

The Great Pestilence The Black Death The Great Mortality

*"So many died, they believed it was the end of the world."
Agnola di Tura, Siena (Italy), 1357.*

Plague. Few words in any language conjure such feelings of dread and fear as this doom-laden word. Plague has the power to devastate entire civilizations, causing unimaginable suffering as it lays waste to the smallest village and the greatest city alike. As well as an almost unparalleled destructive force, plague can also be an agent of change, allowing a GM to usher in a new age into his campaign.

Plague is packed full of information about how a GM can integrate a plague into his campaign either as the subject of a single adventure or as the focus of an entire campaign:

- Discusses how plague begins, how it ravages villages, towns or even entire continents, and what it leaves behind.
- Presents five savage diseases, four templates, four monsters and The Mottled Lord, God of Disease.
- Details a host of new locations, NPCs, rituals, magic items, and more!

Whether a GM is preparing for a new edition or simply desires making wholesale changes to

Plague



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Table of Contents

Foreward	2	Chapter Five: GM's Toolkit	22
Chapter One: Plague Genesis	4	A Torrent of Death	22
Chapter Two: In Plague's Grip.....	9	Skill Challenges	24
Chapter Three: Aftermath	13	New Templates	26
Chapter Four: Player's Toolkit.....	17	New God.....	29
New Equipment	17	New Artifact.....	30
New Magic Items.....	17	New Monsters	31
New Rituals	20	Plague Locations.....	33
		Plague NPCs	37
		Glossary	39

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Foreword



he Great Pestilence. The Black Death. The Great Mortality. Few events in the history of the world awaken such feelings of dread, fear, and impending doom as the arrival of plague. Plague can ravage whole nations or continents, devastating populations, annihilating communities and shattering the rule of law. In the grip of a truly virulent contagion, economies crumble, chaos reigns, and society

irrevocably changes as the survivors emerge into a quieter, emptier world. Particularly savage outbreaks can topple city-states, kingdoms, and even empires, plunging whole regions into anarchy and war.

Plague is a killer on a truly epic scale, responsible for more deaths, misery, and suffering than all but the most genocidal and hard-fought of wars. Even the foulest atrocities of the most energetic and black-hearted of tyrants pale into insignificance compared to the destructive might of the plague.

A society gripped by plague descends into a nightmare from which death is the most common deliverance. The sick are shut up in their homes to die, graveyards overflow, neighbors turn against one another, and parents abandon their infected children to die. Trade and industry cease as survivors limit their exposure to the afflicted in a desperate bid for survival. Taverns, pubs, and other places of public assembly close while those lucky enough to escape infection pray to the gods for deliverance. In short order, public services – such as they are – are overwhelmed and collapse. Law and order breaks down, refuse and the bodies of the dead litter the streets, and the essential business of the land grinds to a halt.

As the plague rampages through the streets, the afflicted die in ever-increasing numbers. As is typical in such situations, it is the poor that suffer the most, dying in their thousands. Those with the funds, or the means, flee; some already carry the contagion and spread it into the surrounding countryside gifting previously untouched settlements with misery, suffering, and death. The rich retreat to their country estates, pay clerics to provide the much coveted Remove Disease ritual, or isolate themselves behind high walls, praying for deliverance.

Hysteria, persecution, and bigotry stalk the streets. The strain of living in such conditions drives many unfortunates mad, while others seek scapegoats upon which to vent their anger and frustration. Minority groups and followers of certain gods are both fair game to such people. Public lynchings and murder become commonplace as people seek to protect themselves, placate the angry gods responsible for this terrible pestilence, or take advantage of the chaos to right old wrongs or use it as an excuse for personal gain.

In the bleakest depths of this nightmare, charlatans offer hope in the form of expensive elixirs and cure-alls guaranteed to heal the imbibed, if only the purchaser can afford it. Alongside such odious individuals the few clerics and apothecaries that have not fled labor to control the outbreak and to cure the infected. Without an understanding of basic hygiene and virology, however, such efforts are all but useless. Without restorative magic, most of the afflicted are inevitably doomed to suffer a lonely, drawn-out, and agonizing death.

Eventually the contagion burns itself out or moves on, leaving shattered villages, towns, and cities in its wake. The survivors emerge to a completely different world. In cases of severe plague, the old social order disintegrates. Fields lie fallow, cattle wander untended, villages are slowly abandoned, food is scarce, and the survivors'

For four years between 1347 and 1351, the Black Death stalked across Europe mercilessly savaging villages, towns, and cities. In its wake, it left a trail of death and suffering unparalleled in human history until the titanic battles of World War II six centuries later. Europe became a charnel house. Over the next hundred years or so, as successive waves of disease savaged the continent, millions died either by contracting the plague or as a direct result of the chaos and social upheaval that followed. Conservative estimates place Europe's death toll at somewhere between one-third and one-half of its entire population, while other, more apocalyptic accounts suggest that up to 75% of the population died. In China, during approximately the same period, the population fell from approximately 120 million to 60 million.

quality of life plummets as they struggle merely to survive. In such conditions, opportunists are quick to strike, staking claim to, or buying up at ludicrously low prices, vast swathes of land. Such developments can spell the death knell of the established order as the balance of power within society shifts.

Plague is also a catalyst of change, and some good can come from the unspeakable suffering and torment. Epidemics and pandemics are often followed by periods of unbridled creativity and advancement. Technological and magical advancements improve the lot of the common folk, while society often enjoys something of a renaissance as the old ways are cast aside in favor of new traditions, laws, and values. Wealth and land are redistributed into fewer hands, meaning that after some short-term deprivation the general standard of living increases dramatically. During such times of change, opportunities abound for social advancement or general enrichment. When the plague struck, PCs could be but landless adventurers no different than many thousands of others roaming the land. After the plague relinquishes its ebon grasp, however, they could have risen to prominence perhaps becoming great merchants, renowned champions of good, or even nobles holding high title and great estates.

Three Caveats

Plague explores the effects of a powerful contagion upon a fantasy medieval society and provides GMs with the tools for using a plague as an exciting backdrop or as the driving force in a campaign. However, when reading this sourcebook, the GM should keep three things in mind.

Caveat One

This sourcebook is not an in-depth treatise on the epidemiology of plague. Rather it streamlines the concept of plague to enable fast and enjoyable game play without bogging the GM down with such details as the exact species of rat believed to carry the plague-carrying fleas or the reason why one kind of plague mutates into another.

For example, during the Black Death different varieties of the plague – bubonic, pneumonic, and septicemic – had different mortality rates, infection methods, and origins. While the exact bacterial differences between the various types of plague is no doubt fascinating, this level of realism is not required, or even desirable, at the game



fail often leaves a bad taste in the players' mouths. That said, plague is also an agent of change. If you want to shake up your campaign or prepare for a new game system or edition, a plague can be just the thing to explain the mechanical changes "in game."

How To Use This Supplement

To make full use of *Plague*, the GM needs the D&D 4E *PLAYER'S HANDBOOK*, D&D 4E *DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE*, and D&D 4E *MONSTER MANUAL* while a players needs only the D&D 4E *Player's Handbook*. A short glossary (page 39) presents brief definitions of the plague-specific terminology used in this sourcebook.

This supplement comprises five chapters each of which deals with a separate aspect of plague. Throughout the work are sidebars with germane historic incidents illustrating the effects of plague in the real world as well as helpful tools to use in conjunction with this work.

table. Having an outbreak of septicemic plague, widely regarded as the deadliest of plagues, because "that's what would happen in the real world" is not the best reason to inflict such an outbreak on your campaign. While it has its place in the game, a contagion with a mortality rate of nigh 100% and the ability to kill its host in less than 24 hours is not something to which you would necessarily expose a PC (short of terminally stupid where the PC deliberately exposed himself) unless you are seeking to transition your campaign in a major way. After all, falling before the mighty blows of a fire giant king, while not ideal, is acceptable to many players while dying because you failed at a number of very hard Endurance checks is not.

Caveat Two

A certain amount of controversy in academic circles currently surrounds the exact nature of the Black Death. The overwhelming weight of scientific argument blames fleas carried by rats as the carriers of the deadly contagion, but Susan Scott and Christopher Duncan in their book *Return of the Black Death* recently argued that the Black Death was in fact an outbreak of haemorrhagic plague. This sourcebook does not attempt to weigh the validity of these opposing arguments. Rather, it shows how you, the GM, can introduce a plague into his campaign in an exciting and quasi-realistic fashion. For GMs who seek even more verisimilitude, or who want to do further background reading to make their own minds up on the rights and wrongs of the various arguments, a list of good books on the subject appears in Further Reading.

Caveat Three

A GM should be extremely careful before unleashing a plague into his campaign world. While initially it can seem like a really cool idea, if left unchecked through PC inaction or quest failure, it can destroy years of careful campaign building or require a massive amount of deus ex machine on the part of the GM to put matters right. Consider the implications carefully as having NPCs save the day after the PCs

- **Chapter One** presents information on how plagues spread across a continent.
- **Chapter Two** provides a view of how the onslaught of a virulent plague affects a society.
- **Chapter Three** details the aftermath of a plague; how it changes the structure and ethos of a society, and so on.
- **Chapter Four** presents new equipment (both magical and mundane) as well as new rituals.
- **Chapter Five** details a number of fully fleshed out encounters and NPCs for use in a plague campaign as well as presenting five plagues; new monsters; templates; and a new god – The Mottled Lord – and his fell artifact, the *Ebon Shroud*.

Real World Knowledge vs. Game Play

It is possible that your players' real-world knowledge may influence their in-game actions; for example, when the plague strikes perhaps "inspiration" strikes and they start to slaughter all the rats they can find in a given community. This isn't necessarily a disaster because the GM is under no compulsion to have the plague savaging his campaign world be an exact carbon copy of the historical plague. Thus, while it is a generally accepted fact that bubonic plague was spread by fleas carried on rats, in the GM's world it could be the fleas of the common housecat or dog. In rural communities, horses, cattle, or even pigs could carry the deadly fleas. Indeed, in a fantasy campaign dense patches of rotten air or a rare alignment of celestial bodies could spawn plagues. Remember this is a fantasy game; don't let real-world biology dictate in-game fun (unless it suits your tastes!)

Chapter One: Plague Genesis



plague can enter a society through one or more of the following routes: migration, natural disaster, trade, war, or magical attack. In many cases, a combination of events triggers an outbreak. For example, perhaps an earthquake or volcanic eruption triggers an outbreak of plague, which the survivors then transmit to visiting merchants. Those merchants return

home and spread it to their families who in turn infect their acquaintances. As the tide of infection ripples outwards in many cases it is impossible to tell how a plague takes hold in a given family or neighborhood. This chapter discusses each of the infection methods in turn.

With the exception of a magical plague deliberately introduced into a society, plagues do not simply spontaneously erupt. Naturally occurring plagues (that is those not created by magic) often start out in some remote area of the world before slowly migrating across nations and continents savaging all in its path.

As the first rumors swirl around taprooms and marketplaces describing terrible events in far off lands, few show any real concern. After all, how could events hundreds, or even thousands, of miles away affect life in the locality? In societies where most people live and die without travelling more than a score of miles from their home, nations hundreds or thousands of miles away seem impossibly distant and all but unreachable. However, as the plague approaches a community, the level of concern it spawns increases. While it may take many months – or even years in some cases – for a plague to reach a given community, there is little that the populace can do to prepare for its assault beyond fleeing. Before the plague itself reaches a community, survivors of villages and towns already ravaged by it may arrive like harbingers of doom. In many cases, this is the means by which plague enters an otherwise uninfected settlement. The lurid tales of death and suffering on a terrifying scale serve to further inflame the populace's fears perhaps leading to riots, persecution, or mass hysteria.

In general, when considering how to introduce plague into your game world, keep in mind that a contagion (with the exception of those created by magic) requires a host to transport it. This principle remains the same whether the plague has a particularly long incubation period (in which case humans can carry it long distances before succumbing) or if it kills relatively quickly (making its progression across a continent far slower). In many cases, both humans and a particular kind of animal (or its fleas) can spread the disease. Of course, plague travels much further if it manages to take hold in a seaport. In campaign with high levels of magic, hubs of magical transport – locations with permanent teleportation circles and such like – serve to spread plague over huge distances extremely quickly.

War

War is an efficacious catalyst for plague. Not only are the agents of war a mobilized force that travel long distances, war has a habit of creating many of the ideal conditions in which a contagion can spread. Dead bodies litter the countryside as skirmishes and battles drive large bodies of people back and forth across the landscape. Other people are forced to live in confined spaces when attackers besiege castles or settlements. Buildings – and in exceptional circumstances entire villages or towns – are damaged or destroyed and food supplies are either seized

Although the plague progressed quickly through the countryside, a wave of people fleeing its effects often gave warning to communities in its path days, or even weeks, before it actually arrived in all its malign glory. With little practical preparations to make, those dwelling in its path had little to do but wait, worry, and pray.

In European history, the main conduit for plague into mainland Europe was the siege of the Genoese city of Caffa in the Crimea by a Tartar army in 1347. While the plague almost certainly entered the continent in other places around the same time, the savage fighting in the Crimea served as the catalyst for the plague to burst into Europe.

While no complete accounts of the fighting survive, legend has it that the siege of Caffa saw one of the first ever instances of biological warfare when the Tartars catapulted corpses of their plague-dead into the city. The survivors of that terrible conflict took to their ships and retreated to the European mainland bring with them tales of slaughter and death. Unbeknownst to them, they also brought with them plague.

When officials made the connection between Genoese ships sailing from Caffa and the outbreak of plague they took strenuous measures to expel said vessels from their harbors. In many cases, their precautions came too late with plague beginning to ravage the population shortly afterwards. Expelled vessels wandered the Mediterranean moving from port to port until inattentive harbor masters granted them entry or until all their crew were dead. Some of the vessels were found washed up and abandoned along Europe's coastline while others disappeared into legend, their fate unknown.

by the enemy or destroyed. Displaced persons, deserters, or stragglers wander the countryside looking for food or a safe place to rest

War also disrupts the essential business of the harvest and brings trade to a virtual standstill (both of which can lead to widespread starvation.) Additionally, numerous studies have shown that high levels of stress - endemic during times of war – can depress immune systems, making such individuals more susceptible to disease.

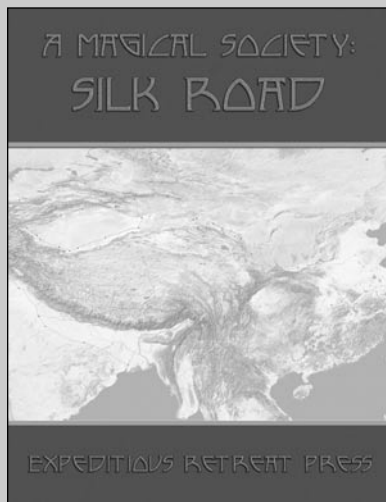
Land-based Trade

Trade is often the engine that spreads plague. Well-established trade routes running through peaceful areas provide the means by which infected persons or goods can travel long distances in relative safety. Only merchants trading highly portable, valuable items such as precious gems, spices, and so on use magic to speed their travel. Those dealing in heavier or bulky items, though, travel only at the speed of a horse-drawn cart. This means that plague travels slowly and predictably along such routes, devastating one village or trade stop at a time before spreading out along the network of secondary roads and tracks to shatter surrounding communities.

Such slow progress gives plenty of time for communities in the path of the plague to prepare for its arrival, if anyone actually heeds the warnings carried by surviving travelers. However, many if not

In medieval Europe, it took 8-12 months to travel from China to the Crimea, but within a decade the plague had visited almost every region of Eurasia. Although the plague slowly crept across the sparsely inhabited steppes, once it reached Europe's densely populated heartlands it raced through the populace.

A Magical Society: Silk Road by Suzi Yee presents in detail how a trade route operates, what factors engender great overland trade routes, what elements accompany their existence, and how caravans function on historic and fantasy terrains. *A Magical Society: Silk Road* (also produced by Expedition Retreat Press) is available as a book at FLGS and at www.XRPshop.citymax.com, as well as a PDF from www.YourGamesNow.com.



all communities on a trade route rely on the travelling merchants for their very survival. Such communities – except in the direst circumstances – are unlikely to turn away a seemingly healthy merchant and his entourage. The demand for rare and exotic goods and the greed of merchants may stymie officials from enacting any truly effective countermeasure until too late. Even when the danger is fully recognized, avarice or vested interest may foil attempts to enable sensible or effective preparations. There are always those in a community ready to bend or break quarantine for monetary gain. Once the plague gets a foothold in a community there is rarely anything that can be done to halt the ensuing onslaught of death and suffering.

Sea-based Trade

The passage of merchant vessels is far less predictable than that of land-bound traders. Once a vessel sets sail it can essentially end up at almost any port. Vessels carrying plague, however, tend to be limited to ports within relatively short sailing distances. This is because there is a limit to how far an infected crew can sail a ship before there are not enough healthy sailors left to crew the vessel. In such a closed environment, it is virtually impossible to escape infection for any length of time.

Travelling aboard ship, plague can leapfrog along a continent's coastline possibly even infecting multiple ports before infection renders the crew incapable of further progress.

Even when the crew is all dead, the ship can still infect others. Vessels run aground are traditionally a rich source of loot for those living in nearby communities. News of such a ship likely results in a



stampede of peasants intent on carrying away anything of value. Even when the first eager looters clamber on board they may not realize that something is terribly wrong. As they move through the vessel, however, they inevitably come across bodies of the plague dead, possibly becoming infected themselves. Even then, unobservant, stupid, or desperate looters may still remove trade goods, personal possessions, and so on from the ship further increasing the chance of their own infection.

Migration

Migration can carry plague extremely long distances. Wherever large groups of people move, disease lurks ready to strike, especially if the migration results in the co-mingling of people from two different germ pools. In particular, if the migrating people have a full or partial immunity to the disease they carry, they can travel incredible distances before they succumb to the contagion (if they ever do).

Migrating peoples, particularly if they travel in large numbers, have an imperative to reach land upon which they can settle quickly; thus, they move as swiftly as possible. Large groups can also strip bare the countryside of food and other consumables. Such activity is a powerful incentive for them to move quickly to their destination, as is the ire of those already dwelling in the area whose livelihoods they endanger. Remember, migration is often the impetus and result of war, which further improves the conditions in which plague revels.

Migration is also an excellent way to introduce new races and cultures into your campaign. A new race could suddenly appear in the borderlands of an established kingdom after fleeing some terrible enemy or cataclysmic natural disaster. Migration, for the same reasons, can also happen across the planes giving the GM the opportunity to introduce more exotic races into his campaign (such as tieflings or dragonborn) if he so wishes.



Finally, of course, one of the natural reactions to the impending wave of death howling at a nation's borders is for some of the populace to flee. Not all of those taking evasive action, however, will be free of the plague and so they infect more refugees and communities as they flee. All but the most disorganized communities turn away anyone obviously suffering of plague and so the countryside begins to fill up with corpses as those with nowhere else to go, dying in ever greater numbers in hedgerows, fields, and woodlands.

Natural Disaster

Outbreaks of plague often seem to presages or follow swiftly upon the heels of natural disaster, intensifying the effects of plague for the inhabitants of the area. Earthquakes, volcano eruptions, floods, periods of torrential rain or baking drought, and so on can all create perfect breeding conditions for plague. Such calamities upset the natural ecosystem, destroy crops, throw society into confusion, and cause death on a massive scale. They also often spawn conflict as survivors desperately struggle to secure any remaining resources – particularly food and water. Neighbors may turn on each other in their bid to provide for their families while villages or towns may deploy their militias to take what is “rightfully theirs.” In extreme cases, armies may march to war to defend their land, territory, or precious remaining natural resources.

Magic

Magic is the great wild card in determining how plague ravages a society. Magic can simultaneously help and hinder the spread of plague or even be the agency of its rise. The amount of magic and the ease with which the populace can access it has a dramatic effect upon the ease of which any plague crosses a continent or nation. The effect of magic on plague is further discussed in Chapter Two.

