

MUMMY'S MASK



CURSES OF THE ANCIENTS

Mirti pronounced the sarcophagus free of traps, so we unsealed it. When Raherta lifted the mask from the mummified prince within, I swore I saw the shadows move—drawing closer from the corners of the tomb—but I convinced myself it was nothing. Holding the mask, Raherta translated the hieroglyphs, 'My guests, may you share my eternal reward.' We laughed this cryptic warning off as a dead man's bluster.

"Yet now, after these many years of misfortunes and accidents, only Raherta and I remain—and in recent months, my letters to him have gone unanswered. We made the discovery of a lifetime, found wealth beyond measure, but not one of us prospered. Fortune, fame, even life itself, passed through our fingers like so much sand."

—Jakent of Shiman-Sekh, Osirionologist

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Feared more than any tomb guardian, Osirion's dread curses are whispered of in haunts frequented by adventurers, explorers, and grave robbers. To enter a crypt, whether sealed or long opened, is to court the undying wrath of its builders, the dead within, and the very gods. Distinct from conventional traps, these magical afflictions typically exact their vengeance with a measure of poetry, lacking the mercy to deal a quick and clean death. While curses abound in the Inner Sea region, laid by cruel hags, evil witches, fearful linnorms, and worse, the deserts of Osirion are a land of curses, where the foolhardy are seemingly just as likely to be stricken by ancient wrath as by a parched, sun-scorched death. Noted here are just a handful of the most storied curses of Osirion and beyond.

Many of these curses punish those who trespass on tombs and other powerful sites. The most notorious Osirian curse comes from the undying mummies that guard many lost tombs. Both a disease and a curse, mummy rot reduces its victims to sand and is spread by a mummy's touch.

The fabled pyramid of the Four Pharaohs of Ascension bears a particularly insidious curse. Symbols of power lie hidden within the tomb, and should an intruder glimpse too many of these runes, the curse activates and reaves spirit from flesh, turning the would-be thief into an undying guardian. In the Gozarin Necropolis, violators of Jetrieti V's portion of the Pyramid of Masks, instead succumb to a deadly wasting disease, while rumors tell that the curse of his ancestor Jetrieti I causes its victims to burst into flame at the touch of the sun's light.

The vengeful ghost of the Pharaoh of Blades lies trapped in a labyrinth below Ipeq, victim of a curse of his own devising. His curse confounds all sense of direction within the labyrinth, denying exit to those it traps. Throughout the tomb lie hidden gems that allow escape, but they elude even the pharaoh's ghostly grasp.

Other curses specifically punish thieves; in many such cases, returning that which was stolen lifts the curse. For example, while entering the Crypt of the Everflame in Nirmathas poses no great hazard, stealing from the sarcophagi within causes the thief's possessions to age, corrode, and crumble into dust. And in Katapesh, stealing a pendant from a mummified gnoll turned a man named Cheeho into a talking dog. Though he would gladly return the pendant to end his suffering, Cheeho unfortunately has forgotten the precise location of the mummy's burial site.

Handling treasure looted from a tomb can be risky even to those innocent of theft. The Ruby Prince of Osirion himself recently bore a hidden curse contracted from a relic of Lissala, ancient goddess of runes. The grim humor of being laid low by a relic of Thassilon rather than Osirion's own lost empire was not lost on the heir of the pharaohs. Given the Ruby Prince's importance and the potency of the curse, hundreds of Pathfinders

CURSES IN OUR WORLD

Even in the real world, superstitions abound about vengeance from beyond the grave and the punishments meted out against those who desecrate sacred ground. Even before hieroglyphs were translated, accounts spoke of events such as wrathful spirits plaguing a ship, which were banished only when the pair of mummies looted from a tomb were cast overboard. With the deciphering of hieroglyphs, aided by the Rosetta Stone, the legend of Egyptian curses grew. Inscriptions in tombs threatened dire consequences to grave robbers, ranging from execution at the hands of the dead to agonizing death from incurable diseases.

