectiveness when you are with companions.

After casting *detect thoughts* and keeping the spellcaster and his images in the detection cone, you can accurately pick out the real caster from the images. According to this divination spell, you can determine the location of thinking minds as long as you can see the creature whose thoughts you're detecting. *Mirror image* cannot fool this spell since the created figments are merely that—figments. Although *detect thoughts* requires concentration (a standard action), you can still direct others in their attacks against the *mirror image* caster. By giving direction to your allies, they gain an attack bonus equal to your Intelligence modifier.

The third method to detect the real caster amidst his images is by use of the spell *deathwatch*. As figments, the images have no "condition" as identified by this spell and the caster can more easily ignore them. But since they are still visible, a successful hit is not guaranteed!

By using *deathwatch*, you can guide your companions toward the real caster (see *detect thoughts* sidebar above). And since *deathwatch* is not a spell that requires concentration, you yourself can move to attack. When multiple images are present, instead of rolling randomly to determine whether you hit the caster or an image, apply the rules for concealment (since the enemy caster can slip through his images). If and when only the caster and one image remain, you can attack the caster without penalty.

## Related Research

A number of *mirror image* variants have popped up over the centuries since Sarrt's

### VARIANT SPELL: *Sudden Chorus*

As the spell *mirror image* with the following exceptions.

**Level:** Brd 3

Besides confounding enemies attempting to attack you, *sudden chorus* allows your images to sing or play exactly as you sing or play. The difference is that each image sings or plays the harmony to your melody (some images duplicating each other's, but never your own, notes). The result is a powerful auditory blend which grants a bonus to your Perform checks equal to one-half your level. This bonus is effective whether making a Perform check on its own or as part of a bardic music ability. If you are not singing, the images make no sound and the spell performs as *mirror image*.

## Behind the Spells: Mirror Image

original version. After hearing the bardic stories about Aldomin, a wizard named Tantrus decided to reconstruct the original spell used at the Sarrt family's doomed dinner meeting. The original had been lost but Tantrus' effort is likely almost identical to the original (which was lost after Aldomin's death).

One of my personal favorite variants to use is a spell that causes an image of an opponent to appear directly in front of him. It's great fun to see the expression on a person's face when he suddenly finds himself brandishing a weapon at, well, himself! I'd be surprised to learn if it was *not* a gnome who was responsible for this spell's creation.

### VARIANT SPELL: *Distracting Image*

Illusion (Pattern) [Mind-Affecting]

**Level:** Brd 1, Sor/Wiz 1

**Components:** V, S, F

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Target:** One creature

**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)

**Saving Throw:** See below

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

By means of this spell, you create an image in front of the target creature which appears to be an opposite reflection of the target (as if it were looking at a mirror). Besides being very disconcerting, the image mirrors every move the target makes (including moving with him), always facing him directly. If the target wishes to attack a foe with melee or ranged weapons, he must first succeed a Will save. Success means he ignores the image for that particular round and can attack without penalty. A failed Will save means that the image is too great a distraction and any attack rolls the target makes for that round suffer a -3 penalty. All creatures that can see the target can see the *distracting image* as well but only the target is affected. To others, the image appears as a translucent duplicate and can be passed through without consequence.

Focus: A small mirror.

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Polymorph

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. Each pdf in this series examines the spell-caster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. In this issue, Maxolt —*polymorph*.

### The Creator

I'm surprised at how often scholars believe that *polymorph* was inspired by the druidic ability to shapechange. Of course, the two are unrelated. Shapechanging is the natural result of a druid's growth in knowledge about the world. *Polymorph* is, at its core, just another spell. Learned folks attribute its creation to everything from espionage to a form of joyrid-

ing. In truth, the former might be more accurate than any other guess. An elven wizard named Lorryn Tel'Fariin was the chief researcher for the elven people of this early age. His task, indeed his love, was to investigate and record the life and behavior of other creatures. Lorryn became fascinated not only by how each creature's cultures behaved but by how many differences there were on an inter-cultural level. Elves believed themselves

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: Polymorph

the pinnacle of humanoid life and the knowledge that they had any similarities to lower life forms did not fall on welcome ears. Races such as orcs, trolls, or even more basic animal life had just as much variation and organization (such as it is with these beings) as elvenkind. Lorryn noted to his colleagues that factual knowledge, no matter what its ramifications, deepens the respect that elves should have for all creatures. (If people think elves are haughty today, they should have seen this pointy-eared race back in their heyday. Sheesh!)

So here we have Lorryn working steadily researching all sentient life the elves come in contact with. After a few centuries of the same repetitive procedure—observation, notation, expansion—Lorryn decided that he was only gaining a fraction of the knowledge in front of him. Certainly, he reasoned, long-term observation of a creature does benefit the researcher but there will always be a primary insight missing. There had to be a way to gain firsthand information. This could be accomplished by interviewing some of the lesser hostile races but many of the beings to be studied did not even have the capability to speak—at least not in a way that could normally be understood. Druids and certain magic spells could overcome even this difficulty but such interviews were still limited, Lorryn believed, by that single creature's own point of view. No, there had to be a better way to collect accurate data on a species by somehow immersing oneself in the target society.

To this end, Lorryn worked for many months on the earliest version of the *polymorph* spell. With it, the elf could change himself into virtually any other life form for hours at a time. Thus was born the perfect solution for Lorryn's dilemma. The wizard's subsequent research comprises the basics known and trusted by scholars of creature lore to this day. (Take note adventurers; now you know who to thank when you research monster combat tactics!) Lorryn devoted years, probably decades, of persistent study to his craft using *polymorph* and his own senses as his only tools. He swam with sharks, flew with dragons, and tunneled with trolls, exulting in the personal knowledge gained by living amongst each culture. After satisfying his own

check-list of facts for each outing, the elf returned to his home and penned in shorthand the events of his reconnaissance. Lorryn's aides became worried at first by their master's rather unusual data-gathering method but, after a few such excursions, found comfort that the wizard was as safe as anyone in the field. After writing what needed to be written, Lorryn would be off again to study another creature in its native environs. The aides would then expand on the wizard's shorthand notes and place the volume(s) into the already extensive zoological library.

Everything proceeded apace for a long time but the constant researching took a toll on the elven wizard. Many years after he began his *polymorph*-aided studies, Lorryn started to lose his self-identity. Since the wizard rarely spoke to his aides after leaving his notes, these elves noticed nothing wrong with their master until it was too late. With every assumed form, Lorryn's mind lost a little of that part of itself which recognized his own existence as an elf. The wizard's last researched creature was the locathah. Rumors abound that Lorryn's locathah offspring still exist under the waters near the elven isle of Siiranthrol. The wizard's aides made several attempts to find Lorryn but these proved unsuccessful. The clerical elves (the bookkeeping kind not the divine kind) still maintain the library of Lorryn Tel'Fariin to this day. If you display knowledge of, and respect for, the lost ancient wizard, you might gain access to the information therein at a reduced fee. Here's another interesting tidbit. Rumor has it that Lorryn mated in his final form and that his direct bloodline has the spell-like ability to assume other forms for a short time each day. You might have a surprise encounter with a locathah on dry land and not even know it!

Thank the gods that so many creatures were researched before the wizard's untimely loss of self. In fact, it is because of this unfortunate occurrence that the original *polymorph* spell was soon after split into two versions—one which affected only the caster and one that targeted another creature. The former was completely safe but the latter took the loss-of-self side effect to the extreme by permanently changing its target. In recent years, the foremost arcane minds have reunited these halves



## Behind the Spells: Polymorph

of the same spell and made the result safe to wield. But then some hotshot spellcaster decided to introduce *baleful polymorph* and *polymorph any object* into the arcane lexicon. This spell is dangerous enough without further modifications. Can't mages find another spell to tweak in their spare time?

### Spell Secrets

At its most basic level, the *polymorph* spell's magic works the way it does by filtering through the target's soul. It is the creature's very essence that unconsciously determines criteria such as eye color, natural odor, and other benign qualities of the new form. For this reason, *polymorph* does not affect constructs, elementals, outsiders, or undead; all of which have either no soul or possess an unusual chemistry between corporeal form and the soul. At least, it doesn't affect them using the conventional form of the spell. But if you've been following this series, you know that there's precious few rules that are absolute. *Polymorph* is another example. By giving up a part of his own life essence, a spellcaster can *polymorph* one of the soulless targets listed above.

The *polymorph* spell can affect nonliving creatures if even a mere spark of a distinct soul is present within the form for the magic to interact with. To temporarily transfer a piece of your soul to a nonliving target, you must touch the target and succeed both a Spellcraft check (DC 24) and a Concentration check (DC 19) while casting the spell. If either check is a failure, the spell is wasted. Succeeding both checks means you can cast *polymorph* on the target normally but for the duration you are inflicted with one negative level (which affects all of the spell's level-dependent variables). The target cannot change into another nonliving form and must still be willing to change in the first place—the presence of your essence cannot affect its power of choice if it has one. The resulting form bears certain similarities to the caster. The negative level is removed at the end of the spell's duration.

I am often asked why *polymorph* heals a creature as though it had a restful night's sleep. My theory (supported by the second spell secret below) is that a radical shifting of the physical body also closes open wounds. The sealing of these injuries provides a minimum of healing to the creature. A sorcerer friend of mine has a saying: "You can't pour salt on a polymorphed wound." Alright, I didn't say it was a particularly good saying but it is appropriate for this discussion.

If you can cast at least two spells of the conjuration school that are 5th-level or greater, you are qualified to attempt this spell secret. After succeeding a Spellcraft check (DC 24), you can use *polymorph* to beneficially distort your (or the target's) skin for the spell's duration. Instead of assuming an entirely new form, the target's skin or other outer layer contracts and expands in a fluid dance which makes the epidermal layer appear almost like a liquid. Besides appearing extremely disconcerting to onlookers, the effect actually promotes the knitting of physical wounds. The target gains the fast healing extraordinary quality for the spell's duration at the rate of 1 hp per 4 caster levels per round (maximum of fast healing 5).

### Related Research

As useful as it is to take the form of another creature, sometimes even this transmutation is not enough for the occasion. When an ancient curse can only be lifted by "one of high elven blood" or a magic item wielded by "mountain dwarf hands," then clearly more than a *polymorph* facelift is necessary. That's where *false bloodline* comes in handy. When used in conjunction with *polymorph*, a spellcaster might get himself into a heap of trouble when the spells expire and his true form and lineage is discovered!

## Behind the Spells: Polymorph

### NEW SPELL

#### *False Bloodline*

Transmutation

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 2

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Target:** Willing living creature touched

**Duration:** 1 min./level

**Saving Throw:** No

**Spell Resistance:** No

After *false bloodline* is cast, you are considered to be of the same blood as the creature's blood used for the component. If you used a drop of elven blood, for example, you are considered an elf for all effects related to race. This spell overrides your base race for the duration. This effect allows you to touch or wield race-specific items but may also prove a detriment if a race-specific spell targets your false blood. In addition to acquiring the chosen blood type, you also gain a +2 insight bonus to all skill checks when dealing with that race.

*Material Component:* A drop of blood from the creature type you wish to be related to.

Similar, but not quite related to *polymorph*, is a substance discovered not terribly long ago called "mallyate." With but a thought, the wielder of mallyate can transmute the substance into any weapon or item of armor he is familiar with.<sup>1</sup> It was not long after discovering one of these slabs that the gnomish warrior-mage Felefred create the *gloves of the beast* for a companion (no doubt inspired by the mutable substance).

### NEW MAGIC ITEM

#### *Gloves of the Beast*

This pair of supple brown leather gloves automatically sizes itself to fit any Small or Medium-size wearer. When not active, these gloves appear normal in all respects. When their magic is summoned, however, the gloves transform the hands and arms of the wearer into that of a certain type of animal as decided at the time from the choices below. The new form has a duration of 5 minutes or until dismissed earlier by the wearer. The gloves can only be activated up to three times per day whether or not the full duration is used each time.

- **Bat:** Your hands become tiny claws and a thin membrane drapes from spindly arms to attach at your waist. You can now fly at a speed of 20 ft. and with average maneuverability.

- **Monitor Lizard:** Your hands and forearms are webbed. You can now swim at a speed of 20 ft.

- **Octopus:** Your arms become pink tentacles and you gain the Improved Grab ability—you must hit an opponent of any size with your tentacle attack. You can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

- **Tiger:** Your hands are coated in orange fur and end in sharp claws. You can make claw attacks which inflict 1d6+Str modifier damage on a successful hit.

Moderate transmutation; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *polymorph*; Price 47,900 gp.

<sup>1</sup> For more on this strange but useful substance, see the *Mallyate* pdf in Ronin Arts' "Athenaeum Arcane" line.

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Prestidigitation

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. For this issue, Maxolt cautions us against the incredible threat behind that most innocent of spells—*prestidigitation*.

### The Creator

Despite being probably the most innocuous cantrip in the arcane lexicon, *prestidigitation* laid the groundwork for one of the most disastrous magical experiments ever conceived. I shudder to even speak of this in fear that it may, yet again, inspire closer inspection of the dreaded universal school of magic. But since giving you information is what I'm supposed to do, so be it. Just thank the gods that there are a bevy of adventuring companies around to

thwart and/or clean up the experiments that will no doubt arise from this issue's contents. I'll preface the following story by saying that *prestidigitation's* tale is more interesting than the person who created it. Just bear with me.

As I mention in my issue on the *wish* spell, magic is a power that, while intangible, becomes manifest through the rituals of spell-casting practiced throughout history to the present day. This power comes from a place—a demiplane, if you will—of magic. In this place,

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: Prestidigitation

which likely overlaps the totality of existence itself, magical energies drift like currents in a great stream. When one casts a spell, the magic flows to you, is configured by your components, and then released in that predetermined form (or school). But there are a few spells whose effects do not conform to a single magical school. These spells tap into the demiplane of magic and, while still requiring a requisite number of verbal or somatic components, serve to actually channel **raw** power to the caster. This magic is mutable, capable of mimicking any school of magic, and is rightly dubbed as “universal.” For lower level spells, the danger is minimal. However, any high-level universal spells would be quite the opposite—look at *wish* and *limited wish*. Both hold great unpredictable power and are never to be used lightly. *Permanency* falls into this category as well but since its power serves to immediately solidify another spell, the magic is not a threat. Alright, I’m blathering on about this. To sum up, spells of the universal school use magic the same way as any other spell but do so in a more unrefined way. To see why this can be a bad thing, reference the second spell secret below.

The spell for this issue began with an idea for a traveling bardic stage show. Nephar Poratis was a human bard of moderate talent in both song and instrument. He wasn’t the best the world had to offer but he was one of the busiest and innovative. The man loved to make people smile and didn’t mind if they were laughing at him or his antics. Nephar used physical gags to great effect. His trademark gesture was the cocking of his head limply to one side to show sadness or disappointment during a skit. As for the traveling show, Nephar got the idea when he learned that the local magistrate was not happy at the bard’s mocking of his halting style of speech. While the imitation was supposed to be a form of flattery, Nephar knew he had gone too far and had worn out his welcome in the town.

No worries, he thought. Other bards had succeeded on the road, so why shouldn’t he? Unfortunately, Nephar enjoyed having a good many props and carrying them all from place to place was going to be quite a hassle (especially since he was given only a day to leave the town from the magistrate—that’s just not enough time to pack!). So Nephar grabbed the essentials and

set out on his trusty mule and stage partner Sarah (she would bray on cue). Life on the road was good to the bard but he continued to lament his lack of materials. Like the stories he had picked up during his life, so had Nephar gained a smattering of magical powers and recalled the importance of an old saying: “When the physical fails, turn to the magical.”

Now, bards in that early century were not exactly well versed in the technicalities of arcane theory (some would argue the same about today’s bards, but that’s another debate). It is amazing to some scholars that this profession could cast spells at all, much less create their own. And when they did fashion a spell, you could guarantee that it was in the crudest sense. Corners were cut in terms of the quality of components and the rechecking of basic magical physics. In Nephar’s case, creation matters deteriorated even further when he used the relatively new *wish* spell as his example. The bard wanted a cantrip to create props and change their colors at a whim. The spell closest to this was the *wish* spell which reportedly granted whatever you wanted in an instant. Not only was this spell out of Nephar’s league (thank the gods!) but was also, as he once said, “way too excessive for my minor needs.”

Instead, the bard based the template for his spell—*prestidigitation*—only loosely on the *wish* spell since they seemed to grant the same things only on a much different scale. This was the mistake, you see, for where “schooled” magics coax power from the demiplane of magic the “universal” spells yank the same power out by force of will (only the most experienced casters can really “feel” the difference though). And, of course, since Nephar was using a universal spell as the template for his own, so too did *prestidigitation* become a universal spell powered by raw unstable magic.

This was no problem for Nephar since he never realized the inherent danger in universal magic. It was a problem, however, for the man he sold the spell schematics to. A war wizard of the kingdom Rachear saw Nephar use his spell during a show and asked to see the write-up on it afterward. The bard was only too proud to show off his creation and even sold a copy of it to the eager wizard. I say “eager” because the man saw the potential in forcibly drawing raw magics that could be molded as needed

## Behind the Spells: Prestidigitation

over a sustained period of time. The wizard saw the danger in it too but his ambition and pride dismissed that quickly enough.

This wizard was in charge of Rachear's defenses and when he got the spell back to his lab and began to take apart the layers of "uselessness" that Nephar had woven into it, he decided to attempt the creation of a protective cloud. This cloud would be a sentient manifestation of the raw magic called by the spell, capable of reacting to preset conditions (like an invading force or natural disaster) with whatever spell was appropriate. The wizard planned to dump knowledge of all of his spells into the cloud so the sentience would be able to pick from a variety of magics to deal with the task at hand. While the wizard's idea had merit, he was way too inexperienced for the task. Even the mighty Archmage of Danauw (creator of the *wish* spell) was destroyed by this line of experimentation and he was probably the greatest spellcaster to ever live!

Before he attempted to create his raw magic defense cloud in front of the king and the assembled throng of Rachear's nobility, the war wizard sent a summary of his work to the neighboring province's arcane college (where he was trained) to a good friend and colleague there. In case the magic became unstable and injured him or his mind, he wanted at least the basics of his research preserved. Smart move. When the war wizard called the needed power for his spell from the demiplane of magic, it slammed into him like a 50-foot wave over a 1-foot dam. Instead of mentally copying every spell known to him and inhabiting the vapor prepared for it, the magic exploded outward in all directions in a catastrophic orgy of destruction. The capital of Rachear, a gleaming marble city called Elahn, was torn apart by the radiating waves of unfocused magical power that spilled from the demiplane.

After a handful of the citizens of Elahn escaped the destruction and told their tale, the wizard's friend at the neighboring college knew what had occurred. This man, named Temeritul Egresh, drafted a letter to be sent to every arcane body of academia known to exist. In it, he described his friend's attempt to harness raw magic and called for a ban against further research into the universal school. Naturally, this proclamation intrigued more casters than it

discouraged. The end result? More deaths occurred from further experimentation but eventually people got the hint. Universal spells are relatively safe when used outside combat conditions. *Prestidigitation*, *arcane mark*, *permanency*, *wish* and *limited wish* are the only spells left in today's arcane vernacular that fall under the universal school. As for Elahn, it still lies in ruins. Undead and other native creatures, all charged by strange magics, infest the area. Adventurers travel to the city's plateau in an attempt to plunder the riches left by the survivors those many year ago. But in addition to contending with the altered creatures, they must avoid falling prey to the strange magical mists that creep through the ruins, randomly eating, transmuting, or vaporizing whatever they come in contact with. Rumor has it that the mists disappear during the full moon so that is likely the best time to investigate the city (although whether the mists leave the city or simply become inert fog banks is unknown).

### Spell Secrets

Before we get into the doom and gloom of universal magic at large, there is one spell secret for this issue's focus on *prestidigitation*. This little trick is most useful for bardic casters during a performance.

If you use *prestidigitation* to create an object and are able to cast transmutation spells of 2nd level or greater, you can change that object's shape at will during the spell's duration. If you have created multiple objects, you can combine them into a larger (yet still crude) item (not larger than a 2-ft. cube). In addition, by concentrating on an object for one round, you can change its consistency from a solid into a benign gas or liquid state (and back again if desired but only one form per round). The range of effect for any of these is still 10 feet as per the spell description.

The real moral of the creator's story above is that universal spells are dangerous. Do not create more, please. If you do, there is an old

## Behind the Spells: Prestidigitation

spellcaster's wife's tale about sentinel beasts appearing and devouring your magic items and research. And if that doesn't happen, you might just blow yourself up. Alternately, you might use a purposeful detonation to wipe out weaker creatures surrounding you. In any event, keep your cleric handy (just not too close).