Disease killed huge numbers of Americans after European and African settlers arrived bringing with them a plethora of new diseases to which the indigenous population had no resistance or immunity. In some areas, this avalanche of new diseases killed up to 90% of the population. Reliable figures are impossible to come by, but some scholars believe that this catastrophe exceeded the suffering and death caused by the Black Death.

When plague struck Cyprus in the summer of 1347, a particularly powerful earthquake compounded the inhabitants' suffering. The resultant tidal wave “as high as a cathedral's spire” inundated much of the island, dashed entire fishing fleets to pieces and destroyed many precious olive groves – one of the cornerstones of the island's economy. Finally, a “pestiferous wind spread so poisonous an odor that many, being overpowered by it, fell down suddenly and expired in dreadful agonies.” Reeling from these four terrible disasters, the Cypriots became terrified that their many Arab slaves would rise up in a bid for freedom and thus massacred them in their hundreds.

In Europe, around the time of the plague, volcanic eruptions were reported in Italy, earthquakes struck Italy, Austria and Cyprus, major floods inundated Germany and France, while a tidal wave battered Cyprus. Huge swarms of locusts were also reported in Poland!

Canton and Houkouang in China were alternatively lashed by torrential rain and baked by long droughts. In Honan, a swarm of locust was reportedly so massive that it blocked out the sun itself! Worse was to come. Months later, a powerful earthquake buried part of the city of Kingsai and tore a hole large enough to create a lake 300 miles long in the mountains of Ki-ming-chan.

Exploration and Travel Rituals

Magic provides the means for individuals to move long distances in the blink of an eye; thus it can both speed the pace of a plague's spread across a kingdom or continent and provide early warning of impending doom.

Even low-level rituals provide the ability to move quickly. Phantom Steed, for example, provides up to eight mounts that last for half a day. If the individual casting the ritual makes a high enough Arcana check, the mounts gain additional powers, such as ignoring difficult terrain, moving on water as if it were solid ground or even flying. With a top speed of 20 (100 ft.), the steeds can move immense distances – in the best cases over 100 miles – before the ritual ends. Water Walk is perhaps the least powerful of the various exploration rituals as its short duration limits the distance affected individuals can travel. However, it could potentially allow travel to islands up to five miles distant.

Similarly, Shadow Walk effectively quintuples the movement speed of all participants allowing (potentially) large numbers of individuals to move great distances during its eight-hour duration. If the participants really push themselves they could conceivably move 60 – 70 miles a day using this ritual.

Portals and teleportation circles are, however, the most dangerous magic when considering the spread of plague. Major cities often have many permanent teleportation circles which allow the plague to jump huge distances in the blink of an eye. Individuals that know the Linked Portal or Planar Portal rituals can link to these permanent teleportation circles, traveling to them instantaneously. Although, these rituals only open a portal for a brief space of time, an epidemic only requires a single infected individual to get up and running. The most powerful of all travel rituals is True Portal. Those powerful individuals who master this high-level ritual have the ability to transport themselves to almost any point in the known world.

Finally, the Sending ritual, while it does not permit movement, does allow the user to send messages and warnings pertaining to the plague's progress across great distances. Such first-hand reporting could provide the impetus for a community to prepare for the worst.



Worshippers of Disease

The evil and/or mad necromancer tinkering with cadavers in his subterranean laboratory is a staple of fantasy adventures. Heroic adventurers often encounter and slay such odious individuals in the course of their adventures battling past countless undead servitors to foil the evil mastermind's dire plots.

However, the danger of such villains increases manifold if instead of simply creating undead minions to hurl at the surrounding countryside, the necromancer infects his servants with plague. Infected thus (but themselves immune to the plague), the undead shamble into the countryside killing or infecting all they encounter. As the survivors flee, carrying news of these terrible depredations, they carry something with them far more deadly than fear: plague.

As word spreads of the undead infestation, adventurers no doubt descend on the locale to save the ordinary folk from the undead. If the plague has not yet taken hold in the local communities, the PCs are unlikely to realize the true gravity of the situation until too late. Indeed, in this situation, the adventurers may become infected as they battle the undead and the necromancer and ultimately may also be the ones to introduce the infection into the nearest town.

Even more terrifying, and infinitely more dangerous, than a lone necromancer are the organized, well-motivated followers of a disease god. Driven by religious fanaticism, radical sects of the priesthood seek not only to worship their divine patron, but also to introduce his "gift" to the general population. Such groups may coordinate their actions with other sects, meaning that plague could spring up in more than one place at once.

In a real nightmare scenario, the priesthood could be working at the behest of a neighboring power planning to take advantage of the disease ravaging the kingdom's heartlands to grab choice border provinces or other desirable possessions. In this situation, after the plague has ravaged a kingdom for several months its rivals (protected by the magic of their hirelings) cross the border in force. Of course, the followers of a disease god – invariably evil – could double-cross their employer, providing his troops with a false cure-all. As the invading forces succumb to the contagion, the survivors stagger back to their homeland taking the plague with them.

Chapter Five presents more details on the disease god and his followers.

It was a common belief in Norway and Sweden that the plague travelled the country in the guise of an old woman carrying a rake and broom. When she used her rake to spread the contagion, some people were lucky enough to survive, but when she used the brush, everyone in the locality died.

Myths & Superstitions

Common peasants often have no comprehension of the real causes of plague. Instead, they seek to rationalize the terrible events befalling them by falling back on established superstitions and traditions. It is unlikely, though, that one theory of the plague's origin will prevail across all facets of society. Superstitious peasants may believe that angry gods or demons are to blame, while learned sages may assert that a rare conjunction of planets is the real cause. Even among one segment of society views will vary wildly. For example, while one group of peasants may blame toxic, invisible vapors rising from the ground, another group may believe that an angry giant has cursed them because adventurers killed his son. Theories may also vary from village to village, causing some confusion on the part of travelers (and even possibly conflict between the two groups.)

When deciding on an individual's opinion on the origin of plague keep in mind his available pool of knowledge and frame of reference. Many individuals who espouse "truths" about the plague may do so for reasons of personal gain, further mudding the situation. For example, a cleric may believe that those transgressing his patron's divine edicts will be struck down by the disease (coincidentally increasing the size of his flock and the value of their offerings) while an astrologer may seek to secure greater funding so that he may further study the planets.

Remember also that magic, while it may not be ever-present, exists and that most people have seen it practiced at least once. The existence of mythical creatures and legendary individuals such as gods, heroes, and their nemesis are irrefutable. This makes it far easier for the average peasant to believe that the plague has its roots in magic. To such people, it is far more likely that angry gods, the insidious plots of some evil organization, or miasmas rising from deep caverns are to blame for the plague instead of the fleas carried by a particular kind of rat. Thus, when running a plague campaign feel free to invent any number of spurious origins for the plague. Indeed, in your campaign one of these origin theories may even be correct!



Signs from the Heavens

In a medieval society, many people believe that the heavens - and specifically the planets - have some influence over the course of events. To such people, the position of the planets and other heavenly bodies is a perfectly credible cause of plague. Unfortunately, the alignment of the planets is something that even the most powerful magic cannot influence. As such, this kind of pronouncement can lead to mass hysteria as the populace realizes that little can be done to avert a slow, torturous death. The appearance of a comet can also herald the arrival of plague. Such an evil omen is a powerful and highly visible sign of the gods' displeasure.

Miasmas

The idea that miasmas - dense, invisible foul-smelling clouds of infected or corrupted air - causes plague is a common one among superstitious peasants. Generally, miasmas were thought to comprise poisonous vapors given off by decomposing bodies and other tainted objects. Such clouds gathered in unhealthy places such as fetid swamps (areas of stagnant water were particularly dangerous) and in settlements ravaged by plague. Strong winds - whether naturally occurring or at the behest of some malign agency - were thought to spread the disease. Some individuals believed that the deeper one ventured into a miasma the greater the chance of contracting a terrible disease and the greater the suffering. When one reached the center of such a cloud, death was believed to be a virtual certainty. Refer to Chapter Five for details of a new monster, the Miasma.

Angry Gods

Gods get angry and when they are angry they smite sinners. Charismatic street-preachers or the leader of a countrywide religion could preach that humanity is responsible for the plague; they have broken one of their god's laws and now they are being punished through a divine curse. Such declarations tend to lead to outpourings of pious behavior and the foundation of radical and dangerous sects.

As their name suggests, the Flagellants were renowned for publically whipping themselves not only in a show of piety and devotion, but also in an attempt to expiate their sins. Extant before the Black Death struck Europe, the advent of plague brought about a new, more dangerous (and in the Church's view ultimately heretical) bent to their teachings. During the plague years, their numbers exploded, thousands joining the order and processing through the countryside and towns of Europe. In 1349, Pope Clement VI alarmed at their burgeoning power and influence ordered the sect suppressed. At the same time, ordinary people began to notice that the sect's practices and processions provided no defense against the plague; in fact, the flagellants sometimes were the very agency that introduced the plague into a community. Consequently, the sect's numbers rapidly dwindled, although it never completely died out.



Poison

In some cases, the populace can come to believe that someone is deliberately poisoning them. Groups in society that are particularly reviled or feared are often the targets for such accusations. Normally, such poison is added to wells, rivers, streams, and other sources of drinking water. If this kind of belief takes hold, it can lead to widespread persecution of the supposed culprits. If the accused group is not strong enough to protect itself, its members face exile or brutal deaths at the hands of a vengeful mob. Chapter Two covers this topic in more detail.

Mythical Creatures or People

Instead of a segment of society being blamed for the plague, a particular creature is identified as the culprit. Such creatures are invariably evil and are often an established enemy. If the creature blamed is an individual or unique being - perhaps an ancient dragon or other legendary creature - it is often very powerful. If a particular type of creature is blamed, perhaps the orcs of the West Mountains or other group, this belief can impel a society to wage bloody war against their enemy or to unleash a terrible magical attack of their own (if they have the resources).

William of Newburgh, a 12th-century English chronicler, related the story of an evil man who died without confessing, but who was given a Christian burial nonetheless. On subsequent nights, he rose as a vampire and stalked through the town, his rotting and putrefying flesh filling the air with a terrible plague that killed many of the townsfolk. Eventually, he was exhumed but before his horribly bloated corpse could be burnt it was struck with a spade and warm blood from the dead he had killed gushed out. When the corpse was burnt, the plague ended.

Chapter Two: In Plague's Grip



In this chapter, uncover the details on how a plague could ravage a fantasy medieval society and how its populace reacts to its depredations. This is perhaps the setting for the quintessential plague campaign. The PCs get to experience firsthand the terrible suffering wrought by the plague. In a normal campaign, once a party of adventurers retreats from the wilderness to the nearby town to

rest and reflect upon their experiences, they are for the most part safe. Of course, petty thieves and conmen will seek to lighten their purses, enemies may seek to shatter their reputations or end their lives, but generally speaking, centers of civilization are safe havens.

Nothing could be further from the truth in a world wracked by plague.

When the PCs finally win free of the wilderness and stagger back to town bearing their injured and the fruits of their labors – gold, gems, and even magic items – they no doubt dream of spending a few days resting in the local tavern carousing. Nothing they have experienced on their adventures could possibly prepare themselves for the scene of pure horror that greets them, though. As they approach the town gate, they may remark to themselves that few travelers are about and that the normal clamor of industry seems strangely muted, or may even be completely absent. The gates may be closed against them or just as likely they stand wide open, their guards dead or fled. Entering the town a terrible, almost apocalyptic sight meets their eyes. Where once crowds went about their business and heavily-laden wains bearing trade goods choked the streets, now only the desperate, the brave, or the truly altruistic dare to thread. The dead lie stark where they fell or are stacked like firewood waiting for someone to find the strength or courage to bury them. If the weather is not cold, the stench is unbearable. Stray dogs scour the streets in packs looking food, rats and other vermin are everywhere feasting on the many corpses lying scattered about.

Townfolk shun strangers, contact with such viewed as a virtual death sentence. Inns, taverns, and markets are all closed and other essential services are shut down. Tradesman, scholars and others of note refuse to see them no matter how much gold they offer and above all rises the wailing of widows and widowers mourning their loss.

Use the information in this chapter in conjunction with the NPCs and locations presented in Chapter Five to run an adventure or campaign gripped by plague.

Who Dies?

When plague strikes, the poor die in droves. Living in close proximity to one another in ramshackle dwellings without enough food to eat, they are easy prey for the voracious killer stalking through their midst. Without enough money to pay for the necessary rituals to protect or cure them, the appearance of the plague's symptoms is a virtual death sentence for them (and in many cases those around them too).

The wealthy and powerful, of course, often survive plague (particularly in a society with relatively easy access to magic) much easier than the peasants and serfs that work their lands. The wealthy have the means and the funds to flee the avalanche of death approaching, retiring to their country estates or simply paying to have the necessary rituals carried out. The nobility also finds survival easier

Plague rarely wiped out entire communities; normally anywhere between one third and two thirds of the populace died.

Exceptions exist, however. In the English town of Gloucester, for example, 90% of the population are said to have died – a truly apocalyptic death toll.

Small, isolated communities living in cramped conditions such as monasteries and castles also often suffered much higher death rates. During the Black Death, some monasteries and priories were all but wiped out with only a single survivor remaining. In such cases, the few survivors gained much from their ordeal being promoted to positions of importance when the community was properly reestablished.

In the case of the isolated mountain village of Tusedelal in Norway, when a rescue party finally reached the abandoned village they found but a single survivor – a little girl reduced to a savage existence, scavenging through the abandoned houses of the dead for scraps of food. Because she was the only survivor, subsequently she inherited much of the surrounding land and became very wealthy as a result.

to come by. As well as wealth, they command the obeisance of those around them and can also retreat to their fortified manor house or castles if the need becomes truly great. The death of a ruling monarch would be almost unheard of. Similarly powerful adventurers should be able to avoid death by plague with relative ease, particularly if they are affiliated with a particular faith or have a skilled cleric in the party.

An individual's profession also had a direct bearing on whether he lived or died. Those who came into contact with many people – traders, craftsmen, guards, and so on also had a higher than normal chance of contracting plague. Additionally, once plague gripped a particular settlement, someone had to deal with the detritus it left in its wake – suppurating corpses, infected homes and possessions, and so on. In villages and other rural locales a building could be burnt to the ground after all within had succumbed, but not so in a town or city. Someone had to remove the dead, convey them to a plague pit and inter them there. Such jobs were horrible, grizzly, and exceptionally dangerous. Many who took them up (probably for the high wages) themselves died of plague. Other professions that suffered higher than normal death rates included the clergy and others who stayed to tend the sick and notaries who carried out the vital work of witnessing wills and other legal documents.

Public Health Measures

As plague approaches forward-looking civic figures attempt to lessen the severity of the dying by enacting a number of measures lest their community be annihilated. Without large-scale use of magic, these rarely stop the plague in its tracks, although they can stem the tide of suffering if enacted quickly and forcibly. The mortality rates greatly increases if the town council (or other governing body) waits until the plague is established before putting in place public health measures.

In some settlements, the authorities take draconian steps to try to control the spread of plague. Such steps include imposing curfews; the closing of public places such as taverns, inns, theatres, and other places of business; enforcing the quarantine of the sick and those

Only one ruling European monarch died as a direct result of the plague. King Alfonso of Castile perished when he refused to abandon his army in Gibraltar in 1350. Other royal personages did die of the plague, however, including the wife, youngest daughter, and niece of King Pedro of Aragon.

coming into direct contact with them; the destruction or cleansing of infected property; and the cancellation of upcoming festivals, tournaments, and events. Funerals (while they are still held) must be carried out at night to lessen the chances of infecting passersby and to at least partially hide the scale of the dying in the populace.

Additionally, many towns and cities try to cut themselves off from the outside world to lessen the chance of plague-ridden travelers (particularly sailors, merchants, soldiers, and other folk routinely travelling long distances) from gaining entry. Such settlements demand proof that a traveler is well before allowing entry and may even refuse to admit travelers who have recently visited places thought to be wracked by pestilence.

While prudent, these countermeasures can spawn yet more problems. At the least, such measures have the unfortunate effect of causing food shortages because no shops or markets are open and as a result the populace's living conditions deteriorate.

Personal Health Precautions

Of course, the most effective defense against plague is to flee (or to find a reliable source of Cure Disease – or similar – rituals). For some neither of these options may be viable either because a person wishes to stay put or because they do not have the funds or ability to flee.

During the Black Death, the overwhelming agreement of learned minds in Europe was that corrupted air carried the infection. Thus, the air had to be purified. Thus, richly scented woods – aloe, amber, musk,



Desperate Times Call for Desperate Measures

As the plague howled through Bordeaux's streets in 1348, the mayor ordered the harbor set ablaze to arrest the plague's remorseless progress through the town. Unfortunately, the flame quickly blazed out of control and several other buildings were burnt to the ground.

Other communities took more bizarre steps to curtail the plague's progress. King Magnus II of Sweden, for example, ordered foodless Fridays and shoeless Sundays to appease an angry god. Unsurprisingly, this had no effect on the plague which slaughtered the Swedes with as much gusto as it slaughtered the rest of Europe.

or the cheaper cypress, laurel and mastic - were to be burnt inside to keep the fell air at bay. Houses were to be filled with pleasant smelling plants and flowers and the floors were to be sprinkled with rose water and vinegar. A number of antidotes gained popularity. Pills of aloe, myrrh, and saffron were all employed as well as traditional poison antidotes for much the same association.

Brave souls venturing forth on the streets carried amber (if wealthy) or a number of odorous substitutes (if poor), or a smelling apple. When out and about, those still healthy tend to give others a wide berth – 10 ft. was a generally accepted safe distance for avoiding infection.

Preventative methods involved eating certain foods, avoiding unnecessary activity, and in some cases bleeding. In some areas, people avoided coastal areas because they believed that the foul air rolled in from the sea, sometimes in the form of sea mists. The arrival of such could cause panic in a port already beset by plague.

Of course, the most effective measure of avoiding infection was to avoid (like the plague) contact with any infected individuals. This led to husbands abandoning wives, parents leaving their infected children to die, neighbors ignore the pain-filled moans issuing from nearby houses, and so on. Certainly, most right-minded individuals would offer no help whatsoever to an infected stranger – the risks were simply too great.

Quarantine of the Sick

It became common practice to quarantine infected people along with their family, lodgers, and anyone directly exposed to their illness in their homes to inhibit the contagion's spread. Watchers were set over these buildings to prevent the inhabitants leaving, although in some places, the sick were allowed to venture forth after dark to search for more food, bury their dead, and so on. This effectively puts in place a curfew upon those yet well who shut themselves up in their houses after dark so as to avoid the sick as they shuffle forth into the night air.

Food and other supplies were delivered to the sick so that those within did not have to venture forth. Such aid was given freely to the poor, but others able to pay were expected to do so. Funds for these endeavors were raised through special taxes.

If an incarcerated individual survived the quarantine period without developing any symptoms, he was allowed to go free, although many families were obliterated by this practice. Because being locked up in a house with an infected individual was regarded effectively as a death sentence for everyone in the house, some people took strenuous measures to avoid this fate. To do achieve this, folk either did not report a plague death or tried to cover up its true cause.

In some cases whole communities – normally isolated villages and hamlets effectively quarantine themselves either to keep the plague out or to keep a contagion already raging within from spreading to nearby settlements. Such locales are rarely completely self sufficient and so the surrounding settlements continue to trade with

History records the first instance of quarantined houses being identified with a red cross upon their door as occurring in the spring of 1551 in the English city of York. Authorities across Europe experimented with a number of different lengths of quarantine. Eventually a period of 40 days was adopted as standard.

One of the most famous real-world examples of an entire settlement quarantining itself is the village of Eyam in Derbyshire, England. The plague struck Eyam in August 1665 and savaged the community for 17 long months. As soon as plague was confirmed in their midst the villagers quarantined themselves to protect surrounding villages from a similar fate. Their heroic sacrifice was not in vain, and their selfless action contained the plague, but of a pre-plague population of 350 only 83 villagers survived.

the quarantined settlement. In these instances, trade often takes place at an isolated place. Coins in payment are either left in rivers (where the waters scour them clean of any lurking contagion) or plague stones (hollow stones containing a disinfectant such as vinegar).