Fear of the mummy's curse swelled further with the opening of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922. It began when Lord Carnarvon, member of the first expedition, nicked a mosquito bite while shaving. The cut progressed into blood poisoning and pneumonia, and Lord Carnarvon passed away a mere month after entering the tomb. Lurid accounts of coincidences and portents preceding his demise filled the papers of the day. His death was followed by several other ominous ends, with causes ranging from disease to murder.

A few years later, Henry Field spread the tale of Sir Bruce Ingham, recipient of a mummy's hand bearing a scarab bracelet. Written on the bracelet was a warning: "Cursed be he who moves my body. To him shall come fire, water, and pestilence." Soon after, Ingham's house burned down, followed by a flood during its reconstruction.

For more than a decade, the death of any visitor to the tomb of Tutankhamun was hailed as proof of the pharaoh's dread curse. Yet in truth, most who entered the tomb lived long lives. Ultimately, the mummy's curse owes more to sensationalism and selective reporting than to vengeance from beyond the grave.



loyal to Osirion searched the far corners of Golarion for hints of a cure.

Occasionally curses act more to keep Golarion safe from the contents of a tomb than to punish would-be thieves. The layered protections of the Pyramid of An-Hepsu XI fall into this category. The Incorruptible Pharaoh and his most dangerous creations lie hidden in his tomb. Cunningly woven wards and curses keep them forever sealed away from the world, along with any intruders who have dared to disturb his rest.

Curses can also arise spontaneously, usually at sites of great evil. Untold years of ritual sacrifice and cannibalism stained Smugglers' Shiv, off the coast of Sargava, with more than blood. On its shores, the dead now refuse to remain quiet, and the living find themselves consumed with an unspeakable craving for the flesh of their own kind.

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ALTERNATE BESTOW CURSE EFFECTS

The spell *bestow curse* allows the caster to invent a novel effect, but one no more powerful than those described in the spell itself (no worse than a 50% chance of losing actions, a -4 penalty on checks, or a -6 penalty to an ability score). Effects in line with that power level include the following.

- When the victim is adjacent to the area of a damaging spell or spell-like effect, the area expands to include the victim.
- The victim can't heal naturally, and magical healing heals the victim by only half the usual amount (minimum 1 point). Fast healing and regeneration are likewise halved.
- Whenever the victim takes damage, he is staggered for 1 round.
- The victim is plagued by cacophonous sounds and strobing lights that only she can hear and see. She is distracted (+5 to Perception DCs), cannot take 10 on skill checks, and must succeed at a concentration check (DC 10 + spell level) to successfully cast spells.
- Anytime the victim picks up or retrieves an object (including drawing a weapon or ammunition), there is a 50% chance that he immediately drops it. If ammunition is dropped, the attack being made is lost. Any remaining attacks in a full attack action may still be attempted.



SPREADING CURSES

Curses needn't be limited to those effects described by *bestow curse* (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 247) or in rules for afflictions (*Core Rulebook* 555). When designing a new curse, be careful not to go too far. A devastating curse can have consequences as serious as dying or being turned to stone. Certainly, horrific curses that promise inescapable doom have their place, but curses that can be endured for a time bring more to the table, as surviving and escaping such a curse can become an adventure all its own. Consider these guidelines when creating a curse.

Make It Logical: A character generally doesn't get cursed for minding her own business. More often, the victim meddled with powerful forces, disturbed an ancient grave, or even wronged a vengeful fortuneteller. Try to fit the curse to the act that brought it on, like a glutton being unable to eat or a tomb robber burning in the light of day.

Make It Interesting: A boring curse isn't worth the game time it consumes. A good curse should be creepy, comical, embarrassing, or terrifying, or have a good story behind it.

Make It Interactive: Some curses require the players and GM to roleplay effects such as an inability to lie or a compulsion to steal. This sort of curse can be very rewarding with a motivated group, as possible effects extend far beyond what game mechanics allow.

Make It Simple: A good curse has easy-to-handle mechanics. Most curses should have only one or two effects, and should be possible to resolve during gameplay. Avoid the need to reference complicated effects during combat. Failing that, prepare an index card with the curse's details.