Either intentionally or as a result of another spellcaster's interference, a spell of the universal school (like *prestidigitation*) can explode! The first way for this to happen is if you will it yourself. While casting a universal school spell, you can attempt to destabilize the magic with a successful Spellcraft check (DC 20 + spell level) although it is difficult to do so. Failure means the spell's energies return from whence they came and your spell is wasted. Success, however, means that the spell's energies explode in a 10-ft. radius per spell level (5 feet for 0-level spells) and inflict damage equal to 1d6 per spell level (1d3 for 0-level spells) multiplied by your caster level. A Reflex save is allowed for half damage from all creatures in the affected area (including the caster who is not immune to the damage). [Example: After casting *prestidigitation* a 5th-level wizard decides to detonate the spell instead of using it normally. He successfully makes his Spellcraft check (DC 20) and then determines damage thusly: (1d3) \* 5. Let's say a 3 is rolled. This means that the damage is 15 points and carries out to a radius of 5 feet.]

The second way to trigger a detonation is if a universal school spell is either counterspelled or *dispelled* (the effect occurring at the spot the spell is active in). The chance of detonation is equal to a base 5% chance multiplied by the highest caster level (whether the original caster or the opposing one). [Example: A 9th-level wizard is *dispelling* the *arcane mark* of a 2nd-level sorcerer. Multiply 9 by the 5% base chance and there is a 45% chance of detonation. If this occurs, use the rules as above: Roll 1d3 (0-level spell), multiply by 9 (the caster's level), and damage is in a 5-ft. radius]

## Related Research

Since every spellcaster in this new generation thinks the old faithful spells need a "greater" version, I present to you *greater prestidigitation*. If only aspiring spell crafters would concentrate on new things instead of trying to improve on the classics. At least this spell makes for a grander stage show.

### VARIANT SPELL

#### *Prestidigitation, Greater*

As the spell *prestidigitation* with the following exceptions:

**Level:** Brd 1, Sor/Wiz 1

**Casting Time:** 1 round

**Range:** 60 feet

This spell expands the scope of its namesake by allowing you to clean, color, or soil items in a 5-ft. cube each round for every two caster levels. You can also chill, warm, or flavor 1 lb. per caster level of non-living matter. A new function of this *prestidigitation* variant allows you to bring forth tones of sound from any objects created by the spell. You can only summon or silence one specific tone per round (low, medium, or high) from an object and this requires a move action. The loudness of the tone cannot be adjusted from a standard conversation volume. There is no limit to the number of different objects that can be affected.

# Behind the Spells: Prestidigitation

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Prismatic Trio

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. In this issue, Maxolt pulls back the multicolored curtain to reveal that most dangerous trio of spells—*prismatic sphere*, *spray*, and *wall*.

### The Creator

Spells are usually the result of long hours of study and experimentation. Some spells, however, originate completely by happenstance. The *prismatic* trio—*sphere*, *spray*, and *wall*—falls under the latter category. When the retired human wizard Anton Vilanoc was invited to join his liege on a tour of the Delgos Stronghold, he could not resist. Little did

Anton know he was embarking on a journey that would see his greatest arcane achievement while sealing his fate.

For many years, the Delgos Stronghold was a quiet enigma overlooking what is today known as the Valley of Wraiths (I think this catchy name was given to the valley just to scare folks away but have never ventured there to confirm that assumption myself). The half-elven conjurer Delgos, an aficionado of all

by Bret Boyd

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things involving the other planes of existence, constructed his stronghold using material not recognized by those persons brave enough to get close to it. The conjurer valued his privacy with xenophobic zeal, scattering traps across the nearby landscape which summoned monsters neither friendly nor weak to deal with intruders. The stronghold was built using the plans drawn up by equally reclusive dwarven architect Grak Blackfist. (Maybe there's an organization comprised solely of wealthy reclusives. How else would they all know each other?)

Locals avoided the stronghold for some time but a dire need for more arable farmland soon prompted them to investigate the fertile valley. After several of the people died from the monstrous traps, the rest knew that action had to be taken to take the land from the silent master of the valley. The sequence of events ended in a surprisingly bloodless fashion at first. The locals sent an official request for King Xentius to order troops to take control of the Delgos Stronghold. They did so in but a few short hours. After navigating the trap-laden fields, Xentius' soldiers searched the pinecone-shaped stronghold but found no sign of the conjurer for which it was named. The king's spellcasters then set to work disarming the summoning traps across the area while a messenger returned to the monarch with the news.

That brings us back to Anton. Besides news of the army's victory, the message to Xentius included a baffling description of the stronghold itself. Inside the structure, the soldiers found no sign of normal habitation—furniture, foodstuffs, personal effects, etc. Instead, each of the stronghold's five floors' sported long hallways that ended in elaborate full length mirrors. The mirrors had frames of gold etched with strange runes. Anton Vilanoc, retired or not, remained the foremost expert on languages and was one of the most respected and powerful mages of the kingdom. After arriving at the stronghold, Xentius personally showed the wizard the true reason he was invited—to decipher the runes and the purpose of the Delgos Stronghold.

Anton studied all 25 mirrors before stating his conclusion to Xentius—the stronghold was some kind of planar way station. The runes on

each mirror marked them as gateways to different planes of existence. He concluded that this was why the locals never saw Delgos. He must have journeyed off of the Material Plane. Stories of the occasional encounter with strange creatures in the area only confirmed the wizard's pronouncement. The whys and hows of such a construction were beyond Anton's ability to hypothesize accurately. Apparently, King Xentius was less concerned with the reasoning behind the stronghold's construction and more concerned with how to dismantle it.

"As far as I'm concerned," Xentius told Anton, "this structure is an open and unprotected route into my kingdom. It must be closed for the safety of the people." Anton knew this would not be an easy command to obey. After studying the runes, it was clear that Delgos placed safeguards on the mirrors to prevent conventional dispelling. The wizard told as much to Xentius but the king was adamant, replying, "I don't care what needs to be done. Use whatever resources my staff can provide you. If you succeed, your family will want for nothing inside my kingdom."

With that, the king left; satisfied that Anton would not fail him. Xentius' brusque nature and his assumption that Anton could perform arcane miracles were both factors in the wizard's choice to retire from official service in the first place. Now, here he was back in the same old situation. But he would do as ordered; for his family if not the kingdom. It was true that a collection of standing planar gateways was dangerous and while Anton was not comfortable dismantling the place without knowing the purpose of its construction he would comply.

The wizard assembled a cadre of capable spellcasters, both arcane and divine, to help him come up with a means to deactivate the *gates*. After a few months of work, the group discovered that, while direct *dispel* spells would be ineffective, the *gates* were created with "backdoor" ways to deactivate them in case of emergency. Accessing the backdoors required nothing more than casting certain spells at/on the mirrors themselves. The question then became—what spells would negate the power of each mirror? The assembled spellcasters believed that trial and error would

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eventually yield the correct spells but Anton wasn't convinced that was a safe approach.

Guardian runes had been etched on each mirror and seemingly at random on the walls. At first, Anton believed these runes were some kind of energy repression magic, necessary to keep the power of so many *gates* from interfering with one another. Now, the wizard was not so sure. But before he was able to voice his concern to the majority, a young sorcerer decided to cast a random spell at the *gate* to the Astral Plane. Immediately, the guardian runes on every level flashed with a fiery red light. Some mirrors fired black bolts of energy down the hallways, melting any creature unfortunate enough to be struck. Other mirrors emitted waves of energy that caused insanity in those creatures engulfed by them. Within other hallways, the runes on the walls birthed grotesque and powerful monsters that brutally tore apart spellcasters too stunned to flee.

Anton and another wizard were within a hallway blasted by insanity waves. The younger spellcaster, caught off guard by the defenses, found his brain rendered useless as the first wave struck at him from behind. Anton reacted by jumping against a wall and heading for the stronghold's central spiral staircase. The wizard barely dodged one wave of power and had reached the stairs when a second wave impacted his shoulder and ear. The powerful blast rocked Anton's senses and he careened over the railing running the length of the stronghold. Fortunately, the wizard was only on the first floor up but the wave, much less the fall, left him dazed and confused on the marble foyer inside the structure's entrance. He stared helplessly upward at the rainbow of colors that signified the planar eruptions in every hallway and listened to the horrified screams of his compatriots.

A minute later, one surviving cleric scooped up the wizard and carried him outside to safety. Of the sixteen spellcasters that had been inside, only five survived the defenses of the Delgos Stronghold. The group returned to report their failure to Xentius. Instead of being angry at the survivors, the king acknowledged that the power within the stronghold was simply too powerful to deactivate. And since the creatures that undoubtedly used the Delgos

Stronghold as a way station had not yet assaulted the region en masse, he reasoned, perhaps the whole area should just be left deserted. Xentius ordered guard posts erected and permanently manned around the Valley of Wraiths. Besides slaying many of the kingdom's brightest spellcasters, the disaster also spawned rainbow-colored cyclones which appear at random times and places across the valley and beyond. (These *prismatic* cyclones have decreased in their appearances over the centuries but local lore still attests to their existence. An initial scouting party sent in after the disaster also discovered that the stronghold's interior was back to normal, there being no sign of magic use or even the bodies of the fallen spellcasters!)

As for Anton, the impact of the wave in the stronghold instilled the glimmer of madness. Oddly enough, the insanity wave affected the wizard's motor skills instead of his mind. If anything, Anton's arcane faculties only increased after his brush with death. Mumbling and nodding to himself wherever he went, Anton's mission in life became to best the Delgos Stronghold. It took many months but the wizard finally conceived a spell that would use the very nature of the portals against them. Since using trial and error to decipher the exact deactivation spell for each *gate* would take more years of life than Anton had left, the wizard hypothesized that a more general energy type could be used instead (as opposed to a specific spell).

That spell was, of course, *prismatic spray*. Inspired by the very power he hoped to thwart, Anton sketched out a formula by which several conduits would open into multiple planes to create a contained multi-planar disruption. These planar energies would then merge and spray outward from the caster, manifesting in the same colors associated with the spell to this day. The spell's effect, Anton believed, would lash against the mirror-gate with its various energies and, by process of elimination, deactivate the power in one fell swoop. As Anton developed *prismatic spray*, he also sketched notes for *prismatic wall*, a defensive version of his spell which again incorporated an element from the stronghold's *gates*—the deactivation spells. A wall of layered magics requiring more than a simple *dis-*

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*pel magic* seemed brilliant despite the fact that it was the very thing he was working to beat. (Perhaps he was more rattled in the brain pan than history gives him credit for!)

After finishing the formulae for both spells, Anton set off on his own. After *invisibly* passing by the guards, the wizard reentered Delgos Stronghold nearly a year after the disaster which claimed so many of his colleagues. Unfortunately, history never records if Anton was successful or not. The stronghold still stands and no outward change to it appeared following the wizard's disappearance. Anton's assistant, a halfling named Drayme Haukins, is credited with introducing his master's two new spells into mainstream arcane channels as well as developing the *prismatic sphere* spell. The halfling decided to improve upon the *prismatic* model by circumventing the somatic component for his spell. Regrettably, Drayme was slain and his original notes destroyed before his improvement could be applied to the lower level magics of *prismatic wall* and *spray*.

### Anatomy of a Spell

Before we get into the technicalities of the *prismatic* spells, I think it best to analyze just how this trio of multi-effect spells is fashioned. With a better understanding of spell construction, you can better grasp the mechanical changes in the next two sections. Sound good? I thought so.

Although the trio of *prismatic* spells come in different forms (*spray*, *wall*, and *sphere*), their basic construction is essentially the same. Each spell utilizes power from the following planes of existence: Astral, Elemental (Air, Earth, Fire, and Water), Ethereal, Negative Energy, and Positive Energy. Temporary "conduits" created by the spell allow for a controlled energy release from each of these planes. For some *prismatic* effects, the power comes from a single plane. For other effects, the power is a result of two combined planar energies. Creating a raw blast as with *prismatic spray*, this core construction is virtually unchanged. But for the other two spells, both of the abjuration school, additional protective measures are included in the arcane formulae (hence their status as higher-level spells over

the simplistic evocation of the *spray*). Let's break the core construction down.

The blindness inherent in the three *prismatic* spells originates from the Positive Energy aura. The conduit to this plane provides an extra boost of power to the other effects. Given the brightness of the Positive Energy Plane, it's no wonder that blindness is present as a side effect since the energy ripples about each spell's perimeter. But what's to keep the positive energy in check? Why, negative energy of course! Instead of harmfully and haphazardly spilling into the Material Plane, the connection to the Negative Energy Plane corrals the positive energy and gives each *prismatic* spell its shape. Besides giving the trio of spells their inherent power and structure, these twin opposing energies merge with three other planar conduits to create three of the prismatic colors. With this in mind, here's the color-by-color breakdown of the *prismatic* spells.

- Red – fire lashes out from the Elemental Plane of the Fire
- Orange – negative energy combines with the Elemental Plane of Water to produce acid
- Yellow – positive energy agitates the power emanating from the Elemental Plane of Air to produce electricity
- Green – negative energy corrodes the mists from the Ethereal conduit to produce acid
- Blue – positive energy causes matter from the Elemental Plane of Earth to become phased in a way which transforms any matter this wave touches to stone
- Indigo – the planar paradox that is this multi-planar disruption rips at the mind as much as it does the body, possibly giving way to insanity
- Violet – the "planar glue" of the Astral Plane which allows this multi-planar disruption to occur might also envelop the victim and send him or her to another plane

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### Spell Secrets

I advise caution when reading the rules for this section. Since there are three different spells being discussed in this issue, one spell secret may not apply to all. Each box text calls out which of the *prismatic* spells can be tweaked with the rules therein.

When you want to wreak havoc and confusion amongst a group of enemies, *prismatic spray* is one of the best spells for the task. But what happens if you want to utilize the great bag of effects when the enemy force isn't within the spell's range? With the first spell secret, you can have your cake and eat it too!

When you cast *prismatic spray*, instead of all beams firing at once, you can fire one beam per round up to a 60-foot range. To achieve this, you must succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 27) or the spell must be cast normally. If you succeed, the beams are fired in the standard color sequence but, after the red beam is fired in the first round, you can release subsequent beams as a move action in later rounds. If you use this spell secret, each beam requires a ranged touch attack to strike the target. Beams need not necessarily be fired in consecutive rounds but the caster cannot tarry long as the total duration of this spell secret cannot exceed one round per caster level. Not using all of the beams within this duration means that the unused beams are forfeited. [Example: A 14th-level wizard might decide, after firing the red beam in round one, that he doesn't need to fire the orange beam until two rounds later. By the eleventh round, all of the wizard's foes have been slain and he has only used up the first five beams. When no more targets present themselves in the remaining three rounds, the ability to use the indigo and violet beams is dismissed.]

Cagey foes will know to surround a spellcaster in a staggered formation if he's already demonstrated the ability to cast *prismatic spray*. The benefit of this powerful evocation is lessened considerably in such a situation unless the caster knows the second spell secret and can lure his foes in closer.

Instead of releasing *prismatic spray* in the standard cone shape, you can opt to release the burst of power from your person in all directions. If you succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 27), the *spray* erupts in a burst from your position in a 15-foot radius. The effects are in all other ways as the normal spell. Failure on the Spellcraft check means that the spell is lost.

When experienced spellcasters battle one another, the safety of a *prismatic wall* or *sphere* can be a very temporary reprieve. The spells needed to negate the multi-colored beams of energy have gone unchanged throughout the centuries of the spells' existence. I assert that this is either from laziness or lack of imagination. The negation spells are by no means set in stone. You can either change the basic formula of these abjuration spells (requiring a once and done Spellcraft check (DC 20 + spell level) when adding the spell to your spellbook or when a sorcerer commits it to memory for the first time; see the spell secret below to determine what spells can be swapped in) or use the third spell secret presented on the next page when changing them during casting.

## Behind the Spells: Prismatic Trio

In order to change the negation spells as listed in the *prismatic wall* and *sphere* spells on the fly, the spellcaster must first succeed a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 20 + spell level). Failure means the spell must be cast normally as the know-how to alter the spell in this way is beyond the caster's ken. A success means that the caster is free to swap out one or all of the spells listed and insert the spell(s) of his choice. Then, a Spellcraft check (DC 35 base) must be succeeded to actually swap the spell(s). To qualify, a new negation spell must match the original spell's level and use a spell you are able to cast (i.e. one on your spell list). Note that the Spellcraft DC can be reduced by 2 for every new spell(s) matching the school of the original. Altering the spell in this way causes the casting time to increase to one full round.

[Example: To throw off his evoker opponent, a sorcerer decides to use this spell secret when casting *prismatic sphere*. First, the sorcerer must succeed a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 29). Second, he decides to only replace the first two beams' negation spells. The red beam's *cone of cold* is replaced with *teleport* while the orange beam's *gust of wind* is replaced with *shatter*. While the first substitution is not with a spell of the same school, the second one is which lowers the Spellcraft DC to 33.]

### Related Research

Although it seems costly to do so, the *prismatic arrow* makes a fearful addition to any archer's arsenal. With a handful of these potent projectiles, an enemy won't know what to expect next after his ally on one side succumbs to noxious poison while his ally on the other side turns to stone after being struck by the rainbow arrow.

### NEW MAGIC WEAPON

#### *Prismatic Arrow*

This +1 *arrow* is painted in the seven colors of the *prismatic* spells. If it strikes a foe so that it would normally deal damage, it instead bursts into multi-colored magical energy. The target is then treated as if it had been struck by the *prismatic spray* spell (DC 18).

Strong evocation; CL 13th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *prismatic spray*; Price 2,282 gp.

Perfect for the adventuring group that gets in over its head inside a dungeon, the *prismatic spider* can help to guarantee a safe tactical retreat. Trust me; the cost will be more than worth it when that lich you accidentally awoke must stop to contend with the barricade created by this item. Hopefully, the sudden appearance of a *prismatic wall* will cause such

an enemy to think twice about adding your hide to its trophy room.

### NEW MAGIC ITEM

#### *Prismatic Spider*

This item is a glass brooch in the shape of an arachnid. The spider's body is colored violet while each of its six legs is painted in the other colors of a *prismatic* spell. When thrown onto the ground (or other solid surface), the spider shatters and bolts of magical energy shoot upward. The energy immediately expands to form a multi-colored rectangular web of power which acts exactly like the *prismatic wall* spell. The dimensions of the effect expand until they reach a solid barrier (up to a maximum of 60 ft. wide and 30 ft. high). The brooch also grants a +5 resistance bonus to all saving throws made when the wearer is affected by any *prismatic* spell. Once this *prismatic spider* is broken, its shattered remains dissolve into nothingness.

Strong abjuration; CL 15th; Craft Wondrous Item, *prismatic wall*; Price 31,000 gp.

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Reverse Gravity

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. These are the spells which, if on your PC's class list, will be taken as soon as possible. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. For this issue, Maxolt shows us the ups and downs inherent in the spell which defies a law of nature—*reverse gravity*.

### The Creator

After the world was formed, the gods granted stewardship of it to the druids. These keepers of nature had an affinity to all the flora and fauna that existed. Their leader directed the membership to tend to the differing environments as they chose—swamps, deserts,

forests, plains, tundra, and everything in between. Ephraim Mournes bore the mantle of Grand Druid of Forests at the time of this tale. Being the 20th in the long line of Grand Druids, Mournes was pretty much like all the rest—a kindly old human whose soft voice never was raised in anger and whose move-

by Bret Boyd



## Behind the Spells: Reverse Gravity

ments were as gentle as a summer breeze. At this stage in history, many natural areas possessed a direct link to the fabric of magic itself through their animals, minerals, or plants (some still might possess it today). Mournes resided in a great forest whose trees filled this role. Legends speak of even novice druids being able to cast spells far beyond their ability as long as they were in close proximity to any of these “attuned” objects or creatures.

The normally quiet pace of life in this forest was one day disrupted by a great rumbling of the earth. Earthquake? No, thought Mournes, as the Grand Druid stirred from his meditation. The reverberations came not from beneath the earth but by something far closer to the surface. Mournes gathered together those druids who lived closest to him. After speaking his fears, the group changed their shape into majestic eagles and flew toward the forest’s center. As their goal came into sight, the Grand Druid knew his suspicions were correct. The great volcano that rested here was already coughing up wisps of dark smoke.

After retaking human form, the other druids looked to Mournes for direction. Surely, the surrounding area had to be evacuated before the volcano erupted. One younger druid actually suggested trying to stop the volcano itself with their magic. Unfortunately, as any druid worth his salt knows, a disaster, as long as it’s natural, cannot be interrupted by the druidic membership. The question in Mournes’ mind was, “Is this a natural disaster?” Sure, the volcano was natural but this particular one had been used by the gods to draw energy and power directly from the Elemental Plane of Fire. After the world had been roughly formed, the gods ceased to siphon that power and the volcano was rendered dormant; supposedly for all time. Only the Grand Druid held this knowledge which was why the others could not understand Mournes’ hesitation.

After a few moments, a great owl landed next to Mournes and morphed into human form. What this man, a senior member of the Order of the Owl, had to report confirmed the Grand Druid’s secret fear. As an owl, the druid had spotted several figures moving about inside the volcano. The description of the creatures left no doubt—devils! They were busy placing a multitude of rocks and boulders over the spot where a hole to the Plane of Fire would be reopened,

more than likely on the extraplanar side. Devils had several times before attempted to harvest the power inherent in the magically-attuned trees. And every time, the magic they desperately sought was used to defeat them by the druids. It seemed that their leader, a being known as Xear, would see the magical trees destroyed rather than remain in druidic hands. Those boulders the devils were moving into position would be thrown with the eruption and scattered across the entire forest, burning faster than the druids could possibly stop.

