

# THE MALADY CODEX III

DISEASES OF THE SEA



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## DISEASES OF THE SEA

**WRITTEN BY: JASON BAKOS, THEMIS PARASKEVAS**

**EDITED BY: TAL AVIEZER**

**LAYOUT BY: TRAVIS LEGGE**

**ARTWORK BY: DAEMON ARTS, PIXABAY, VECTEEZY, DM'S GUILD STOCK ART**

**SPECIAL THANKS TO: CHAD M. LENCH, BLAISE WIGGLESWORTH**



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This supplement is written by medical students with a love for tabletop roleplaying games. Inspired by a wide array of ailments, 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 in origin. This time, they all feature themes related to the sea and are inspired by the diseases that troubled those who sailed the seas in the Middle Ages.

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. This supplement will hopefully become a vital weapon in the arsenal of dungeon masters 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 than illness. Used as a way to advance a storyline, to expand a character arc, or to incite conflict, the following stories can serve you well, but be warned! Use them too much, and they might lose their 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 have powers to overcome these maladies, but can one cleric heal a whole country plagued by a dragon's toxic fumes? Try to focus on the worldbuilding and roleplaying elements 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 out 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 intended to be placed as your needs require.

This second installment of the Malady Codex treads where the first Codex didn't dare to: the realm of the humanoid psyche. Mental illness remains a mystery wrapped inside a puzzle. Although much research has been done, mental disorders remain elusive, and their treatment is still disputed. No single paradigm for explaining mental illness exists. This is exciting and terrifying for scientists and roleplayers alike. The types of stories that can be told with the tools presented here are testament to this.

Even though the diseases of the mind in this book are only imaginary, we are painfully aware of the gravity of mental illness in the real world and the impact they have on everyday life. In no way do we wish to trivialize or stigmatize those suffering from such ailments, nor do we. Having said that, the diseases of the mind included within these pages should be used to add depth, gravity, and an increased sense of authentic humanity to any fantasy game.

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.





# THE MALADY CODEX III

*"To all scholars and medical scientists;*

*This manual is a catalog of the most fantastical diseases I have encountered 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. I am a cleric of Apollo, one who has met gods and, in my prime, helped bring one down. As I settle down, too tired from old age to continue with my adventuring habits, I write this to present a portfolio of the most common magical diseases that sailors might encounter in their travels. 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 continue to write this Codex of Maladies."*

This guide is a collection of diseases that are a mix of magical and realistic. Most are based on real world diseases; these should serve as an example of the power maladies hold as storytelling tools. First, some basic concepts are introduced. We then provide a basic template you can use to create your own maladies. Finally, the diseases themselves are described.

## 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. They were designed to be storytelling tools. Feel free to 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 this is a game after all. This element is also highly adaptable. While we offer recommendations on how to infect creatures, on the symptoms they present with, 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, or 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 a 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 Hands* works, or if the disease is so powerful that it can only be dealt with using a special remedy.

## HOW TO HANDLE INFECTION

We must now discuss an unfortunate truth: players metagame. When one of the player characters is injured or comes in contact with an infectious source, the DM must ask for a corresponding saving throw. Once they fail it, it's no tall task for the player to put two and two together and figure out that their character may have been infected with a disease. At that point, the players will do everything in their power to cure the disease, casting spells and calling in favors from paladins who can lay their hands on them and rid them of their ailment. This presents a problem both for the DM, who wants to use the disease, but also for the narrative, as it gets disrupted by this instance of metagaming. We have gathered a few ideas that we believe can help you deal with this phenomenon. It's also noteworthy that these could help you in other aspects of the game where the players could be prone to act on meta knowledge.

Ask the players to make a Perception check. If they fail, roll a Constitution saving throw for them, as they didn't notice the source of infection. This usually works for smaller things, such as the bite of an insect. (We advise that you write the incident down and keep the folded note somewhere visible, so as to avoid any confusion that might arise 5 sessions later.) Similarly, have them roll a Medicine check to see if they know of the disease.

- Do not inform them about the outcome of the said saving throw.
- Do not let them heal a disease their character would not be suspicious of.
- Use different spells to cure different diseases. Lesser Restoration just might not be enough.

- Have every player with the potential to be exposed to the disease in this session roll a saving throw at a different time, such as the beginning. Write down the results and explain that this is to not give away the precise moment of “an event”.

A disclaimer is, of course, mandatory here. We do not assume that every party will metagame. We do not also condemn it, as it is a valuable part of the game in some ways. We are just trying to help DMs who may find themselves in a situation where, for any reason, meta-gaming could hinder the experience they are trying to provide through the use of a disease. It is also worth noting that sometimes it is within the bounds of reason and gaming etiquette for the player to assume they have been infected. Just imagine the typical scene of a nurse or a doctor in real life, accidentally getting themselves pierced by a needle that was used to draw blood from a patient. At that point, it's not metagaming. It's common sense to assume you have been infected.

## How to Live with Infection

A sailor's life is tough. Each and every day, mariners might find themselves in life-or-death situations, and they have to prove themselves worthy of being on board. This makes disease a minor but cumulative aspect of a sailor's life. They have accepted the danger and learned to live with it. This should not mean that chronic diseases such as those we are describing do not impact the whole ship. Ships make perfect environments for epidemics due to the close contact of people, and poor hygiene. An outbreak could kill half of the crew and leave the other half unable to command the vessel, leading them to certain death. Thus, each ship has at least one qualified medic. One would argue that a ship without a captain could end its journey, but the lack of a physician would surely doom the voyage.

Realism is an important part of the Malady series. Keep in mind that even if diseases have never before been implemented at your table, they have existed in your fantasy world since the beginning of time. Both PCs and NPCs have seen their relatives die from maladies. A character might begin their journey already infected with a disease that is slowly killing them, and they're trying to hide it from their companions until they finish their quest. Your medieval society might be cruel and define a person by a disease they are carrying. A character might be deemed useless if they break their leg, and be left to die on a mountain. But, as always, we have added a more light-hearted malady that would be suitable for any table.

## EXAMPLE

The following should serve as a template for the disease you are about to read.

### Acesius' note

Introduction to the disease

*Real life reference*

## ORIGINS

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

## CAUSES

How does it spread from a creature to another? How can one get infected?

## SYMPTOMS

How 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

How is this disease best used by the DM?

## SALTMARSH'S FIRE

**They say every sailor contracts this disease sooner or later. People doubt that you have spent time at sea if you haven't lost at least one friend to it. It's really not worth contracting it for a few moments of fun, but what can a healer do except treat the unlucky?**

Saltmarsh's Fire is a sexually transmitted disease with an origin story straight out of a fairy tale. Its symptoms range from comedic to severe, and it is, without a doubt, the sailor's disease.





