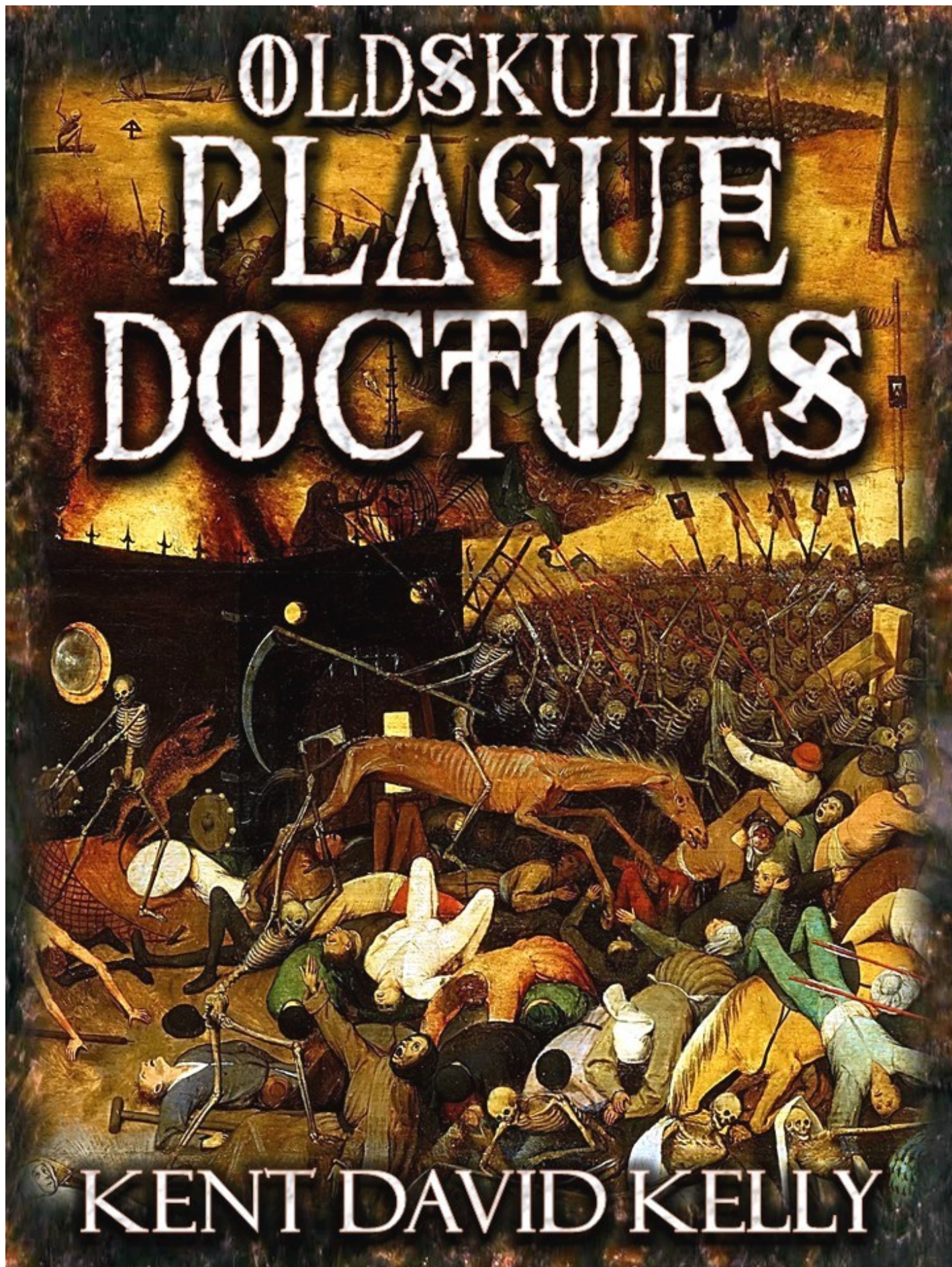
