An Introduction to Fantastical Diseases and Epidemics.

THE MALADY CODEX

By Jason Bakos and Themis Paraskevas

Enrich your world with magical diseases, in this supplement for Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition!

GUILD

THE MALADY CODEX

AN INTRODUCTION TO FANTASTICAL DISEASES, EPIDEMIOLOGY AND TREATMENT.

On the cover: The fabled Druid responsible for one of the deadliest diseases in the world, the "Druid's Curse." Art by Anthony DePietro, whose awesome work can be found on Facebook, ArtStation on Instagram.

Thanks to the playtesters: Kostis Chatzilias, Vagelis Tsogas, Giorgos Apostolou, Marios Mpampouris, Dionysis Vekios, Dimitris Logothetis, Giorgos Lyras, Aleksis Malifatouratzis, Aris Mpizos, s Sourounis, Nikos Skepetaris, George Triantafyllopoulos, Theofanis Tsiliras, Thimios Ntinos.

BY JASON BAKOS AND THEMIS PARASKEVAS

EDITING BY MARCUS SANTOS

TEMPLATE BY NATHANAËL ROUX

INTRODUCTION

This supplement is written by medical students with a love for tabletop roleplaying games. Inspired by the wide array of diseases, and the medieval myths that once surrounded them, we embarked on a mission; to enrich other worlds with fantastic diseases.

Herein are presented a plethora of diseases, varying from magical to microbiological causes.

We feel that every disease is something to be feared. Deep in each civilization's roots, there are myths, remedies and folklore, all revolving around the ailments that affect its people. When each Dungeon Master wants to expand on the details of the societies that unfold before their very eyes, tools that spice up the process become a vital weapon. This supplement will hopefully become one of them, as DMs become inspired by the grim, epic or mundane conditions of the human body and mind.

Do not underestimate diseases. Part of the Dungeon Master's art is to be able to stir feelings up in their players, and there are few human conditions that could accomplish that better. Used as a way to advance a storyline, to expand a character arc or to create conflict, the following stories can serve you well, but be warned! Use them too much, and they might lose value.

Also bear in mind that these diseases are not simply a way to add mechanical complexity to your game. A paladin, a monk and a cleric will mostly still be strong against these ailments, but there is a limited amount of effort a cleric can exert to heal a whole country plagued by a dragon's toxic fumes. Instead, try to focus on the world building and roleplaying aspect that a disease can bring to the table. Imagine describing a town plagued by a wave of sickness, bring to life a dragonborn whose scales are falling one by one. Those evocative scenes are what we hope this book can provide.

As for the locations described in this supplement, bear in mind that they are intentionally generic and without specific location. This is a toolset for the Dungeon Master. There is no need to limit the utility of the tools we provide, so we kept them open ended and without boundaries. Explore the ideas presented here; include them in your own words, alter existing locations of known settings, or just use them for one-shots! The possibilities are endless, and that is part of why we play this game. We hope you enjoy.

"To all scholars and medical scientists; This manual is a collection of the most fantastical diseases I have collected over the years in my travels. I have met tyrants, conversed with madmen and barely escaped with my life from rather precarious situations, all for the sake of knowledge. The experiences I have gained cannot be simply captured by my humble writing skills, so in hopes of leaving behind something truly worth reading, I'll just do what I can best; describe the maladies I've encountered.

I am Acesius, a man who has spent his life studying the humanoid body. As I settle down, too tired from old age to continue with my adventuring habits, I write this to present a portfolio of a very characteristic collection of diseases. The ones I chose to present all serve a purpose. Their significance cannot be ignored, and thus it is my belief that every reader who is interested in the more... fantastical of the ailments that trouble us all should be aware of them. This is the reason I wrote this Codex of Maladies. "

This guide is a collection of diseases that are a mix of magical and realistic. Mostly based on real world diseases, these should serve as an example to the power these maladies hold as storytelling tools. First, some basic concepts are introduced, and after an example of the structure, which could also serve as a template for other diseases, the diseases themselves are broken down.
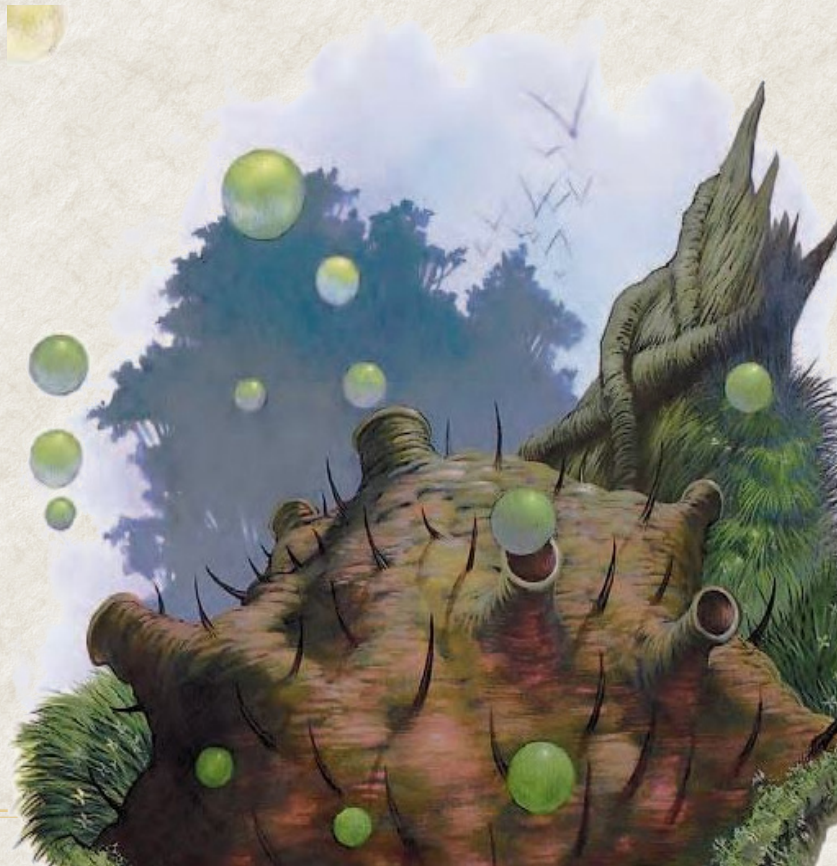
How to Handle Diseases

Contrary to the heading, this is not a guide for medical professionals. Here, we offer a few insights on how to handle the maladies presented in this codex. There are many aspects to these. They were designed to be storytelling tools, first and foremost, which means that they are not written as some sort of gospel. Feel free to read these texts and modify them as you wish, adapting them to fit your style and your worlds. To fulfil their duty as story tools however, they have to have a mechanical aspect to them as well, as this is a game after all. This part is also highly adaptable. While we offer recommendations on how to infect creatures, on the symptoms they present and on how to cure diseases, we insist that you take these with a grain of salt. The biggest change you should think about making depends on your players. If you have paladins, clerics and monks in your party, don't forget that their classes have been designed to give them an edge against all kinds of ailments. Don't take this away from them; encourage them. There are few things more satisfactory to a player than to suddenly realize that their high-level monk is immune to this disease, saving them and proving how the long hours the character has spent perfecting their art was worth it. Apply a similar line of thought to healing. In this edition of the game, we feel that the rules have been intentionally left vague regarding the relationship between healing magic and lasting diseases. Below, we present a short list of tools that can be used to cure a disease, and when describing each one, we suggest a way to get rid of it. Ultimately, it is up to you as the DM to decide whether or not a Paladin's Lay on Hand works, or if the disease is so powerful that it can only be dealt with a special remedy.

Spells

◊ **Lesser Restoration (2nd level).** Removes one disease or one condition (blinded, deafened, paralyzed, poisoned).

◊ **Raise Dead (5th level) and Resurrection (7th level).** Cures non-magical diseases that afflicted the deceased at the time of their death.

◊ **True Resurrection (9th level).** Cures all magical and non-magical diseases that afflicted the deceased at the time of their death.

◊ **Heal (6th level).** Removes all diseases and blindness, deafness.

◊ **Hero's Feast (6th level)** .Cures all diseases.

◊ **Mass Heal (9th level).** Removes all diseases and blindness, deafness.

Magic Items

◊ **Keoghtom's Ointment**. Cures all diseases.

◊ **Periapt of Health.** Suppress current diseases and grants immunity to diseases.

◊ **Elixir of Health.** Cures diseases and removes blinded, deafened and paralyzed conditions.

◊ **Potion of Vitality.** Cures all diseases and removes exhaustion.

Other

◊ **A Paladin's Lay on Hands ability**. Cures one or more diseases.

◊ **Master Transmuter: Panacea.** Cures all diseases.

You can also consult with the extensive table that is provided in the seperate .png file to quickly and convieniently figure out what effect a spell or magical item can have.