*Based on the real-life disease known as syphilis, this malady is a spin on the most common sexually transmitted disease that sailors and pirates alike contracted. Syphilis was a huge problem in medieval Europe. Those who spent their entire lives on ships were prone to coming in contact with it, since they usually sought to satisfy their primal needs in every port town.*

## ORIGINS

Eons ago, a powerful dragon became disgusted with the vile and unholy behaviors of humanoids. After one catalytic event involving pirates who did unspeakable things, she finally had enough. She dove from the sky above the pirates' ship and burnt them all to death, sparing only one swab. She then cursed the survivor, and he became the first to suffer from Saltmarsh's Fire. He was later cured, or so he thought, so he continued on the same path of pleasure without inhibitions. When he realized that the dragon intentionally cursed him with a disease that would become dormant, it was too late. The fire had begun to spread.

## CAUSES

This disease is sexually transmitted. Those who work in brothels have a higher chance of contracting the disease, but it can affect anyone. There is no other known means of transmission. It is hard to know

when you're in danger of spreading or contracting the disease as it comes and goes in waves, seemingly disappearing for large periods of time. Any creature that has sexual intercourse with a creature suffering from Saltmarsh's Fire, at any stage, must make a successful DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become infected.

## SYMPTOMS

The disease presents itself in four distinct stages, each lasting from a few days to whole years. A simple table with a rough estimate of how long each stage lasts is provided below:

Stage	Duration
1	3 days.
2	1d4+1 days.
3	2d100 weeks.
4	Permanent.

**Stage 1:** A few days after the incident of infection, a rash appears on the infected area of the genitalia. It is usually small, but the itch it creates reduces the quality of everyday life for the infected. This mild discomfort is usually ignored unless someone points out that it is only the precursor to much more serious symptoms. In three days the rash goes away on its own.

**Stage 2:** A few weeks after Stage 1's symptoms subside, the more characteristic signs of the disease develop. First and foremost, whenever another creature touches the infected creature's genitalia, the rash reappears and bursts into flames. This is what the name refers to, of course, and it is the result of the dragon's curse. When the rash ignites, the infected creature takes 1d6 fire damage, and the instigator of the symptom must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d6 fire damage. Other than that, the infected are overtaken by fatigue; they feel sore and they generally look sick. For the next 3-5 days, they have one level of exhaustion that can only be removed through magical means.

**Stage 3:** At this stage, the disease becomes dormant. This means that all symptoms disappear, and the infected creature feels as if it has been cured. This, of course, is a dangerous folly, as they are still very capable of spreading the disease.

**Stage 4:** Months, maybe years after the second stage's symptoms end, the final manifestation of the disease takes root. The brain is mainly affected, resulting in all sorts of symptoms like headaches, deafness, blindness, faulty perception of space, a



sluggishness in movement, and even personality changes. You can assign these at will, or determine which ones the infected creature suffers from with the following table. Roll 2d6 and apply the results. If you roll the same number twice, roll two additional 2d6, which means that the creature suffers from 3 manifestations of this stage. If you have a duplicate, roll until you receive a different symptom.

Roll	Symptom
1	Headaches
2	Deafness
3	Blindness
4	Spatial Disorientation
5	Sluggish Movements
6	Personality Changes

## DIAGNOSIS

It is very easy to diagnose this disease as it is common knowledge, especially amongst those who live close to the ocean. A creature can recall the causes, symptoms, and cure with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check. Creatures with the Sailor background have advantage on this check. One problem that arises in diagnosing and generally discussing this malady is its cultural roots and the way they reflect on its name. While many know it as Saltmarsh's Fire, enemy nations have come to call it by their hated neighbor's name. For example, citizens of Waterdeep and Neverwinter might call it "the Luskan Lashes" and elven kingdoms refer to it as "Dwarven Itch". Not only does this cause confusion as people don't realize they are talking about the same disease, but it can also lead to dispute and arguments.

## CURE

To cure Saltmarsh's Fire, at any stage, a creature must consume a vial of dragon blood. This is commonly referred to as Sanguis Draconis and is an expensive material. If a dragon is slain, its blood cannot be consumed immediately. Instead, it must be distilled by a creature proficient in the use of a *herbalism* kit, following a successful DC 14 check with the *herbalism* kit. Sanguis Draconis is commonly sold in port towns and other metropolises where the disease is rampant, but is usually priced high. A wealthy individual or an adventurer might be able to afford it, but it's commonplace for sailors to have to call in favors or take up jobs just for one vial of Sanguis Draconis. Note that in some places, the good-natured metallic dragons donate blood in order to help the

poor and helpless. In other cases, Sanguis Draconis can be distilled from the blood of a sorcerer with the draconic bloodline archetype. It cannot be distilled from the blood of a dragonborn.

*In the real world seas, Dragon's Blood or Sanguis Draconis (a gum resin taken from the berries of palm trees) was commonly used to treat a variety of diseases. This resin was used both as a medicine as well as a varnish, and owes its name to its deep red color.*

## PLOT HOOKS

This malady can mainly be used to enrich the experience of a grim or realistic nautical game. It adds depth to the world in a way that targets the player characters and could end up creating the circumstances for a fun roleplaying experience.

This disease gives the DM the opportunity to create a quest with just one mission: slay a dragon and get its blood. This could result in epic stories being told on the table, and that, in its essence, is the goal of this book. On the other hand, it could also entail a search for a sorcerer with draconic blood, who might need a favour in exchange for the donation.

## VUTRIM'S TREACHERY

**Deep sea creatures are truly a wonder to behold. They all find peculiar ways to hunt for food. The Vutrim is no exception, though I'm not certain if it's just a powerful sea creature or something else entirely.**

Vutrim's Treachery is a malady that affects entire crews. It has a dietary cause and can infect shipboard voyagers at any time. The mental fog it creates makes it easy for the ship to crash and sink, leaving the crew powerless. That is when the Vutrim consumes them.

*Vutrim's Treachery is, of course, based on the real life disease scurvy. Scurvy was a major problem in the pre-refrigeration era of sailing, as provisions didn't last as long and didn't usually provide the crew with all the necessary micronutrients. The lack of Vitamin D in the body resulted in a disruption of homeostasis, and, ultimately, disease.*

## ORIGINS

The Vutrim, an ancient creature born in an era long past, dwells the deep seas. It created a disease with the intent to wreck ships and drown them beneath

the waves. As they sink, both ship and crew become easy prey for the Vutrim's long tentacles. The creature hunts all sorts of other sea creatures, but with its disease, ships are the easiest target.