“Begin the evacuation,” Mournes said solemnly and then added, “But do so through the animals. Assemble the membership here at once.” The Grand Druid weighed his options, not knowing which was the best course but knowing that many druids would be needed to accomplish it. Should they attack the devils or perhaps attempt, as the novice member suggested, to stop the eruption itself? No, either course would prove futile given the lack of time and preparation. Then the first blast shook the ground and one of the devil-placed rocks shot weakly from the volcano’s mouth, landing not terribly far from Mournes’ position. The fiery rock, likely just a test of the explosive strength, smashed several trees and lit others on fire before coming to a rest many yards from its impact point. The already gathered druids moved quickly to douse the stone and the affected trees. Some members were heard cursing the rock but the early blast actually inspired the Grand Druid.

We don’t need to prevent the eruption, he thought. What we need to do is stop the fiery debris. By the time the bulk of the forest’s druids had arrived, the volcano was ready to let loose its first real eruption. Mournes quickly explained that, by using the attuned trees’ enhanced magical connection, the druids could stop the boulders from reaching the earth by casting a spell he had just created (literally, he fashioned the idea for the spell minutes before as a result of the witnessing first impact). By reversing the direction of gravity itself above the tree line, the rocks could not fall to damage the forest. The idea proved a resounding success. Only a handful of boulders made it past the blanket of reversed gravity quickly erected by the druid conclave. These few, as well as the ones being suspended far above, were doused by novice druids throw-

## Behind the Spells: Reverse Gravity

ing water-related spells. Unfortunately, the intense usage of the attuned trees caused them to lose that special magical connection. The devils, their prize lost, retreated to their dark planar abodes. The druids, of course, were truly only concerned with the forest's survival and victory was indeed achieved.

Thus was *reverse gravity* born of quick desperation by, of all people, a druid. Since gravity is a natural state, I suppose it's only fitting that a druid crafted a spell to alter it. As for the magical connection of these trees being lost, well that's almost true. I've spoken with several adventurers who have been to that same legendary wood and happened upon floating boulders. At seemingly random times, rocks of any size might rise up as high as a hundred feet. Woe to the person or creature standing on such a boulder as it zooms into the sky! Given the overlapping gravity magics of the spell's legend, I do not doubt these adventurers' stories. Mind your step!

### Spell Secrets

*Reverse gravity* is quite the attention getter when cast on unsuspecting foes (and what foe is really expecting to be whisked suddenly into the air?). But perhaps you've got the opportunity to use surrounding features—nearby cliff or closely-grouped stalactites—as a weapon if only the enemy would throw itself at them. With the first spell secret, you can help your foe toward certain grievous injury or worse.

Academics refer to the second spell secret as “uncontrolled ascent.” The advantage to this is that your victims do not have sufficient time to react to their situation. By the time they've figured out what's happened, they're plunging back to earth. In rare cases, some casters have used this spell secret to launch groups of allies to a higher plateau.

When casting *reverse gravity*, you can opt to not quite finish the spell's verbal component. When you do this, and succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 20), the spell's effect is an instantaneous burst of reversed gravity. Loose objects and creatures in the area of effect at the time of the casting are thrown straight up and, if they fail to grab onto something on the way up, find themselves falling right back down after reaching a vertical limit. This limit, indicating how far up a creature flies, is double the *reversed* area they traveled through. [For example: If three of your 10-ft. by 10-ft. areas are atop each other, the target not only flies upward through that area but another 30 feet before plummeting back to the ground.] Unless measures such as *fly* or *levitate* are in effect, the target takes appropriate damage from the fall.

You can tweak the area of effect that is affected by *reverse gravity* to create no or subjective directional gravity instead. Such redirection requires a successful Spellcraft check (DC 23) or the caster must have 9 or more ranks in Knowledge (the planes).

Much more difficult to pull off is the tweaking of the gravity fields in such a way that each 10 ft. by 10 ft. cube created possesses its own distinct gravity field from that of its neighbor(s). To accomplish this, you must succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 25+2 for each section different beyond the first). [For example: If you're creating four areas with *reverse gravity*, you can have them all be different in terms of the gravity they generate. To leave a section in its normal reversed state requires no additional modifier. But let's say you place the cubes into an L-shape and want gravity to flow so that whatever's inside them is carried along the ground? This means you'd need three to gravitate “forward” (relative to the caster) and the last perpendicular to these others. Since all are being changed, your Spellcraft check is DC 33 (25+2+2+2+2).] Using the example, if you're familiar with the layout of a particular corridor, you could conceivably use this spell secret to send an ally down a hallway and around corners without them having to touch the floor, walls, or ceiling and thus avoid potential traps. In all cases, a target can attempt a Reflex save if there is something to secure itself on.

## Behind the Spells: Reverse Gravity

### Related Research

Whenever there's a spell that reverses a constant, there always seems to be a spellcaster that wants to take the constant to the other extreme. In this case, *increase gravity* doubles the normal pressure experienced by this natural state and causes creatures to move more slowly and objects to fall more quickly.

#### VARIANT SPELL

##### *Increase Gravity*

As the spell *reverse gravity* but with the following exceptions...

**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates; see text

Instead of flipping gravity about, this spell greatly increases its current pull. All creatures caught in the area of effect are automatically penalized as if they were carrying heavy loads (see Chapter 9: Adventuring in the PHB for penalty information). On the second round of exposure, a target also becomes fatigued unless he has taken **no actions** whatsoever. On the third round of exposure, unless the target has still taken **no actions**, its condition worsens to exhausted (in addition to still being penalized for carrying a heavy load, which means *that* reduced speed is cut in half). Even if a target leaves the area of effect, the penalties remain for an additional number of rounds equal to half the caster level unless a Fortitude save is succeeded. Inside the area of effect, ranged weapons are at an additional  $-4$  circumstance penalty as the missiles drop too quickly toward the ground thanks to the increased gravity.

Sometimes it is beneficial to only tag one or a very few objects or creatures for *reverse gravity*. To this end, an enterprising spellcaster created *gravity globs*. All manner of interesting scenarios are possible when, for instance, a high stakes gambling table suddenly flies to the ceiling before the last cards are shown or an evil priest finds himself wishing he hadn't put that stained glass window above his throne as he and his seat fly up to meet it!

#### NEW MAGIC ITEM

##### *Gravity Globs*

This clear gelatinous substance takes up no more room than the palm of the average human's hand. When part or all of the substance is made wet, it immediately becomes sticky. Once wet, the glob adheres to the next solid surface it is applied to (possibly requiring a successful touch attack if used against a creature). Its magic then activates, causing the object or creature it is stuck to to react as if within a *reverse gravity* field as cast by a 12th-level caster. The target rises 60 feet and, unless it encounters another solid body, spins lazily for the 12 round duration. At the end of this duration, the glob shrivels and falls off the target, its magic spent. These items are usually sold in a set of three.

Strong transmutation; CL 12th; Craft Wondrous Item, *reverse gravity*; Price 12,600 gp (per set).

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Shatter

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### The Creator

When a spell has its origins in less than civilized circumstances, the truth tends to get buried. It's something I don't really understand but then I'm not part of the trendy crowd. Mainstream sources would have you believe that *shatter* was created by a half-elven wizard named Juriatt Prag. Now, while Juriatt was certainly a capable caster (and did create the *knock* spell), he is credited with creating *shatter* because the academic community

doesn't like to remember the spell's actual creator—a derro sorcerer named Pujat. I say, "So what?" Magic is magic and it doesn't matter who created the matrix for a given spell. Its use neither condones the creator's lifestyle, much less his race, nor does it sully your own magic in some way. And yet Juriatt gets the credit. Well, that changes as of now.

Derro have a genetic predilection for madness. While this doesn't do much for the race's good name, it does grant them talented spellcasters (sorcerers, specifically). Pujat lived

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: Shatter

near the outer defensive block of a typical derro underground city. As a sorcerer of middling power, Pujat sold his talents to natives and visitors alike. As I understand it, derro adult males were (and perhaps still are) required to participate at least twice a month in *ter'ri zalms* (loosely translated as “assault teams”). Pujat cherished these times because it gave him new opportunities to use magics he might not ordinarily use in the city (or at least not use without consequences). But as time went on, the *ter'ri zalms* Pujat served in met with more and more defeat at the hands of magic-wielding foes who had become wise to derro tactics in that area.

Pujat noticed that at every failed ambush, the enemy seemed to always use potions or other magical items to give them a decisive advantage. There had to be some way to remove that advantage, the derro thought. By the time his next *ter'ri zalm* rotation was up, Pujat had a spell crafted to nullify those irritable items. His spell, originally called “smash trinkets,” met with some success. Enemy adventurers found their lanterns exploded and vials of magical liquids smashed by an unseen force. Pujat’s spell was designed to create fierce vibrations inside all objects within a certain radius. But while the derro was ecstatic at the apparent victory of his spell, the effect did little to delay his team’s defeat. This time, Pujat himself was captured and taken above-ground to the adventurer’s base of operations. The derro’s unusual spell had surprised the humans and elves so much that they deemed the creature worthy of interrogation—ironic considering derrokind’s own propensity for cruel torture.

The adventuring band kept Pujat imprisoned for three months in their keep until they were certain the derro had given up all of his secrets. It wasn’t easy for the sorcerer, but the derro did indeed give up his arcane formula for “smash trinkets.” After Pujat was unceremoniously executed, the spell was cleaned up by (you guessed it) local wizard Juriatt Prag and given a new title: *shatter*. A sad little tale, for one never knows what other arcane gems Pujat might have contributed to history. That said, no one knows what arcane scribbles he left in his home either, much less if they were salvaged by anyone. As the story goes, the

derro city was attacked by the surface dwellers but the entire battle ended with the disappearance of all involved. I’ve heard of expeditions sponsored to discover the whereabouts of *any* survivors but all report back with the same result. The city is abandoned. Not even valuable plunder remains. It is as if the soldiers from the surface swept the city clean and then kept moving deeper into the subterranean world.

### Spell Secrets

Almost any object destroyed by *shatter* can be repaired by the *make whole* spell. In fact, I’ve heard of more than one trickster who *shattered* a valuable crystalline piece of art only to

When casting *shatter*, you may attempt to lessen the critical vibration frequency necessary to destroy an object outright. Such a less intense focusing severely weakens an object so that, while it does not shatter right away, it will fly apart after the first solid smack. To accomplish this effect, you must succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 10 + weight of target object) or the spell functions normally. This technique can only be attempted on single objects and not as an area effect. If your Spellcraft check fails by 10 or more, the vibrations were too weak to accomplish anything and *shatter* is wasted. Alternately, if your check fails by less than 10, the spell works normally.

[For example: A 5th-level cleric wants to “nearly shatter” the orc double axe of her foe. She hopes that, if successful, the orc will believe her body to be indestructible if his weapon crumbles upon impact. The cleric casts *shatter* at the double axe before the orc charges in. Since the weapon is less than 50 pounds, it is certainly within the spell’s weight limit. The cleric’s player rolls a Spellcraft check and gets a 16. Since the cleric’s skill is maxed out at 8 ranks, this means the total 24. Unfortunately, the orc double axe weighs 15 pounds so her target number was 25. Remember that a failed roll of less than 10 means *shatter* works normally. So, while she cannot attempt her ruse on the orc, at least it still loses its weapon in mid stride.]

## Behind the Spells: Shatter

magically reconstruct it after the owner tosses the bits out with the garbage. Sneaky bastards. But that isn't the only covert use for this spell. Surprisingly enough, one of its hidden powers lies in combat. No, I'm not talking about that astronomical probability of an encounter with a crystalline foe. I mean that you can, if careful enough, vibrate a target object to just before the breaking point. The look on a warrior's face is priceless when, instead of landing a killing blow with his sword, he finds it crumbling harmlessly to pieces after the strike. Such a maneuver not only unnerves the warrior but opens him up to easy melee counter-attack.

Another little known fact of this spell is that it can be used cooperatively. When multiple spellcasters target the same thing, the *shatter* effect multiplies according to the accumulated power of the mages. Let me just say, a low-level spell's potential really shows when several casters can bring down an earth elemental with it.

When acting on the same initiative, two or more spellcasters can increase the pound limit affected when casting *shatter* at the same target/area. To determine how many pounds can be affected, simply add the caster levels of all casters together. This applies for both area targeting and if all *shatter* spells are targeted at a single object (whose composition must still fall into the spell parameters). [For example: Three arcane spellcasters, levels 5, 6, and 7, need to destroy a granite statue weighing approximately 150 pounds. They agree to cast *shatter* at the same time, knowing that any one of them can not accomplish the task on their own. Together, their levels equal 18. Since one object is being targeted, the pounds affected equals 180. Thus, the trio successfully shatters the statue.] The damage against crystalline creatures, however, cannot be massed in this way and each spell's damage is calculated separately.

### NEW SPELL

#### *Bone Shatter*

Evocation [Sonic]

**Level:** Chaos 5, Clr 5, Destruction 5, Sor/Wiz 5

**Components:** V, S, M/DF

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Target:** One creature within sight that possesses a skeletal structure

**Duration:** Concentration, up to 1 round/level (D)

**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

A deep base sound erupts from the target's body as the spell is cast. The target creature must succeed a Fortitude save every round or else find his bones the victim of intense assault by vibration. The effects depend on how many times a creature succumbs to the attack. If, at any time during the duration, the target leaves your line of sight, the spell ends. You must concentrate on the creature's form for your magic to increase in intensity.

*First Failed Save:* The creature feels sharp but brief pains cascade across its body, inflicting 1d6 points of damage.

*Second Failed Save:* The creature's pain intensifies as some of its bones start to fracture. The creature takes 2d6 points of damage and now has a -2 circumstance penalty to all actions.

*Third Failed Save:* As above but the creature's damage increases to 3d6 and it is now considered staggered.

*Fourth Failed Save:* The resonance is now so powerful that the creature's bones literally snap apart. The damage inflicted increases to 4d6 and the creature drops to the ground and is considered helpless. Further failed saves inflict the same 4d6 damage until either the duration expires or the target dies.

*Arcane Material Component:* A cracked humanoid rib bone.

## Behind the Spells: Shatter

### Related Research

The *shatter* spell offers itself up to a lot of tinkering in the arcane field. A spell that causes objects to vibrate so fiercely that they explode is just dying to be modified. There is one particularly nasty spell which targets the bones of a creature with shattering resonance (see previous page). It cannot be pleasant when your bones start to burst inside your own body. The creator of this spell must have been inspired by the derro race since it has excellent potential as a spell of torture.

Another favorite *shatter* variant, especially of worshippers of Destruction deities, is *shatterstorm*. The ability to not only smash objects but then put their shards to work for you in a small cyclone of whirling fragments is a great boon. Even the most benign object, such as an empty barrel, can yield a potentially powerful ally when this spell is used. I've witnessed one surprised comrade cut down when a decorative suit of chainmail exploded beside him, its fragments cutting him to bloody ribbons.

### NEW SPELL *Shatterstorm*

As the spell *shatter* with the following exceptions:

Evocation [Air, Sonic]

**Level:** Chaos 4, Clr 4, Destruction 4, Sor/Wiz 4

**Area or Target:** 10-ft.-radius spread; or one solid object

**Duration:** 1 round/2 levels

**Saving Throw:** Will negates (object); Will negates (object); Reflex half (see text)

Like *shatter*, you can use *shatterstorm* against one object or a collection of objects (cannot exceed a total weight of 40 pounds) within the radius of effect (in this case 10 feet). The difference is that, once destroyed, the pieces of the object(s) immediately become dangerous flying shrapnel. The jagged pieces swirl in a column both 10 feet in width and height. You can direct the *shatterstorm* to move up to 20 feet per round as a move action. When directed into the spaces one or more creatures occupy, the storm inflicts a base 2d6 damage plus more damage depending on the weight of the object(s) shattered:

Weight of Shattered Object(s)	Additional Damage
1 to 5 pounds	+1d6
6 to 10 pounds	+2d6
11 to 15 pounds	+3d6
16 to 20 pounds	+4d6
21 to 25 pounds	+5d6
26 to 30 pounds	+6d6
31 to 35 pounds	+7d6
36 to 40 pounds	+8d6

Target creatures can attempt a Reflex save for half damage. During the spell's duration, it is possible to increase its supply of shrapnel by casting *shatter* at another object (or group of objects). By moving the *shatterstorm* over subsequently smashed pieces, it collects them into its swirling winds and increases the damage potential as shown above (but cannot exceed the 40 pound limit).



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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Shield

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. This time around, Maxolt gives a peek behind the low-level protection spell of choice—*shield*.

Well, here we are at the 10th issue in the *Behind the Spells* series. I didn't honestly think we'd get this far. Your interest in my ramblings has brought no end of joy to my old draconic heart. To those of you who have been following my verbal journeys all along, thanks. To those of you joining us for the first time, welcome aboard! It seems only fitting that I tie this anniversary issue in with the very first issue featuring *magic missile*. If you don't have that copy, don't worry. As with all of these *Behind the Spells*, each issue is stand-alone. Enjoy and here's to many more issues to come!

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: Shield

### The Creator

Peltanin Moldao was the grandson of Mirtanin Moldao, the creator of the *magic missile* spell. Peltanin, unlike his renowned forebear, did not take an active interest in wizardly thought and practice. However, Peltanin's life of "arcane servitude" (as he called it) was destined from the moment his grandfather created that most famous of spells. Friends and relatives constantly compared the youth to his grandfather and, when he failed to perform to their expectations, chided him. You see, Peltanin could never hope to live up to Mirtanin's prominence in the Moldao family unless he too could fashion such a universally liked and accepted spell as *magic missile*. The odds were stacked against Peltanin, to be sure, especially when one considers how much the youth disliked having the ways of wizardry shoved down his throat.

As I've come to learn during my adventures, however, one should not confuse *interest* with *ability*. Peltanin had the same intuition for wizardry as his grandfather and, when he did wield a spell, did so with grace and precision. The Moldao family had many coins with which to pay for Peltanin's training and the youth learned under the most learned minds money could buy at the time. After finishing his studies, he went straight to work developing "the next great offensive spell." Although he lacked the desire of other wizards, he wanted to desperately throw off the yoke of his ancestor. He studied the mechanics and variations of *magic missile* until he could stand it no longer. Every spell Peltanin came up with was never fast enough, never accurate enough, never "good" enough for his family. But it wasn't only the Moldao family who was interested in Peltanin's spell developments.

The Arcane Triad, a group of evocation mages which Mirtanin Moldao helped to found, subtly watched the youth's efforts with increased interest. The group never offered Peltanin membership—no, one had to possess a passion for magic and not just ability—but they found his approaches to a supposed new and improved *magic missile* spell intriguing. Peltanin continued his efforts, without substantial results, for many years. The wizard was simply too interested in non-wizardly pas-

times to get deep into his promising work. All of that changed on one fateful afternoon at the local mage fair. Peltanin attended the annual event to sell minor magics and keep his face in the arcane community, as it were. Not to mention these fairs also attracted more than a few lovely ladies in search of just the right spell or elixir to make themselves beautiful. As Peltanin spent the day watching these lovelies wander about the fairgrounds, he heard not one, not two, but **six** different people comment about him.

"Oh, it's such a pity he never lived up to his grandfather," one lamented, pointing at Peltanin when they thought he wasn't looking.

"That wizard made nothing of the education he was given. It's a wonder the family doesn't disown him," whispered another.

Normally a patient man, Peltanin could stand the comparison to his grandfather no longer. He overturned his stand with shouts of profanity and blasted the last nay-sayer with the *magic missile* which he apparently held so dear. "That spell," Peltanin cried, pointing to the man he had just injured, "will not survive my generation!" The wizard then stormed from the fairgrounds and was never seen in the city again.

That is the last point at which history tracks out friend, Peltanin. Did he ever attempt to make good on his threat? Most certainly, yes. I've been able to discover that Peltanin moved to a small lakeside town a hundred miles away. Here, the wizard devoted his existence to stopping the profits of *magic missile*. I use the word "profits" for two reasons. First, spellcasters everywhere profited greatly in combat after learning Mirtanin's easily mastered offensive spell. Second, the Arcane Triad made a tidy fortune selling the formula to *magic missile* across the realm. For this second reason, the Triad made an active effort to find Peltanin and "persuade" him to stop his research.

What happened next is lost even to my highly trained sleuthing skills. Apparently, agents from the Arcane Triad did indeed catch up with Peltanin as he was about to send the formula for his spell "missile shield" to a colleague. Oddly enough, when I thought I'd found source material to confirm my suspicions (a diary of a neighbor where Peltanin resided), the library mysteriously burned in a

## Behind the Spells: Shield

fire. Coincidence? The authorities say “accident” but my finely honed adventurer instincts tell me otherwise. Someone doesn’t want me digging up the Triad’s possibly dirty past. I’ll have to watch my back and just give you my theory for now. Peltanin was likely kidnapped or even killed for his development of what today is the *shield* spell. What else could he have been up to which had a name so close to that spell and be able to negate *magic missiles*? It’s also equally as likely that the Triad polished the spell before having third party agents take the formula and sell it to the arcane community (for a substantial profit).

