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# GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY:

## OCTOBER 2017





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# GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY: OCTOBER 2017

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*Featuring material from some of Raging Swan Press's newest products as well as classic releases of yesteryear, advice articles and material from Creighton's own Borderland of Adventure campaign, the GM's Monthly Miscellany series is a terrific free resource for the busy, time-crunched GM.*

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## SOURCES

As well as new, never seen before material from my own Borderland of Adventure campaign, this instalment of GM's Monthly Miscellany presents information from several Raging Swan Press products and advice articles including:

- **Places of Power: Forgotten Athenaeum** Richard Green
- **Village Backdrop: Farrav'n** Mike Welham.

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A lot has happened since I last wrote a foreword. We've had some extensive building works at Global HQ and they are finally finished! Just last week, I started the seemingly unending job of flat packing all our new furniture.

I'm now writing this in our new Global HQ at my new desk and I've got a good feeling for the weeks and months ahead. A lot of the challenge—I think—of focus and the creation of “deep work” is about creating an environment conducive to work. (And as an aside if you like to write or design you should read *Deep Work* by Cal Newport—it's a great book which will help

you write better and deeper content.) I think I've achieved this in Global HQ's design (even if the filing cabinet was an absolute swine to construct!)

In other marvellous news, by the time you read this my first Kindle book will be available. If you like odd or bizarre words, be sure to check our *Cool Words for Gamers* on Amazon!

### PATREON

You might be aware Raging Swan Press is now on Patreon. We signed up at the start of April 2015, and it's going rather marvellously. The thrust of our Patreon campaign is to be able to afford better rates of pay for our freelance game designers. As I'm sure you know, the economics of 3PP are notoriously tight, but Patreon gives us at Raging Swan Press a way to increase our freelancer rates. At time of writing, we've already massively increased our word rate to 11 cents a word, which gives me a warm, fuzzy feeling inside. We want to pay more, but to do that we need your help! If you sign up, you get our supplements earlier than normal and cheaper than normal. Even better, you can pledge what you want and cancel when you want. If you are interested in supporting us, check out [patreon.com/ragingswanpress](https://patreon.com/ragingswanpress) or head over to [patreon.com](https://patreon.com) and search for Raging Swan!

### THANK YOU!

In any event, I hope you enjoy the material in this GM's Monthly Miscellany, but more importantly I hope you find it useful and that it enhances your campaign.

If you've got any comments or questions about Raging Swan Press, I'd love to hear from you. You can contact me at [creighton@ragingswan.com](mailto:creighton@ragingswan.com).



### 3 JOLLY HANDY THINGS TO HAVE BEHIND YOUR GM SCREEN

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I'm a big fan of working smart not hard, I'm also a big fan of being prepared. I am a prepper GM! I've talked before about the kind of normal stuff I keep behind my GM screen and in my gaming kit. Along with these gaming basics, I also have several other things ready to go at a moment's notice. To save space, some or all of these things--depending on the situation--might actually be lurking on my iPad. Irrespective of whether they are in electronic or physical format, they've saved my bacon more than once!

#### DRESSING TABLES

It should come as no surprise I love dressing tables. I love how the small details can bring a dungeon (or whatever) alive. Dungeon dressing helps with the players' suspension of disbelief and can help build mood and verisimilitude.

Part of the reason I started writing the 20 Articles (available for free on Raging Swan's Free Resources page) was to inject more flavour to the adventure I was running at the time. I tailored the tables to the events and locales the party were encountering—I don't think they realized I was adding to the adventure. In any event, I always like to have a table or two behind my screen. (And, if you want to know what might be

coming up in my campaign, just check out the kind of articles we release!)

#### PREPARED ENCOUNTERS

Sometimes, the PCs go "off piste". When this happens, to give me time to think I often throw a prepared random encounter at them. This gives me time to think and can even help me "run out the clock" so I can spend the time between sessions preparing the areas they are moving into.

Pathfinder's mechanics are so complex that doing this of the cuff with anything but boring, bog standard monsters can be tricky. Having a stock of prepared encounters lets me run an exciting, flavourful combat. Hopefully, if I do it right, the players never realize I'm just playing for time.

#### PC NOTES

In much the same vein as the old Dungeon Masters Adventure Log, I like to have notes about the PCs behind the screen so I don't keep having to ask questions like, "What's your Perception modifier?" Having these notes, helps me run the session quickly and more efficiently.