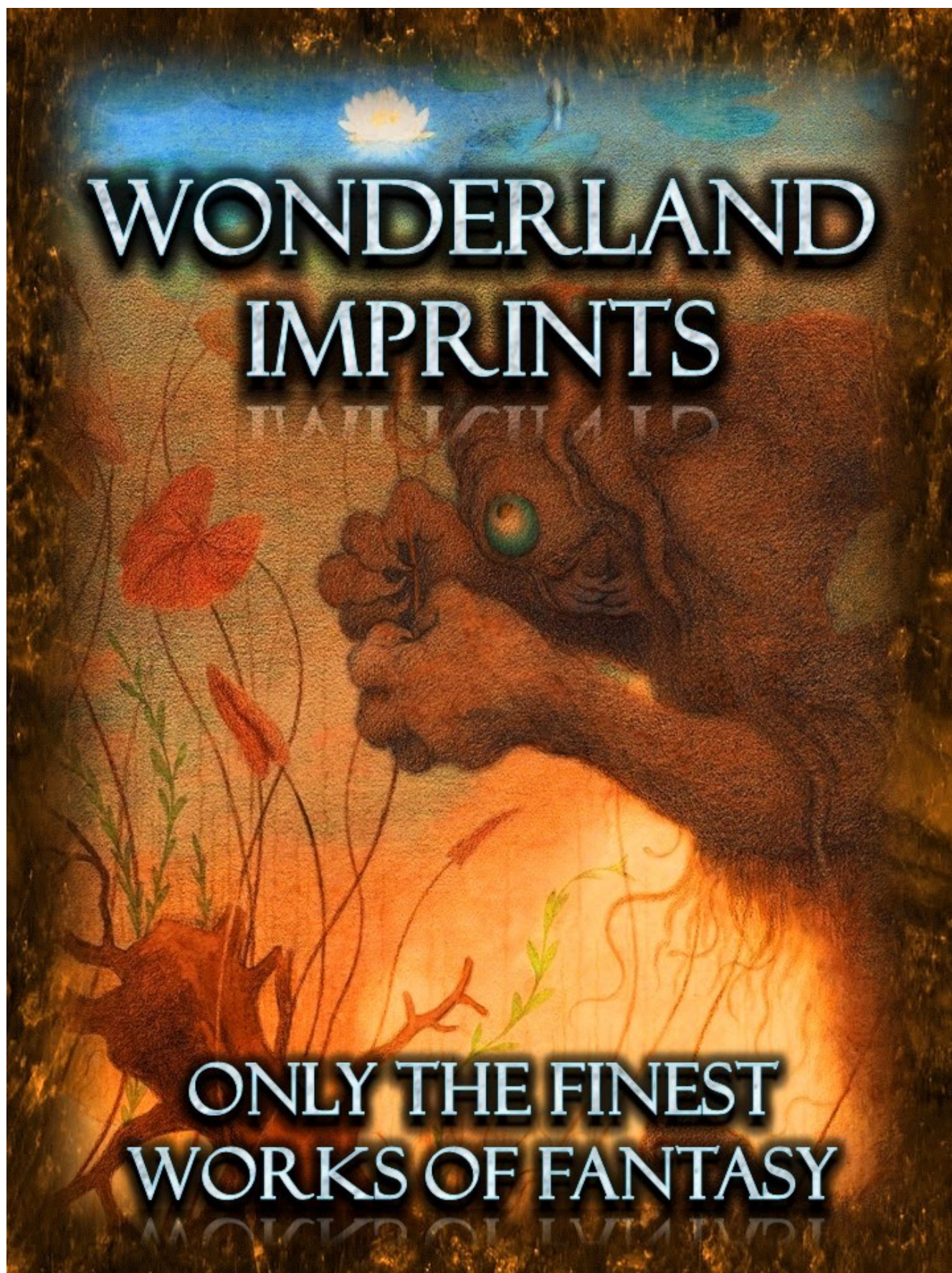


