Rite Publishing Presents:

101 Malevolent Magic Items

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Dedication: To Dark Mistress, who asked for it.

Special Thanks to my wife and kids for providing several good ideas.

Introduction

Magic is dangerous. By which we do not mean to say that magic is a good way to hurt people, though it is that. What we are referring to is the fact that magic represents a tampering with reality, an overriding of the natural laws to produce a desired effect. As any good science fiction movie-buff can tell you, tampering with nature is a dangerous business. Not that you would know this by the way many role-players treat magic. Most adventurers in fantasy role-playing games take magic for granted, similar to a way in which we take our computers, cars and telephones for granted. They chug potions with no thought toward what they are putting into their bodies. They cast spells which mess with their basic genetic codes with nary a worry about the consequences. They expect magic to work when they beckon. But magic is dangerous. It is not a push button vending machine, which, when the power goes out, simply ceases to function. When magic goes haywire, things go very, very wrong. Hence this book.

Overview

This is not just a book of cursed objects; meaning those magical items which, through a mishap of the crafting process, have adopted properties which are detrimental to the user. Failures in the creation process are an unfortunate happenstance and do result in curses and a good many of the items in this book are of that sort. However, such items share the pages of this tome with a second group: items which are intentionally designed to harm the user. There exist, among the magical community, as elsewhere, certain individuals who delight in causing misfortune. Within these pages, cursed items and malevolent items exist side by side, differentiated only by the style of their stat block. Malevolent items are made exactly like any other normal magical item, and are thus presented as a regular magical item; whereas cursed items, which are created accidentally, are presented in a style similar to cursed items in the *Pathfinder® Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook™*. Despite this mechanical difference, for the poor fool who finds and uses either, the end result is the same: misfortune of one sort or another.

The statblocks for each item have a few other things we might mention. For one thing, there is no market price given for any of these, regardless of how they were created (though intentionally created items note the cost of their creation). While buyers interested in any one of the items in this book might exist, cursed and malevolent objects are not the sorts of things reputable businessmen are going to deal in. Trying to sell, or buy, any of these objects should be an arduous task more focused on making the right connection than on the price. As well, each statblock ends with a "Cure." Some of these items can be discarded as normal once their flaw is realized. Most of the time getting rid of a cursed item is not so simple. Specific steps must be taken before the user is free of the curse. Each item has a suggested cure,

though of course GMs are free to be creative in the matter of remedies.

The last set of cursed and malevolent items in the book is described as legendary. These are items with a unique history and a unique set of powers, all of which might be known to bards or lore-masters. The difficulty for knowing this history should be 10 less than the difficulty to properly identify the item using magic. The histories provided with the items are specific to the world of Questhaven, though the stories themselves should be easily adapted to any game world. Similar to artifacts, each of these legendary cursed items has a specific way in which they must be destroyed, assuming the PCs are interested in destroying them. Again, GMs should feel free to alter both the histories and the methods of destruction if doing so would benefit their game and the stories they themselves are trying to tell.

Why Use Cursed Items?

There was a time when it was assumed every dungeon would have at least one or two cursed items in it. The use of these items has in recent times fallen a bit out of fashion. Many were afraid that cursed items detracted from the enjoyment of the game. While cursed items should be used sparingly, we must recognize that they do serve a purpose other than simply allowing cruel GMs a moment of levity. They actually have at least two legitimate uses.

The existence of cursed items makes players more cautious. And this is a good thing. If every vial of

glowing liquid is a *potion of cure light wounds*, then players will just chug every vial on the belt of their fallen foes after a battle. If one in four is actually a vial of deadly poison, the players will, after the first or second time, start taking the time to test the potions. Likewise, if one in ten magical items is cursed, while daring players might simply slap on every magical hat, cloak and belt they find, *smart* players will take the time to identify each before use. There is a different feel to the game when the world contains cursed objects and players are less likely to treat a dungeon romp as a buffet of treasures and more likely to approach it as the continuous series of tests, traps and dangers you want it to be. Moreover, cursed items make magic just a little less friendly. It reminds the players that their characters are putting strange, potentially harmful toxins into their bodies, enchanting their physiques in unnatural ways and tampering with their very minds. Magic becomes a little less like a vending machine and a little more like an untested, unlicensed nuclear accelerator right after you've flipped it on for the first time.

Beyond keeping players on their toes, cursed and malevolent objects, used right, make for a good story. What is the *Lord of the Rings*, if not a quest to get rid of a dangerous cursed object? How many horror stories are built around a single, malevolent object? Many, if not all, of the items in this book have the makings of a good macguffin, or a memorable encounter. Conflicts and challenges are what create the tensions which result in captivating narratives. Cursed items are thus useful in providing the basis for an entertaining tale.

