

Ancient legends relate that an evil sorcerer named Azirian once summoned a black ship from a distant land far across the ocean, a ship loaded with a cargo of terrifying artifacts, among them the *Cryptichronos* (also known as *The Hidden Time*, in reference to its ancient origins, and as *The Book of Horrors*, for more obvious reasons). Scholars agree that Azirian must have gone insane when he read the grimoire, for he tried to use its powers to summon a beast he claimed could destroy the world, then fled with the book into the earth's catacombs, where he surrendered his will (and his body) to the hunger of the illithids.

No more is known of the *Cryptichronos* until it is mentioned 500 years later in the journals of the wandering mage Adjazzet, who discovered the book in a rusted, subterranean vault and managed to record some of the book's contents before also going mad, committing suicide by ingesting green slime. His apprentice Olmoroth inherited the work and used it to become the tyrannical ruler of a dying city; however, he eventually lost the book (and his life) in a necromantic duel with a vastly superior opponent, possibly a beast from the lower planes.

The present whereabouts of the *Cryptichronos* remain unknown, and wise men fear that the book may have fallen into wicked hands. Anyone finding the grimoire is encouraged to destroy it for fear of someone unleashing an unspeakable horror upon the world. Indeed, this latter possibility may have already happened in the campaign world.

**Description:** The book consists of 19 pages of vellum bound with silver wire to two thin plates of obsidian that bear no identifying marks or inscriptions. The plates measure two spans by three spans in size and are especially resistant to chipping and grazing (treat as hard metal for item saving throws). The obsidian surface is darkly reflective, and Adjazzet writes that eerie, phantom "images" sometimes appear in the plates and then immediately vanish. No one can decide for certain what these swirling, shadowy images are, but glimpsing them is extremely disconcerting to the viewer. Those who gaze for over a turn at the covers suffer the effects of a *scare* spell at the 16th level of ability.

The first page of the book depicts an illustration of a laughing skull burning up in violet flames. A *magic mouth* is activated whenever the book is first opened to this page, causing the skull to speak in a heretofore unknown language, perhaps the one indigenous to the land of the book's origin. (A spell such as *comprehend languages* provides the following rough translation: "Curse the thief of secrets! Let him know his heart's corruption! What he

reads here is the writing on the walls of his own tomb!") When the *magic mouth* intones this weird message, the opener of the book must make a saving throw vs. death magic or become afflicted with a rotting disease similar to the leprous touch of a mummy. This disease is fatal within 1-8 months, and for each month that it progresses the victim permanently loses two points of charisma (possibly acquiring a negative ability score). The course of the disease can be halted only by administering a *cure disease* spell (from a priest of at least 9th level) or a *heal* spell (the latter offering the added benefit of restoring lost charisma points). While so afflicted, a person cannot respond to any other *cure wounds* magic, and all nonmagical healing occurs at 10% of the normal rate. Once the *magic mouth* has been activated, it never speaks to the same individual again, although another person opening the book may hear the message and possibly suffer its ill effects.

The next 16 pages of the *Cryptichronos* contain various spells, one spell to a page. The exact content of these pages remains unknown (so that each DM may design the book to his liking). The tome is rumored to include not only such familiar magic as *animate dead* and *Evard's black tentacles*, but also such exotic magic as the wu jen spells *creeping darkness* and *wall of bones*. At least five of the spells in this section are known to be completely unique, never before seen in any other volume of magic.

The last two pages of the *Cryptichronos* describe the drawing of a special pentacle used in the summoning and binding of extraplanar creatures. The textual description, written in the language spoken by the *magic mouth*, is accompanied by an actual rendering of the pentacle--a rendering that acts as a symbol of insanity to all who look upon it without the benefit of an *anti-magic shell* spell. The victim becomes subject to every manner of madness, becoming a (short-lived) NPC.

The unique spells follow:

**Undead Control** (Necromancy)  
Level: 3                    Components: V,S,M  
Range: 20 yards    CT: 1  
Duration: Special    Save: Special  
Area of Effect: Special

With this spell, the caster may control any undead creatures within range as if an evil priest four levels lower in experience (thus, a 5th-level wizard may affect undead as though he were a 1st-level evil cleric). While casting the spell, the wizard rolls 1d20 and consults Table 47 on page 67 of the 2nd Edition *DMG* in order to determine whether or not the monsters are

commanded (a "D" result is treated as a "T"). The wizard can make only one attempt to control the undead; whether or not the attempt succeeds, the spell is used up and lost from memory. Any encountered group (not type) of undead that resists the control of the wizard can never be commanded by his use of this spell.