TYPES OF CURSES

Curses can have a wide range of effects, which is something to keep in mind when designing a new curse. Some trigger only intermittently, some apply a constant penalty, and some grow worse with time. In addition, some curses function exclusively using game mechanics, while others incorporate roleplaying into their effects.

Intermittent: Some curses, such as *unluck*, trigger only under certain conditions and stay constant in their effects.

Progressive: A progressive curse functions much like a disease, requiring periodic checks to determine whether the affliction progresses. However, unlike those suffering from diseases, the victims of these curses cannot recover just by succeeding at saving throws. A progressive curse worsens with each failed save, often ending in incapacitation or death. *Mummy rot* is a typical progressive curse.

Static: Curses like *baleful polymorph* apply an effect for the entire duration of the curse, without a change in its severity.

Mechanical: These curses rely on game mechanics for the majority of their effects, such as applying penalties, ability damage, or negative conditions. This sort of curse is a good choice if you want a steady, consistent effect for the curse.

BREAKING THE CURSE

The most conventional way to rid a victim of a curse is the spell *remove curse*, occasionally with the aid of other or more powerful magic. When making a new curse, especially one with a strong story background, consider novel ways to remove the curse beyond just casting a spell. Robbers might be cursed until they return every ill-gotten coin, while a haughty aristocrat might suffer until she cleans the feet of a dozen beggars. Make the victim vaguely aware of how to end their torment, but let them discover the specific details on their own through either research or trial and error. Curses with a story-based remedy often resist *remove curse* and *break enchantment*. Increase the DC for removal by 2, 5, or even 10 based on the power of the curse. Particularly powerful curses resist *remove curse* and *break enchantment* entirely, requiring either specific conditions for removal or the application of *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish*.

Weaker curses also exist. A simple cleansing ritual might suffice to remove them, perhaps discoverable through exploration, research, or a successful Knowledge (religion) check. Such weaker curses could even fade naturally over the course of days or weeks.

While many NPC casters offer curse removal with no questions asked, it's common knowledge that curses aren't

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picked up accidentally. Some of these casters might want to know the circumstances behind the curse (often employing Sense Motive during the discussion). Good-aligned churches could expect acts of atonement or charity as at least partial payment for removing a justly gained curse.

CRUEL CURSES

The curses below could be incorporated into traps, associated with locations, triggered by opening crypts or offending powerful spellcasters, or inflicted in any other circumstance that calls for a vengeful affliction.

CREEPING SENILITY

Type curse, disease; **Save** Will DC 19 negates, Will DC 19 to avoid effects

Onset 1 minute; **Frequency** 1/day

Effect 1d2 Int drain and 1d2 Wis drain; **Cure** Creeping senility can be cured only by successfully casting *remove curse* and *restoration* within 1 minute of each other. Additional castings of *restoration* are required to restore the drained ability scores.

DAYBANE

Type curse; **Save** Fortitude DC 17 negates

Effect The target takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage for every minute of exposure to bright light, including daylight. This effect ends when the creature falls unconscious. This curse never deals lethal damage.

DAYBLIND

Type curse; **Save** Fortitude DC 17 negates

Effect The target is blind except in dim light or darkness.

DISSOLUTION

Type curse, disease; **Save** Fortitude DC 18 negates

Onset 1 week; **Frequency** 1/day

Effect 1d2 drain to a random ability score (determined each day); **Cure** A dreaded form of wasting curse, dissolution can be cured only by successfully casting both *remove curse* and *remove disease* within 1 minute of each other and succeeding at both checks by 5 or more. If both checks succeed but either one succeeds by less than 5, the curse seems to be removed but returns in 1d4 weeks. While in remission, the curse cannot be detected or removed.

FAMINE

Type curse; **Save** Will DC 22 negates, Fortitude DC 22 to avoid effects

Effect Any food that the target attempts to consume instantly rots into a putrescent mass. The target can attempt a Fortitude save to choke down the spoiled food. If the target fails at the check, she takes 1d2 points of Constitution damage. In either case, attempting to consume food leaves the target sickened and unable to eat for 1d4 hours. Food

created by magic can resist spoilage with a successful caster level check against the DC of the curse.