It just seems ludicrous to me that the Triad would rather see the grandson of one of their founders effectively dead as opposed to the potential loss of their biggest spell sale. That takes more guts than I thought that ancient group had. And who would care today, centuries later, about such an act? Are the secrets surrounding Peltanin’s fate still so relevant that they’re worth destroying a library over? Does the Triad still exist in some form? As I said, I’ll have to get back to you when I know more. Until then, enjoy the below *shield* facts I’ve put together.

### Spell Secrets

While developed specifically to negate the use of *magic missile*, the end result of the *shield* spell gives quite a bit more than that original premise. Having an invisible tower shield of pure force can be quite the boon to poor under-protected mages. But can the shield of *shield* do more than prevent direct strikes to the caster’s fragile form? You bet. A caster can launch his *shield* with a thought to have it slam into opponents at a distance.

It is known to some that not only did Peltanin create *shield* to stop *magic missiles*, he also embedded a secret manipulation to deflect them. Unfortunately for the spellcaster, the nature of the *shield* spell is such that a deflection of the missiles is uncontrolled. Since these are bolts of pure force, a deflection can have all manner of interesting consequences. A companion of mine deflected four *magic missiles* once only to have two of them hit an ally and another knock a pricey vase off a table!

When your *shield* blocks a *magic missile* attack, you can attempt to deflect the missile(s) with a successful Spellcraft check (DC 15 for each missile). Since the *shield* moves subtly as you do yet still faces forward, the angle of the deflected missiles is random. Roll a d6 for each missile and consult the “Missing with a Thrown Weapon” diagram in **Chapter 8: Combat** of the PHB. A roll of 1-2 means the missile deflects forward to the left. A roll of 3-4 means the missile deflects directly forward. A roll of 5-6 means the missile deflects forward to the right. The distance of the deflected missile is exactly the same as the distance from the caster to you. If (or when) the missile’s maximum range is met after the deflection, it winks out of existence.

Spellcasters who have used *shield* over the centuries have been pleased by its *magic missile*-negating property but not all believe that spell should be exclusively protected against. There are a few mages out there who prefer

As a standard action, you can mentally launch your *shield* at a foe you can see. First, you must succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 16) to loosen the *shield* from its guardian position. Second, you must make a ranged attack to successfully hit the target (using the greater of your Intelligence or Dexterity modifier to add to the attack roll). The maximum range for your *shield* throw is 30 feet and the damage inflicted is 1d8 plus 1 per two caster levels (maximum +5). In addition to inflicting damage, the *shield* makes a bull rush attempt. For this attempt, the target cannot be greater than Large size, you add half your caster level to your opposed Strength check, and there is no ill effect for you if the attempt is unsuccessful. Whether or not the *shield* throw attack is successful, the spell ends after the round it is attempted.

## Behind the Spells: Shield

*shield* to stop other low-level spells such as *burning hands*, *color spray*, or *ray of enfeeblement*.

You can alter the *shield* spell when casting it to replace the negation of *magic missile* with another spell. This other spell must be one that specifically targets you and is limited to 1st and 0-level spells. Similarly, you can apply any 1st or 0-level divine spells if you are capable of casting them but the restriction of having you as the target still applies. You can only have one *shield* spell in operation at a time.

### Related Research

The ability to swap *magic missile* protection for defense against another low-level spell is quite useful but spellcasters over the years have improved even on that secret manipulation. There is one standout in that select group of variants which I think would find more use if knowledge of it were more widespread.

### VARIANT SPELL

#### *Shield, Greater*

As the spell *shield* with the following exceptions:

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 5

You create a visible, rippling barrier of force that swims over your entire body without quite touching it. This rotating protective field of shimmering force provides a +4 deflection bonus to armor class, applying against incorporeal attack since it is a force effect. In addition, the *greater shield* also functions as a *lesser globe of invulnerability*.

*Material Component:* A glass or crystal bead that shatters at the expiration of the spell.

Some spellcasters look beyond the protective nature of the *shield* spell and into its unique ability to utilize other spells of similar power. By sacrificing its ability to protect, the caster can use the *shield* as a window through which he can use various divination spells.

### NEW SPELL

#### *Detection Shield*

As the spell *shield* with the following exceptions:

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 2

**Range:** Personal; see text

In addition to *shield's* normal benefits, the spell provides the ability to use several divination spells as a move action. Using the shield-shape force as a kind of free-floating window, you can look through it to use any of the following spells (but only one per round): *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *read magic*, *detect secret doors*, and *detect undead*. You must be viewing through your "window" for this ability to be successful, which means the normal cone-shaped emanation area for these spells does not apply (*read magic* being the exception here). While using a divination spell, the *shield* is incapable of protecting you against *magic missile* attacks, although the standard +4 shield bonus still applies.

# Behind the Spells: Shield

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Shocking Grasp

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### The Creator

There are few things more irritating to me than a misnamed spell. When a spellcaster casts *shocking grasp* does he need to actually grasp someone for the spell to function? Of course not. He need only touch the target to deliver the electrical jolt. So why not call it “shocking touch?” The answer leads us into this issue's historical lecture.

Even after the Great Kingdoms of the west were founded, there was still plenty of unconquered land to go around. These tracts of earth, some forested, some mountainous, and still others good for planting, came under the control of whomever first laid claim to them. Of course, such claims didn't always last. There was always some bully who would have to march in, frighten with a display of force, and cackle as the peoples kow-towed before

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: Shocking Grasp

him. Lord Vask was such a man. A sorcerer by trade, Vask grew up in the rough and tumble trade town of Fenj'mit. Vask saw how the local guilds were really in control of the people and their possessions and wanted such power himself. Unfortunately for the human, he was not really a people person. Being a guildmaster is often as much an effort in diplomacy as in force. Vask's talent in arcane matters was indeed respected but not advanced enough to warrant a true bid for master of the Weirdfire Brotherhood (the undisputed arcane masters of the city who controlled any matter of sorcery including levying heavy fines against spellcasters who refused to pay for "casting privileges").

So Vask left Fenj'mit on his 20th birthday and roamed about for a full year. He sought a suitably weak urban center in which to establish his own organization of arcane control. As seen before, control in an urban locale necessitated a charismatic leader and Vask was not one to sitting in the shadows as puppeteer. In the same vein, Vask did not enjoy being used either. During his journey, the sorcerer could not shake the impression that someone was helping him out of dangerous situations. Although a mature adult, Vask was alone on the road and more than once beset by a band of monsters or brigands he couldn't hope to defeat on his own. Nevertheless, after a flashy evocation to begin his combat maneuvers, the enemy group always retreated. Surely they had confronted more powerful foes than he, Vask reasoned, so why the quick retreat? Before finding his eventual home in Weyroot, the sorcerer made certain to perform a thorough search after one such thwarted ambush. Sure enough, he discovered enormous clawed footprints in the mud behind a stand of trees.

But I digress (although we'll return to this protector in a few moments). Vask decided that if he could not establish his own vile group within a city, he might be just as content ruling a smaller community on his own. Weyroot was a farming thorp outside normal trade roads. The people, humans mostly, were a happy lot of simple farmers—perfect targets for the scheme Vask concocted toward the end of his wanderings.

Well, it wasn't much a scheme, really. Vask strolled into Weyroot one sunny day and

informed all the locals passing the central gathering area that he was now in charge of them. They would pay him tribute in the form of food and money and he, in turn, would protect them from outside threats (sure he would!). Anyone that did not agree to these terms or who attempted to move from Weyroot would summarily be executed. Predictably, the people trotted out their old and wise elder to negotiate with the sorcerer. Before the old man could get within 20 feet of Vask, the sorcerer fried the poor soul with a *lightning bolt* in a most frightening display.

"There will be no bargaining," announced Vask. "I, Lord Vask, am the law here now. Obey me or die!" The sorcerer's residence was a small keep just north of the thorp. It was abandoned decades ago after the former lord was overthrown and the new one had little interest in Weyroot or its environs. There was at least one, shall we say, "morally weak" resident who became Vask's toadie after the sorcerer took control. The assistant was told to take a census of the community and then called for all adult men to assemble at the keep. Vask was a very covetous man and now that he had control over others he wanted to secure that control. To that end, he had crafted a new spell during his year of wandering—*branding grasp*.

The spell focused a considerable electrical charge into Vask's palm; a charge that took the shape of any symbol the sorcerer chose. In this case, Vask chose his personal symbol—a stylized "V" within a circle—with which to brand his newly acquired property. Each adult male was branded on the back of the left-hand wrist. As if this humiliation was not enough, the magical electricity was quite painful and some men did not survive the procedure. These, Vask coolly noted to the others, were not worthy of his lordship. After dismissing his newly minted slaves, he raised the slain men as zombies to serve inside the keep aside the *unseen servants* Vask commonly used.

Little did Vask know that his spellcasting talent, not to mention his penchant for electricity, came from his unseen protector—a blue dragon. It seems Vask's great-grandmother had an unknown dalliance with the wymr Vetrikilatrum. The dragon kept an eye on his progeny knowing that, sooner or later, one of



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his blood's generations would have a great aptitude for sorcery. Vetrikilatrum had moved beyond the need for a great hoard or sniveling servants. Now his game was in the realm of men. What could these humanoids, with an innate draconic flair for magic and easy access to materials, make of themselves? Vask was Vetrik's great experiment. I'm not really sure what he wanted Vask to do but for a blue of his age to follow the human around is quite unheard of in any century of history.

In the end, even the blue wyrm (by the gods, I hate blues) could not protect Vask from the multiple adventuring parties asked by the people of Weyroot to send the sorcerer packing. With a cunning but dangerous tactic, two groups banded together—one distracting the dragon, the other invading the keep. Vetrikilatrum was destroyed by a trap specifically meant for it. Supposedly, his bones still litter the hills of Weyroot, mistaken for rocks after being half-buried by the beast's explosion. Vask is a different story. The sorcerer, like any evil figure in command of others, sent his minions against the adventurers while he moved to escape via secret subterranean tunnels snaking beneath the keep. After the adventurers caught up with him, the battle was brief but fierce. Vask's electrical assaults brought most of the cavern they were fighting in down in a cataclysmic quake. The sorcerer himself was thrown into a chasm and not seen again.

The sorcerer's notorious *branding grasp* spell, along with his other research, was taken from the keep by the surviving adventurers. A half-elven wizard by the name of Aegrid Ffike decided that the painful reminder associated with Vask's spell was too great to keep in existence as-is. Instead of copying the spell into his spellbook, the wizard decided to first break it apart into two new spells—*arcane mark* and *shocking grasp*. I suppose it was Ffike who technically created the spell of our discussion here but, without Vask, it might never have existed. Why he didn't properly rename the "grasp" part is anyone's guess. I say it's just a case of laziness but at least he had the decency to not copy the original in its entirety (the Weyroot residents might have hunted him down if he had).

Weyroot still exists to this day, the tale of Lord Vask a popular one on bards' lips as they pass through on the relatively new trade road. Recently, however, there have been rumors that the Lord's keep is again the site of activity. Zombies crackling with eldritch electricity have been fought at the keep's perimeter and a faint voice has been heard chanting arcane phrases by those courageous enough to sneak up to the keep's outer wall.

### Spell Secrets

In the last few decades, the *shocking grasp* spell has changed. The previous version allowed the caster to hold the charge for a bit before discharging it. The newest version forces the caster to use the charge immediately after casting it or he loses it. I suppose this is part of the "want it now" mentality that seems to be sweeping the current generation of spellcasters. Is there no thought to strategy or finesse anymore? Fortunately, it is still a relatively simple matter to hold the charge if the caster so desires.

Instead of immediately discharging the jolt of a *shocking grasp*, you can opt to hold the energy for a short time. At the start of the first round after which you do not discharge the spell, you must succeed a Concentration check (DC 10). For every round thereafter, the Concentration DC increases by +1. You cannot hold the charge for more than 5 rounds (maximum of +5 to the DC) after you have cast the spell. After five rounds, the spell dissipates harmlessly.

With the proper knowledge, a spellcaster can invert *shocking grasp* into a protective barrier for himself. The resulting field interferes with incoming electrical attacks and prevents some of the damage from getting through. The barrier also looks pretty keen at night!

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If you succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 16) after casting *shocking grasp*, you can coat yourself in faintly shimmering arcs of electricity. This effect grants you electricity resistance 5 for 10 minutes per caster level. The blue-green electrical arcs also act as the *faerie fire* spell (providing candle illumination; thwarting concealment, etc.) but can be mentally doused with a successful Concentration check (DC 11 per round).

### Related Research

As often as a spell is stifled, it tends to reappear later on with that much more urgency. The recent activity at Weyroot Keep and rampant rumors of Vask's return to that area have caused the resurgence of that sorcerer's most infamous spell. The spell depicted here is probably not the same one used by Vask but you can bet it's pretty close.

#### VARIANT SPELL

##### *Branding Grasp*

As the spell *shocking grasp* but with the following exceptions...

Universal [Electricity]

**Casting Time:** 1 round

**Target:** Creature touched

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Spell Resistance:** No

After chanting and focusing magic into your palm, you mentally form the electricity into a certain rune or mark as chosen during the casting. You then grasp a target to inflict 1d4 points of damage per level (maximum of 5d4) and brand the mark into the creature's skin. The mark cannot be dispelled but normal wear gradually causes the effect to fade in about one month per level.

After a creature is slain by electrical damage, one often sees the corpse twitch as the last energies dissipate. One ingenious young wizard saw this and decided to apply it to the *shocking grasp* spell to see what effect it might have on those who don't die.

#### VARIANT SPELL

##### *Convulsive Grasp*

As the spell *shocking grasp* but with the following exceptions...

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 2

**Target:** Living creature touched

**Duration:** Instantaneous; 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** None; Fortitude negates (see text)

In addition to dealing 1d6 points of electrical damage per caster level (maximum 5d6) with a successful melee touch attack; the attack also causes the target creature's muscles to convulse erratically. The creature is allowed a Fortitude save only to negate the spasming. If the saving throw fails, the creature's convulsions inflict a -2 circumstance penalty to initiative and attack rolls for 1 round per caster level (maximum of 5 rounds).

# Behind the Spells: Shocking Grasp

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Silence

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. In this issue, Maxolt draws back the veil on a spell voted most likely to be used against other spellcasters—*silence*.

### The Creator

Life was easy for the human Alandra Miu until her deity handed down a special directive. A civil unrest that might erupt into the second War of Nobles had begun to stir in the city of Mandahar. As a cleric in the service of the Goddess of Serenity, Alandra's duty was to promote the peace and inner strength found through quiet meditation and self contemplation.

As a bustling urban center filled with power hungry nobles, this directive seemed nigh impossible. However, Alandra Miu was not a priestess who turned away from seemingly impossible tasks.

Only in her thirtieth year of life, Alandra had already reached the highest rank of her faith and, as a crowning achievement, brought peace to the village of Thastrik (which the woman called home until her goddess' call), a

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rural community torn apart by a recent army's brutal occupation. It was because of her extraordinary efforts that the goddess called on Alandra to establish a shrine in Mandahar. Having a mostly human population, Mandahar's first strike against it, at least as far as Alandra was concerned, took the form of racial prejudice. Elves, dwarves, and the like were considered second class citizens at best. This came as no surprise to the young priestess. After all, if the citizens couldn't get along with each other, how could they possibly get along with members from other races?

The second major obstacle to a peaceful existence was the current power vacuum. Mandahar's merchant council, the ruling body of the city, recently lost its chairman. This man had been adept at seeing all sides of an issue and voting for proposals in a way that favored almost everyone while keeping the city's needs in mind. The chairman's vote was always the tie-breaker for the other eight council seats were equally divided between the two ruling noble merchant clans. Not that each council person was a blood member of one of the two clans, mind you, but everyone knew whose purse their fellow councilors could be clinging to. As Alandra arrived in the city and took up residence in the warehouse district, the council was listing names that might fill the chairperson's seat.

This information was common knowledge so it took no effort for a diplomat and mediator of Alandra's to discover. As the cleric expected, her work was cut out for her. The first order of business was to establish a public shrine in veneration of the Goddess of Serenity. The building Alandra rented was spacious enough to house this shrine on the first floor while she could have a residence above on the second floor. As with all areas sanctified to the goddess, Alandra needed a separate area for personal prayer. In a community free from violent thought and action, Alandra could have used the shrine for this space. But in Mandahar, even those people who entered the shrine in good faith possessed enough negative energy (in the spiritual sense, mind you) to contaminate the space. So, beneath the shrine, in a secret basement not much larger than a horse's stall, Alandra established her personal prayer space. The

goddess' faithful prayed in "peace pools" such as these at least twice a day. The name peace pool comes from the goddess' birth within a sacred pool of water but that's another legend we're not getting into here.

After establishing her own sanctum and centering her mind, Alandra set about bringing peace to Mandahar. As with any such mission, the priestess began small because, as she was known for saying, "a single ripple, no matter how small, affects everything in the water." Easily accessible, the lower class citizens—the ones who could barely afford food and a living space—were the most eager to accept the message of the Goddess of Serenity. "After bringing peace to yourself," Alandra explained, "you can properly overcome life's difficulties." The cleric's sensible words and confident presence convinced many to visit her shrine. Unfortunately, even though Alandra believed real headway was being made, her converts slowly stopped visiting.

It seems that although these citizens were receptive to Alandra's sermons, they were more susceptible to life's immediate demands. Hungry family members and challenging workplaces soon returned to dominate the poor folk's minds; the illusion of peace fading into fond memory. Even those souls who Alandra was certain would aid her cause returned to their miserable lives after discussion with their fellows. No matter what strata of society the cleric might try to approach, she saw the result would be the same. Even those persons who would be receptive to her message would be dragged back to the norm by their friends and neighbors.

Communication was Alandra's, and her goddess', enemy. In rural communities such as Thastrik, the cleric never had to worry about a constant and disturbing chatter. Here in Mandahar, however, persistent communication kept the people focused and mindful of their places in society. There would never be enough time or occasion, Alandra realized, for people to be alone with their thoughts. And while she purposely chose the relative isolation of the warehouse district to live, the buzz of urban society was still disturbing her private meditations. Somehow, Alandra needed to bring a rural pace to an urban environment.

## Behind the Spells: Silence

The answer? Magic. After long and thoughtful prayer, Alandra was granted the knowledge she desired in the form of the *silence* spell. She cast the peace-inducing dweomer onto her private sanctum and found the result restful and inspiring at the same time. She had the tool. Now, she needed the opportunity. Alandra believed that such an opportunity might be the final voting for council chairperson. The evening following the creation of this new spell, Alandra sat amongst the audience in the council chambers. The vote for chairman was to be in the public eye and many middle class citizens attended to root for their favorite candidate. As she knew it would, the meeting grew into quite the ruckus as councilors and audience members alike shouted over city issues and such before the voting even got started.

Amidst the chaos of the meeting, Alandra calmly cast her *silence* spell to encompass the people at the council table. The effect quieted the audience as much as it did the councilors. Alandra stood atop a chair and addressed the crowd, making an impassioned plea for peace. She pointed to the quiet councilors and asked, "Is not silent reflection on a problem half the distance to solving it?" Alandra quickly outlined a plan which included having only one person speaking at a time during meetings while all others silently weighed the issue at hand before speaking. "Concurrent shouting solves nothing. Allow Serenity to enter your hearts and guide you away from hasty decisions into the bliss of organized thoughts."

Alandra's display, unfortunately, had the opposite effect of what she intended. The audience in the council chambers recoiled at the display and rejected the nauseatingly peaceful proposition. Depending on who was elected, half of the audience stood to gain power and influence and so, before that vote, everyone wanted nothing to do with the cleric's suggestions. Frustrated, Alandra dropped the *silence* over the councilors and fled the chamber. She had failed her goddess. Mandahar could not be shown the way of Serenity. Of course, the enspelled councilors seemed to be considering their predicament during her speech. Perhaps her spell needed to be a bit more grandiose to make her point.

A flash of brilliance led Alandra to the local alchemist. Word of her actions would no doubt carry to every house in Mandahar by the morrow and she intended to capitalize on that attention. The gnome nodded sagely as the cleric detailed her plan. As a non-human, the alchemist was one of the few sympathizers with Alandra's desire for peace in the city. Together, the pair developed a particular agent that could be combined with water. The resulting concoction would be detectible by sight or smell. The result, however, would be instantly noticed when the drinker attempted to speak. The new alchemical agent "rasproot" would inhibit speech in the subject for at least a few hours' time.

After working through the night and most of the next day, the duo had produced enough rasproot for Alandra's plan. The headwaters for Mandahar's water supply were not far away. Into them the gnome and human dumped twenty pounds of the quieting root. As legend has it, Mandahar soon after became one of several major cities in the region to include veneration of the Goddess of Serenity at the start of every council meeting. The subsequent construction of Serenity temples and decreases in crime and poverty in these same cities speaks to the effectiveness of Alandra's efforts. Guess the people heard her message that time.

