

DYSON'S DODECAHEDRON

Volume 1, Issue



CURSES!

UNIQUELY UNDEAD

RESKINNED DRAGONS

RUINS OF THE GORGON

TIME FOR A CHANGE

Don't let familiarity get you down.

One aspect of Old School Gaming that is brought up fairly often is the "Sense of Wonder" and the feeling of exploration involved in our original days of gaming, back when the game was new to us, and each adventure was the first of its kind.

Working towards recreating these days of wonder is a noble goal for all, and is a task I give myself whenever I run a fantasy RPG - be it classic B/X Dungeons & Dragons (my game of choice) or the 3rd edition games I've been running for years "on the side".

In my opinion, this sense of wonder had little to do with the rules sets we were using at the time, or even the philosophy behind these rules. It is all about the setting, the play style, and the work we put into it.

And of course, I have a shortcut. A trick I use to help bring back the sense of wonder for jaded players. I change things, I twist them, I reskin them and make them different than what is expected.

And that's what this issue is mostly dedicated to - rules and articles to change things that you might be taking for granted. Making the usual unusual again. So get out there and rediscover the sense of wonder!

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Uniquely Undead was the first post to the blog that actively solicited additional material for the article to be published here.

Reskinning Dragons is a very recent article on the site, and may well be revisited with additional unique dragons depending on reader response.

Ruins of the Gorgon evolved from a mapping experiment I posted last month - an attempt at a 1-hour-map that ended up taking 2 hours to complete. The adventure is a fairly typical dungeon crawl with a minor twist.

Random Curses originated as a list of curses I kept around for cursed scrolls and other magic items, then converted into a set of random tables.



UNIQUELY UNDEAD

In a recent discussion about level draining undead in Labyrinth Lord, several DMs and players indicated that they would rather kill a character than have him level drained. And in SOME cases I understand (although personally I have no real problem with level draining undead).

So what do you do to replace the venerable wight if you scrap level-draining? Give him some other scary power or two to even out the odds (especially since they are already cleric-turning fodder). Roll d100 (or choose) on the following table once for every two hit dice of the undead (rounding up). You can also just create new undead by upping the hit dice of the wight (and decreasing his AC 1 point for every 3 hit dice you give him). The other upside? Since he's not relying on his level draining touch attack, you can kit your undead menace out with a cool weapon or two.

- 01-03. **Limited Flight** – 60' (20') movement rate. Seems to walk through the air.
- 04-06. **Dimension Door** – as the spell, 3/day
- 07-09. **Special Senses** – Detects magic, life and invisibility at will
- 10-12. **Animate Dead** – as the spell, 2/day
- 13-15. **Darkness** – as the reverse of *light* at will
- 16-18. **Unnatural Might** – +2 to hit and damage
- 19-21. **Track Life** – Once he's met you, he can track you without fail. Even across the planes if need be. The only way to break the trail is to die and be brought back to life.
- 22-23. **Magical Ability** – casts spells as a magic user, caster level of 1/2 the undead's hit dice
- 24. **Clerical Ability** – casts spells as a cleric, caster level of 1/2 the undead's hit dice
- 25-27. **Withering Touch** – touch causes plants to wither and other living things to rot. Deals 2d4 damage to creatures.
- 28-30. **Putrefying Aura** – all food and drink within 20' is rotted and destroyed – magical food and drinks get their owner's save versus poison.
- 31-35. **Massive Claws** – unarmed attacks deal an extra die of damage, or 1d8 damage if it didn't have such an attack.
- 36-38. **Diseased** – attacks transmit mummy rot (see the mummy description)
- 39-40. **Striking Aura** – the palpable aura of fear freezes all those who see the undead. Save versus paralysis when encountering the undead or be paralyzed for 1d6+1 rounds.
- 41-43. **Paralyzing Strike** – the undead's blows paralyze as a ghoul (although elves are not immune)
- 44-45. **Vampiric Drain** – damage dealt by the undead in melee heals it an equivalent amount.