> *"Ah... the power of magic. I pity the commoners who fool themselves, believing that one potion made from a petty crook can heal their pain. If, by some miracle, you didn't get scammed, buying a colorful brew of goblin tea, don't expect to get rid of these diseases so easily!"*

Categories

The diseases mentioned in this book have been categorized in a few distinct ways, as a means of navigating through them, enabling you to choose the right one for the right conditions. You wouldn't want to accidentally give a major NPC the Druid's Curse, unless you don't really have plans for them.

◊ **Penetrative:** This category is highly lethal, as it affects even characters immune to normal diseases.

◊ **Magical - Divine - Natural:** this category can be useful in deciding what skill check to ask of a player when they try to learn more about a particular ailment. Magical corresponds to Arcana, Divine to Religion, and Natural to Nature. It is also important for effects that grant certain advantages against magical effects.

◊ **Lethal - Non Lethal** : Lethal Diseases lead to death if not treated, while one could potentially live with a Non-Lethal Disease.

Maladies

Example

This exemplary disease should serve both as a template for aspiring writers to create their own, while also giving some insight to the way each of the following diseases was written.

Origins

How it came to be. What caused this specific disease to become a threat?

Causes

How does it spread from organism to organism? How can you get it?

Symptoms

What does it look like? What does a patient experience?

Diagnosis

How do you make sure that someone is infected with this?

Cure

How does a patient get cured of this disease? What can others do to help?

Plot Hooks

What can the DM do to include this in their campaign? What's the best way to use it?

Druid's Curse

Penetrative, Lethal, Natural

> *"Of all the diseases in this codex, there is none more mysterious. Perhaps the deadliest of them all, this is a disease whose origins are lost in time. Let me tell you the tale of the fabled druid...*

This is the story of a disease born out of vengeance. A pandemic that brought a civilization to ruins and the whole world to its knees.

> *Loosely derived from the disease caused by Yersinia Pestis. a rod shaped coccobaccilus. The disease most commonly known as the Plague, may manifest as the Bubonic Plague, with swollen possibly hemorrhagic bubonic lymph nodes, or as the Black Plague, with subcutaneous bleeding and absence of swollen lymph nodes.*

Origins

There was once a druid, a peaceful fellow that passes his days in a swamp with a few others that shared his love for the biome and the druidic arts. One day, the druid's altar was raided by orcs and he found himself, along with 3 other fellow druids, chased in a swamp. They spent the night hiding in a flea ridden cave. Three nights later, at the time the moon was at its highest, the first of his companions started bleeding from his neck and his fingers were turning black. The others followed, and a week later, he was all alone, miraculously unharmed. In that swamp, in that cave, the druid came to the realization that nature was filled with death and that even the smallest insects could kill the strongest creature, even the elves of the forest. Thinking only of revenge, he used his druidic abilities to harness the power of the fleas and infested the orc raider's camp. They all bled to death. Fierce warriors, unable to fight this fatal weapon. The druid took an oath of vengeance against the greenskins, swearing it upon the moon itself, and headed back to the swamp.

Causes

The disease is spread by infected fleas. They are carried to towns on small animals, such as rats and squirrels. Then the flea bites the creature and the disease enters the blood, spreading to every inch of the now infected creature's body.

Symptoms

The symptoms start 5-6 days after a creature is infected, developing fever, nausea and photophobia. The next day, lymph nodes on the neck and the bubonic area get swollen and start bleeding. Most people die from severe bleeding in two or three days.

Any creature affected by the disease has disadvantage on Perception Checks while in sunlight. Bleeding creatures have to make a DC 10 Constitution Saving Throw every hour. On a failed saving throw, their maximum health is reduced by 5. The DC is increased by 2 every 6 hours., even if the infected creature succeeds at its saving throw.

Diagnosis

Its characteristic symptoms make the diagnosis obvious, but it is too late when one understands their fate. Someone with enough knowledge on the disease could see an epidemic pattern, as usually whole villages are infected rather than an individual. The diagnosis could also be made by finding fleas with purple patterns on their carapaces on the diseased or on animals. If a creature has never heard of the disease and the legend of the druid, they can draw the connection between the fleas and the symptoms with a successful **DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check.**

Cure

There is no easy cure of the disease, but doctors have noticed that victims of the disease that spend time in swamps live relatively longer, even a few weeks more than the norm. There have been some documented cases of people being cured after removing the swollen lymph nodes on the neck. This of course is a risky medical procedure and only a few experienced doctors have managed to save their patients.

A very rare herb known as Sparkleaf can cure the symptoms of the disease if brewed and consumed as a tea. To acquire Sparkleaf however, one must locate a Shambling Mound that lives in a swamp, and remove a purple flower with lighting-like patterns on its flowers from the creature's body. To brew the tea, a creature proficient **in Medicine** or with the **Herbalism Kit** must succeed on **3 or more out of 5 DC 16 checks** with the corresponding skill.

When the druid created the virus, he made sure that it was protected by spells that remove diseases. Spells that remove disease, such as a Paladin's *lay on hands* ability or the *cure disease* spell only serve as a break to the symptoms progression. Any time that a spell like *cure disease* is cast on an inflicted creature, the DC for the disease does not increase by 2 for the next 6 hours.

Plot Hooks

This disease is one of the deadliest in this book. It's meant to be used as a world-ending pandemic, or at least a city-threatening epidemic. It could be that the heroes, or someone they know, has contracted the disease, and they must find a cure as the clock is ticking. With time running out, their options are limited. One way to end the pandemic is to search for the druid that created it, but that should prove to be rather difficult. Another way is to procure Sparkleaf, and brew the tea that fends off the disease. However, the plant can only make 6 therapeutic doses, which means that it would take a whole army of Shambling Mounds to cure a town.

Use this disease with caution, as it is deadly and hard to cure. It's meant to be used as a looming threat, a means to signify that the clock is ticking, and as a kick start for adventurers to go and save the world.

For one example about how this disease could be introduced to a campaign, keep an eye out for our freebie adventure, "Plague Bearers", soon to be released on the DMs Guild. Live through the fateful days of the demise of the orc clan, and survive to tell the tale of the mad druid, acting as a harbinger to his pandemic. A low level adventure in a swamp setting will turn out to be quite lethal!
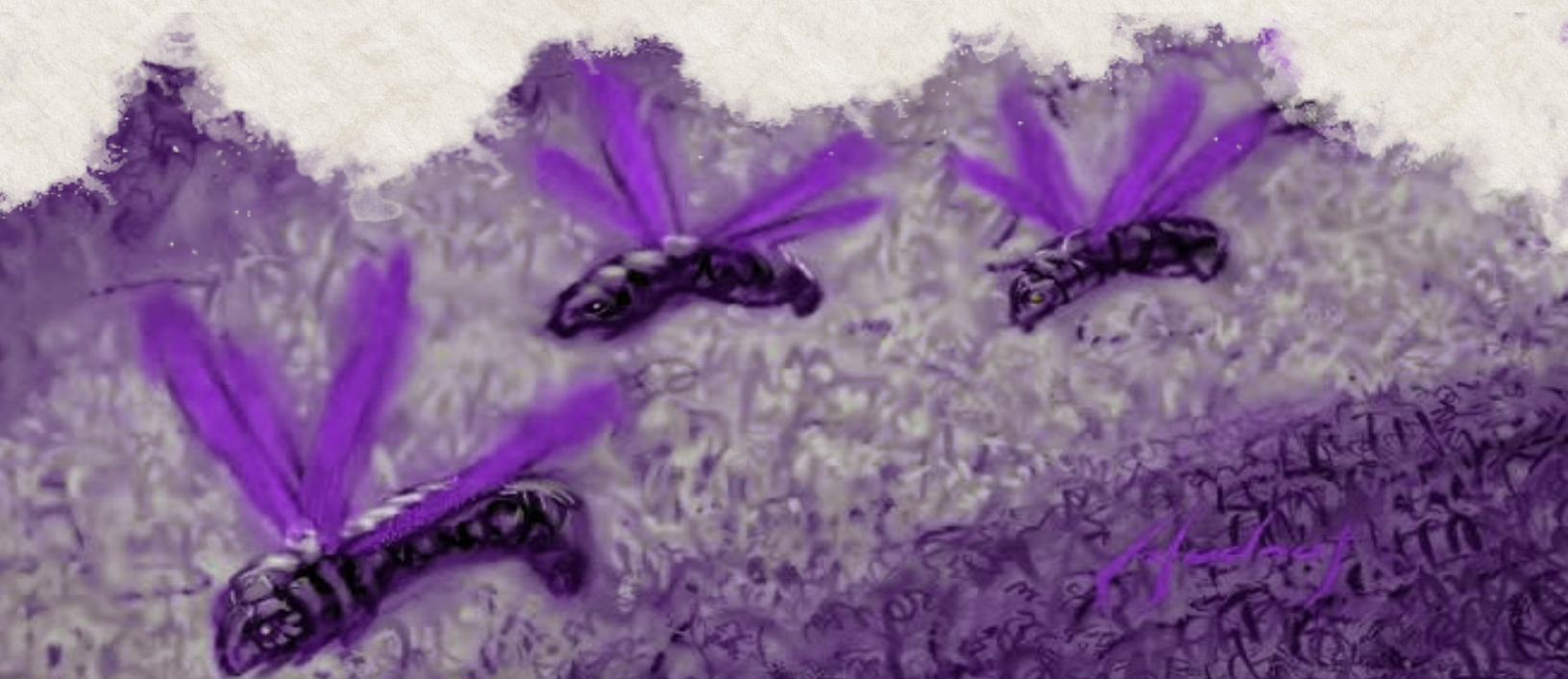
Mad Mage Virus

Penetrative, Non-Lethal, Magical

> *Every wizard needs a signature world-ending thing. This nutcase decided to make viruses. I'm really worried about those who dabble with the arcane ways.*

Origin

Some wizards prefer to see their victims blasted by Fireballs, while others prefer to punish them with haunting illusions. The maddest of them all decided to create a virus, using forbidden transmutation magic. This highly adaptable virus changes depending on the host's actions.

