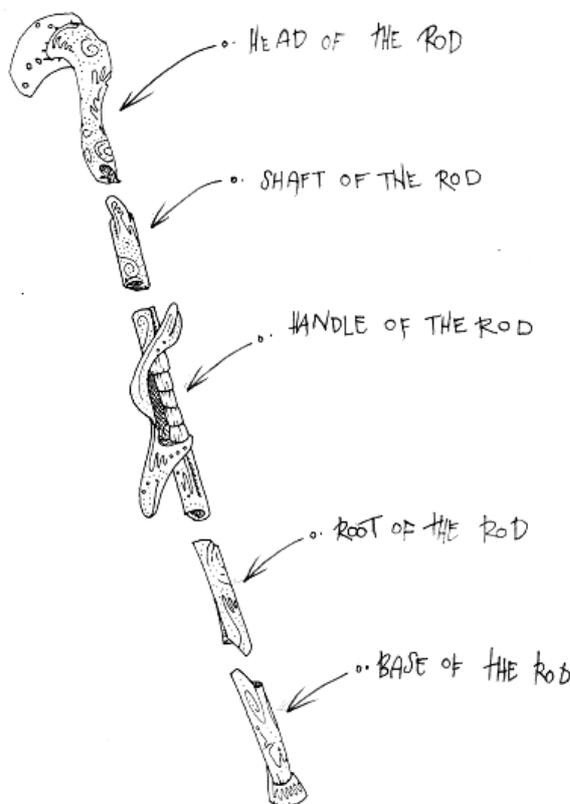


THE ROD OF POWER



The Rod of Power is an ancient, all-powerful artefact, used to build and subjugate empires in the antediluvian past. This document details its history, its multifarious powers, and gives the intrepid Judge some inkling on how to introduce the damn thing to their campaign, at their own risk.

History of the Rod of Power: In the antediluvian past, a horrible despot rose to rule the nascent tribes of men. He subjugated all before him, felling nations of elves, dwarves and other ancient races in the process. His power was absolute, and stemmed from a single artefact: the Rod of Power.

The early scions of the Old Kings rose against him, and allied themselves with the ancient, lambent kingdoms of the Elflands, then still connected with the mundane world. In a war which burned continents and scarred history, they were finally victorious over the tyrant, and managed to break his conduit of power.

Obviously, the artefact could not be completely destroyed, but was rather broken into five pieces. These pieces were scattered among the victorious factions for safekeeping. But time rolls like the waves of the sea, and only change is constant. The quiet force inside the artefact wishes to be reassembled, and the young gods of this epoch are always yearning for power.

Core rules: The Rod of Power has three distinct stages: dormant, awakened and completed. Dormant pieces of the Rod are merely arcane artefacts, possibly useful as quest objectives or motivations, but mostly inert magically.

Awakened pieces of the Rod of Power are quite powerful magical artefacts in their own right, with the looming presence of divine attention shadowing their user. A complete Rod of Power is a miracle to behold, and will likely change the face of any world that bears witness to such a change. The following sections cover each form, and are meant for use by Judges wishing to apply even an idea of such a powerful artefact into their campaign world.

The Dormant Rod of Power: Singular pieces of the Rod, scattered along the winds, have no power in and of themselves. They appear as tarnished bronze objects from a bygone age. Somehow however, deities and patrons may be interested in these objects, even though their real significance is hidden from the characters holding them.