OLDSKULL PLAGUE DOCTORS

KENT DAVID KELLY





Oldskull Plague Doctors

**An Old School Supplement
For Fantasy Role-Playing Games**

Created By
Kent David Kelly

Interior Illustrations By

Jacob Binck, William Blake, Harry Clarke,
Doug Coldwell, The Brothers Dalziel,
Gustave Dore, Henry J. Ford, Paul Furst,
Arthur Hacker, Rick Hershey, Adolf
Hiremy Hirschl, Hans Holbein the
Younger, David Lewis Johnson, William
Holgarth, Theodor Kittelsen, William
McAusland, Bradley K. McDevett, Evelyn
de Morgan, Adriaen Pietersz, Patrick E.
Pullen, Arthur Rackham, Alfred Rethel,
Charles Robinson, Sidney Sime, Christian
von Mechel,
Et Alii

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OSR

Description

***They stand in defiance where others
cannot endure ...***

***Scions of faith, eradicators of
undeath,***

***Annihilators of the Legion of the Chaos
Plague.***

***Do you dare to assume the covenant
and mantle of the Mercy Killers,***

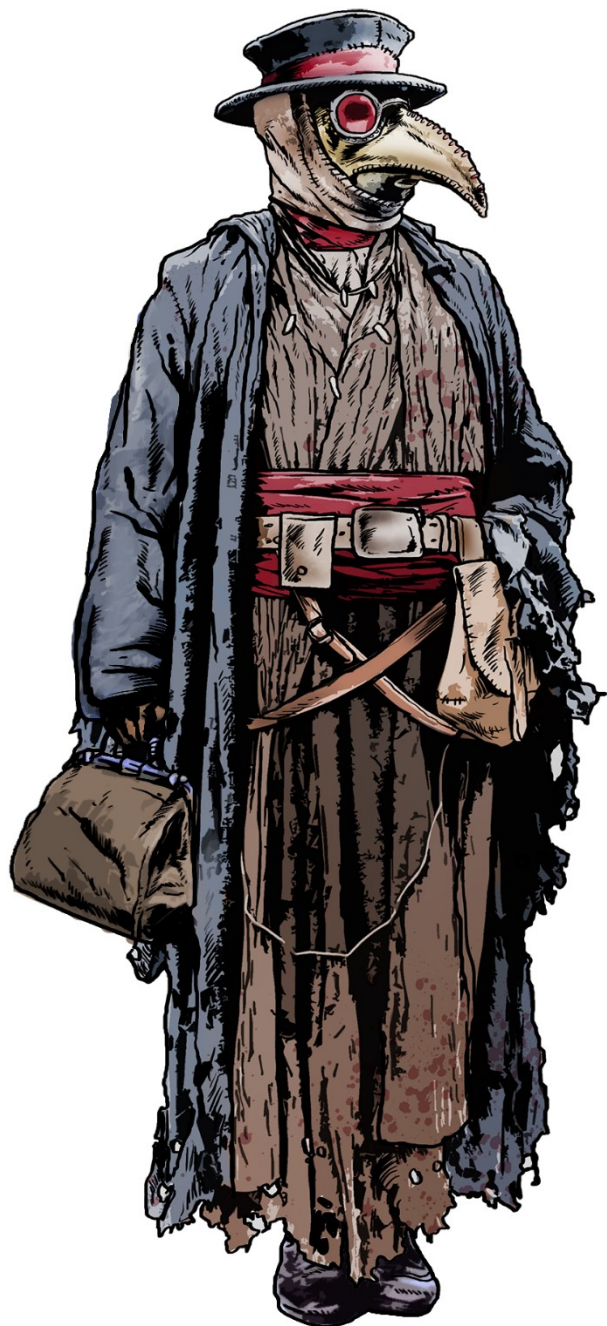
***The ultimate expert-difficulty
adventurer class within the World of
Oldskull?***

The PLAGUE DOCTOR is a unique, lore-heavy sub-class of the cleric. In addition to details concerning their place in the game world (pertaining to gods of healing, the Black Death, the undead, vermin and wererats, the coming Apocalypse, arcane plagues, and so forth), you will also find rules concerning the surprising combative nature of the class: annihilation of the undead, parrying canes, purging aspergillums, and infestation-destroying alchemical incendiaries. So if you'd like to play a hybrid crusader / healer / mad bomber who looks like a gothic raven of death, you've come to the right place!

Systems featured in this deluxe class supplement include: plague doctor deity selection, a plethora of level titles and roles, unique spell selections, hospitale stronghold founding, vermin eradication, incendiaries, and an arsenal of equipment, including masks, canes, mantles, and those ever-glorious alchemical explosive vials.

So what are you waiting for? Purge the unclean! Purge them all!

Another fine gaming supplement from Kent David Kelly and Wonderland Imprints, *Only the Finest Works of Fantasy*.



Indubitably pyrotechnic!

Introduction

The plague doctor is an exceedingly dark, intriguing, and atmospheric role-playing alternative to the cleric class. It is a

bemusing fact of old school play that virtually all groups need multiple clerics in order to survive, particularly considering the reluctance of even veteran players to pull the group out of a dungeon for an unexciting bout of healing, rest, and purification. The paradox of course is that with few exceptions, the number of clerics demanded by the players' preferred play style is almost never matched by the number of players actually willing to play them.

The ultimate solution, without making the game easier for lazy players? Create a cleric sub-class focused on healing in the most entertaining manner possible, supplementing the classic cleric without replacing it. Such a sub-class needs to be interesting, support-heavy, combat-ready, independent (but far stronger in a group), powerful, and coupled with excellent long-term campaign mechanisms which make the new class integral to team play over time.