Here's an interesting historical footnote. Because Alandra's private sanctum measured 15 square feet, the *silence* spell was always assumed to have that same radius of effect. Quite by accident, the elven bard who created the arcane version of the spell, Nallis El'Hadrin, discovered that the area of effect was indeed a 20-foot radius. For centuries, the spell was recorded with a slightly incorrect title. Because of this error, casters have simplified the spell's name to the elegant *silence*.

### Spell Secrets

Sometimes *silencing* a creature can prove more problematic than its worth. After casting the spell on an enemy wizard, you might too late discover his capability with a broadsword as he rushes to attack! Instead of a boon, the magical *silence* zone in this situation becomes a burden unless you too have non-spell (or at least non-verbal) advantages. The first spell

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secret allows you to circumvent what many casters perceive as a minor flaw in the spell's design.

By succeeding a Spellcraft check (base DC 17), you can cast *silence* but tweak the effect so you can hear yourself normally. For every other creature within 60 feet that you would like to make immune to the *silence*, add +1 to the Spellcraft DC. All creatures thus affected by this spell secret can hear noise made by themselves and by all others chosen by you inside the area of effect. Failing the Spellcraft check means the spell functions normally.

Although *silence* was created to stop sound, the basic spell formula here can be used to dampen other senses, albeit in a reduced capacity. In particular, this spell secret can manipulate sight or smell.

To inhibit a sense other than sound, you must first succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 15). Failure means the spell is wasted. If you succeed, you may choose either sight or smell. Using *silence* to stop sight means that any creature within the spell's area of effect gains a limited *invisibility*. After remaining still within the area for one full round, a creature appears to vanish. To stay *invisible*, that creature must remain motionless, unable to attack, defend, or even retrieve a stored item. The hidden creature can breathe or speak but that's about it.

Using *silence* to prevent smell means that no smell can enter, pass through, or exit the area of effect. This comes in most handy when being tracked by creatures using the Scent quality. Such a creature in the smell-free zone will know something is wrong with that area but such knowledge will not enable to overcome the spell's effect. Of course, if a creature is so close it is within the area of effect, the creature it is tracking had better have another means of camouflage or it will certainly be spotted visually.

## Related Research

The old saying "opposites attract" holds true in the premise of the spell *resonating sphere*. Long after *silence* and *sound burst* became parts of the bardic arcane repertoire, an innovative young human named Elik Manc decided to meld these two spells together into something greater than themselves. The stealthy placement of a *resonating sphere* can prove as useful on the battlefield as it can in the dungeon.

### NEW SPELL

#### *Resonating Sphere*

Evocation [Sonic]

**Level:** Brd 3, Clr 3

**Components:** V, S, F/DF

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

**Area:** 20-ft. radius emanation

**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)

**Saving Throw:** Fort partial

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

Upon the casting of this spell, no sound can penetrate in to or out of the affected area. Creatures inside the area, however, are subjected to a tremendous cacophony. Every creature in the area of effect takes 1d4 points of sonic damage per round and must succeed on a Fortitude save each round to avoid being stunned for 1 round. Creatures that cannot hear are not stunned but are still damaged. This cacophony persists for the spell's duration but the sound cannot be heard outside the *silenced* perimeter.

*Arcane Focus:* A musical instrument wrapped in cotton.

If there is one item confiscated as much at government meetings as it is at mage fairs, it is a rasproot pellet. As detailed in the creator story above, rasproot is an alchemical substance that prohibits speech in a creature that drinks of the liquid it is exposed to. Some

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scholars believe it is rasproot which evens the odds between alchemy and magic. Several times throughout history, certain spellcasting organizations have attempted to squelch the practice of alchemy in their regions. Each time, however, these casters can never seem to find the right words (much less *any* words) when it matters most.

### **NEW ALCHEMICAL ITEM Rasproot Pellet**

Specific herbs and ground hay are combined into a paste that is then rolled into pellets no larger than a human's thumbnail. One batch of rasproot paste makes 20 pellets. When placed within any liquid, a rasproot pellet dissolves within one round, releasing its special property that is capable of tainting up to one mug full of liquid. Any creature that drinks of the liquid must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 20) or feel a discomforting burn at the back of the throat. Two rounds after drinking the liquid, the creature then finds that its vocal chords are too dry to create noise beyond the slightest intelligible rasp. The effect lasts for 1d4+1 hours. Creatures succeeding the Fortitude save suffer no ill effects.

Craft DC 20; Cost 4 gp/pellet (80 gp/batch)



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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Sleep

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is want to do. In this issue, Maxolt awakens our thoughts to that most favorite of slumber spells—*sleep*.

### The Creator

The story behind the *sleep* spell is a surprisingly tragic one taught to all apprentice spellcasters as a morality tale. The main tenet of the story is that magic should never be used to stage a practical joke, no matter its intentions. Spells have specific purposes and are not avenues for foolishness. This tale centers on a human bard named Feldrick Mainj

whose recognized place in history is an unfortunate farce.

After touring the civilized nations of his day, Feldrick decided to finally retire from his bardic wanderings to a small industrial town called Zamlin. He was not the best performer around but he worked hard to earn a modest living. The bard churned out a few popular ballads including “The Paladin and His Duck” and “The One-Headed Ettin” but really wanted

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## Behind the Spells: Sleep

to craft a piece he'd be remembered for. This desire was one of the main reasons Feldrick settled down—to write the greatest ballad he could. The bard hoped that Zamlin's active community and varied racial populace would provide good inspiration for his magnum opus. Naturally, Feldrick continued to ply his trade by performing at the local taverns around his downtown residence at least thrice weekly.

To liven up an otherwise all-music act, Feldrick always included a magical display or two to keep the audience interested. It did not take long for thrill-seeking youngsters living nearby to learn of Feldrick's talent and demand, on an almost daily basis at the bard's doorstep, to see some magic. At first, Feldrick did not mind at all giving the children a minor illusion to ogle. However, after hitting upon the perfect idea for his epic ballad, the bard did not appear for these daily castings. He remained at his desk, scribbling away on a thick pile of parchments at the second story window. Most of the children grew bored with waiting for Feldrick to emerge and, by the end of the first week of his absence, only four remained, determined yet to see some magic. This quartet of youngsters, between ages eight and ten, fell into a routine where they would rap on the bard's door after morning and afternoon meals. The knocks were neither soft nor brief as all four children beat erratically on the wooden entrance. On several occasions, the sudden cacophony caused Feldrick to smudge a section of his work as his pen and hand jerked in surprise across the page. Whenever this happened, the bard rushed to the door and threw it open in a rage.

"Flee, you little rodents," he was heard shouting, "Or the next spell I cast will be the last you ever see!" By this time, the children were already half a block away, giggling at the expected reaction. The quartet made a game of bothering the bard and once even tossed a rock through the very window he was seated at. The projectile smashed the ink vial at the head of the desk which then leaked all over the bard's work. Feldrick was so furious that he decided to put an end to the irritating visits once and for all. Instead of hurling more threats at the youths, the bard instead calmly bade them return the next day and he would show them a brand new spell if they would

leave him alone. Of course, the children agreed.

Feldrick stayed awake most of the night fashioning a relatively simple spell that would place the children into a deep slumber. His plan was then to call the nearest guardsman and have him transport the sleeping children back to their parents. The guard would then tell the parents to forbid their children from visiting the bard ever again. After experimenting on an alley cat, the new spell—*sleep*—was found to work perfectly. All was ready when the children arrived in the late morning to rap on his door. When Feldrick answered, he spread his arms in a grand fashion and, as if performing on stage, called out, "And now, my young friends, the new spell I promised you—*child-killer!*" The surprised youngsters cried out in alarm and began to sprint away but the bard rattled off his spell before they fled its radius.

All but one succumbed to the effect, the "survivor" stopping briefly to see if his friends followed. When he saw his pals drop lifeless to the dirt, the child screamed in genuine terror and fled through a side alley. Unfortunately, the panicked youth sprinted without looking into the busy street on the other side and was struck dead beneath the wheel of a passing wagon. Bystanders were aghast as a nearby guardsman rushed futilely to the child's aid. At the opposite end of the alley, Feldrick stood in utter shock. How could this have happened? What should he do!

Instead of trying to think the situation through rationally, the bard rushed inside his home and quickly threw together a travel pack. He had to leave town! Giving the sleeping children outside only the barest of glances, Feldrick fairly jogged toward the closest town gate. Warning whistles rang out seemingly from every direction as law enforcement signaled each other in their special code—a musical code taught to them by Feldrick himself! The poor bard was too rattled to decipher the high-pitched staccato peeps and was easily seized by alerted guards at the gate. Zamlin's magistrate ordered the bard to be imprisoned for a year's time. The normal punishment would have been death but since the death was accidental (and Feldrick was still some-

## Behind the Spells: Sleep

thing of a minor celebrity for the town), execution was overruled.

As often happens, however, urban legend took this tale and ran with it. Before Feldrick even saw the inside of a jail, rumors had reached to neighboring communities saying how the crazy old bard had murdered four children with foul magic. The bard heatedly refuted the outrageous portrayal of himself and his actions but his truth could not hope to stand up to the fancies of fiction (something he should have known). Even today, the story of the bard lives on; saying how the ghosts of the slain children haunt the taverns of Zamlin and attack anyone that sings inside them. Throughout the centuries, this tale of woe (truthful except for its ending) has been a favorite—the accidental and unfortunate legacy of Feldrick “Child Killer” Mainj.

### Spell Secrets

Sleeping is one of the most basic functions that a living being performs. The first spell secret allows the spellcaster to tap into another vital function—eating. Using the spell in this fashion provides even more possibilities when one considers the potential drugs and poisons that a nearby food item may contain.

Upon a successful Spellcraft check (DC 11), you can enspell a person to “eat” instead of “sleep.” This variant uses the exact same rules as the *sleep* spell except instead of dropping into slumber the affected creature moves to the closest item of food and start eating it. Consumption is accomplished slowly, the enchanted creature savoring every bite. “Food” is anything the creature knows to be as such as he is not compelled to eat anything he knows to be hazardous (of course, if a creature doesn’t know something’s been poisoned that’s a different matter entirely). After consuming all food he can see or already knows about, the creature walks until he finds more food. For the duration, the target is oblivious to the activities around him, answering all inquiries with the simple phrase, “I’m hungry.” If the cannot locate food within 1 minute, the spell expires.

Depending on how one sleeps, the body may not be fully functional for awhile after waking. The phrase “I must have slept wrong” is often heard during morning meal while the speaker rubs his neck, back, or some random limb. Although unstated in the *sleep* spell’s description, I’ve always seen creatures that were successfully targeted gently lower themselves into a normal sleep position. The second spell secret presented here removes that brief period of safely laying down and forces the affected creatures into a “slept wrong” position to affect penalties upon awakening.

If you succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 16), you force upright targets of your *sleep* spell to instantly drop to the ground in a contorted heap. Only standing and/or mobile creatures can be affected this way as sitting or lying targets have nowhere to drop to. Should the Spellcraft check fail, the spell functions normally. A successful check means that when the creature awakens, it is penalized as if it had slept in medium or heavy armor for hours. The result is that the target is fatigued, unable to charge or run and having a -2 to Strength and Dexterity. The duration of this fatigue is equal to half the duration slept (a target asleep for 3 minutes would thus be fatigued for one and a half minutes or 15 rounds).

### Related Research

Successful adventuring is all about having options. A well-balanced party can take on any foe but what happens when members of the group fall in battle? Can a fallen individual’s companions take up any of the responsibilities shouldered by that character? I think that “what if” scenarios should be the bread and butter of spellcasters brainstorming spell creation. Clearly this was the case when a certain sorcerer created the *stall* spell. Inspired by *sleep* and the cleric’s ability to turn undead, the creating spellcaster must have asked himself, “What happens when the cleric falls and undead rush out from around the next corner?” The resulting variant of *sleep* has proven quite popular with inexperienced casters who often

## Behind the Spells: Sleep

find themselves at the mercy of low-powered undead or the onslaught of animated furniture.

### VARIANT SPELL *Stall*

Necromancy

As the spell *sleep* but with the following exceptions...

**Area:** One or more nonliving creatures within a 10-ft. radius burst

This spell taps into the magical energies that animate constructs and undead and disrupts them. The effect is barely visible as a light blue glow around the affected creatures. Stalled creatures stop in their tracks and are helpless for the duration unless touched by a living creature. This contact removes the disrupting energy pattern that *stall* creates, allowing the target to move once again. *Stall* can only affect constructs and undead.

*Material Component:* A clump of sheep's wool.

Once the *sleep* spell had made good inroads into the general arcane lexicon, it did not take long for a new spell to emerge that exploited the opposite effect. Like a figurative splash of cold water, *vigilance* keeps a person more awakened to his surroundings but in an almost preternatural way. He can better anticipate danger, is more adept at avoiding blows, and often spots things before his companions do. I find it odd that this spell didn't really catch on in mainstream circles but then I guess, unlike *sleep*, it never had a captivating tale of child-slaying attached to it.

### NEW SPELL *Vigilance*

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

**Level:** Brd 1, Sor/Wiz 1

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** 30 ft.

**Targets:** The caster and up to 1 living creature/level within a 30-ft. burst, centered on the caster

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates (harmless)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

You imbue a higher state of alertness onto the chosen targets. Each creature gains a +1 insight bonus to initiative and armor class as well as a +2 bonus to Spot checks. *Vigilance* counters and dispels *sleep*.

# Behind the Spells: Sleep

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS Teleport

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. These are the spells which, if on your PC's class list, will be taken as soon as possible. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. For this issue, Maxolt chats with the actual creator of the spell guaranteed to (usually) get you where you're going—*teleport*.

## The Creator

What follows in this section is a bit different than the norm for this series. Believe or not, I had the good fortune to sit down with the actual creator of the *teleport* spell. Decorated for both his heroic acts in battle and his ingenuity as a wizard, the elven warrior-mage

Duthann El'Lorass granted me this audience with him not two weeks before his passing. I had an inkling that I would one day pen some type of memoirs so I took with me a magical quill and ledger which recorded the words and activities of that afternoon. Well, I didn't quite stay the entire afternoon and I didn't exactly

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get the whole story. In any case, I present to you below that account...

**Maxolt Alberiim and Duthann El'Lorass** sit on high-backed wooden chairs on opposite sides of a round marble table.

**MA:** "Thank you, General, for honoring me with your time this fine afternoon." *Maxolt pours himself a cup of feywine from a glass pitcher.*

**DE:** "The pleasure is mine, master Alberiim. And, please, I left the military some decades ago. Call me Duthann."

**MA:** "Excellent. I like 'master Alberiim' so you can stick with calling me that. So, Duthann, I'm here to learn about the origins of the teleport spell, which I'm told you created to extricate yourself from a dire predicament. Give me the backstory for that."

**DE:** "Certainly. More than ten centuries ago, my people were at war with the demonic forces of a powerful being known as Xaltrix. After heavy losses on both sides of the conflict, the high mages of the elves managed to impri—"

**MA:** "I see. Do you happen to have any sweet bread?"

**DE:** "I-I'm sorry?"

**MA:** "Bread...sweet...do you have any?" *Maxolt downs his glass of wine.*

**DE:** "Yes. Help yourself. There is a loaf on the counter over there."

*Maxolt rises and walks toward an elaborate ivory countertop along the north wall.*

**MA:** "Keep going, Gen—er, Duthann. My magic quill will continue recording your tale."

**DE:** "Certainly. I was saying how the high mages imprisoned Xaltrix on an island some distance from the mainland. They used magic to seal the malevolent demon prince within a stone pillar and to cloak the island in a sorcerous mist which allowed no ship or creature to approach the island. If anyone or anything ventured too close, the mist's magic would create an effect that moved the creature or object to the opposite side of the warded area."

*Maxolt returns to sit at the table, bearing three-quarters of the loaf of sweet bread. He pours more feywine for himself before tearing a hunk of sweet bread off the loaf and sticking it into his mouth.*

**MA:** "Fascinating. So, let me guess. You used this transportation magic of the mist as a baseline for creating the teleport spell?"

**DE:** "No. I wish it had been that simple. What happened was—"

**MA:** "How do you make this stuff? I'd kill for bread this good."

*Duthann leans forward in his seat.*

**DE:** "I'll be happy to entertain your sweet bread questions after the interview. As I was saying, the story of Xaltrix's fate sets the scene for the situation in which—"

*Maxolt downs the feywine and chews vigorously on another clump of bread.*

**MA:** "It's magic, isn't it? You use magic to make this bread. That seems a bit extravagant."

**DE:** "Look, master Alberiim. I granted you this audience because I believed you were genuinely interested in my account of the teleport spell's origins. If you cannot keep to the topic at hand, I must ask you to leave my home."

**MA:** "My apologies, Duthann. Please continue. I won't mention the sweet bread again."

*Duthann reclines once again and pours his own glass of feywine.*

**DE:** "Thank you. Now, it turned out that Xaltrix's imprisonment was not to be the end of him. Human followers of the demon prince managed to find the mist-shrouded isle and eventually break through our magical defenses. The evil sorcerers were able to open a thin channel through the mists so that a boat could make it to the beach. They were not as fortunate in deciphering the defensive dweomers protecting the prison pillar. So, as humans are want to do, they decided to use brute force—or in this case, magical force—to overcome the problem."

*Maxolt slams his glass onto the table.*

**MA:** "I won't sit here and allow you to slight my race without rebuttal. Certainly, you can't judge all humankind by the actions of a handful of demon worshippers."

**DE:** "More often than not, history has proven my point. And I'll thank you to be more careful with my stemware."

*Maxolt stands.*

**MA:** "That's it! The interview is over. I cannot, in good conscience, take the words of an admitted racist and proliferate them to the arcane community as the truth on this or any other topic."



## Behind the Spells: Teleport

With that, I left the dwelling of General Duthann El'Lorass. Okay, I was obviously belligerent from the get-go but my emotions concerning the elven role at the Massacre of Tri'Tania were still fresh in my mind. I won't get into elven politics here, though, so here's the short version of Duthann's story. Yes, the human demon worshippers did gain access to the island and had difficulties accessing the prison stone. Instead of experimenting carefully to determine a weakness in the elven magics, the humans brought all of their destructive spells to bear in an attempt to simply destroy the prison. They succeeded but at the cost of their own lives. The coating of defensive and counterattack magics on the pillar reacted unpredictably to the sudden arcane assaults and exploded. The waves of destructive force not only slew all the human aggressors in the area, they also warped the transportation property of the mists. The human's goal, however, was achieved and Xaltrix emerged from the prison, albeit in a weakened state from the explosion.

The demon prince rejoiced in his newfound freedom but little did he realize that nearly 500 years had passed since his imprisonment. It was little more than luck that the demon worshippers had somehow found a record of Xaltrix's imprisonment, much less that they were able to find the island. Xaltrix tried to shift back to his home realm in the outer planes but the magical power bound to the island still prevented planar travel. When Xaltrix tried the next best thing (*teleporting* to another location and then *plane shifting*), he found that the elven magic, though warped by the explosion, still would not release him from the world. Xaltrix *teleported* to the last place he remembered—the plateau where he fought the elven contingent that defeated him.

As luck would have it, the plateau was occupied at that moment by a squad of elven wizard-soldiers on a training exercise. These spellblades were under the command of then Captain Duthann El'Lorass. When Xaltrix appeared, his evil demeanor was obvious and the elves launched an immediate attack. The demon prince, already weakened by his explosive escape from the pillar, felt the magic of the island grappling for him. Apparently, the high elven magic was still attempting to drag its

charge back to the site of his prison. Xaltrix attempted to *plane shift* away from the realm but the elven magics coating him would not allow it. The demon prince flew into a rage and attacked the elven contingent with all of its fury. After a few minutes of fierce magic, blade, and claw exchanges, the island's magic caught up with the Xaltrix. But right before it could return the demon prince to the island, Duthann courageously leapt atop the foe before it could slay a critically injured spellblade and impaled his sword through the beast. Both captain and demon were returned to the island but only the elf was deposited on the shore. After regaining his footing, Duthann could find neither his sword nor sign of the Xaltrix. Had the demon's body been dumped into the sea by the magic or was it even then stalking him?

Duthann toured the small island in an attempt to get his bearings and he recognized the broken pillar and wisps of the weakened high elven mists as those belonging to the Xaltrix legend. The elven captain's options were few. He had no hope of swimming to shore as he not only had no idea how far the mainland was but also had no idea which way it was! A rescue by his elven kin seemed unlikely unless one of his spellblades could give a report which sparked recognition of the Xaltrix tale. Even then, the mist's magic was now unpredictable and any rescue attempt would be extremely dangerous. No, it would have to be Duthann that extricated himself from this situation. To his good fortune, there was food to be had from the local flora. And best of all, Xaltrix never returned to harass him. Some scholars believe that the demon prince was so mortally wounded that he was able to fool the mist into releasing its vigil and escaped reimprisonment.

Duthann decided to come up with a magical means to return to his home. Perhaps he could use the mist's ability to move things from one side of the island to the other? Or, even better, somehow reproduce the demon's own ability to transport across long distances or across the planes themselves. After a year of experimenting with improvised tools and crude components, Duthann devised the basics of the spell *teleport*. Despite his claim in my brief interview, the elf certainly did use

## Behind the Spells: Teleport

the mist's magic as a baseline to create it. The high elves came up with the *teleportation*-like effect based on the spell *dimension door* but the *teleport* spell's first official format did indeed come from Duthann. He transported safely back to his homeland to the surprise of many; well and whole with an interesting story and a new spell which would become a staple of experienced mages throughout the ages.