- 46-48. **Weakening Blow** – the undead's blows drain Strength like a Shadow.
- 49-50. **Crippling Blow** – the undead's blows drain Constitution the same way a shadow's attacks drain Strength.
51. **Soul Eater** – creatures slain by the undead cannot be raised or resurrected. The undead gains 1 HD for 24 hours, and permanently gains 1 hit point.
- 52-54. **Curse of the Fallen** – undead casts curse 3/day (typically opening a battle with such a curse).
55. **Soul Wrench** – the undead's blows are deadly. The target gets a save versus death.
- 56-57. **Wail of the Haunted** – once per turn the undead can howl or wail. Living creatures within 60 feet must save versus paralysis or run in fear.
58. **Wail of Mourning** – once per hour the undead can howl or wail. Living creatures within 30 feet must save versus death or die.
- 60-62. **Breath of Decay** – once per turn the undead can make a breath weapon attack (typically a magical “blast” of decay, but sometimes shards of bone, or regurgitated black evil, or even fire or gas or something thematically appropriate) in a 15' cloud in front of him that deals 1d6 damage /2 hit dice of the undead.
- 63-67. **Faithless** – turned by clerics as if the undead had 3 hit dice more than it has.
- 68-70. **All But Invisible** – cannot be detected except by touch and feel. Cannot be detected by magic, psionics, sound or scent, etc.
- 71-73. **Immortal** – unless destroyed by a cleric's turn undead attempt, dissintegrated, or burned and the ashes mixed with holy water, this undead will reform in 2d12 hours after being slain.
- 74-76. **Regeneration** – the undead regenerates 3 hit points per round except from holy damage. It ceases regenerating if destroyed.
- 77-78. **Charm Gaze** – gaze attack acts as a charm monster spell
- 79-81. **Arcane Devourer** – attacks drain one spell from a spellcaster's prepared spells (starting with highest level spells, specific spell chosen randomly). If the undead successfully saves against a spell cast upon it, the caster of the spell also loses another spell as if struck by the undead.
82. **Bug Filled** – when struck down, the undead splits open producing an insect plague as the spell as well as a 10' radius cloud of poisonous gas (to which the undead insects are immune).
- 83-84. **Poison Filled** – when struck down, the undead emits a 10' cloud of noxious gas (save versus poison or suffer a die of damage equal to twice the undead's hit dice – 3 hit dice would be a d6, 6 hit dice a d12, etc). The gas remains for 4 rounds.
- 85-88. **Recruits in Death** – those struck down by the undead rise as undead themselves.
- 89-90. **Frenzied Regeneration** – the undead heals 1 hit point per round, +1 per living being within 30 feet.
91. **Touch of Ages** – blows landed by the undead age the victim 1d10 years.



- 92-93. **Shards** - the undead creates minor versions of itself and is usually accompanied by 1d6+1 minor companions (each with 1/4 of it's hit dice and dealing 1/2 damage and having most powers reduced by half or more)
94. **CorpseSoil** - the undead controls any earth within 100 feet of a grave - able to use transmute rock to mud, move earth and/or entangle at will using this earth.
- 95-97. **Stitched Horror** - the undead has two extra limbs allowing it to wield two additional weapons or attack unarmed with them.
98. **Maddening Whispers** - anyone staying within 30 feet of the undead and able to hear it must make a saving throw versus spells after the second round or become *confused* with temporary insanity lasting for 1d10 rounds after no longer hearing the whispers.
- 99-100. **Entombed** - as (71-73) *Immortal*, except the undead reforms at its coffin, sarcophagus or similar burial place. Until this item is destroyed, the undead cannot be permanently destroyed.

UNDEAD GUARDIANS OF VEROOTH

No Appearing: 1d6 (2d6)
 Alignment: Chaotic
 Movement: 90' (30')
 Armor Class: 2
 Hit Dice: 7
 Attacks: 1
 Damage: by weapon +2
 Save: F6
 Morale: 12
 Hoard Class: VII, XIV
 XP: 1140



The Guardians remain concealed, often entombed in the earth, for most of their existence, only to break free to defend their lairs or to hunt down those who have stolen from them. They wear plate mail (included in the AC above – their AC is 5 without armor) and wield a variety of weapons with great might (their unnatural strength grant the guardians a +2 bonus on attack and damage rolls.)