Enter the plague doctor!

Through years of research and testing, I've made this specialist class as entertaining and challenging to play as I possibly could. The class has deliberately been designed along what I call the "paladin paradigm": It is very powerful on paper, yet is balanced by its alignment requirements, implied leadership role of responsibility, and several unsettling disadvantages. The plague doctor class is arguably too powerful at lower levels (as an incentive to invite experimental play), but they are fully on par with already-deadly classes (e.g., the established and classic magic-users, paladins, assassins, barbarians, etc.) in mid- and high-level play. By making the eccentric new healer one of the most important and fascinating characters in the group, you can easily change the dynamic of your campaign while making the players more interested in healing, support, pacing, teamwork, and tactical retreats.

The class has been designed to encourage these roles and modes of play. You might even find that your play group wants more than one plague doctor, which is a fine problem to have; although in that instance you then might want to increase the deadliness of the monsters in the game so that there is a counterbalance between the Player Characters' enhanced survivability and the ongoing challenges that they will face in dungeons deep.



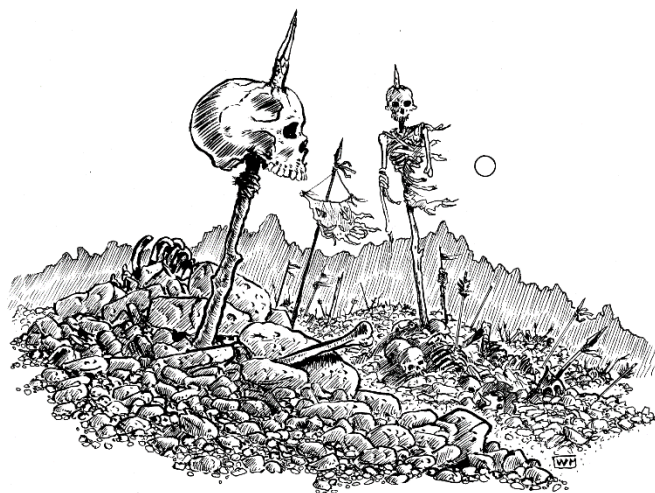
The Game Master and any prospective plague doctors' players should note that this class is only intended for advanced play. I don't just mean the Advanced-level FRPG; I also mean that the player(s) and GM will need to do some heavy lifting, planning, generation, integration, and quality record-keeping to get the most out of the class. Plague doctors demand expert play, and role-play, from a player due to their large number of interrelated skills and layered abilities. Many of these powers are unusable during combat but will make the group stronger during the rest, research, base-building, ambush, and exploration phases of the campaign. Learning to play this class, and to play it well, will present a significant challenge for your craftiest players. But the rewards in doing so will be

immense. High-level plague doctors can enhance the party's survivability to such a degree that dungeon expeditions can be longer, and more dangerous expeditions can be taken as well. Over time the plague doctor can even become the scion of a baronial headquarters, the hospitale, which can feature as a PC base of operations in the long-term campaign.

Most importantly, the class is unforgettable and really a lot of fun.

So come along with me, will you? Don your mask, take up your cane, swear to the covenant, pick up some alchemical incendiaries and prepare to purge the unclean from the undercity of Grimrook, the dungeons deep, and the vermin-infested wastelands. Your people are dying, their heroes are scattered, their loved ones have risen in undeath, the vermin are rising in a terrible plague-infested tide in the name of the Yellow King, and your allies desperately need you to heed the call ...

Are you worthy?



Overview of the Plague Doctor Class

Forced into being by godly and divine reprisal against the ravages of both the Chaos Plague and the ravenous King in Yellow, the plague doctor is an enigmatic “upstart” sub-class of the Cleric. Plague doctors are fearless, resolute, inquisitive, sagacious, merciful, and self-reliant. They make reluctant yet stalwart leaders in the crusade against abominable Evil.

To the uninitiated these mysterious icons are best known for their looming dark silhouettes, beaked raven masks, and the sickly-sweet scent of burning spice ... a bittersweet echo of the undeath, mercy killings, and horrors of madness which linger ever on as echoes of conquered Chaos in their contagion-haunted wake.