FEVERED DREAMS

Type curse, disease; **Save** Will DC 17 negates, Will DC 17 to avoid effects

Onset first period of sleep after exposure, **Frequency** 1/day (when sleeping)

Effect The target's sleep is plagued by nightmares. On a failed save, the target awakens fatigued, cannot prepare arcane spells or sleep again that day, and takes 1 point of Constitution damage and 1 point of Wisdom damage; **Cure** Fevered dreams can be cured only by successfully casting both *remove curse* and either *remove disease* or *dispel evil* within 1 minute of each other.



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FONT OF TRUTH

Type curse; **Save** Will DC 15 negates, Will DC 15 to avoid effects

Frequency 1/minute (when speaking only)

Effect The target is unable to intentionally lie. In addition, anytime the target is asked a question, she must succeed at a Will save or answer in exacting, truthful detail. The target receives an additional save once per minute to cease elaborating upon her answer.

PARCHED

Type curse; **Save** Will DC 15 negates, Fort DC 15 to avoid effects

Onset 1 hour; **Frequency** 1/hour

Effect This variant of the ravenous curse causes extreme thirst.

A gallon of water slakes his thirst until the next failed save. If the victim does not drink within 10 minutes of a failed save, dehydration sets in (*Core Rulebook 444*), and he must succeed at a Constitution check to avoid taking nonlethal damage.

RAVENOUS

Type curse; **Save** Will DC 15 negates, Fort DC 15 to avoid effects

Onset 1 hour; **Frequency** 1/hour

Effect The target suffers from ravenous hunger. Gorging on a full day's worth of food satiates the craving until the next failed save. If sufficient food is not available, starvation advances at the rate of 1 day per failed save (*Core Rulebook 444*).



SHATTERED SELF

Type curse; **Save** Will DC 20 negates

Frequency no more than 1/day (see text)

Effect The victim's mind splits into two coexisting personas, one normal, the other malicious and self-destructive. When in control, the self-destructive persona sabotages the victim's efforts and plots the demise of the victim's friends and loved ones. It takes care to conceal its actions and intent from others. The normal persona retains only the haziest recollection of actions taken by its alternate, and has no sense of missing time or having blacked out. Exactly when the alternate persona takes control is up to the GM, but it does so no more than once per day. Each time the alternate persona surfaces, the victim must succeed at a save or the alternate persona takes control for 1d6 minutes. Normally these takeovers happen when the victim is alone or with just one person, but moments of extreme stress may force the victim to attempt a save against this effect as well. The alternate persona has full access to the normal persona's memories, and receives a +10 bonus on Bluff checks to conceal its presence. Despite the malevolent nature of this affliction, the victim's alignment remains unchanged when under the curse's effects; **Cure** Shattered self can be cured only by successfully casting *remove curse* and either *heal* or *greater restoration* (or other means of restoring sanity) within 1 minute of each other.

VULNERABILITY

Type curse; **Save** Will DC 17 negates

Effect The target becomes vulnerable (*Core Rulebook 562*) to a single energy type, taking 50% more damage than normal from that energy type. If the target is immune or already vulnerable to the damage type, the curse has no effect. If the target has resistance to or protection from the energy type, apply the vulnerability before the resistance or protection.

CURSED SPELLS

Curses are strong magic, and spellcasters throughout the world have explored new ways to lessen their sting and to intensify their bite.

ABEYANCE

School abjuration; **Level** cleric 2, inquisitor 2, paladin 2

Casting Time 1 minute

Components V, S, M (a flask of holy water worth 25 gp), DF

Range touch

Target creature touched

Duration 24 hours

Saving Throw Will negates (harmless),

Spell Resistance yes (harmless)

Abeyance suppresses the effects of a single

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curse on a creature. It does not restore any damage or drain that might have been caused by the curse. *Abeyance* cannot suppress curses that cannot be removed by *remove curse*, but it can suppress curses such as lycanthropy that require *remove curse* along with additional measures. An individual curse can be suppressed only once by *abeyance*, even if cast by a different caster.