### Spell Secrets

When tweaked properly, the *teleport* spell can be used to prevent the ability to *teleport* innately possessed by some creatures (certain demons and devils, for example). Such creatures become a lot less sure of their survival when the ability to leave the scene on a whim is taken away!

When you cast *teleport* but touch an unwilling creature with the innate ability to *teleport* (no matter which particular spell it mimics), your magic might interfere with that ability. To successfully scramble an enemy's *teleportation* ability, it must fail its Will save which is opposed by your Spellcraft check. If your skill check roll is higher, the touched foe cannot use its ability to *teleport* for a number of rounds equal to your caster level. If and when the affected creature does attempt to use its *teleport* power, a visible shimmer of bluish energy ripples harmlessly across its form.

Spellcasters who use the second spell secret usually do so as a last-ditch effort in a combat whose location is far beyond a *teleportation* safe spot. When faced with multiple opponents, however, this secret could come in quite handy. If nothing else, it certainly provides some entertainment to onlookers outside the affected area. In cultures with high magic use, this spell secret provides a venue for gambling as viewers bet on the precise spots a creature hops to.

You can use *teleport* to affect an area around you in an odd way. If you cast the spell on yourself (and yourself only) but decide you are unwilling to transport anywhere, the energies rebound against you and disperse wildly outwards in a 5-foot-radius per caster level from you (i.e. a 12th-level caster would create a 60-foot-radius area). Such an area is referred to as a "teleport diffusion field" and randomly causes any creature or object not attached to the floor, walls, or ceiling, to "hop" about within the affected area. Every time the spellcaster's initiative comes up, every creature or object within the diffusion field must succeed a Will save or be *teleported* to a random space inside the field. Determine the space moved to by rolling d8 twice. The first roll is multiplied by five and determines the distance traveled. The second roll determines the direction traveled by the creature/object and works just as if you missed with a thrown weapon (with 1 being straight ahead (the creature's current facing or, if an object, toward the caster) and 2 through 8 counting clockwise around the creature/object). If the determined range and/or direction would place the creature/object inside a solid surface or outside the field, it is instead shunted to the nearest safe area inside the field. The duration of the diffusion field is 1 round for every two caster levels and it affects anyone or anything even if they enter the field after it springs into existence (although creatures/objects exiting the field are safe unless they move back in).

## Behind the Spells: Teleport

### Related Research

When *greater teleport* just isn't an option, you need every edge you can get when *teleporting* to an unfamiliar location. Even better is to use this item to get inside an enemy stronghold without danger. Well, without immediate danger anyway.

### NEW MAGIC ITEM

#### *Teleport Spotter*

This small (1-inch-square) cube of clay is unremarkable until a drop of blood is added to it. The cube then changes color from a dull gray to a light tan and emanates a faint magical aura of conjuration (if detected for). The drop of blood must be from an arcane spellcaster capable of casting *teleport* or one of its higher level counterparts and the process inflicts one hit point of damage to the caster. The *spotter's* only function is to safely guide the spellcaster whose droplet of blood it holds to a safe area when he *teleports*. When the spellcaster does cast *teleport* and focuses on the cube, he is whisked to the closest safe area in sight of it. There is no chance for a mishap even if the *teleport spotter* is within an area unknown to the caster. The single drawback is that while the *spotter* holds a drop of your blood, its location is the only one you can *teleport* to. Once you do so, the cube returns to an inert state (capable of being used again) and the hit point is restored.

Faint conjuration; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *teleport*; Price 30,000 gp.

Sometimes the best efforts of your party cannot stop a foe from *teleporting* away to safety. He'll then return in the not too-distant future all healed and ready to continue the battle. How can you put a stop this? Why, with the new spell *reverse teleport* of course! Developed within the last few decades, this spell is quickly becoming a mainstay in the arcane libraries of wizards everywhere.

### NEW SPELL

#### *Reverse Teleport*

Conjuration (Teleportation)

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 7

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** Standard action

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Area:** Spot that creature or object occupied less than one round before

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Saving Throw:** Will negates (object)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

You can use this spell to bring back creature(s) or object(s) that just *teleported* away. When cast on the same spot where a creature just used a *teleport* spell or effect (within one round's time), the magic reaches to where the target transported to and attempts to *teleport* them back. All creatures and/or objects affected by the initial *teleport* must succeed a Will save or are instantly returned to the spot they occupied previous to their departure.

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## Temporal Stasis

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. These are the spells which, if on your PC's class list, will be taken as soon as possible. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. This time around, Maxolt tells us about one of the more timely spells in the arcane arsenal—*temporal stasis*.

### The Creator

I'm a big endorser of saving things for later. What may seem to have no use at the moment—coil of rope or a half-melted candle—could somehow come in handy in the future. In a way, that's what *temporal stasis* is all about. Legend has it that in a small village called

Blikten there lived an elderly human named Thania Dross. She was a transmuter of great experience, committing every spell known in that school of magic into her spellbook library. Nothing transmutation related went unaccounted for. Like me, I'm sure Thania thought that one should never throw away something poten-

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: Temporal Stasis

tially useful. Or maybe she was just a magic hog. With legends, you can never be sure.

Thania lived with her grandson, Mervil, whose parents were slain shortly after his first year by a rampaging green dragon. Thania was the only family the 7-year-old Mervil had ever known and each loved each other greatly. The youth lived a childhood full of wonder between watching the magical experiments of his grandmother and visiting the monthly trade fair that Blikten held with their centaur neighbors in the adjacent forest. It was this same love which forced Thania to work on another, and perhaps her final, spell.

After a particularly powerful ghost terrorized the town for a month, Thania and the local cleric, Fostiv, finally managed to track down and destroy it. Unfortunately, the showdown left the transmuter aged more than 30 years beyond what she was before. By the time of this tale, Thania is well into her eighties and looking upon Mervil with sorrowful eyes. She worried as to what would become of the youth without family. Of course, one of her friends would take in the lad as their own but it wouldn't be the same for him. There had to be a way to preserve herself and the wisdom she wanted to impart as Mervil grew. Writing her thoughts down would be too risky as the first lucky fire would snuff it from existence. No, she wanted to preserve her personality as well as her mind. Magic was the answer but she just needed just a little more time to fine tune her work.

Time, however, was running out, but not for the reasons she thought. When it came time for that month's trade fair, there were no centaurs to be found. At least two dozen of the equine-bodied creatures visited the fair regularly. For none to arrive at the appointed time was curious to say the least. Blikten's constable assembled a small party to go investigate. Several of his deputies had come down with a sudden flu (indeed, half the town seemed to be coming down with nasty colds) so he turned to noteworthy figures like Thania and Fostiv to round out his party. After leaving Mervil with her neighbors, Thania, Constable Jelk, three militia members, and the cleric began the day-long trek to the centaur forest community. Not two hours into the journey, the group discovered one of the centaur crafters who was a regular fair-goer. The poor creature's corpse was extremely jaun-

diced and the horse hair had fallen off the body in scattered patches, revealing disgusting oozing pustules beneath. Even the centaur's eyes had taken on an unnatural violet coloration. Both cleric and transmuter agreed it was unlike anything they had ever come across.

As if the centaur corpse was not enough of an ill omen, dead animals fairly littered the rest of the journey. The forest had an ominous quiet to it when the group arrived at the centaur village. They searched the dwellings and surrounding area only to find every last one of the creatures dead from the same loathsome effects which had slain the first. None of the group had ever seen or heard of a natural disease wreaking such horrible death and, after detecting magic on the corpses, Fostiv confirmed that the plague was magically induced.

As if to punctuate the statement, the group was suddenly ambushed by several hooded humanoids. Although only a few of these foes were slain before the rest escaped, seeing their black silk hoods and runed robes told the Blikten group all they needed to know. Worshippers of the god of Disease were to blame for this situation. They must have released a magical contagion and it swept through the area, Thania surmised. And then she thought of Mervil and the rest of Blikten after feeling the direction of the breeze.

"What if the plague wasn't limited to this village?" Thania whispered in fear. Fostiv overheard her but stared past the transmuter at a deer on the opposite side of the clearing. The animal calmly ate from a bush, apparently unharmed. The duo walked toward the deer which soon bolted after spotting them. Not fifty feet from the village perimeter, several more deer were licking a very peculiar tree. The evergreen's bark was a gray-white in color and purple sap ran freely from it. All of these deer were unharmed as well. Fostiv saw another centaur corpse on the ground and rushed toward it. Constable Jelk identified it as the village's druid. The centaur was slumped against the tree, purple sap on its hands and lips yet the creature had obviously died from the magical plague.

Fostiv frowned at the scene and said, "He must have somehow caused this charik pine tree to produce a cure. But it must not work once a creature has been exposed. You see the stains? We have to get as much sap as possible back to

## Behind the Spells: Temporal Stasis

Blikten!”

After administering the sap to themselves, the group emptied their waterskins and filled them (as well as their any other items that could hold sap) with the purple antidote. To get them back to town as quickly as possible, Thania cast *polymorph* on herself and became a modestly sized brass dragon. Her companions boarded loaded with sap and they returned to Blikten in under an hour. What they found was not encouraging. Several residents already lay dead along the main road. As the group dispersed to give their sap to anyone they could find, Thania took her waterskin to look for Mervil. Inside her neighbor’s home, the husband and wife sat with concern beside a figure shaking in their bed. Thania cried out in anguish; she was too late! Mervil had already fallen under the disease’s effects. The transmuter explained the situation while she administered the sap to Mervil and the couple and bade them to take it to the surrounding homes.

As Thania picked up her grandson, now soaked in sweat from a high fever, her mind worked through her grief to find another solution. She couldn’t hope that the sap would work in time, given what they’d seen happen to the centaur druid. Memories of the spell she’d been working on before this catastrophe flitted through her mind. That was the solution, she realized. The spell, once completed, would have put the transmuter into suspended animation until Mervil needed her counsel. Now she could use it on the youth to preserve him until another cure could be found.

Thania took Mervil back to their home and rushed through the finishing touches of her spell *temporal stasis*. Fortunately, the expensive components had already been assembled, as she’d nearly completed the spell anyway. Thania wasted no time in placing her grandson into stasis with the following condition in which he could be released, “You are freed when someone touches you and says, ‘You will be cured.’” She then wrote a hasty account of the last few hours and an explanation of what she had done to Mervil and then placed the parchment sheet into his inside vest pocket (in the event she met an untimely death).

What happened next has been lost in the mists of time. I’ve heard that Blikten was attacked and razed by worshippers of the

Disease god after they regrouped. At some point before this, Mervil’s body had already been transported from the town along with the notes of Thania’s *temporal stasis* spell (although Thania is reported to have died in Blikten). The conditional part of the spell wasn’t with the primary notes and is why today’s version exists as it does (although I’ve presented the probable version of Thania’s below). Furthermore, I’ve heard it told that the charik pine enchanted by the centaur druid was also the target of Thania’s version of the *temporal stasis* spell. It was likely her hope that one day it could be used to provide a cure for those previously infected by the Disease god’s contagion (like her grandson). Either way, neither Mervil’s nor the charik pine’s location are currently known.

### Spell Secrets

Sometimes spellcasters are ordered by political bodies to use *temporal stasis* to capture criminals too dangerous to rehabilitate and yet too intelligent or important to slay outright. After all, keeping an enemy alive yet under control can be more effective than making him a martyr to his allies/followers. Other casters simply use the spell to keep friends or even family safe over an extended period of time for any number of reasons. There is one secret to the spell, however, that is performed only as a last resort by spellcasters who are on their own and in a tight spot. They can cast *temporal stasis* on themselves and, perhaps, bring themselves out of stasis without aid.

There are times when one not only wants a creature put into stasis but also hidden away. If you don’t have a trapped vault handy, you can draw on your knowledge of illusion magic to try and cloak the target from casual observation.

When casting *temporal stasis* on yourself, you can attempt to reawaken from the stasis at a predetermined time (which must be stated during the spellcasting and can not be less than 1 minute). You must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 20) to do this. Failure indicates the magic is too strong for your body to resist and you are trapped in suspended animation until released by another creature or force as per the spell description.

## Behind the Spells: Temporal Stasis

If you are able to cast at least one illusion spell of 8th-level, you can attempt to disguise the target of a *temporal stasis*. During the spell's casting, you must succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 23). Success means the target cannot be seen by nonmagical vision—including blindsight, darkvision, etc.—but magical light reveals the target to on hand creatures. Furthermore, the target gains a +3 to any Will saves against someone trying to *scry* for it.

### Related Research

As the story of Thania Dross shows, suspending the life force of a creature can be quite useful. There are other times, however, when objects are too priceless to allow the elements and age to decay their forms. *Greater temporal stasis* serves this need and is the likely form Thania's own spell took which she placed it on her grandson.

In the time since the original spell became an arcane staple, another version appeared that is useful to even low-level casters. This variant is primarily for combat use to protect fallen or mortally injured comrades from imminent death until appropriate aid arrives.

### VARIANT SPELL:

#### *Temporal Stasis, Lesser*

As the spell *temporal stasis* with the following exceptions...

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 2

**Components:** V, S

**Duration:** Concentration, up to 1 round/2 levels

After touching the target, you must continue to concentrate in order to preserve the stasis field around it. This is accomplished by using a move action (so you are still free to move or cast spells as per a standard action). However, you cannot move more than 10 feet away from the target or the spell ends. In essence, the stasis field feeds off of your conscious energy and moving too far away breaks the bond around your body and the target.

### VARIANT SPELL: *Temporal Stasis, Greater*

As the spell *temporal stasis* with the following exceptions...

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 9

**Target:** Creature or object touched

**Duration:** see text

**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates (object)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes (object)

Like the spell *temporal stasis*, you use this spell to place something into suspended animation. But instead of the target being a creature only, it can be anything—living or nonliving. When cast on an object, any magical properties are suspended (but not dispelled). Potions cannot be opened, the text of magical scrolls is too fuzzy to read, magic items do not operate, etc. At your discretion, you can set a condition or time whereby the spell's magic releases the target. This is done verbally at the end of the spell's casting and must be specific if a condition. For example, you might cast the spell on a king and state, "You are freed when the nations of Forann and Bretin make peace with each other." Or if the target is a magic sword, you might state, "You are freed when the youngest son of the Diranges family enters this chamber." Whether or not you choose to affix a condition to the spell, the magic of *greater temporal stasis* cannot be otherwise removed (such as by a successful *dispel magic* spell or a *freedom* spell).

**Material Component:** A powder composed of diamond, emerald, ruby, and sapphire dust with a total value of at least 5,000 gp contained in a platinum coated hourglass worth at least 2,500 gp.



# Behind the Spells: Temporal Stasis

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## The Walls

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. In this issue, Maxolt builds a house of knowledge atop those wondrous spells that comprise “the walls”—*wall of fire, force, ice, iron, stone, and thorns*.

### The Creator

You, my readers, probably cast skeptical glares at the title of this issue—“The Walls.” How could all of these spells, you ask yourself, have come from the same caster? The answer: they did not. Well, not really. Oddly enough, this is likely the only time that the spell(s) came *before* the historically acknowledged creator—in this case, a half-elven wizard named

Flagen Ir'Wivis. Academia is so convoluted concerning the origins of this set of spells that Flagen is even credited with the creation of *wall of thorns*, a druid spell! Of course, every work of fiction has a bit of fact in it, eh?

Our story begins with a multi-racial group of adventurers called the Company of Tolerance. A huge crossroads city named Melvarr served as the company's headquarters. Logically enough, the group's name came from

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: The Walls

its membership—elven, human, halfling, gnome, half-elf, and dwarf—one each of the “civilized” races that made up the populace of Melvarr. As most adventuring groups were want to do, the Company of Tolerance righted wrongs while battling the enemies of order and goodness. The group made quite a name for itself over its years of service and so was at the top of a go-to list to investigate a crypt that was accidentally discovered.

The “crypt” turned out to be much more than a burial area. The Company of Tolerance did unearth a number of skeletons in the main chamber but just what type of creatures these skeletons were in life was another matter. The bones of each corpse were a seemingly random mish-mash of different creatures. Part human, part eagle, and part roper could be identified all as one form! More than intrigued, the druid of the company, a gnome named Jaspin Huum, stayed to carefully examine the skeletons as the rest probed deeper into the subterranean complex through a secret passage. The pictography within the dungeon environment seemed familiar to the company’s elven leader and he soon determined that this complex was the lost dungeon of Malarix the Transmuter. Malarix had a penchant for altering the forms of unwilling subjects (for what good would a spell be if always tested on willing subjects?). Malarix died centuries before but it was said that his laboratory and lair were still buried somewhere, guarded by insidious and malevolent traps. If rumors proved true, the Company of Tolerance would need to be on full alert.

Unfortunately, even full precautions did not help them. As Jaspin continued his cataloging of the transformed skeletons, the company moved deeper into the dungeon and entered a hexagonal chamber housing an apparently unguarded horde of treasure at its center. After searching the room’s perimeter, the company decided to first ponder the strange arcane runes surrounding the chamber’s five entrances (too clever by half to make a play for the treasure right away). The archway runes were identical in construction and radiated powerful magic. To no one’s surprise, the type of magic detected was transmutation. Then they turned to the valuable baubles and coins piled higher than the halfling rogue. While no

one in the company truly needed the money, the members discussed how many of their charities would benefit from such a haul.

First, they would have to verify the treasure’s authenticity; if not its reality (illusionary traps were not unheard of). Having already detected a magical dweomer on the pile, they next attempted to dispel the magic. And then all hells broke loose. Even hundreds of feet away, Jaspin heard the cries of alarm from his companions. The gnome called upon his druidic shapeshifting power and took wing as a hawk. In less than a minute’s time, Jaspin arrived at the proper chamber to see only four of his friends. The hexagonal room with five entrances now only had four as the one across from the druid’s entrance was now blocked by a slab of ice. A flash of light from above sent a ray of magic into the group’s dwarf. The stout figure struggled for a moment and then vanished. In the next instant, the archway to the right of the iced one became blocked with gray stone.

The hawk-gnome landed and prepared to take his normal form when he saw the group’s half-elf launch a barrage of glowing missiles toward the ceiling. They impacted spectacularly with a misshapen crystal jutting from above the treasure. The light from inside the object sputtered before firing yet another beam of horrible magic back at the wizard. The lightning-fast exchange of magic left the half-elf vanished and yet another wall—this one of fire—blocking a previously open archway. The crystal continued to sputter with power but obstinately resumed its attack. Only Jaspin, the elven leader, and the human barbarian remained (my apologies for not being able to ferret out the names of these others). The elf called for a retreat from the chamber before he was struck next.

Jaspin took wing as his friend disappeared like the rest. A flash of power erupted from another archway and, while the hawk could not tell what had happened, quickly decided to fly toward the last unaffected exit, the one which the party had entered from. As usual, the human disagreed with the call for retreat and flung his greatclub at the crystal as Jaspin entered the corridor. A final ray of power connected with the barbarian before his club smashed the crystal into a thousand pieces.

## Behind the Spells: The Walls

Jaspin returned to his gnomish form before turning to catch the human's expected leap from the room. However, the only thing to greet the druid was an iron wall that had appeared in the archway.

What happened after this is not entirely known. Jaspin apparently returned to Melvarr and contacted a half-elven ally named Flagen Ir'Wivis (mentioned above) to help his friends. After studying the available texts on Malarix the Transmuter and hearing Jaspin's account of the events, Flagen returned with the gnome to the dungeon. Careful examination revealed hidden runes on the only archway now accessible. Given Malarix's fame for changing creatures into other things, Flagen correctly deduced the shattered crystal had been a magical trap that turned the Company of Tolerance into the walls that now blocked the archways. As Jaspin listened to the theory, his hand reverently touched the wall of iron. The voice of the human barbarian then exploded into the druid's mind. After jerking his hand away, Jaspin placed it back on the wall.

Through some fluke of magic, the damaged trap had not only completed its task in transmuting the dungeon's intruders but also left their personalities intact! Jaspin and Flagen learned that the walls created by the transmutation sorcery reflected the personality of the target. The gnome realized immediately that the barbarian spoke true. His iron will and ability to take punishment in combat likened many to call him a "man of iron." Similarly the fire wall reflected the half-elf's inner racial turmoil, the wall of ice suited the halfling rogue's coolness under pressure, the wall of force reflected the elf's commanding presence even when he was not present, and, finally, what else could a dwarf be turned into that reflected his inner self but a wall of stone.

The druid and wizard also learned that, while the crystal was indeed responsible for the trap's magic, its destruction prevented the process from being reversed. Not only was this insidious trap designed to prevent people from entering the dungeon, it was designed to keep those already inside trapped until they

starved to death. In an era before *wish* or *miracle* spells, this left Jaspin's companions in dire straights indeed. To make matters worse, all of his friends could still feel the passage of time and realized their plight was unsolvable. The answer was unfortunately too obvious. The dungeon needed to be destroyed.