## FARRAV'N AT A GLANCE

**Rulers:** Janndra Rav and Balt Rav

**Government:** Overlord

**Alignments:** NG, CG, N, CN

**Population:** 89 (72 gnolls, 6 humans, 8 half-orcs, 3 halflings)

**Notable Folk:** Garritt Rav (Scorpion Circus), Gerda Fulp (The Date Frond), Quent Sorren (Open Air Market)

**Languages:** Common, Gnoll

**Qualities:** Holy site, pious; **Disadvantages:** Worm-infested

**Corruption:** -1; **Crime:** -3; **Economy:** -1; **Law:** +1; **Lore:** +1; **Society:** -3

**Danger:** +10

## MARKETPLACE

**Resources & Industry:** Water, desert guides, trade goods

**Base Value:** 500 gp; **Purchase Limit:** 2,500 gp; **Spellcasting:** 6th (Janndra at location 9, Garritt at location 10); **Minor Items:** 2d4; **Medium Items:** 1d4; **Major Items** –

A group of ruthless gnolls control Shadescar Oasis, at one time the only place to get water and shelter in the Luminous Desert. The raiders extorted money from travellers and captured those appearing hapless or weak to be used as slaves (or food).

Nearly a decade ago, Jenndra Shadescar, one of the gnoll slavers, received a vision from the goddess Rav. The goddess promised Jenndra a place the gnolls could live in peace. However, the goddess required Jenndra and her followers to renounce their evil ways and accept Rav as their only deity. The gnoll, chafing at the harsh conditions at the oasis, was happy to comply. She awoke the next morning to find a set of golden armbands and a map etched on a silver scroll. Taking her closest compatriots ostensibly as a raiding party, she disappeared into a sandstorm summoned by Rav. When they did not return, the Shadescar tribe counted them as dead.

A dune field confronted the gnolls when they arrived at the promised location. Rav, through Janndra, commanded them to dig. After days of digging out tons of sand, water bubbled up from the great pit they had dug and pooled into a clean source of water. The gnolls planted dormant seeds they found nearby the water, and the seeds rapidly grew into full-sized date trees.

The gnolls now living in Farrav'n ("home of the Rav tribe") provide respite for travellers on the edge of desperation. Other than the occasional worm attacks, life is serene. However, the Shadescar raiders have grown suspicious about the lack of victims coming their way and reports of friendly gnoll guiding travellers. It is only a matter of time before they locate and attack Farrav'n.

## VILLAGE LORE

A PC making a Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local) check may know something about Farrav'n. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser result.

**DC 15:** The oasis village Farrav'n was founded by a gnoll priestess of the nature goddess Rav.

**DC 20:** A few non-gnolls live in the village and receive fair treatment from the gnoll residents. Anyone planning to live in Farrav'n must pledge loyalty to Rav.

**DC 25:** The gnolls are outcasts from a larger tribe which controls the nearby Shadescar oasis.

## VILLAGERS

**Appearance:** Gnoll villagers are serene and stand almost fully upright, allowing them to tower over most visitors. All gnolls bear a prominent brand displaying the palm tree representative of their goddess. Non-gnoll residents have weathered skin due to their time spent in the sun.

**Dress:** Clothing is loose for all inhabitants of Farrav'n. Most gnolls go shirtless, but wear loincloths out of courtesy to visitors. During ceremonies, hunting trips or in preparation for war, gnolls wear lightweight metal rings on their arms and legs for protection and to denote rank within the tribe.

**Nomenclature:** *male* Garth, Rolf, Vark; *female* Eeva, Parrdu, Zassa; *family* Fulp, Rav, Sorren.

## WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about Farrav'n and its surroundings. This takes 1d4 hours and requires a DC 10 check. A PC gains one additional rumour for each 5 points by which the check result exceeds DC 10. Use the table below, to determine which rumour(s) the PC learns.

D6	RUMOUR
1*	Make sure you travel in groups. These gnolls may seem friendly, but they devour wayward travellers.
2	Kreegan, the gnoll chieftain at Shadescar Oasis, is amassing an army to take Farrav'n by force.
3	The Desert Wanderers have recently lost two humans they were guiding through the desert, ruining their otherwise spotless record.
4	The gnolls' goddess, Rav, expects a non-gnoll sacrifice every summer solstice. Supposedly, the sacrifice is a volunteer or a criminal.
5*	Garritt is a spy for Kreegan and plans to unleash his scorpions on the village as a prelude to a larger attack.
6	Noticeable tension has developed between Janndra and Balt over the tribe's new path.

