Ancient Curses

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Legendary Games

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The following superscript notations are used to denote references to official *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* rulebooks:

[ACG] = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Class Guide*

[APG] = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*

[ARG] = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Race Guide*

[GMG] = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Gamemastery Guide*

[PC:DH] = Official companion for dungeoneers.

[PC:MM] = Official companion for players in the marketplace for magic.

[OA] = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Occult Adventures*

[PU] = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Pathfinder Unchained*

[UCam] = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Campaign*

[UC] = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Combat*

[UE] = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Equipment*

[UI] = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Intrigue*

[UM] = *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Magic*

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About Legendary Games

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What You Will Find Inside
Treasures and Tomes of Horror

Ancient Curses brings you a wealth of woe to unleash upon your campaign, allowing you to bring home the kind of supernatural suffering that will make your heroes weep and the mightiest pharaoh and his priests laugh. This book includes archetypes focused on ancient curses and extensive rules on creating cursed items, including an array of accursed abilities to bedevil the unlucky or unwary, as well as a full system of haunt-like cursed places, with sample location-based curses from CR 1 to CR 17. Add to this a ton of terrible new curses from **sunbane** and **creeping calcification** to **shrouded slumber** and **hourglass eyes**, and you've got a fantastic resource for bringing a delightful depth to the kinds of curses your PCs might encounter while plundering their way through the lost tombs of a fallen empire.

The Legendary Games tradition is to combine rich story and background, innovative layout, beautiful aesthetics, and excellence in design that is second to none. This product is the latest in that tradition, and we hope you enjoy using it as much as we enjoyed making it. Game on!

- Jason Nelson

Ancient Curses

A classic trope when venturing into lands once ruled by a grand civilization is that the relics and ruins they leave behind are strange and dangerous places, and that things left behind are best left alone lest anyone disturbing them be struck down with terrible power that has lingered through the ages. This has been a staple of fantasy film and fiction from cursed Aztec gold in the Caribbean to savage morlocks and innocent but ignorant Eloi living in the far future among the collapsed remnants of a civilization long destroyed. This literary tradition is strongly rooted in real-world history and culture, with great rulers and priests in civilizations across the globe inscribing imprecations warning tomb robbers of dire fates that would await them should they violate the sacred grounds, and even the kind of everyday taboos that made ritually unclean those who touched the dead or their goods. That said, perhaps nowhere has the idea of ancient curses been so closely identified as with the culture and religion of ancient Egypt.

Egypt is uniquely situated at a crossroads of continents, a powerful empire that lasted for thousands of years, and yet was conquered repeatedly, only to reassert itself yet again with a renewed legacy of material, cultural, and intellectual riches that connected its latter-day rulers with an imposing and literally monolithic legacy of greatness. The great monuments and the rich history showed wealth and opulence, but behind it the promise that even more must be buried just out of sight. Combined with the elaborate burial practices, mystery cults, and magical artifice, real-world Egypt offered the promise of treasures unimagined, yet always with a chilling foreboding about the rituals, the mystic writings, and the fact that few plundered their tombs and lived to tell the tale. Just enough to keep the dream alive, but few enough to dissuade all but the most ardent treasure hunters.

Even in modern times, Egyptian tombs were notorious for being cursed. The opening of Tutankhamen's tomb unleashed (coincidentally or not) a buffet of tragedy. The financial backer of the expedition, Lord Carnarvon, was taken ill and rushed to Cairo. He died a few days later, only 57 years old. It is rumored that when he past, the lights briefly went out all throughout the city of Cairo. Carnarvon's son claimed that at the exact moment of his father's death, his favorite dog in England suddenly jumped up, howled, and collapsed dead. The exact cause of the lord's death is unknown. The most anyone could diagnose was perhaps an infection that stemmed from an insect bite he received on his face during the excursion. Adding scary intrigue to this theory is the curious detail that when Tutankhamen was unwrapped in 1925, the mummy was discovered to have a wound on it's left cheek in the exact place as the insect bite which killed Carnarvon. But it doesn't stop there. By 1929, eleven people connected with the discovery of the tomb had died prematurely and under unnatural circumstances. The raging party list includes two of Lord Carnarvon's relatives, his personal secretary, and the secretary's father, Lord Westbury. Westbury probably came to the conclusion he was having absolutely no more of this curse nonsense for he wrote a note, "I really cannot stand any more horrors and hardly see what good I am going to do here, so I am making my exit." He politely placed the appropriately perfumed stationary note where others could discover it and promptly jumped from the 7th floor roof of his stately grounds. Carnarvon's half-brother became nearly blind and died from blood poisoning from the procedure that was meant to restore his vision. Carnarvon's full brother died of pneumonia. The list goes on to include deaths by arsenic poisoning, fevers, mysterious illnesses and death by gunshot wounds inflicted by a wife.

Whether such events were supernatural or coincidental, the idea of the cursed tomb is iconic when talking about fantasy kingdoms and cultures based on ancient Egypt. To bring that kind of culture to life in all its richness and majesty in a world where magic and curses

most definitely are real requires delving more deeply into curses than the rather cursory treatment such magics have been given in the core Pathfinder rules. There are curses aplenty to be found elsewhere in the world, but here you will find curses that will warm any pharaoh's tired bones with mirth as they bring his enemies down to dusty doom.

Cursed Class Features

While GMs are encouraged to create their own past life profiles to suit their own campaigns, below are seven ready-to-play examples for GMs to insert into their games.

Cursologist (Occultist Archetype)

All occultists are familiar with the magical resonances inherent in everyday objects as well as those with an impressive lineage, but there are those who seek the peculiar vibrations of cursed objects, especially those lingering relics of ancient civilizations that bring doom to would-be treasure hunters plundering the tombs of an elder race.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A cursologist is not proficient with medium armor or shields (except bucklers).

Cursed Item Detection: A cursologist gains Cursed Item Detection[PC:DH] as a bonus feat.