Goodbyes were said and promises made by Jaspin to visit the families of his comrades. Normally a sarcastic and unemotional individual, the gnome openly wept when Flagen and his wizardly brethren collapsed the crypt and its connecting tunnels, including the hexagonal chamber, with powerful earthquakes. A week after they completed the razing, Jaspin came again to Flagen for a favor. The gnome offered to pay the wizard to create five new spells based on the walls his friends died as. These wall spells, once introduced to the arcane lexicon at large, would be a lasting, if anonymous, memorial to the Company of Tolerance. While Flagen toiled away on these spells, Jaspin created a sixth wall spell to reflect his own dour personality—a wall of thorns. When the other spell were completed, the druid asked that a footnote be included at the bottom of the scrolls that told the reader of all the other wall spells that were available. As planned, the six wall spells survived the centuries and are still in use today. If you've heard of one, then you've heard of them all even if you haven't the ability to cast the entire set.

### Spell Secrets

When Flagen listened to Jaspin's request to create the wall spells, he was already so moved by the experience that, not only could he not say no, he decided to include a certain spell secret that reflected the race each wall was fashioned from. The half-elf told Jaspin of his idea so the gnome would place the same type of secret within his *wall of thorns*. The result is something the Company of Tolerance would have been very proud of and serves as a fitting legacy to that ancient band of goodly adventurers.

## Behind the Spells: The Walls

The races that the wall spells are based on can tap into the respective walls' magic to gain a combat benefit (see the table below for details). To call on this spell secret, you must meet four requirements. First, you must be of the same race as the target wall is based on. Second, you must be standing within 30 feet of the wall. Third, you cannot be of evil alignment. Fourth, you must succeed a level check (DCs given below) to call on the wall's racial secret. This spell secret is available for any class to call on (not just spellcasters). Whether or not the level check succeeds, you can only attempt to use this spell secret once per wall spell encountered (for permanent walls, not more than once per day). Weapons can be given the listed special qualities even if they are not already magical. However, a special quality cannot stack with another of the same type (you cannot have a double *flaming* weapon, for example).

Wall Type	Racial Requirement	Level Check DC	Benefit (duration equals 1 round/character level)
Fire	Half-elf	24	Chosen melee weapon gains the flaming special quality
Force	Elf	25	You gain a +1 deflection bonus to AC
Ice	Halfling	24	Chosen ranged weapon gains the frost special quality
Iron	Human	26	Chosen piercing or slashing weapon gains the keen special quality
Stone	Dwarf	25	Chosen melee weapon gains the bane special quality (you choose one creature type)
Thorns	Gnome	25	Chosen weapon gains the ghost touch special quality

After a wall spell has been cast, you may attempt to break off a section and hurl it at a chosen enemy. To accomplish this, you must succeed both a Spellcraft check and a ranged attack roll (skill check DCs and damage types given below). The amount of damage inflicted is always 1d6 per caster level (maximum of 10d6) and you hurl no more than one projectile per 2 caster levels for the spell's duration. Note that whether the Spellcraft check succeeds or fails, the wall is reduced in some way (also described below).

Wall Type	Spellcraft DC	Damage Type	Effect on Wall
Fire	24	Fire	A bolt of flame flies from the wall; spell duration reduced by 1 round
Force	25	Slashing/Force	A razor-thin blade of force energy spins from the wall; spell duration reduced by 1 round
Ice	24	Piercing/Cold	A concentrated shower of jagged ice shards bursts from the wall; spell duration reduced by 1 minute
Iron	26	Bludgeoning	A ball of iron instantaneously forms from the wall and shoots away; spell area reduced by 5 square feet
Stone	25	Bludgeoning	A 5-foot square section of wall breaks loose and hurtles away; spell area reduced by 5 square feet
Thorns	25	Piercing	A concentrated shower of sharp thorns flies from the wall; spell duration reduced by 10 minutes

## Behind the Spells: The Walls

As different as the wall spells are in terms of effects and appearance, there is one spell secret which they all hold in common. Each wall can, if the caster manipulates the spell properly, fire a projectile made up of the wall's respective composition. Doing so reduces either the wall's area or duration in some way, so keep that in mind.

## Related Research

Spellcasters always seem to be looking for variety at the expense of creativity. The wall spells are a great example of this phenomenon. Since the creation of the original sextet of wall spells, a plethora of variants have emerged. Walls that create everything from acid to bones to dragon scales are now available to casters. Where's the originality? After combing through the many wall spells out there, I present the most original of the offshoots. Be careful who you cast this around as it's a bit graphic for the younger crowd (and quite dangerous for everyone!).

### NEW SPELL *Wall of Flesh*

Evocation (Creation)

**Level:** Clr 6, Sor/Wiz 6

**Components:** V, S, M/DF

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Effect:** Fleshy wall whose area is up to one 10-ft. square/level

**Duration:** 1 min./level

**Saving Throw:** See text

**Spell Resistance:** See text

You cause a flat, vertical wall of bloody flesh to spring into being. The wall inserts itself into any surrounding material if its area is sufficient to do so. The wall cannot be conjured so that it occupies the same space as a creature or object. It must always be a flat plane, though you can shape its edges to fit the available space.

A wall of flesh is 1 inch thick per two caster levels. Each 10-foot square of the wall has 3 hit points per inch of thickness and hardness 2 as it has the consistency of leather. Creatures can hit the wall automatically. A section of wall whose hit points drop to 0 is breached. If a creature tries to break through the wall with a single attack, the DC for the Strength check is 15 + caster level.

The *wall of flesh* also has a programmed defense mechanism. Any creature that moves within 10 feet of the wall finds itself under attack by a maw that suddenly forms on the wall (and has 10-foot reach). Jagged bones serve as teeth inside the maw which attacks the target creature at a +10 bonus to bite. A wall bite inflicts 1d6 points of damage per two caster levels and, unless a successful Fortitude save is made (DC 10 + one-half your caster level + Cha modifier), affects the target as per the 4th-level cleric spell *poison*. The wall can only create one mouth which lasts as long as there is a creature within range to attack. The mouth can slide across the wall at a movement rate of 10 feet to chase foes that believe they can simply move safely to another portion of the barrier.

When the section of the wall the mouth occupies is dropped to 0 hit points, the wall is breached and the mouth vanishes for 1d4 minutes. However, unless the wall is destroyed in its entirety, the mouth can return and attack normally.

*Material Component:* A small strip of bloodied flesh.

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS

## True Seeing

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is wont to do. In this issue, Maxolt opens our eyes to the origins of the divination spell of choice—*true seeing*.

### The Creator

Long ago, there existed a minor deity named Sibylla. The core faithful of this goddess, those who paid her more than mere lip service, only numbered in the low thousands. Sibylla's lone domain was that of concealment, which has since (understandably so) been absorbed by other deities over the centuries. At a time of crisis, the deity's faithful were divided into two major groups—divine and

arcane. The former believed that Sibylla wanted concealment powers to be used to shield creatures from pain and distress. The latter, comprised solely of illusionists, respected the clergy's belief but at the same time subscribed to a broader view of the goddess' domain. The illusionists wanted the power of concealment to be usable at the discretion of the caster and not morally regulated.

by Bret Boyd



## Behind the Spells: True Seeing

The schism that Sibylla's clerics saw coming was something of constant debate. For while illusionists did not depend on the goddess for their spells (and therefore should really not have a say in church doctrine), most of these arcane casters not only supported the church in word but also in deed through monetary contributions and the fashioning of minor magic items. Perhaps worst of all, the clergy could not even turn to their goddess for a definitive answer to the quandary. Sibylla, the Hidden Goddess, lived up to her moniker by not answering her worshippers' questions. It seemed that the question of what to do with the power of concealment rested in the individual's beliefs, which of course only strengthened the view of the illusionists.

So why did illusionists even care about church matters in the first place? Well, in these early years of civilization, arcane wizardry was only starting to come into its own as an organized practice. Methodology and practical application were finally established and made available to those persons who could both afford the training and had an aptitude for it. But even as the wonders of generalized wizardry were dispersed throughout the known realms, there were those students (and even a few masters) who wanted to stretch magic's guidelines by concentrating on a particular school. Given the already malleable nature of illusion magics, this was the first school to receive such attention.

As these self-styled "illusionists" began to come into their own, however, the leaders of arcane academia at that time found such specialization abhorrent and an unnatural study of magic (supported by the fact that an illusionist's obsession with one school led to reduced or no ability with other schools). Of course, this initial fear of wizardly specialization disappeared over time but at this moment in history criticism was harsh. I could go on and on about this arcane schism but the above information will suffice. This leads us back to the church of Sibylla.

Illusionists soon became known as "second class wizards" and were simultaneously the subject of pity and ridicule in arcane circles. These specialists knew that, without outside support, their research would die with their generation. The most powerful illusionists

held a secret conclave at which they decided to formally join Sibylla's church. What better fit for illusionists than to serve under the Hidden Goddess? Although an act born of desperation, most illusionists freely accepted this religion forced on their order. As a result, both groups—divine and arcane—flourished for many decades. But then the church of Sibylla gained a new prelate in the form of Trilan Raboim.

Trilan was as charismatic as he was powerful in the faith. At this point in time, the human cleric found himself in a position similar to those first illusionists. Sibylla's church had always been small but, even after the addition of the arcane cadre, it was shrinking. More people needed to attend services and, more importantly, contribute to church coffers. Before his bid to be named prelate, Trilan concocted a plan to not only give the church direction but give it those much needed worshippers. And now we come full circle in our story. Trilan decreed that Sibylla had instructed him to introduce definitive doctrine to the church, that of using concealment to help others as they deal with physical or emotional pain. Such a doctrine, he knew, would be looked on quite favorably by others and attract them in their times of need to the Hidden Goddess' shrines.

As well-intentioned as the new doctrine was, the illusionists could not hope to follow it and they knew their time with the church of Sibylla had come to an end. Many in the clergy wanted the arcane casters to remain as an official arm of the church but Trilan was secretly glad to see them go as he believed they aided in lowering church status (illusionists had, after all, been denounced as "second class"). The schism was taken in stride by the majority of people on both sides of the issue but some of the illusionists—those who had grown comfortable and powerful providing the church with minor magics—did not take it so well. These few illusionists had so risen in influence within the church that they practically had "high cleric" authority within their areas. In Trilan's new doctrine, illusionists had no place in church hierarchy. When they lost their comfortable positions, a handful were quite vocal in their protests and promises of vengeance.

## Behind the Spells: True Seeing

Trilan may have brought the church of Sibylla some stability and increased exposure in the public eye, but he also fretted about these powerful illusionists. Would they strike out at clergymen or even at the shrines? Their magic could easily dupe others into somehow turning against Sibylla's faithful. Trilan's answer was to keep constant vigilance. To that end, he called upon the Hidden Goddess for a spell capable of piercing whatever disguises the outcast illusionists might try to use against the church. The result is our spell topic—*true seeing*. And since he knew that not all illusionists harbored ill will toward the church, Trilan also prayed for the spell to reveal a target's moral inclination through his or her aura. I have no idea why this last power of the spell is not granted today but those in the know might still be able to tap into it (see the second spell secret below).

### Spell Secrets

In some ways, *true seeing* is considered overkill in the divination department. True, it reveals deceptions from numerous effects but won't a caster normally be under duress from one, maybe two, of the disguise types at once? When one considers that the spell is also usable by only one person, this limits its usefulness greatly, in my humble opinion. I must not be the only one who thinks so because the first spell secret came about many years ago. With it, you can share divination of one specific concealment effect amongst your allies. Naturally, adventurers should still protect the

By succeeding a Spellcraft check (DC 30), you can choose one effect detectable by *true seeing* and share (by touch) that special sight with a number of creatures equal to one per your caster level. The duration for the spell using this secret is 1 minute only and the range of the sight is reduced to 60 feet. The effects to be chosen from include the following: normal and magical darkness; secret doors hidden by magic; *blur* and *displacement*; *invisibility*; illusions; polymorphed, changed, and transmuted creatures/objects.

cleric casting this spell but at least with this secret in play a lucky strike won't take down the party's lone advantage against disguised or otherwise concealed foes.

When news of Trilan's spell of *true seeing* reached illusionist ears, they set right about creating their own version. A few did so because they feared the church's spell was a preemptive move against them while most just realized the importance of being able to see through their brethren's spells in case the need arose. Not only was the arcane version's name different but it could not ascertain a creature's aura (and rightly so since the creating illusionist knew only that the clerical spell overcame magical and supernatural concealments). Over the years, even the divine version lost the aura sensing power and the two versions became interchangeable but this extra little divination ability is easily regained (especially to the religiously-minded).

You can use *true seeing* to detect the alignment of creatures you look at with a successful Spellcraft check (DC 25). You gain a bonus +1 to your check for every 2 ranks in Knowledge (religion) you possess. Success indicates you know if a creature is good, neutral, or evil. No other information is revealed (unlike the various *detect* spell).

### Related Research

Commonly discovered within forgotten religious related vaults, *mutable holy symbols* are thought to be the last magic items commissioned by the church of Sibylla. Rumors indicate that, before the Hidden Goddess vanished from recorded history, the last few dozen of her faithful used these items to disperse secretly into other faiths. These same rumors assert that those last clerics perpetuated Sibylla's name and values through the centuries; each member passing on the secret of his true faith to one or two trusted brethren every generation. Are there clergy of the Hidden Goddess still practicing today? If so, how many are left and where are they? And, perhaps most importantly, what is their ultimate goal in keeping such an ancient religion?

## Behind the Spells: True Seeing

### NEW MAGIC ITEM

#### *Holy Symbol, Mutable*

In its unaltered state, a *mutable holy symbol* is little more than a cylindrical block of sandstone 2 inches in diameter and 3 inches in length. At the will of its bearer, the item transforms into a specific holy symbol (which must have been seen up close by the user). It is capable of focusing energy like any other holy symbol but also provides a rudimentary knowledge of the faith its current shape represents. This means that the bearer is granted a +2 competence bonus to Knowledge (religion) checks pertaining to the current shape's religion. The holy symbol also allows use of the *disguise self* and *sanctuary* spells once per day each with a command word.

Moderate illusion; CL 6th; Craft Wondrous Item, *disguise self*, *sanctuary*; Price 6,900 gp.

Not long after the birth of *true seeing*, Trilan Raboim decided to ask Sibylla for a similar spell that would protect areas (like church naves) from deceptions for a greater length of time. The result is the *true light* spell which, while not in widespread use by either divine or arcane casters today, has seen consistent use by the wealthy throughout the ages. Merchants and other well-to-do persons hosting parties, business meetings, or other get-togethers have been known to hire spellcasters to strategically place *true lights* either inside or outside (sometimes both!) of their gathering places for added safety.

### VARIANT SPELL

#### *Light, True*

As the spell *light* but with the following exceptions...

**Level:** Clr 6, Drd 6, Sor/Wiz 7

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

Besides providing basic illumination, the glow from *true light* also functions as the *true seeing* spell. The conditions revealed by *true seeing* are similarly revealed (but not dispelled) under the light's 20-foot-radius brightness—normal and magical darkness are nullified within the area, magically hidden secret doors are revealed if touched by the light, etc. Changed or otherwise cloaked creatures (under the terms of *true seeing*) creatures entering *true light*'s central area of effect are allowed round-by-round Spot check (DC 15) to notice that their concealment is not functioning. The dim light that stretches out an additional 20 feet from the center area does not possess the *true seeing* quality but it does affect creatures who are utilizing one of the concealment types detected for by coating them in *faerie fire* (which itself eliminates such benefits as *blur*, *displacement*, or invisibility).

**Material Component:** A firefly coated in an ointment that costs 450 gp and is made from mushroom powder, saffron, and fat.

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# BEHIND THE SPELLS Web

*Behind the Spells* is a pdf series which examines those spells from the PHB that are listed time and again on character sheets throughout gaming. Each pdf in this series examines the spellcaster who created the spell, one or more of the spell's hidden capabilities, and possible variants for the spell. Narrator and host, Maxolt Alberiim, guides you through the ins and outs of these spells. Actually an ancient gold dragon, Maxolt masquerades as the blond-haired human fighter-mage to continue his research into magic and to aid others as his kind is want to do. This time around, Maxolt lets us in on the dark past of a favorite sticky spell—*web*.

## The Creator

Everyone knows this story. In an age long since past (although still fresh in the minds of elvenkind), an evil subrace of elves was driven underground by their goodly surface elf cousins. These “dark” elves, or drow, trusted no one, especially each other. They established cities deep beneath the earth in caverns the likes of which most surface dwellers have never seen. Philosophies aside, it was the introduction of a certain arachnid deity

which defined the drow development in exile. A cruel goddess known as the Spider Queen took these heartless elves for her own, eventually guiding them to establish a matriarchal society in her honor. Herself an outcast from the elven pantheon, the Spider Queen stoked the fires of racial hatred already present in the dark elves. In time, she knew, the drow would be strong enough to launch a counteroffensive and exterminate their hated surface elf cousins.

by Bret Boyd

## Behind the Spells: Web

As the drow made their notoriously arrogant and ill-tempered mark on the subterranean world, the female leaders prepared for their offensive on the lands of light. Strong and skilled warriors as well as powerful spellcasters would be required for the assault on the elven forests. Any drow who did not enter a spellcasting profession was trained in the art of swordplay. Intelligent males took up the mantle of wizards since sorcerers were considered the “undisciplined hacks” of the arcane community. Last, but not least, the female drow almost always entered the Spider Queen’s clergy.

One requirement of the preparations for war was the need to develop entirely new magics which would take the surface elves by surprise. From what I’m given to understand, several of the more innovative and powerful wizards were confined to their laboratories and ordered to develop these magics or die trying. How’s that for incentive? One of these wizards was Xann Maelor. Never known as a flashy spellcaster, Xann knew that his colleagues would be creating all sorts of spells to affect maximum destruction of land and bodies. But to Xann, there were only so many ways you could kill someone before it became tiring. Instead, the wizard fashioned the *web* spell. Xann wanted a spell which would both impede multiple enemy troops while paying lip service to the clergy’s precious Spider Queen. By using a spider’s web as the main visual element, Xann hoped to curry some favor with his feminine superiors in the hopes that the vile wenches would leave him be once their glorious crusade had ended. Once, believing he was alone with a fellow wizard, Xann once stated about the clergy, “If those bitches aren’t happy with this spell, I pray that another god delivers us from them.”

What has come to be known as the Nightblood Incursion occurred a century afterward. The drow cities coordinated a massive attack on the central lands of the surface elves. Wave after wave of drow soldiers streamed from the underearth like fountains of vile poison. Magical defenses, hastily erected by the unprepared surface elves, struck many of the evil invaders down but many more charged through the smoking remains of their brethren. As chaotic melee spilled into Largin Forest (I

believe it has another name today), Xann gathered a group of drow soldiers as his own. He quickly described a strategy whereby a handful of soldiers would charge an enemy position and then, as one, flee to one side in apparent fear before reaching them. As the surface elves would break ranks to give chase, Xann would cast several *webs* to entangle them. It would be an easy matter for the rest of Xann’s force to then sweep in and slay the elves. As a final insult, a torch-bearing drow would ignite the *web* before the force moved on. Both the elves and their trees would live eternally together as ashes.

Xann’s tactic proved sound and was used to great effect to pick off isolated patches of enemy troops. By daybreak, most of the Largin Forest was in flames and the elven fortress of Lin’Este was laid waste. This battle, however, turned out to be the only successful offensive for the drow that night as the other cities’ forces were driven back underground. This made the victory here taste that much sweeter. Unfortunately for Xann, his victory was short-lived as the memories of elves are quite long and the vengeance of the Spider Queen fierce. His remark about the clergy, thought made in secret those many years earlier, had doomed him. Weakened by the long night of combat, the Spider Queen’s faithful attacked the wizard after the battle. His tongue was crudely sliced off and thrown into the smoldering underbrush. The priestesses also blinded the wizard and dissolved his fingers in acid. No male in their city would ever question the females’, much less the Spider Queen’s, authority again.

These days, what used to be the Largin Forest has made a comeback, its trees nearly equaling the height and numbers it had in its prime. No one is certain what became of the fortress of Lin’Este because the elves only investigated its ruins once and then left it be. There are confirmed rumors that, during the anniversary week of the Nightblood Incursion, large webs appear at random inside the forest. Anything or anyone stuck to the webs when they vanish are never seen again. I hear yet another band of adventurers is gearing up to investigate this phenomenon. The first few groups never returned while the most recent swore to seeing strange lights playing inside

## Behind the Spells: Web

the ruins of Lin'Este. Personally, I think it has something to do with a certain drow wizard's tongue still residing in the forest. But what do I know?

### Spell Secrets

While it was originally conceived as a deterrent to enemy troop movement, the *web* spell has seen a few alterations over the centuries. Its current form in most spell treatises allows for certain manipulations by the capable spellcaster. The first of which acts as a poor man's *bold person*, entrapping a single target within the spell's sticky strands. Since only one target is affected, the webbing is a tad stronger.

