

THE GLOG:

Diseases

Version 0

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Disease Spirits

Diseases are caused by petty spirits, who can only be detected by the stinking miasmas that surround them.

Holy people enjoy divine protection, and are therefore protected from the sundry depredations of disease spirits.

This is why paladins are immune to disease. It is also why lepers are treated so poorly—their physical maladies most likely stem from spiritual corruption. Diseased characters are similarly suspected of moral wickedness.

Catching a Disease

Keep track every time a player is exposed to a disease: each bite from a dire rat, or each time they open a sarcophagus in the Yellow Tooth Plague Tomb. You can also be exposed to a disease by touching a person who is infected, or spending too much time in close proximity.

The next morning, each character who was exposed must make a Con check. Multiple exposures incur cumulative penalties (-1 per subsequent exposure). If they fail this first Con check, they suffer the normal effects of the disease and are considered infected. If they pass this first Con check, they suffer no effects and are not infected.

Suffering a Disease's Effects

Every subsequent morning, an infected character will make a Con check against the disease. If they fail this check, they take the listed ability score damage.

This damage will not recover naturally until the disease is cured. (Ability score damage is normally recovered at the rate of 1 point per ability score per day.)

If an ability score would be damaged below 0, all additional damage is redirected to Con. If Con ever reaches 0, the character dies. (0 Str / 0 Dex result in a character who is only capable of whispering and crawling. 0 Int / 0 Wis result in unconsciousness or a fevered delirium. 0 Cha results in the death of the soul.)

Diseases also have non-numeric effects, which are suffered as long as the character is infected.

Recovering from Disease Naturally

If you succeed on two of these Con checks in a row, the disease is cured.

If you spent the entire previous day resting in bed, you get +2 on your morning Con check against the disease. If

you were also attended to by healers who used appropriate medicines, you get an additional +2 on your morning Con check. (This requires either an infirmary, or dubious herbs and an appropriate skill check.)

Recovering from Disease via Exorcism

Casting *protection against evil* on a person gives them a new save against all ongoing diseases, with no penalty for failure.

If *protection against evil* is cast as part of an exorcism (and all priests and clerics know how to perform an exorcism), the save is made at a +2 bonus. An exorcism ceremony takes an hour and requires an assistant. Using a vial of holy water (or its equivalent) confers another +2 bonus. If the Con check vs disease is a critical failure, all participants are exposed to the disease.

Remove curse instantly cures a disease, but is not a spell that players will ever be able to cast reliably.

Recovering from Disease via Appeasement

Appeasing a disease spirit is very similar to paying a ransom.

The further the disease has progressed, the higher the ransom will be. Disease spirits are not inexperienced negotiators.

Each disease spirit is appeased by two different things. Roll 2d6 on the Appeasement Method Table to see what they are. If both dice show the same number, then the disease spirit is only appeased by that one thing. If the disease spirit receives that appeasement, it departs.

No actual amounts are listed for the appeasements, since the required offering depends on (a) how desperate the party is, and (b) how much they have to give. Disease spirits base their requirements on their evaluations of you. For example, if you are dressed like rich nobles, then it will expect more money to be offered than if you were dressed like beggars (just like a regular ransom). And yes, clever players can sometimes use this to their advantage.

It is not obvious what methods will appease a particular disease spirit. A cleric can *commune* with the disease spirit and ask it a certain number of yes/no questions in order to ascertain what ransoms it will accept, and how much it expects. And of course, *speak with spirit* will allow you to speak with the disease spirit directly.

Alternatively, you could just try all six methods.

All appeasements must be accompanied by ceremony. This can be as simple as a few respectful words encoded

in a prayer to the disease spirit, or simply ritualized begging over the afflicted person.

The appeasements listed below are general; feel free to make them more specific to particular diseases. For example, appeasing a bog pox spirit with money might involve throwing it into the swamp, while appeasing a leprosy spirit with money might involve binding a gold coin into a bubo. A sleeping sickness spirit might require you to put the money under the afflicted person's bed, where it vanishes as soon as it is unobserved.