Magic and the Plague

Magic can both help and hinder the course of plague. While this discussion of two kinds of ritual and their abilities and limitations is brief, also see Chapter Four and Chapter Five for more information on how magic can alter the historical plague conditions.

Divination Rituals

Divination rituals have their part to play in the spread and prevention of plague. While many spellcasters may use various divination rituals to learn more about how to combat the plague besetting their society, others might use the same magics for more self-centered or nefarious reasons. Unprincipled individuals may use the arrival of the plague to further their own goals or may even seek ways to hasten or strength its grip on a given community. Spies for a neighboring kingdom may seek better ways to infect an enemy's army, while thieves may introduce plague into a rich man's home to ease their assault on his valuables.

However, the truly powerful divination rituals costs thousands of gold pieces to complete and are accessible only to high-level individuals. Casting such powerful rituals would only be done in times of great crisis – perhaps when a plague is ripping through a great metropolis and not when it merely savages several borderland villages.

Commune with Nature is the least powerful and least useful ritual when dealing with plague, although it could provide several pointers to a naturally occurring plague if combined with insightful questions. Consult Mystic Sages also may or may not be of use when combating the spread of plague. While the ritual does provide a single piece of information, it cannot uncover information which the most learned sages could not learn. In a fantasy medieval society which lacks knowledge of virology and other advanced sciences it may fail to uncover essential truths about the nature of plague. Similarly, Consult Oracle can help combat plague but only if the answers to the questions ask are (or have been) known to one or more creatures. If no one knows the true origin of the plague or the best way to fight it, this ritual is useless.

Loremaster's Bargain can provide valuable help in the fight against plague, because if the petitioner convinces the powerful otherworldly entity to assist him, he may gain valuable information

as a result of clever questioning. Likewise, information gained from Voice of Fate can be of great use, but only if it is acted upon immediately (which may be difficult in a city paralyzed by plague).

Restorative Rituals

The D&D 4E *Player's Handbook* presents four rituals of particular interest to a plague campaign: Cure Disease, Gentle Repose, Raise Dead, and Remove Affliction. Additionally, Chapter Four presents a number of new rituals of use in a plague campaign.

Cure Disease is obviously a very important ritual in the fight against plague. However, it has two weaknesses that must be considered in regards to its efficacy in halting an epidemic. Firstly, the ritual requires 150 gp of mystic salves, which obviously in the midst of an epidemic will become increasing difficult to find. This will result in the price of this ritual increasing as time goes on and supplies become scarce. Secondly, and most importantly, Cure Disease offers no proof against re-infection; meaning that a given individual may require multiple Cure Disease rituals to survive a severe outbreak of plague. Finding the gold to pay for multiple castings is only part of the problem, though. The character must find a priest or other learned personages willing and able to cast the ritual. Most such folk are likely to be besieged by others wishing his to cast the ritual. Remove Affliction can also remove a disease from an infected person, but it costs more and uses many of the same mystic salves that Cure Disease requires.

If all else fails and a loved one dies from plague, his relatives could purchase a Raise Dead for him. However, Raise Dead merely returns the deceased to life; it does not remove any permanent conditions such as a disease. Thus, unless Raise Dead is swiftly followed by a Cure Disease or Remove Affliction, the subject is likely to expire again quickly.

Burial and Last Rites

During a major outbreak of plague, the very fabric of society is in danger of unraveling. Death can occur on such a scale that it becomes unmanageable; the dead lie where they fall in the streets and in their homes, the survivors now so inured to death that few make any attempt to bury the huge number of corpses scattered about.

Set against this horrific backdrop of death and misery it is easy to forget that behind every death is a survivor's heartrending personal tragedy. Close family members or friends that have selflessly nursed the afflicted through their last hours of suffering now face the realization that they must continue their own life as best they can (assuming they are not already infected). Coupled with the need to somehow get enough food to survive, the survivors must still attend to the legal necessities of death: taxes must be paid after all (if any tax collectors remain alive to collect them), inheritance must be divided out among surviving family members, and so on.

In many European cities as the plague raged through the streets, officials literally ran out of places to bury the dead. Accounts of communities running out of coffins and of graveyards overflowing are commonplace. Numerous accounts speak of the dead lying piled in the streets like firewood. In such situations, extra land for huge plague pits was often hurriedly consecrated. In some cases, even this was not enough. In one notable instance in Avignon, Pope Clement VI consecrated the River Rhone into which, with little or no ceremony, the dead were tossed in a desperate attempt to deal with the problem.

Hedonism, Religion, and Hysteria

With a literal torrent of death swirling about the streets, the living are faced with the horrific realization that they too will probably soon get sick and die in the same agonizing fashion as their friends and neighbors.

Typically, in such horrific conditions, individuals react in one of several ways: some sink into hopeless apathy while others hurl themselves into an orgy of hedonism on the assumption that they should enjoy what little time they have left. Ironically, of course, such pursuit of earthly pleasures often requires close, intimate contact with other person, which greatly increases the likelihood of infection and death. Others may see profit and opportunity amid the death as others bravely soldier on, while many seek solace in their religion (or the bottle). To some, it seems pointless to go on or to even dream of life after the contagion abates.

Rarely does society completely break down, however. Even in cases of catastrophic death tolls, civilization's values quickly reassert themselves as the survivors deal with the grim reality of their situation.

Bigotry and Persecution

As society struggles with such fundamental questions as how to stop the contagion spreading, treat the infected, and deal with the vast number of dead, fear, hysteria, and a desire to blame someone – anyone – for this terrible state of affairs can sweep through the populace. Old rivalries and half-forgotten grievances suddenly flare to life as mobs stalk the streets looking for someone to vent their anger upon. In such a fear-laden atmosphere minorities – particularly unpopular ones – make easy targets. The lucky are simply banished. Others less fortunate are dragged from their homes, beaten, and then executed either in revenge for their supposed atrocities or in a desperate attempt to placate the gods or other beings deemed responsible for unleashing the plague. Ironically, few in the mob stop to notice that in most situations the minority are suffering in equal measure.

Social Unrest

Demonstrations and riots create a new set of challenges for the authorities vainly struggling to stem the pestilential tide of death. Likely, many members of the Watch, city garrison, or similar body have already succumbed to the plague while others will themselves been quarantined or have deserted in an attempt to save themselves. With hundreds, possibly thousands of demonstrators on the streets, the authorities may simply lack the strength or manpower to effectively restore order. Even if sufficient troops yet remain to repel the looters, bloody skirmishes are likely to result as the peasants – with nothing left to lose – spend their remaining strength in futile demonstrations.

Riots and demonstrations can be used by the nefarious for their own ends – perhaps an audacious theft or bloody revenge – as well as for “legitimate” concerns. The populace likely demand that those in positions of authority take effective measures to lessen the plague's terrible effect. Food shortages, perceived favorable treatment to a specific group of people, and so on all sparks civil unrest.

During the Black Death, the Jews were widely persecuted because it was believed they caused the plague by poisoning many settlement's sources of drinking water as part of an insidious continent-wide plot. Across Europe, thousands died at the hands of the mob – in many places burning was a favorite form of execution. Many more Jews fled east to Poland where they were allowed to settle in relative peace.



Looting can become commonplace during plague. With many of the rich and privileged gone to their remote estates, their homes stand empty ripe for the picking. Mobs desperate for food and drink – or just driven into a wild destructive frenzy – target such locales for the rich pickings they hold. Shops, taverns, and other places of business could similarly be ripped apart in search of loot, food, or alcohol.

Predators Without

As plague runs amok, there are those without society that sense advantage in the avalanche of suffering and death. This may be as simple as wolves creeping forth from their forest to savage unattended livestock now wandering aimlessly through the countryside. Tribes of brutish raiders – orcs, goblins, or giants – may pick this time to strike in search of plunder. As plague savages the land, banditry becomes commonplace as survivors take by force what they need to survive. Even neighboring kingdoms may pick this time to strike. In most such cases, it does not take long for an invading force to become infected and the war quickly fizzles out. As the survivors stagger home, they carry not only loot with them but plague, thus serving to spread the curtain of suffering drawing across their land.

What of the Survivors?

Chapter Three handles the long-term effects of a plague in depth, but a few words on the plague's immediate aftermath are in order here. When the plague finally loosens its grip on a settlement the survivors must deal with the horrific detritus of death and suffering scattered about everywhere. Everywhere bodies need burying (or burning), houses must be fumigated, possessions that must be disinfected (or otherwise disposed of), and so on. Immediate concerns around lurking infection among the bodies and possessions of the dead may slow this progress to a crawl. Additionally, by now food supplies are probably low or all but exhausted. Replenishments must be found, or the survivors will starve to death. The years immediately following plague are, thus, particularly hard.

During the Moscow Plague Riot of 1771 thousands took to the streets in the face of a major epidemic to demonstrate against the harsh measures put in place to contain the outbreak. For three days, the mob seethed across the city killing several members of the government, looting, and destroying several quarantine zones. Only the presence of several army units – who were eventually forced to fire on the mob – enabled the authorities to restore order and to execute the ringleaders.

Chapter Three: Aftermath



here are many ways in which an epidemic or pandemic can alter a society; this chapter explores them and provides several adventure hooks for the GM to employ in his home campaign.

The aftermath of plague provides just as many opportunities for adventure as does the actual outbreak itself. Eventually, the plague moves on or the outbreak burns itself out. The stunned survivors emerge into a quieter

and emptier world. While a localized outbreak of plague has no real long-term effects beyond the area it ravages, a nation recovering from a prolonged, virulent, and widespread outbreak changes forever. A third or a half of a nation's population cannot die without considerable disruption to its economy and society. Some effects – perhaps a border war – are quickly over while others reverberate down through the years for decades or centuries to come.

Although plague devastates populations, very rarely does it wipe out an entire community. Normally, enough people survive to re-establish any given settlement. However, in some cases where an already declining community is struck with plague, the survivors may migrate to other nearby settlements in search of an easier, safer, or more prosperous life.

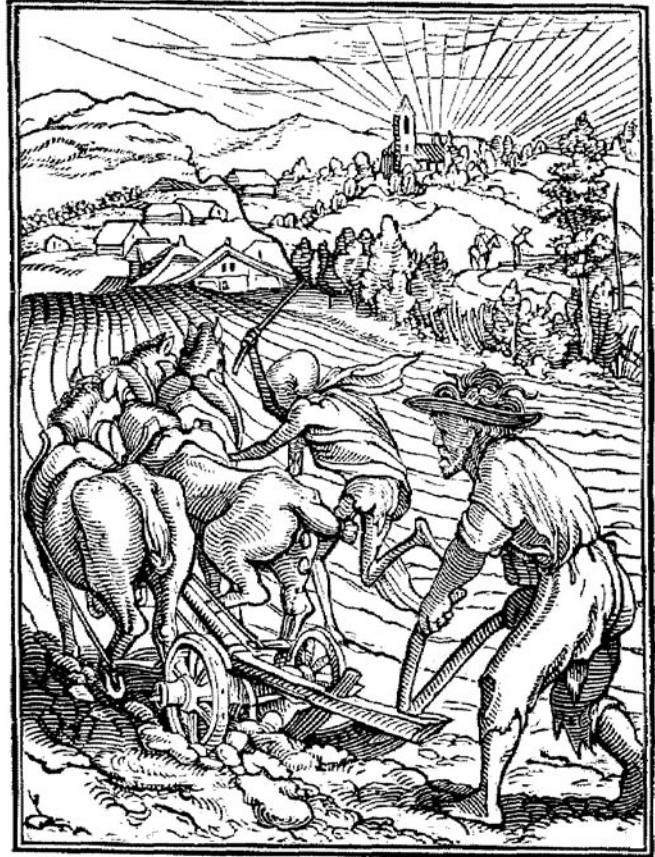
Thus, as an outbreak burns itself out, the business of civilization gradually reasserts itself. While essential services may cease during a plague, most often this is a temporary hiatus; there are usually enough survivors willing to step forward to fill essential posts. Of course, all new incumbents may not be suitable for their new positions and as such incompetence and corruption could run rife through society until the situation is corrected.

As life begins to return to a semblance of normality, the survivors begin to notice that the old ways are being swept away and that change is sweeping through their society. Change, however, always has winners and losers; thus, conflict between these two groups is inevitable. Such conflict, where the peasants seek to better themselves while a nation's elite struggle to maintain their positions and privileges, can provide the back-story for many compelling gaming sessions.

For groups who favor the dungeon delving or exploration styles of play, there will be new areas to explore and new threats to pacify. A rival kingdom may declare war on the PCs' kingdom in an attempt to exploit its weakness or now abandoned villages may house the restless spirits of the recently departed that must be put to rest before the surrounding farmlands can be reclaimed.

Alternatively, groups favoring roleplaying can explore a completely different set of challenges. Such groups may concentrate on healing the divisions in society brought about by change or they may lead a revolution to throw down the old order.

The subject of exactly how many people died during the Black Death is a contentious one because of the scarcity of written records from the period. England has perhaps the most complete records of the period and Philip Ziegler, in his book *The Black Death*, settles on a figure of 1.4 million dead from a pre-plague population of around 4.2 million. Accurate figures for continental Europe and beyond are impossible to come by, but no doubt some areas suffered even greater levels of mortality.



The Fabric of Society and the Land

One of the obvious effects of plague is the shrinkage of the population and – as a consequence – of the number of people able and willing to work the land or engage in their chosen professions. Medieval industry was extremely labor-intensive; there were few machines to take the place of dead workers and so after a plague, labor is in high demand.

Even the most basic of tasks become difficult. For example, post-plague populations cannot farm as much land as the pre-plague populace because the requisite workers simply do not exist. In many places, local agriculture may even shift to the raising of livestock as such methods are less labor-intensive than planting and harvesting large fields.

Consequently, the survivors farm only the best land leaving the rest to lie fallow or allowing nature to reassert itself. This in turn raises the dreaded specter of localized famine because even if some regions do produce enough grain, meat (or whatever), they likely do not produce enough of everything to ensure a healthy and dependable diet.

Trade and commerce suffer as the physical infrastructure of society begins to decay because there are fewer skilled workers such as stonemasons able to repair the buildings, bridges, and roads upon which civilization depends. In such an environment, if farmers in one area are producing a surplus it can be difficult or impossible to get it too far off markets.

Society begins to retreat in upon itself. Small enclaves of survivors live in villages and market towns surrounded by civilization's forlorn wreckage as the land becomes a wilder, emptier, more untamed place. Empty villages, overgrown orchards, fallow fields, crumbling buildings, and so on all bear mute testimony to the



ferocity of the plague. Linked by a deteriorating network of roads and tracks, travel between settlements becomes difficult and dangerous as the distance between enclaves increases.

In the wilds, there is little help for those overtaken by danger, and predators of all kinds lurk in the wilderness. Bands of starving, half-crazed peasants may be bold enough to demand food from a small or obviously weak group while wolves, emboldened by unattended cattle and livestock, may stir themselves from their woodland haunts.

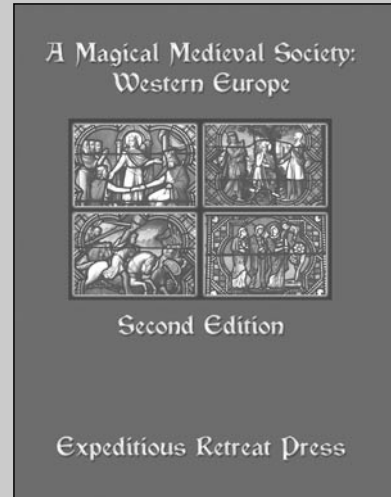
On all sides, nature begins to slowly swallow up abandoned fields and pastures under a blanket of saplings, bushes, and thick a tangle of weeds and brambles. Many villages lie all but abandoned; perhaps where once 200 people once dwelled now only 80 still live. As life gets harder, more and more of these survivors give up the unequal struggle against nature and migrate to better situated, better protected, or wealthier settlements. Within a few years bustling farming communities fall silent, their fields choked with weeds and their buildings battered into rubble by the elements.

Even in towns and cities the effects of the manpower shortage is evident. Lords encounter trouble hiring skilled workers to carry out repairs and improvements to their estates. Survivors with unique or in-demand skills can double, triple, or even quintuple their prices, meaning that only the very wealthy (or desperate) can afford to hire them.

Even in towns and cities, the depopulation caused by plague can be so severe that entire streets or neighborhoods lie empty. Such areas readily become the haunts of thieves, necromancers, evil clerics, and worse. Undead, swarms of rats, packs of wild dogs, or other predators lurk in such places ready to feast upon the unwary explorer.

Of course, for the unscrupulous, the spoils hidden in such areas by the dying represent temptation incarnate. The allure of all that treasure just lying around waiting to be claimed, combined with the total lack of any witnesses to its theft, could drive many desperate or greedy individuals to search the forlorn, empty streets and houses in search of their fortune.

A Magical Medieval Society: Western Europe presents in detail how magical medieval societies function from the ground up while integrating fantasy troupes into the fabric of society. A Magical Medieval Society: Western Europe published by Expeditious Retreat Press is available as a book in FLGS and at www.XRPshop.citymax.com and as a PDF at www.yourgamesnow.com.



The Natural Order of Society

Before the plague, noblemen, landed gentry, and rich merchants occupied society's top echelons. Their lands and other business interests generated them much wealth, power, and status. The peasants dwelling upon their lands were beholden to them for almost everything and provided a useful source of cheap and plentiful labour. Because of their wealth, they were able to command great influence and power in society, which they used in part to maintain their status.

Unfortunately for the wealthy, during a plague the poor suffer the most. With the death of a significant portion of the workforce, much of a noble's estates fall silent because there is simply no one left to work the land. Consequently, while their income increases in the years following the plague as they collect their owed death dues, in the long term their income falls just at a time when the cost of almost everything is rising.

The cost of labor increases and the cost of anything created through labor also rises as the level of supply drops. While food prices eventually stabilize and perhaps even drop slightly as demand drops, most other manufactured goods continue to command a high price. In particular, the price of items crafted by skilled laborers – stonemasons, weaponsmiths, armorers and so – remains high. Indeed in such a world, even the quality of such workers' output often declines as skilled artisans literally rush from one job to the next.

As the workers' wages increase so do their standards of living and their expectations rise. Many have inherited land and property beyond their wildest dreams, willed to them by their many deceased friends and family. Many take only the best and discard the rest. Thus, even the lowliest peasant's clothing is better than it has ever been, and the contents of his house are also of a higher standard than before. With this access to the finer things, comes the desire to better oneself. Peasants began to experience unprecedented social mobility. With the discovery that he could simply pack up his family and move to another location – because everywhere was desperate for labor – a peasant's ability to negotiate better wages and conditions for himself (and his family) improves dramatically. Noblemen renowned for cruelty or for the

In 1381, just three decades after the Black Death, the Peasant's Revolt stunned medieval England. The peasants, daring led and incensed by the conditions imposed upon them by the king, even managed to briefly hold London before the revolt was brutally suppressed.

France also suffered similar insurrections repeatedly during the fourteenth century. These uprisings were not small, localized affairs. For example, in 1358 the Jacquerie uprising resulted in 20,000 deaths and compounded the economic hardships of the losers.

malpractice of their tenants suddenly find themselves without anyone to manage their farms while those known for their honesty and good nature command greater loyalty from their workers and consequently are in a better position to weather the storm battering society.

In this new society, women also found themselves with unparalleled opportunities. With the dearth of skilled laborers, it is far easier for them to assume their dead husband's trade than if plague had not savaged the countryside.

Of course, the lords and noblemen do not just accept this change in their fortunes. Rather, typically they react in a predictable self-centered fashion using their waning power and influence to safeguard their own positions. Laws may be passed controlling or regulating the extent to which wages and prices can rise or dictating how far a peasant can or cannot travel in search of work. Such measures often provoke feelings of anger among the populace they are designed to control and in extreme cases lead to revolt or civil war as laborers and peasants fight for their newly discovered rights.

