

Dead Thom's Crossbow

D20 fantasy magic by Patric L. Rogers.

Dead Thom is an adventuring wizard who once worked briefly with the enigmatic magician Dr. Xin. The good doctor had a special apparatus that looked like a narrow cylinder that easily fit in one humanoid hand. The top end of the cylinder had a small button that when depressed emitted flames button perpendicular to the body of the cylinder. The range was very short, but the flames were hot enough to cause painful burns to the hardy and a few seconds exposure was enough kill the weak. Periodically, Dr. Xin needed to “replace the fuel” by removing some kind of lozenge from the bottom of the cylinder and inserting a new one.

Dead Thom did not have any opportunity to closely examine the artifact, and Dr. Xin was never forthcoming with his secrets about its operation. Dead Thom reverse engineered the principles of the idea behind Dr. Xin's device and incorporated them into the crossbow he has carried from his earliest days.

Dead Thom's Crossbow is a heavy repeating crossbow with a special setting dial on one side. Settings for the dial are “normal bolt”, “flame bolt” or “force bolt”. After the dial is set, the operator cocks the crossbow using the mechanism to load a bolt and ready the weapon to fire. It operates as a conventional repeating crossbow, launching normal or magical bolts from the magazine as fast as the wielder can load.

The “normal bolt” dial setting fires crossbow bolts from the magazine, using whatever conventional normal or magical ammunition the wielder has loaded.

“Flame bolt” loads a magical rod of red-yellow flame into the crossbow instead of a normal bolt. Firing the weapon emits a short stream of flame that lasts long enough to sweep side-to-side affecting an area. The exact amount of damage caused depends on the fuel rod used.

“Force bolt” loads a long arrow-like shaft composed of blue force energy. This bolt has barely the range of a conventional bolt's short range, but it flies with unerring accuracy, even into the most congested melee and is a force effect that can harm a number of creatures immune to normal weapons.

Dead Thom has enjoyed his new crossbow ever since and combines it with *armor piercing* bolts whenever he has the chance.

Game Mechanics

Dead Thom's Crossbow is a +1 *heavy repeating crossbow*. In addition, the dial can be set to “flame bolt” or “force bolt”. Changing the setting is a ready weapon action. The weapon can be fired as many times per round as the wielder can normally fire a heavy repeating crossbow, including the spell trigger activation effects of the magical emissions. Firing the crossbow while threatened provokes attacks of opportunity as normal, regardless of the type of bolt fired.

When set to “flame bolt”, firing the weapon results in a *burning hands* (DC 11, 3d4) as a spell trigger activation effect each time the crossbow is fired. The wielder may activate the effect in the same or different arcs if it is activated more than once per round.

Setting the crossbow to “force bolt” launches a *magic missile* (110 ft., treat as single missile doing 2d4+2 damage) as a spell trigger activation effect each time the crossbow is fired. Multiple bolts may be fired at the same or different targets.

The crossbow has an enlarged undercarriage and is powered by inserting a *wand of magic missiles* and a *wand of burning hands* for use as fuel. The ammunition supply is limited by the charges in the appropriate wand. The caster level of each wand must be at least caster level 3 or the magical emissions will not function. Using a wand of a higher caster level results in a proportionately greater spell effect. In this case, the loading and firing action of the crossbow acts like the spell trigger for the energy of the wand. The wielder does not need to know any command words, have the spells *burning hands* or *magic missile* on his spell list, or even be a spellcaster of any kind.

Faint evocation; CL 7th; *Craft Magic Arms and Armor*, *Craft Wand*, *haste*; Price 32,700 gp; Cost 16,700 gp + 1280 XP.

Appendix

Armor Piercing

An *armor piercing* weapon has an enhanced tip that can penetrate armor more easily than even *keen* weapons. Armor, natural armor and shield bonuses to AC (but not including any enhancement bonuses to that armor) do not count against it because the weapon punches right through armor. (Dexterity, deflection, dodge, luck, insight, enhancement and other such bonuses still apply.) This property can only be applied to piercing melee weapons, piercing thrown weapons, and piercing ammunition.

Strong transmutation; CL 12th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *keen edge*; Price +3 bonus.

Ray of Fire

Evocation [Fire]

Level: Sor/Wiz 0

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect: Ray

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

A ray of scorching air and flame projects from the caster's pointing finger. The caster must succeed on a ranged touch attack with the ray to deal damage to a target. The ray deals 1d3 points of fire damage.

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