

WARPSTONE

The independent magazine for Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay



Mentioned in Dispatches: Spells

by Neil Taylor, Spencer Wallace & Martin Oliver

Spell components are usually forgotten - not just in WFRP, but in most FRPGs. Be honest, hold your hand up if you've ever just "assumed" that your mage has the components for a spell handy, or bought them in bulk at the start of a campaign. But spell components are in the

rulebook for a very good reason - to act as a secondary check, after magic points, on the awesome power mages wield.

One major reason why they get ignored is how rare they are. Take Strength of Combat, a level 1 spell. Its component? A giant's scalp. Not easy to get hold of, considering that "[Giants] were driven out of the Old World by the expanding Human races" (WFRP rulebook). The inherent danger in obtaining a scalp once you've found a Giant would stop most level one mages from bothering to learn the spell, especially since *"every spell requires one or more material ingredients which are consumed by the magical energy of the spell"* (pg.135). Kill a giant, every time you want to cast that spell? Perhaps not. Add to this all the book-keeping required, and you can see why many people ditch spell components altogether. Which is a shame, because it's great fun to watch the dawning realisation on a player's face that their character, currently mere yards from the screaming

goblin horde, is fresh out of tuning forks, and their spare sulphur's tucked away safely in the bottom of a rucksack!

The idea of buying components also raises problems. If you can't get hold of giant's scalps, how come some shop's got a stock of them? Are sales restricted to a Wizard's Guild? How much do they cost? (How much have your PCs got?!) Are they taxed? Are mages forced to

register as available for military service before they're given their goods? Getting hold of rare ingredients is an obvious excuse for adventures, but using these sort of restrictions could make even the simplest components an excuse for excursions into the city's underworld.

One suggestion to deal with all this is that the spell ingredient, as listed in the rulebook, is the ideal focus for a spell. With careful research, a Wizard (particularly an Alchemist) could produce alternatives. Perhaps not as effective, nor as reliable, but alternatives none the less.

For example, Zone of Steadfastness requires a Pint of Dragon's blood. A suitable substitute would be some kind of blood with an aspect of dragonness about it - such as human blood mixed with sulphur and boiled for a week in a pot with a lizard's skeleton. This might give a

20% chance of outright failure when cast, a 40% chance of the mage's hair turning blue for a month, and a 5% chance of an insanity point. You could also moderate the effects of the spell - just take a look at the climax to EiF for an example of this. Alternatively, if you're feeling

really brave, you could use the table below...

Of course, it's up to players to devise substitutes, and for the GM to decide how effective or risky it is. True, the mage will have to live with any side-effects or possible backfires, but at least they'll be able to cast the spell. After a fashion. And at considerable risk: the GW web

site (<http://www.games-workshop.com>) includes comments such as, *"Magic by its very nature warps and corrupts, turning men into monsters and fuelling the dark tide of Chaos."* With all this in mind, we've come up with a set of rules to cover the use of improvised components.

When some poor mage runs out of the components they need, all is not lost. By dint of great effort, and at no small risk to everyone in the close vicinity, they can sometimes twist the forces of magic to their own ends using the power of their mind alone.

When a wizard casts a spell without using the right components, they should test against WP with a penalty of -10% per level of the spell. Extra magic points can be expended to offset this penalty (but not to enhance their WP) at 5% per point. Using a substitute component can give a 5-20% bonus to the roll (GM's discretion), depending on how similar it is to the component listed in the rulebook. If the roll succeeds, the spell is cast as normal. If not... well, things start to get interesting, and the player should roll on the following table:

SPELL MISCAST TABLE

Roll Effects

- 1-25 The spell is cast, but range, duration and effect are all halved.
- 26-45 Spell stalls. Caster must spend an additional d6+6 MPs to make it work.
- 46-60 Spell stalls, and a further d6 MPs are required to make it work. In addition, the effort of bending the Warp to the caster's will causes d6 insanity points.
- 61-70 Lacking a proper material focus, the backlash of warp energy as the spell goes off causes blood vessels to burst and violent spasms to throw the caster to the ground. The caster takes d6 wounds, irrespective of toughness or armour, and is prone for a round.
- 71-80 Although the spell goes off as normal, channelling the power of the Warp without proper protection results in a 25% chance of the caster developing a random mutation.
- 81-90 Disaster! The caster's failure to control the Warp results in a rift opening for d6 minutes. Each minute, there is a 30% chance that something will find its way out into the material world... In addition, any character foolish enough to even look into the tear must take a terror test.
- 91-95 Oh Shiii...! The caster's body shimmers for an instant and then disappears, as it is pulled into the Warp by entities best left unimagined.
- 96-00 Just when you thought it was safe... The spell works as expected, and all seems normal. However, the caster's meddling has resulted in something sinister sidling into their mind. There is nothing they can do but watch helplessly as this being uses their body and power to further its own strange aims -whatever they might be...