Society and Morality

The lucky survivors of plague emerge, almost shell-shocked, into a different world. While the aftermath of plague has a dramatic effect on the physical landscape and infrastructure of a nation, the effect it has on the survivors' mentality is even more profound. In the same way that people living in a community gripped by plague react in many different ways to their circumstances (see Chapter Two), it is also true that those fortunate enough to survive react to this state of affairs in a variety of fashions. For many people their survival is an occasion for unrestrained joy and over indulgence in celebration of their deliverance, while for others their survival seems like little more than a reprieve before their inevitable death at the hands of some natural or manmade phenomenon.

The years following a plague are often characterized by a marked rise of excess and decadence in every conceivable kind of the vice. The crime rate soars and the pursuit of wealth and status become all important for many. (Wealth of course brings comfort and security as well as the ability to flee the next outbreak of pestilence). Even the commonly expected standards of dress alter to suit the more lascivious character of society.

In the immediate aftermath of plague, a society's birth rate soars as a natural consequence of the survivors' hedonism. For years afterwards the birth rate remains high as survivors meet new people and remarry.

Others, having lived through the holocaust of the plague, find little joy left in living. Many of their friends and relatives are dead and likely their belief in the proper order of society is shattered, or at the least severely damaged. The king, government, and the churches – the most powerful institutions in the realm – have all failed to protect them from the plague's terrible malevolence. Such folk are quick to believe the darkest rumors and omens. A cabal of evil spellcasters plot to overthrow the kingdom from within, the orcs of the Gray Hills plan to sack border villages and towns, and even more terrible whisperers of

dark, unknowable forces gathering in the shadows to shatter mans' domain over the land all are easily believable by such simple folk.

Some even fall under the spell of charismatic preachers or of dark, shadowy cults dedicated to black-hearted powers that prepare for, or hasten, the end of the world.

Technological and Magical Innovation

The massive (and long-term) reduction in the population often also leads to technical and magical innovations in pursuit of laborsaving devices or aids. Instead of single-minded searching for better ways to kill their enemies and advance their own goals, altruistic or practical-minded wizard and clerics search for better ways to increase crop yields or methods in which to complete other labor-intensive tasks. Wizards may create simple automatons or animated objects designed for mining, farming or other unpleasant and labor-intensive tasks.

The vast majority of the populace, of course, may consider some innovations distasteful. Some clerics may even advocate animating the bodies of the recently dead (but who did not die of the plague) to help with menial tasks such as plowing fields, harvesting wheat, and so on. Some deranged or power mad necromancers may even seek to acquire the bodies of plague victims to create new and terrifying varieties of undead capable of not just horrifying their opponents but also of infecting them with deadly contagions.

War and Persecution

War and persecution often follow plague as night follows day. In a world struggling to get back to normal, resources (particularly food) are often scarce. Inevitably, in such situations the strong look to the weak to provide what they need. Greedy kings may take this opportunity to conquer land or to seize other resources that they have long coveted. While outright war may break out, smaller border skirmishes commonly flare up as peasants, minor lords, or bands of desperate bandits secure what they need to survive. Such conflicts can prove devastating to the participants already reeling from the horrors of the plague. With many people of fighting age dead, armies are necessarily smaller, but in addition, the death of each combatant is more keenly felt.

Tribes of raiding humanoids may also chose this time to boil out of their mountain fastnesses to raid and pillage now weakly defended border territories. While such raiders certainly search for and carry away gold and other riches, slaves, foodstuffs, and livestock are also now highly prized.

In the century following the Black Death, technical innovations in Europe included the printing press, new forms of water pumps to aid deeper mining, improved techniques of salting and storing fish (enabling fishing boats to remain at sea longer), and innovative new shipbuilding methods that allowed bigger ships to be sailed by smaller crews. Inevitably, some inventors also focused on increasing a nation's military might; firearms and cannons first begin to enter widespread and effective use in the centuries following the Black Death.

The science of medicine and surgery also evolved after the Black Death. While previously the emphasis had been on herbal remedies and teaching handed down from the ancient Greeks, now doctors began to place more emphasis on clinical treatment and observation.



Alternatively, some nations may turn to persecution in a bid to stop the plague returning. If the belief arose among the populace that a particularly subset of society was responsible for the plague, the survivors might seek to kill or drive out any such remaining people. The lucky ones are simply forced to migrate while others are killed and their property seized by anyone strong or daring enough to hold it. Such wandering bands of people (particularly if in large numbers) prove a problem for neighboring states. Do they allow such groups to settle in their land or do they close their borders, possibly precipitating a conflict?

Religion

The ravages of plague often had a profound impact on the survivor's view of religion. As always, however, an individual's view of religion is a very personal experience – what makes one man a true believer may shatter another's faith.

For many, adherence to the tenets of a particular religion provided no protection from the plague whatsoever. While they survived, many of their friends, relatives, and neighbors died, their prayers no proof against the plague's malign power. In communities without powerful clerics even the most pious – the village priest – died providing more proof of organized religion's complete failure to deal with such a monstrous enemy. Such skeptics and unbelievers note (often vocally and very publically) that beyond the magics used to combat the disease, the church was helpless in preventing the vast number of believers dying terrible, agonizing deaths. Prayer it seems was pointless. While rituals such Remove Disease undoubtedly cured the lucky recipient, many faiths charged steeply for such services or reserved them for the powerful and influential as demand exploded. In any case, the supply of such rituals was often limited and in such a time, the price levied would often increase far beyond the reach of the common man. Blind faith, it seemed was not enough to protect oneself from a terrible, lingering death.

On the other side of the coin, of course, survivors often believed that it was their devotion to their patron that spared them an agonizing death. Such individuals often become wildly and vociferously religious; some even joining the clergy to make good the losses inflicted by plague.

A church's secular power often increases after plague. With so many believers dead, many faiths benefit from the many bequests of wealthy or powerful members of the congregation seeking to ease their passage to the afterlife. Land, buildings, precious objects of art, and treasure all flow into a church's coffers increasing not only its wealth but its political influence.

Of course, not all religions emerge from an epidemic strengthened. Some minor faiths could be all but wiped out, their few clergy not having access to disease defeating rituals. Within a generation, these faiths could be dead, their gods forgotten and their holy places torn down or cannibalized for other buildings.

Other religions, such as those dedicated to gods of disease or death, may be outlawed or banned by the state. At the very least, the devotees of such powers are likely to experience an upsurge in persecution and hate by members of other congregations.

Some faiths, perhaps those dedicated to the healing arts, however, may experience a dramatic upsurge in conversions as the survivors seek to protect themselves against any further outbreaks.

Subsequent Epidemics

Often after a severe bout of plague, a nation experiences a period free from the ravages of contagion. However, in many cases plagues returns to heap further misery and suffering upon the populace.

Outbreaks became more localized in nature and the mortality rates slowly declined to around 10 – 15 percent as the survivors build up some kind of immunity or resistance to the plague. Thus, although the plague was still terrible in the locality, it no longer threatened the very fabric of society. Some contemporary accounts also tell of the disease's symptoms changing, implying that the population slowly gains at least a partial immunity to the disease.

This is not only limited to plague, however. Other lesser contagions such as smallpox, anthrax, typhoid, influenza, and dysentery also follow in the wake of an epidemic or pandemic. Again, while such outbreaks were dangerous to the locality, they do not normally threaten whole regions in the same terrible way as plague.

Poor sanitation contributes to the danger posed by such outbreaks as does the lack of healthy adults to care for those that fall sick. If a child or elderly person was struck down by a disease, there were fewer people available to care for that person. Similarly, someone who survived the plague perhaps as the only adult survivor of a family had no one to tend him if he also fell unwell. If he died, his dependants (young children, the old, or the infirm) either fended for themselves or died of starvation.

Just ten years after the Black Death, in 1361, Europe suffered another bout of plague. While not as severe as the Black Death – only around 20% of the population died – it still deeply affected the population, who feared that the Black Death had returned in all its grim, savage glory. Indeed, after this second attack, plague struck and killed somewhere in Europe every decade for the next few centuries. While it never again killed so widely in such horrific numbers, it still managed catastrophic, localized outbreaks (such as during the Great Plague of London in 1665).

Chapter Four: Player's Toolkit



ontained in this chapter is a selection of new equipment, magic items, and rituals for use by PCs and NPCs alike in a world wracked by plague.

New Equipment

While non-magical in nature, those treating plague victims have mundane tools of the trade when on the job.

Plague Doctor's Outfit

To prevent infection, those tending plague victims often garb themselves in an outlandish outfit designed to both warn people of the wearer's profession and to provide some measure of protection from the plague itself. The outfit consists of a close-fitting, wide-brimmed black hat; a primitive gas mask shaped like a bird's beak stuffed with aromatic herbs and spices; red glass eyepieces; a long, black overcoat reaching from head to toe; a wooden cane; and leather breeches. Cost 30 gp; Weight 5 lb.

Apothecary's Bag

An apothecary's bag contains many naturally occurring herbs used to combat a variety of diseases as well as the tools of the apothecary's trade. Characters using an apothecary's bag while treating a plague victim gain a +2 bonus to Heal checks made to cure the victim of a disease. An apothecary's bag can be used ten times before its store of herbs is exhausted. Cost 20 gp; Weight 2 gp.

New Magic Items

In a world wracked by plague, artificers and both powerful clerics and wizards craft items to both help and hinder the malign devastation wrought by plague.

Armor

Plaguecursed Armor Level 8+

This mottled and slightly rusted armor smells slightly of death.

Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp
Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp			

Armor: Any

Enhancement: AC

Property: Gain a +5 item bonus to Endurance checks made to resist the progress of plague once infected.

Power (Encounter): Immediate Reaction. When struck by a melee attack, you can hurl the power of the plague lurking in the armor at the person who struck you, who is weakened until the end of your next turn.

Lore: Sometimes when a person infected with plague dies wearing his armor, an eldritch blend of his dying spirit and the lurking malevolence of the plague infuse the armor. While the result is not infectious to the wearer, this does allow him to temporarily affect enemies with the awesome might of plague.

Weapons

Immobilizing Weapon Level 5+

Motes of sparkling light glimmer upon this weapon's surface.

Lvl 5	+1	1,000 gp	Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp

Weapon: Any ranged

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls.

Critical: +1d6 radiant damage.

Power (At-Will • Radiant): Free Action. All damage dealt by this weapon is radiant damage. Another free action returns the damage to normal.

Power (Daily • Radiant): Free Action. Use this power when you hit with the weapon. The target is immobilized until the end of your next turn.

Level 15 or 20: As above, but the weapon deals an extra 1d8 radiant damage.

Level 25 or 30: As above, but the weapon deals an extra 2d8 radiant damage.

Lore: Characters expecting to battle creatures infected with plague or other virulent diseases use these weapons to stop their foes closing with and potentially infecting them.

Pestilential Weapon Level 3+

A layer of mottled, russet stains clings to this weapon.

Lvl 3	+1	680 gp	Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp
Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp

Weapon: Any melee

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls.

Critical: +1d6 necrotic damage per plus

Power (At-Will • Necrotic): Free Action. All damage dealt by this weapon is necrotic damage. Another free action returns the damage to normal.

Power (Daily • Necrotic): Free Action. Use this power when you hit with the weapon. The target is weakened until the end of your next turn.

Level 13 or 18: As above, but the weapon deals an extra 1d8 necrotic damage.

Level 23 or 28: As above, but the weapon deals an extra 2d8 necrotic damage.

Lore: Blackhearted champions of the Mottled Lord use these weapons to spread their master's children. Other individuals use them to deliberately infect their targets so that the infected creature may return to, and infect, his fellows.

New Magic Items By Level

Level	Name	Slot	Price (gp)
3	Pestilential weapon	Weapon [Melee]	680
3	Amulet of purity	Neck	680
5	Immobilizing weapon	Weapon [Ranged]	1,000
5	Mattock of excavation	Wondrous Item	1,000
6	Gloves of contagion	Hand	1,800
8	Plaguecursed armor	Armor [Any]	3,400
8	Pestilential weapon	Weapon [Melee]	3,400
8	Amulet of purity	Neck	3,400
10	Immobilizing weapon	Weapon [Ranged]	5,000
12	Mask of sweet air	Head	13,000
12	Maul of destruction	Wondrous Item	13,000
13	Plaguecursed armor	Armor [Any]	17,000
13	Pestilential weapon	Weapon [Melee]	17,000
13	Amulet of purity	Neck	17,000
15	Immobilizing weapon	Weapon [Ranged]	25,000
15	Potion of purification	Potion	1,000
16	Gloves of contagion	Hand	45,000
17	Healer's circlet	Head	65,000
18	Plaguecursed armor	Armor [Any]	85,000
18	Pestilential weapon	Weapon [Melee]	85,000
18	Amulet of purity	Neck	85,000
20	Immobilizing weapon	Weapon [Ranged]	125,000
23	Plaguecursed armor	Armor [Any]	425,000
23	Pestilential weapon	Weapon [Melee]	425,000
23	Amulet of purity	Neck	425,000
25	Immobilizing weapon	Weapon [Ranged]	625,000
25	Potion of plague	Potion	25,000
26	Gloves of contagion	Hand	1,125,000
28	Plaguecursed armor	Armor [Any]	2,125,000
28	Pestilential weapon	Weapon [Melee]	2,125,000
28	Amulet of purity	Neck	2,125,000
30	Immobilizing weapon	Weapon [Ranged]	3,125,000

Hand Slot Items

Gloves of Contagion

Level 6+

These seemingly boil-covered gloves enable the wearer to affect the target as if he had been struck down by a terrible disease.

Lvl 6 1,800 gp Lvl 26 1,125,000 gp

Lvl 16 45,000 gp

Item Slot: Hands

Power (Daily • Necrotic): Minor Action. Change the damage type dealt by your next power to necrotic. Add 1d6 to the damage dealt by that power.

Level 16: Add the subject is slowed (save ends)

Level 26: Add the subject is weakened (save ends).

Head Slot Items

Healer's Circlet

Level 17

This plain circlet is set with a number of yellow-orange stones.

Item Slot: Head 65,000 gp

Property: Gain a +4 item bonus to Heal checks (made to treat a subject infected with plague or other infectious disease) and to Diplomacy checks.

Power (Daily): Free Action. You can use this power to either grant an ally within 5 squares an immediate saving throw to negate the effects of one condition currently affecting him or you can reroll a Heal check made to treat the progress of disease in a subject you are tending.

Lore: Infused with the healing puissance of long-dead healers, these circlets are used to tend those beset by plague. Many are very old and appear a little battered, but the restorative magic within them remains strong.

Mask of Sweet Air

Level 12

This supple leather mask is impregnated with sweet smelling herbs.

Item Slot: Head 13,000 gp

Property: Gain a +3 item bonus to Heal checks made to treat a subject infected with plague or other infectious disease.

Power (Daily): Minor Action. Gain a +2 power bonus to your attack roll against a target infected with plague or other infectious disease. If you do not make an attack by the end of your next turn, you lose this bonus.

Lore: These masks are worn by apothecaries, pest doctors, and others who come into repeated contact with plague victims.

Neck Slot Items

Amulet of Purity Level 3+

The yellow-orange stone set into this amulet is etched with various protective runes

Lvl 3	+1	680 gp	Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp
Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp

Item Slot: Neck

Enhancement: Fortitude, Reflex, and Will

Property: Gain resist 5 necrotic.

Level 13 or 18: Resist 10 necrotic.

Level 23 or 28: Resist 15 necrotic.

Power (Daily): Standard Action. You may choose to reroll an Endurance check made to resist the progress of a disease infecting you. Once the result of the second check is known, you may use either roll as your check result.

Lore: Healers, pest doctors, and others without access to Cure Disease rituals wear these amulets crafted from amber to ward against the effects of plague.

Wondrous Items

Mattock of Excavation Level 5

This simple pickaxe has a flat long edge perfect for digging into the soil.

Wondrous Item 1,000 gp

Power (Encounter): Standard Action. A character wielding a *mattock of excavation* can transform six squares within reach into difficult terrain (entering such squares costs 1 extra square of movement).

Lore: Prized during times of plague for its ability to swiftly excavate deep pits, *mattocks of excavation* are also found in the arsenals of armies planning siege works and other individuals planning extensive building projects.

Maul of Destruction Level 12

Fastened at the end of a well-worn handle lies a blunt block of steel.

Wondrous Item 13,000 gp

Power (Encounter): Standard Action. A character wielding a *maul of destruction* deals 5d6 damage against any object struck with a successful melee attack.

Lore: *Mauls of destruction* are normally employed to open doors, knock down walls, and so on. However, during times of plague they are also often used to destroy plague-ridden buildings and so on.

Potions

Potion of Plague Level 25

This simple flask contains the sputum of a plague victim.

Potion 25,000 gp

Power (Consumable; Healing): Standard Action. If this potion is consumed either on its own or with another liquid, the target may be infected with bubonic plague; +25 vs. Fortitude; *Hit:* The subject is infected with bubonic plague and begins to suffer its affects. *Miss:* The target is not infected.

Lore: A potent weapon of assassination, these potions are incredibly dangerous to prepare. Invading armies sometimes use magic to introduce a *potion of plague* into a besieged castle's water supply.

Potion of Purification Level 15

This simple flask contains a pure, effervescent liquid.

Potion 1,000 gp

Power (Consumable; Healing): Standard Action. If this potion is consumed it cures the drinker of all diseases and poisons which are currently affecting him.

Lore: Created for use in times of great need, *potions of purification* are highly prized during times of plague.





New Rituals

This section details several new rituals for use in a plague campaign. See the D&D 4E *Player's Handbook* for more information on rituals, including several rituals of value in a plague campaign, notably Cure Disease, Gentle Repose, Raise Dead, Remove Affliction, and Speak with Dead.

Level	Ritual	Key Skill
1	Gentle Repose	Heal
3	Delay Contagion*	Heal
4	Resist Contagion*	Heal
4	Zone of Sweet Air*	Heal
6	Cure Disease	Heal
6	Speak with Dead	Religion
8	Raise Dead	Heal
8	Remove Affliction	Heal
10	Contagion*	Arcana
16	Infestation*	Arcana

*New ritual presented in this sourcebook.

Contagion

As you perform this ritual, a roiling cloud of black vapor slowly gathers between your hands. As you name your enemy, the cloud fades from view before reappearing nearby to the subject of your ire.

Level: 10
Category: Creation
Time: 1 hour
Duration: Instantaneous
Component Cost: 400 gp
Market Price: 1,000 gp
Key Skill: Arcana

You use Contagion to infect an enemy with a deadly disease. The enemy can be anywhere within a radius equal to your level in miles. When you complete the ritual make an Arcana check, to determine the highest level of disease that you can conjure.

Arcana Check Result	Level of Disease
15 or lower	Level 10
16-19	Level 15
20-29	Level 20
30-39	Level 25
40 or higher	Level 30

Once you have determined the highest level of disease that you summon, choose a disease of that level or lower of which you have detailed knowledge. For the purpose of this ritual, detailed knowledge of a disease includes tending someone suffering with the disease, observing the effects of a disease on an individual from initial infection to recovery (or death), and so on. Once you complete the ritual, the target is automatically attacked by the disease, which must succeed on a +13 attack against Fortitude to infect the target. Once a target is infected, the disease progresses naturally. If the attack is unsuccessful, the target suffers no ill effects, but knows that some kind of ailment attacked him.

Delay Contagion

Applying holy unguents to the infected individual, you temporarily stay the course of the disease.

Level: 3
Category: Restoration
Time: 10 minutes
Duration: Special
Component Cost: 25 gp
Market Price: 100 gp
Key Skill: Heal

The Delay Contagion ritual delays the progress of a single disease which has already affected a creature. If you know that the subject is affected by multiple diseases you must choose which one to affect with this ritual. If you do not know that the subject is affected by multiple diseases, this ritual affects the most recently acquired contagion. Make a Heal check, to determine how long the ritual protects the target.