When confronting a variety of undead, the wizard affects the weakest type of creatures first. Multiple castings of the spell are required in order to exert control over the more powerful members of an undead horde. The spell permits the wizard to wrest control of the monsters from another evil priest or from another wizard employing this magic. Note that anyone of good alignment must, of course, use the spell only after careful consideration. (See the 2nd Edition *DMG*, page 68, for more information regarding the influence of evil priests over undead creatures.)

The material component is an evil priest's unholy symbol or some other properly *cursed* talisman forcefully presented to the affected monsters. The component is not lost in the casting and may be subsequently reused.

**Sinuuous Horrors** (Alteration)

Level: 4                      Components: S

Range: 0                      CT: 1

Duration: 5-10 rnds. Save: Special

Area of Effect: Caster

This spell transforms each of the wizard's arms into a writhing, hissing serpent that can strike at any opponent within arm's reach. Each snakelike tentacle can attack once per round as a monster with as many hit dice as the wizard as levels of experience.

The snakes each do 1-3 hp damage with their fangs, and there is a 3% chance per level of the spell-caster that the serpents are poisonous to humanoid creatures. Anyone bitten by a venomous snake must make a saving throw vs. poison at -2 or go into violent convulsions for a number of rounds equal to the caster's level. A convulsing creature suffers 1 hp damage per round and is incapable of any action (treat as a stunned opponent).

The wizard cannot cast this spell while holding any object or while wearing anything upon the hands (e.g., rings and gloves). Similarly, the wizard cannot grasp anything while under the influence of this transformation, nor can he cast spells with somatic components. A *snake charm* can pacify the tentacles for 5-8 rounds if the wizard fails a saving throw vs. spells. Note that the *sinuuous horrors* can never be compelled to attack their host, and that they remain in effect until the expiration of the spell, regardless of the wizard's desire.

**Vampire Mist** (Evocation)

Level: 4            Components: V,S

Range: Special    CT: 5

Duration: 1 rnd./lvl.    Save: Special

Area of Effect: 6' diameter cloud

With this spell, the wizard causes a pale cloud of chilling vapor to form at any desired spot within a 30' radius. The vapor billows, shifts, and appears almost sentient even though it is not truly alive. It moves at a rate of 30' per round, seeking out and enveloping the nearest life-form within reach of its gaseous tendrils (possibly attacking the spell-caster if he does not take precautions). Once the spell is cast, the wizard does not need to concentrate upon the magic in order for its effects to persist. The vapor can flow over 10' high walls and can seep through even the smallest openings and cracks. It cannot pass through airtight barriers (such as a *wall of force* or a hermetically sealed door), nor can the mist move across an area of fire. The gas avoids open flames, so a character could conceivably keep the vapor at bay with a torch.

The mist drains blood from any creature caught within its area of effect, doing 1-8 hp damage per round. The enveloped creature must make a saving throw vs. death magic during the first round of damage or else fall down incapacitated, unable to leave the gaseous cloud without help. As the *vampire mist* "feeds," it turns dull red and can drain up to 48 hp damage before being completely "satiated" (i.e., inactive) for the remainder of the spell duration. A creature does not need to breathe the vapors in order for their effects to work.

The mist cannot harm an individual protected by an *anti-magic shell*, and a *gust of wind* repels the vapor without dispersing it. Violent winds (such as those created by an air elemental) completely obliterate this gaseous horror, as do extremely hot fires (such as those created by a *fireball* or *flame strike*), *Vampire mist* does not harm fire-based creatures, undead, or monsters from a plane other than the Prime Material. When the duration of the spell expires, the cloud simply thins out into nothingness.

**Crimson Scourge** (Necromancy)

Level: 5            Components: V,S,M

Range: Touch    CT: 5

Duration: Special    Save: Neg.

