

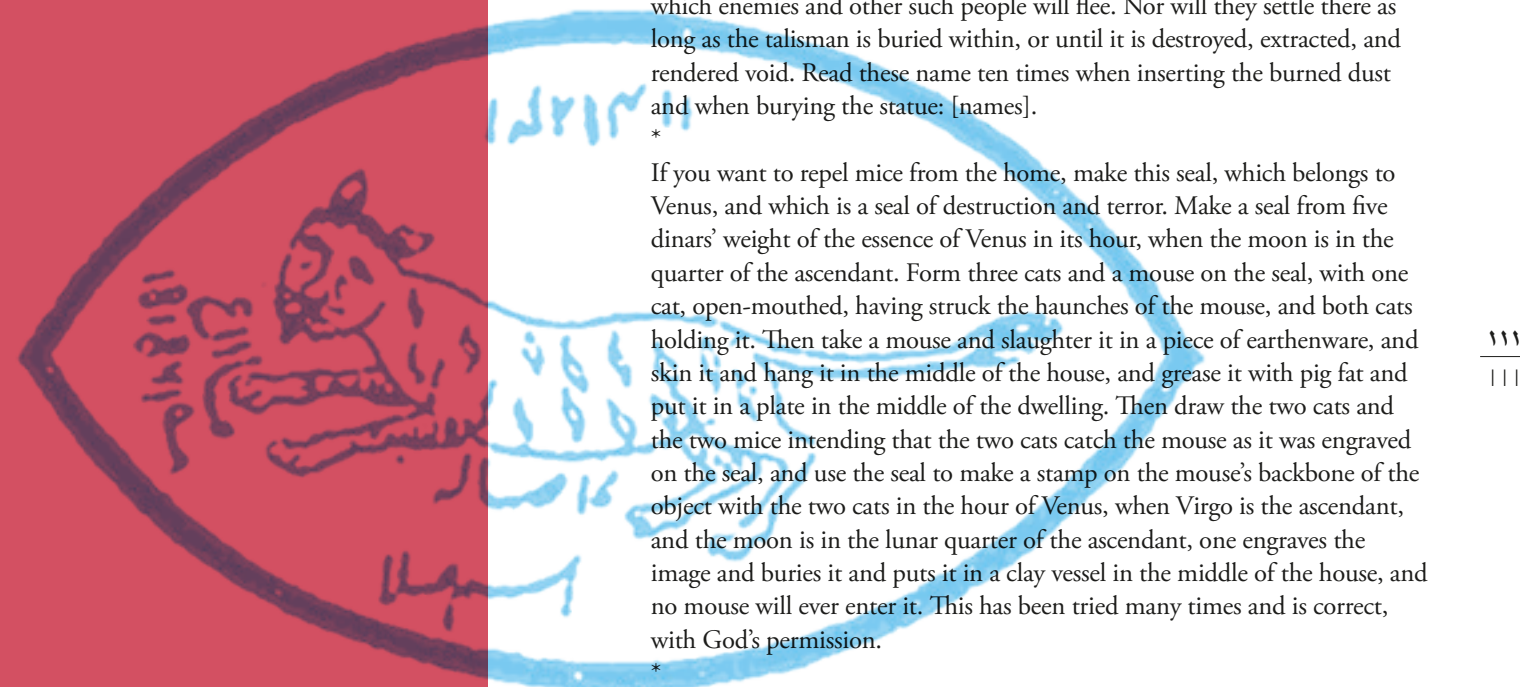
# The Cat and the Fat

By **Siraj al-Din al-Sakkaki**

These three magic spells involving cats are from Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī's 13th century grimoire, which is the subject of a Leverhulme-funded research project called "The Sorcerer's Handbook." One interesting aspect of these spells is how virtually every part of them is familiar in medieval European magic, from the lofty to the low (astrological calculations down to ritualistic cat torture). Just one more example of how intertwined so called Western and Eastern medieval cultures always were.

To the cat (or indeed mouse) lover, it is true that the rituals described here aren't very nice, but we should consider the turbulent world of the early days of the Mongol conquests, in which Sakkākī was attempting to survive. We might give our attention only to the bright and benevolent aspects of the human psyche, but the darkness nevertheless persists, and unobserved, grows yet more insidious. So all eyes on the black cat, please.

Translated by  
Emily Selove



That said, there is a safety feature built into most occult texts, which is their partial incomprehensibility. A mixture of textual corruption and deliberate obfuscation means that not only should you not try this at home—you probably couldn't even if you wanted to.

Thanks to my research fellow Luca Patrizi, as well as to Amin Ehteshami and Giovanni Martini for valiantly and generously trying to help me with the various Persian-language puzzles embedded in and surrounding this Arabic text, which arose in an emphatically multi-lingual milieu.

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The eighth talisman is for dispersing soldiers and military men from any land you like. Await the passage of Venus through Libra when the moon is in Aries, and, on Friday in the hour of Venus, form the image of a cat from yellow bronze. On the back of the cat statue, engrave a two-headed snake with no tail, and on its chest, two mice. Fill the middle of the statue with the dust of a burned mouse of equal weight, and bury it under the gate of the city, from which enemies and other such people will flee. Nor will they settle there as long as the talisman is buried within, or until it is destroyed, extracted, and rendered void. Read these name ten times when inserting the burned dust and when burying the statue: [names].

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If you want to repel mice from the home, make this seal, which belongs to Venus, and which is a seal of destruction and terror. Make a seal from five dinars' weight of the essence of Venus in its hour, when the moon is in the quarter of the ascendant. Form three cats and a mouse on the seal, with one cat, open-mouthed, having struck the haunches of the mouse, and both cats holding it. Then take a mouse and slaughter it in a piece of earthenware, and skin it and hang it in the middle of the house, and grease it with pig fat and put it in a plate in the middle of the dwelling. Then draw the two cats and the two mice intending that the two cats catch the mouse as it was engraved on the seal, and use the seal to make a stamp on the mouse's backbone of the object with the two cats in the hour of Venus, when Virgo is the ascendant, and the moon is in the lunar quarter of the ascendant, one engraves the image and buries it and puts it in a clay vessel in the middle of the house, and no mouse will ever enter it. This has been tried many times and is correct, with God's permission.

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If you want to attract someone from afar and excite a person or cause intense love ... enter an empty house and draw a magic circle and put the triangle with the seal in this magic circle. Suffumigate it with incense and call out the words twenty-one times, then say (in Persian): "O King Shahvīr, I do the deed of the black cat; you must help me!" Then take a black cat and feed it twenty dirhams' weight of sheep fat and heat it in a clay oven until it turns red-hot and dies in the fire. Then put a sack in some water, and when it is wet, insert the cat and place it in the oven until it is heated through and the fat drains out of it. Take it in hand and make a wick from a piece of the fat, writing these names. Take the cat and the fat and write twelve wicks, and make twelve wicks, and light them and put it on the top of a hole. Draw a magic circle around it and suffumigate it with incense and recite the spell. You will hear a voice, so do not be afraid. Put the top in the hole and say (in Persian), "I wish to give [insert name] his place, bring him to me right now!" Thus is the spell incanted each time until you hear a voice, which will be the sign that your wish has been granted. This is the wick, as you see: [numbers and letters].