Archaeologist (Ex): At 2nd level, a cursologist's study of ancient lands and places and the relics they leave behind grants him a bonus equal to 1/2 his occultist level on Knowledge (history) checks. This bonus also applies on Appraise and Knowledge (engineering) checks made to examine objects or structures at least 100 years old. This replaces magic item skill.

Curse Crafter (Su): At 5th level, a cursologist gains Craft Wondrous Item as a bonus feat; however, he takes a -5 penalty on all skill rolls related to crafting magic items unless he is intentionally creating a cursed item whose curse has a tangible game effect. At 8th level and every 3 levels thereafter, the cursologist may choose to learn a different item crafting feat in place of Craft Wondrous Item; in effect, he loses the old feat in exchange for the new one. The penalty for crafting non-cursed items remains regardless of which type of item he creates. This replaces aura sight.

Accursed Implement (Su): At 5th level, a cursologist can use choose a cursed item he is wearing or wielding as one of his implements, and may expend one of his focus powers for that implement to temporarily suppress the effect of the item's curse for him. This does not alter any effects the cursed item may have on other creatures, nor does it allow the cursologist to remove a cursed item from another creature.

If a cursologist chooses any spells with the curse descriptor as implement spells with his accursed implement, those spells take effect at +1 caster level and the save DC is increased by 1. At 7th level, a cursologist may select *bestow curse* as one of his implement spells for that implement regardless of the implement's school. At 13th level, he may select *major curse* as one of his implement spells regardless of the implement's school.

This replaces the focus power normally gained at 5th level.

Curse Cleansing (Su): At 8th level, a cursologist learns how to counteract most curses through the use of fetishes, incantations, and inscriptions cobbled together from books of ancient wisdom and fragmentary formulae. Performing a curse cleanse takes 1 minute and requires the cursologist to expend 1 point of mental focus (either generic focus or focus from any one of his implements). Once completed, the cleansing ritual functions as *remove curse* using the cursologist's caster level.

At 12th level, the effect of the cursologist's cleansing affects the target as *break enchantment* rather than as *remove curse*.

Before attempting curse cleansing, a cursologist can attempt a Knowledge (arcana) check against a DC of 10 + the curse's save DC to learn if there is a particular substance or item that is especially effective against the curse in question. If that substance can be acquired, the cursologist gains a +2 circumstance bonus on his caster level for the purpose of the curse cleansing. In the case of powerful curses, such as those created with a *major curse* spell, such components may be costly, but typical curses may have inexpensive items that enhance the cursologist's cleansing. Locating such components requires 1d4 hours of searching and a successful DC 10 Diplomacy check in a metropolis, with the DC increasing by 3 for size of a settlement smaller than a metropolis: large city, small city, large town, small town, village, hamlet, thorp, wilderness.

This replaces magic circles.

Ephemeral Curse (Ex): At 8th level, a cursologist learns how to duplicate the effect of one oracle curse^APG, functioning as an oracle 3 levels lower than her occultist level. He may activate this curse as a standard action and can use it for a number of minutes per day equal to his occultist level. This duration need not be continuous but must be spent in 1-minute increments. A cursologist adds *oracle's burden*^APG to his list of spells known, but he can cast this spell only while his curse is active.

At 12th level and every 4 levels thereafter, a cursologist learns a new oracle's curse, and when he triggers this ability he can manifest any oracle's curse that he knows.

At 16th level, he can activate two oracle curses simultaneously as a standard action for a number of minutes per day equal to his occultist level. If he adopts only a single curse, he can use that curse for a number of hours per day equal to his occultist level.

This replaces outside contact.

Counter-Curse (Su): At 12th level, when a cursologist fails a saving throw against a curse effect he can expend 1 point of mental focus to reroll the saving throw. This does not require an action. If an ally within 30 feet fails a saving throw against a curse effect, as an immediate action the cursologist can expend 1 point of mental focus to grant a bonus equal to his Intelligence modifier on that ally's saving throw. This replaces binding circles.

Swift Cleansing (Su): At 16th level, a cursologist can purge curses very rapidly, performing a curse cleansing as a full-round action. This replaces fast circles.

Priest of the Old Ways (Cleric Archetype)

The relationship between mortals and the divine has changed throughout the centuries, and no one embodies this more than the priest of the old ways. These clerics are rare, as the old ways are mostly forgotten, but they possess a strange and ancient power.

Apply Energy (Su) A priest of the old ways does not channel energy in a burst, but rather channels it directly from herself to another individual through physical contact (generally kissing, licking, or spitting upon the target, although other forms of touching, such as laying hands upon the target, can suffice). If the priest of the old ways is applying energy to harm a creature, she must succeed on a melee touch attack to affect them. This otherwise functions as the channel energy class feature, except that the amount of damage healed or inflicted at 1st level is 1d10, and it increases by 1d10 at 3rd level and every two levels thereafter. A priest of the old ways does not need to present a holy symbol when using apply energy.

Abilities that allow channel energy to be used in unusual ways, such as the Turn Undead feat, can be used in conjunction with apply energy, but still affect only a single touched creature.

This ability modifies the channel energy class feature.

Oral Tradition (Ex) The magic wielded by a priest of the old ways comes from the mouth and the spoken word, not from the hands. The priest of the old ways ignores the somatic components of spells that she casts., as though those spells were affected by the Still Spell feat. However, she must use verbal components for each spell she casts, even if it would not otherwise require them. As such, she gains no benefit from the Silent Spell feat. Additionally, any spell failure chance relating to verbal components (such as that imposed by the deafened condition) are doubled for the priest of the old ways.

Pragmatic Magic A priest of the old ways knows that no magic is inherently good or evil, and that it is how it is used that counts. Whenever she casts a spell with an alignment descriptor (chaotic, evil, good, or lawful), she treats it as though it did not have that descriptor. In addition to changing how the spell affects certain creatures, objects, and spells, this allows the priest of the old ways to cast any spell, even if its normal alignment descriptor would prevent her from being able to cast it.