Once they have seen a living being, they can track them without fail, following the very life-force of the creature. The only way to break this “scent” is for the person they are tracking to die (and hopefully raised thereafter). And they will continue to do so relentlessly, even if slain. Unless destroyed by a cleric's turn undead attempt, disintegrated, or burned and the ashes mixed with holy water, slain guardians will reform in 2d12 hours and continue the hunt.

RESKINNING DRAGONS

One occasionally hears DMs and players alike bemoaning the trivialization of dragons in Dungeons & Dragons; and yet I see very few dragons in most people's games. Personally, I like having each dragon being different than the others to keep players on their toes. However, most are also old and famous enough that a bit of research will tell you the important facts to prepare for such a battle (especially what kind of breath weapon the creature has).

In my recent games I had an albino dragon, a spider dragon and Gurrweth the Beast, a feral dragon. For each of these I just took the stats for a dragon from the B/X rules, changed the skin colour and descriptive text, and then changed the breath weapon.

The real trick is the breath weapon. It seems to bring back the sense of wonder every time the dragon lets out a blast of whatever strange magical breath said dragon has. Typically I add a secondary effect to the dragon breath so that the players remember it as vividly as the characters would once they survive a blast of putrescent goo.

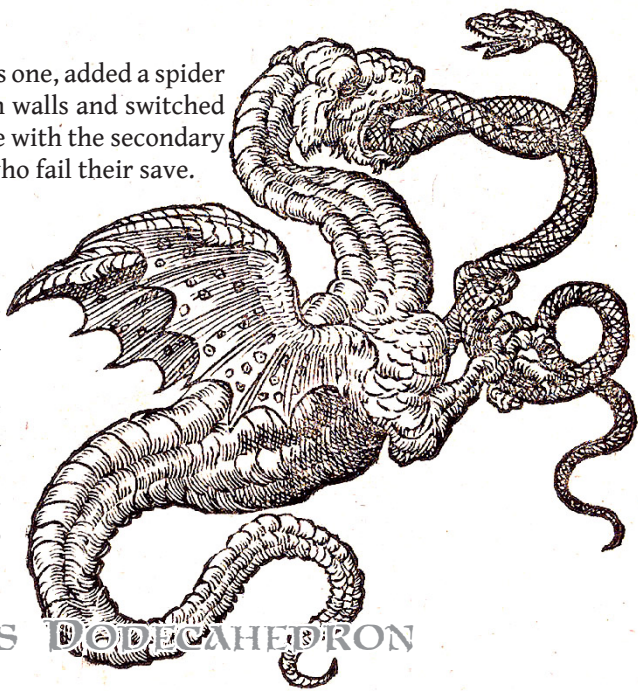
Here are some "unique" dragons used through years of my D&D games through various editions. Each just used the rules for a standard dragon from that edition, with some cosmetic changes and usually an addition to the creature's breath weapon.

SPIDER DRAGON

I took a black dragon for this one, added a spider climb like ability to walk on walls and switched the breath weapon to a cone with the secondary effect of entangling those who fail their save.

ALBINO DRAGON

For a lower-level game I reskinned a white dragon and made it sickly and weak. Its breath weapon is a line of decaying goo (treat as a black dragon's acid breath) that also reduced the movement rate of those who failed their save.



FERAL DRAGON

This was just a red dragon with no spellcasting ability and extra fur. Because of his high hit points and my desire to not have him completely slaughter the party with his breath weapon, his breath was weakened by his lack of magic and bestial throwback genetics, dealing only half the normal damage. He preferred to get involved in good old melee combat, which is just as terrifying as anything else a red dragon can throw at you.

DRAGON OF PRIMAL AIR

Increase the flight speed of the dragon by 50% and swap out the breath weapon for the djinni's whirlwind ability.

