

The Discerning Grimoire

Description: a large book, bound in blue-colored leather. Approximately 250 pages. There is an embossed rune of unknown origin and meaning on the front, which changes slowly over time. The book registers as magical, and is enchanted to regenerate itself over time. Scans will not reveal the author. The Discerning Grimoire *can* be destroyed, but doing so would require eliminating every scrap of the book; it has reconstituted itself from a single page at least once.

The Discerning Grimoire can be used by only one magic user at a time. It is a teaching tool that calibrates its content to best suit the current user, giving a course of study that will focus on what the user most wishes to learn. In practical terms, this results in the learning of assorted cantrips, several useful minor spells, at least two significant ones, and at least an understanding of a powerful spell or ritual. The Grimoire will not provide magical instruction for spells which are beyond the capacity of the user, but neither will it grant more than basic competence. Like all skills, practice makes perfect.

Where all of this becomes a problem is in the minor detail that the Discerning Grimoire has, ironically, no *moral* discernment, and doesn't care what is being studied. For

example: someone wishing to learn healing will come away with, say, cantrips for cleaning and closing wounds, easing pain; spells for healing damage, curing disease, recovering the use of crippled limbs, and either a spell for reattaching limbs or even resurrecting a freshly-dead corpse. But if the next magic user wants to learn necromancy, the Grimoire will just as readily teach cantrips for detecting dead bodies and opening graves, spells for making zombies or skeletons, whether individually or *en masse*, and, say, the ritual for turning oneself into a lich.

The only restrictions seems to be that each user only gets one course of instruction, and that the ultimate course of study is up to the Grimoire. More than one mage has discovered a hitherto unknown (and often deeply hidden) arcane interest after acquiring the Discerning Grimoire. It's said that the Grimoire never gets it *wrong*, but that's an allegation, not something that has been actually proven.

The Grimoire has been destroyed several times, but its regeneration ability makes it persistent. Or perhaps a new one just gets created when the latest version is destroyed. There's definitely powerful magic associated with it, but the Grimoire's origins remain stubbornly obscure.

Something out there wants mages to achieve their arcane dreams, and it is indifferent to what those dreams are. It's

entirely possible that the 'author' of the Grimoire is magic itself.

Many mages find that concept worrisome.

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