## CAUSES

Spending prolonged periods of time at sea leads to a lack of quality food. Preserving nutritious rations is difficult during long voyages. If a creature goes a number of days equal to 10 plus its Constitution modifier without eating, or with a diet limited to low-quality food such as bread, beans, and salt pork, then it becomes susceptible to Vutrim's Treachery. The next time it comes into physical contact with sea water, the creature must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, or become infected.

## SYMPTOMS

The symptoms of this disease appear in succession, presenting themselves in stages of some sort.

**Stage 1:** Blue and green skin spots appear on the victim's skin; these can appear anywhere on the body, but are very bright and noticeable on the torso and inside the mouth.

**Stage 2:** The victim's thought process is disturbed, as Vutrim projects images into its mind to lead to confusion. This confusion leads to mistakes, which can be fatal for the life of the ship, and can complicate treatment. The creature has disadvantage on all wisdom and intelligence checks. For some example projections into the mind, see below.

**Stage 3:** Extremely painful stomach cramps cripple the creature, as its organs slowly die on the inside, and its eyes cry tears of blood. The creature suffers 3 points of exhaustion and cannot take both an action and a bonus action on the same turn. It must also make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, or also take 1d4 acid damage every turn. This is what kills the infected.

**Stage 4:** When the creature finally succumbs to the disease, the internal organs quickly dissolve, leaving behind a dangerous acid that slowly eats through the body killing the creature.. The acid then proceeds to melt the wooden floors, and eats away at the ship, with the intent of opening a hole in it and sinking the vessel. The acid melts wood and other soft materials, like cloth, paper, and leather, but cannot melt any metal or stone. It corrodes 5 ft of any material every 6 seconds.

The symptoms do not have a specific trigger after which they appear, nor can anyone be certain of when the next stage symptoms will manifest. However, as a rule of thumb, the stages last approximately this long:

Stage	Hours
1	24
2	12
3	6
4	2-4

## DIAGNOSIS

Vutrim is a merciful elder evil. It gives the sailors visions that reveal its identity, but it mixes them with other visions of random scenery and incomprehensible events. Thus, it gives a clever diagnostician a chance to understand its masterplan and put an end to it, perhaps even taking pleasure in the occasional defeat at the hands of a smart mortal. However, given that most infected creatures' thoughts are hazy and they cannot think straight, it becomes very difficult to discern the important visions from the random ones. Some ideas for what the infected could see include:

- Pirates raiding the ship.
- Rats in the cargo infecting foodstuff.
- A giant squid-like creature that has possessed someone from the crew and is responsible for the disease.
- A malicious wizard that is watching the ship through his magic crystal ball.
- A monk pouring lemon on a platter of food.
- Someone spilling their blood over the corpses that the disease claimed.
- The captain of the ship opening a hole in the ship, letting the waves swallow it.
- The ship crashing on a large sailing object and two people trying to catch hold of a piece of floating timber.
- A humongous eye that opens in the deep sea, and the ship with its passengers reflected in its iris.

A DC 18 Wisdom (Medicine) check is required to diagnose Vutrim's Treachery, as very few ships actually survive to tell healers about it. Knowledge of the ancient monster's existence brings the DC down to 15. A *detect poison and disease* spell can also locate the source of the problem, pointing to every infected sailor and identifying the water as the catalyzing agent. The Medicine check is still required to complete the diagnosis and identify the cure.





## CURE

The infected creatures must be *fed with good food, though the effects will be greater if the recipe contains lemons and oranges*. Just one meal of nutritious food will set the disease back to Stage 1, and a whole day of eating healthy foods that contain lemons and/or oranges cures the disease. The fluids that the deceased victims excrete can also be neutralized with lemon juice. The disease can also be cured with healing spells such as *lesser restoration*, or *heal*, though these have no effect on the fluids that could sink the ship.

## PLOT HOOKS

This disease is perfect for used in a mystery/investigation type of scenario. The adventurers encounter a ship that has been infected with Vutrim's Treachery and must help the crew by correctly diagnosing the condition and providing food and lemons to protect the crew and the ship.

It also serves as an introduction to Vutrim, who could be used as a major villain in future adventures, or perhaps a patron for warlocks.

Note that the characters can't be infected unless they, too, have been having problems with their diet. Having said that, they likely have no idea that this is the case. It will be interesting to see what they

come up with in order to protect themselves from the disease. Let them roleplay whatever ideas they have, but be ready to advance the story if the heroes become bogged down.

## SQUIDITIS

**"After studying Illithid creations, I have come to the conclusion that they all carry the same psionic essence in different quantities. Their invasion of our realm could not leave our waters unsullied by this madness."**

Squiditis is an acute infection related to consuming a specific type of sea creature, the vampire squid. It can also spread as a result of combat with said creature. It is a potentially deadly disease for any crew sailing the seas, as it presents with very non-specific symptoms at first, but can quickly climax and create all sorts of problems.

*As with all the other diseases in this supplement, this malady is based on something from the real world related to the seas. This time, however, we cannot give away our source. Let's just say that whoever contracts this squid's disease will be very cranky.*



## ORIGINS

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When mindflayers first invaded the world, their very nature was so alien that whole ecosystems underwent substantial changes. As they usually do, the Illithids conducted experiments on organisms, constantly trying to create new species that would serve their purpose. It is through these experiments that the vampire squids came to be. They were designed to be efficient hunters, capable of procuring large quantities of seafood for their masters.

## CAUSE

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*“I’ve seen a ship crash into a reef when the captain and his navigator both contracted this disease.”*

Squiditis is a disease that can only be contracted by coming in direct contact with a vampire squid, be it dead or alive. Vampire squid live in deep sea waters but might come close to the surface when darkness prevails. They usually prey on smaller fish, but are able to easily wrap their tentacles around larger victims, such as humanoids. At the same time, many creatures roam the seas that can best the vampire squid, which means that the squid itself might get eaten and spread the disease. Whenever a creature comes in direct physical contact with the vampire squid or a sea creature infected by it, it must make a DC 15 Con Saving throw or be infected with the disease.

## SYMPTOMS

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This disease starts with non-specific symptoms such as fever, a sore throat, dizziness, and itching in the outer ear. The creature gains 1 point of exhaustion that can only be removed by magical means such as a *lesser restoration* spell. If, for any reason unrelated to the disease itself (such as physical exhaustion), the creature gains a second point of exhaustion, the disease progresses from the physical first state to the second state: that of the mind. The creature becomes moody, indifferent, and does not want to cooperate with others. It tries to avoid combat by any means, and will only enter combat in a life or death situation. At the start of every round, it must make a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, it must take the Dash action and run away from the encounter. Any creature can make a Charisma (Persuasion) check with a DC of 10 + (infected creature’s Charisma modifier), in order to convince them to participate in combat. If the check succeeds, the infected creature

can participate in combat normally until the end of the combat encounter.