Plague doctors are undaunted, misunderstood, and mysterious creatures. They are methodical and defensive. They possess fewer magical spells than clerics

do, and are less proficient in melee combat unless they are using specialized tools. These disadvantages are more than made up for by their extensive arsenal of healing powers, survival skills, defensive capabilities, attack resistances, purging materials, and medicinal prowess. And — as any wanderer in these dark times who defies the powers of evil knows all too well — only the strong can ever survive within the ravaged World of Oldskull. Plague doctors, as a defiant order of the sacred covenant of purity and Good, survive and endure through their camaraderie and leadership, exceptional stamina (including enhanced hit points and poison resistance), as well as their surprising powers of parrying, smiting, flaming oil purges, undead annihilation, and vermin extermination.

As Plague doctors fight on and continue to stand in vigilance against evil and contagion, they gain in both earthly and sacred power. With higher experience levels they gain many unique and innate talents — each of significant potency — which collectively render them less reliant upon expendable spells. But the casualties are high and the order has been targeted by the powers of evil who threaten ultimate extermination. Even after a generation of enduring the waves of Chaos Plague and battling unearthly terrors, the ranks are few and no NPC plague doctor has yet attained an experience level higher than 18. Perhaps your own character shall be the first ...

Real-World History of the Plague Doctors

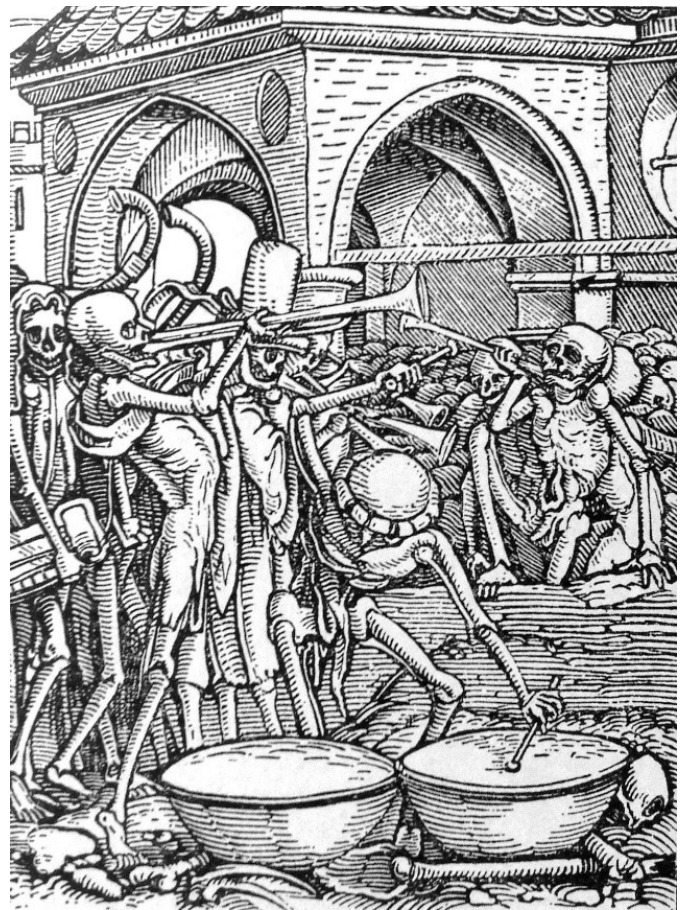
In the real world, plague doctors arose as a result of the bubonic plague and its horrific legacy of death, terror, and mortal misery.

Holy men and physicians alike fled from the fatal disease in waves, leaving common folk to endure the worst of the plague in many places. Although few of these upstart doctors possessed expert or even sufficient medical training, all of them had the courage and audacity to walk the streets and to count the dead, as well as the afflicted. Houses and entire streets were marked as hopeless pox-ridden areas, but this miserable warning work allowed the survivors to avoid the worst of the contagion in many places. Plague doctors advised the afflicted, comforted the dying, buried the dead, counted the bodies and moved on from place to place. Some saw them as figures of hope; others believed they presaged death and knew their comings and goings because of the crows who followed after.



The practice of plague doctorship began in earnest in the 1300s, although the traditional costume we know so well actually dates much later (to the 1620s). The doctors persisted for centuries wherever the plague arose. In the 1500s, the prophetic Nostradamus was counted among their number.

The most iconic symbol of the plague doctor is the beaked mask, which owes its curious design to the fact that pox-walking was terrible and stench-ridden work. The interior of the mask was typically filled with rose essence, cloves, camphor, mint, and other highly aromatic herbs and spices. Some believed that the spices actually eradicated the disease before it met the doctor's breath, while others were simply relieved to experience any respite from the omnipresent smells of blood, filth, death, and piles of bodies in decay.



