

# Amulet of the Virtuous Heart

(*Nigel Ward*)

This benign-sounding necklace is created by ancient and blasphemous magic through a vile and murderous ritual. The amulet takes the form of a small white, vaguely heart-shaped “hag stone”, i.e., a stone with a hole bored through the middle, and is of little obvious value. Its power is of use only to unholy creatures (supernatural, infernal, or undead beings). The amulet renders the wearer immune from being driven off by the sight of a crucifix or other holy symbol, grants the ability to traverse sacred or hallowed ground and to cross running water, and renders the wearer immune to being exorcised or injured by holy water or relics.

Fortunately, the duration of the protective immunity granted by the amulet is temporary, limited to 1d6 hours. Whilst the wearer will not be entirely certain how long their protection will last, the stone will slowly turn from a milky quartz-like white to smoky black as its power wears off – giving some sense of how long the protection will last. Once expired the amulet remains merely an ugly lump of black stone, lacking the traditional powers (e.g., to see invisible creatures) often associated with hag stones.

The ritual of creating the amulet requires a “pure and virtuous” victim (often a child) to bore a hole through the stone. The depraved creator must then recite certain ancient spells whilst heating the stone in a blazing fire. Finally, they quench the scalding hot stone in the lifeblood of their unfortunate victim – whom they must slay with their own hand to gather the blood at the moment of quenching. Given the manner of its creation, only the most vile and wicked sorcerer would contemplate creating this corrupt bauble.

The origin of this ghastly necklace is lost in the mists of time, but it was certainly known to nefarious magicians from bygone eras. Papyrus fragments, attributed to the great wizard Chefru, suggest an unnamed undead enchanter used such an amulet to enter a sacred Temple of K'nemu in ancient Kaikuhuru. Closer to home, ancient Lughwyd texts mention a traitorous Madhir druid offering such a charm to a troll-Queen in exchange for an unspecified boon. More recently, certain Church scholars speculate that the attempted pillaging of relics from the Church of St Sebastiano in Ferromaine a few years past was carried out by a hellion-possessed minor cousin of the Senfriti family protected by such an amulet. However, money buys many things, including urgent repairs to the church and the silence of the stalwart band of pilgrim knights who successfully defended the church from the infernal assault at great peril.

**Adventure hook:** The PCs are employed to help transport the young daughter of a wealthy merchant to reside with her aunt before her father embarks upon a lengthy trade voyage. A vile necromancer seeks to kidnap the girl to use her to create an amulet. If they succeed, clues will lead to the sorcerer; if they fail, they will face a desperate race against time to stop the murderous ritual from taking place.

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