Rite of Encirclement (Sp) Beginning at 6th level, by expending two uses of apply energy and tracing a circle three times around an area of at least 5 feet in diameter, a priest of the old ways can erect a magical barrier that blocks magic from entering or leaving the encircled area, effectively stopping line of effect for spells as though it were a solid barrier. The effect last for one hour per class level, or until dispelled, and can be detected with a *detect magic* spell.

Create Curse Vessel (Su) Beginning at 12th level, a priest of the old ways can create vessels with which to deliver curses from far away. By spending eight hours sculpting or crafting a clay vessel, either in the form of a pot or in the form of a statuette, and by incorporating in its design both the carved name of the curse's recipient and some piece of the recipient (such as a bit of fingernail, some hairs, or an object that belonged to them), the priest of the old ways can create a vessel that allows her to deliver curse spells to her intended victim from a range. Any spell with the curse descriptor can be cast on the curse vessel as though it were the creature the vessel is associated with, and the spell then affects that creature regardless of range, provided that they are both on the same plane of existence. When a spell is cast in this way, its saving throw DC is reduced by 2. This effect applies to spells cast by other characters on the curse vessel, as well.

Bob Greyvenstein

The priest of the old ways must expend three uses of apply energy whenever she creates a curse vessel, and as long as the curse vessel is not destroyed, it counts against her daily uses of apply energy each day thereafter. Destroying a curse vessel does not end any curse effects currently in place, but does prevent it from being used to deliver subsequent curses. Once a curse vessel has been destroyed, the piece of the target that was incorporated into it is destroyed as well, and cannot be recovered.

Cursed Items

The crafting of cursed items in the official Pathfinder rules is a generally unintentional event, something that occurs as a result of failed efforts to craft genuine magical items. Cursed items generally appear to work normally to the creature wearing or wielding them and even to other observers, but in the heat of battle they may have no effect at all in the case of a *delusion* effect, or may create magical misfires, target random creatures, or have other harmful side effects or require some expense, effort, or sacrifice in order to function properly.

Cursed items may have some redeeming features, or they may be wholly useless or dangerous to the wielder or wearer and her allies.

Cursed Versions of Normal Items: Oftentimes a cursed item does work normally, at least some of the time. Items with intermittent functioning are described in the Cursed Items section of the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook* and *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Equipment*, and include items that are simply unreliable (with a 5% chance of failing to work each time it is activated), being dependent on specific environmental factors (like temperature, exposure to sunlight, proximity to certain types of creatures, and so on), or activating on its own at random, uncontrolled intervals, requiring some behavior or characteristic in its wielder, or having a drawback that accompanies its beneficial effect. Intelligent items can act similarly to cursed items as well, if created with a disagreeable personality and enough ego to force their wielder to kowtow to its wishes.

Intentionally Cursed Items: While cursed items are usually created by mistake, a cruel or crafty spellcaster could choose to create cursed items on purpose, using the same rules for creating ordinary magic items in terms of skill, feat, and spell requirements, but in addition the crafter must include *bestow curse* or *major curse* as a spell requirement. If using *major curse* to implant a curse effect that would not normally require it, the crafter gains a +4 bonus on caster level or skill checks that day related to crafting the cursed item.

A GM might allow PCs to construct specific cursed items, such as a *ring of clumsiness* or *armor of arrow attraction,* though she should be careful to restrict or prohibit the creation of items with deadly or unavoidable effects, such as *bags of devouring* and *dust of sneezing and choking.* Many such items exist in the game as a legacy of earlier editions and are intended as hazards to be overcome, not as unbeatable weapons in the hands of the PCs.

Cost of Crafting Cursed Items: In general, crafting a cursed version of a magic item is much cheaper than creating a real item. The cost of creating specific cursed items, such as those listed in **Table 15-28: Specific Cursed Items** in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*, need to be calculated on a case-by-case basis, depending on the item's actual effect (in the case of cursed items with potentially useful curses) and the severity of the drawbacks of the item. The cost to create items with the following curse effects is reduced as follows:

Delusion: The cost is reduced 90%.

Dependent: The cost to create an item with a specific dependency is reduced by 20%, though this may be adjusted if the dependency that allows its function is very common or very rare. At the GM's option, a dependency that is irrelevant for the purpose of the campaign, such as items that function only out of direct sunlight for a campaign that takes place wholly underground or under the sea, may not reduce the item's cost at all.

Drawbacks or Requirements: The reduction in cost depends on the severity of the drawbacks or requirements of the curse.

- Those that have no statistical impact or are purely cosmetic do not affect the item's cost.
- The cost is reduced by 10% for items with a minor drawback or requirement, such as increased need for sleep, changing gender, or having to worship a particular deity or have a minimum number of ranks in a particular skill.
- The cost is reduced by 30% for harmful or costly drawbacks or requirements, such as dealing ability damage to the wielder, forcing her to change alignment, or requiring her to perform a quest to activate the item or sacrifice wealth to it.
- The cost is reduced by 50% for major drawbacks or requirements such as gaining negative levels or sacrificing sentient creatures to power the item.

Intermittent/Uncontrolled: The cost to create items that function intermittently or that have occasional uncontrolled activations is reduced by 10%.

Opposite Effect or Target: The cost is reduced by 50%.

Cursing Objects with Curse Spells: At the GM's option, *bestow curse* and *major curse* spells can be used to imbue a curse in an item. The target item must be touched, and if the target item is magical the caster must succeed on a caster level check against a DC of 15 + the item's caster level or the curse fails to take hold. If the item is magical or is an attended object, it gains a saving throw to resist the curse. If the item fails (or is not allowed) a save, roll on **Table 6-2: Common Item Curses** in *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Equipment*; the item gains that curse for a number of days equal to the caster level of the *bestow curse* spell.

