

ALTERNATE MAGICS

ALTERNATE MAGICS is an article on modifying spells and summonings in Stormbringer 5th edition written by Andrea Rocci (© 2008)

These are some simple house rules on magic that I am playtesting in my current campaign. They aim at reintroducing into the magic system the element of randomness and chaos and the cosmic proportions that characterized the old Stormbringer RPG. Although the new Elric! system is more balanced, I think it lacks some of the chaotic element that made the old Stormbringer so fun.

Some simple rule variants can reintroduce the best of the old system without the flaws -- I hope. The main feature of these rules is that they reintroduce the Summoning skill and employ it in new ways, taking advantage of the extended use of "criticals" that characterizes the Elric! RPG.

SPELLS

Spell casting is too reliable; to add a little uncertainty to it, a POW x5 roll (Luck roll) is required to cast a spell.

- **Fumble (99-00)** - GM should come up with a suitable mishap: e.g. spell backfires, double MP spent and no effect, spell has normal effect but caster loses all MP and faints, jealous Chaos Lord strips the knowledge of the spell from caster.
- **Failure** - No effect. Magic points spent.
- **Success** - The spell is cast with the normal effect. Magic points spent.

SUMMONINGS

THE SUMMONING SKILL

The summoning skill is reintroduced. This skill represents the sorcerer's general knowledge of the rituals, chants, and runes used to bring otherworldly creatures to the plane of the Young Kingdoms. The base chance for a character with sorcerous background and training is INT+POW. If a character without any previous formal sorcerous training acquires a summoning spell (e.g. the summon demon spell) from a grimoire or somehow else, his/her base chance will be equal to his POW characteristic. Experience is gained normally when using the summoning skill.

USING THE SUMMONING SKILL FOR SUMMONING DEMONS AND ELEMENTALS

In order to summon a demon or elemental a character must know the appropriate spell and roll her/his summoning skill. The skill roll substitutes for the Luck roll.

- **Fumble** - Magic points are spent. Roll on the Summoning Fumble Table.
- **Failure** - Magic points are spent. Make a Luck Roll; if it fails, roll on the Summoning Fumble Table.

- **Success** - The entity manifests in 1d8 hours or 1d6 rounds as appropriate.
- **Critical** - The entity manifests in 1 hour (demons) or 1 round (elementals). Add 25% to any one communication skill roll while negotiating. Add 5 to adventurer's POW in the POW:POW struggle if the sorcerer attempts binding. The sorcerer learns the name of the demon breed.

The following bonuses could apply at GM's discretion:

- the demon belongs to a demon breed known to the sorcerer (because he/she already summoned it or did scholarly research on it): +10%
- the sorcerer knows the True Name of the demon or elemental: +20%

INSTANT SUMMONING

When a sorcerer knows the True Name of a demon or the name of a demon breed, he can attempt to summon the known demon or a specimen of the known breed in 1d8 rounds. To accomplish this exceptional deed of sorcery the player must declare his/her intentions and roll a **critical success** in his/her summoning skill. If the player rolls a simple success the entity does not manifest, the MP are gone, but he/she need not make a Luck Roll to avoid a fumble.

SUMMONING THE BEAST AND PLANT LORDS

The chance of success in summoning the Beast/Plant Lords is no longer the ridiculous 01 percent; a **critical success** in the Summoning Skill is required instead. If the summoning spell succeeds the character's soul is taken to the half-world where the Beast Lord resides. There the character must plead for its help. The fact that the Beast Lord answered the summoning does not mean that it is willing to aid the character or is benevolent towards him/her. Pleading his/her cause before the Lord should be a good role-playing opportunity for the character.

The outcome of the bargain could be influenced by Communication skills and by the deeds of the character on behalf of the Balance (the GM might ask the player to roll less than the character's allegiance points in the Balance box on a d100).

Success in poetic and singing skills, as well as the knowledge of rhymes that praise the lords may increase the chance of success of the summoning. However the cumulate bonus should never exceed +10%.