## DIAGNOSIS

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The disease cannot be discerned from other flu-like diseases at its early stage. If a creature is proficient in Medicine and is aware of a recent encounter between the victim and the squid creature, it may diagnose it with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check or a DC 15 Wisdom (Investigation) check. During the second stage, each DC is decreased by 5.

## CURE

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The disease may be cured by removing all points of exhaustion from the infected creature, but this will require magical means. At the dawn of every 10th day that the creature is infected, it may try to remove one point of exhaustion with a successful DC 15 Constitution save. This can also remove the first point of exhaustion.

The disease can be kept in check with the help of music. Any kind of music will do the job. It halts the progression of the symptoms, and improves the general health of the infected creature. With a successful DC 10 Charisma (Performance) check using any musical instrument, a creature can remove the symptoms of the disease from all infected creatures who can hear the music. Symptoms will remain in remission until the infected creature completes a long rest; an additional successful performance will then be needed to alleviate the symptoms again.

## PLOT HOOKS

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This is a simple disease that can be used to enforce the feeling of dread for the creatures of the deep. Not only do they wreck ships and eat people, they carry deadly diseases that can spell doom for crews. Due to its illithid origins, it also ties in perfectly with any other mind flayer presence in the area, and adds depth to the influence these creatures have on their environment. If you introduce this disease through an NPC, we advise you use the musical element of the disease to stimulate more senses for your players. The scene of a grand approaching ship with lavish decorations and three gigantic sails is awe-inspiring, but the scene can be enriched by adding this note; the grand playing of an orchestra, or the pirate songs that taunt innocent ships.



# THE RAINBOW MIST

**I once travelled to the Sea of Fluros in order to help a fellow adventurer heal their wounds. These Mists are very tricky, always elusive, moving with the wind from one place to another.**

The Rainbow Mist is a supernatural phenomenon that, without any explanation, closes wounds and regrows limbs, but sometimes at a great cost. The Mist is a large body of magical mist that travels the seas, affecting all those who are engulfed by it. Those who are healed by the Mist slowly transform into different creatures, bound by the sea.

*This malady was inspired from many things, both from the stories we hear about the sea and from the reality of medicine as a science. On one hand, it combines mists, which have been used as a storytelling tool since ancient times, and a real-life fantastical phenomenon, fluorescent marine animals and plants. On the other hand, it serves as a parallel to the countless microbiological applications we have found in medicine, wherein we derive beneficial material from potentially deadly organisms, sometimes at great risk.*

## ORIGINS

Ever since the first civilizations formed and bards began to sing about the wonders of the world, the Rainbow Mist was present in stories. All who were raised in a society with nautical traditions and folklore know about it and its healing properties, but they also understand how big of a wager it is to venture into the sea, looking for a cure that comes with a heavy price. As to how or when these Mists were formed, no one knows. Some scholars believe that they originate from the Astral Sea, while some clerics insist that it was one of the old gods that gifted the Material Plane with the elusive Mists.

## CAUSES

The Mists are sometimes visible to the naked eye, glowing brightly in all the colors that the eye can perceive. Sometimes they only take one color, usually blue or green, and blend in with the rest of the environment. Depending on the shade and texture, the creatures that are sailing in it might not even realize it is there. In any case, the Mists have a very strong effect on healing, and to anyone who casts *detect magic* while in the Mist, a faint aura of evocation seems to suffuse it. Whenever a creature suffers a wound while inside the Mist, or comes into the Mist

with a wound, it is placed under the Mist's influence. If a creature with an amputated limb enters the Mists, the influence also applies, even if the wound is not fresh. If a creature drowns in the sea under the Rainbow Mists, it is also affected. If a creature wants to resist the effects of the Mist, it must make a DC 16 Charisma saving throw, or become "infected".

## SYMPTOMS

The Rainbow Mist is a healing force that, when applied excessively, can corrode and slowly change the very essence of the creature it heals. There are three distinct stages to the process. First, any wounds heal, any limbs slowly regrow, and damaged organs regain function. In every case, the tissue that was affected gives off a light blue glow and remains transparent. Second, the fluorescent tissue begins to spread, replacing healthy tissue surrounding the wound. Gradually, it replaces as much of the creature's healthy tissue as it can. Finally, the creature mutates into a marine creature. The following are the three stages, in depth.





**1st Stage:** While affected by the Mist, a creature's lost limbs may regrow. Limbs will fully regrow in 1 minute. The character also gains 5 extra HP when they expend a hit die, for every die rolled. This gain is permanent. When the wound is fully healed, the disease progresses to the next stage. In this stage, even magical wounds that cannot heal are replaced with fluorescent tissue.

**2nd Stage:** In this stage, the fluorescent growth expands to healthy tissues. This leads to a plethora of changes in the body. Fingers become webbed like a frog's, fins appear on the creature's back, and its skin is replaced by fluorescent fish-like scales. No mental changes occur, but the creature will become amphibious, meaning that it gains a swimming speed equal to its normal speed and that it can breathe underwater. When this transformation is complete, the disease progresses to the next stage.

**3rd Stage:** The affected creature is transformed to a marine creature. Its brain is now affected and its behaviour changes. It loses part of its sentient personality, and animalistic instincts prevail. Everyday it begins a journey to reach the depths of the sea and, every night it tries to dive even deeper.

The disease progresses at a constant rate which slightly differs according to the race of the creature (the bigger the creature, the longer it takes), but it would take 10 minutes for an affected creature's wound to heal, 1 day for a limb to regrow, and 1 week to finish the transformation). If the creature is inside the Mist, the process accelerates by 10 times.

## DIAGNOSIS

This disease is easy to diagnose as a medical condition, as long as you have heard stories regarding the Rainbow Mist. To diagnose it, a creature must succeed on a DC 10 Intelligence (History, Arcana, or Nature) check or a DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check. To know about its exact symptomatology and cure, a creature must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom (Medicine) check.

## CURE

There are two facets to handling this disease: curing it and halting its spread. To halt its spread, a creature must succeed on a DC 16 Charisma saving throw. The growth can also be halted by applying mud to the tissue, but if the creature comes into contact with sea water for more than one minute, it automatically fails the next day's saving throw. The saving throw happens daily.

To cure the disease completely would mean reversing its effects and turning the fluorescent tissue back to normal. To accomplish this, a special ritual must be performed with the help of a druid who is part of the Circle of the Land. The infected creature must come in contact with the mystical forces of the earth, in order to balance the effect the sea had to it. This ritual requires a handful of mud from a place unsullied by civilization, the branch of a treant, and a magic weapon. This ritual will strip the weapon of its magical powers. The ritual must be performed at dawn.

