

Secrets of the Cerebrix

Some wizards are willing to go to great lengths for secret lore and greater power; those who share the secrets of the Cerebrix definitely fall into that category; the creature known as a Cerebrix is a bizarre many-legged and bloated parasite adapted to residing inside the brain cavity of both elves and humans.

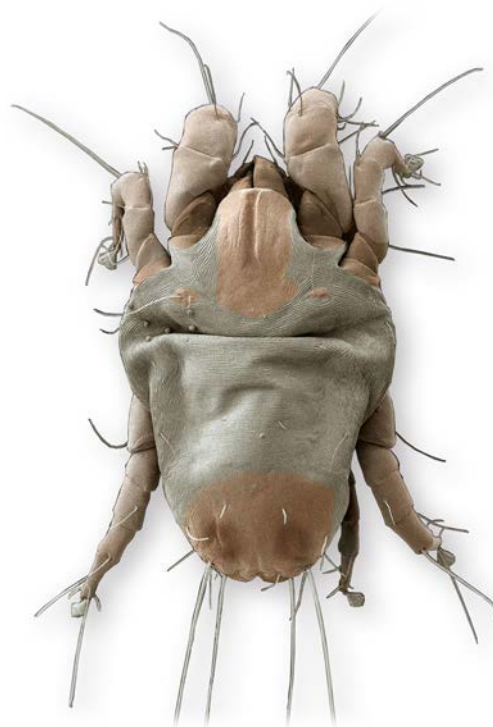
Legends say that this creature was developed as a weapon by elves in ancient times, used by elven nobles to control their rivals and make them docile. Since it is not itself magical in nature, divining its presence is very difficult. It has somehow been altered since, as it does not take over the mind of its host completely, but some say that this can easily be changed by those who know the correct formulae.

The Cerebrix itself is about four inches long; a shriveled insectoid ill adapted to life outside a humanoid brain case. It is blind and helpless, and needs to be inserted through the nasal passage of the intended host. If this is done to anything other than a human or elf, the result is complete paralysis followed by death within D6 days.

The host of a Cerebrix tends to develop a number of muscle twitches and ticks, and will also tend to become not so slightly unstable; the host of a Cerebrix loses 4 points of wisdom and 4 points of charisma permanently with 2 weeks of the creature being implanted. The worm grants a +4 modifier to all saves versus mind-affecting magic, however, since it will naturally resist attempts to interfere with its hosts thought pattern.

Once it is implanted, the Cerebrix will live comfortably for 3D10 years, after which it will deposit D6 eggs and die in the process. This process, known as "the transition" among those who make use of the creature, is a time of great danger for the host. The host will be incapacitated during this time, and in order for him/her to survive the larvae spawned by these eggs must be captured as they exit the nasal cavity and one of them fed and grown to maturity and then implanted back into the host. Any excess larvae are usually sold at exorbitant prices to those hungry for the secrets of the Cerebrix.

Considering these great risks, why would anyone allow a creature to live inside his/her skull? Well, apart from the resistance to mind-affecting magic, this symbiosis with the Cerebrix allows the casting of a number of very powerful



spells. These incantations are impossible to cast (albeit possible to learn) without a Cerebrix implanted, as they are in effect cast by the host and the creature in concert. They are usually taught by other hosts, and those who serve as homes to a Cerebrix often gather in secret societies or cabals, both to share lore and to enjoy mutual protection, but these spells can also be researched by a host on his/her own by learning to communicate with the creature, although this takes twice the time of researching a normal spell.

Zone of Scuttling Sensations

Magic-User Level 1

Duration: 2 Rounds/level

Range: Personal

This spell makes the Cerebrix in the caster's brain emit a zone of invasive, uncomfortable thoughts in a 10' radius around him/her. Living beings suffer great discomfort and a -1 penalty to attack and Morale rolls while within the aura, and animals and unintelligent beasts with 2 HD or less must save vs Petrification to willingly enter or stay within the zone.

The caster is not the obvious source of this discomfort unless the victims are somehow psychically sensitive or know of this spell and its effects.

Antennae of the Mind

Magic-User Level 2

Duration: 4 Hours + 1 Hour/level

Range: 30' Radius

The Cerebrix is stimulated into staying awake while the caster rests, extending its psyche to detect any alarming changes in the vicinity. If an unknown being approaches within 30' of the caster, he/she will be awakened immediately and will be fully aware, and also know where this presence is located.

The Cerebrix has some limited capability of taking instructions; it can be instructed to ignore certain familiar presences which have spent at least a day with the caster (such as fellow party members and hirelings) and can also be instructed to ignore animals or creatures with below ½ HD. Apart from this, however, any living being approaching the caster will wake him/her up.

Mindless undead and automatons will not trigger this spell, unfortunately, but other types of undead will. Naturally, being under the effect of Mind Blank and spells that prevent the reading of one's mind also grants "invisibility" to this spell.

Cocoon of Mind

Magic-User Level 2

Duration: 1 Turn/level

Range: Personal

The caster stimulates the Cerebrix into generating a powerful defensive barrier against intrusions into his/her mind. Not only does this grant a further +4 modifier to saving throws versus mind-affecting spells (in addition to the normal +4 bonus from harboring a Cerebrix), it also causes 2D6 points of damage to anyone attempting to actively invade the caster's mind (using a spell or spell-like power), regardless of whether the caster succeeds or fails at his/her saving throw.

Actively invading is defined as using the spell or power to read or control the caster's thoughts; a passive effect or one simply causing damage or confusion will not trigger the damage, although the caster still gains a bonus to save versus such effects.

Crawling Visions

Magic-User Level 3

Duration: 1 Round/level

Range: 30' + 10'/level

This spell sends the mind of the Cerebrix crawling into the mind of a single target being within range. This generates horrid visions, and often leads to complete loss of control.

The target must save vs Magic each round of the duration. If he/she fails, roll a D6 on the table below.

D6	Vision
1-2	<i>I need to get it out of my skull!</i> The target spends the entire round stunned and reeling, drops anything held to claw at its head.
3-4	<i>Get away! Get away!</i> The target flails wildly around itself. If there are targets nearby, it attacks a random target within melee range at its full capacity.
5	<i>I see it now!</i> The target moves towards and attacks a target chosen by the caster of <i>Crawling Visions</i> , using its natural weapons or any held weapon.
6	<i>The voices know better...</i> The caster of <i>Crawling Visions</i> dominates the target, gaining full control of it for the round.

Crawling Horde

Magic-User Level 5

Duration: 1 Round/level

Range: 30' + 10'/level

This spell functions exactly as the spell *Crawling Visions*, but affects a number of targets within range equal to the caster's level, rounded down.

The strain of exerting control prevents the caster from controlling more than one target affected by the result *the voices know better* in any given round, however; the caster chooses one target to control, and any others simply lose their action and are treated as stunned.