- *A Bronze Rod of Rulership:* An ancient scepter, carved with spirals and symbols of power. An exhaustive identification reveals a dormant magic, along with a looming power and will. This is the *Head of the Rod of Power*. It is worth 150 gp.
- *A Piece of Odd Bronze Tubing:* Partially hollow, this piece of bronze is carved with spirals and eyes. The eyes seem to follow whoever is near, but magic reveals nothing of the purpose of the item. This is the *Shaft of the Rod of Power*. This piece is worth a 100 gp, to the right buyer.
- *A Bronze Handle:* Possibly from a shield or an ancient piece of weaponry, this tarnished bronze handle is worn with use. Still, the runes and sigils along it are legible, although unintelligible to all but the most enlightened scholars. This is the *Handle of the Rod of Power*, worth 200 gp to smiths or sages; this item can be fashioned to be a part of a shield or a two handed weapon.
- *A Bronze Cylinder:* Adorned with primitive symbols of lightning, this piece has obviously been part of a larger whole at some point. It is strangely warm to the touch. This is the *Root of the Rod of Power*, worth a 100 gp to the elementally inclined.
- *A Bronze Base:* This is obviously what remains of an ancient bronze spear or staff. Probably ornamental, its tarnished rivets tell a story of long years of use. Why this would interest anyone is beyond you. This is the *Base of the Rod of Power*, and it has no apparent use for anyone. A merchant of curiosities would probably pay 50 gp for the piece.

The Awakened Rod of Power: Once enough of the pieces of the Rod are in worthy hands (Judge's discretion; usually player characters and/or baddies), the pieces awaken. At this point they become rather powerful magical items in their own right, and draw divine and eldritch attention to them.

All awakened pieces of the Rod of Power are interesting to deities and patrons. These are all powerful artefacts, and Judges should treat them as such. All of the pieces of the Rod of Power have an Intelligence of 18, and communicate with their user/owner in powerful dreams and urges, driving them to find the rest of the Rod. Deities and demons will likely focus extra attention upon anyone carrying an awakened piece of the rod.

- *The Head of the Rod*: This scepter can be used to invoke *Charm person* (DCC rulebook pg. 131) as result 19, 5 times per day.
- *The Shaft of the Rod*: This tube can be used to invoke *Wizard sense* (DCC rulebook pg. 245) as result 33, 5 times per day.
- *The Handle of the Rod*: This handle can be used to invoke *Magic shield* (DCC rulebook pg. 146) as result 27, 5 times per day.
- *The Root of the Rod*: This bronze cylinder can be used to invoke *Bolt from the Blue* (DCC rulebook pg. 287) as result 21, 5 times per day.
- *The Root of the Rod*: This piece of bronze can be used to invoke *Resist Cold or Heat* (DCC rulebook pg. 266) as result 23 OR *Water breathing* (DCC rulebook pg. 235) as result 17, this ability can be used 5 times per day.

The Completed Rod of Power: This piece of strange arcane machinery will break a world¹. All god of the gods want to see it assembled by their followers, the horrid powers therein guided by their divine will.

- *The Rod of Power*: A staff of burnished bronze, with eldritch markings and spiraling sigils twisting along its shaft. A sign of power, control, and blood. The Rod has an Intelligence equal to infinity, and communicates with its wielder utilizing their urges, unconscious wishes, and painful, direct thought if necessary. The Rod allows its carrier the following abilities, at will with no limitations:
 - *Charm all*: Causes everyone within a 1000 miles to fall under a *Charm person* spell (DCC rulebook 131, as result 19). Anyone affected by the effect is not aware of being controlled by whoever is using the staff; they justify any forced actions as their own. The user may force anyone under the effect to do things contrary to their instincts with a contested Will save, a successful Will save at this point breaks the control.
 - *See all*: The wielder can see through anyone's eyes within a 1000 miles, as *Wizard sense* (DCC rulebook pg. 245), result 33. The owner of the eyes is not aware of the use, and the Rod directs the user's gaze towards any rebels to their rule automatically.
 - *Shield the wielder*: Anyone wielding the Rod is automatically under the effect of *Magic shield* (DCC rulebook pg. 146), as result 27. This effect persists as constant, and may increase if the Rod feels threatened.
 - *Burn all*: The wielder may invoke *Bolt from the Blue* (DCC rulebook pg. 287) as result 21 with the following changes: the bolt may be directed at anyone that the wielder sees through anyone's eyes.
 - *Ground the wielder*: The wielder of the Rod is always automatically affected by the spells *Resist Cold or Heat* (DCC rulebook pg. 266, as result 23) and *Water breathing* (DCC rulebook pg. 235, as result 17). These effects may increase if the Rod feels threatened.