Causes

This virus is airborne, which means it is transported through the air and with inhalation. A creature has to spend at least 24 hours with an infected creature to catch the disease, or have it bestowed upon them by the Mad Mage or his apprentice themselves, through a Wand of Viral Infection (Appendix C).

Effects

The goal of the virus is to take down adventurers, not peasants. It activates whenever a creature battles and slowly mutates, as it understands their fighting style. The disease has four stages, from Stage 0 to Stage 3.

Stage 0: When a creature is infected, the Virus is on Stage 0 for all damage types

Stage 1: When a creature deals one type of damage, for example thunder, they proceed to Thunder Stage 1, while they remain on Stage 0 for all other damage types. Upon dealing this damage, they must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom Saving Throw or take 1d8 damage of the appropriate type (in this example, Thunder damage). The creature proceeds to Stage 1 even if it succeeds on the Saving Throw.

Stage 2: The next time the creature deals the same type of damage, (in this example, Thunder damage), they enter Stage 2 for the appropriate type. They must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom Saving Throw or take 2d8 damage of the appropriate type. The creature proceeds to Stage 2 even if it succeeds on the Saving Throw.

Stage 3: If a creature with Stage 2 for one type of damage, deals the same type of damage again, the virus proceeds to Stage 3. They must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom Saving Throw or take 3d8 damage of the appropriate type. Additionally the parasitic aberration manifests (even in a success).

Dormant Stage: Whenever a creature is not dealing damage in combat, the disease remains dormant for all types of damage.

Whenever a creature deals any other type of damage, the virus returns to Stage 0 for that type of damage and proceeds to Stage 1 for the new type. In our example if the creature is on Thunder Stage 2 and then hits his enemy with an axe, its virus returns to Thunder Stage 0 and proceeds to Slashing Stage 1. If an attack deals two types of damage simultaneously, like Meteor Swarm (Fire and Bludgeoning), if the infected creature is on Stage 0 for both types, both types proceed to Stage 1, and if it is on a higher Stage for either only that stage proceeds to the next. Dealing multiple attacks in one round (For example, a sorcerer could cast two different spells in one turn) will cause multiple Virus triggers.

If the host dies by any means, including damage taken from this disease, and the Virus is on Stage 1 or 2 for any damage type, it manifests as a **Malady Gp41 or Gp120** (App. B) for the appropriate damage type.

When the virus mutates into the Aberration, read or paraphrase the following to describe its appearance:

> *"As soon as the piercing visceral pain subdues, you feel a dark aura manifest around you. Eminating from every part of you, flame-like and cold, a dark aura slowly spreads. In front of your very eyes, the aura begins to take form, solidifying and giving birth to a creature ripped right out of your worst nightmares. An aberration."*

See Appendix D for a helpful progression chart.

Diagnosis

The disease cannot be easily diagnosed as there are no symptoms other than visceral pain upon dealing damage. A creature can follow the disease's pattern with a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Investigation) check**. A **successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana)** or **Wisdom (Medicine) check** can provide the creature with insight both on the symptoms of the disease, and its cure.

Cure

When the Mad Mage created this disease, he made sure to bestow upon it the power to be incurable, by casting a *wish* spell that brought him to the brink of death. As a result, there is nothing that can cure the disease, except for a *wish* spell or a cleric's *divine intervention* ability. However, the disease is cured automatically when the virus mutates into the Aberration.

Plot Hooks

This is clearly a player-driven disease, as we feel that seeing a player character rise up to the challenge and beat it would be rewarding, while also providing a different experience. Having said that, it could also be used as an interesting encounter mechanic. Imagine a boss fight where the opponent uses only one type of damage on the adventuring party. They kneel after every attack, as something is hurting them. This raises suspense, as the adventurers stand dumbfounded by the odd behavior. In the fourth round however, they see this dark shadow form all around the opponent, and suddenly, there's an abomination right there, ready to wreak havoc.

Oxitorus' Toxic Breath

Non Lethal, Natural

> *If I want you to take one thing away from this codex, it's this. There's nothing better to prove the power of maladies than a tyrant who rules with one.*

If you ever travel to Minoxia, a small kingdom in the West, then be wary of its ruler, the Ancient Black Dragon known as Oxitorus the Choleric. With his strategic intellect and seemingly bottomless hunger for wealth, he has cast the shadow of a conqueror over many lands. Behind all of his successes, however, is his breath weapon; a modified, magical dragon breath with unparalleled toxicity. His whole kingdom is polluted by the remnants of his toxic breath, making it unfavorable for unlucky travelers. Woe to those who experience it first hand.

> *The effects of Oxitorus' Toxic Breath resemble the effects of the cholera toxin produced by Vibrio Cholerae (a similar toxin is also produced by a type of E. Coli). It causes massive, watery diarrhea. Clinically, it presents with neurological symptoms due to electrolyte deficit and severe dehydration.*

Origins

Centuries ago, Oxitorus the Choleric, an Adult Black Dragon with tenacity and ambition greater than most, realized that his own powers were not enough. Following years of painstaking research, he found a way to make his poison breath even deadlier. With its enhanced poison prowess, his rise to tyranny was quick and with many victims. He now rules over a forgotten kingdom, lost in a network of swamps.

Causes

When Oxitorus uses his breath weapon, creatures must also succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw, or become poisoned. The toxin in the dragon's breath enter the creature's body, and an infection is established.

The lands that Oxitorus the Choleric rules over are all polluted by remnants of his breath. While inhabitants have become somewhat resistant to the effects of the poison, the dehydration which characterizes the disease makes the populace just weak enough to not consider rebelling, but without depriving them of the power to work.

Symptoms

The main symptoms of the disease contracted by Oxitorus' breath weapon are neural dysfunction, dehydration and diarrhea. All present quickly and extremely severely, often becoming life-threatening. Dehydration makes a creature feel weak, the diarrhea becomes painful after a while, and the nerve damage results in shaky limbs, loss of balance and powerful headaches. Within hours, Oxitorus' victims become incapable of fighting, and thus, victory is assured. At every dawn, after a creature is infected, it must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, or take 1d8 poison damage. This damage cannot bring a creature to 0 HP. It also has disadvantage on all ability checks.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is hardly a challenge in this case. If contracted by direct contact with Oxitorus breath, it is most likely that the proud dragon will boast about the impending doom that awaits. If a creature contracts it in the lands inflicted by the toxic gas, then the only way to diagnose the ailment is to ask the locals.

Cure

The Dragon Ruler himself can of course cure this disease, but at a hefty price. One must swear absolute loyalty to him if they are to be saved.

Alternatively, they could seek the help of a rebel group known as "Orange Talon". They act in the shadows, plotting the downfall of the Ancient Dragon. They have discovered a cure to the disease, but will not give it away for free. An infected creature must either pledge to help them in their cause, or buy it from them, for the price of 500 gp. This price, of course, can vary, depending on the setting and worth of gold, but make sure it's expensive, but not so much that it becomes improbable that the adventurers buy it. A single dose of the antidote will reverse the effects of the disease, and protect the creature for a month from the symptoms of Oxitorus' poison.

A creature proficient in *Alchemist's Supplies, Herbalist Kit, Poisoner's Kit* or in Medicine can attempt to create an antidote for the disease. They must succeed on a **DC 18 check made with the kit or skill** of their choice. On success they create an antidote similar to the one provided by Orange Talon.

Plot Hooks

Without a doubt, this isn't something you want to introduce to your campaign without thinking about it. This tyrannical entity known as Oxitorus is bound to make your players want to visit his country, even try to meet him. They might even wish to dethrone him. For that reason, we believe this disease should be used as a general plot idea, maybe for a small

campaign or even an addition to an already existing game. There is nothing holding you back from also simplifying things by just having your players face off against Oxitorus and his toxic breath. There is no need for an entire kingdom to suffer just so that you can have a challenging encounter.

BEHOLDER SPORES

Lethal, Magical

> *A priest in the Necromanteion always said that if you have to make an enemy of someone, make sure it's not a giant eye with other eyes for hair. Vicious creatures, these Beholders.*

The spores Biathocax the Beholder has spread all over the world, in an ingenious ploy to spy on many underworld merchants and other shady figures. These are inspired by the spores in the Dungeons and Dragons 5th edition adventure *Tomb of Annihilation*, but there is no need to read it to understand the disease.