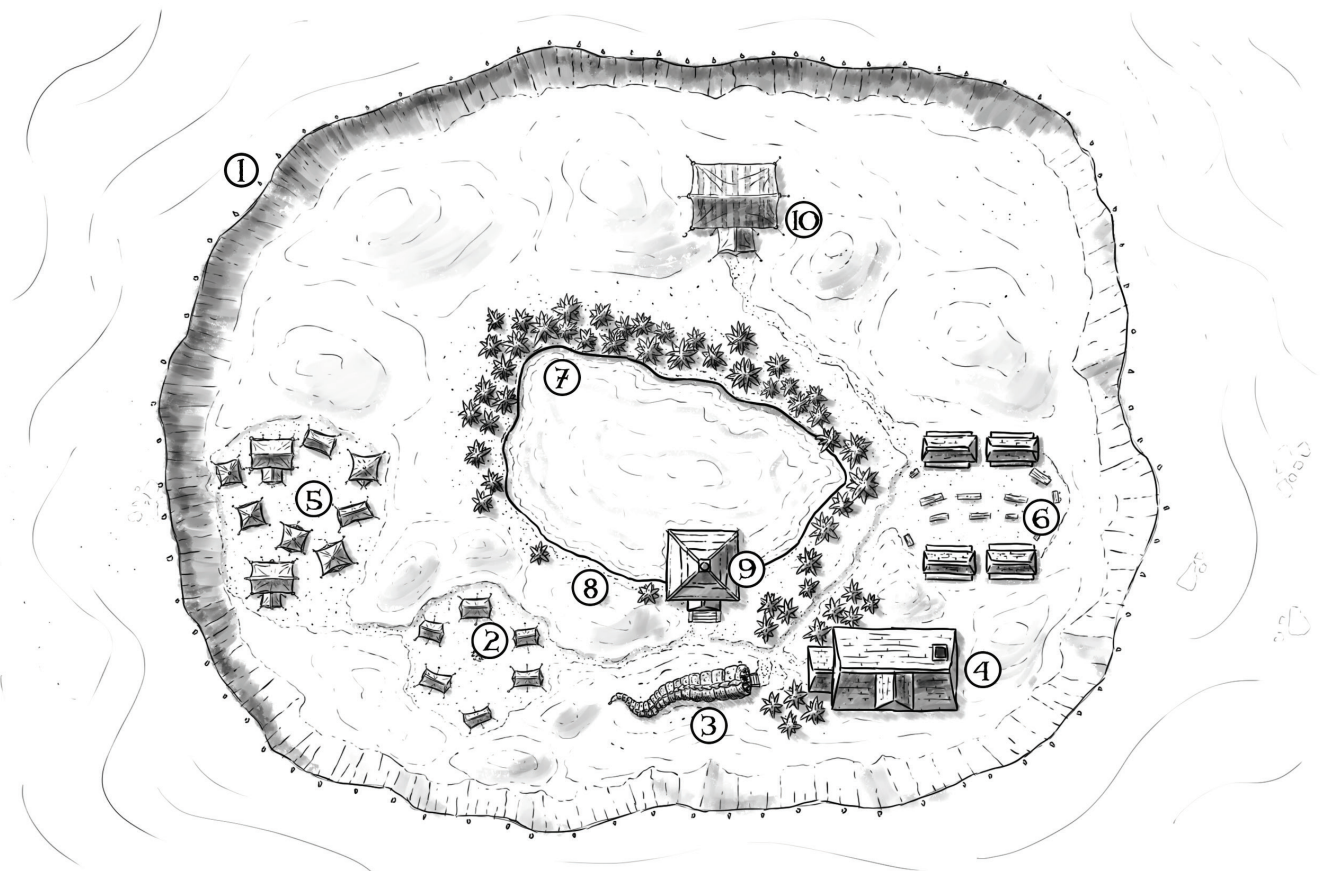
\*False rumour



## NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

Most of the village comprises the gnolls' tent-homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Sand's Edge:** A patrol watches the edge of the depression leading down into the village proper. The gnolls standing guard aren't here entirely for protection, because the sand itself acts as a trap for the unwary. Just inside the border, violet light shines from Rav's Blessings—staves preventing sandstorms from harming the village.
2. **Desert Wanderers:** Led by Balt Rav, the Desert Wanderers act as guides and trackers for those who can afford their services. The highly trained gnolls guard the village when they aren't otherwise engaged.
3. **The Tan Worm:** The Rav tribe killed this variant purple worm shortly after arriving. The worm's hollowed out, and reinforced, outer shell serves as barracks for the villagers and lodging for those who don't like sleeping in a tent.
4. **The Date Frond:** Contained within the only other permanent building besides the Wellspring Temple, this tavern offers a spiced date wine. Gerda Fulp, an affable halfling, and her sister manage the Date Frond.
5. **Visitors' Tents:** Within view of the Desert Wanderers, these accommodations of varying quality house travellers.
6. **Open Air Market:** As Farrav'n has grown, the village has become a trade hub where visitors can buy goods and supplies or trade desert artefacts. Quent Sorren, the first non-gnoll to settle in the village, oversees the market and appraises esoteric trade items.
7. **Oasis Public Access:** The gnolls opened a generous portion of the oasis for public use, but they regulate the amount of water individuals can take each day.
8. **Beasts of Burden:** Camels and other desert dwelling animals shelter between the public access and the temple.
9. **Wellspring Temple:** This temple to Rav welcomes all visitors and provides healing to those suffering from the effects of their desert travels. The tribe's spiritual leader, Janndra, spends most of her time here. The temple's inner sanctum is only accessible to gnolls who worship Rav.
10. **Scorpion Circus:** Garritt Rav discovered an affinity for scorpions and trains them to protect the tribe and act as entertainment for visitors to the village.



## FORGOTTEN ATHENAEUM AT A GLANCE

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**Ruler** Erasmus Spyridon

**Population** 19 (15 humans, 1 dwarf, 2 half-elves, 1 halfling)

**Alignments** CG, NG, N

**Languages** Common & many others

**Resources & Industry** Books, knowledge

Several hundred years ago, the peaceful and enlightened kingdom of Tirinos came under threat from the expansionist Venovian Imperium and its fearsome ruler, the Emperor Kazakul. Fiercely intolerant of beliefs and faiths different to his own, Kazakul decreed that any nation coming under imperial control must convert to the worship of Surtur, God of Fire and War. All other religions were proscribed.