Heal Check Result	Duration
9 or lower	1 day
10-19	5 days
20-29	10 days
30-39	15 days
40 or higher	20 days

For the duration of the ritual, the target no longer has to make Endurance checks to see if his state improves, worsens, or stays the same. However, the subject still suffers the effects of the disease up to the point that this ritual is completed. Once the ritual's duration expires, the disease affects the subject normally.

The Delay Contagion ritual only protects a subject from a disease already affecting him when the ritual was completed. If a character is infected with another disease while protected by the ritual, the new disease affects him normally.

When you cast this ritual, you spend a healing surge to power the ritual. You cannot regain this healing surge until after the ritual's effect has ended.

Infestation

You gather the power of plague about you and cast it into the rats scurrying about the sewers of the town.

Level: 16 **Component Cost:** 3,600 gp
Category: Creation **Market Price:** 9,000 gp
Time: 1 hour **Key Skill:** Arcana
Duration: Instantaneous

You use Infestation to infect the rats (or other small creatures such as spiders) in a particular area with a virulent disease. You must be able to see the vermin to be infected and they must be present for the entire time it takes to complete the ritual. Other creatures in the area are not affected by this ritual, but can be infected by the newly contagious rats. When you complete the ritual make an Arcana check, to determine the maximum level of disease with which you can infect the targets.

Arcana Check Result	Level of Disease
20 or lower	Level 10
21-34	Level 20
35-45	Level 25
46 or higher	Level 30

When you complete the ritual, the target creatures are automatically infected with the disease of your choice (which will eventually kill them providing a clue as to the source of the plague). Once you have determined the highest level of disease that you summon, choose a disease of that level or lower of which you have detailed knowledge. For the purpose of this ritual, detailed knowledge of a disease includes have tended someone suffering with the disease, observing the effects of a disease on an individual from initial infection to recovery (or death), and so on.

Resist Contagion

Massaging healing agents into the subject, you sacrifice some of your life force to protect them from the ravages of disease.

Level: 4 **Component Cost:** 25 gp and 1 healing surge
Category: Restoration **Market Price:** 150 gp
Time: 10 minutes **Key Skill:** Heal
Duration: Special

When you complete this ritual, the subject (you or the individual you touch) gains a modicum of protection against the first disease to which he is exposed in the next 24 hours. This protection takes the form of a bonus to the subject's first Endurance check made to determine the disease's progression; when you complete the ritual, make a Heal check to determine the value of this bonus.

Heal Check Result	Endurance Bonus
12 or lower	+2
13-19	+4
20-29	+6
30-39	+8
40 or higher	+10

This ritual can also be cast on a subject already suffering from the affects of a disease. In this case, the Endurance check bonus applies to the first check made after the ritual is completed.

When you cast this ritual, you spend a healing surge to power the ritual. You cannot regain this healing surge until after the ritual's effect has ended.

Zone of Sweet Air

With a flash of white light, protective energy surges through the area, keeping disease at bay.

Level: 4 **Component Cost:** 25 gp and 1 healing surge
Category: Warding **Market Price:** 175 gp
Time: 1 hour **Key Skill:** Heal
Duration: 24 hours

A Zone of Sweet Air protects those within it from contracting diseases. When you complete the ritual, make a Heal check to determine the size of the zone and the maximum level of disease affected by the zone.

Heal Check Result	Warded Area	Disease Level
9 or lower	Burst 10	Level 10
10-19	Burst 14	Level 15
20-29	Burst 18	Level 20
30-39	Burst 22	Level 25
40 or higher	Burst 30	Level 30

Individuals already infected with a disease can still enter the warded area, but they cannot infect anyone (willingly or unwillingly) while within the Zone of Sweet Air. Such individuals must still make an Endurance check to determine the disease's progression while within the zone.

When you cast this ritual, you spend a healing surge to power the ritual. You cannot regain this healing surge until after the ritual's effect has ended.

Chapter Five: GM's Toolkit



Ms will find herein all the tools required to run a truly memorable plague adventure or campaign. Chapter Five contains new diseases, skill challenges, templates, monsters, locations, and NPCs. Before planning starts for introducing a plague into a campaign world, the GM should consider the long-term impact of his decision. Some of the plagues presented below are more virulent and

deadly than others and care should therefore be taken in placing them.

A Torrent of Death

This section details the various types of plagues thought to have ravaged Europe in the Middle Ages as well as a magical plague that animates those it kills as undead. The D&D 4E *Dungeon Master's Guide* describes how to handle a disease's progression and presents several diseases for use in your game.

It is a common misconception that during an epidemic, only one plague is at work upon the population at any given time. For example, it is widely albeit erroneously believed that during the Black Death, only bubonic plague savaged the populace. In fact, contemporary accounts strongly suggest that while the majority of those infected did die from bubonic plague, both pneumonic and septicemic plague also attacked the population, wreaking a terrible toll of suffering and death. This was terrifying for those living through such an attack. Some struck with plague would linger for many days in agony, while other seemingly healthy people go to bed and never wake again. To

Scaling the Diseases

The plagues presented in this chapter are virulent, brutal, and invariably fatal. They are presented at their terrifying worst; at the height of their death-dealing powers. However, a fair amount of evidence exists in historical records to imply two interesting points. Not all epidemics were of equal virulence – sometimes plague ripped through a town killing whole swaths of the populace while in other attacks, far fewer people died. It also seems that as successive waves of contagion battered Europe, significant portions of the populace (perhaps up to 20% in places repeatedly struck) developed at least a partial immunity to plague. A GM can simulate either of these situations in a number of ways: he can reduce the level of each disease to a suitable level or he can simply determine that some NPCs (or PCs) are immune to the disease – no matter how many times they are exposed the disease fails to infect them.

Remember, when introducing these plagues into your campaign that there is essentially no way that heroic tier characters could survive being infected with plague without magical healing. Essentially, if handled carelessly these diseases can result in a TPK (which is no fun for anyone), so be careful!

the survivors, there did not seem to be any way of explaining why these cases differed and consequently the sheer indifferent brutality of the plague terrified them.

Bubonic Plague

Bubonic plague is the plague generally accepted to be the cause of the Black Death. Subjects infected with bubonic plague can subsequently develop pneumonic or septicemic plague (see relevant listings for more details). It is the most common form of plague.

Infection and Transmission: The bites of fleas infected with the bacterium *Yersinia Pestis* carry bubonic plague. Generally, people were a lot dirtier during the Middle Ages and also lived in close proximity to many animals (and thus their fleas).

Incubation Period: 2 - 10 days.

Symptoms: The typical sign of infection with bubonic plague are a painful, swollen, and very tender lymph node. The swollen gland is called a “bubo” (hence the name plague’s name) and such swellings can appear in the groin, armpit, or on the neck. (Generally, most folk developed these swellings in their groin because this was the closest lymph node to the bite point). High fever, chills, or extreme exhaustion can also manifest themselves at this time. Other symptoms include red spots that turn black as the disease progresses, heavy breathing, vomiting of blood, aching limbs, and (of course) unbearable pain.

Historical Note: The bubonic plague of the Black Death may have had different symptoms to that encountered in later outbreaks. It is possible that subsequent forms of the bubonic plague mutated from this particularly deadly form into something less virulent.

Bubonic Plague

Level 22 Disease

Attack: + 25 vs. Fortitude.

Endurance: improve DC 29, maintain DC 24, worsen DC 23 or lower

The target is cured.

◆ **Initial Effect:** Character feels generally ill, develops muscle pain, and a severe headache.

◆ Character develops swellings in his groin, armpits, or on the neck. Character loses one healing surge and the amount healed by a healing surge is halved.

◆ Character may suffer seizures before falling unconscious.

Final State: The target dies

Pneumonic Plague

Pneumonic plague is the rarest, but not the most lethal, strain of plague.

Infection and Transmission: Pneumonic plague is passed from person to person through the inhalation of aerosolized infective droplets and does not require any animal or flea to infect a host. Close contact with an infected person (5 ft. or closer) is required to catch pneumonic plague in this fashion. Characters infected with bubonic plague that subsequently get pneumonia can develop pneumonic plague. Septicemic plague can also cause pneumonic plague if it reaches the lungs of its host.

Pneumonic Plague

Level 24 Disease

Attack: + 27 vs. Fortitude.

Endurance: improve DC 31, maintain DC 26, worsen DC 25 or lower

The target is cured.

◆ **Initial Effect:** Character feels ill and quickly develops a crushing headache and fever coupled with a hacking cough. Character loses one healing surge and the amount healed by a healing surge is halved.

◆ Character feels weak (treat him as weakened) and begins to cough up blood.

◆ Character loses consciousness. He can no longer use a healing surge.

Final State: The target dies.

Incubation Period: 2 - 3 days.

Symptoms: The most common symptom of pneumonic plague is uncontrollable coughing which brings up blood-stained sputum and breathing difficulties. This coughed up blood is often bright red and foamy. The plague first manifests itself through fever, headache, and weakness and can cause respiratory failure and shock. Without magical treatment most people infected with this strain of plague die an agonizing death.

Septicemic Plague

Septicemic plague is the deadliest of all known naturally occurring plagues.

Infection and Transmission: Septicemic plague can result from either bubonic or pneumonic plague when bacteria enter the blood from the lymphatic and respiratory systems respectively. It is almost impossible to transmit septicemic plague from person to person.

Incubation Period: In extreme cases, septicemic plague can cause death before any symptoms appear; this is particularly terrifying for witnesses as it can seem that the plague strikes its victims down in a matter of moments.

Symptoms: Individuals afflicted with septicemic plague suffer from abdominal pain, diarrhea, fever, low blood pressure, nausea, vomiting, and finally organ failure.

Septicemic Plague

Level 26 Disease

Attack: + 29 vs. Fortitude.

Endurance: improve DC 33, maintain DC 28, worsen DC 27 or lower

The target is cured.

◆ **Initial Effect:** Character develops excruciating abdominal pains, a high fever and feels sick. Character loses two healing surge and can no longer use a healing surge.

◆ Character loses consciousness; his organs begin to shut down.

Final State: The target dies.



Hemorrhagic Plague

Dependant on the exact strain of hemorrhagic fever, the mortality rate lies between 50 – 90%. Some scholars believe that it was hemorrhagic and not bubonic plague that was responsible for the Black Death's horrific death toll.

Infection and Transmission: Only one strain of hemorrhagic fever is thought to be airborne; the others require physical contact with infected blood or other bodily fluids.

Incubation Period: 20-22 days.

Symptoms: Those infected with hemorrhagic plague suffer from fever, vomiting, diarrhea, pain or malaise, and sometimes internal and external bleeding. Most victims of hemorrhagic plague die of hypovolemic shock or organ failure.

Hemorrhagic Plague

Level 24 Disease

Attack: + 27 vs. Fortitude.

Endurance: improve DC 31, maintain DC 26, worsen DC 25 or lower

The target is cured.

◆ **Initial Effect:** Character develops a fever, feels generally unwell and suffers from vomiting and/or diarrhea. Character is slowed and weakened.

◆ Character begins bleeding internally and externally. He is slowed and weakened.

◆ Character loses consciousness. He can no longer use a healing surge and begins to go into hypovolemic shock.

Final State: The target dies.

Attack: +31 vs. Fortitude.

Endurance: improve DC 35, maintain DC 30, worsen DC 29 or lower

The target is cured.



Initial Effect: Character feels ill and suffers and alternating hot and cold flushes as well as a strong feeling of vertigo.



Character becomes weakened (as described by the Player's Handbook) and has an overwhelming urge to drink.

Final State: The target dies. In 1d4 hours, the subject rises as an undead; apply the plague spawn template to the slain individual. Special Note: A Gentle Repose prevents a character killed by the ebon plague from rising as an undead while the ritual is in effect.

Ebon Plague

One of the staples of recent fantasy and fiction writing and movies is the disease that transforms the dead into ravenous zombies. One such disease is presented above. Use this disease in conjunction with the plague spawn template presented later in this chapter.

Infection and Transmission: Ebon plague is transmitted through the natural attacks of those infected with it. Whenever the infected creature claws, bites, or otherwise injures a target, it makes a secondary attack (using the statistics above).

Incubation Period: After death, the subject rises as a plague spawn in 1d4 hours.

Symptoms: Characters infected with ebon plague suffer from alternating hot and cold flushes and overwhelming vertigo. As they become sicker, they become weaker and are afflicted by a raging thirst.

Skill Challenges

The concept of a plague campaign or adventure lends themselves perfectly for the setup of one or more skill challenges. This section presents several new skill challenges. See the D&D 4E *Dungeon Master's Guide* for general information on running skill challenges. A GM should tailor each of the skill challenges below to suit his campaign.

Linking the Skill Challenges: The skill challenges presented below can be used as a part of an ongoing campaign or can be linked together to form a small side quest wherein the PCs happen upon an infected and isolated village or other locale.

Expanding the Skill Challenges: Some of the skill challenges presented in this chapter can be expanded to fill many hours of exciting game play. Where appropriate, suggested methods for this are briefly discussed below. Additionally, the GM should employ NPCs and locations detailed in this chapter to add flavor to the PCs' experience. The D&D 4E *Dungeon Master's Guide* presents information on scaling these to suit your adventuring party.

Using Powers and Rituals: Instead of making skill checks, the PCs may elect to use powers or rituals they know to succeed at a skill challenge. Deal with each idea on a case by case basis, remembering to reward creative play.

Entering An Infected and Quarantined Settlement

You finally reach the town's gate but it is shut firmly against you. Guards huddle in the gatehouse above and loudly warn you that plague is raging within.

Setup: You wish to enter the town, but the Council has ordered that no one may enter or leave until the plague abates. You must either convince the guards to let you in or find some other way to gain access.

Complexity: 2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight, Intimidate, Perception, Stealth, and Streetwise.

Bluff (moderate DCs): You make a Bluff check to convince the guards that you are not infected by the plague. Other characters can aid the PC making this check.

Diplomacy (moderate DCs): You make a Diplomacy check to make the guards more amenable to letting you into the settlement. Other characters can aid the PC making this check.

Insight (moderate DCs): A successful Insight check does not count as a success, but provides a +2 bonus to a subsequent Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Streetwise check. A failed Insight check does not count as a failure.

Intimidate: The PCs cannot intimidate the guards; they are safe atop their wall and the threats of the PCs do not move them. Any attempt to use Intimidate earns the PCs a failure.

Perception (moderate DCs): If you succeed on a Perception check you notice a small, unguarded culvert leading under the town's wall or other means of entry such as an unguarded section of wall. Subsequent Acrobatics, Athletic, or Stealth checks may be required to actually enter the town.

Streetwise (moderate DCs): Succeeding on a Streetwise check enables you to learn more information about how the plague came to the town and how it is progressing within. This check can be made only once and does not count as a success. Rather, subsequent Bluff or Diplomacy checks made by the PCs to enter the town gain a +2 bonus. For example, if the PCs learn that the plague entered the village along the southern trade route, they can argue that coming from the north they are uninfected.

Success: If the PCs gain 6 successes before 3 failures, they enter the settlement without having to resort to violence. Before they enter, though, the guards give them a final warning that plague is loose within the walls and that they cannot be held responsible for the PCs' hard and grisly plague death.

Failure: If the PCs gain 3 failures before 6 successes, the gate guards deny them admittance (for their own good). The PCs must find another way in, but anticipating this, the gate guards pass the word to their compatriots that strangers have been seen trying to get into town, which increases the Watch's vigilance.

Additional Notes: Consider employing the following locales and NPCs in this skill challenge:

NPCs: Watchman (page 39).

Tracking the Source of Infection

Plague is savaging the countryside and the peasants are in an ugly mood, looking to blame someone – anyone – for their suffering. To stop this vigilante justice, you must uncover the real source of the plague.

Setup: The villagers are looking to blame a small minority for their woes and may even lynch or burn their chosen victims if you do not find the true source of the infection.

Infection Source: Much of the detail of this skill check depends on how the village was originally infected. The skill checks below assume that the village was infected deliberately by a plague master (see "New Templates" in this chapter for more details) using the Infestation ritual (Chapter Four).



Complexity: 3 (requires 8 successes before 4 failures)

Primary Skills: Diplomacy, Insight, Intimidate, Nature, Perception, and Streetwise.

Diplomacy (moderate DCs): You try to convince one of the villagers to speak with you about the plague and how it struck the village. During this terrible time, most villagers hide in their houses and if they must move around, they keep their distance from other people. This first check does not count as a success as you simply convince a villager to actually talk to you, but subsequent successful Diplomacy or Streetwise checks reveal more information.

Insight (moderate DCs): You speak with many people in the village to learn more about the plague. A successful check indicates that you have inadvertently spoken to one of the plague master's minions and realize that the man is holding something back.

Intimidate (moderate DCs): If you have succeeded on an Insight check, you can subsequently make an Intimidate check to get the man to reveal his connection with the plague master. Success indicates that you force the man to reveal important information.

Nature (moderate DCs): A successful Nature check reveals that you have noticed the lack of vermin in the village (this is a side effect of the Infestation ritual) and realize that this is in some way linked to the plague.

Perception (moderate DCs): Succeeding at a Perception check indicates that you have spotted a vital clue regarding how the plague is spreading through the village. Perhaps you find an inordinate number of dead rats, or realize that most of those who first became infected frequented the local church or inn. Subsequently successful Perception checks reveal more clues about how the plague is spreading.

Streetwise (moderate DCs): Use Streetwise to question the local populace to gain more information.

Success: If the PCs gain 8 successes before 4 failures, they succeed in tracking the infection to its source before the mob attacks and kill several innocents.

Failure: If the PCs gain 4 failures before 8 successes, they eventually track the infection to its source, but not before several innocent people are forced to confess to spreading the plague before being lynched by the vengeful mob.

Additional Notes: The GM can expand this skill challenge by adding in interludes and short scenes to bring home the immediacy of the problem. Perhaps the PCs find a terrified peasant hiding from the mob or come across an attempted lynching, which they must stop. Consider employing the following locales and NPCs in this skill challenge:

Locales: Plague Cart (page 35), Plague Pit (page 35), and Temple: God of Healing (page 36).

NPCs: Pest Doctor (page 38), and Plague Cart Driver (page 35).

Tending the Sick

Plague rages through the streets and you are trying to help the sick. While you may not be able to heal them all you can at least ease their suffering.

Setup: You are in a village which is being ravaged by plague. Being obvious adventurers, the folk turn to you for help and succor. You have resources far beyond the norm and they believe that your experiences may be of use to them.

Complexity: 5 (requires 12 successes before 6 failures).

Primary Skills: Diplomacy, Heal, Intimidate, Nature, Perception, and Streetwise.

Diplomacy (moderate DCs): You used honeyed words and flattery to talk a villager into providing some much needed resource. Examples of such could include a large unused piece of land on which to dig a plague pit or to set up a makeshift pest house or a large quantity of herbs or other healing supplies.

Heal (hard DCs): You make a Heal check to cure someone who has fallen victim to the plague. This check does not simulate you healing a single individual, but rather many such folk. The GM may alter the DC of this check dependant on the type of plague (and its virulence) at work in the village.

Intimidate (hard DCs): You try to intimidate someone into providing vital resources or assistance to combat the plague. This is hard to do as the instinct for self-preservation overrides many individual's desire to help their neighbors. See the Diplomacy skill above for examples of such resources.

Nature (moderate DCs): You use a Nature check to first identify and then find large quantities of a local herb that helps combat the plague. Subsequent Heal checks made to cure plague victims gain a +2 modifier.

Perception (moderate DCs): Making a successful Perception check reveals a clue regarding how the plague is spreading. For example, you could notice that close physical contact or the presence of many rats seems to speed infection. Refer to the section of Diseases in this chapter for more information.

Success: If the PCs gain 12 successes before 6 failures, they manage to halt the plague's progress through the village before more than about a quarter of the population perishes.

Failure: If the PCs gain 6 failures before 12 successes, the plague eventually abates but not before half the population lies dead.