> *Loosely based on Fungal Infections, and mainly influences by Aspergillosis, which can be caused by mold in common places.*

Origins

Biathocax was a Beholder with no purpose. Having no interests and no particular way to spend time, boredom took the better of his brilliant mind. In this time of madness, he came across the legend of Belchorzh, the invisible beholder that made one of Acererak's infamous tombs his home. Rumors have it that Belchorzh filled an entire level of the tomb with a magical fungus, that grew and created mold in the walls and floor of the tomb. Biathocax knew he had to try this, and so he did. He managed to create a living organism, a fungus he named A. Biathocax, and sold to many underworld merchants. Now it can be found in many dark places all over the world.

Little did the merchants know, the fungus is a living part of Biathocax. He can see from the eyes that sprout from it, and thus has established an immense network of surveillance, giving him the edge he needed to finally find his place in the world.

Causes

This green mold can be found in dark rooms, smells like rotting corpses, and feels very soft but moist. It grows on the floor, the ceiling and the walls, but especially in cracks and nooks. At random times, or when a creatures comes within a few inches of the mold, a small opening forms in the green mold, from which a cloud of purple spores erupt. Each creature within 5 ft of the mold must succeed in a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, or become infected. The spores accumulate in the lungs of the infected creature, and slowly start to multiply.

It is worth noting here that as characters move through areas with this alien growth, tiny eyeballs emerge from the mold to scrutinize them. If they attack them and inflict fire, ice, necrotic, radiant, slashing, bludgeoning or piercing, the mold will die but a cloud of spores will spread to anyone within 30 ft of the destroyed batch. Any creature in this area must make the saving throw or become infected.

Symptoms

After the initial infection, the next time a creature falls asleep, the fungal infection takes its toll. When they wake up, they must make a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw, or the infection stage increases by one. Every time the creature wakes up from a long rest, they must make the same saving throw, or have the disease stage increase.

The symptoms themselves depend on the stage. Note that each stage symptoms include the previous stage as well, but are not written in the table for efficiency's sake.

Stages	Effects
Stage I	The infected creature, upon waking up, suffers 1d8 poison damage, as they cough violently for a minute. They then feel normal until Stage II.
Stage II	Dyspnea, tiredness and a slight burning feeling in the chest. The infected creature has disadvantage on Constitution checks.
Stage III	Heavy dyspnea and a feeling of lungs burning with every breath. The infected creature gains one point of exhaustion.
Stage IV	Waves of violent trembling, blood coughing and disorientation. The infected creature gains 4 points of exhaustion, reaching 5.

If you want to cripple your players with this malady, you can also use this additional rule: After Stage II, the creature does not gain regain hit points from a long rest. This is because the sleep is constantly disrupted by the symptoms.

If a creature spends 24 hours in Stage IV without receiving any help, they die either of organ failure or from suffocation. The bodies of Biathocax' victims become sources that spread the fungus, and as they slowly rot, turn green. Their very skin becomes the mold, and if left unattended for a whole month, they completely turn into a mass of the green mold.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis should be easy, considering that the only way to contract this disease is to inhale the spores from the cloud released by the mold. It should be fairly easy to connect the incident to the symptoms, but if a creature is having trouble discerning the cause, a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check** will illuminate the situation.

Cure

Biathocax realized early on in the development process that the spores could become lethal, even for their owners, and to make sure it was safe to sell, created an antidote. Every mold owner has an antidote, which means that in every dungeon, hideout or house that the mold is found, a vial of its antidote is safely hidden. Just one small drop of the antidote mixed with water is enough to cure the disease.

Any spell or character class ability that protects from diseases or makes a creature immune to them completely protects the creature from the fungus, but a spell or ability that removes diseases only halts the progression of the spore infection to Stage I.

Plot Hooks

Whenever you want to create a dungeon or a place to be explore, you could add this mold as a potential side quest, as well as an environmental hazard. As the adventuring party grows stronger, it might even be possible to take on Biathocax himself and stops this world-wide plague.

MINDFLAYER NETWORK

Non-Lethal, Magical

> *I have unending worry about Illithids. Those damn aliens brought us even more than we could have imagined. If anyone you know sees purple, bring them to me.*

A virus that hijacks senses and connects creatures to the Hivemind, but only as an extra set of eyes and ears. Basically, the Mindflayers are always watching.

> *Loosely derived from Variant Creutzfeldt–Jakob, most commonly known as the mad cow disease. It is caused by prions, which are proteins with abnormal structure that can also turn normal proteins into misfolded, and thus pathogenetic proteins. It presents with symptoms of the central nervous system, such as psychiatric disorders.*

Origins

Eons ago, an Elder Brain's whole network was brought almost to ruins at the hands of the Githyanki. Struggling to survive, it had to adapt and find a way to expand its reach. In a moment of satanic brilliance, the Elder Brain reached a conclusion: not only Illithid should provide it with information. Soon, the surviving Mindflayers connected with this Elder Brain were tasked with a mission of paramount importance, and that was to spread this virus which would act as a Trojan horse, an infiltrator in a creature's senses.

Causes

A Mindflayer that is part of this Elder Brain's network can choose to use the *Infect* ability.

Infect. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one incapacitated humanoid grappled by the mind flayer. *Hit:* The target takes 44 (8d10) piercing damage. Then, it must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, or become infected with the Mindflayer Virus.

The mindflayer might choose to infect a brain by changing its chemistry, instead of devouring

it. It then leaves the victim to be eaten by other animals or creatures. When the host is eaten by another creature, it must make a DC 18 Intelligence saving throw, or become infected by the disease, also becoming a host.. This means that one might contract the disease via the food chain. It is improbable for the disease to survive on a non-intelligent host for more than a month, as it needs to devour emotions and thoughts from beings of higher consciousness to thrive and survive.

Symptoms

In the first few days after a creature is infected with the disease, it only notices a slight yet consistent headache. This happens as the virus spreads all over their brain, hijacking all senses and preparing to transmit all signals to the Elder Brain.

One week after the unfortunate event, when the creature wakes up after a long rest, it views the whole world as if a purple filter was applied to its eyesight. Everything seems to some sort of shade of purple, but other than that, it's perfectly normal. After a few minutes, its eyesight is restored to normal.

Two weeks after the initial infection, the creature has horrible nightmares. Horrifically realistic and without reason in them, these foul dreams are simply images the infected receive from other Mindflayers. Having no psionic abilities and a totally different biological structure, most creature's conscious is unable to process the images, which result to it becoming confused, lethargic, and losing its focus. Apply a short-term madness. (DMG p 259). If this condition persists, without cure the inflicted creature gains an indefinite madness.

Diagnosis

The presence of the virus is difficult to locate without the use of magic. In fact, only a *detect good or evil* or a *detect poison or disease* spell can accurately diagnose the infection.

Cure

To get rid of the virus, potent magic must be used, as it is deeply rooted in the brain of the infected creature. A *calm emotions* spell can suppress the effects of madness, while a l*esser restoration* spell can rid a character of the short-term madness. The *remove curse* or *dispel evil* might also prove effective in removing the virus early on. If the virus has reached its final stages, a *greater restoration* spell is needed to cure the disease. Alternatively, the creature must seek the help of the Gith, who have a simple medicine that cures the disease. They will not easily hand it over, however. The antidote could also be found in the hands of powerful scholars and knowledgeable mages.

Plot Hooks

A truly terrifying plot device, this virus could serve both as the reason why the adventuring party are hunting Mindflayers, and as a trap for them. There are few things as dangerous as having your opponent watch your every move, and having an infected creature in the party means that the Elder Brain is always ten steps ahead. As a plot hook, a DM could have a whole farm of infected animals spreading the virus to an entire city, placing it under the vigilant watch of the Illithids. However, the most impactful way to use this could be to infect a player character. Use this wisely and slowly tone up the effects. At first, hint at the fact that something is wrong with the headaches. Later on, instill this feeling of unease and paranoia at the player, and finally, watch how they react when they find out that they have been leaking information to the enemy.

DEMONIC VIRULENCE

Non-Lethal, Divine

> *Slowly drives you into madness and animosity. How fun. This is how a demonic invasion begins, dammit.*

A variant for the optional rule Abyssal Corruption. and a usefull tool for any campaign featuring demons. A disease that spreads to any creature near portals to or from the Abyss, corrupting them and changing their very outlook on life on the material plane.

> *Very loosely derived from the progressive effects of atmospheric pollution caused by the ever growing human population.*

Origins

Many are aware of the corruption rooted deep inside the layers of the Abyss. In fact, the Chaotic Energy of the Abyss leaks from every portal to the plane and affects everyone around it. Some poor unfortunate souls are affected more than most.