If using *major curse,* the caster gains a +4 bonus on caster level checks to overcome a magic item's caster level, and if the save is failed (or not allowed), and the caster may add or subtract her caster level from percentile rolls to determine the type of curse.

Rider Curses: A rider curse is a curse that does not affect the functioning of the associated item but instead applies an independent curse effect that is either harmful to the wearer or wielder or that allows the creator of the item (or, at the GM's option, other creatures it designates) the ability to locate, influence, or otherwise affect the wearer or wielder of the item or those nearby. Adding a rider curse to an item works like creating a magic item except as otherwise noted. Crafting the rider curse is separate from crafting the item itself, and in addition to any other requirements listed below it requires the same kind of item creation feat that was needed to craft the item in the first place. A spellcaster can imbue a rider curse in an item she did not create.

FLAWED FACADE	PRICE 100 GP

Slot —	CL 1st	Weight —

Aura faint illusion

The item's apparent value is increased by 1d10 x 100 gp and the DC of Appraise checks to determine the item's true value is increased by 5. The creator can apply this curse more than once to the same item, up to a maximum number of once per 2 caster levels. Its effects stack.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS	COST 50 GP

bestow curse, disguise self

HONEYED ALLURE   PRICE 500 GP

Slot —   **CL** 5th   **Weight** —

Aura faint enchantment

A creature handling or examining this object for 1 full round is captivated by it and consumed with a desire to wear or wield it (DC 14 Will negates). She always chooses to employ that item rather than another item that uses the same body slot. If it is a wielded item that does not require both hands to wield, she may use her other hand for anything she wishes and if wielding two weapons may choose which is her primary weapon.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS   COST 250 GP

beguiling gift[APG], *bestow curse*

INFLEXIBLE FATE   PRICE 5,000 GP

Slot —   **CL** 10th   **Weight** —

Aura moderate conjuration and transmutation

This item bonds itself to a creature who wears or wields it and cannot be gotten rid of by physical destruction unless its curse is first removed. If destroyed by any means, it reappears intact and undamaged the next time the wearer or wielder is in combat. If a worn item, it reappears on the target, worn in the appropriate body slot; any other item worn in that slot is displaced into a random pocket, pouch, pack, or other container (including extradimensional containers) on the wearer's person. If no suitable space large enough to contain the displaced item exists on the wearer's person, the displaced item falls to the ground in the wearer's space. If the cursed item is a wielded item, whenever the cursed attempts to draw an item of the same type (e.g., weapon, shield, rod, staff, wand, wondrous item) he draws the cursed item appears in his hand instead, even if the cursed weapon has been destroyed, disarmed, dropped, or stolen. Drawing the cursed item uses the normal action required to draw an item of its type. If the cursed item is a weapon and the cursed creature draws two weapons, the cursed weapon is always treated as his primary weapon and he may not make attacks with his secondary weapon unless he first attacks with the cursed weapon.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS   COST 2,500 GP

bestow curse, make whole, teleport

MEMORY CHARM, LESSER   PRICE 500 GP

Slot —   **CL** 5th   **Weight** —

Aura faint enchantment

A creature acquiring this object forgets the person or place from which she acquired it within 1d6 rounds after she no longer has line of sight to that creature or location. A successful DC 14 Will negates this effect; however, for every 24 hours that pass without seeing the creature or location where the items was acquired, a new saving throw is required to avoid forgetting that person or place.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS   COST 250 GP

bestow curse, memory lapse[APG]

MEMORY CHARM, GREATER   PRICE 4,000 GP

Slot —   **CL** 10th   **Weight** —

Aura moderate enchantment

A *greater memory charm* functions as a *lesser memory charm* but implants a false memory in place of the creature's true memory of acquiring the item, rather than simply causing her to forget the item's provenance (DC 16 Will negates).

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS   COST 2,000 GP

bestow curse, modify memory

OBSESSIVE ALLURE   PRICE 3,000 GP

Slot —   **CL** 8th   **Weight** —

Aura moderate enchantment

This functions as *honeyed allure* (DC 16 Will negates). In addition, the wearer or wielder of the object becomes paranoid about losing the item and afraid of it being damaged or stolen. He takes elaborate precautions to safeguard it and is extremely suspicious of anyone commenting on his odd behavior or his precious item, responding to them as if targeted with *malicious spite*[UM] (DC 16 Will negates).

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS   COST 1,500 GP

beguiling gift[APG], *bestow curse, malicious spite*[UM]

SPYING CURSE — PRICE 4,000 GP

Slot — **CL** 10th **Weight** —

Aura moderate divination

As long as this object is held, worn, or carried by a living creature (including in an extradimensional space), the creator can concentrate for 1 minute in order to scry (as *scrying*) upon that creature. The target gains no saving throw against this *scrying*, and the creator can observe him for up to 10 rounds per day. These rounds need not be consecutive. Whenever the creator is scrying on the target, she also learns his direction, distance, and general condition.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS — COST 2,000 GP

bestow curse, scrying, status

TRACKING BEACON — PRICE 1,000 GP

Slot — **CL** 5th **Weight** —

Aura faint divination

The creator can use *locate object* upon any device with this enhancement for 5 minutes per day; this duration need not be continuous but must be used in 1-minute increments.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS — COST 500 GP

bestow curse, locate object

UNSPEAKABLE FORBIDDANCE — PRICE 6,600 GP

Slot — **CL** 11th **Weight** —

Aura moderate enchantment

A creature that wears or wields this item is compelled not to speak, write, communicate, or even think the name of the item's creator until the curse is removed. Each time the cursed creature answers a question or provides information or clues or otherwise alludes to the creator's identity, the cursed creature must succeed at a DC 19 Will save or suffer the same ill effects as if she had failed to comply with a *geas/quest* or *mark of justice* spell (depending on which spell was used in the item's creation).