Player Information

Pretty much everything printed in this document is common knowledge. Characters have lived in Centerra their whole life, and are aware that diseases are caused by evil spirits that can be healed, exorcised, or appeased. And players should be aware of the mechanics for these things (the two consecutive Con checks, etc).

Please relay this information to players when they first contract a disease, so they can make informed decisions. Disease mechanics are an open system, not a hidden one.

Random Disease Table [d20]

1	Barghopsis	1d4 Dex, 1 Con. Long grey hairs sprout in patches. You can only move on all fours. Your speech can only speak one word per round (amidst involuntary growls).
2	Black Death	1d6 Con. Fever, headaches, vomiting, and buboes. No side effects; it's bad enough.
3	Blisterscale	1d4 Cha. You begin growing scales. Your throat thickens, giving you a 1-in-6 chance to fumble any spell you attempt to cast. If you have taken at least 5 point of Cha damage from this disease, you can breathe underwater. If you would die from this disease, you instead turn into a Deep One NPC.
4	Bog Pox	1d4 Dex, 1 Con. Your skin becomes jaundiced and your joints swell. You can no longer eat normal food, and can only gain nourishment from fresh blood, at least one large blood meal a day. The amount of required blood loss would kill a human and weaken a cow.
5	Bottler's Froth	1d4 Wis, 1 Con. You constantly salivate a reddish foam. You are exhausted by combat, and take a cumulative -1 penalty after each round of combat. If you spend a round resting, this penalty is reset.
6	Brain Worms	1d4 Wis, 1d4 Cha. Once per day, you experience a perfect hallucination (all senses). The worms use this ability in order to spread their infection to others (all of your bodily fluids are infectious, as usual). Ideally, they'd like you to get eaten by a dragon or drown in a popular water source. Timing and details are up the DM. (Be malicious!)
7	Butterfly Skin	1d6 Str. Your skin produces "sequins". For every point of damage this disease does, you produce an exceptional sequin worth 1c. If you take maximum damage from this disease, one of the six sequins is a magnificent sequin worth 10c. Sunlight deals you 1 damage per round of exposure.
8	Common Cold	1d4 Str. You lose your sense of smell. The risk of sneezing gives you -2 Stealth.
9	Dauntledregs	1d6 Int. Your skull softens and swells. You automatically fail all saves against fear and confusion.
10	Dungeon Slough	1d4 Dex, 1 Con. Your skin begins to peel off in large sheets. Whenever you take damage, you take an additional +1 damage.

11	Dwindle Pox	1d4 Str, 1 Con. You begin shrinking. If you take at least 7 points of Str damage from this disease, you drop to Small size (as a halfling). This change is permanent until cured by <i>remove curse</i> .
12	Filth Fever	1d6 Str. Every stressful moment (such as a round of combat), you have a 1-in-6 chance of losing your standard action as you soil yourself (defecation, urination, vomiting bile, etc).
13	The Gobbles	1d4 Str, 1 Con. Your eyes bug out. Your mouth grows extra teeth. You are blind, except in perfect darkness.
14	Leprosy	1d4 Str, 1 Con. If you ever take maximum Strength damage, a body part falls off. [d6] 1-2 finger, 3-4 toe, 5 nose, 6 ear. When this disease is cured, it instead goes into remission for 1d6 months. It can only be permanently cured through divine healing (in the form of <i>remove curse</i>).
15	Polypores	1d4 Wis, 1d4 Cha. Bracket fungi begin to grow on your head. Unless you cover your head (blinding yourself), the fungi constantly glow as bright as a candle, pulsing to your heartbeat. You cannot wear a helmet. If you die from this disease, your corpse takes on a wooden consistency and sprouts mounds of polypores.
16	Red Ache	1d4 Str. Red blisters. Your bones begin turning entirely into marrow. You take double damage from bludgeoning sources (including falls).
17	Slimy Doom	1d4 Con. Your blood turns into slime. If you take maximum Con damage from this disease, you permanently lose a point of Con.
18	Sleeping Sickness	1d6 Wis. Purple rings around the eyes. For every point of Wis damage you take from this disease, you require an additional hour of sleep each night.
19	Slow Pox	1d4 Dex, 1 Con. An incremental paralysis. You get a penalty to Initiative and Movement equal to your Dexterity penalty from this disease. If you die from this disease, your body will take an extremely long time to rot.
20	Wandering Heart	1d3 Con. Your heart is slowly and visibly exiting your chest. Whenever you are crit, you take an additional +1d6 damage.