Causes

Whenever a portal to the Abyss opens, and for the next hour, any intelligent creature in a 1 mile radius that starts its turn there or enters the area must make a DC 15 Charisma Saving Throw. On a failure, the creature begins to become corrupted and has to roll a d20. This corruption has an additive effect. Every time a creature is affected by the corruption, add the result of a d20 roll to any previous rolls. Upon reaching a score of 20, mild symptoms manifest, such as horrifying nightmares and visions of layers of the abyss. Upon reaching a total score of 40, the creature is corrupted. Refer to the Abyssal Corruption table for the effects of this Corruption (DMG p, 62). If the sum reaches a score of 60, the creature's alignment changes to chaotic evil. A player character may be affected by each portal only once.

Symptoms

The disease mainly presents itself with a long term madness. The following six can be applied, but feel free to use any madness found in the *Out of the Abyss* adventure or in *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*.

Madness	Effect
Tyranny	Anyone weaker than me must obey my orders.
Pestilence	There is no beauty in nature, and I must desolate the Realm.
Harbinger	I am a bound to a demon lord and must do anything to bring my masters and his servants to the material plane."
Madness	My actions have no though behind them; I only act on a whim.

Apathy	The world around me seems gray and cold. I need to end it.
Arrogance	Everything in this world is mine for the taking. Make me king.
Compulsion	I am aware of the demonic influence and commit to ritualistic behaviours to quieten the voices.

Diagnosis

You can detect a corrupted creature using a *detect evil and good* spell. If the caster needs to be sure that the corruption is the result of influence from Abyssal powers, they must succeed on a **DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check**. You could offer the option or rolling with Wisdom instead of Intelligence if the character is proficient in Religion, to signify that they feel the effect of the Abyss, instead of simply recalling lore.

Cure

After finishing a long rest, a corrupted creature can make a **DC 15 Charisma saving throw.** On a successful save, the corruption effect ends. A *dispel evil and good* spell or any magic that removes a curse also ends the effect.

Plot Hooks

This is a useful tool to include in any campaign or short story that features demons. It might even be the ruse that gets the adventuring party to embark on their mission. Consider assigning these flaws to an NPC, or even create one based on their flaws. As for inflicting players with this disease, we advise to consider it well before implementation, as these flaws tend to change the roleplaying aspect of a character. Be wary of introducing demonic portals in your campaings, but if you do, invest in the idea. We feel that demons are a part of the mutliverse's nature that is feared for its ability to disrupt, and this disease captures a manifestation of Abyssal corruption.

LOCKJAW

Lethal, Natural

> *Quite common in eras of war. Everyone should know about this.*

Tetanus (medical term but commoners use the term Lockjaw) is a common disease in any kingdom. The bacterium that lives in rusted metals, (though it is believed by many that rust itself causes the disease) produces a toxin leading to spasms of the affected muscles. This variant of the real historical Lockjaw might just prove to be deadlier than the historical version.

> *The disease is based on the real world disease commonly known as Tetanus, though the symptoms are overdramatized for gaming purposes. In reality, a possible infection caused by a rusty metal wound is treated with anti-serum and vaccination in a matter of hours.*

Origins

No one can say where a microorganism originated from without touching on belief systems and knowledge that only wizards, biologists and clerics should have access to, and thus, this paragraph is left blank.

Causes

Any poor warrior that is inflicted a wound with a rusty sword, or any unlucky adventurer that steps on a rusty nail, is a perfect candidate to contract Lockjaw. When a creature takes Piercing or Slashing damage from an object with rust, the DM rolls a d20. On a critical failure, the creature

must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, or become inflicted with C. Tetani.

Symptoms

The symptoms manifest 2 hours after becoming infected. If not treated properly, the infection spreads to the rest of the creature's body. It takes 24 hours for your body to fully paralyze, and the paralysis spreads from the infected area towards the rest of the body slowly, leaving behind small marks like rust on the body. Use this as a time counter, because with every hour that comes to pass, the infected creature loses more and more mobility. Any arm that is paralyzed cannot be used to wield a weapon and if both arms are paralyzed you may also not perform somatic spell components. One affected leg reduces your speed by 10 feet and your speed is 0 if both your legs are paralyzed. When your whole body is infected, you gain the Paralyzed condition.

If left untreated for 48 hours, violent seizures overtake the infected creature, and they soon die.

Diagnosis

The spreading paralysis from the inflection point and darkening of the skin around the trauma are characteristic of this disease. Anyone with common knowledge and a successful **DC 10 Wisdom (Investigation)** or **DC 5 Wisdom (Medicine) check** can make the diagnosis.

Cure

The condition can be cured with a *restoration* spell but the symptoms will relapse the next morning. The disease can be cured by heating affected areas for at least five minutes. A hot metal rod or burying the paralyzed area in desert sand will do the job.

Plot Hooks

This disease is based on a real world phenomenon that plagued medieval and underdeveloped civilizations. As such, it might only find application in grim settings, where magic is scarce and resources valuable. In "high-fantasy" settings, this disease is perhaps best usable only once or twice. We find it vital to emphasize on the time based mechanic of the rust's spreading, which could add a new dimension to any trap, dungeon or other adventure, as the players know that the character's time is running out.

NECROPHORUM

Thrust: *Non-Lethal. Natural*

Necrobacillosis: *Lethal, Natural*

> *Infuriating, really. I've seen cities brought to their knees just cause one farmer wasn't careful with his stock.*

Fusobacterium necrophorum is a real world bacteria that once had such a high mortality rate, that it was granted such a grim sounding name. In fantasy, Necrophorum mainly affects animals, meaning it is a farmer's worst nightmare.

> *Derived from the homonymous disease caused by F. Necrophorum, which usually affects cattle and horses.*

Origins

No one can say where a microorganism originated from, without touching on belief systems and knowledge that only wizards, biologists and clerics should have access to, and thus, this paragraph is left blank. Common people have been aware of the disease since they began breeding animals.

Causes

Necrophorum can be transmitted in a variety of methods, but they all revolve around the hoofs of creatures. As such, horses, goats, lambs are most susceptible to the various diseases the bacteria cause. The epidemiology, the study of the population with the disease, can be split in two distinct factions: dealing with small or large amounts of animals.

When dealing with small amounts of animals (1-10): If not isolated, an infected animal will infect any animal it spends time with. The chance of an animal being affected after contacting a host can be found following the table presented below:

Hours	Chance of Infection (%)
>1	5
1	25
6	50
12	60
18	80
24	100

When dealing with large amounts of animals

If not isolated, an infected animal will infect any animal it spends time with. The percentage of the animal populace that gets infected can be found following the table presented below:

Days	Percentage Infected
2	10
3	20
4	40
5	80
6	100

Symptoms

An infection by Necrophorum can present as two distinct diseases; thrush and necrobacillosis.

Thrush is a disease that occurs on the hoof of horses, sheep and other cattle. The infected area turns black 2-3 days after the infection takes place and releases a characteristic smell. If left untreated, it causes lameness in a week's period. The animal can no longer run and its speed is halved.

Necrobacillosis (or Calf Diphtheria) is a possibly deadly laryngeal infection that mainly presents as swelling in the throat. This results in coughing and difficulty in breathing, which begin 2-3 days after the infection. The animal is also catatonic, meaning they always appear sleepy and move so slow, it makes controlling a herd difficult. If left untreated, the animal will die in a week's notice from heavy dyspnea.

When dealing with small amounts of animals:

Roll a d4 for each animal. On a roll of 1,2,3 the disease will present as thrush, while on a roll of 4 it will present as Necrobacillosis.

When dealing with large amounts of animals:

75% of the infected animals will have Thrush, while the remaining 25% will have Necrobacillosis.

Diagnosis

The diagnosis can be performed by a scholar, a medic or an experienced cattle owner. To diagnose this disease, a creature suitable to do so must make a **DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check**.

Cure

Treatment of Necrophorum is easy, as long as there is access to a herb known as Flintleaf, known to grow deep inside forests, in large quantities. Explorers are regularly hired to venture into dangerous areas just to find a batch of Flintleaf, especially in areas where Necrophorum decimates livestock. Flintleaf is easily recognizable by its most problematic property: if any sort of metallic or iron item makes contact with its leafs, it spontaneously combusts. The fire easily spreads to the nearby leafs, effectively burning the whole batch in one fell swoop. The necessity to take great care in preparing the cure has given rise to a special *flintleaf herbalist kit,* which can be found in many shops, for double the price of the simple herbalist kit. If a creature is proficient with the herbalism kit, then they can create one bottle of antidote from 10 leafs of Flintleaf, with a successful **DC 16 Herbalist Kit check**. A bottle of antidote is enough to cure 50 animals with foot disease or 5 with Necrobacillosis.

Plot Hooks

This is a simple disease, mostly meant to serve as a traditional type of quest; a simple yet effective "fetch-quest" for low level adventurers, just starting out in this wild world. The DM can also use the disease to infect the party's horses with thrust and make their adventures more difficult, without getting rid of them once and for all.

A small note; it's doubtful that commoners would call this disease by it's official name. Thus, when roleplaying one, you could refer to it as Thrush, or Deadly Hove disease.

