

# Staff of Memphis

(The Mesmeric Phrenological Induction Stimulator)

([MEMPHIS])

Typically called “The Staff of Memphis,” this fine piece of Victorian pseudo-engineering combines the dubious theories of mesmerism with the dubious practices of phrenology to create a highly dubious, but frustratingly functional, short-range mental dominator. To use, simply point the Staff of Memphis -- ah, the “Mesmeric Phrenological Induction Stimulator” -- at the victim, concentrate on the emotion that one wishes to induce, and the gem on the Staff will focus a mesmeric ray that can be trained upon the portion of the brain that governs that emotion. There’s even a faint green glow as the gem does its work.

Complications? Well, first off: the damn thing’s vaguely radioactive when powered up. Nothing horrible -- about the level of a chest X-ray, when used -- but it’s still not a good idea to use this item regularly. Second, it’s not immediately obvious which part of the brain governs which emotion (at least, according to the aforementioned dubious practice of phrenology, remember). It’s usually easy to find ‘fear’ and ‘slavish devotion,’ but tracking the

more sophisticated emotions requires a certain amount of practice. Which leads back to the entire radioactivity problem. When this item was designed and created, X-rays had yet to be discovered; there's nothing in the instruction manual to note the problem, and legend has nothing more concrete to say about the Staff than that it's 'cursed.'

There is, by the way, no explanation as to why people who use the Staff invariably end up wearing pseudo-Egyptian dress, take on a public persona that is almost aggressively and certainly obnoxiously evocative of Hollywood Pharaohs, and gravitate to baroque criminal schemes that involve scarabs and mummies, somehow. There's absolutely nothing about the item that should induce that, even if one takes both mesmerism and phrenology seriously (which one should not). Perhaps the item *is* cursed? After all, it's not even supposed to work in the first place.

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