Area of Effect: Special

This terrible spell can affect one human being whose number of levels (or hit dice) do not exceed the level of the spell-caster (dwarves, elves, and other humanoid creatures are immune

to this magic). Upon pronouncing the curse, the wizard touches the victim, who is entitled to a saving throw vs. spells at -2, with failure indicating that the target person begins to bleed profusely through the pores of the skin, taking 1-2 hp damage per round until dead. Regular first aid cannot prevent this damage, and most magical curatives have no effect upon the affliction. Such spells as *remove curse*, *cure serious wounds*, and *cure critical wounds* can staunch the hemorrhaging, but hit points may be regained fully only through time and rest. A *heal* spell, on the other hand, can dispel the results of this evil magic entirely.

The most horrible property of the *crimson scourge*, however, lies in the "contagiousness" of its effects, for whenever an afflicted victim comes into physical contact with someone else, the touched person may have to make a saving throw vs. spells at -2 or become likewise afflicted. Fortunately, a character is immune to the curse so long as he has more levels or hit dice than the person bleeding; moreover, the spell-caster can never suffer the effects of his own *crimson scourge*. Certain plagues throughout history have, in fact, been attributed to this spell (that often goes by the name of "the red death"). However, the spell does not really cause a biological illness and is, therefore, unaffected by any spells that *cure disease*.

The working of this curse requires that the wizard wear a scarlet robe and a faceless red mask, both made from the finest silk, worth at least a 1,000 gp each. These components are not lost in the casting and may be used as many times as desired.

**Amorphous Blob** (Alteration, Necromancy)

Level: 7                      Components: V,S,M

Range: Touch      CT: 1

Duration: Special Save: None

Area of Effect: Glass orb filled with fluid

The casting of this spell requires that the wizard first construct a crystal orb filled with a swirling, gelatinous fluid. The orb and its contents take 1-4 weeks to manufacture. In order for the spell component to be made properly, the wizard must enlist the aid of an experienced alchemist and must build a special laboratory equipped with its own strange, custom-made apparatus, the total cost of which can be no less than 5,000 gp. The wizard also needs to procure the following ingredients used to formulate the weird fluid: one pint of the spell-caster's blood, three pints of ochre jelly, and one dram of acid from a black pudding. With these ingredients, the alchemist prepares a viscous solution and encapsulates

it in a finely blown glass ball, 1' in diameter. The wizard then holds the sphere in a *shocking grasp* so that he can magically activate the liquid contents. Once these procedures are completed, the wizard may use the orb at any time thereafter to cast an *amorphous blob*. Should the glass container break before the spell is actually employed, the fluid is lost and the wizard must start the process over again from scratch.

Casting an *amorphous blob* causes the fluid inside the sphere to congeal into a dangerous, amoeboid life-form that is released whenever the glass is shattered. The wizard can smash the ball by hurling it at an opponent (treat as a grenadelike missile), but great care must be taken since the caster has no control over his creation once it is released. The blob resembles an ochre jelly and has the following statistics: AC 6, MV 6, HD 3, hp 24, #AT 1, Dmg 3-12, AL N. The monster feeds in order to grow, and it grows extremely fast. The blob has a volume of four cubic feet upon its release, but on a killing attack, the amoeboid creature engulfs its prey and gains 1 hp for each hit die of the dead victim. Every 8 hp gained by the *blob* endows it with an additional hit die (in terms of fighting ability) and results in not only an increase in volume of four cubic feet, but also a cumulative bonus of +1 on damage rolls (modified results cannot exceed 12 hp damage per round).

Example: A blob freed from a sphere kills four 2-hp opponents. The blob, therefore, grows four cubic feet larger and attacks as a 4-HD monster, doing 4-13 hp damage per round.

Note that the blob needs only one round to grow to its new volume, and during this time the creature can perform no other action. All increases in hit dice, size, and damage are permanent and do not decrease with the loss of hit points. No known limit exists to the blob's total volume, and if not soon killed, the creature can become extremely powerful.

The blob can regenerate 1 hp per round, but this ability cannot bring a dead blob back to life. The creature can flow through narrow openings and can ooze along walls and ceilings. The blob also secretes a digestive acid that dissolves wood (at a rate of 2"/round) and metal (at a rate of 1/2"/round); stone and glass remain unaffected. Magical cold does no damage to the blob, but slows the monster (as the spell) for 2-8 rounds. Fire harms the creature normally, but lightning actually imbues the blob with an extra hit point for every hit die of damage that might have been inflicted; thus, a 6d6 *lightning bolt* endows the creature with 6 hp, possibly increasing the blob's size and attack potential. Mind-influencing spells, of course, have no effect upon this unintelligent creation, and all forms of magical control are useless against it.