ISTD

(Interspecies Sexually Transmited Disease)

Non-Lethal, Natural

> *Sexual intercourse is common amongst creatures of all races, but sometimes, if they are not very careful, it just might prove too dangerous.*

This disease is a sexually transmitted disease, which spreads as every STD does. However, what makes it really interesting is its genetic abilities to combine with other strands, other viruses that are slightly different to it, to create a new strand. This new strand, a chimeric one, is the actual pathogenic virus.

> *The recombination mechanism of the ISTD virus is loosely based on H. Influenza's antigenic shift. Through antigenic shift, strains that infect mainly different species recombine to create a new Influ-*

Origins

No one can say where a microorganism originated from without touching on belief systems and knowledge that only wizards, biologists and clerics should have access to, and thus, this paragraph is left blank. Common people have been aware of the disease since times long forgotten.

Causes

A small amount of the population is affected by the MxFx virus, with higher prevalence amongst individuals committing to multiple sexual partners (brothels, sailors etc.). Each race is normally affected by one virus strain, characteristic of the disease. This means that among Elven population, the MeFe is dominant, while Humans are affected by MhFh strain. The reason for that is that even if a Human is affected by an Elven strain, he cannot transmit it himself. Note that you may only have an Elven strain, if you are an Elf or if you had sexual intercourse with an Elf that has the disease. Additionally a virus strain that is composed by only one racial strain only causes common cold symptoms. But in some cases two virus strains may recombine into a new one. This can happen if for example a Human with MhFh has sexual intercourse with an Elf with MeFe, creating a hybrid MeFh (or MhFe - there is no difference).

Symptoms

When infected with a combined strain, a creature presents with both symptoms of the two races, as seen in the following table. For example, a dragonborn individual that came in sexual contact with a Tiefling, has the MdbFtf strain, which means they have a skin disease and can only discern shades of grey. Use the following table to assign symptoms to each race. Feel free to design your own symptoms for other races besides the core ones, keeping in mind that it's the norm for the symptoms to directly contradict something the race is known for.

Strains	Symptoms that manifest on hybrid strains
Dwarfs (MdFd)	Acidic Vomiting (every 30 minutes) [range 5,deal 1d6 acid damage] and Vulnerability to Poison Damage
Elves (MeFe)	Fatigue (one level of exhaustion if character is resting, two if he is adventuring))
Dragonborn (MdbFdb)	Skin disease, hard scale like white skin patches on the back, unable to regulate temperature, Extreme cold (Dmg 110)
Gnome (MgFg)	Lethargy, slow thinking, disadvantage on checks associated with remembering things
Halfling (MhfFhf)	Instability, disadvantage on acrobatics checks
Tiefling (MtfFtf)	Ophthalmopathy, you can only discern shades of grey
Human (MhFh)	Psychiatric Disorder. Stress when talking with other races. Disadvantage on Charisma checks.

Diagnosis

To diagnose this malady, a professional or experienced person is required. Any creature proficient with Medicine can suspect the diagnosis with a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check**. To confirm the diagnosis without a doubt, the infected creature has to admit to coming in contact with a creature of another race sexually.

Cure

Symptoms manifest one day after the transmission and last for one week. The touch of paladin should prove effective, and usually cures the

disease. In some cases though, even their divine touch only speeds up the process of healing, and symptoms may last for a full day at most after their intervention. A healing spell such as *lesser restoration* cures the disease, with the symptoms gradually going away, and vanishing completely when the infected creature finishes a long rest.

Plot Hook

This disease is obviously a fun tool for the DM to mildly annoy players who love going to brothels. The trope, fun as it is, can get somewhat stale sometimes, but this should make this visit memorable. Do not abuse this disease, as it could potentially leave a bitter taste and become repetitive. It is also advised to be creative when it comes to races not included in this codex. A very important note: this disease could be the means for racism to spread or occur. We do not advise that you seek to expand on this aspect of the disease, but if you do, make sure it's through the mouth of a vile or non-respected NPC, one whose opinion and world views aren't that valuable. Of course, you could play with dark forces... but you have been warned.

KING'S EVIL

Non-Lethal, Natural

> *Just one family. With their magic powers, just one family rules over all of these lands. See? The power of a disease is unfathomable.*

In the faraway kingdom of Mitaria, a disease plagues the lands. Poverty-struck but hardworking, the citizens are forced to pay crippling taxes to the royal family. They endure it however, out of respect and out of fear... For in this kingdom, the Royals have a magical ability; the power to cure the so called King's Evil with just one touch.

> *"This malady was inspired by the real, historical King's Evil, combined with Leprosy. In parts of Europe during the Middle Ages it was believed that a touch from royalty could heal skin disease known as scrofula or the 'king's evil'. Scrofula was usually a swelling of the lymph nodes in the neck caused by Tuberculosis. The healing effect was thought to be passed down from generation to generation, giving the monarchs an divinity, adding to their authority. To avoid confusion with the Druid's Curse, we changed the symptomatology into that akin of leprosy"*

Origins

King's Evil's origins are a highly controversial subject amongst historians. Some claim that an ancient king, perhaps first in the line of the Kurari, heartbroken by his peoples' suffering, asked of a wizard to make him able to heal them himself. Others believe in a far more sinister theory, one that states that the royals created the disease and then monopolized on the cure with magic. Whatever the case, the true cause is lost in history, or buried deep in a crypt, documented on an ancient book that has not seen the light of day for centuries.

Causes

King's Evil is a disease that spreads through touch. A creature that comes into contact with an already infected creature must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, or become a carrier of the responsible microorganism. After a creature becomes a carrier, symptoms might manifest randomly in a few weeks, up to years away from the infection. There really is no way to know when it will happen, but creatures that are already sick and weakened appear to have a higher chance of becoming symptomatic.

Symptoms

King's Evil is predominantly a malady that affects the skin. The first noticeable sign of leprosy is often the development of pale or pinkish patches of skin that may be insensitive to temperature or pain. As the infection rages, the skin of an infected individual becomes unnaturally pale, to the point of becoming an almost clear white. When the condition reaches its terminal stage, the skin becomes almost transparent, and patient's muscles can be seen. This results in a most hor-

rifying of sights, as a person appears to be made out of sick muscle tissue, with the facial features mostly missing. This breathtaking sight is the reason why most of society has shunned the victims of the disease, and why all who live with it would do anything to have a royal cure them. Other symptoms include susceptibility to diseases, a heavy coughing and muscle weakness.

Mechanically, patients with King's Evil have disadvantage on all charisma based skill checks except intimidation, on which they have advantage. If they have reached the point in the disease where their skin is clear, they also gain a point of exhaustion that cannot be removed unless they are cured.

Diagnosis

Diagnosing this disease while in Mitaria is fairly easy, and it can be done with a successful **DC 11 Wisdom (Medicine) chec**k or a **DC 14 Intelligence (History) check**, to either identify it as a medical singularity or to remember about this infamous disease that thrives in these lands.

Cure

Unfortunately for patients, the only way to get cured is by the touch of a royal Kurari's hand. This blessing can be achieved either by paying a royal a large sum of money for their pity, or randomly, as Kuraris have a habit of acting on a whim, and healing a few people affected by this terrible disease.

If you so desire it, you could specify what the Kurari Royal Family does to cure the disease. If, for example, you decide that due to their heritage they have the innate ability to cast *lesser restoration* or any other spell, which means that the adventurers could also succeed in healing King's Evil, which in turn could cause the fall of an entire dynasty, as the foundations it is built on suddenly crumble. Think about these options you have, and experiment

TALONA'S CURSE

Penetrative, Lethal, Divine

> *Apollo's day can be ruined just at the mention of Talona's name. Trust me, I've witnessed it happen.*

Talona's Curse is a tool powerful priests loyal to the Goddess of Disease can use to spread her wicked influence. The disease is a way for Talona to become well known, as well as facilitate the spread of diseases.

> *There is no real inspiration for this disease. We just wanted to add some fantastical effects to Talona, who was worth her own disease in this supplement. Jason is a fool. Sleep Paralysis is a documented sleep disorder that may be accompanied by delusional effects. Many cultures have created myths surrounding it and it also appears in classical literature and pop culture.*

Origins

Since ancient times, mortals have wished upon the gods for power. Many have devoted their entire lives to a deity, and some, through painstaking effort, have accomplished to forge a connection with a higher power. Talona is no different. Around the worlds, many have worshipped her, the goddess of disease, and some, the most influential, have earned the deity's appraise.

Talona's Curse is a power gifted to her faithful. It is intended to be used as a tool for spreading diseases. Usually wielded by clerics with unshakeable devotion, this Curse is not to be underestimated.

Cause

A cleric that has been bestowed with Talona's Blessing can use their *Channel Divinity: Talona's Curse* ability on whoever they see fit. For the class ability, see **Cleric of Pestilence (Appendix B)**.

Symptoms

The symptoms of the disease begin to manifest the day after the curse takes place. The creature undergoes Sleep Paralysis. Sleep Paralysis is a feeling of waking up suddenly, being conscious but unable to move. It only lasts for a couple of minutes, but the feeling is unbearable. During the incident, the infected creature can see a young naked woman with pale skin approaching him, laughing maniacally. The Sleep Paralysis returns every second day and each time, the woman ages. After 10 incidents, the woman appears as a skeleton with rotten flesh. The next incident is the last as Sleep Paralysis does not recede and the creature dies, paralyzed and terrified of the vision it is having.