NECROMANCY

"There is sorcery here. She is no reincarnation. You'd bring your lost love's spirit from the nether world to inhabit this girl's body. Am I not right?"

- Elric to Earl Saxif d'Aan in *Sailor on The Seas of Fate II*, 5

It is assumed in these rules that the foul arts of necromancy described in the *Bronze Grimoire* supplement always involve the summoning of a spirit from limbo or from some other plane of existence (see the "Afterlives" section, page 17, of the *Bronze Grimoire*). If you use the rules in the *Bronze Grimoire*, note that the following spells involve a Summoning skill roll that substitutes for the Luck roll: Animate Skeleton, Create Abomination, Lure Spirit, Raise Mummy, Raise Zombie, Summon Ghoul. A Summoning skill roll will be necessary also for the "Speak with the Dead" spell; the cost in MP for this spell will be equal to the

dead person's POW.

Whether or not you adopt the _Bronze Grimoire_ necromancy rules you can always employ this general purpose spell:

- **Summon Spirit Spell** - In general the summoning of the spirits of the dead -- for the purpose of questioning them, binding them or luring them in someone's body -- could be ruled as follows when not otherwise specified:
 - ~ a successful Summoning Skill roll is required to summon a random spirit; a critical success is needed to summon a particular individual.
 - ~ If the result is a Failure a convenient mishap occurs. GMs can either use the Necromantic Mishaps Table (_Bronze Grimoire_, page 19) or devise their own tables of ghastly events.
 - ~ the cost in magic points equals the spirit's INT+POW.
 - ~ required casting time is 1d6 hours.

UNUSUAL DEEDS OF SORCERY

"You were successful, lady," he said, "in conjuring up a demon?"

"A demon? I think not, though he looked to us like a demon with his slanting eyes and his pointed ears -a face not unlike your own, Prince Corum - and we were at first afraid for he stood in the centre of our magic ring and he was furious, shouting, threatening in a language which I could not, in those days understand."

-Michael Moorcock, The King of the Swords

The summoning skill is a useful measure of the general magic proficiency of a character and can be used in a simple way to deal with the summoning of creatures that are predefined as coming from another plane, such as the Creatures of Matik, the Elenoin, the Steeds of Nirhain, or even a Vadagh from Corum's world, an Eldren from the ghost-worlds of Ereko's Earth, or a traveller of the spheres like Wheldrake the poet.

Creature Summoning Procedure

The character must have some information on the target creature and its plane of existence. She/he should also figure out the proper summoning ritual (which will count as a spell against free INT). This can be done in two ways:

- 1: The sorcerer has found the relevant spell in a grimoire.
- 2: The sorcerer creates a ritual based on his/her knowledge of the multiverse (success in the Million Spheres skill), library research, or information that is given during play.
 - The character must roll a **critical success** in his/her Summoning Skill and the creature will appear. The duration of the ritual is up to the GM and players to determine.
 - The cost in magic points is 1d8 + the POW of the creature summoned.
 - If the creature summoned has human or near-human intelligence the sorcerer can negotiate its services. Otherwise he can always attempt to dominate the creature with a POW:POW struggle: if the sorcerer succeeds he/she can give orders to the creature for a number of rounds equal to the sorcerer's POW.
 - Predefined creatures from other planes cannot be bound.

NOTE: Normal inhabitants of other worlds cannot be dismissed like demons or elementals. They remain on the plane of the Young Kingdoms unless a demon or a special spell (such as Chaos Gate) is used to send them back to their home world. Obviously this might cause trouble to imprudent summoners.

INVOKING THE LORDS OF THE HIGHER WORLDS

In the Stormbringer RPG servants of the Cosmic Forces could invoke divine intervention rather easily, probably too easily. In Elric!, on the contrary, characters alleged with a Force have in principle no chance of succeeding in an invocation but the minimal 1%. I think this is less fun and contrasts with the cosmic high fantasy feeling a moorcockian RPG should have. Therefore I propose to modify the rules as follows:

- The chance of success in invocation for an alleged character is 1/10 (round up) of his/her allegiance points.
- The chance of success for Champions remains unchanged (POWx3)