### Diseases

Not the most exciting topic for a role-playing game, but diseases are a part of life in Bostonia. Healing magic is common among the Bostonian Church, but spells to cure disease are not and though medical technology is fairly advanced, it is expensive. In addition, Bostonia has many creatures that carry disease, as well as festering swamps and ancient sites that curse trespassers with sickness. So, it is likely that at some point, your characters will end up treating or falling victim to some sort of malady.

Remember though, diseases should not be a major part of your game. You should not throw them about like traps and make every creature or ancient site the carrier of some hideous infection. Instead, they should be used sparingly, as plot devices or dangers that guard places where “man was not meant to be.”

#### Contracting Diseases

When a character comes into contact with an infectious creature or item, there is generally a percentage chance that they will be exposed to the disease. This does not mean they have contracted the ailment, merely that they have come in contact with the pathogen and are at risk. Generally, this percentage will be determined by the GM, or the author of a particular adventure.

**Example of Being Exposed to a Disease**: In his travels, Davross comes across an ancient tomb. On opening it, stale air and dust swirls and Davross breaths it. The dust is infected with tomb mold and the GM has ruled that there is a 20% chance of being exposed to the disease. Davross’ player groans as he rolls the percentile dice and comes up with a 15.

Once a character has been exposed to a disease, then he must make a saving throw to resist it. In most cases, this is a TOU test. Each disease has a virulence DL to resist. If he succeeds then he is fine until he is exposed again. However, if he fails this test, he has contracted the disease.

**Example of Contracting a Disease**: Tomb mold is a fairly virulent malady and once Davross is exposed, he has to roll a TOU save vs. DL 14 to resist contracting the disease. Davross’ TOU is only 11. He rolls a 2 and the GM rolls a 3. Davross fails his skill test (13 vs. a 17) and contracts the mold.

#### Effects of Disease

All diseases have an effect time. This indicates how often the disease affects the character’s statistics. An effect time of 1 day means that every day, the disease reduces one or more of the character’s primary statistics. In addition, some diseases have secondary effects (such as insanity or paralysis) that occur after so much time has passed, or the victim’s attributes have dropped to a certain level.

**Example of Primary and Secondary Effects**: Tomb mold is a pretty serious disease. Looking in the description, we see that tomb rot has an effect time of 1 day and an effect of –2 TOU. This means that each day, Davross will lose 2 points of TOU (pretty nasty). In addition, the secondary effect of tomb mold is that when a victim loses ½ his TOU, he falls unconscious. So in 3 days, Davross will have lost 6 TOU points, and will be rendered comatose by the disease.

Finally, almost all diseases have some sort of critical effect. This effect occurs when one of the affected statistics reaches 0 or less. Generally, the critical effect is some sort of permanent disfigurement or death. A saving throw is usually permitted to avoid these debilitating effects.

#### Running Its Course

All diseases have a duration, which is the amount of time they last before they have run their course. Once a disease has run its course, the victim loses no further stats and starts to recover. In addition, a character afflicted with a disease is permitted one chance to “shrug off” the effects of the disease. When a character contracts a disease, he rolls 1d6. This is the number of effects he takes before having a chance to shrug off the disease. After this number of effects has been taken, the character is allowed another TOU save. If successful, the disease has run its course and the character can start to recover. If the save is failed, the character will feel the full effects of the disease.

**Example of Running Its Course**: Tomb mold has a duration of 10 days. Davross would be at a –9 TOU after this time and would have to make a test just to survive. However, his 1d6 roll comes up a 2. This means that after 2 effects (in this case, 2 days and –4 TOU), Davross can make his TOU test again in an attempt to shrug off the mold. He again fails his TOU test and will have to survive the effects of the mold running its course.

#### Treating Diseases

Physicians can diagnose diseases using the rules in the healing section. The DL of a physician test to diagnose a disease is based on the commonality of the ailment and how obvious the symptoms are. Once a disease is diagnosed, it can be treated. Treatments for a disease are listed in the disease’s description. Some treatments totally eradicate the disease and allow the victim to start recovery. Others only reduce the effects.