In the hours a cursed creature spends awake, it emits a dark unholy aura. This effect of the curse affects the creature and anyone close to it, specifically within 10 feet of it. All creatures in the aura have disadvantage on Constitution saving throws.

Diagnosis

A cleric, paladin, or otherwise knowledgeable creature in the ways of the divine can diagnose this disease easily. Once they do, they make sure that the infected creature understands that their time is running out, and that they are actually seeing Talona herself in their sleep. To diagnose this condition without a shadow of a doubt, a *detect good or evil* spell is sufficient. A paladin's *divine sense* ability can also detect the aura that surrounds victims of the curse.

Cure

The only real way for a creature to rid itself of the curse is to acquire the services of a Cleric or Paladin devoted to Ilmater or a deity with similar agenda who needs to complete a special ritual. This ritual can be completed by an expert NPC in exchange for something, or as a favour if the affected creature is deemed worthy by their god.

Plot Hooks

The Curse of an Evil Deity may be used by a DM in a horror setting (a city cursed by the gods) as well as be attributed to a main villain that haunts the players in your campaign. It could also be a valuable tool in a world already infested with diseases and plague as a storyline crescendo.

Plot Hooks

This malady is mainly supposed to be used as part of a kingdom's backstory, While a player character could contract it, it would deform them, but we feel this is not high-yield, storytelling wise, unless there's a specific synergy with the character. Instead, think of this as a versatile tool to add to your arsenal of stories to use in world building; a disease that could fit right into any kingdom with a strict monarchy.

Appendix A: NPCs

Acesius

Acesius (Ah-keh-see-us) is an old human male. He is a retired adventurer, having lived through epic adventures and witnessed the fall of dangerous villains. He is specifically known for his major role in the fall of Vukelator, the queen of the Undead, as he was one of the three cleric heroes that lead the charge against her hoards of foul creatures. He is regarded to be a chosen one, a cleric who has gained the blessing of Apollo himself, who is one of the Gods of Healing.

If you want to introduce him in your story, he can be found resting in a large town, somewhere comfortable but close to the action. In the Forgotten Realms, Waterdeep sounds like the perfect example, while in Eberron, Sharn is surely the place. He likes visitors, especially ambitious adventurers, and will be happy to offer his insights on any disease.

This means that he can be used as an exposition tool, accurately informing the players about certain details regarding these ailments.

When the adventurers meet him, he is either playing a sweet song on his harp or writing about the diseases he loves to document.

The Whistler

This crow-like kenku is a specialist on diseases and traditional ways of diagnosing and treating them. A Cleric of Yurtrus, the orc god of disease and death, his domain is that of death. He is usually seen roaming the dark parts of the world, never staying put for too long. He's enigmatic, cryptic and rarely reveals information irrelevant to the case he's working on.

He usually remains silent, only responding with a few whistles that few understand. When he really needs to explain something to others about a malady, he mimics the voice and sayings of a lady with a grizzly and rough voice, who spoke common with an orcish accent. They way she speaks, through him, makes it apparent that she was a master of the traditional ways of treating the sick.

Sometimes, he can be found collaborating with the Greenskull Orc clan, a nomadic society that accepts death as part of the cycle of battle and survival. He is looked upon from the rest of the Clan and only addresses to Ulultha, their leader and the fallen warriors. Most of the day, he can be found wandering around, whistling an ominous tune.

As the DM, you can use The Whistler to guide your adventurers, helping them cure a disease. You might also be able to reveal details about one, or diagnose what troublesome ailment affects a creature. Be sure to describe the process as something a witch doctor would do. Reading bones, communing with the spirits around, giving off a vibe of tribal medicine and shaman practice.

APPENDIX B: MONSTERS

Malady Gp41

This is the virus created by the Mad Mage, presented in the homonymous disease, *Mad Mage Virus (page 6)*. It rests inside of its host until combat, forming somewhat of a symbiotic relationship. Whenever their host uses their abilities to inflict damage, they absorb part of it in order to evolve and grow. When the virus has been fed with enough energy, it manifests into a vicious aberration. These aberrations also have some behaviours programmed into them, deeply rooted in their essense with magic.

Parasitic Bond: The virus feeds on the hosts powers ands grows stronger with each subsequent attack. When it materializes,the parasitic aberration has a shadowy form that vaguely resembles the race of its host, though not enough to recognize its host. It's arms glow with magical energy if it has fed on magic damage, or it may hold a shadowy weapon. Although this disease is most common on humanoids, it can also (though not as easily) infect other creatures, such as animals or even dragons!

Weaponized: A parasite that has been fed with physical damage (slashing. bludgeoning, piercing) holds a weapon similar to its host's. If it was creatued from physical damage, it can use its *Adapting Weapon* ability.
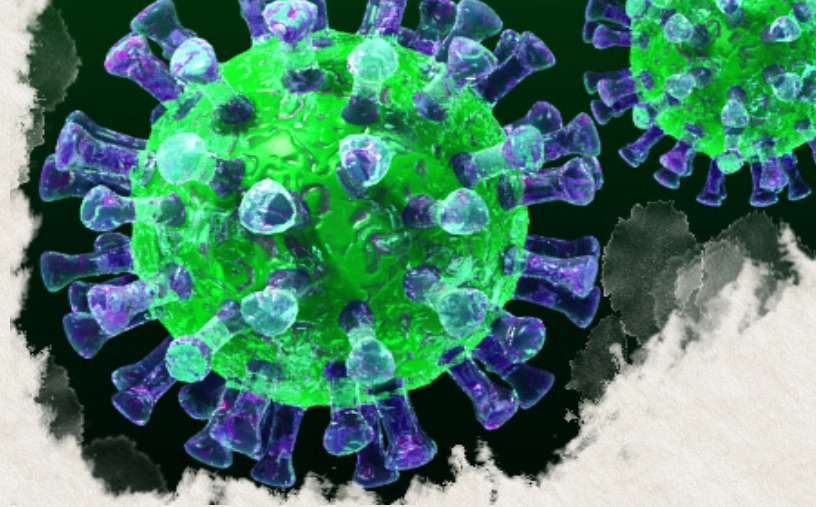
If it was brought forth through a magical ability, it uses the *Adapting Claws* ability, swinging its sharp claws clad in the corresponding magical element.

Born in the Fight: The parasite is resistant to the type of damage it has fed on.

Big Scheme: The creatures are programmed to attempt to escape if cornered. Any parasite that manages to survive the encounter will try to recuperate and head to the Mage Tower. In fact, 3-4 Gp 41 aberrations teaming up in a small group with a Gp120 Malady aberration as their leader, in order to survive, is not a rare sight.

> *Optional Ability: When the Malady Gp41 is dropped below 50% of its total HP, it may use Dash as a bonus action.*

Horizontal Evolution: Two or more aberrations may spend 1 hour together to exchange genetic material, in order to learn any abilities the other aberration has gained from their parasitic growth. An aberration may choose only one type of damage from the pool it gains through horizontal exchange for their *Adapting* abilities.

Malady Gp120

This virus is a stronger strand of the Mad Mage's Virus. It usually prefers its host to be stronger, more potent, as weak creatures cannot nurture it fully. It usually spawns by itself, but if it survives, it actively seeks out other viruses, forming a group of sorts.

Cleric of Pestilence

A variant of the Warpriest NPC from *Volo's Guide to Monsters,* this cleric is devoted to Talona and her worship. Faithful of the Goddess of Disease will go to great lengths to spread her curse, even cursing entire towns and even temples. They usually travel the world, in search for possible victims.

Cleric of Pestilence

Medium humanoid (any race), any evil alignment

Armor Class 18 (plate)
Hit Points 117 (18d8 + 36)
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +6 Wis +7
Skills Intimidation +6 Religion +4
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages any two languages
Challenge 9 (5000 XP)

Spellcasting. The priest is a 9th-level spellcaster. It's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *resistance,sacred flame, spare the dying, toll the dead*

1st level (4 slots): *bane, divine favor, guiding bolt, inflict wounds*

2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness, hold person, silence, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (3 slots): *bestow curse, conjure animals, feign death, life transference, magic circle, spirit guardians*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment, blight, giant insect, guardian of faith*

5th level (1 slot) *contagion, insect plague, raise dead*

Actions

Multiattack. The cleric makes two melee attacks.

Maul. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit* 10 (2d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Channel Divinity: Talona's Curse (Recharges after Long Rest). The cleric chooses a 10by10 ft area inside a 60ft range. Any creature except other Clerics of Pestilence must make a DC 20 Constitution Saving Throw. On a failure, a creature is inflicted with *Talona's Curse*. The cleric may cast Channel Divinity twice per day.

Malady GP120

Medium aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (Natural Armor)
Hit Points 105 (18d8 + 12)
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Dex +6 Wis +4
Skills Stealth +8
Damage Resistances adapting
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Deep Speech, Undercommon
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the parasite can move up to your speed towards an enemy it can see.