Full disclosure: SPOILER WARNING! This section contains a number of annotations and notes concerning various Goodman Games adventures, and in general is mostly meant for Judges. As such, these notes are mostly an account of how I ended up creating this piece of magical garbage,

¹ Seriously. I didn't actually plan any of this, and now my players are either going to go into some serious PvP or someone will change the face of the world. Judges, do not take this lightly, and if you apply this piece to your campaign, savour every moment.

and as such, barely necessary to use the above rules. I'm an old hand at gamemastering, so I'm used to dropping quest seeds, campaign keys, and all sorts of little clues into adventures. The Rod of Power started as an epiphany, after my Wednesday group's first foray into DCC. I ran *Portal under the Stars* as our very first funnel; the group looted the tomb, successfully stepping over the scorched corpses of their compatriots (see notes on their adventures in the relevant [KitN article](#)), and later performed a spectacular *Detect magic* ritual upon their loot (resulting in a top roll of 37).

This seemed like a good point to elaborate and *go beyond the book* as they say, so I described a reading of dormant, powerful magic from the bronze rod of rulership: a bleak past, a striking warlord holding sway over thousands upon thousands of completely subservient fighting men, and an endless war. The rod of rulership they found was merely a piece of a greater artefact, with promise of great danger and power.

Cleverly, my player's wanted none of it. They actively avoided the plot hook, despite the vague cajoling of their gods and patrons. At this point, Narrimunth and Nimlurun were the only deities to know about the object. But, as any good Judge would run it, they kept running into pieces of the item:

- *Head of the Rod*: Found in the tomb at the end of *Portal Under the Stars* (from the DCC rulebook's adventure appendix). Originally marked in the dungeon loot as a "bronze rod of rulership", serendipitously identified as part of a magical, legendary artefact. This was the first piece my group found, and mostly just a side-idea at that point. This was almost two years ago at this point, so I've let this sleeping dog have it's nap. My Wednesday party actually managed to lose this piece eventually, and it now resides in a forgotten dwarfhold, hidden from everyone.
- *Shaft of the Rod*: Discovered inside the jellyfish at area 2-5 of *DCC #75 The Sea Queen Escapes*. Everyone was clutching for straws with the Curse of Sea Change, the turtle-island was sinking, and this piece was fused into the fist of the Wednesday group's cleric of Nimlurun-turned-Justicia. Good times.
- *Handle of the Rod*: Found in the pit trap at the end of *Gnole House* (from the *DCC Quick Start Rules, Free RPG Day 2017 edition*). I decided to involve my Monday group with this season's main plot, because what the hey, who wouldn't want a season finale with 12+ players who each play 2-4 characters...
- *Root of the Rod*: Found in an ad-hoc cleaning closet in area 4-2 of the time-vessel in *DCC #79: Frozen in Time*. The closet was largely born out of a frustration over my Wednesday group's incessant search for secret doors and traps, and a very good roll thereof. They also found a plastic bucket and a modern mop, which they promptly pilfered.
- *Base of the Rod*: Discovered in a secret tomb in Goodman Games' *Saga of the Witch Queen*. I used a heavily modified version of *Level 2: Lair of the Lizard Men* as a basis for a dungeon, and after my Wednesday group spent the equivalent of two months of sessions carefully digging through the dungeon, I dropped the final piece on them. At this point everyone was aghast, and knew that a reckoning was at hand.

As of today (29/06/2018), my Monday group has one piece and is on the way to pick up their second, and my Wednesday group has three pieces, scattered on all of the characters of a single player. To be honest, my current goal is to try to corral this dumpsterfire somehow, and drive the season to an end so I can have some creative leave.