As the heavily armoured legions of the Imperium marched into Tirinos, they tore down the statues of the Twelve, the deities of the Tirene pantheon, and set fire to their temples and monasteries. Libraries and other places of learning were raided, and any books they found, whether religious texts or not, were seized by the soldiers, piled up in the streets, and burned.

Erasmus Spyridon was the Bibliognost at the Athenaeum, the largest library in Akkratas, the Tirene capital. Horrified at accounts from the cities the Venovians had already taken, he searched through the Athenaeum's books for a means to save the library. As Kazakul's legions marched into the city, Erasmus discovered a powerful ritual in an obscure tome hidden in the stacks. Enlisting his fellow librarians' help, he cast the ritual and shifted the entire Athenaeum, its inhabitants and its ornamental gardens to the safety of the Astral Plane.

Today, the Forgotten Athenaeum of Tirinos still exists on the Astral Plane, and is dedicated to collecting and preserving blasphemous texts, uncomfortable truths and dangerous knowledge from across the multiverse. Erasmus remains as Bibliognost—although he has been there for over 300 years, nothing ages while on the plane. The Athenaeum's location is known only to a select few librarians and sages who can access it through a network of portals connecting to other libraries, universities and places of learning.

Because the Athenaeum holds a vast amount of lost or forgotten information that many powerful, wealthy and often dangerous individuals covet (or would prefer never saw the light of day), the library can sometimes play host to visitors with nefarious motives as well as innocent scholars and academics.

### LORE

A PC making a Knowledge (planes) or Knowledge (history) check may know some information about the Forgotten Athenaeum. A successful check reveals all the information revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 20:** The Forgotten Athenaeum is a secret repository of lost and forbidden knowledge hidden on the Astral Plane.

**DC 25:** Centuries ago, the learned librarian Erasmus Spyridon used a powerful spell to move the library to the Astral Plane to save its collection from book-burning invaders.

**DC 30:** Portals to the Athenaeum exist in several libraries throughout the multiverse and can be accessed by using a copy of Erasmus Spyridon's tedious memoir *Meditations of a Bibliognost* as a portal key.

### NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the inhabitants of the Athenaeum are unremarkable individuals.

**Appearance:** The librarians come from several different cultures and worlds, and have a variety of skin and hair colours. Both sexes keep their hair cropped short, and the men are typically clean-shaven.