## PLOT HOOKS

The Rainbow Mist is a very powerful tool for worldbuilding, as it can be used by PCs and NPCs alike. It can be part of the lore of your world, depending on how folklore depicts those who find themselves lost in the Mists. It also represents the very real dangers of the sea and all the elements that surround it. The Rainbow Mist becomes especially deadly if combat breaks out while creatures are surrounded by it, because they all become infected and begin their transformation.

Another way to use the Mist to introduce it when your players attempt planar travel, especially to magical places like the Astral Sea. It can serve for a reminder that they are entering uncharted waters, both figuratively and literally, and that reality may not obey its customary laws.

Finally, there are many stories to be told of people who wish to regrow limbs or cure incurable diseases, and are willing to take a risk. Likewise, stories regarding those who lost the bet and became cursed by the sea, forever sailing it and without the ability to leave, have great potential.

## RAT'S CURSE

**I watched a city burn down, just to contain the Druid's Curse. When I realized that the malady had mutated and spread to the sea, the only thing I could do was pray to Apollo for salvation.**

The Rat's Curse is an aquatic variant of the Druid's Curse, a disease created by the Fabled Druid as part of his plot of vengeance against living creatures who have defiled the environment for far too long.

*This disease is inspired by the Bubonic Plague, commonly referred to as the Black Death. It was a disease that claimed almost one third of Europe as victims in the Middle Ages, and it all started with*



*rats that travelled in the cargo holds of ships. While the symptoms of the Black Death are more closely mirrored in its reimagining in the Malady Codex I, this variant focuses on the notion that a few rats can bring civilizations to their knees.*

## ORIGINS

The Druid's Curse travelled through the swamp waters, in animals and carcasses, and swiftly began to evolve in order to survive in aquatic environments. It evolved, and, almost like an intelligent organism, learned to manipulate the elements and became an entirely new strain that is easily distinguishable from the original disease.

## CAUSES

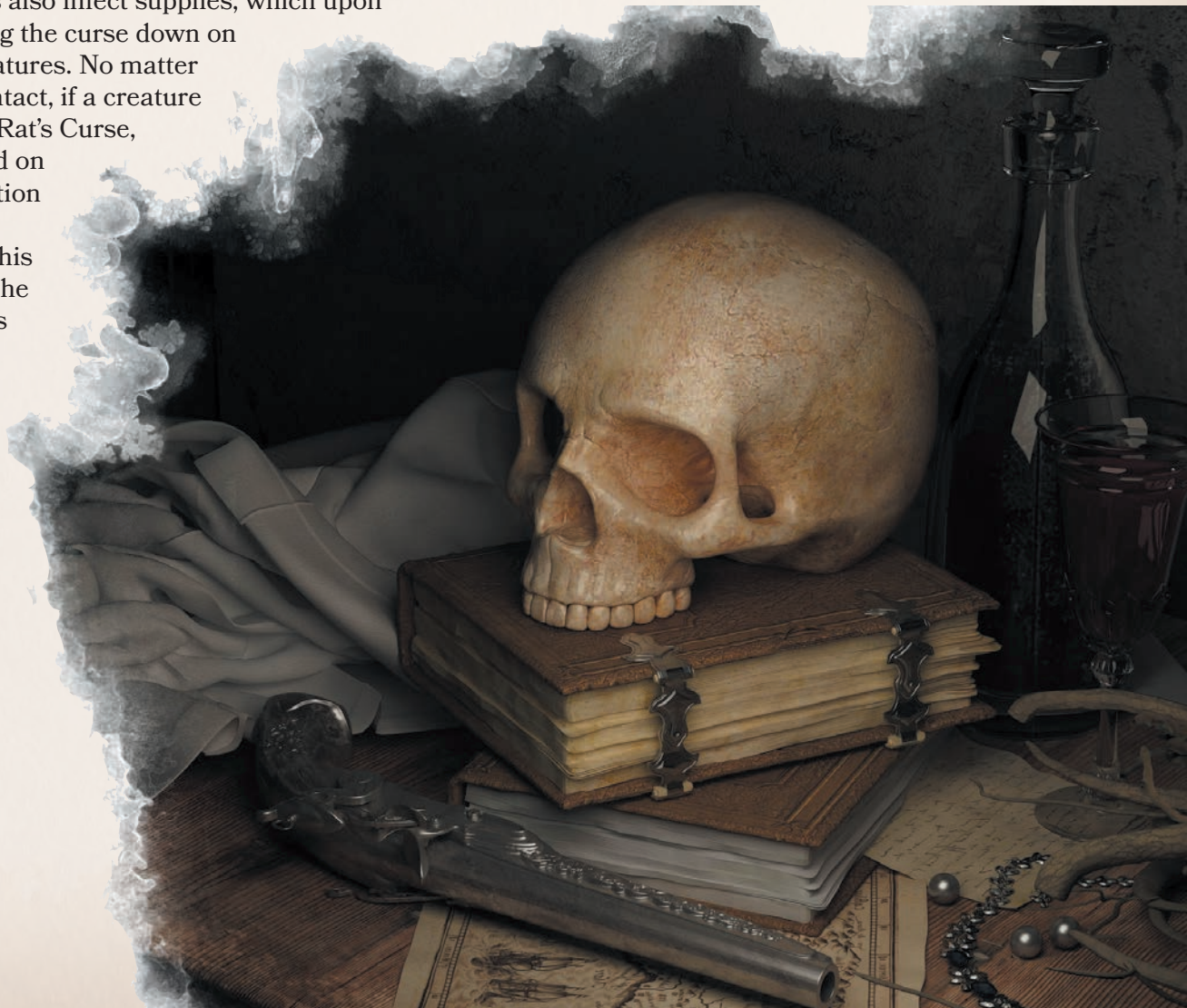
Insects carrying the disease reside inside the flesh or on the skin of small animals such as rodents and sea rats. These animals enter ships when they come close to coasts or when they're brought aboard as food by the sailors. The pests bite any creature they cross paths with, and the disease enters the blood, spreading to every inch of the infected creature's body. The rodents also infect supplies, which upon consumption bring the curse down on unsuspecting creatures. No matter the method of contact, if a creature is exposed to the Rat's Curse, they must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw, or become infected. his disease is one of the few rare examples of a penetrative malady, which can affect even creatures that are normally immune to diseases (such as paladins).

## SYMPTOMS

When the disease enters the bloodstream, it travels throughout the entirety of the body. For some reason, it prefers to take shelter in specific parts, especially the elbow and the chest. After it has settled in, it starts to affect the creature in a very conceptually simple way; it retains fluids. This sea disease's main manifestation is swelling of several body parts and organs of the body, due to the accumulation of water in them.

