

THE RULE OF OBSESSION

'Lust for a woman weakened my sorcery. Now the woman is mine, and feasting on her soul. I shall be unconquerable! 'Back, fool! 'You have not conquered Thugra 'Khotan!'

For most sorcerers, their magic is an obsession that drives them on, constantly forcing them to seek out new sources of knowledge and new forms of power. Diluting that obsession by any means, whether falling in love, pursuing a new career, or demonstrating overmuch loyalty to a cause other than their own sorcerous masters – tends to weaken their magic considerably. However, if they can somehow draw the source of the distraction into themselves – for example, by sacrificing their loved one, succeeding at a major test in the new profession, or rising to the top of a non-sorcerous organisation only to entice all its members to their own destruction as a mass sacrifice – their power is significantly boosted.

In effect, the rule of obsession is played out somewhat like a minor quest or sub-plot alongside the main campaign. A sorcerer can always declare himself obsessed with something other than sorcery. If he does so, his Base Power Points are reduced by -1 to -3, depending on the strength of the obsession. These may be regained – with interest – only by somehow drawing the object of the obsession into himself. Until that point, his BPP will remain penalised, though of course the character's current Power Points can still go up and down as usual. Maximum Power Points are calculated from his new Base PP.

The Games Master may also rule a sorcerer to be so obsessed, though he should do so with care. Usually the only two possible reasons for doing so are as follows:

- † The sorcerer acquires an Allegiance (see p. XX) to someone or some group other than his own sorcerous master or masters, or some demon or other.
- † The sorcerer acquires more levels of some other class than he has levels of scholar.

On the other hand, it is said that observers can tell when someone is obsessed with something and that the obsessed cannot usually tell. This being the case, the Games Master is certainly permitted to make statements along the lines of 'you are clearly obsessed with hunting this particular individual down – if this continues, I will certainly rule you to be Obsessed.'

The Games Master is also always at liberty to veto any obsession that the player chooses for his character, to avoid abusive or just plain implausible obsessions.

A sorcerer with an obsession can regain his lost 1 to 3 BPP, and gain a permanent increase equal to the same amount he originally lost, by somehow incorporating the essence of the obsession into himself and his sorcery – a form of symbolic (or in some cases literal) cannibalism. The precise nature of this incorporation depends on the obsession, but some guidelines are given above.

The key to understanding the Rule of Obsession is that in essence the sorcerer is 'gambling' between one and three permanent points of BPP.

Generally speaking, a sorcerer should not be permitted more than one obsession per year.

The rule of obsession never applies to a sorcerer who does not have any levels in the scholar class. A mere Dabbler (see Chapter 2: Feats of Sword and Sorcery) is unaffected by the rule of obsession, as he is by definition not obsessed with sorcery, but simply toying with its dark powers.



MAN-APE

Conan, he whispered, 'it was no man that stood before me! In body and posture it was not unlike a man, but from the scarlet hood of the priest grinned a face of madness and nightmare! It was covered with black hair, from which small pig-like eyes glared redly; its nose was flat, with great flaring nostrils; its loose lips writhed back, disclosing huge yellow fangs, like the teeth of a dog. The hands that hung from the scarlet sleeves were misshapen and likewise covered with black hair. All this I saw in one glance, and then I was overcome with horror; my senses left me and I swooned.'



BESTIARY

Large Monstrous Humanoid

Hit Dice:	6d8+12 (29 hp)
Initiative:	+7 (+2 Dex, +5 Reflex)
Speed:	30 ft. (6 squares), climb 30 ft.
Defence Value:	15 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural)
Damage Reduction:	5
Base Attack/Grapple:	+6/+16
Attack:	Slam +11 melee (1d8+6)
Full Attack:	2 slams +11 melee (1d8+6) and bite +9 melee (1d10+3)
Space/Reach:	10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks:	Improved grab, crush 3d8+9
Special Qualities:	Low-light vision, scent
Saves:	Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +3
Abilities:	Str 22, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 5, Wis 12, Cha 7
Skills:	Climb +12, Listen +5, Spot +5, Perform (mimic) +7, Search +2
Feats:	Alertness, Multiattack
Environment:	Temperate and cold mountains
Organization:	Solitary
Advancement:	7-10 HD (Large)

The man-ape is close to human intelligence and almost as tough as a gray ape. Man-apes are actually descended from ancient Atlanteans, having degenerated from their human state to a more primitive one, rather than being some kind of 'missing link.' An adult male man-ape is 5 ½ to 6 feet tall and weighs around 350 pounds.

Man-apes do not have a true language of their own, though they are able to communicate basic concepts to one another with a combination of body language and simple vocalisations.

Man-apes are found only in the mountains to the east of Zamora, on the fringes of the Eastern Desert. Certain Corinthian and Zamorian scholars occasionally travel to these mountains and attempt to train man-apes, but because of the creature's high intelligence such training always risks breaking down, whereas training a true animal would not have this danger.

Combat

Man-apes attempt to grapple their victims, then settle down to crush and gnaw them at leisure.

Crush (Ex): A man-ape that gets a hold can make a single crush attack in place of its two claw attacks. The crush attack automatically inflicts 3d8+9 damage on the target. A man-ape has a +4 circumstance bonus to its bite attack when targeting the victim of a crush.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the grey ape must hit with a claw attack. If it gets a hold, it can crush.

Skills: Man-apes have a +6 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