DRAGON OF PRIMAL EARTH

I used a blue dragon here, replacing the description of the lightning bolt with a cone of stony debris that also knocked back anyone who failed their save.

CARRION DRAGON

This carrion-eating monstrosity uses the same breath weapon as the Albino Dragon (but in this case, a half-digested morass of carrion). Also, anyone slain by the breath weapon immediately gets animated as a zombie as per the spell animate dead. For bonus points, surround the dragon with a cloud of carrion birds that interfere in combat.

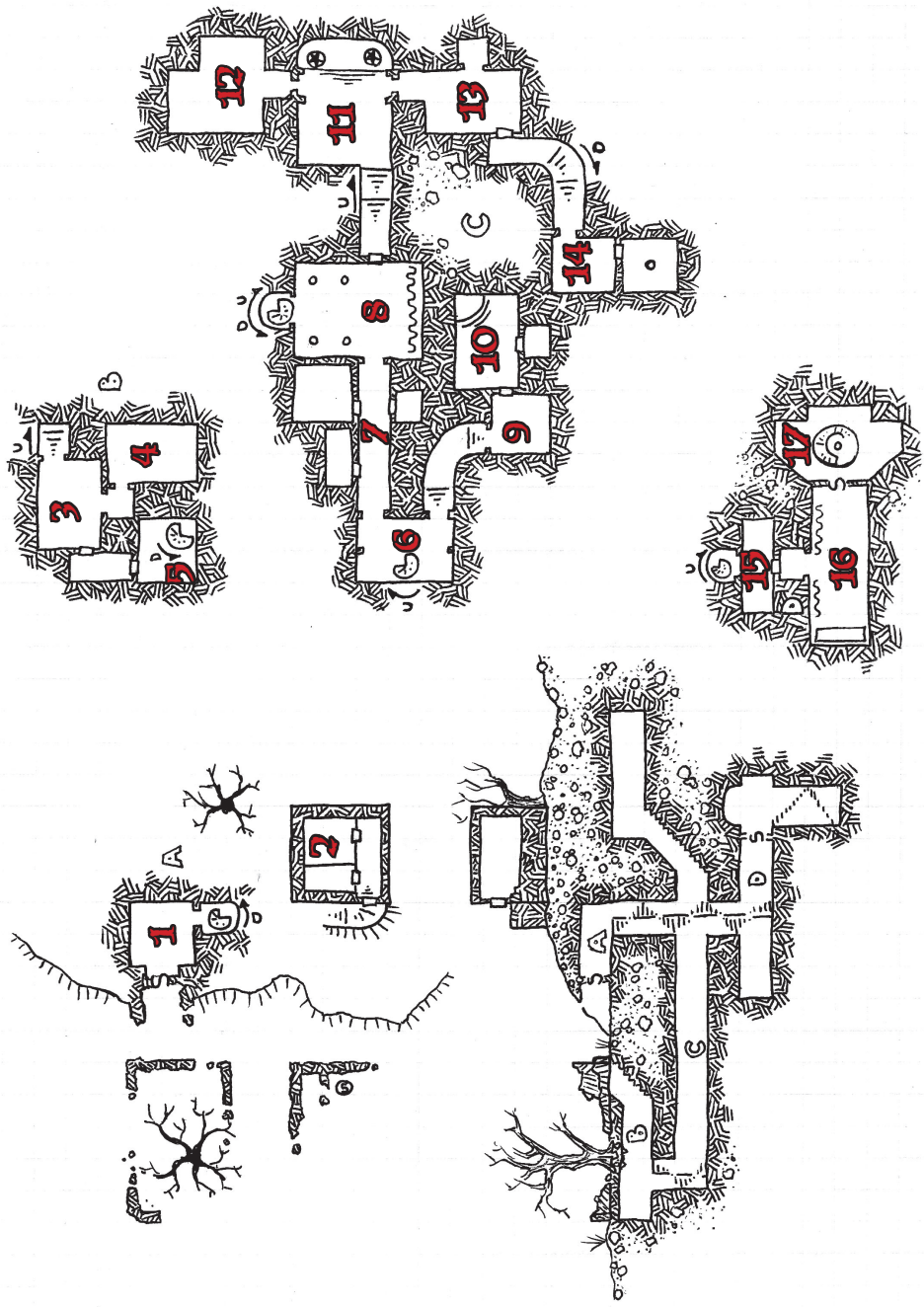
VAMPIRIC WYRM

These undead dragons heal themselves for half the damage they deal in melee combat. They can see in any amount of darkness, and their breath weapon only deals a small amount of damage - however those who fail their save against the blast of darkness also find themselves the centre of a *darkness* spell.