**Example of Disease Treatment**: The treatment for tomb mold is an acidic alchemical inhalant that burns the mold from the lungs. The description of the treatment says that it is 100% effective in clearing the mold from the lungs and the character can start to recover as soon as he is treated. Fortunately, Davross knows a skilled alchemist who can make such a potion and he is saved.

#### Recovering from Disease

When a character is recovering from disease, each of the affected stats regains one point each three days. The exception to this is if the character was reduced to 0 or less in any of his stats. If so, that stat recovers at a rate of one point every 4 days.

#### Sample Diseases

Below are a few diseases to give a GM some ideas.

Black Rain Disease

Virulence DL: 18

Effect/Time: -1d6 STR, DEX, AGI/1 Week

Secondary: None

Duration: 4 Weeks

Black rain is a phenomenon that plagues Bostonia every 10 years or so. Severe storms move in from the southwest bringing with them high winds, dangerous lightning and a black tarry rain that soaks the land and carries disease. Anyone caught in the rain must make a survival test vs. DL 15 to find shelter and avoid contact with the infectious liquid. Failing this test means that there is a 100% chance of being exposed to the disease.

A character that actually contracts black rain suffers painful and itchy poxes that ooze and seep. The pain and discomfort make physical action difficult, causing a reduction in STR, DEX and AGI. There is no additional effect until one of the characteristics reaches zero. At that point, the victim must make a TOU roll vs. DL 18. Failure means death for the victim. Success means that the character loses 1d6 points of CHA permanently, gains some scars and gets a +3 to any future TOU saves against this disease.

There is no sure treatment for black rain. A physician who can make a skill test vs. DL 18 can mitigate the effects of the pox, halving the rate at which attribute points are lost.

Gnawing Fever

Virulence DL: 13

Effect/Time: -2 WIL/1 Day

Secondary: Self-Inflicted Wounds

Duration: 7 Days

Gnawing fever is a disease carried by plague rats and is transmitted by bites or scratches from these beasts. The wounds redden and swell and start to itch. Soon the redness and itching spreads along the blood vessels until the victim’s entire body is affected. The continuous itching reduces the victim’s WIL by 2 points each day.

Once he is reduced to ½ his WIL, the scratching and gnawing becomes so intense, that the victim will actually cause himself damage 1d4 points of damage. The victim can make a WIL save at DL 14 to resist the urge to tear at his skin. If he is reduced to zero WIL, he must make a SPI or TOU roll vs. DL 10 or go permanently insane.

Gnawing fever can be treated by various alchemical, herbal and medical means. Generally, a skill roll vs. DL 11 can help ease the itching and give the character a +2 to all WIL, SPI or TOU rolls to resist the itching effects.

Tomb Mold

Virulence DL: 14

Effect/Time: -2 TOU/1 Day

Secondary: Unconsciousness (1/2 TOU)

Duration: 10 Days

Tomb mold is a dangerous mold that infests dark and dank areas. It seems to grow best near ancient stone and the two can often be found together. Tomb mold is usually harmless to humans unless its spores are inhaled. When this happens, the spores attack the lungs of the victim, causing chest pains, shortness of breath and a lack of oxygen. In game terms, the character loses 2 points of TOU each day.

When ½ the victim’s TOU is lost, the victim’s breaths are fast and shallow and his body shuts down from the lack of oxygen. If a 0 TOU is reached, then the character is fighting for his life. A final TOU roll vs. DL 16 is required. If this succeeds, then the disease will run its course and the character will not suffer any permanent effects. If this roll fails, then the character loses 1d3 TOU permanently due to the damage caused by the mold. If the victim fails by 3 or more, he dies from the mold.

The most effective treatment for tomb mold is an acidic alchemical compound inhaled into the lungs. The treatment lasts about 3 days and will halt the progression of the mold the first day it is administered. After 3 days, the mold is killed and the victim can recover. Administering the treatment requires 3 doses of the medicine (costing about 50pn/dose) and a physician.