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS — COST 3,300 GP

bestow curse, geas/quest or mark of justice

Cursed Places

Not all curses are placed on magic items, or cast directly on their recipient. In stories and folklore involving curses, it is quite common for curses to be placed on specific locations, whether to protect those places from those who would despoil them (such as the infamous curses said to be placed on ancient Egyptian tombs), or as a means of punishing those who regularly use the location anyway (such as making a farmer's fields turn barren and unable to produce crops). Although cursing a location is somewhat less precise than cursing an individual, it allows the curse to be delivered to multiple recipients, over great periods of time, and is perfect for spellcasters who do not allow the possibility of unintended harmful fallout from their magic get in the way of their magical wrath.

Location-Based Curse Rules

These location-based curses are similar to haunts, as presented in *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game: GameMastery Guide*, but rather than coming from the lingering malevolence of a restless spirit, they come from powerful and spiteful magic. As a result, they function somewhat differently. The following section outlines the differences between location-based curses and standard haunts.

Combat: Like a haunt, when a location-based curse is triggered, its effects manifest at initiative rank 10 in a surprise round, and characters in the curse's proximity can attempt to notice it at the start of the surprise round by making a notice check. Similar to haunts, a location-based curse can sometimes be fooled by effects such as *invisibility*, but *hide from undead* does not affect them.

Descriptors: Unlike a haunt, the effects of location-based curses are not mind-affecting or fear effects, unless they replicate spell effects that otherwise would be, or the individual curse's description states that they are.

Destruction: Not all location-based curses have specific actions that can permanently destroy them, and for location-based curses, especially those with a release entry. Unless otherwise stated, location-based curses of CR 5 or less can be permanently

removed with *remove curse*, those of CR 10 or less can be permanently removed with *break enchantment*, those of CR 15 or less can be permanently removed with *limited wish*, and those of CR 20 or less can be removed with *miracle* or *wish*. This must be done at the cursed location, and ends any ongoing effects still suffered by victims of the curse.

Detection: Because location-based curses are not tied to undead spirits in any way, and are purely magical effects, they cannot be detected with *detect undead*, but they can be detected with *detect magic*, which also shows the borders of the area that the location-based curse occupies. A successful Spellcraft check (DC 10 + the location-based curse's CR) reveals to the caster that the effect is harmful or malicious in some way, but does not provide further details. For every 5 points by which the result of the Spellcraft check exceeds the DC, the caster can identify one of the following aspects of the location-based curse: trigger, effect, or release.

Effect and Release: Location-based curses often have effects that are long-lasting and persist even after the curse has ceased manifesting, or even been neutralized. If so, this will be stated in the curse's effect, and the curse will have a release entry, which describes the actions necessary to end the curse's effect. For some curses, performing this action will free all affected creatures, while for others, only the character that performed the action is released from the curse. This is described in the curse's individual description. Unless the curse's individual description indicates to the contrary, the effects of the curse can still be removed by casting *remove curse* or similar magic on the afflicted creature. The restrictions described under destruction for what spells will work on curses of what CR apply to this as well.

Neutralization: Like haunts, a location-based curse reduced to 0 hit points is neutralized, but not destroyed. This functions identically to haunts, with the curse being unable to manifest again until it successfully resets.

Trigger: Location-based curses are often far more discriminating in what sorts of actions must be taken in order to trigger their effects than haunts are. While location-based curses can be triggered by mere proximity, most of the time a specific action must be

taken in order to trigger location-based curses. Also, in some cases, the curse can only be triggered by creatures meeting a certain description, such as elves, women, members of a certain nationality, and so on. All information regarding how the curse is triggered is found in the trigger entry.

Weaknesses: Location-based curses can be damaged on the round in which they manifest, but unlike haunts, they are not always harmed by positive energy, instead having a wide variety of vulnerabilities that vary from curse to curse. Any creature that succeeds on its check to notice the curse by 5 or more also notices subtle details in its manifestation that give clues to what actions can be taken to damage it, as described in the individual curse's description. Alternatively, a *dispel magic* spell can always be used to damage a curse, inflicting 1d6 points of damage per two caster levels to the curse.

CREATING LOCATION-BASED CURSES

Location-based curses follow the same rules for construction as haunts, with the following adjustments.

FEATURE TYPE	CR MODIFIER
Unique destruction requirements	+1–2
Effect persists after curse stops manifesting	+2
Curse can be damaged in multiple ways, or in ways that are available to characters of all classes	–1

EXAMPLE TRIGGERS	CR MODIFIER
Proximity	+0
Touching or handling a specific object	–1
Only affects members of a specific race, class, etc.	–1

RELEASE CONDITIONS	CR MODIFIER
Can be performed by anyone with materials at the cursed location	–2
Is costly or requires sacrifice to perform	+1
Requires access to specific items or individuals that are difficult to find	+1

SAMPLE LOCATION-BASED CURSES

The following location-based curses serve as examples from which you can create your own.

CURSE OF ILL EASE   CR 1

XP 400

N persistent location-based curse

Caster Level 1st

Notice Perception DC 15 (to catch a glimpse of a stern, disapproving face watching you from the corner of your eye)

hp 2; **Weaknesses** solemnly offering a word of respect to the ones who laid the curse inflicts 1d2 points of damage to the curse; expending a spell of 2nd level or higher that grants a morale bonus automatically neutralizes it.

Trigger proximity; **Reset** 1 day

EFFECT

A foreboding sense of ill ease affects those within the area of this curse. Creatures in the curse's area take a –2 morale penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, ability checks, and damage rolls. Additionally, whenever such a creature rolls a natural 20 on an attack roll, saving throw, skill check, or ability check, it is treated as a natural 1, instead. The effect ends when the character leaves the curse's area.

DESTRUCTION

In addition to the standard means of destroying a location-based curse, a curse of ill ease is tied to a specific object, usually a bust or statue depicting the curse's creator, or an authority figure the curse's creator respected. Destroying this object destroys the curse.