Non-Random Diseases

Demon Fever	1d4 Wis, 1d2 Con. Once per day, you must succeed on a Cha check or do something evil. (Timing and extend are up to the DM, but it shouldn't last for more than a round of combat or an exploration turn outside of combat. Be malicious!) This disease cannot be cured except magically.
Mummy Rot	1d4 Con, 1d4 Cha. You cannot recover HP in any way. Mummies automatically know if you are suffering from this disease. If a mummy gives you a direct command, you must save or obey it. This disease cannot be cured except magically. It is not contagious (except from mummies).
Zombie Rot	1d4 Con. The frequency of this disease is once every 20 minutes instead of once every day. If you die (from any cause) you immediately rise as a zombie on the next round.

Appeasement Method [d6, roll twice]

1	Blood	A worthy sacrifice. Perhaps just a chicken if the disease is still in its early stages. Terminal diseases require the sacrifice of a cow (100c) or a person.
2	Epidemic	You must consciously infect other people with your horrible disease. Perhaps just one other person if the disease is still in its early stages. If the disease is terminal, a dozen is customary.
3	Flattery	Everyone must gather around and speak loudly about how great the disease spirit is, how powerful, and how generous. Two successful Cha checks are required if the disease is in its early stages, while as many as ten might be required if the disease is terminal. Retries are only possible if the group of flatterers is at least twice as big as last time. Certain grandiose gestures (proposing to marry the disease spirit, offering it a knighthood) count as one or more automatic successes, but be aware that the disease spirit might actually accept these things (2-in-6 chance by default).
4	Food	The salted herring and hardtack that passes for adventuring “rations” doesn't count. Real food purchased from a real chef, or at least prepared with a skill check and a kitchen full of ingredients. (Kitchens in dungeons are now relevant!)
5	Intoxicants	Perhaps just a bottle of whisky if the disease is still in its early stages. If the disease is terminal, a box of opium (200c) is customary.
6	Money	Gold, silver, jewels, and items of exquisite craftsmanship of magical puissance.

* Remember that disease spirits are full NPCs. If the players start talking to them, you may want to roll up a random personality for them. And although they are intelligent, they lack a full understanding of human culture, and can be tricked. They might mistake a carved log for a human if it is wearing clothing, or they might not understand that a character is not actually a king, and has no standing to award knighthoods. You might even be able to fake a character's death well enough that the disease spirit will depart.

So every 30 minutes of writing this, I've been making wandering monster checks for you. And I just rolled a 1, so here's your monster.

Plague Golem

Inside a plague golem is a pile of brown bones and an offering of gold and fine silks. These riches do not belong to the corpse, but instead to the disease spirit. They were offered as payment, so that the disease spirit might guard the tomb by animating the golem. These grave goods are worth 2d6 * 100c and are absolutely laminated with the appropriate disease.

HD 6 AC plate Fists 1d6/1d6

Move 9 Int 5 Mor 9

***Crumbling** – Each time a plague golem is attacked with a bludgeoning weapon (hit or miss), it loses 1 point of AC as its fragile clay crumbles away, and any adjacent creature is exposed to the disease it carries.

***Ephemeral Plague** – As a standard action, a plague golem can point its finger at a target, who then immediately suffers all of the non-numeric effects of a random disease. (Each plague golem is associated with a single disease; do not change it once it is determined.) For example, a barghopsis plague golem causes people to sprout patches of long grey hairs and run around on all fours. You might need to take some liberties: a sleeping sickness plague golem might cast *sleep* instead, and a slow pox plague golem might just cast a version of *slow*. Killing the golem ends the effect. This constitutes exposure to the disease, and anyone who was affected by this ability must make a Con check the following morning or contract it (following normal disease rules).