Notes: The GM can expand this skill challenge by adding in interludes and short scenes to bring home the suffering wrought by the plague as it stalks through the village and to drive home the consequences of failure. The PCs could come across infected individuals driven mad by pain staggering through the streets in search of relief, a plague cart carrying its pestilential cargo to a plague pit, a cleric hurrying to give a victim the last rites, and so on. Consider employing the following locales and NPCs in this skill challenge:

Locales: Plague Cart (page 35), Pest House (page 34), and Temple: God of Healing (page 36).

NPCs: Pest Doctor (page 38), and Plague Cart Driver (page 35).

New Templates

This section presents several new templates for use in a plague campaign.

Many of the templates below have powers which can result in the infection of a PC with a plague. When creating an opponent for the PCs, determine which kind of plague the creature is infected with taking into account the level of the party and the type of disease in the surrounding area (if any). Refer to the “A Torrent of Death” section in this chapter for details of several plagues and the D&D 4E *Dungeon Master’s Guide* for more information on applying templates to a creature.

Plague Master

Plague masters are powerful individuals who have mastered the secrets of plague and use it as a tool to achieve their own ends. They are foul, odious individuals who often bear the scars of their experimentation and study of plague upon their bodies. Often physically frail, they rely on servants, minions, and other intermediaries to provide the items they need for their sinister research or plots.

Plague masters often dwell near graveyards or other areas which can provide them with a large store of bodies upon which to experiment.

They enjoy unleashing deadly contagions into the countryside and revel in the ensuing suffering and dying. Unscrupulous individuals – kings, barons, and others in position of power – occasionally hire plague masters to visit terrible diseases upon their enemies and their servants striking after the contagion has gravely weakened their foes. Many plague masters are servants of the Mottled Lord and view it as their divine mission to spread their lord’s “gifts” throughout the land. Such cults are extremely dangerous and often lurk hidden without the community their plan to infect.

Occasionally, altruistic individuals follow the path of a plague master with the goal of stopping deadly contagions ravaging a community. Such individuals are revered when a plague looms nearby, but in primitive and superstitious communities can be blamed for an outbreak (and are treated accordingly).

Prerequisite: Humanoid, level 9, Intelligence 13

Adventure Hooks: A plague master has settled upon the small town in which the PCs are resting as the target for the next visitation

Plague Master	Elite Controller
Humanoid	XP Elite

Defenses +2 Fortitude; +2 Will

Immune disease (plagues)

Saving Throws +2

Action Point 1

Hit Points +8 per level + Constitution score

POWERS

⚡ **Contagious Terror** (immediate interrupt; when the plague master is targeted by a melee attack; at-will) • **Fear**

Level +2 vs. Will against the attacker; the target takes Fear damage equal to the plague master’s normal basic melee attack.

⚡ **Pestilential Curse** (when reduced to 0 hp)

Close burst 5; level +2 vs. Fortitude; all enemies within the burst may become infected with a plague. At the end of an encounter, each creature struck must succeed on a saving throw or become infected.

Sample Plague Master

Calis	Level 9 Elite Controller
Medium natural humanoid, elf cleric plague master	XP 800

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +11; low-light vision

HP 166; **Bloodied** 83; **Healing Surge** 1 (41 hp); see also *pestilential curse*

AC 23, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 24

Immune disease (plagues)

Saving Throws +2

Speed 6

Action Points 1

⚡ **Mace** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

+10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.

⚡ **Longbow** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

Ranged 20/40; +13 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage.

⚡ **Contagious Terror** (immediate interrupt; when Calis is targeted by a melee attack; at-will) • **Fear**

+11 vs. Will against the attacker; 1d8 +4 damage.

⚡ **Cause Fear** (standard; encounter) • **Divine, Fear, Implement**

Ranged 10; +12 vs. Will; see D&D 4E *Player’s Handbook*.

⚡ **Searing Light** (standard; encounter) • **Divine, Fire, Implement**

Ranged 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 2d6 +5 radiant damage, and the target is blinded until the end of Calis’ next turn; see D&D 4E *Player’s Handbook*.

⚡ **Pestilential Curse** (when reduced to 0 hp)

Close burst 5; +11 vs. Fortitude; all enemies within the burst may become infected with a plague. At the end of an encounter, each creature struck must succeed on a saving throw or become infected.

⚡ **Flame Strike** (standard; daily) • **Divine, Fire, Implement**

Burst 2 within 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 2d10 +5 fire damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends); see D&D 4E *Player’s Handbook*.

Cure Serious Wounds (Level 6 Cleric Utility Prayer)

See D&D 4E *Player’s Handbook*.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Elven

Skills Heal +14, Nature +11, Religion +14

Class Features *channel divinity (turn undead), healing word*

Str 12 (+5) **Dex** 18 (+8) **Wis** 20 (+9)

Con 11 (+4) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 13 (+5)

Equipment Chainmail, mace, longbow with 20 arrows, holy symbol, ritual scrolls as determined by the GM

of his divinely sent plague. Before he can deluge the town with disease and death, however, he must acquire certain components to empower his rituals. For several weeks, his minions have been exploring the town's graveyards, searching for the plague pits spoken off in the town's old records. The resultant opened graves and exhumed bodies have the townsfolk convinced that a vampire or other servant of evil has come among them. Consequently, strangers and travelers are subjected to random, stringent checks by the town watch and may be set upon by the mob.

As the number of graves desecrated mounts, rumors of strange folk poking about the surrounding countryside stir the PCs to action. They discover the minions in the act of excavating one of the town's old plague pits and must stop them before they recover that which their master desires.

Pestilential Victim

Pestilential victims have been infected with plague, but have not yet succumbed to its malign grip. Infected with a terrible and invariably fatal disease they often know that their life is hurtling to an end.

Most victims, in this state, seek to isolate themselves from contact with other people (thus limiting the contagion's spread). Others, near death, and driven into a frenzy by the excruciating agony of the plague's physical symptoms and maddened by the certainty of near death, stagger from their beds in search of relief. Such individuals normally do not live long, but can infect any they come in contact with. A few selfish and odious individuals take perverse glee in infecting as many people as possible before finally succumbing.

A pestilential victim's appearance depends on the plague with which they have been infected. The means by which they can infect other individuals is contingent on what is killing them. Refer to the "A Torrent of Death" section in this chapter for more details on infection methods.

Prerequisite: Humanoid

Adventure Hook: A nearby town or village has fallen prey to the plague. As the contagion rages through the streets and score of people die, terrified survivors flee in a vain attempt to escape the same fate. Unfortunately, they did not flee quickly enough and are already infected. Attacked and killed by goblin raiders before they could reach safety, they none-the-less have their revenge upon their murderers infecting them with plague before they die.

Pestilential Victim	Elite Brute
Humanoid	XP Elite

Defenses +2 AC; +2 Fortitude; +2 Will

Saving Throws +2

Action Point 1

Hit Points +10 per level + Constitution score

POWERS

Despair (Fear) aura 5

Enemies within the aura receive a -2 penalty to attack rolls against a pestilential victim.

↓ Diseased Strike

Creatures struck by a pestilential victim's melee attack may become infected. At the end of an encounter, each creature struck must succeed on a saving throw or become infected. Refer to the D&D 4E *Dungeon Master's Guide* or Chapter Four of this book to determine the kind of plague they carry.

Sample Pestilential Victim

Pestilential Victim Goblin Warrior	Level 1 Elite Brute
Small natural humanoid	XP 200

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +1; low-light vision

Despair (Fear) aura 5; enemies within the aura receive a -2 penalty to attack rolls against the pestilential goblin.

HP 66; **Bloodied** 33

AC 19, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14

Saving Throws +2

Speed 6; see also *shoot and scoot* and *goblin tactics*

Action Points 1

⊕ Spear (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

+6 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.

↓ Diseased Strike

Creatures struck by a pestilential goblin's spear may become infected. At the end of an encounter, each creature struck must succeed on a saving throw or become infected.

↘ Javelin (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

Ranged 10/20; +6 vs. AC; 1d6 + 2 damage.

↘ Shoot and Scoot (standard; at-will)

The pestilential goblin warrior moves up to 3 squares and at any point during that movement can make a ranged attack without provoking opportunity attacks.

Goblin Tactics

As Goblin Racial Trait; see D&D 4E *Monster Manual*.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Goblin

Skills Stealth +10, Thievery +10

Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 17 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+1)

Con 13 (+1) **Int** 8 (-1) **Cha** 8 (-1)

Equipment leather armor, spear, 5 javelins in sheaf

Unknowing Carrier

Unknowing carriers are particularly dangerous individuals because they do not know that they are carrying a terrible contagion. Such individuals often hail from an area recently infected or have traveled through such an area recently. They often leave a trail of death and suffering in their wake, making them relatively easy to track down. An unknowing carrier is not necessary evil (although he could be), but could be the source of death and suffering on a truly great scale.

Prerequisite: Humanoid, Con 13

Adventure Hook: The PCs come across a series of villages all gripped by plague. After investigating, they discover that each settlement was visited by the same travelling adventurer days before the contagion broke out. Speaking to the villagers, they discover that the Trestoc the mage declared that he planned to travel to a nearby town to seek employment with the local lord. The PCs must race to catch up with and stop him before he enters the town and infects hundreds more people.

Unknowing Carrier **Elite Skirmisher**
Humanoid XP Elite

Defenses +2 AC; +2 Fortitude; +2 Reflex

Immune disease (plague that it spreads)

Saving Throws +2

Action Point 1

Hit Points +8 per level + Constitution score

POWERS

Exposed to Death

Creatures that come into close contact with an unknowing carrier may become infected with the disease which it carries. At the end of the encounter, each creature must succeed on a saving throw or become infected.

Unnatural Resilience (immediate reaction; when the unknowing carrier suffers an effect that a save can end; encounter)

The unknowing carrier rolls a saving throw against the effect.

Sample Unknowing Carrier

Trestoc **Level 4 Elite Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid,
human unknowing carrier XP 350

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +5

HP 104; **Bloodied** 52

AC 19, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15

Immune disease (Bubonic Plague)

Saving Throws +2

Speed 6

Action Points 1

⊕ **Quarterstaff** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

+4 vs. AC; 1d8 damage.

⊗ **Magic Missile** (standard; at-will) • **Force**

Ranged 20; +7 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 4 force damage; see D&D 4E *Player's Handbook*.

↘ **Crushing Burn** (standard; encounter) • **Fire**

Trestoc makes a separate attack against 3 different targets; ranged 10; +7 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4, and the target is knocked prone.

↖ **Thunderous Separation** (standard; encounter) • **Thunder**

Close burst 3; +7 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 thunder damage and the target is pushed 3; additionally Trestoc is also pushed 3 away from his starting position.

Exposed to Death

Creatures that come into close contact with Trestoc may become infected with the disease he carries. At the end of the encounter, each creature must succeed on a saving throw or become infected.

Unnatural Resilience (immediate reaction; when Trestoc suffers an effect that a save can end; encounter)

Trestoc rolls a saving throw against the effect.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common

Skills Arcana +11

Str 10(+2) **Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 17 (+5)

Con 12 (+3) **Int** 18 (+6) **Cha** 12 (+3)

Equipment robes, quarterstaff, wand

Plague spawn

Plague spawn are those unfortunate individuals who have succumbed to a plague of magical origin. Although dead, the plague lives on with them, animating their bodies as an engine to continue the pestilence's spread. Either under the command of a plague master, or at their own volition, they are compelled to seek out others and to infect them.

Prerequisite: Humanoid

Adventure Hook: A magical plague has wiped out an isolated hamlet clustered around a small mine. The plague was sent by a plague master because he desired the mines as a lair from which he could infect more of the surrounding area. The plague warped some of the populace into plague spawn. Some of the plague spawn lurk in the rapidly decaying settlement while others prowl the surrounding countryside searching for victims and acting as guards for their master. Deep in the mines, the plague master continues his perverted experiments occasionally working on lone travelers brought to him by his minions. The PCs could either be attacked by a pack of plague spawn or they could be investigating the mysterious disappearance of a traveler.

Plague Spawn **Elite Brute**

Animate (undead) XP Elite

Defenses +2 AC; +2 Fortitude; +2 Will

Saving Throws +2

Action Point 1

Hit Points +10 per level + Constitution score

Powers

⊥ **Diseased Strike**

Creatures struck by a plague spawn may become infected. At the end of an encounter, each creature struck must succeed on a saving throw or become infected.

⊥ **Pound** (standard; recharge ☐, ☐)

Driven by the fury of contagion, the plague spawn makes two basic melee attacks.

⊥ **Plague Swarm**

The plague spawn calls forth its pestilent allies into melee and deals an extra 1d6 damage against its enemies. Increase this extra damage to 2d6 at 11th level and to 3d6 at 21st level.

Sample Plague Spawn

Berserker Plague Spawn **Level 4 Elite Brute**
Medium animate humanoid (undead), orc **XP 350**

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +2; low-light vision

HP 132; **Bloodied** 66; see also *diseased berserk rage*

AC 17, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 14

Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant

Saving Throws +2

Speed 6, (8 while charging)

Action Points 1

⊕ **Greataxe** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

+8 vs. AC; 1d12 + 5 damage (crit 1d12 + 17).

⊕ **Diseased Berserk Rage** (standard; useable when bloodied; encounter) • **Healing, Weapon**

The berserker plague spawn makes a basic melee attack and regains 30 hit points.

‡ **Diseased Strike**

Creatures struck by a berserker plague spawn may become infected. At the end of an encounter, each creature struck must succeed on a saving throw or become infected by Bubonic Plague.

‡ **Pound** (standard; recharge ☉, ☿)

Driven by the fury of contagion, the berserker plague spawn makes two basic melee attacks.

‡ **Plague Swarm**

The berserker plague spawn calls forth its pestilent allies into melee and deals an extra 1d6 damage against its enemies. Increase this extra damage to 2d6 at 11th level and to 3d6 at 21st level.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Skills Endurance +10, Intimidate +6

Str 20 (+7) **Dex** 13 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+2)

Con 16 (+5) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 9 (+1)

Equipment leather armor, greataxe

New God

The Mottled Lord, The Great Afflicter

Evil God of Disease, Pestilence, Suffering, and Death

The Mottled Lord is a figure of blackest nightmare and terror. His folk lurk in the wild wilderness worshipping his sinister glory in the faded ruins of an elder time or the tumbled ruins of isolated villages wiped out by plague.

His followers are almost universally hated and despised for the pestilence and suffering that inevitably follows in their wake. Not for them are the comforts of civilization; any follower of the Great Afflicter found lurking within a settlement is immediately arrested and executed for fear of what pestilence he is planning to unleash.

Dogma: Disease is the deliverer of justice; sweeping away the unworthy, sparing only the chosen ones. Our lord's children lurk in the hidden places of the world, waiting only his signal to emerge. The brethren must embrace them and spread their love far and wide. Death is a gift and pain and suffering the scourge that cleanses the soul.

The Faithful: For a supplicant to be received into the Mottled Lord's church he must voluntarily become infected with a plague and survive its effects without assistance from any outside source. Similarly, the applicant is not allowed to affect the course of the disease with any skills or rituals he knows. If during this process, the applicant dies it is seen as a sign that the Mottled Lord did not deem him worthy of inclusion in his flock. Similarly, if he survives he is welcomed into the church as a true believer. This harsh form of induction serves to keep the clergy's numbers low and often leaves the new member with the signs of disease upon his body.

Holy Symbol: A grinning skull.

Goals: The Mottled Lord's servants sole purpose is to spread their lord's gifts as far and wide as possible. To that end they are often encountered searching for old plague pits, investigating reports of terrible contagions raging in far off lands, infecting a settlement's water supply, and so on. They often work with undead, which they deliberately infect before sending them forth into the surrounding lands.

The Mottled Lord's clergy is small and thus his adherents must often work through minions or other unwitting servants.

Sacrifices: Sacrifices to the Mottled Lord can take weeks to complete. Each of his temples has a deep oubliette into which are cast the poor folk chosen to host the Mottled Lord's children. Within lie the infected corpses of previous offerings. Inevitably, coming into close contact with these remains, the victims contract one or more horrible diseases. The lucky ones succumb within a week; the unlucky sometime linger for up to a month in terrible agony as their bodies are destroyed from within.

The Mottled Lord's clergy revel in the suffering of their sacrifices, using them to predict the future in a particularly vicious form of anthropomancy while chanting fell litanies to their master. The oldest sacrificial oubliettes are deeply filled with skeletal remains; evidence of hundreds of years of such offerings.

New Artifact

The Ebon Shroud

Paragon Level

Once worn by the Mottled Lord, the folds of the Ebon Shroud contain the seeds of every terrible plague that the world has ever suffered.

Body Slot: Head

Property: You gain resist necrotic 15 and immune to disease.

Property: You gain a +2 item bonus to saving throws.

Property: When using an attack power granted by the shroud, you can use your highest mental ability score. (Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma) for the attack.

Power (At-Will • Arcane, Charm, Implement, Psychic): Standard action. You can use *eyebite* (as Level 1 Warlock attack; see D&D 4e Player's Handbook).

Power (Encounter • Necrotic): Standard action. You sap a target's vitality, using it to heal yourself; Ranged 10; Wisdom vs. Fortitude; *Hit:* 3d6 + ability modifier damage (see above), and you can spend a healing surge.

Power (Daily • Necrotic): Standard action. You gain 25 temporary hit points and you hurl the terrible power of disease at a target; Ranged 10/20; Wisdom vs. Fortitude; *Hit:* The target suffers 2d10 + ability modifier necrotic damage (see above), and is pushed 3, and is weakened (save ends). *Miss:* The target suffers no damage, but is weakened (save ends).

Goals of the Shroud

- To spread the gifts of the Mottled Lord throughout the world.
- Enlarge the Mottled Lord's clergy.

Roleplaying the Ebon Shroud

The *Ebon Shroud* communicates telepathically with the character wearing it in a rasping whisper and rarely shuts up. The *Shroud* is quite maniacal and constantly goes on about the Mottled Lord's many children, speaking about them like a dotting uncle. It tries to convince the wearer to aid it in spreading plague through the surrounding lands. It even leads him to one of the Mottled Lord's secret temples so the character can witness firsthand the awful glory of month-long sacrifices.

Concordance

Until its owner dons the *Ebon Shroud*, the artifact has no concordance and the owner does not gain any of its powers or properties. Once a character has donned the *Shroud*, he finds it impossible to remove.

Starting Score

5

Owner gains a level

+1d10

Owner is a follower of the Mottled Lord

+2

Owner completes a quest on behalf of the Mottled Lord

+1

Owner cures a victim of plague or another disease

-2

Owner ignores the tenants of the Mottled Lord's faith

-2

Pleased (16–20)

"I am death. Come my children, feast on the flesh of the living."

The shroud marks the character as a true believer and makes all its powers available to him.

Property: The *Shroud's* item bonus to saving throws increases to +3.

Property: When using an attack power granted by the shroud, you gain an additional +2 item bonus to the attack roll.

Power (Daily • Necrotic): Standard action. You gain 45 temporary hit points and you hurl the terrible power of disease at a target; Ranged 10/20; Wisdom vs. Fortitude; *Hit:* The target suffers 4d10 + ability modifier necrotic damage (see above), and is pushed 3, and the Shroud makes a secondary attack. *Secondary Attack:* The target is attacked by bubonic plague. *Miss:* The target suffers no damage, but is weakened (save ends).

Satisfied (12–15)

"I feel the power of death grow within me."

The character pleases the *Ebon Shroud*, which views him as a potential convert to the Mottled Lord's creed. To encourage him to convert, the *Ebon Shroud* makes most of its powers available to him while teasing him with the even greater powers that await him if he gives himself over completely to the *Mottled Lord*.

Property: When using an attack power granted by the shroud, you gain an additional +1 item bonus to the attack roll.

Power (Encounter • Necrotic): Standard action. You sap a target's vitality, using it to heal yourself; Ranged 10; Wisdom vs. Fortitude; *Hit:* 5d6 + ability modifier damage (see above), and you can spend a healing surge.

Normal (5–11)

"Within this cloth slumbers the power to destroy entire nations."

When a character first dons the shroud it communicates with him by sending him terrible dreams showing some of the worst plagues in history. It then explains to him what it is and how the character can serve it (and its master).