THIEF'S BRAND   CR 3

XP 800

LN location-based curse

Caster Level 2nd

Notice Perception DC 15 (to notice a red glow and the sound of sizzling flesh)

hp 6; **Weaknesses** susceptible to cold damage and spells or effects with the chaotic descriptor

Trigger the curse is triggered by taking any item that the creature does not own while within the curse's area; **Reset** 1 day

EFFECT

A spectral branding iron manifests in the air, burning an angry red, and flies towards the creature that triggered the curse. Treat this as a melee attack with a +4 bonus, which deals 2d6+1 points of fire damage on a hit. The damage inflicted by this curse cannot be healed until the character is released from the curse, nor can the brand be removed. As long as the brand is in place, all lawful characters have their starting attitude towards the branded character reduced by one step.

RELEASE

The cursed character must return the stolen item to where it was found, and must confess the theft to a legitimate authority (such as the owner of the item, if applicable, or the local law enforcement, etc.). This lifts the curse for the character who performs the action only.

POOL OF THIRST   CR 5

XP 1,600

NE location-based curse

Caster Level 5th

Notice Perception DC 25 (a vision of a blasted grey landscape in the pool's water)

hp 10; **Weakness** any spell with the water descriptor deals 1d4 points of damage per 2 caster levels to the curse

Trigger the curse is triggered by drinking from the pool; **Reset** 1 day

EFFECT

The pool drains moisture from everything near it, forcing each living creature within 30 feet to succeed on a DC 14 Will save or be affected as though by the spell cup of dustAPG, which lasts for 5 days.

RELEASE

Any character that inflicts at least 5 points of piercing or slashing damage to themselves and spills their blood in the pool is released from the curse's effects.

CURSE OF FLOWING BLOOD   CR 7

XP 3,200

CE persistent location-based curse

Caster Level 7th

Notice Perception DC 25 (a vision of every surface in the area coated in dried blood)

hp 31; **Weakness** susceptible to positive energy, whenever a creature heals 1 or more hit points within the curse's area, the curse suffers 1d4 points of damage;

Trigger proximity; **Reset** 1 hour

EFFECT

Whenever a creature in the curse's area suffers damage, their wounds do not close, and they take an amount of bleed damage equal to 1/5 the damage suffered, rounded down (minimum 1). Each round, on the curse's initiative, each creature in its area suffers 5 points of damage.

RELEASE

Any character that willfully inflicts at least 5 points of damage to herself while in the curse's area and verbally offers up her blood as an offering is immune to the curse's effects.

PUPPETMASTER'S CURSE   CR 9

XP 6,400

LE location-based curse

Caster Level 9th

Notice Perception DC 25 (to notice a skein of spectral red strings descending upon you)

hp 18; **Weaknesses** expending any spell with the mind-affecting descriptor inflicts 1d3 points of damage per spell level to the curse.

Trigger the curse is triggered by performing any blasphemous or disrespectful act in the curse's area; **Reset** 1 day

EFFECT

A web of spectral red strings descends upon all creatures in the curse's area. Each creature must succeed on a Will save (DC 17) or be affected as though by the spell suggestion. The exact nature of the suggestion is determined when the curse is created, and cannot later be changed, but the effect persists after the curse ceases to manifest (to the spell's normal duration). Some common suggestions include: leave this place and do not return (counts as very reasonable), taking some action that will set off a trap or a more sinister curse, attacking the one who triggered the curse, or performing some sort of embarrassing activity (such as acting like a chicken).

RELEASE

There are no special means of release from this curse.

CURSE OF AGING   CR 11

XP 12,800

CE persistent location-based curse

Caster Level 11th

Notice Perception DC 25 (to gain a brief vision of yourself as a withered and ancient corpse)

hp 49; **Weaknesses** susceptible to positive energy

Trigger proximity; **Reset** 1 hour

EFFECT

The curse drains the life force from creatures in the area, effectively aging them. Each round, on the curse's initiative, each creature in the curse's area must succeed on a DC 19 Fortitude save or be permanently aged 1d6 years. Races that normally reach venerable age between age 150 and age 300 age 1d10 years, instead, and races that normally reach venerable age sometime after 300 age 2d10 years, instead.

DESTRUCTION

A special ritual can be performed on the site of the curse during a new moon in order to destroy it and release all of the stolen life energy. Doing so takes 1 hour, and requires that the ones performing the ritual succeed on at least three out of five Spellcraft checks (DC 40). Success permanently destroys the curse and causes all characters within 1 mile of the cursed site to be restored to their normal age. Any stored energy from victims not within this area, or who have since died, is wasted.

SWINELORD'S CURSE   CR 13

XP 25,600

N location-based curse

Caster Level 13th

Notice Perception DC 30 (to hear the malevolent cries of hundreds of tiny animals)

hp 26; **Weaknesses** Susceptible to fire damage.

Trigger taking any hostile action against any animals within the curse's area triggers the curse; **Reset** 1d4 rounds

EFFECT

Each creature within the curse's area that harmed an animal in the past minute must succeed on a DC 20 Fortitude save or be transformed into a pig, as though by the spell baleful polymorph. Unlike baleful polymorph, the creature does not need to immediately make a Will save in order to avoid losing its abilities and sense of identity. Instead, the creature must make this saving throw each time it leaves the curse's area. Even if the creature fails this save, its abilities and mental faculties return automatically if it ever enters the curse's area again (although if it leaves again, it must make a new saving throw).

RELEASE

If a creature affected by this curse is touched by an Intelligent creature (one with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher) which eats and has not eaten any meat for the past week, the affected creature is immediately released from the curse's effects.

CURSE OF STONE   CR 15

XP 51,200

N persistent location-based curse

Caster Level 15th

Notice Perception DC 35 (to see screaming and agonized faces in the stonework of the room)

hp 67; **Weaknesses** Susceptible to all forms of damage made against any stone in the curse's area (the stone's hardness applies as normal); *soften earth and stone*, *transmute rock to mud*, and similar spells inflict 1d6 points of damage per spell level.