THE HUNTER

This green dragon lurks in an ancient forest where it is incredibly well hidden by its adaptive camouflage (surprises 1-5 in 6). Its breath weapon is a magical cone of energy that entangles anyone failing their saves in a mass of fast-growing vines and branches.

RUINS OF THE GORGON



Ruins of the Gorgon is an adventure for level 4 characters, who will probably be expecting to find a gorgon somewhere in the depths of the ruins. And who may already be complaining that they are only level 4, and a gorgon has 8 Hit Dice. Smack them down already, and explore the ruins!

Both entrances into the ruins are accessible by secret doors. Thus it is best if the party has a hook bringing them here that includes either someone who knows the entrance or a map indicating where the trap door to area B is. The expected routing through the dungeon is to enter through the trap door to area B, and then explore to C then D, however a party can shortcut this by using the other secret door and then going straight down to D (although few adventurers in my experience have the balls to just skip deep into the heart of a dungeon without exploring the upper sections). This adventure uses several new 'surprise' undead - don't point out that they are undead to the players.

Wandering Monsters (1 in 6, check each turn)

Surface (1d4)

- 1 1d8 Hobgoblins
- 2 1d4 Mountain Lions
- 3 1d4 Black Bears
- 4 1d8 Oil Beetles

Underground (1d4)

- 1 1d8 Gnomes
- 2 1d3 Carrion Crawlers
- 3 1 Gelatinous Cube
- 4 1d8 Shadows

AREA A - THE SURFACE RUINS

The ruins can be found by looking for Prince Erin's Folly, a small fortress on a hilltop. Just below the fortress are the ruins of a few buildings and part of a structure built into the hillside. There are two entrances into the ruins from here - one is a very well concealed secret door in the ruins built into the hillside, the other being a trap door concealed beneath leaves and litter in the southern portion of the ruined buildings (the one without the tree).

1. **The Guarded Entrance** - A pair of **Iron Living Statues** (AC: 2, HD: 4, hp: 24, 21, Mv: 30' (10'), Att: 2, Dmg: 1d8/1d8, Sv: F4, M: 11, special: absorbs non-magic metal weapons) guard this entrance and will not leave the room. Anyone passing through the archway to the stairs without saying "gorgon" in orcish must save versus spells or be rendered unconscious for d6+1 turns. These stairs lead to areas 8 and 15.
2. **Prince Erin's Folly** - **12 Hobgoblins** (AC: 6, HD: 1+1, hp: 9, 8, 8, 8, 7, 6, 6, 6, 5, 5, 4, 3, Mv: 90' (30'), Att: 1, Dmg: 1d8, Sv: F1, M: 8) have set up here while trying to figure out where their prey went. They are split between the rooms, with a few on guard on the roof. In a locked and poison needle-trapped coffer they have **3,000 gp**. The 8 hp hobgoblins each have a **100 gp emerald**.

AREA B - ENTRANCE CHAMBERS

3. **The Escaped Prey** - 5 Troglodytes (AC: 5, HD: 2*, Mv: 120' (40'), Att: 3, Dmg: 1d4 (x3), Sv: F2, M: 9) are resting and preparing to return to the surface.
4. **Orcish Temple** - remains of mosaics on the wall hint that this was once a temple to one or more orc gods. It is being used as a latrine by the trogs.
5. **Barricaded Stairs** - the door to this room is barricaded with remnants of furniture from room 4. A pair of **Troglodyte Ghouls** (AC: 6, HD: 3**, hp: 15, 16, Mv: 90' (30'), Att: 3, Dmg: 1d3 (x3) + paralysis, Sv: F3, M: 9, Special: paralysis, camouflage (surprise on 1-4) and troglodyte stink) wait for their companions to free them again. The stairs lead to room 6.