One of the easily recognizable manifestations of this disease is the effect it has on the hands of the infected. Characteristic nodes appear in the inside part of the elbows, as well as on the wrists. These nodes gather water from the rest of the body, and block the return of fluids from the arms to the body, which results in the extremities becoming severely enlarged. Due to the location of the nodes, however, only the forearms and the palms swell up. he lower torso also fills up with water, resulting in the appearance of an enlarged belly.

Infected creatures also suffer from dyspnea, which means that they find it harder to breathe, and they are known to enter a fit of what is known as violent water





coughing. Any time the creature overexerts itself physically, it must make a DC 25 Constitution saving throw, or enter a coughing fit. Water comes out of its lungs, leaving behind a taste of seaweed and salt. The cough is so violent that the creature drops whatever it was doing, just to try and breathe again. The creature becomes incapacitated. In the end of its turn, it must make another saving throw, or continue coughing. If it succeeds, the cough fit stops for good. If it fails three consecutive times, it falls unconscious, as it has been deprived of oxygen for too long. When unconscious, it starts to make Death Saving throws. As for what counts as physical overexertion, we leave this to the DM's judgement, but a few examples could include using the Dash Action, remaining locked in combat for more than 3 rounds, taking a critical hit or having to make any difficult Strength or Dexterity check.

Another symptom that is caused by retention of fluids is that the creature's veins fill up and protrude on their torso and neck. This is the chronic part of the disease, and also the part that leads to certain demise unless treated. Every day after the infection, there is a chance that a multitude of veins inside the body spontaneously break and cause extreme hemorrhage, which means that blood will fill the body on the inside. This condition is unfortunately only treatable with the highest levels of magic, such as the Wish spell or Divine Intervention. The chance of this event occurring is 0% on the first day, and it increases by 1% every day after that. A violent water cough crisis increases the internal bleeding chance by 5%. The d100 should be rolled at the end of the day. If the roll is below the current internal bleeding percentage, then sometime during the next day, perhaps tied in with some strenuous activity or perhaps out of the blue, the event occurs.

## DIAGNOSIS

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This malady is man-made, and it hasn't been around for many years. Still, due to the exponential rate of its spread, healers from all corners of the world were forced to quickly learn about it and figure out a way to heal it. Any creature proficient in Medicine can diagnose this with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check.

## CURE

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The Fabled Druid created his original Curse with the intent of showing no mercy to any living organism. As such, he went to great lengths to make sure that his disease would be resistant to healing magic and mundane curing methods. Only high levels spells

like Wish or Divine Intervention can relieve a patient of the curse. The sad reality of this disease is that it spreads fast in unsuspecting populations, and its victims only live for a few months.

Perhaps out of pity, or maybe as a contingency plan, the Druid allowed just one plant to completely remove the disease from an organism. For the Druid's Curse, this was a flower that could be found on wild shambling mounds. However, this affinity for the Sparkleaf was lost when the malady mutated. A new plant took its place as the panacea of the curse, one that can be found in the depths of the sea. It is known as Flower of the Far Realms, and it is a wonder of marine biology, as it blooms on coral reefs. The Flower of the Far Realms, or Realmreef for short, is a flower that can be found only in treacherous reefs and also in some Underdark locations known only to the best and most courageous explorers. It also sporadically sprouts on other planes of existence, and it is to that fact that the flower owes its name. Some experts believe that the reefs share a connection with the mythical Aboleth, a creature that inhabits both Underdark and undersea environments, and is said to have mythical roots. The theory seems to hold true, as most places with large gatherings of the Flower of the Far Realms are abandoned or occupied Aboleth lairs.

As for the coughing fits, any creature can attempt to help the affected creature out. Generally, the best way to relieve them of the stress created by the water in their lungs is with a spell that controls water. Other than that, any creature can attempt to expedite the procedure by force. A creature can take an action to perform a rough medical maneuver, where the belly of the victim must be pressed with heavy and spontaneous pressure, causing all of the water to come out at once. Knowing how to perform this maneuver requires a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check, or a background in medical training. Even without formal training, however, it is possible that some will try to perform the maneuver. Have them roll a simple Dexterity check to assert how skillfully or clumsily they hit the victim, and based on the situation, assign a corresponding DC.

## PLOT HOOKS

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This is meant to be a deadly disease, one that can spell doom for entire villages and that could throw off the balance of the world in a few months. The Fabled Druid set out to correct the balance of civilization and nature, and if his curse spreads, then he may just succeed. Should you introduce this disease in



your games, know that it should send out a powerful message: civilization as we know it is in trouble.

As for the everyday use of this disease, some port towns might have already become used to seeing people with enlarged forearms go on their lives and there might even be a need for a special infirmary or organization to be set up to treat those that suffer from the water retention symptoms.

An evocative concept would be that of a pirate captain that has discovered a place where the Flower of the Far Realms naturally grows in abundance, and has made that his lair. Imagine a temple partially submerged in water, with mold growing in the cave's walls, treasure chests filled with loot spread all around, and an endless supply of Realmreef. This pirate could act as a major villain in your stories, one whose lair must be infiltrated in order to procure large quantities of the healing plant. The captain is known for being one of the first to contract the disease, but he was fortunate enough to discover that the Realmreef cured it. Nonetheless, just to be safe, he has made it a habit to constantly snack on the plant, which has become a sort of trademark for him. Needless to say, Captain Marlon "Snack" Sidgaster also has a role in spreading the disease, as he has a very strong economic incentive for doing so. He is trying to establish himself as a crime lord of the high seas, based on this treasure of the Flower of the Far Realm.

## FALLING DISASTERS

**There is always going to be one clumsy rigger that's gonna fall off the mast while tying the sails. I guarantee it. Always treat the ship's surgeon with at least some respect. You never know when you might need him to set your bones back in place.**

Falling disasters are not a disease in the form that one might expect, but rather a set of rules on how to deal when a creature falls from significant height, or suffers an violent injury. Please note that this disease is intended to be rarely used, and only when the situation calls for it. It is also advised not to use it on the heroes, as it might be too punishing, even for a gritty/realistic setting. Instead, consider this a set of rules that help you track injuries, in the case that they happen naturally in your game's story.

*Though most do not associate bone fractures with the term disease, the condition does in fact qualify as one. As such, we thought that it would be fitting to at least deal with such a wide-spread subject somehow, even if it only entailed the presentation of some simple rules, rather than a fantastical disease. Note that the mechanical symptoms are not fully*

*representative of the real life counterpart fractures, but rather a representation of the biggest hindrances a fracture can pose to movement and functionality.*

## ORIGINS

This disease has existed for as long as organisms have had bones to break. It is by design that the organs that hold our bodies together crack, bend, and break, only to be reformed. Most of the time, when creatures partake in strenuous activity, bones suffer microfractures that quickly heal.. Sometimes, unfortunately, the break is too big, causing immense pain and discomfort, while also limiting range of motion. It is quite common to have a nautical accident while sailing the rough seas, climbing tall masts, or fighting off pirates.