Abeyance does not allow a creature to divest itself of cursed objects, though it can suppress a curse contracted from an object.

AGGRAVATE AFFLICTION

School necromancy; **Level** cleric 3, druid 3, sorcerer/wizard 4, witch 3

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target one creature

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw see text; **Spell Resistance** yes

All recurring afflictions (those with a frequency, including curses, diseases, and poison) possessed by the targeted creature immediately trigger, requiring an immediate saving throw (as described in the affliction) to avoid suffering their effects. A successful saving throw does not count toward ending the affliction, and this extra save does not change the timing of the next save against the affliction. Afflictions without a frequency are unaffected by this spell.

BESTOW CURSE, GREATER

School necromancy; **Level** cleric 7, sorcerer/wizard 8, witch 7

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range touch

Target creature touched

Duration permanent

Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

You place a curse on the subject. Choose one of the following.

- -12 penalty to an ability score, or -6 penalty to two ability scores (to a minimum ability score of 1).
- -8 penalty on attack rolls, saves, ability checks, and skill checks.
- Each turn, the target has a 25% chance to act normally; otherwise, it takes no actions.
- Bestow one of the curses or variants in this article.
- Bestow curse of the ages or unluck (*Core Rulebook* 557).

If a specific affliction is bestowed, the save DC of the spell replaces the usual save DC of the affliction. You can also invent your own curse, but it should be no more powerful than those described above.

The curse bestowed by this spell cannot be dispelled, but it can be removed with a *break enchantment*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish* spell. It cannot be removed with *remove curse* or suppressed with *abeyance*. The DC to remove the curse with *break enchantment* increases by 5.

CURSED ITEMS

Retrieving treasures from Osirian tombs carries risks beyond the traps and guardians found within. Ancient Osirians deliberately created items that were seemingly beneficial but concealed harmful effects, causing even treasure hunters who are knowledgeable about curses to risk death from innocuous-seeming loot.

Like most cursed items (*Core Rulebook* 536), the following resist attempts to identify their inimical nature. These particular items were crafted deliberately as punishment for thieves. In addition to the items listed below, *necklaces of strangulation*, *periapts of foul rotting*, *poisonous cloaks*, *robes of powerlessness*, *robes of vermin*, and *scarabs of death* might lurk in Osirian treasure troves. Methods of creation for the items below have been lost or are carefully guarded secrets.

CARNIVOROUS JAR		PRICE
		—
SLOT none	CL 11th	WEIGHT 10 lbs.
AURA moderate necromancy		

A wooden stopper depicting an animal or human head seals this limestone jar. Any creature that opens the jar takes 3d6 points of Constitution damage as several of its internal organs vanish from its body and appear inside the jar. If the creature survives, the resulting trauma deals 2d6 points of bleed damage every round. This bleed damage lasts until the victim receives at least 5 points of magical healing or benefits from a DC 20 Heal check. A *carnivorous jar* functions only once, and can be found alone or in sets of four.

INTENDED MAGIC ITEM

preserving flask, *restorative ointment*, or any item held in a jar or similar container

CONSTRUCTOR ARMOR		PRICE
		—
SLOT body	CL 12th	WEIGHT 30 lbs.
AURA strong transmutation		

Designed to resemble the wide scales on a serpent's belly, this armor functions as a *+1 breastplate of fire resistance*. The first time the wearer is struck in melee, the armor animates and begins crushing its wearer. On the round that the armor animates, it automatically grapples the wearer. In following rounds, at the beginning of the wearer's turn, the armor makes a grapple combat maneuver check (CMB +20) to constrict the wearer. If successful, the armor deals 2d6 points of damage each round. Once animated, the armor releases its grip only when it is destroyed or its wearer dies. The wearer can't physically remove the armor once it activates, but others can help destroy or remove it. This armor functions normally (without animating) when worn by unliving creatures such as constructs and undead.

INTENDED MAGIC ITEM

+1 breastplate of fire resistance