

20 Ways to Identify Cursed Items

(without using Identify spells)

For OSR adventures

- [1] Submerge the item in holy water. If the water starts to boil, it's cursed.
- [2] Pop a pimple after sleeping with the item under your pillow for three nights. If a black worm crawls out of your pimple, it's cursed.
- [3] Present a small item to an all-white, thievish ferret. If the ferret shuns it, it's cursed.
- [4] Use prestidigitation on the item with a bunch of other normal items and make them enact a famous play. If the item takes up the role of the villain, it's cursed.
- [5] Leave the item alone in a room full of dolls. If any of the dolls moved when you weren't looking, it's cursed.
- [6] Threaten to smash the item with a hammer, but don't follow up on it. If the hammer is broken or stolen in the next few days, it's cursed.
- [7] Have someone with little to no arithmetic skill do equations on parchment nearby the item. If their numbers keep coming up as unlucky or bad numbers (13, 666, etc.), it's cursed.
- [8] Put the item in the cow shed. If the cows give spoiled milk straight from the udder, it's cursed.
- [9] Put the item in the chicken coop that is raising chicks. If the mother hen starts pecking the eyes out of the chicks, it's cursed bad!
- [10] Get a poet to write a short poem or song about the item. If their later work becomes troubled with dark dreams and a sick muse, it's cursed.
- [11] Look at the item. If it's adorned with skulls and horns and painted black, it's probably cursed.
- [12] Draw a face with a neutral expression and place the item over the drawing. Show the drawing to people who haven't seen it before and ask them what expression the face is making. If they say 'despair' or 'pained', it's cursed.
- [13] Wave a garland of rubies and emeralds with a silver chain over the item. If the rubies whisper to you in your dreams, it's not cursed. But if the emeralds do, it is.
- [14] If the item is small enough to be carried by a single bird; tie or attach the item to a bird and let it free. If you find the bird and item disemboweled on your front step, it's cursed.
- [15] Paint a portrait of the item. If the portrait becomes bad luck to any room or person who owns it, the original item is cursed.
- [16] Wave a wooden switch over the item and use it to beat a disobedient child. If the child continues to rebel, the item is cursed.
- [17] Find the monks of Treblell. They will examine your item and sing a long and winding song, and if one of their members loses their voice permanently, then the item is cursed. They charge a hefty sum, but a lot less than what you'd hope.
- [18] Whenever a black moon rises hold the item to the sky in reverence. If you are struck by lightning by the true gods for your heresy, it's cursed.
- [19] Leave the item on the floor with some crumbs around it. When ants come, examine their behavior. If some ants begin to abandon their queen and behead other ants and stack those heads near the item as a shrine to the item, it's cursed.
- [20] Have a prepubescent girl urinate on the item while hanging holly leaves around your house. If a werewolf comes next full moon, the item is cursed. Don't give the item to him, give him the child instead.