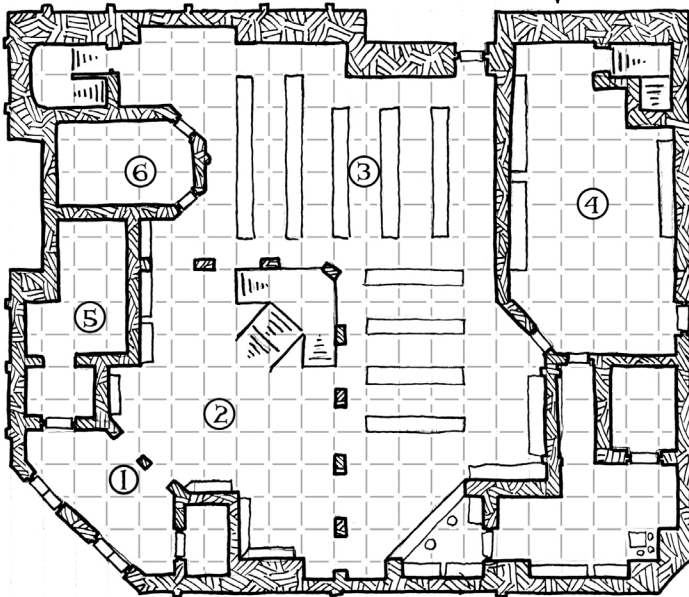
**Dress:** The librarians wear long tunics of dark blue wool and silver pendants depicting the Tree of Knowledge—a tree growing out of a book, the symbol of the goddess Minras.

Some of the more notable residents and visitors are:

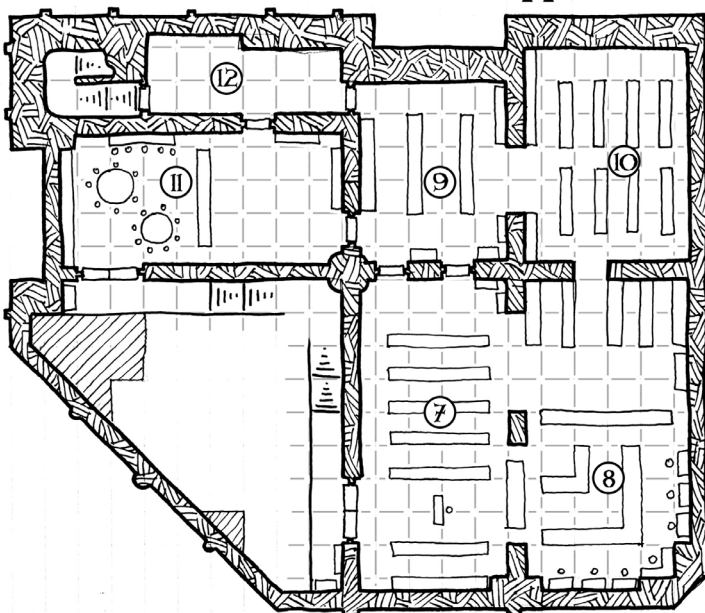
- **Erasmus Spyridon** (location 6; CG old male human wizard 7/lore master 10) Erasmus is the learned Bibliognost of the Athenaeum and has dedicated his long life to preserving the knowledge held here.
- **Althiel Veroth** (location 11; CN male human fighter 5) Althiel and his companion Hallia Bloodthorn (N female human rogue 6) are a pair of unscrupulous book thieves.
- **Euneas Heliex** (location 9; CG male human druid 2/expert 3) Euneas is the Senior Librarian for the Hall of Nature.
- **Jocasta Melina** (location 8, CG female half-elf wizard 3/expert 4) A Tirene who has lived in the Athenaeum for centuries, Jocasta is Senior Librarian for the Hall of the Multiverse.
- **Lileth Silvertongue** (location 11; NE female human fighter 3/rogue 4) Posing as a bard in search of material for her songs, Lileth is here on secret orders from her king.
- **Reneida Lagaris** (location 10, N female human wizard 7/lore master 4) Reneida is the Senior Librarian for the Hall of Arcana and joined the staff just three years ago.
- **Senuthius** (location 3; NG old male human wizard 2/expert 4) Senuthius is the doddery Tirene Senior Librarian who runs the Hall of History.
- **Tadras Beldok** (location 7; N male dwarf expert 4) Tadras is the cynical, irascible Senior Librarian in charge of the Hall of the Gods.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