Unsatisfied (1–4)

"I sense terrible, unending death creeping toward me."

The *Ebon Shroud* realizes that the character is extremely unlikely to become a worshipper of the Mottled Lord. Before it leaves, however, it gifts its bearer with a short-lived bout of plague. It wants to see the wearer suffer and experience his pain so it is careful not to kill him.

Property: You suffer a -2 penalty to Diplomacy checks and lose your immunity to disease.

Special: Once per encounter, the *Shroud* makes a special attack against your Fortitude defense, rolling 1d20 + your level. If the attack hits, you are weakened until the end of the encounter.

Angered (0)

"A darkness hovers about me and I cannot slake my thirst."

The *Ebon Shroud* now actively tries to kill the character, before it moves on to find a more pliable individual.

Special: With immunity to disease lost, as soon as your concordance score drops to 0, the *Ebon Shroud* attacks you with pneumonic plague (refer to "The Torrent of Death" section for more details on pneumonic plague).

Moving On

“Arrrgggggggh.”

With immunity to disease lost, the *Ebon Shroud* infects the character with highly virulent (and magic resistant) strains of bubonic, pneumonic, and septicemic plague, slaying him in a matter of hours. The character’s body remains infectious for 2d10 days; anyone finding the suppurating corpse runs the chance of becoming infected with bubonic plague (resolve this normally for each character coming within 5 ft of the corpse). If the character is subsequently returned to life each of the diseases must be removed by a Cure Disease ritual.

After the character is dead, the *Ebon Shroud* returns to its master who once again hides it in a plague pit or similar location where it waits to be found.

New Monsters

Presented are four new monsters born of plague: the miasma, the elder miasma, the pestilential treant, and the pit slime.

Miasma

A floating cloud of noxious, foul smelling red and brown mottled smoke hovers in midair. Shapes in the billowing cloud reminiscent of the misshapen bodies and crushed limbs of the dead shudder and spasm as if in terrible pain.

Combat Tactics

Miasma are driven to spread the contagion infesting them. As such they ignore any creature obviously already infected with plague, instead preferring to infect healthy foe.

Once it has slain its opponents, it drags their bodies back to its lair and piles them up in a macabre display of death.

Origins and Society

Miasma form in plague pits, pest houses, and any other places in which a large number of plague-infested corpses accumulate. Composed of the sputum and other noisome liquids given off by the dead and the dying, miasma are wracked by the agonies and the hopelessness of the dead. Miasma are solitary creatures that despise the living.

Miasmas normally lurk in the area in which they were formed, but creep forth at night to spread the terrible contagions that slew the creatures that birthed them.

Miasma Lore

Characters encountering a miasma can make a Religion check to recall information about it. A check also reveals all information revealed by a lesser success.

DC 15: Miasma form in plague pits or in other places containing large numbers of plague dead. They normally stay nearby to where they were created.

DC 20: Miasmas carry plague within them and can infect those that they come into contact with.

DC 25: Creatures of death, miasmas are vulnerable to radiant damage but are particularly resistant to necrotic attacks.

Elder Miasma

Elder miasmas are terrible combatants. Spawned from ancient plague pits, they have been driven virtually insane by the long years of their existence and the pain of their creation.

Miasma Level 10 Solo Controller

Large natural animate (undead) XP 2,500

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +10; darkvision

Stench of Death aura 5; the terrible stench of death fills the area around a miasma; any creature that enters or begins its turn in the aura is weakened (save ends)

HP 400; Bloodied 200

AC 26, Fortitude 24, Reflex 22, Will 25

Immune disease, poison; **Resist** necrotic 10; **Vulnerable** radiant 10

Saving Throws +5

Speed 8; fly 4 (clumsy flyer)

Action Points 2

⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will)

+15 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage.

⊕ **Gaseous Embrace** (standard; at-will) • **Necrotic**

+14 vs. Reflex; the miasma attacks one or two Medium or smaller targets and on a hit, the target is grabbed and pulled into the miasma’s space; the target is dazed and takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage until it escapes the grab. A creature that escapes the A creature that escapes the grab shifts to an adjacent square to the miasma of its choosing. The miasma can move normally while creatures are in its gaseous embrace but cannot fly.

↗ **Screams of the Damned** (immediate reaction; when struck by a ranged attack; at-will) • **Fear**

Ranged 20; +14 vs. Will; 2d6 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends) as the miasma hurls the death-screams of the plague dead into the target’s mind.

↖ **Sputum Burst** (standard; recharge ☐, ☐) • **Necrotic**

Close burst 3; +13 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 5 damage. The miasma emits a burst of plague and if the first attack hits the miasma makes a secondary attack. Secondary Attack: The plague that infects the miasma makes an attack against the target.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Skills Intimidate +15

Str 18 (+9) **Dex 17 (+8)** **Wis 10 (+5)**

Con 12 (+6) **Int 5 (+2)** **Cha 21 (+10)**

Elder Miasma Tactics

Elder miasma charge recklessly into battle and then spend an action point to use *merciless battering*. Subsequently, it tries to grab a weakened opponent before using *gaseous embrace*. Afterwards it continues to use *merciless battering* wherever possible spending an action point to use *screams of the damned* on a ranged attacker.

Elder Miasma Lore

Characters encountering an elder miasma can make a Religion check to recall information about it. A check also reveals all information revealed by a lesser success. Refer to the information presented under “Miasma Lore” to determine what the PC recalls, increasing all DCs by 5.

Elder Miasma**Level 16 Solo Brute**

Huge natural animate (undead)

XP 7,000

Initiative +13**Senses** Perception +14; darkvision**Stench of Death** aura 5; the terrible stench of death fills the area around a miasma; any creature that enters or begins its turn in the aura is weakened (save ends)**HP** 925; **Bloodied** 462**AC** 30, **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 31**Immune** disease, poison; **Resist** necrotic 10; **Vulnerable** radiant 10**Saving Throws** +5**Speed** 8; fly 4 (clumsy flyer)**Action Points** 2⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will)

Reach 3; +19 vs. AC; 3d8 + 7 damage.

⊕ **Gaseous Embrace** (standard; at-will) • **Necrotic**

+17 vs. Reflex. The elder miasma attacks one or two Medium or smaller targets and on a hit, the target is grabbed and pulled into the miasma's space; the target is dazed and takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage until it escapes the grab. A creature that escapes the grab shifts to an adjacent square to the miasma of its choosing. The elder miasma can move normally while creatures are engulfed within it but cannot fly.

⊕ **Merciless Battering** (standard; at-will)The elder miasma makes two basic melee attacks. If the miasma hits a target with one of its attacks it makes a secondary attack. *Secondary Attack*: The plague that infects the miasma makes an attack against the target. See the "Torrent of Death" section for more details.⤴ **Screams of the Damned** (immediate reaction; when struck by a ranged attack; at-will) • **Fear**

Ranged 20; +17 vs. Will; 2d8 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends) as the miasma hurls the death-screams of the plague dead into the target's mind.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common**Skills** Intimidate +18**Str** 24 (+15)**Dex** 20 (+13)**Wis** 13 (+9)**Con** 15 (+10)**Int** 8 (+7)**Cha** 21 (+13)

Pestilential Treant

The thick roots of a gnarled and twisted oak tree spread possessively over the small mound upon which it grows. Its sickly yellow leaves are mottled with streaks of gray and black.

Combat Tactics

Pestilential treants prefer to fight atop "their" plague pit. They use *raise plague dead* when most of their opponents are within the area and then pummel any creature breaking free. Pestilential treants are vulnerable to fire and attack those wielding it as a priority.

Origins and Society

A pestilential treant was once a normal treant that took root above an old plague pit. As its roots quested ever downward it encountered the disease-ridden remains buried in the pit and fed upon the vile liquids and ichors therein. Not only has the infection changed the treant's natural abilities, but it also warped its personality, turning it in a black hearted creature of death and disease. While the treant does not actively seek to spread the contagion throughout the surrounding countryside, it jealously guards what it sees as its territory, attacking all who draw near.

Pestilential Treant Lore

Characters encountering a pestilential treant can make an Arcana check to recall information about it. A check also reveals all information revealed by a lesser success.

DC 20: A pestilential treant was once a normal treant, but it has been warped by the strange energies given off the mass graves of the plague dead. It sups on their decaying bodies and can call them forth to aid it in battle.**Pestilential Treant****Level 19 Elite Soldier**

Huge fey magical beast (plant, undead)

XP 4,800

Initiative +13**Senses** Perception +13; low-light vision**Whipping Branches** aura 3; any creature that enters or begins its turn in the aura takes 5 damage.**HP** 368; **Bloodied** 184**AC** 36, **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 32**Vulnerable** fire (a pestilential treant takes ongoing 5 fire damage [save ends] when damaged by fire)**Saving Throws** +2**Speed** 6 (forest walk)**Action Points** 1⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will) • **Necrotic**

Reach 3; +25 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 damage, and ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends).

⤴ **Raise Plague Dead** (standard; recharge ☞, ☞)

Close burst 5; +23 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends) as its grasping roots and the limbs of the plague dead burst from the ground.

Alignment Evil**Languages** Elven**Skills** Nature +18, Stealth +16**Str** 27 (+17)**Dex** 14 (+11)**Wis** 18 (+13)**Con** 24 (+16)**Int** 16 (+12)**Cha** 22 (+15)

Pit Slime

A shapeless, horrid mass of putrid flesh and slime oozes across the floor, questing for warm flesh upon which to feast.

Combat Tactics

As soon as a pit slime notices a living creature, it moves toward it attacking as quickly as possible. It uses *double strike* whenever possible concentrating on defeating a single foe before moving on to other targets. When damaged for the second time it hurls a *dirge of the dead* at its attackers. When its *dirge of the dead* power recharges, it uses it as soon as possible.

Pit slime are remorseless hunters and utterly without fear; they do not flee combat. Other undead often trail behind a pit slime, trusting that its formidable strength will defeat or seriously weaken their prey.

Origins and Society

When plague ravages an area with particular savagery and orderly burials cease mistakes can be made. In some cases, still living plague victims are cast into the pits under the mistaken assumption that they are dead. Buried among the numberless dead, these unfortunate's last moments of life are filled with abject terror, agonizing pain, and the numbing realization of imminent death. If the victim is sufficiently strong willed some portion of him lives on after death imbuing the sludge at the bottom of the pit that oozes from the decomposing corpses with a spark of sentience.

Pit Slime

Level 8 Elite Brute

Large aberrant animate (undead)

XP 700

Initiative +4

Senses Perception +7; darkvision

HP 212; Bloodied 106

AC 22, Fortitude 23, Reflex 17, Will 19

Immune disease, poison; Resist necrotic 10; Vulnerable radiant 5

Saving Throws +2

Speed 6, climb 3, swim 2

Action Points 1

⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will)

Reach 2; +11 vs. AC; 3d10 + 5 damage, and the target is pushed 1.

⊕ **Double Strike** (standard; at-will)

The pit slime makes two slam attacks.

↩ **Dirge of the Dead** (standard; recharges when first bloodied; encounter) • **Necrotic**

Close burst 5; +9 vs. Will; 4d8 + 5 necrotic damage and the target is weakened (save ends) as the pit slime lets out a mournful wail laden with the sorrow and pain of the dying. *Miss*: Half damage and the target is not weakened.

Alignment Evil Languages Common

Skills Intimidate +9

Str 20 (+9)

Dex 10 (+4)

Wis 8 (+3)

Con 16 (+7)

Int 4 (+1)

Cha 10 (+4)



The resultant pit slime vaguely recalls its former life and is driven by an all-consuming desire for revenge against those responsible for its new unnatural existence. The pit slime eventually slithers out of the pit, and when it does it goes on a terrible rampage through the surrounding area. Of course, in many cases the people responsible are already dead – themselves plague victims – and this knowledge shatters the pit slime's tenuous hold on sanity.

Locations and Folk

This section presents a number of readymade encounter locations and NPCs for use in a plague campaign or adventure. When portraying these individuals and places, remember the extraordinary situation in which the PCs find themselves. These are not run of the mill encounters. The GM should seek to convey a sense of the unfolding horror as the plague savages the population.

Plague Locations

In a campaign beset by plague, it is likely that the PCs will frequent places that either did not exist prior to the outbreak, or that they would never normally chose to visit. Some places, such as pest houses or the mass graves of the plague pits are little more than charnel houses. In such locales the threat of infection is ever present, the corpses of the dead were often stacked like firewood while they awaited burial or cremation and the constant pain-wracked moans of the dying fill the air. Other places, such as the boarded-up homes of the infected, are desperate places reeking of despair and lingering lonely death. Such places are avoided by all sensible passersby and guarded by members of the watch charged with ensuring none of the incarcerated



escape. These locations are but an example of the kind of locations that the PCs may have to visit during an outbreak of plague. Each of the locations described also have one or more individuals associated with it.

Abandoned Village/Hamlet

Once plague has ravaged a settlement, it invariably moves on. While plague rarely kills everyone in a given community, it can often render a village uninhabitable. Perhaps so many of the populace die that village life falls apart or the militia is weakened to such an extent that bandits or other raiders – maybe orcs or goblins – make a locale simply too dangerous to stay in. Alternatively, surviving villagers may believe they have better prospects elsewhere and simply up and leave. Whatever the reason for its abandonment, nature quickly reclaims the site of a deserted village.

Deserted villages are quiet, mournful places. Depending on how long the village was abandoned, nature will have reclaimed some or all of the settlement. After only a year or so depending on the village's climate and situation, fields will be choked with weeds and small shrubs and buildings made of wood and other nonpermanent materials will be in need of repair. Thatched roofs sag, window shutters bang aimlessly in the breeze and a blanket of weeds, wild flowers and thigh-high grass are testament to the village's abandonment. The gnawed skeletons of dead villagers lie where they fell and the settlement's plague pit may yet lie open, exposing its terrible contents.

A few animals may have escaped from their pens and those that survive the depredations of predators (probably wolves) and raiders (desperate bandits or rapacious humanoids) may yet graze within the village's precincts.

After a few years, small trees will have taken root in previously cleared areas and many buildings will be at best severely damaged. With the collapse of roofs, the elements will start to degrade the buildings even quicker. Stone buildings – the local church, perhaps the local inn and the homes of the well-off – will fare better; their structures will remain basically intact for decades (or even centuries), but animals and pests will inevitably find their way inside. Within a decade or so, nothing will remain for treasure seekers except for the hidden wealth of the dead.

NPCs: Normally none.

Hooks: A plague master (page 26) has established himself in an abandoned village now all but swallowed up by the surrounding woodland. Claiming the remains of the local church – the only stone building in the village – as his lair, he has begun to harvest the bodies of the dead intent on unleashing the plague in surrounding villages. To protect himself, he has created undead from the villager's remains and they now tirelessly guard his new domain.

The PCs become involved when they are asked by the folk of a nearby village to locate several missing children who have disappeared into the surrounding forest. Investigations lead the PCs to the abandoned village and into battle with the plague master's minions.

Ghost Ship

Ships riddled with pestilence are often the way in which the plague reaches across seas and oceans to strike with little warning in ports and coastal villages.

Often when plague gets loose upon a ship, all or the vast majority of the crew dies. Often, those still healthy after it becomes evident that plague is among the crew abandon ship in an attempt to escape the pestilence, leaving their shipmates to an agonizing death. Without a functioning crew, the ship drifts aimlessly until a storm sinks it or it runs aground. Grounded ships are a ripe source or plunder and salvage for peasants and adventurers alike.

It is highly likely that the first aboard will not realize their peril. They will probably be too busy looting the hold to discover the fate of the crew – many of the corpses would have been thrown overboard in a desperate attempt to halt the contagion. A few corpses may be found in their cabins or scattered about the vessel and then the cause of the ship's abandonment may become all too clear. Dependant on the plague aboard, it could be days or weeks before the first looter falls ill. By then, infected looted goods will likely have changed hands several times, possibly spreading the chain of infection to surrounding settlements.

NPCs: (If the PCs come across the vessel while it is being looted) Human Rabble and/or Human Bandit (see the D&D 4E *Monster Manual* for details of both); otherwise none.

Hooks: The PCs come across an abandoned vessel and investigate. As they do so, they quickly realize the crew's fate when they discover the first mate's body lashed to the wheel. As they make this grim discovery, peasants from a nearby village arrive to loot the ship. The PCs must convince the villagers that plague is aboard the ship. Initially, the villagers do not believe the PCs, assuming that the PCs want to loot it themselves. If the PCs fail to convince the villagers of the danger, they swarm aboard intent on looting. If they do manage to keep the villagers away, they must still neutralize the lurking threat within the ship.

Pest House

Pest Houses are normally located in remotes places away from the populace at large or in locations that make quarantine easy to maintain. In a medieval society, a pest house or hospital was not a place in which the afflicted went to be cured. In effect, pest houses existed to keep the sick isolated from the healthy. Those infected were normally brought there to die a painful and lonely death. Anyone emerging from such a forsaken place owed more to gods of chance than to any of the basic medical techniques available to the poor. Of course, in a fantasy medieval society Remove Disease rituals and even skilled healers using herb lore can cure the afflicted, but both are in high demand and only the very rich or influential can guarantee access to such services.

NPCs: Pest Doctor, characters with the pestilential victim template (page 27), and possible clerics of a god of healing.

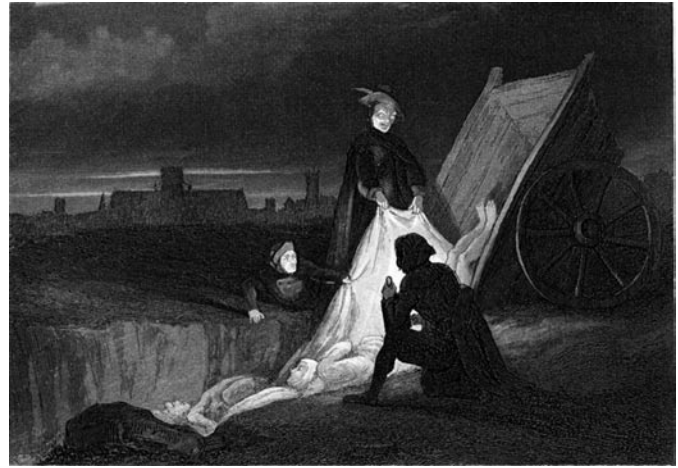
Hook: The PCs are approached by a young man desperate for their aid. His father was recently taken to the local pest house and the young man fears that his father will die there. Since his father was carried away, the young man has managed to find the money to pay for a Remove Disease ritual. He can only afford one, however, and begs the PCs to retrieve his father before it is too late. If the PCs hesitate, he breaks down in tears and tells them how he has already lost his mother and two sisters and that his father is his last living relative.

Once the PCs get to the pest house, they quickly discover that the staff are corrupt. They are providing no aid for the sick, rather waiting for them to die before looting their corpses. The staff plan to flee when they have enough wealth, so they are making only minimal effort to bury the dead.

Plague Cart

A single cart wends its way through the town streets, a mournful bell warning of its approach. Piled high with the suppurating corpses of the dead, all right-minded folk give the cart a wide berth. Probably manned by only one or two hard-bitten folk carrying out their grim task, the cart makes slow progress through the streets. Once full, it makes its way to the nearest plague pit into which its contents are unceremoniously dumped. In a large settlement more than one cart wends its way through the streets. At the height of a plague, such carts continually move through the streets, only stopping at nightfall.

No one in their right mind would attack or attempt to steal from a plague cart and thus the drivers do not expect any trouble. This is one of the most dangerous jobs to do when a plague strikes a town. Thus, only desperate folk with little or nothing to lose volunteer. Consequently, it is well paid.



NPCs: Plague cart driver.

Hooks: The PCs could come into contact with a plague cart as they move through a town. Perhaps they simply step aside to let it pass or one of the folk on the cart is not yet dead and weakly begs for aid. Alternatively, a pair of thieves could be crewing the cart, using it as a cover for their nefarious activities. Such individuals would almost certainly have access to the rituals required to stave off the disease.