AREA C - THE MAIN RUINS

6. **Torchlight** - This chamber has spiral stairs leading up to room 5. Sconces in the north and south walls contain torches that light magically when someone enters the room. Any torch will work in the sconces, and the torch burns down as normal.
7. **An Infestation of Gnomes** - The orcs once kept a slave population of gnomes that still thrive in the darkness, eating mushrooms, slimes and each other. Each of the three rooms along this hall is home to **d8+1 Feral Gnomes** (AC: 5, HD: 1+1, Mv: 60' (20'), Att: 1, Dmg: 1d6, Sv: D1, M: 9). Between the three rooms there is a **potion of healing**, a **potion of growth**, and **4 gems** (50, 100, 100 and 500 gp values).
8. **Warlord's Respite** - The stairs to the north of this room go up to area 1 and down to area 15. The pillars are carved with representations of orcish warlords and the tapestry on the south wall shows an orc in black armour standing over a mass of gnome slaves. Anyone touching this tapestry must save versus spells or be struck by a feeble curse (from the table on pg 12).
9. **Slime** - A mass of mushrooms fill this moist room, and the floor is covered in slime mold. A **Gray Ooze** (AC: 8, HD: 3*, hp: 15, Mv: 10' (3'), Att: 1, Dmg: 2d8, Sv: F2, M: 12) is lurking on the floor waiting for tasty gnomes.
10. **Slime Redux** - The floor of this room is covered in an immense **Gray Ooze** (AC: 8, HD: 5*, hp: 26, Mv: 10' (3'), Att: 1, Dmg: 2d8+2, Sv: F3, M: 12) that has eaten the other mushrooms and is encroaching on the dais in the corner. The only other living thing is the mass of **Green Slime** on the ceiling (AC: n/a, HD: 2, hp: 7, Mv: 3' (1'), Att: 1, Dmg: special, Sv: F1, M: 12). On the dais is an iron throne. Anyone sitting on the throne must save versus magic. If the save succeeds, they gain +1 Strength for 12 hours. If they fail, they suffer a curse (see the tables on page 12).
11. **Displayed Stone** - The room at the top of these stairs contains a raised platform with two statues of orcs in combat poses. They could definitely be mistaken for orcs turned to stone by a gorgon or something similar.



- 12. Premonitions** - This room is full of statuary of various things, including many small animals, a few gnomes, and a few that were evidently adventurers. One is an actual statue of an orc warrior which contains a secret compartment containing a **wand of cold** with 5 charges. Opening the compartment releases a poisonous dust (save versus poison or suffer 3d12 damage).
- 13. The Cockatrice** - this was once home to a cockatrice which was slain by the gnomes when it got out of hand. Now 4 Gnomes (AC: 5, HD: 1+1, hp: 9, 8, 7, 5, Mv: 60' (20'), Att: 1, Dmg: 1d6, Sv: D1, M: 9) and a **Gnomish Sorcerer** (AC: 5, HD: 4, hp: 12, Mv: 60' (20'), Att: 1, Dmg: 1d6, Sv: D1, M: 9, Special: sleep, charm person, mirror image, web) live here with the dead cockatrice set up on wires to distract attackers. The sorcerer has the key to the well room south of room 14.
- 14. Well Chamber** - The room to the south of this chamber contains a fresh water well. The door to that room is locked. This room contains several barrels of water drawn from the well, a few buckets and old water-logged rope. A pair of **Giant Weasels** guard the room for the gnomes (AC: 7, HD: 4+4, hp: 30, 16, Mv: 150' (50'), Att: 1, Dmg: 2d4, Sv: F3, M: 8)