Using Cursed Items

When placing cursed items in a hoard, do not count the items toward the total value of the treasure. Likewise, used cursed items in moderation. A few such finds keeps players on their toes; too many and people won't want to play with you anymore. Likewise, PCs should, ideally, be given an opportunity to fight the curse. No-win situations are seldom fun. Nevertheless, if the players refuse to investigate cures or refuse to employ care in their use of magic, sometimes it is the burnt hand that teaches best.

The difficulty to identify a regular magical item is 15 + CL. The difficulty to properly identify a cursed item is 25 + CL. If the person identifying the cursed item has enough success to identify a regular magical item, but not enough to identify they curse, he or she mistakenly believes the cursed item to be of a benevolent nature. The DCs for any saving throw related to any of the following object is either 10+ ½ CL (rounded down) or 15 + ½ CL (rounded

down), depending on the object. The DC to remove any of the curses or conditions imposed by the following items using *remove curse* is 10 + CL.

Whenever possible, GMs should create a reason, in-game, for the cursed item to be where it is. Perhaps it is the reason for bad things to be happening to good people (or to bad people, as the case may be). Perhaps the party requires it to specifically set their own trap for some foe or other. Perhaps it is kept by the villain as an interesting conversation piece. Perhaps the PCs find a magical staff clutched in the hands of an ornate statue, not realizing it is the curse of the staff which created the statue. However you end up using these items, I hope they enliven your game and inspire you to find new ways to make your players suffer (even if only a little).

Armors and Shields
(11 total)

ARMOR OF ILL-FATE
Aura moderate transmutation; **CL** 13th; **Identify** DC 38
Slot armor; **Weight** variable
DESCRIPTION
This armor appears to be standard +1 armor but its true nature is often revealed in combat. All critical threats against the wearer are automatically confirmed for maximum damage.
CREATION
Magic Items *armor of fortification*
CURE
This armor may be removed as normal.

ARMOR OF THE KLEPTOMANIAC
Aura faint enchantment; **CL** 5th; **Identify** DC 30
Slot armor; **Weight** 10 lbs.
DESCRIPTION
This armor functions as +1 leather armor, but when worn it compels the wearer to steal. Once an hour, the wearer of the armor must succeed at a DC 17 Will save to resist the armor's compulsion. Failure results in the wearer attempting to steal something from another, utilizing a Sleight of Hand skill check. The wearer has no knowledge of his theft, whether successful or not. It is entirely a subconscious activity. Once worn, the user will not voluntarily part with the armor and will use it in preference to all others.
CREATION
Magic Items *+1 leather armor*
CURE
Remove curse (DC 15), or a similar spell, is necessary to free the wearer of the armor's hold.

ARMOR OF THE ROOSTER
Aura moderate enchantment; **CL** 9th; **Identify** DC 34
Slot armor; **Weight** variable
DESCRIPTION
This armor appears to be standard *+1 armor of fearlessness* but though its wearer is immune to fear, he is also filled with an overwhelming sense of self-confidence which compels him to act in a provocative fashion. When facing a recognized foe or group of foes, or an obvious authority figure (a king, town guard, etc.), the wearer must make a DC 19 Will save each round to

avoid shouting out a boastful and insulting threat. Once affected by this compulsion, the wearer will not voluntarily surrender the armor but feels compelled to use it to the exclusion of all other armors.
CREATION
Magic Items any *armor of fearlessness*
CURE
Remove curse (DC 19), or a similar spell, is necessary to free the wearer of the armor's hold.

ARMOR OF THE STONY SKIN
Aura strong transmutation; **CL** 18th; **Identify** DC 43
Slot armor; **Weight** variable
DESCRIPTION
This armor appears to be *armor of invulnerability.* When worn, the skin of the wearer becomes hardened and rock-like, granting the wearer DR 5/magic or blunt. Any blunt weapons used against the wearer crack the wearer's stony skin doing double damage and 1d2 bleed damage. Moreover, as a consequence of this cracking of the skin, whenever the wearer is reduced to 0 hp, he suffers 4 points of Constitution damage. This damage cannot be healed so long as the armor is worn. Once used in battle, the wearer will not voluntarily surrender the armor but feels compelled to use it to the exclusion of all other armors.

New Armor Special Ability:
Fearlessness: A suit of armor with this special ability renders its wearer immune to all fear effects, regardless of the source.
Moderate enchantment; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *remove fear*; price +2 bonus.