Instead of an area spread, you can focus the spell into a fist-size ball of webbing to throw at a target. First, you must succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 12) to form the ball in your hand and then make a ranged touch attack as you throw the web-ball. Failure of the Spellcraft check means you must either deploy the *web* normally or lose the spell. (Alternately, on a roll of "1," the GM may elect to have the *web* centered on you.) If you succeed the ranged touch attack, your foe is cocooned within the spell's morass of webbing, unable to see or move and falling prone to the ground for the spell's normal duration. The webbed target is entangled, requiring one round to break free with a successful Strength check (DC 25) or Escape Artist check (DC 30). If you miss the target with your throw, treat the web-ball as a grenade-like missile. The spot it lands in erupts in a 5-foot area of sticky webbing, causing no ill effect unless a creature happens to be in that square (and is entitled to a Reflex save to avoid).

The second way a spellcaster can manipulate *web* is to cast it flat onto the floor of a certain area. If the caster is incredibly skilled, he may even be able to disguise the webbing to look like part of the floor. Enemies

become quite surprised when they rush a spellcaster only to find themselves suddenly stuck in their tracks.

You can cast *web* so that it covers a 20-foot area of flat surface instead of a 20-foot radius spread. This manipulation requires no Spellcraft check since it is inherently less useful than the normal application of the spell. The following rules apply when a *web* is cast in this manner onto the ground. If a creature is within the area of effect, it can attempt a Reflex save to initially move 5 feet from its current position (likely closer to the edge of the effect or even out of its area). Otherwise, a creature can only move by attempting the same Strength and/or Escape Artist checks the spell normally requires. Until a creature moves outside the area of effect, it must continue to succeed one of these checks in order to move 5 feet for every 10 above the DC rolled on the check result.

In addition, when you cast the *web* to adhere onto a flat surface, you might be able to camouflage it so others won't notice that something's wrong until it's too late. To achieve this disguised webbing, you must have knowledge of at least one 2nd-level illusion spell and succeed a Spellcraft check (DC 20). A success means that your *web* is now the same color and texture as the surface it's laying on. Creatures are allowed a Spot check to determine that something about the webbed area appears "wrong." The Spot check DC equals 12 + caster level. Once a creature "trips" the *web* trap, the illusion dissolves.

### Related Research

Given the historical context of the *web* spell, it's no surprise that few elven spellcasters have it in their repertoires. That same inattention to the spell has seen the reverse as far as the dark elves are concerned. Two variants of *web* are in general use amongst drow spellcasters. The deadly efficiency and secrecy of

## Behind the Spells: Web

the race speaks to why these variants haven't seen widespread dissemination into the arcane communities of the surface races.

### VARIANT SPELL

#### *Queen's Web*

As the spell *web* with the following exceptions:

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 4

**Components:** V, S, F, M

**Duration:** 2 rounds/level

**Saving Throw:** Reflex negates; Fort negates; see text

**Spell Resistance:** Yes (harmless); Yes; see text

In addition to creating a mass of gluey fibers, the *queen's web* inspires dark elves nearby as well as inflicts poison on those creatures unlucky enough to touch it. All drow of evil alignment within line of sight of the web are granted a +1 morale bonus per 3 caster levels to attack rolls and saving throws by its subtly shifting light patterns. The *queen's web* also bears a contact poison which affects any creature within the web's area of effect. The poison is terinav root—inflicting 1d6 Dex in initial damage and 2d6 Dex in secondary damage unless the Fortitude save (DC 16) is made.

*Focus:* A holy symbol of the Spider Queen.

*Material Component:* A sliver of terinav root (150 gp worth).

The second variant is used most often to block the secondary entrances of drow homes and other important sites like treasure vaults. Not only does an intruder need to contend with the webbing but also with the literal glow of guiltiness that clings to him. The improved version increases this variant's effectiveness tenfold.

### VARIANT SPELL

#### *Security Web*

As the spell *web* with the following exceptions:

**Duration:** 1 min./level

The webbing created by *security web* glows as the spell *faerie fire* for the duration. A creature touching the web finds that the glow spreads across its body for the spell's duration. When you cast this spell, you determine the pattern and colors of the *faerie fire* so you can later easily identify any creatures that came in contact with it. As with the normal *web* spell, *security web* can be made permanent with the *permanency* spell. In this case, the *faerie fire* duration is 1 minute per level after the creature last touches the *security web*. Otherwise, the glow lasts as long as the *security web* itself.

### VARIANT SPELL

#### *Security Web, Greater*

As the spell *security web* with the following exceptions:

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 3

The webbing you create with this spell still tags creatures that touch it with *faerie fire* but is also *invisible* for the duration.



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# BEHIND THE SPELLS Wish & Limited Wish

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*Narrator's Note:* We'll deal with *wish* first since it was the first to be created. Oddly enough, *limited wish* not only comes from a different creator but from an entirely different time period.

by Bret Boyd

# Wish

### The Creator

Without doubt, the creator of the *wish* spell was a man known as the Archmage of Danauw. I can say this without hesitation because the legend of this particular human is one passed on to all dragonkind from their elders. I suspect the humanoid races are less likely to heed the tale's warning and thus neglected to pass it on (no offense intended to my humanoid readers). Where was I? Oh, yes.

When magic was new to the humanoid races, there was a great need to catalog what spells everyone else was creating. The Amber Citadel was the first real "magic school" in existence and its headmaster, for lack of a better term, was the Archmage. The elderly human saw to the orderly collection and cataloging of spells from every corner of the planet. The Archmage was a great believer in the free sharing of knowledge. He did not desire personal power or control over others which, consequently, drew a great many apprentices to the Citadel. The Citadel's staff recorded every nuance of every spell that came across the structure's doorstep—from effects to variants and from casting difficulty (the Citadel is responsible for the concept of "levels") to components—whether arcane or divine.

It's this last criteria which so vexed the Archmage. "Why does spellcasting require these things?" he wondered. "Magic exists somewhere. Why can we not harness it without the need for a ritual of gestures, words, and things?" From a pure scholarly point of view, the Archmage's question had merit. But then the human became obsessed. There had to be a way, he believed, to tap directly into the ethers containing magic itself. Forget components. Forget formulae. The Archmage was after direct contact with, and channeling of, raw magical power. Again, he wanted to discover this for purely innocent reasons. Imagine, he thought, how far society could leap in both knowledge and capability if magic were accessible directly?

Naturally, before he could introduce such a concept to the masses, the Archmage had to discover the secret for himself. He pondered the question for some time, spending long years researching every work yet written on magical theory (all, of course, which the Citadel had a copy of) as well as traveling the lands and speaking to the most learned minds. What he eventually discovered was that the components of a spell—be they verbal, somatic, or material—serve to shape the spell's form but are not responsible for the energy necessary to cast it. Magic is drawn from a mystical somewhere by the caster's force of will. With the hypothesis that one's will, if strong enough, would override the need for components, the Archmage reasoned that he could cast any spell by sacrificing his very life essence. By giving enough of his life force, the Archmage hoped to gain the direct contact to magic he had been questing for. He gathered together his most trusted three assistants, powerful mages in their own right, and explained his plan.

As one, the trio stated that such a plan was extremely dangerous. Who can guess, they asked, the consequences when magic's very fabric is pulled at? But for all the unknown dangers, the mages agreed that the possible rewards outweighed the risks. The Archmage instructed his assistants to seal his laboratory with overlapping defensive spells. If anything should go wrong, the headmaster had no wish to endanger the Citadel. The trio of mages waited inside the lab as their master began casting. As the story goes, the Archmage intoned the first few syllables common to nearly every spell as a way to begin the magical process. Normally, the energies are then directed toward any applicable components as the spellcaster mentally wills the magic into the pattern of a desired spell. But in this case, the Archmage allowed the energies to well up inside his body as he spoke the simple phrase, "I wish to access the flow of magic."

## Behind the Spells: Wish & Limited Wish

As he spoke, the Archmage forced a kind of feedback loop to occur. Instead of redirecting or releasing the magic, he pushed back at it using his own life force. The human's consciousness left his body and traveled with his essence to wherever the magic was coming from. Unfortunately, the Archmage's actions caused a hole to rip in reality itself. His assistants thought they saw a multi-colored portal open directly behind the Archmage but what they really saw was their master becoming magical energy himself! In an instant, the Archmage knew the success he had been hoping for but at the same time realized the horrible price in attaining it.

His human form could not withstand the raw power smashing against it as the loop between body and the demiplane of magic destabilized. Within moments, the Archmage knew that the tear in reality would not only consume his body but that the resulting explosion of power would likely destroy the Citadel and perhaps a good portion of land around it. There was no choice but to give his life over to the demiplane to seal the tear he had made. But the Archmage also knew that other spellcasters would try to succeed where he had presumably "failed" in unlocking the secret of direct magical channeling. With every ounce of willpower remaining to him, the Archmage used the magic flowing through his form to stop time itself long enough to compose one last spell. He then gave up the fight against the magic, using what was left of his life essence to safely seal the rift.

To his assistants, the Archmage appeared to vanish inside the horribly beautiful rift. After blinking away the bright light, the mages found a scroll where their master had been standing. On the outside was a single sentence preface: "With great power comes great responsibility." Inside was a spell named simply *wish*. To this day, my kind believes that any creature who casts a *wish* spell actually contacts the spirit of the Archmage of Danauw. The human's essence still floats in the ethers of magical energy, forever ensuring that no other spellcaster meets the same fate.

There are also rumors that the Archmage's body and possessions were torn asunder by the power he nearly unleashed and that these parts were spread across the world when his

soul entered the demiplane of magic. As if to lend credence to these rumors, there have been reports of particularly powerful magic items found as well as unusually preserved body parts that radiate magic. Some of these items have been found inside swamps while others were unearthed deep underground during mining. Their exact description and powers are unknown as the creatures who discovered them are either found missing or dead within a few days afterward. The other prevalent rumors deal with the Amber Citadel itself. It is said that the exact spot the Archmage "died" in was so extremely subjected to unstable energies that the leak between the Material Plane and the demiplane of magic (which the human gave his life to seal) might open anyway. As evidence, random flare ups of magic were said to plague the Citadel's residents after the Archmage's death.

### Spell Secrets

What the *wish* spell essentially does is use a portion of the caster's life essence to directly harvest a large amount of raw magical energies. The spellcaster then directs the energies to perform a function with a verbal command starting with the words, "I wish...". When the Archmage of Danauw fashioned this spell before his "death," he made sure to enumerate on the "safe" uses of the spell's energies. As the Archmage himself discovered too late, magic works best when it has a structure or pattern to follow. This is reflected best by the *wish's* power to duplicate nearly any spell in existence. The patterns of these spells have been around for a very long time and, even if a caster cannot cast the spell himself, he is at least familiar with it (especially by the time he is of sufficient ability to cast *wish*). Wishes whose results can be attained by following normal creation patterns have the best chance of being granted by the spell. This is why spells, the enchantment/creation of items, curing of injured/ensorcelled creatures, instant teleportation, etc. are amongst the safe wishes.

But there's always those casters who wish for something a little too, well, let's say extreme. "I wish for a million platinum pieces." This is all well and good but because there is no established practice or custom for

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By using the word “eventually” in your wish, you activate a secret long-term effect of this spell. The magic essentially stays inside you, remaining dormant for the most part, until needed to help fulfill your wish. Effects are as follows:

- You immediately gain a +4 competence bonus to the two skills you believe most likely to help you in achieving your wish. [For example: If you wished to eventually become a king, the two skills most likely to receive this bonus are Diplomacy and Sense Motive.] In addition, the chosen skills become class skills for you if they were not already. If you are uncertain which skills to choose, discuss it with your GM.
- You gain the Diehard feat even if you do not have the Endurance prerequisite feat.
- When a definitive step toward your wish is imminent, you gain a +4 competence bonus to all attack rolls, skill checks, saving throws, and ability checks until that step is reached. [For example: You know that one of the steps to becoming king is to gain the trust of the citizens of the desired kingdom. If a village within the kingdom you want to lord over is under constant threat by a band of giants, you know that slaying the monsters will put you in good stead with the villagers. The competence bonus activates only when the leader of the giants is in sight. Merely entering the giant’s lair is not cause enough to gain the bonus since the *wish*’s magic knows that only by dispatching the leader will you gain favor in the villagers’ eyes.]
- Should you ever decide that you no longer want your wish fulfilled, the spell’s magic ends and its benefits expire immediately.
- When your wish is fulfilled [Following the above example: When you are crowned king], all of the above benefits expire.

gaining instant permanent riches, the *wish* spell has a difficult time granting it (and is thus an “unsafe” wish). In this case, the wisher is more likely to be killed by the sudden appearance of coins or perhaps land in great trouble when the fortunes of all surrounding kingdoms disappear from their vaults and appear next to him. However, there is a word you can add to an unsafe wish to tip the odds of its granting in your favor—“eventually.”

If you were to state, “I wish to *eventually* be a king,” you’ll find that the spell’s magic works in subtle ways to grant that wish. This simple

word lifts the burden of instantaneousness that is the benchmark of the safe wishes. You still want your wish to come true but it doesn’t have to right away. This kind of wish is usually one which you have been thinking about for a long time. As such, you might already have some kind of plan in mind to achieve that goal. Nothing elaborate, mind you. More of a: “If this and this happen, then I’ll likely be able to do this,” type of plan. Having steps to your wish not only gives it the structure it needs but also gives the spell time to make it come true.

Instead of sacrificing your own experience points to cast a *wish* spell, you can use the XP of nearby living beings. First, you need a hand or claw or similar appendage from a creature possessing the energy drain ability (vampires, wights, etc.). When you cast *wish* while holding this appendage, an invisible necromantic wave spreads to a radius of 100 yards. This effect drains 10 XP per Hit Die of the creature’s appendage from each living creature in the area. [For example: If a spellcaster uses the hand of a wight (a 4 HD creature) to cast this version of *wish*, each living creature within a 100-yard radius of the caster would lose 40XP. To successfully cast *wish*, this caster would require at least 125 creatures to be in range.] The targets are left slightly weakened and dizzy but only for a few minutes, assuming the Fort save is failed. The wide area of effect combined with the low yield of XP per creature is why many evil spellcasters go to fairs and other community-wide events to use this foul version of *wish*. If a caster is using this *wish* version in an attempt to duplicate a spell with a higher XP cost, he must still drain the proper amount of XP. If not enough XP is collected, the spell fails and the appendage used crumbles to dust.

## Behind the Spells: Wish & Limited Wish

Besides having a structure to your wish in mind, the other necessary requirement is the giving of life force. Nine out of ten mages will say that the caster needs to sacrifice his own life essence to harvest raw magic. But it's that tenth mage who is correct. Most members of the academic community do not acknowledge that an alternate life energy acquisition method exists; probably because it is condemned as an evil act. Morals aside, a caster can use the life essences of other creatures to power the magic necessary to cast *wish*. The only time this method might not be considered wholly evil is if the target creatures are condemned prisoners. But that opens up a bag of worms that I'm not going to address right now.

## Related Research

Since the *wish* spell became known to the spellcasting world at large, there have been more than a few attempts to imitate its effects at lower levels. The most popular of these is *limited wish* (see below) but there is another which has proven a boon to arcane casters whose enemies include other arcane spellcasters. *Interference field* draws raw magical power in the same way that *wish* does (albeit in a diminished capacity) but does so in an unfocused way.

### NEW SPELL *Interference Field*

Universal

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 1

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Area:** 20-ft. radius burst

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates (see text)

**Spell Resistance:** No

You flood the chosen area with raw magical energies. As a result, arcane spells (and spell-like effects) are difficult to cast because the unfocused energies mingle and interfere with their formation matrices. A creature attempting to cast an arcane spell must first succeed a Will save to do so. If they fail, the spell is wasted. Success indicates that the caster's will was strong enough to form his spell despite the chaotic energies in the area. However, that caster must make another Will save if he again attempts to cast inside the area of effect.

It is possible for spellcasters to recognize the faint motes of light which are indicative of an *interference field* before they move into it. A creature must first Spot the lights (DC 12) and then succeed a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 15) to recognize the spell. As always, if anyone watching the casting of this spell succeeds a Spellcraft check (DC 16) then they identify it anyway. Note that divine spells are unaffected as are spells which are in affect before they enter the area.

# Limited Wish

## The Creator

As much as *wish*'s backstory is about reaching beyond one's capabilities, the one for *limited wish* is just the opposite. One of the more famous halfling mages in recorded history was Shetley Janc, the resident wizard for the city of Meltiz. This crotchety old figure was traditional in every sense of the word. After apprenticing for many years, the wizard finally established himself in the then capital of the halfling people. He did what was expected of him. He took what he thought was owed him. There were no gray areas when dealing with Shetley. He assumed that all visitors wanted something from him and, more often than not, he was correct. But that was the way of things. Even the life of a spellcaster has a certain businesslike aspect to it, he believed. Folks want fruit? They go to the market and pay the vendor. Folks want something *identified* and/or destroyed? They go the local wizard and pay him.

Unlike many arcane spellcasters, Shetley was never one for extravagance. He used just what was needed for the situation and no more. Once, when asked why he used a trio of *fireballs* instead of a *meteor swarm* to stop a troll incursion, Shetley puffed on his trademark pipe and replied, "Those powerful spells are a lot of flashy nonsense. Never use a greatsword when a knife will do." Being content with moderate arcane power was something the halfling preached often. This advice, however, often fell on deaf ears. Every month saw dozens of power hungry spellcasters rapping at Shetley's door to gain an audience. The halfling knew that these visitors were not interested in chatting magical theory over a cup of tea. They wanted items of power which exceeded their aptitude and thought the old wizard careless enough to give them up. Ha! In point of fact, Shetley's only on-hand items of power were his eight pipes. Expertly stylized arcane runes ran across this collection

of clay pipes, one for every school of magic. The extent of the pipes' individual powers are unknown but, as one legend relates, when brought together the items' combined magics opened a portal to a secret extradimensional graveyard of lost magics.

In his waning years as Meltiz's famous, if not beloved, wizard, Shetley was the oft-seen guest speaker at magic colleges near and far. His chats with the professors made him realize that far fewer students were actually being taught than were sitting in the classrooms. One of Shetley's friends summed up the situation best when he stated, "The dedication isn't there. If the students aren't casting *wish* by week three, then they lose interest." The students were also defined as "limited"—not limited in potential but limited in patience. It seemed to Shetley that he was the last of a dying breed. His type never questioned their place in society or scoffed at the training needed to attain it. But this new generation, humans mostly, was different. They seemed to be forever shuffling about from one job to another, neither content nor overly specialized in any one thing.

Shetley assumed that this was a fault of the race and not something it should be blamed or penalized for. With such short attention and life spans, it was only natural for humans to flit about; trying everything they could at least once. To compensate for these genetic shortcomings, the halfling wizard decided to take it upon himself and set a "lower standard" for humans by creating the *limited wish* spell. While Shetley believed that the original *wish* spell was still the arcane pinnacle that other races could aspire to, *limited wish* would serve nicely as the pinnacle for human spellcasters. "If they can get this far, then they should be happy," he remarked after giving a copy of the spell to a friend. I suspect that if this origin of the spell were better known, fewer humans would take up study of it.

## Behind the Spells: Wish & Limited Wish

### Spell Secrets

*Limited wish* has the same spell secrets that *wish* has except with slightly lesser expectations and results. And really, what more can you expect when a spell name includes the word “limited?”

When using the word “eventually” in your wish, you receive all of the benefits as stated above for the *wish* spell. The only difference is that your competence bonuses are +2 instead of +4.

As for drawing XP from other creatures to supplement the amount required by the spell, the same rules apply. However, the effect is reduced to a 50-yard radius and the amount of XP gathered from each living creature in range is 5 points per Hit Die of the creature whose appendage is being used in the casting.

### Related Research

As it turns out, the only research with close ties to *limited wish* is that given to Shetley’s pipes. Likely minor artifacts in their own right, the original pipes were lost to the ages. Original notes from the halfling wizard’s journal give vague references to the pipes and what he might have done with them. These accounts have been scrutinized by spellcasters looking to capitalize on Shetley’s favorite possessions. The result is a set of *spell pipes* much less powerful than the originals but with no less charm.

### NEW MAGIC ITEM *Spell Pipes*

These elegant clay pipes come in eight different types (see the table below). Smoking the pipe is not necessary to activate a pipe’s powers. Each *spell pipe* adds +2 to the DC for all saving throws against spells cast by you from the pipe’s school. In addition, each pipe acts like a *ring of spell storing*, holding up to five levels of spells but only of the pipe’s designated school. If a caster attempts to store a spell not of the pipe’s designated school, the spell is wasted.

Pipe Color	Design Color	Magic School
Blue	Checkered gold	Abjuration
Red	White spirals	Evocation
White	Black energy bolts	Necromancy
Green	Blue circles	Conjuration
Orange	Gold starbursts	Enchantment
Brown	Red lines	Divination
Tan	Brown dots	Illusion
Gray	Green figure-eights	Transmutation

Moderate varied; CL 9th; Craft Wondrous Item, *imbue with spell ability*, creator must be 9th level and not be a specialist wizard; Price 42,000 gp (each).



## Behind the Spells: Wish & Limited Wish

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