## CAUSES

When a creature falls from a high place, the body is not designed to handle the impact well. As a result, bones many fracture. After taking damage, the creature must make a Constitution saving throw. The DC equals the number of feet the creature has fallen from. Failure results in a broken bone.. The number and type of bones broken differ according to how badly the saving throw was failed.

In the following table, the choice is made by the DM if there are two or more options.

DC Fail	Type of Fracture
<5	1 bone from Table A.
6-10	2 bones from table A, or 1 from table B
11-15	2 bones from table A and 1 from table B, or 1 from table C.
>16	2 bones from table A, 1 from table B and 1 from table c.
Natural 1	Same as previous, but one more bone from each category. (optional rule)

## SYMPTOMS

The bones that are prone to breaking have been categorised based on the severity of the disability that ensues. Table A includes minor injuries, which would only hinder everyday tasks mildly. Table B features major injuries that cause important drawbacks during the healing phase, including the ability to move. Table C describes the fatal injuries a creature can suffer when breaking a bone, which might either prove deadly or cause a permanent disability.



Table A Bones	Loss of function
Clavicle	You cannot draw a longbow or two-handed weapons.
Fingers (Not Thumb)	You have disadvantage on Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) checks using that hand and do not gain benefits on tools. Roll for Amputation.
Jaw	Eating takes twice as long. Injuring a jaw during its healing phase leads to inability to speak.
Tail	You have disadvantage on acrobatic Checks. Roll for Amputation.
Ribs	You cannot take the Dash action.
Radius - Forearm	You have Disadvantage on Weapon Attacks made with that hand. You cannot use that hand to defend with a shield. Roll for Amputation.

Table B Bones	Loss of Function
Wrist	You may not wield weapons or shields with that hand.
Thumb	You use any item with disadvantage with this hand. Roll for Amputation.
Talus - Ankle	Your speed is halved.
Shin	You need some sort of walking stick to walk at your normal speed, or your speed becomes 10ft. Roll for Amputation.

Table C Bones	Loss of Function
Thigh	Your speed is 0 . Unless a Successful DC 15 Medicine Check is performed within the first 2 hours, the bone dies, leaving you with a permanent limp. Also roll for amputation.
Arm	You cannot use this limb to perform any activity, including using somatic components or wielding a weapon. Also roll for Amputation.
Pelvis	Your speed is 5 ft. This area is full of nerve fibers, and unless a successful DC 25 Medicine check is performed within the first 6 hours, you roll for one of the following effects, which are permanent: 1) loss of function in the urinary system and genitalia. 2) You lose control over one leg. 3) Hypersensitivity. If you are hit on the leg, you feel immense pain. Your speed is 0 for 1d4 rounds.

Skull	Hemorrhage appears .During the following 12 hours your mental state worsens, with the following symptoms appearing one by one: Dizziness, amnesia, nausea, headache, and finally comma. If not treated within 12 hours, you die. Until it heals, any blow to the head will cause you to lose consciousness.
Spine	Extreme damage is caused to the neural spine. If treated carefully during the healing period, you heal completely. If violent movement occurs during that time, then it might become paralyzed or bleed out, resulting in death.

These symptoms remain until they are healed, unless it is specified that they are permanent. Bone fractures heal based on the table they are included in, as analysed later in the Cure section below.

## AMPUTATION RULES

*Some bones have a chance to become infected and cause death of the surrounding tissues. If not treated within one day, the infection will cause a systemic reaction and death. Treatment for this is amputation- in other words, removal of the bone. One day after the incident, roll for bone infection. Category A has a 10% to be infected, Category B has a 25% chance, and Category C has 50%. If not treated within one day with amputation, the creature dies. This rule only applies to bones that have the “Roll for Amputation” note.*

## DIAGNOSIS

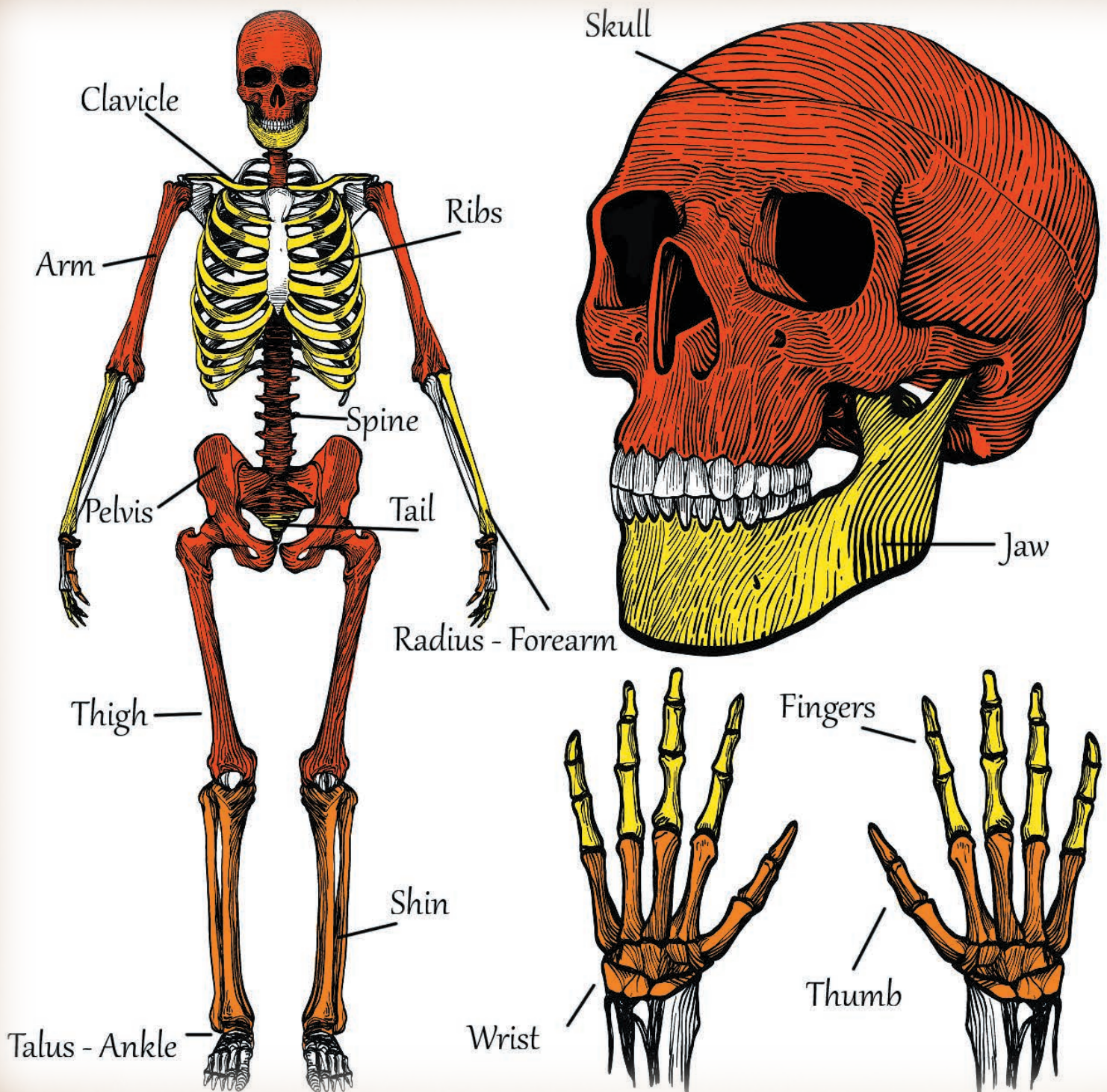
A broken bone is easy to diagnose, especially if it presents with a specific symptom, or if it is so out of place that it becomes visibly misplaced. Any creature can diagnose a broken bone with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check.