Trigger proximity; **Reset** 1 hour

EFFECT

Each round on the curse's initiative, each creature within the curse's area takes 1d4 points of Dexterity damage (DC 22 Fortitude negates) as its body slowly begins to turn to stone. If a creature takes 4 or more points of Dexterity damage, its speed is reduced by 10 feet and it gains hardness 1. For every 2 points of Dexterity damage beyond that, the creature's speed is reduced by an additional 5 feet, and its hardness increases by 1 (to a maximum hardness of 8). A creature whose Dexterity damage equals or exceeds its Dexterity score is petrified. Dexterity damage or petrification effects persist even if the curse is neutralized, though they can be healed or reversed as normal.

RELEASE

If a creature affected by this curse is washed under the light of a full moon with water from a pool in which a nymph has swam, that creature is released from the curse.

IMPENDING DOOM   CR 17

XP 102,400

NE location-based curse

Caster Level 17th

Notice Perception DC 35 (to gain a brief vision of your own funeral)

hp 34; **Weaknesses** Susceptible to positive energy

Trigger proximity; **Reset** 1 hour

EFFECT

Each creature in the curse's area must succeed on a DC 24 Will save or be cursed with impending doom. Affected creatures do not heal naturally, and magical attempts to heal them fail unless the caster succeeds on a DC 28 caster level check. Additionally, each time the affected creature rests, it suffers 1 point of damage per Hit Dice it possesses. If the creature is a spellcaster, it must succeed on a DC 24 Will save each day after resting or be unable to prepare spells or regain spell slots. Finally, the creature suffers a −4 penalty on saving throws made to resist death effects, loses any immunity to death effects it may possess, and cannot gain immunity to death effects. These effects persist even if the curse is neutralized.

RELEASE

There are no special means of release from this curse.

New Curses

The *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook* presents a small selection of curses, just half a dozen, including some of the most iconic curses in folklore in mummy rot and lycanthropy. However, in a fantasy campaign we have an enormous breadth and depth of curses to explore from literary and mythological sources even before we begin inventing curses from whole cloth. Of course, many things called curses in myth and legend would simply be considered spells in a magic-rich fantasy game, or monstrous abilities like the ability of vampires to create spawn (rather than calling it the "curse of vampirism"). Even so, there is ample room for new curses in the campaign, as described in this section.

Curses such as these can be delivered by means of the *bestow curse* spell, rather than invoking the spell's normal effect. The initial save DC is based on the spell itself, but subsequent saves use the base save DC of the curse instead. Some curses described herein are marked with the (major) descriptor, indicating that the caster must use *major curse*^{UM} in order to deliver that curse effect to the target.

Earthmother's Embrace

Type curse; **Save** Fortitude DC 16

Frequency see text

The target is tied to the raw primal energies that reside within the earth itself, connecting its life force to the beating heart of the planet. However, while this connection can bring life and health, it also brings dependence upon the touch of mother earth. As long as the target's bare feet are in contact with an earth or stone surface, he gains a +2 bonus to his Strength score and his CMB and CMD and also gains fast healing 1; these are doubled if the target is prone. If the target is wearing boots or walking or climbing on a structure or large solid object attached to the ground, such as a building or tree, he does not gain these benefits but suffers no ill effects.

Whenever the target ends his turn not in contact with the ground or a solidly rooted object, however, such as when swimming, flying, or on a ship, or if a creature that has pinned the target chooses to hold it off the ground, the target takes 1d4 points of nonlethal damage and becomes fatigued. A successful save against the curse's DC halves damage and negates fatigue. A failed save when already fatigued leads to exhaustion as normal.

Grave Geromancy

Type curse, spellblight (major); **Save** Will DC 17

Frequency 1/day; see text

The target's ability to use magic is impaired and twisted, as tapping into the weave of magical energies in the world burns away the target's future lifespan and draws him closer to death. The target is affected as a curse of the ages^{CRB}, but during any day in which he does not cast a spell he is not required to make the usual daily saving throw to avoid aging. However, whenever he casts a spell of 2nd level or higher he must make an additional saving throw with a penalty equal to one-half the level of the spell or age an additional year. If this aging causes the target to enter a new age category, he takes all applicable penalties for aging but gains no benefits from his newly advanced age category.

Hourglass Eyes

Type curse; **Save** Will DC 16

Frequency see text

The target's eyes twisted and deformed, with pupils shaped like hourglasses. The appearance is eerie and strange to other living creatures, causing the target to take a -4 penalty on Diplomacy checks, though the target also gains a +2 bonus on Intimidate checks against creatures with fewer Hit Dice than her own.

In addition to this visual effect, the target perceives the passage of time slipping by with terrifying rapidity, seeing everything around him seemingly withering and decaying into dust in a nihilistic phantasmagoria. This distorts her sense of the true course of time, impairing her ability to successfully use divinations. Whenever a die roll is called for when casting a divination or using a divination effect, the target must roll twice and select the worse result. The target also takes a -2 penalty on saving throws against harmful emotion and fear effects and effects that cause fatigue or exhaustion, and the duration of such effects is increased by 50% against the target (or doubled for effects that specifically cause despair, hopelessness, or doubt).

Pariah's Exile

Type curse (major); **Save** Will DC 17

Frequency 1/day; see text

The target becomes an object of scorn, hatred, and ridicule by all creatures of its own type (and subtype, if a humanoid or outsider). All such creatures have a starting attitude of hostile towards the target, and creatures of the target's type (and subtype) charge the target twice the normal amount for all goods and services. If using the cost of living rules from Chapter 12 of the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*, those costs are likewise doubled if the target spends most of its time during that month in urban or rural areas where creatures of its type (and subtype) make up a majority or large minority of the population.