Plague Cart Driver

Level 6 Skirmisher

Medium natural humanoid, tiefling

XP 250

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision

HP 70; **Bloodied** 35

AC 20, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 16

Resist fire 8

Speed 6

⊕ **Short Sword** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

+11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage.

⦿ **Hand Crossbow** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

Ranged 10/20; +11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.

⚡ **Bolt Blast** (standard; encounter) • **Weapon**

Ranged 10/20; +11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage. Requires hand crossbow; the plague cart driver makes an attack against 3 targets within range.

↩ **Plague Visage** (minor; encounter)

Close burst 3; +9 vs. Will. The plague cart driver threatens the targets with infection and targets hit are pushed 5 squares.

Infernal Wrath

Same as Tiefling Racial Power (see D&D 4E *Player's Handbook*).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven

Skills Bluff +7, Intimidate +8, Thievery +14, Stealth +9

Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 18 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+4)

Con 14 (+5) **Int** 12 (+4) **Cha** 14 (+5)

Equipment short sword, dagger, hand crossbow with 10 bolts, thieves' tools

Plague Pit

During severe outbreaks of plague, graveyards quickly overflow as the number of dead far outstrips the consecrated land available to bury them. In such situations, a church or other wealthy individual normally donates or purchases additional land and makes it available for the mass burial of the dead. Such pits are often wide, deep and always fill quickly. Sometimes bodies interred are placed reverently in lines and whatever rituals are required by the deceased's faith are enacted. Other times, when the plague is slaughtering scores or hundred of people a day, the dead are tossed in unceremoniously.

When a pit is full, it is quickly closed up and another opened.

When in use, a plague pit is guarded night and day by a small group of men who are solely charged with keeping mourners and other folk away. This is grim, dangerous work particularly in the summer months when the stench of decomposing corpses hangs thick in the air.

Closed pits appear as little more than heaped mounds of earth. Within a year, grass and small shrubs grow atop it disguising its sinister purpose. Plague pits are almost never marked and often the land reverts to its former purpose – normally pastureland. In the future, when its sinister secret is forgotten, the land may even change purposes. For example, plague pits built near to the outskirts of a town or city can be swallowed up by sprawling urban growth possibly leading to future adventures. The larger the settlement, the more plague pits it would have.

NPCs: Watchman (page 39), Grave Diggers (page 37), and Plague Cart Driver.

Hook: A wealthy merchant is build a new townhouse on a piece of land once used as a plague pit. As the labourers dig down to get the foundations they discover the top of the plague pit and refuse to continue excavations. That night, a hitherto trapped pit slime (page 33) slithers out of the pit and starts to kill the laborers before returning to the pit as dawn breaks to rest. The merchant, desperate to not lose his investment, calls in the PCs to investigate the site and to destroy or drive off whatever is killing the laborers.

Quarantined Building

During epidemics, it was common practice to quarantine those infected – or those suspected of infection – in their own homes. In many cases, such unfortunates were barricaded into their homes along with close family members, lodgers, and others unlucky enough to be staying at the same address. Such a quarantine was a virtual death sentence not only for the person initially infected but also for those locked into the house with them.

The state would often employ watchers to make sure that the quarantine was not broken. Additionally, in many cases, food, drink, and other essential supplies would be provided to those quarantined in an attempt to stop them trying to break out. There can be few experiences as terrifying as being locked in a house with one or more people suffering from the plague. As the days pass, the initially infected person probably dies but not before he infects others in the household. As, in turn, they exhibit symptoms, get ill and die the urge of anyone still not infected to flee (no matter the consequences) is all-consuming.

NPCs: Watchman (page 39) and characters with the pestilential victim template (page 27).

Hook: Plague has struck a large city and a row of multifamily housing has been quarantined. The party has been hired to stand as watchmen, but how long can they look into the eyes of the now healthy trapped in a building of death?

Temple: God of Healing

When the plague stalks through the streets and hundreds die agonizing deaths every day, temples devoted to the God of Healing are besieged by crowds of infected individuals desperate for aid. These huge crowds also contain folk still healthy here to beg for succor for their sick relatives and friends. Unfortunately, when they return to the family home such folk are invariably infected as a result of their close contact with so many plague victims.



In the early stages of plague, such temples often double as pest houses of sorts, their clergy offering what aid they can. However, their facilities are swiftly overwhelmed by the torrent of death swirling through the streets. Because these temples represent an infected person's best chance of survival, the clerics within quickly find it necessary to deploy guards to protect the holy places of their faith. Such individuals are either paid very well, or guaranteed free healing should they develop the plague's symptoms.

Within the temple many of the corridors and chambers are filled with the sick. If the temple has a graveyard, it is likely full – the ground choked with the corpses of the dead. If the town is gripped by a full-scale outbreak, the clergy may have been reduced to stacking the dead in piles until sufficient land can be found to bury them.

NPCs: Pest doctor (page 38), characters with the pestilential victim template (page 27), acolyte, and high priest.

Hooks: The PCs enter a plague-infested town to discover a mob seething at the gates of a temple, almost overwhelming the score of guards trying to keep them at bay. It is evident to them that soon the mob will break through the defenses and surge into the temple. The PCs must try to calm the crowd, perhaps with Diplomacy or other skills. While the PCs could instead opt to use lethal force to subdue the crowd this option almost certainly ends in their expulsion from the town (if the mob does not lynch the murderers first!) Quick, decisive, and innovative strategies, however, succeed in calming the crowd.

Acolyte Level 2 Controller

Medium natural humanoid, human cleric XP 125

Initiative +1 **Senses** Perception +5; other senses

HP 30; **Bloodied** 15; **Healing Surges** 1 (7 hp)

AC 12, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 18

Speed 6

⊕ **Mace** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

+5 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.

⊕ **Wrathful Thunder** (standard; encounter) • **Divine, Thunder, Weapon**

+5 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage; see D&D 4E *Player's Handbook*.

⤵ **Lance of Faith** (standard; at-will) • **Divine, Implement, Radiant**

Ranged 5; +6 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 5 damage, and see D&D 4E *Player's Handbook*.

⤵ **Cascade of Light** (standard; daily) • **Divine, Implement, Radiant**

Ranged 10; +6 vs. Will; 3d8 + 5 damage, and see D&D 4E *Player's Handbook*.

⬅ **Bless** (Level 2 Cleric Utility Prayer)

See D&D 4E *Player's Handbook*.

Alignment Good **Languages** Common

Skills Heal +10, Religion +7

Class Features channel divinity (divine fortune), *healing word*

Str 13 (+2) **Dex** 10 (+1) **Wis** 18 (+5)

Con 14 (+3) **Int** 12 (+2) **Cha** 11 (+1)

Equipment clerical vestments, mace, holy symbol, ritual scrolls as determined by GM

High Priest **Level 9 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid, human cleric XP 400

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +9; other senses
HP 84; **Bloodied** 42; **Healing Surges** 1 (21 hp)
AC 17, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 24
Speed 6

⊕ **Mace** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**
+9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage.

↗ **Lance of Faith** (standard; at-will) • **Divine, Implement, Radiant**
Ranged 5; +12 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 8 damage, and see D&D 4E *Player's Handbook*.

↗ **Searing Light** (standard; encounter) • **Divine, Fire, Implement**
Ranged 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 8 radiant damage, and see D&D 4E *Player's Handbook*.

✱ **Flame Strike** (standard; daily) • **Divine, Fire, Implement**
Burst 2 within 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 8 fire damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends), and see D&D 4E *Player's Handbook*.

Cure Serious Wounds
Same as Level 6 Cleric Utility Prayer; see D&D 4E *Player's Handbook*.

Alignment Good **Languages** Common
Skills Heal +15, Religion +12
Class Features channel divinity (divine fortune), *healing word*
Str 10 (+4) **Dex** 11 (+4) **Wis** 20 (+9)
Con 12 (+5) **Int** 16 (+7) **Cha** 13 (+5)

Equipment clerical vestments, mace, holy symbol, ritual scrolls as determined by GM

Plague NPCs

During an epidemic or pandemic, the very fabric of society changes. Remember that in any settlement of note, the taverns and other public places are likely closed, and the streets are all but deserted. Moving through a town that was once a thriving, bustling place is a surreal experience. While the detritus of civilization still fills the streets, grass and weeds may reclaim the thoroughfares for the first time in decades. Moldering corpses awaiting burial or discarded goods may also litter the once busy streets. Even though most people try to avoid infection, some few are still abroad on the streets carrying out vital business.

During a time of plague, certain professions or types of individual are encountered more often than usual. Gravediggers, pest doctors, apothecaries, clerics, and so on all have their part to play in an urban society ravaged by plague. In more rural settings, traditional apothecaries replace pest doctors and the tasks of other specialist roles such as gravediggers are carried out by family members.

Some people are genuinely altruistic, seeking to help their fellow man while others see the plague as an opportunity to enrich themselves. Remember when portraying such individuals to account

Grave Digger **Level 4 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf XP 175

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +1; low-light vision
HP 65; **Bloodied** 32
AC 16, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13
Speed 5

⊕ **Warhammer** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**
+7 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage.

⊕ **Mighty Strike** (standard; encounter) • **Weapon**
Requires warhammer; +7. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage, and the target is pushed 2, and knocked prone.

Stand Your Ground (Dwarven Racial Trait)
See D&D 4E *Player's Handbook*

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven
Skills Dungeoneering +3, Endurance +11, Intimidate +6
Str 17 (+5) **Dex** 13 (+3) **Wis** 8 (+1)
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 8 (+1)

Equipment leather armor, warhammer, spade

for the impact recent events have had upon them. In such circumstances of exceptional stress, people's attitudes, habits, and even jobs change. They likely know one or more people (perhaps from their immediate family) that have died or that are currently sick. Because the markets have closed down, they may be hungry, even starving. Likely the constant threat of infection and death has slightly unhinged them in some way. They may be distrustful of strangers – who after all may be infected – or desperate for money or food and therefore likely to take greater risks than normal to secure those resources.

Use these NPCs in conjunction with the locations detailed previously in this chapter.

Grave Diggers

Excavating the graves and the plague pits required during an epidemic is hard, unpleasant work. While actually digging the graves isn't that bad, filling them in again while in such close proximity to infected corpses is extremely dangerous. Such jobs are uniformly carried out by the desperate or poor who weigh the surprisingly good wages against the chance of a lingering, gruesome death. In general grave diggers become inured to the death surrounding them and become quite brutal and callous. Larcenous grave diggers sometimes loot the corpses put into their care, but such individuals do not normally survive long. Some grave diggers find it easier to do their job while drunk and they can also be encountered staggering through the streets in the early morning after a long night's digging.

Charlatan

Some folk view the plague's arrival as an opportunity to make a lot of money. As the death toll mounts, a settlement's population will turn to anyone promising protection from a terrible plague death. A charlatan makes his money selling a bewilderingly array of potions, unguents, poultices, holy relics, magical cures, and so on to the poor and gullible. Such folk rarely entrap the wealthy or educated with their lies. The wealthy, of course, simply pay a priest to perform the relevant ritual while the educated usually only turn to a charlatan when they are already infected (and desperate).

Charlatan **Level 4 Skirmisher**Medium natural humanoid, human XP 175**Initiative** +7 **Senses** Perception +3; low-light vision**HP** 54; **Bloodied** 27**AC** 18, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16**Speed** 6⊕ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

+9 vs. AC; 1d4 + 1 damage.

⊗ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

Ranged 5/10; +9 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage.

Mobile Strike

The charlatan can move up to 3 squares and make one basic melee attack at any point during that movement. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of the attack.

Combat Advantage

The charlatan deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common**Skills** Bluff +9, Diplomacy +6, Insight +5**Str** 12 (+3) **Dex** 17 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+3)**Con** 14 (+4) **Int** 14 (+4) **Cha** 14 (+4)**Equipment** dagger (3), plague doctor's outfit, many small vials and jars of unguent

Some charlatans openly sell their wares on the streets while others call on the houses of the infected demanding much coin for their spurious cure-alls. To improve the chances of their duplicity succeeding many charlatans pose as doctors or priests and may even have accomplices with them professing to be newly cured plague victims who can testify to the charlatan's miraculous powers.

The Infected

When the plague strikes, in most cases after the local hospitals and temples have been overwhelmed by the sick, infected people are simply locked up in their own homes and left to die. To increase the misery, everyone who has been in close contact with the infected individuals is also locked up in their own house. This is a virtual death sentence for anyone who is still healthy but who is locked up with someone already suffering from the plague.

For a sample infected NPC, refer to the pestilential victim template (page 27).

Pest Doctor

Pest doctors are mainly incredibly brave individuals who willingly remain in a settlement riddled with plague in a vain attempt to wrest at least a few victims from the plague's fell grip. Most have no knowledge of magic; they use their medical training (such as it is) to fight the plague. Normally, this knowledge consists of tradition and practices passed down from previous practitioners; much of it is little use against plague. Altruistic plague doctors provide their services free, or for very low cost, while other less pleasant individuals use the garb of a pest doctor as a means to enter the homes of the dead and dying in a search for hidden wealth.

Pest Doctor **Level 6 Controller**Medium natural humanoid, half-elf XP 250**Initiative** +4 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision**HP** 72; **Bloodied** 36**AC** 20, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 19**Speed** 6⊕ **Sickle** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

+11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 1 damage.

↩ **Cowering Glance** • **Psychic**

Close burst 5; +10 vs. Will; 1d6 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends) as the pest doctor threatens the target with infection with a deadly disease if he comes any closer.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Elven**Skills** Diplomacy +9, Heal +11, Insight +8, Nature +11**Str** 12 (+4) **Dex** 12 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+6)**Con** 16 (+7) **Int** 14 (+5) **Cha** 18 (+7)**Equipment** pest doctor's outfit, dagger, apothecary's bag

Starving Peasant

As the plague takes hold and the intricate web of laws and social responsibility begins to break down, food supplies become scarce. Peasants reduced to scavenging for nuts and berries in the forest take any opportunity to get food. Such individuals encountering an adventuring party start by begging for any spare food. If they are rebuffed, they trail the party continuing to plead for mercy. As they do so, their numbers invariably increase until the PCs are surrounded by a mob of desperate, starving folk. If they are desperate enough they may attack a weak party.

Use the statistics for Human Rabble (see the D&D 4E *Monster Manual*) to represent a starving peasant.

Vigilante Mob

A vigilante mob can be of almost any size. In a small village, it is probably no more than a score strong, while in larger settlements it can number in the hundreds. Vigilante mobs rarely attack those already suffering from the plague – to do so invites infect and a grisly death. Instead, they attack the people they believe are responsible for bringing the plague to their home. Travelers, strangers, merchants, seamen, and member of hated minorities are the preferred targets of such a mob. If the targets are lucky they are simply evicted from their homes and forced to flee. Those less fortunate, however, are put to death – often by burning so that any contagion they carry with them is destroyed.

The PCs could be the target of such a mob or they could come across a group of vengeful peasants in the process of lynching an individual unfortunate to fall into their hands.

Vigilante mobs are normally made up of normal peasants (use Human Rabble from the D&D 4E *Monster Manual*) led by a few charismatic individuals.

Watchman **Level 3 Artillery**Medium natural humanoid, human XP 150Initiative +4 Senses Perception +6

HP 39; Bloodied 19

AC 15, Fortitude 15, Reflex 16, Will 14

Speed 5

⚔ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

+10 vs. AC 1d8 + 2 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the watchman's next turn.

🏹 **Crossbow** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

Ranged 15/30; +10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage.

🏹 **Pinning Shot** (standard; recharge 5, 6) • **Weapon**

Requires crossbow; Ranged 15/30; +10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

Alignment Unaligned Languages Common

Skills Streetwise +7

Str 14 (+3) Dex 16 (+4) Wis 11 (+1)Con 15 (+3) Int 10 (+1) Cha 12 (+2)

Equipment chainmail, crossbow with 20 bolts, longsword



Watchman

When an infected individual was incarcerated in his own home, a guard was paid to keep watch on the house. Such work was boring, but dangerous. Occasionally, driven mad by their pain, incarcerated individuals tried to escape. It was the guard's job to stop them, using deadly force if necessary. Thus, guards much prefer to use ranged weapons or those with reach to minimize their exposure to the plague borne by their charges.

Glossary

Apothecary: Apothecaries dispensed remedies mostly using herbs, plants, and roots to make salves, pastes and pills to ancient recipes. Often apothecaries were the only source of medical care available to the poor or destitute.

Bleeding: A form of medieval medicine during which "bad" blood was drained from the patient's body to improve his general health or to release evil spirits trapped within. The use of leeches was common, but (particularly for poor patients) unsterilized knives were also employed.

Epidemic: A disease that attacks many people in a community or area.

Epidemiology: The branch of medicine concerned with the occurrence, distribution, and control of disease.

Hypovolemic Shock: A very dangerous condition in which severe blood and fluid loss makes the heart unable to pump enough blood around the body.

Incubation Period: The time that elapses between a subject being exposed to a disease and when the symptoms first become apparent.

Pandemic: A disease that affects persons over a wide geographical area.

Plague: A plague is any widespread and unusually contagious disease which has a high fatality rate.

Sputum: Saliva and mucus ejected from the mouth.

Suppurating: To produce or discharge pus.

Virology: The science of studying viruses and the diseases they cause.

Yersinia pestis: Bacteria transmitted by flea bite; the agent of plague.

It was discovered by Alexandre Yersin, who first isolated it in Hong Kong during the outbreak of 1894.

Further Reading

If the subject of the Black Death and in effects interests you, the following books provide a much more in-depth view of the subject.

- Catharine Arnold, *Necropolis: London and its Dead* (Pocket Books, 2006)
- John Kelly, *The Great Mortality: An Intimate History of the Black Death* (Harper Perennial 2006)
- J.C. Russell, "The Aftermath of the Black Death and the Aftermath of the Great War", *American Journal of Sociology* Vol XXVI
- Susan Scott & Christopher Duncan, *Return of the Black Death* (Wiley, 2004)
- Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death* (Penguin Books, 1971)

Useful Links

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Death

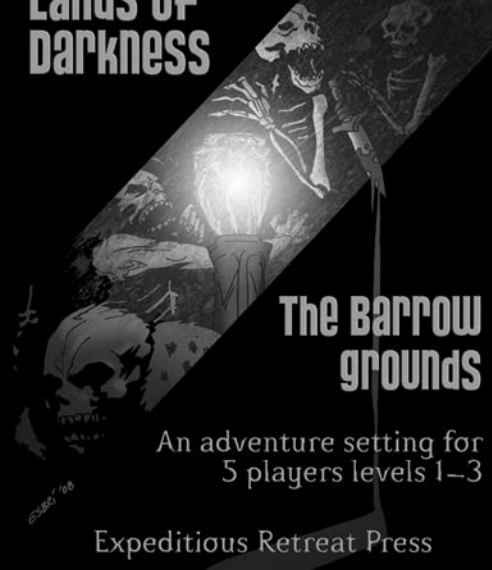
<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/plague.htm>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle_ages/black_01.shtml

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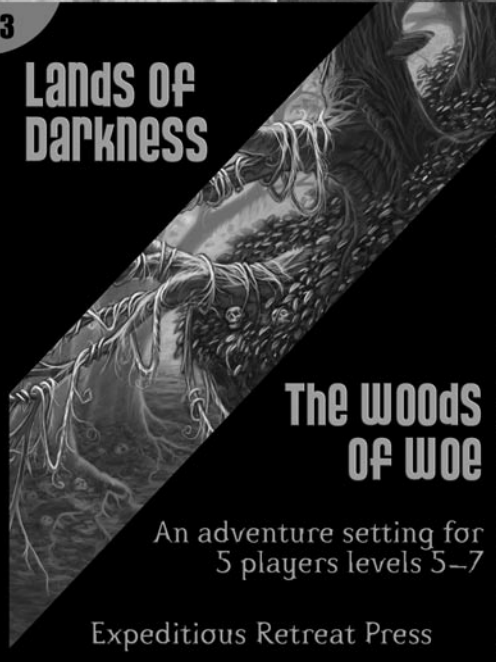
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