## CURE

Table A injuries need a small time to heal. In order to enter the healing phase, another creature must perform a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) Check to put the bone back in place. Every time a check is performed the creature takes 1d4 damage unless it has taken some kind of pain medicine. Healing time is between 1 to 4 weeks. {roll a d4}

Table B injuries need a moderate time to heal and require minimal movement/usage of that bone. In





order to enter the healing phase, another creature must perform a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) Check to put the bone back in place. Healing time is between 4 and 8 weeks, but every time the injured creature tries to use that bone takes 1d4 damage and the healing time increases by 1 day.

Table C injuries need moderate time to heal and require zero movement/usage of that bone. A similar check as before is needed but the DC is 20. Healing time is between 4 and 8 weeks but every time the injured tries to use that bone takes 1d12 damage and the healing time increases by 1 week.

Broken bones can be healed by healing magic that would restore at least 10 hit points (even if the creature being healed is already at full hit points).

## Plot Hooks

This is more of a ruleset than a storytelling tool, and as such, it pales in comparison to the rest of the maladies of these codexes in regards to its plot purposes. Still, we think that it's useful to have a few extra rules in your library, ready to be used at a moments notice when your player decides to jump off a cliff. Many of them think they are gods, after all.



# APPENDIX A: MONSTERS

## VAMPIRE SQUID

*Large beast/Monstrosity?, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 12 (Natural Armor)

**Hit Points** 60 (6d10+24)

**Speed** Swim 30 ft.

**STR** 15 (+2)

**DEX** 13 (+1)

**CON** 18 (+4)

**INT** 12 (+1)

**WIS** 10 (+0)

**CHA** 4 (-3)

**Skills** Perception +2

**Senses** Darkvision 30 Ft.,  
passive Perception 12

**Challenge** 3

*Water Breathing.* The vampire squid can breathe only underwater.

### ACTIONS

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

**Tentacles.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) psychic damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 15) and must succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence saving throw or be stunned until this grapple ends. Any creature that comes in contact with the squid's tentacles must also make a DC 16 Intelligence check or become infected with Squiditis.





## APPENDIX B: MAGIC ITEMS

### FLAG OF DISEASE

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*Common, wondrous*

This green flag depicts a painted skull with closed eyes, black on a white field. It is a known symbol of disease, and signals that the ship is in need of assistance from healers. Nautical laws and morality oblige sailors to respect the Flag of Disease, and it is common knowledge that a deadly disease will befall anyone who harms a ship that flies it.

### RAINBOW JAR

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*Very rare, wondrous*

This jar contains a sample of the Rainbow Mists. It has a magical lid that allows healers to open it without the substance dispersing into the air. It contains enough Mist for five uses. When a dose of the substance is applied, treat it as if the creature became submerged in the Mist, but it only affects one injury at a time.

### TRUTH COMPASS

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*Very rare, wondrous*

This compass is made out of a fine steel and is adorned with features like shells, fish and the waves of the sea. On the inside of the lid it has a clear mirror.

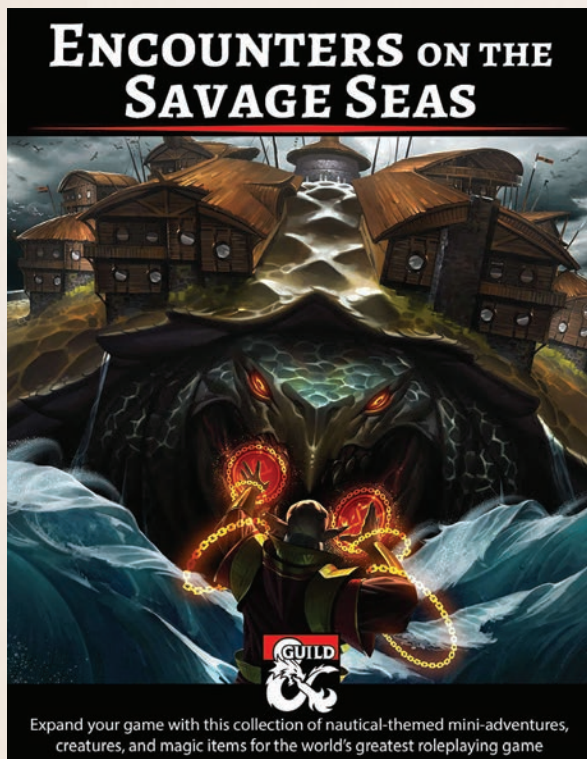
The compass always points to the north, unless someone looks at themselves in the mirror and wishes to find a certain object or thing. Then, the compass points to that. This feature lasts for 24 hours and can be used once per day.





## APPENDIX C: FURTHER ADVENTURES

If you want a taste of how our diseases can be used in a game setting, and specifically in a mystery type of encounter, then check out *Encounters on the Savage Seas* by Jeff C. Stevens et al. Volume II features “A Sailor Fears Disease”, written by Jason Bakos. The supplement is excellent, as it offers a satisfying variety of encounters that can be used to add flavour to your nautical campaigns.



If you want to explore other diseases, then consider checking out *The Malady Codex* and *The Malady Codex II: Diseases of the Mind*. In the first installment of the series, we present 11 diseases that you will undoubtedly recognise as magical variants of some of the most well-known diseases that ever plagued humanity, and in the second, we describe 10 magical diseases of the mind that are bound to enrich your stories.

