

## ARTICLE

# NEWLY FASHIONABLE CURSES OF THE REALMS

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Curses in the Realms change over time, and Ed provides you with some colorful curses you can add to your game.

Since the end of the Sundering, an unknown but growing number of wizards have made use of more powerful alternatives to the *bestow curse* spell—and since this represents a widespread flowering of creativity in devising new arcane spells, it seems to meet with Mystra's approval, with most of these new castings succeeding in a relatively swift and easy creative process.

## THE HOUSE OF VELARR

Word spread in Zazesspur circa 1461 DR of an outlander wizard calling himself "Velarr," who had recently arrived in the city (from Thay, some rumors asserted; from Durpar, others insisted), and who was offering tutelage for fees in the creation of a specific sort of spell: curses.

Some say that Velarr always wore a mask, and under it his features were magically altered so as not to be his own. Others note that he hadn't established the House of Velarr until it bristled with so many magical traps (not to mention guardian monsters such as gargoyles, golems, and even a lurking darkmantle or two) that he could appear to live and work alone, yet defeat a small army of hostile wizards who were in the house with him.

Then rumors arose that Velarr had developed strong protective magic (and used them

constantly) that turned curses back from him at their sources, so he need not fear clients he was teaching and assisting from betraying him.

He had enemies, though—for one morning in 1469 DR, students arriving at the house found it a gutted ruin. Sometime the night before, inside a conjured temporary bubble that had absorbed all light and sound, several violent fires started at different locations inside the structure (that looked to some of the more experienced wizards as the incidental results of fiery spells, hurled in a duel) had ravaged the house. No bones or remains were found in the ruin, but Velarr was never seen again.

It is not known if Velarr ever privately attempted to coerce or co-opt his clients into working with him or obeying him in activities outside his House of Velarr, but the effect of his short-lived school was to send out into the world almost a score of wizards, all independent of each other, who knew unique curse spells (all of them of higher level and of different nature than the widely known *bestow curse* spell). As is the way of wizards, some of these clients of Velarr took apprentices or sold spell scrolls for fees or had their written records seized by others after they died, so knowledge of these curses spread.

With the restoration of Mystra and the stabilization of the Weave, all these curse spells seem to have gained stability, too, surviving with no apparent major changes. Thanks to the uses to which they've been put, some of them have become quite widely known about, if not widely wielded.

Elminster is unwilling to provide specifics of these spells (though it seems clear that most are of third level or even higher), but he did provide an identification guide based on their effects. Those he has identified include the following:

## **ALTHUR'S SPIDERGOUT**

Whenever those afflicted by this curse try to speak, a spider of a random sort (possibly harmless, possibly not) is teleported from somewhere in Faerûn into their mouths. It might be facing outward, and it might not. (There's apparently a similar "toadgout" curse, but thus far Elminster has only heard rumors and has not seen it with his own eyes.)

## **BALARTHRAN'S RECURRING PROFANITY**

Whenever victims try to speak, they must concentrate or the word will be replaced by a full-volume utterance of a word selected by the bestower of the curse (which may not be a rude word; often it is something like "kill" or "murder" or "guilty," to make others wary of the speaker).

## **CLOAHKAUDRA'S FOLLICULAR FURY**

Victims of this curse grow hair with astonishing speed—all over their bodies. It covers their features, interferes with vision, smell, speech and other oral activities, makes clothes tight and

movement-restrictive, and may make many observers think the afflicted beings are turning into some sort of wild beast. If the hair is cut while the curse is ongoing, it grows all the faster in the shorn spot. This growth draws on the victim's vitality, causing the victim to grow unhealthy. If the victim's fortitude is sufficient to overcome the curse, the curse ends. If the victim fails to overcome the curse after another span of time, such as an hour, it continues, though the victim might still find the fortitude to vanquish this curse.



## **HANRA'S LEAKING LIQUESCENCE**

Victims of this curse perspire profusely and heavily. Hair is rapidly drenched, clothing becomes wringing wet, eyesight is repeatedly hampered unless an absorbent headband is worn (and itself wrung out or replaced frequently), and dehydration rapidly occurs. Eventually, drinking must become almost continuous to keep up with water loss (failure to do so brings on dizziness, nausea, then loss of balance, and finally loss of consciousness). When sleep or unconsciousness comes, the afflicted has a chance to withstand the curse and be rid of it. If the victim fails to do so, the curse goes into remission for one day and night, but returns the next day—and at next unconsciousness or slumber, the afflicted one has another chance to throw off the curse, but it becomes more difficult with each such attempt.

## **JARRAKAL'S HALLUCINATIONS**

When those afflicted by this curse looks at the faces of (human) strangers, they instead see the faces of humans they know but haven't seen for years. This curse waxes and wanes (though victims won't know when it's operating or not), but ends instantly and for good—though the afflicted won't be aware of it ending, at that moment—if those thus afflicted look at a face that is magically disguised.

## **JONATHA'S CLUMSINESS**

Whenever victims try to grasp an item or perform any tasks of exacting dexterity (such as write something, thread a needle, or fasten a button), they must concentrate to do

so. Trying to catch a moving item or grasp a live and mobile being requires even more focus. This curse lasts for five hours before a victim can attempt to remove it through sheer force of will (though magical means of removal can work instantly if used). If the victim cannot throw off the curse, it continues for another hour, whereupon the victim can try again to will it out of existence. Unless the victim breaks the curse or it is removed by magical means, it continues.

## METALBANE

Victims of this curse can't hold or touch metal—things of metal (not rock with metal ores in it, but all pure metal, whether alloys or of a single element) pass harmlessly through those so afflicted by this curse. So they can't handle coins or most weapons (unless they bind the hilts completely in something), do up buckles, wield most tools, or perform most cooking tasks, and so on. This condition lasts for four hours before the victim has enough strength of will to make an initial attempt to break it; after those first four hours pass, the afflicted one can focus each hour to attempt to remove it.

## ZULT'S UNQUIET SLUMBER

Whenever the afflicted ones fall asleep, they suffer wild spasms and cramps in their limbs. The pain of these spasms jolts them awake from the pain, since their limbs jerk about violently and uncontrollably. (Victims risk hitting themselves or their limbs against something hard and unyielding unless they succeed at being nimble enough to avoid such painful situations.)

After a day, victims can, by means of their inherent fortitude, break the curse on their own. Failure sees them dealing with the curse for another day, plus they begin to have issues with agility due to having an increasingly unclear mind. Such losses to dexterity and their ability to process the world around them mount until lasting sleep is achieved by the curse being removed or running out, or these losses can stop if magically- or herbally-induced deep slumber occurs and lasts for eight hours or more.

There are more, Elminster warns, that he's still learning about. He added that he's far more interested in tracking down a copy of one of Velarr's protection spells that cause curses to rebound—but thus far, such magic still eludes him.

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