The DC of Diplomacy checks made by any creature to improve their attitude towards the target are increased by 5. The target takes a -10 penalty on its own Diplomacy checks made with creatures of its own type (and subtype), and such creatures take a -4 penalty on saving throws to resist mind-affecting effects that would compel them to harm, thwart, impede, or develop a negative attitude towards the target. This does not apply on saves vs. spells like *confusion* that might accidentally or incidentally induce a creature to harm the target, but apply to spells such as *lesser geas, malicious spite*UM*, murderous command*UM*, suggestion,* and *vengeful outrage*UM*, or to saves by a dominated creature to resist taking an action against their nature if that action is harmful or hostile to the target. Opposed Charisma checks to influence a charmed creature to behave in hostile or harmful fashion towards the target are made with a +4 bonus.

In addition, once per day when the target encounters a creature of his own type (and subtype), that target is affected 1d6 hours later as *malicious spite*UM (DC 17 Will negates), with its malice directed at the target of the curse. If the target encounters multiple creatures of its type (and subtype) during the day, choose randomly or select the creature who had the greatest amount of interaction with the target of the curse. This spell effect persists for as long as the affected creature encounters the target of the curse at least once per day, though if there is no contact for at least 24 hours the affected creature gains a new saving throw each day to end the effect, with a cumulative +2 bonus for each day after the first.

Special: This curse can be used to affect a creature's reactions with creatures of a different type or subtype, or at the GM's option a different group such as a nationality, ethnic group, religious sect, or other group. When used in this way, the DC of all saving throws related to the curse is reduced by 2 unless creatures of the target's type (and subtype) have a traditional enmity, such as dwarves and goblins.

Sand Stepper

Type curse; **Save** Will DC 14
Frequency immediate

The accursed creature leaves sandy footprints behind it wherever it goes. This reduces the DC of Survival checks to track the accursed creature by 10 unless already in sandy terrain, such as a desert or beach. In addition, whenever the accursed creature is walking on a natural surface, it treats that surface as soft, unstable sand. This causes all natural surfaces to be treated as difficult terrain, and the DC of Acrobatics checks made by the accursed creature by 5. In addition, the accursed creature takes a -4 penalty to its CMD against bull rush, drag, overrun, reposition, and trip combat maneuvers.

Shrouded Slumber

Type curse (major); **Save** Will DC 19
Frequency immediate

Shrouded lumber afflicts the accursed creature with crawling bands of dusty linen grave wrappings that begin winding around him whenever he is lying down. These wrappings are magically created, and they automatically wrap around the accursed creature. He gains the pinned condition when asleep, and is tormented by visions of ancient monoliths crumbling, clawing undead hands, and skittering scarabs. Upon awakening, the target is affected by *nightmare* (save DC equal to the curse's save DC) upon awakening, and is treated as pinned, requiring a successful DC 19 Strength check or successful grapple check against a CMD of 29.

These wrappings also appear whenever the accursed creature ends its turn prone. In this case, the wrappings are treated as an entrap special attack

An ally can cut the accursed creature's wrappings as well (hardness 5, hp 15); however, when this happens there is a 50% chance that a swarm of glittering scarab beetles erupts from the shrouds while the accursed creature remains asleep. This swarm is identical to an army ant swarm but does not harm the sleeping creature. The scarabs are magically created and disappear 1d4+1 rounds after they are created. Once the swarm is destroyed or disappears, the accursed creature awakens.

Sunbane

Type curse; **Save** Fortitude DC 16

Frequency 1/day; see text

Sunbane causes the target to become very sensitive to bright light, in particular to direct sunlight. This effect is relatively mild after the initial save is failed, with the target gaining the light sensitivity[B1] weakness and taking a -2 penalty on saving throws or Constitution checks to resist the harmful effects of a hot climate. The target also takes 1 point of nonlethal damage per hour of exposure to direct sunlight. This nonlethal damage cannot be cured naturally or magically until the target spends at least 1 hour out of the sun, and as long as any of this nonlethal damage remains the target takes a -2 penalty on saving throws against pain effects or effects that would cause her to become nauseated, sickened, staggered, or stunned.

As long as the target is not exposed to direct sunlight for more than 1 round, the curse does not worsen. However, each day on which the target is exposed to sunlight for longer than 1 round it must attempt a new saving throw to avoid increasing the severity of the curse.

A second failed save doubles the normal penalties for being dazzled in bright light and increases the penalty on saving throws and Constitution checks to resist the effects of a hot climate and causes the target to take 1 point of nonlethal damage per minute of exposure to sunlight, with additional harmful effects as above.

A third failed save causes the target to develop light blindness[B1] and to take to take 1 point of nonlethal damage per round of exposure to sunlight, with additional harmful effects as above.

A fourth failed save causes the target's skin to blister and burn each round she ends her turn in direct sunlight, dealing 1d3 points of Strength and Dexterity damage (DC 16 Fortitude negates) and causing her to become sickened with pain until all ability damage is healed. If this ability damage exceeds one-half her Strength and Dexterity score, she also is staggered until enough ability damage is healed to reduce it below one-half of either her Strength or Dexterity score.

A fifth failed save causes the target to become as sensitive to sunlight as a vampire, causing her to become automatically staggered on the first round of exposure and utterly destroyed on the second round of exposure if she cannot escape.

Ancient Curses

The Curses of the Pharaohs

Ancient Curses brings you a wealth of woe to unleash upon your campaign, allowing you to bring home the kind of supernatural suffering that will make your heroes weep and the mightiest pharaoh and his priests laugh. This book includes archetypes focused on ancient curses and extensive rules on creating cursed items, including an array of accursed abilities to bedevil the unlucky or unwary, as well as a full system of haunt-like cursed places, with sample location-based curses from CR 1 to CR 17. Add to this a ton of terrible new curses from sunbane and creeping calcification to shrouded slumber and hourglass eyes, and you've got a fantastic resource for bringing a delightful depth to the kinds of curses your PCs might encounter while plundering their way through the lost tombs of a fallen empire. Grab this 24-page Pathfinder accessory today and Make Your Game Legendary!

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