Parasitic Relationship. The parasite has advantage on attacks against your host.

The Last Step:. (Recharge 5-6) The parasite has access to the effect that caused it to to manifest. If it was a spell, it may cast it at will (recharge 5-6). If the attack that brought it to life had an effect similar to Sneak Attack or Reckless Attack it may also use it.

Stored Power (Recharge 5-6). As an action the parasite may begin to absorb power. Until the end of its next round, any attack against it is made with advantage. Count the amount of damage it took until then. As a bonus action, it may unleash this stored power against its enemies. Starting with the creature that has the lowest current hit points, each creature takes damage equal to its current HP. Subtract each creature's hit points from the total before moving on to the creature with the next lowest hit points. A creature's hit points must be equal to or less than the remaining total for that creature to be affected. This spell requires concentration.

Actions

Multiattack. The parasite makes two attacks with its claws or weapon.

Adapting Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit* 17 (2d10 + 6) adapting (magical) damage.

Adapting Weapon. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit* 7 (2d10 + 6) adapting (physical) damage.

Malady Gp41

Medium aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (Natural Armor)
Hit Points 56 (10d8 + 10)
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Dex +4 Wis +3
Skills Stealth +6
Damage Resistances adapting
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Deep Speech, Undercommon
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the parasite can move up to your speed towards an enemy it can see.

Parasitic Relationship. The parasite has advantage on attacks against your host.

Actions

Adapting Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit* 10 (1d10 + 4) adapting (magical) damage.

Adapting Weapon. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit* 10 (1d10 + 4) adapting (physical) damage.

Appendix C: Items

Wand of Viral Infection

Wand, Very Rare (requires attunement by spell-caster)

These metal wands are crafted by the Mad Mage with the help of his most trusted artisans. They are imbued with his tainted signature spell and provide him with the means to spread his magical plague and grow his army of horrors. His most loyal followers are awarded with one of these and guard it with their lives.
This wand has 7 charges. While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 of its charges to cause an abhorrent purple smoke to appear under a creature you can see within 60 feet of you. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be infected with the Mad Mage Virus.
The wand regains 1d6 + 1 expended charges dai-ly at dawn. If you expend the wand's last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the wand crumbles into ashes and is destroyed.

Dome of Constitution

Wondrous Item, rare

This magical copper disc, 1 foot in diameter, is engraved with Ilmater's symbol. It may be activated to create a permanent 20 foot glass dome. Any character resting under the dome for at least 8 hours straight, may add a d8 to a Constitution Saving Throw in the next 24 hours. The dome may be deactivated as a free action and activated once per day. The dome lasts until it is deactivated and may house up to 4 creatures at once.

Bellerophon's Reins

Wondrous Item, Legendary

You must be proficient with Animal Handling to use these Reins. While you are using these to mount a creature, you have +10 to all Animal Handling checks related to it. Additionally the creature grows white feathered wings and gains flying speed equal to 90 ft. You may dismiss these wings as a bonus action or remove the reins as an action.

These reins can help companion animals infected with the Necrophorum disease have their second wind.

Oxitoric Vials

Potion, Uncommon

This Vial is filled with Oxitorus' toxic breath. Upon breaking, the vial releases its gases. Anyone 15 ft from the point of the explosion must take a DC 18 Constitution Saving Throw or take 1d8 poison damage. They must also succeed on a DC 8 Constitution Saving throw, or become infected with Oxitorus' disease. The gases remain in the area for one minute. Any creature starting its turn inside the gases suffers from the effects of the vial.

Appendix D: Tables

When you donwload this product, the Malady Codex, you can find two .png files named "DiseaseTable" and "VirusProgression". The first, a table, was made to save the DM some time, while the second was creatued as a helpful visialization of the progression the Mad Mage Virus follows from infection to materialization.

Other products by Jason Bakos

King to an Empty City

What good is a king without a city to rule over? What happens when everyone in a city disappears, gone without a trace?

This is the state in which an adventuring party, your characters, finds Sheol in; a city devoid of all life forms, claimed by Hegemon, a Wraith that used to be its king.

Explore the empty city! Be mindful of the thieves' guilds! Find your way to the portal that leads to the castle! Fight your way through the hoards of undead to foil Hegemon's insidious plan!

Designed for levels 8-10.

Encounter with the Edan Sha

A group of bandits called the Edan Sha are active in the shady parts of the city. Perhaps they stole from you, or maybe you were hired to defeat them. Whatever the reason, you find yourselves fighting against the gang. Little did you know that they had an ace up their sleeve!

Featured as the Product of the Week, by the DMs Guild Newsletter, "An encounter with the Edan Sha"! This encounter is made up of a droppable scenario, built around the group of the Edan Sha and the Helmed Horror that Hegemon bestowed them with. It can be used as a prelude to the adventure "King to an Empty City", also found on the DM's Guild!

Designed for levels 3-5.

Tomb of Mild Discomfort

Making good on his promise, Acererak the Eternal built a tomb for his opponent, queen Azaria the Arcane, following her defeat at his hands. Bored, but with a reputation as a tomb maker to uphold, Acererak created a tomb filled with traps that will annoy explorers more than they will kill them. Do not underestimate the dangers lurking in this tomb, though!

Featured as one of the ten dungeons in The Dungeoneer's Pack: StormKing's Barrows, this tomb is sure to bring laughter and suspence to any table.

Designed for levels 5-7.

The Necromanteion

The ancient temple is under assault by demons, and only you can save it!

Since ancient times, the Necromanteion has been a temple where people commune with the spirits of the dead. In this Oracle of the Dead, the priests can help you speak with any deceased soul. When you arrive, however, the temple is in flames, and the priests beg for your assistance. Do you have what it takes to claim it back from the forces of chaotic fiends?

Based on the real world temple in Ancient Greece, and heavily inspired by rich lore surrounding it, this critically acclaimed dungeon crawl is bound to become an unforgetable experience!

Designed for levels 3-5.
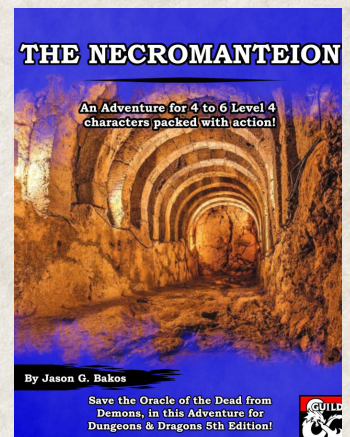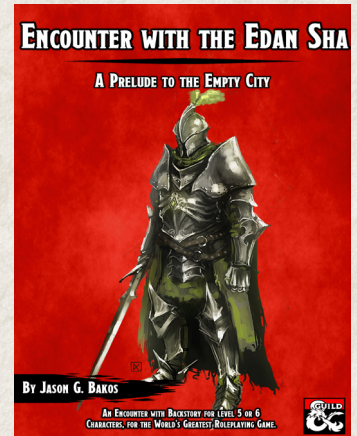
Name	Nonmagical	Magical	Immunity	Special Effects
Spells				
Lesser Restoration	1	1	-	Removes: Blindness, Deafness or Paralyzed
Raise Dead	All	-	-	-
Resurrection	All	-	-	-
True Resurrection	All	All	-	-
Heal	All	All	-	Removes: Blindness and Deafness
Mass Heal	All	All	-	Removes: Blindness and Deafness
Hero's Feast	All	All	-	-
Magic Items				
Keoghtom's Ointment	All	All	-	-
Periapt of Health	-	-	Yes	Suppress current diseases' effects
Elixir of Health	All	All	-	Removes: Blindness, Deafness and Paralysis
Potion of Vitality	All	All	-	Removes any Exhaustion
Features				
Paladin: Lay on Hands	1 per 5 hit points	1 per 5 hit points	-	-
Paladin: Divine Health	-	-	Yes	-
Master Transmuter: Panacea	All	All	-	-
Monk: Purity of Body	-	-	Yes	-

```
┌─────────────────┐  Deals X type of    ┌─────────────────┐  Deals X type    ┌─────────────────┐  Deals X type   ┌─────────────────┐
│ Stage 0 for All │  Damage             │ Stage 1 for X   │  of damage       │ Stage 2 for X   │  of damage      │ Stage 3 for X   │
│ Types           │ ──────────────────> │ Type            │ ───────────────> │ Type            │ ──────────────> │ Type            │
│                 │                     │                 │                  │                 │                 │ The Virus       │
└─────────────────┘                     └─────────────────┘                  └─────────────────┘                 │ manifests       │
        ↑                                        │                                                               └─────────────────┘
        │  Type X Returns to Stage 0             │                            Deals Y type of Damage
        │                                        ↓
        │                               ┌─────────────────┐
        │                               │ Virus Recharge  │
        │                               │                 │
        │                               └─────────────────┘
        │                                        │
                                                 ↓
                                        ┌─────────────────┐
                                        │ Stage 1 for Y   │
                                        │ Type            │
                                        └─────────────────┘
```