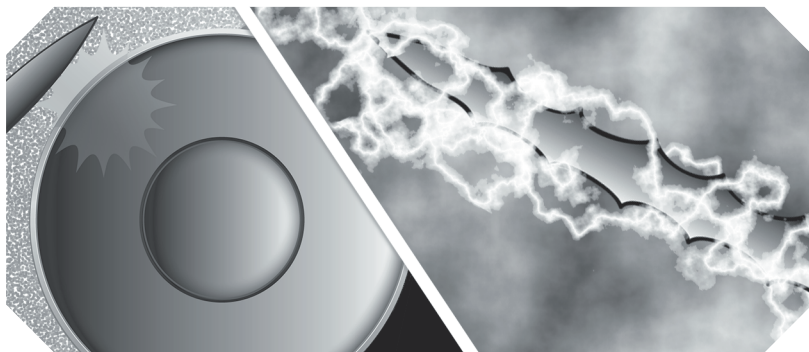


GURPS[®]

Fourth Edition

DUNGEON FANTASY TREASURES[™] 4

MIXED BLESSINGS[™]



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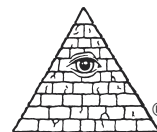
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INTRODUCTION

An object that destroys its owner without providing them with some benefit is a trap, not treasure.

– **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8: Treasure Tables**

Every delver loves artifacts that aren't standard magic items – treasures that cannot be explained solely (or perhaps at all) in terms of common enchantments. Adventurers take pride in owning something rare or unique: “Yeah, yeah, *you* have a fine broadsword that glows. *I* own the Flashing Sunblade!” Bragging rights have a power all their own.

The problem is that while standard enchantments are part of a system with numerous built-in controls – starting with “requires mana or sanctity to work” and “costs a fortune to commission” – one-off artifacts raise the specter of special cases and its nasty cousin, the Demon of Ultimate Power. In the hands of players pursuing the path of the munchkin, such things can lead to power creep that starts out fun but quickly spirals out of control. Though this is to some extent expected in dungeon-crawling games, it's usually checked by another tradition . . .

One-off artifacts don't always play fair.

Sometimes, they're outright *cursed*. That's a perilous path as well, though. Throw too many purely vexatious items at the delvers and the players will take to running a battery of tests on every treasure the heroes find (which disrupts the flow of the game), avoiding loot other than coins and gems they can exchange for standard, “safe” magic items back in town (which is boring), or quitting (which is of course worst of all).

GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Treasures 4: Mixed Blessings offers an alternative: One-off items that are definitely useful and not strictly cursed . . . but that come with built-in checks and balances that *also* exist outside the standard enchantment system. Everything here can be handed out “as is,” varied, or used as inspiration for the GM's creations.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985 and ended up as **GURPS** Line Editor in 1995. In that capacity, he has written, edited, or contributed to hundreds of **GURPS** releases, revised

the game into its fourth edition (2004), and been a regular contributor to *Pyramid* magazine. From 2008, he has served as lead creator of the **GURPS Action** and **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy** series; work on the latter led to his design of the **Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game**, released in 2017. Sean has been a gamer since 1979, but devotes most of his spare time to Argentine tango. He lives in Montréal, Québec with *son amour*, Geneviève.

ABOUT GURPS

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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

Variations

- The basic Scalpel inflicts 3d and then heals twice that, restoring on average 3d HP at modest risk of death for the badly hurt. Variants may require and heal other amounts – the greater the healing, the higher the risk of killing the injured!

- The Scalpel needn't work for just anybody. It may require a Surgery roll even the first time each day, restricting use to skilled healers. It could be nothing but a sharp blade in the hands of those without Power Investiture. Maybe both.

- There's reputedly a Sickle of Life: a very fine sickle that works only for those with Power Investiture (Druidic). This requires Esoteric Medicine (Druidic) or Veterinary rolls for repeated applications. It does swing+2 cutting, weighs 2 lbs., doesn't count as a holy symbol, and holds 7 FP as a power item.

Ouch!

Power Item: 7 FP

Suggested Origins: Magical.

Not all novel enchantments work *quite* as intended. The enchanter of this magical knife originally dubbed it "Amputator," but an unfortunate experience while showing it off to a potential customer ended in him shrieking, "Ouch!" That's the name that stuck.

Properties

- *Blade Quality:* Treat Ouch! as a very fine large knife for all purposes (+2 to damage and -2 to breakage).

- *Limb-Seeker.* Attacks on enemy *arms* and *hands* ignore the usual penalty to hit that body part.

- *Overwhelming Riposte.* Ouch! was designed to be the "ultimate parrying dagger," a main-gauche that doesn't merely ward off attacks, but also disarms the attacker – literally and permanently. On the user's turn immediately after successfully using Ouch! to parry an attack, they can attack any arm or hand their attacker used in the parried attack, still at no penalty for hit location. If the attack roll succeeds and the target fails to defend, roll damage as usual. If even 1 point of damage penetrates DR, the body part is crippled; if this would require more injury than was inflicted, increase the wound to that level. For instance, if the target has HP 22, the "injury over HP/2" needed to cripple the arm is 12 HP, so Ouch! would do at least that much injury when retaliating against an arm.