### Ground Level



### Upper Level



Part of the Forgotten Athenaeum comprises locations of little interest to adventurers. Several locations, however, are notable:

1. **Entrance Hall:** The original entrance to the Athenaeum is rarely used, and the two pairs of double doors are firmly barred from the inside.
2. **Atrium:** Statues of gods and goddesses of knowledge from a variety of cultures and worlds decorate this impressive atrium. Marble stairs lead to the upper level.
3. **Hall of History:** Rows of shelves rising to the ceiling contain the Athenaeum's collection of books and scrolls covering the history and cultures of hundreds of different cities, kingdoms and empires, both well-known and long-forgotten.
4. **Dormitory:** The Athenaeum's librarians sleep in simple bunk beds in this large dormitory. Stairs lead down to a basement filled with crates of books that await cataloguing.
5. **Restricted Section:** This locked area contains the Athenaeum's most dangerous volumes, including necromantic tomes, books that send the reader insane and wicked demonologies.
6. **Bibliognost's Office:** Erasmus Spyridon, the Athenaeum's chief librarian, uses this chaotic, book-filled chamber as his office, private reading room and sleeping quarters. He says he knows where everything is.
7. **Hall of the Gods:** This room is dedicated to blasphemous and heretical religious texts, as well as the holy scriptures of many obscure and largely forgotten gods.
8. **Hall of the Multiverse:** This section of the library holds hundreds of volumes describing the many different worlds and planes of the multiverse. Librarians and visitors use the reading desks here to study or make copies of the texts.
9. **Hall of Nature:** Filled with bestiaries, books of trees, plants and herbs and maps and charts of strange lands, this room focuses on the natural world.
10. **Hall of Arcana:** The rows of shelves in this chamber contain both treatises on magic and a small number of spellbooks and scrolls. The most dangerous arcane tomes are kept in the Restricted Section.
11. **Common Room:** Both librarians and visitors to the Athenaeum like to come to this room to unwind and socialise after a hard day's study in the library.
12. **Guest Quarters:** Visitors to the library sleep in this simply furnished communal dormitory.



## 10 MINOR CURSES LURKING IN A MAGIC ITEM

Some items merely have a drawback to their ownership. Other items are tainted by a minor curse, which can cause much suffering and sorrow to its owner.

Use the table below, to generate the details of minor curses lurking in a magic item recovered by the party.

1. While he possesses this item, the owner begins to believe his comrades and friends covert it. While this feeling does not grow into homicidal maniac, the owner carefully safeguards the item and refuses to lend it to anyone.
2. The owner grows increasingly obsessed with the item. First, she merely keeps it safe, but her obsession slowly grows. After a while, she buys a nice pouch (or similar suitable container) to keep it in. Then, she buys a newer more expensive pouch (perhaps made of a particularly fine material or decorated with small gemstones and so on). This expenditure slowly increases while she possesses the item.
3. The cursed item radiates a subtle field that attracts undead. Unintelligent undead prefer to attack the wielder above all other targets and intelligent undead feel drawn to the item. They do all they can to possess it.
4. The item interferes with the magic of healing spells, magic items and effects, reducing their effectiveness. Such effects heal one less point of damage per die rolled.
5. The item is highly magnetised and attracts electrical attacks and effects. The owner suffers a -1 penalty to saving throws made to resist or avoid such attacks. Every day, these effects are cumulative; for every such effect damaging the owner, the saving throw penalty increases by 1 point. The stored magnetism dissipates overnight.
6. The item draws power from its possessor, draining him. The owner must eat and drink twice as much to maintain his weight and health. (Overtime, owning this item could be very expensive indeed...)
7. The owner experiences delusions of grandeur and becomes convinced she should be leading the party. She is convinced she knows the best way forward and, as time progresses, becomes more and more unwilling to accept other's council.
8. This item was once owned by a werewolf. During the days immediately preceding the full moon, the owner's body hair begins to grow dramatically. This could lead the paranoid or superstitious observer

to conclude the owner is a lycanthrope.

9. This wielder becomes susceptible to bright light. In such areas, she is dazzled in a similar fashion to a drow.
10. The item renders the owner partially deaf. This makes casting spells with verbal components difficult and means the owner often shouts instead of speaking. This could make sneaking into enemy camps, discrete conversations and the like difficult (at best).



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