AREA D - THE DEPTHS

- 15. Antechamber** - A pair of **Iron Living Statues** (AC: 2, HD: 4, hp: 24, 21, Mv: 30' (10'), Att: 2, Dmg: 1d8/1d8, Sv: F4, M: 11, special: absorbs non-magic metal weapons) guard this antechamber and will not leave the room, nor will they attack the iron bull from area 16 if it comes through here.
- 16. The Iron Bull** - This room is decorated with tattered tapestries and is home to the **Iron Bull** (AC: 3, HD: 4*, Move: 90' (30'), Att: 1, Dmg: 1d12, Sv: F4, M: 10) The iron bull is a massive undead bull covered in metal plates. Upon first coming into contact with the iron bull, all characters must save versus paralysis or be paralyzed in fear for 1d6+1 rounds. The iron bull regenerates 3 hp per round. On the west wall is a ruined bookshelf and scattered among the wrecked books are two scrolls - a **scroll of protection from lycanthropes** and a **cursed scroll** (roll on the table on page 12).
- 17. The Lost Pit** - This secret chamber contains a deep (20') central pit with stairs leading down around the periphery. **5 Shadows** of long-dead elves attack any who enter the room (AC: 7, HD: 2+2*, hp: 15, 10, 9, 9, 8, Mv: 90' (30'), Att: 1, Dmg: 1d4 + strength drain, Sv: F2, M: 12). At the bottom of the pit is the dried remains of a once-massive ooze of some kind. Anyone touching the dried remains must save versus poison or become very ill and die within 1d3 turns. Mixed in with the remains of the ooze are **3,000 gp**, a **gold crown worth 1,200 gp**, and a **Sword +1, +3 versus lycanthropes**.

RANDOM CURSES

Level of Curse (d4)

1. Feeble Curse
2. Minor Curse
3. Major Curse
4. Holy Crap Curse

Feeble Curses (d12)

1. Hair falls out
2. Next reaction roll is at a +2 penalty
3. -4 penalty on your next save
4. Lose one prepared spell
5. Itchiness means you suffer -2 on attack rolls while wearing armour
6. Miss next attack
7. Next spell cast will fail
8. Roll 1d20 under Dex whenever trying to run to avoid falling
9. Become convinced that one minor item is a very important magic item and will not part with it
10. Gradually change race to a random race (no game effects)
11. Automatically surprised next fight
12. Reduce movement speed by half

Minor Curses (d12)

1. -3 penalty on all saving throws
2. -4 on all attack rolls
3. Prime requisite is reduced by half
4. +2 penalty on all reaction rolls
5. 50% chance to be unable to act each combat round
6. +/- 1 on all rolls (for the worse)
7. Drop whatever you are holding whenever you roll the minimum result on any die
8. Must always tell the truth
9. Must never tell the truth
10. Double normal chance of wandering monsters
11. 50% chance that each spell cast will have an unwanted effect (wrong target, opposite effect, whatever works)
12. -2 damage per die on all attacks and spells

Major Curses (d12)

1. Polymorph into a frog or other harmless animal
2. Wandering monster of the target's level appears nearby and attacks
3. One magic item disappears
4. Lose one level
5. Re-roll your prime requisite
6. Wounds take twice as long to heal, healing spells are only half as effective
7. +/- 3 on all rolls (for the worse)
8. Cannot sleep – therefore cannot heal naturally, nor prepare spells
9. Lose all spellcasting ability
10. Double vision – all targets are treated as having the benefit of displacement
11. Save versus death, or die!
12. Struck deaf, blind and mute

Holy Crap Curses (d12)

1. Every time you kill a target, save versus death or join him and die
2. Battle Death for your soul
3. Automatically fail all saves
4. +/- 6 on all rolls (for the worse)
5. Lose d4+1 levels
6. Can not wear armour or clothing or use weapons or any devices
7. Can only breathe in water, or only breathe air for aquatic targets
8. Triple damage received from all sources
9. Character ages 1d6 years per combat round
10. All valuables owned by the character are turned to lead and paste
11. d6+1 companions or friends & family are subjected to Major Curses (above)
12. Target rolls for additional curses (starting with level of curse) 6 times