- *Paid for in Blood:* Ouch!'s affinity for arms and hands can get, er, out of hand. On *any* critical failure while attacking or parrying with it, don't roll on the *Critical Miss Table* – the result is always "5." Roll 1d: On 1-4, Ouch! inflicts its usual cutting damage (even if making an impaling attack) to the wielder's other arm; on 5-6, it does this to their other hand. If this damage penetrates DR, it works as above, crippling the body part. Oh, and Luck cannot affect any aspect of this!

Weight: 1 lb.

MIXING A NICE, STRONG BLESSING

Double-edged artifacts offer upsides entangled with downsides. The good ought to be attractive enough that at least *some* players are willing to put up with the bad, which in turn shouldn't be easily circumvented – although that doesn't necessarily mean there are no workarounds! Exploiting loopholes is a hallowed munchkin tradition, but doing so should have a cost more serious than just spending FP (which might also be necessary); e.g., learning a rarely used spell and spending FP on *that*, or investing points in other abilities.

Upsides and downsides needn't balance. The two may differ so much that any comparison is apples to oranges. Even when balance can be defined, there's the question of "For who?" – utility varies from user to user. Indeed, clear, universal balance isn't the best goal. Treasures that are *almost* worthless but frustratingly handy enough to keep, or *almost* wondrous but annoying enough not to be used full-time, are the most interesting ones, because they force adventurers to plan and make choices!

Some examples, which are by no means mutually exclusive:

Benefits the user's foes as well as the user. The Changeling Blanket (pp. 3-4), for instance, provides invisibility that also blinds the user, and two-way silence. The owner of such an artifact generally controls it, allowing them to "cherry pick" moments when it benefits *them* more. That's fine!

Confers advantages alongside disadvantages. The Beast Suit (p. 3) and Devil's Horns (p. 4) are examples. If the advantages aren't "always on," it's fairest if the disadvantages apply only when the advantages do. Fairness isn't mandatory, of course.

Does more harm than good if the user isn't careful, skilled, or just lucky. For instance, the Lifesaving Scalpel (pp. 6-7) can kill in the act of healing, especially in the hands of a non-surgeon; Ouch! (below) is dangerous to those who critically fail often, like risk-taking and low-skill users; and the Shield of Sacrifice (pp. 9-10) saves allies, but is hazardous to bearers without excellent active defenses.

Grants assistance at a high price, paid by whoever benefits. Like the Ring of Degeneration (pp. 8-9), which heals the wearer but slowly kills them unless they occasionally spend character points on HT. Or the Rod of Resuscitation (p. 9), which resurrects the dead but leaves the patient permanently weakened.

Hard to use. Consider the Ultimate Weapon (p. 10), which provides significant benefits but forces the wielder to fight at a penalty and without the aid of several useful combat advantages.

Indiscriminate. The Crackling Blade (p. 4) offers a classic example, zapping target and wielder alike! Savvy users will take steps to immunize themselves.

Makes it difficult or impossible to benefit from other equipment. For example, the Devil's Horns and Headsman's Hood (p. 6) make wearing a helmet tricky, while the Faerie Britches (p. 5) complicate wearing *any* armor.

Requires the user to accept some other inconvenience to gain benefits. The Changeling Blanket depends on assuming a tactically unfavorable posture; the Headsman's Hood aids only those who accept blindness; a fighter in Plodding Plate (p. 8) must shlep extreme weight; and so on.

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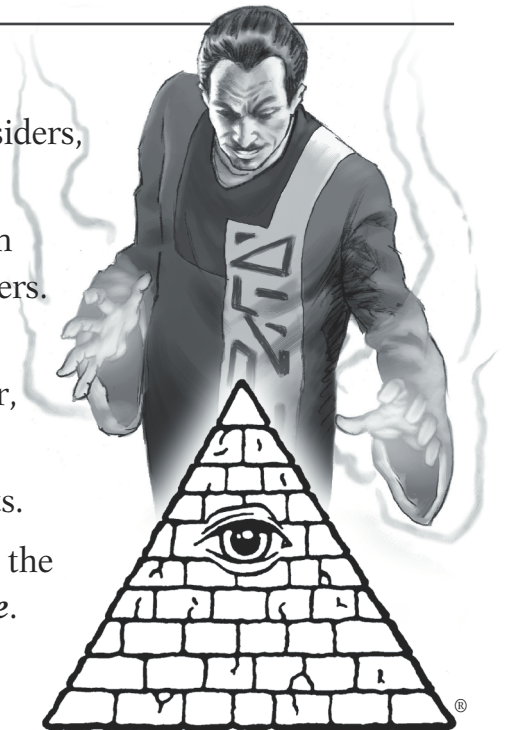
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