By the late 1700s the doctors were figures more of legend and theatrical storytelling. In the World of Oldskull campaign, the most iconic and atmospheric elements of plague doctors from the 1300-1700 have been researched and carefully incorporated with the existing tenets of the world's finest

fantasy role-playing game, creating a unique adventuring character class with distinct and unique ability sets.



The Chaos Plague in the World of Oldskull

The first Plague Doctors — those men and women now christened as elders in the Order of the Covenant Unspoken — arose in Tyrrhenia soon after the perilous emergence of the Chaos Plague, when the infamous Yellow Death was manifested by an avatar of the King in Yellow in Anno Calvariae (Year of the Skull, AC) 1348.

The port city states of Grimrook (Elder Roma) and Serenisse were among the very first to witness the phenomenon of the doctors, as well as the emergence of their divinely-bestowed powers of purity and

healing. The Chaos Plague's vile incursion — brought forth by the abominable vermin and wererat minions of the Yellow King — was first defied by severely outnumbered archmagi, warlords, patriarchs, and master rogues who protected the cities' walls and dock-wards with their powerful magics and heroic martial prowess.

Regrettably the great armies of the Tyrrhenian states were fractured at that time by panic and by petty dissent, because the lords of the uninfected cities were ever more reluctant to come to the aid of Grimrook following the massive second outbreak disaster which occurred along the canals of Serenisse during the Sea-Kept Terror of 1349. When the plague threatened to turn west and inland once more, it was "every city state for itself." Hopeless factionalization turned Tyrrhenia into a wilderness scattered with islands of paranoid survivors, huddling enclosed behind their walls. Edgar Allan Poe's *The Masque of the Red Death* is a perfect encapsulation of this time.

As the plague grew worse and the undead began to walk, the panicked priests of the established Tyrrhenian deities prayed to their gods for ultimate salvation from the ever-encroaching cataclysm. The survivors faced swarms of vagabond plague victims, undead, vermin, wererats, abominations, and worse. Yet despite the willingness of the gods to offer angelic aid to the forces of the valourous, too many of the deities' entrusted followers reacted to the growing plague-menace with cowardice, treachery, and callous acts of grim self-preservation ... each saving only themselves, while leaving brothers and sisters to die.

The Tyrrhenian heroes too began to perish, and to despair. The city states closed their gates to one another as noble houses fell; their armies were held in check upon the walls. Undead and infected victims alike who thronged outside the city walls were mercilessly purged by waves of flaming oil,

fireballs, burning pitch, and quicklime cascades. Tyrrhenia burned, and one by one the cities began to fall, never to rise from ruin.



The armies of the undead — then partially under the control of a ghastly Lich Queen, and known in legion as the Triumph of Death — grew in their grisly might as many more plague victims perished and terribly rose again to serve as minions of the legion. As the faithless Tyrrhenian priests and many of their favored disciples fled, the common masses were left to their doom against the skeletal and zombie hordes.

Yet some few of those commoners left behind vowed to fight to the utter and inglorious end. These, the first plague doctors, were innocents who prayed for their own infusions of holy power so that they might defy the plague-born legion. The Tyrrhenian gods and goddesses of healing — particularly Asculapius, Deverra, Meditrina, and Minerva — forsook their craven patriarchs and bestowed new sacred might upon those bold few upstarts who dared to remain behind, to rally the survivors, to cure the ailing, and to burn the impure.

Led by these crazed rebel doctors and the few remaining Tyrrhenian heroes, as well as some few of the recalcitrant patriarchs, these plague-beset survivors pushed back

the minions of the Chaos Plague over more than a decade of grief, calamity, and terrible losses upon the battlefields against the Lich Queen.



The Lich Queen is now imprisoned in her tomb deep in the earth. A generation has now passed, and some (very) few of those first thousands of doctors have survived and risen to attain NPC experience levels between 10 and 18. While the elders are few, the ranks of the zealous recruits have grown considerably. Low-level doctors arise at a rate that even exceeds their calamitous losses in the dungeons and the ruins where the lingering swirls of Chaos Plague yet remain. Since the time of terror, neophyte plague doctors have proven to be fearless and powerful allies with their own unique beliefs, appearance, culture, talents, powers, and intriguing eccentricities.

Although the plague has been eradicated from the surface in many places, there are still swarms of undead found beneath the earth ... and too, there are packs of wererats who are led powerful Vermin Lords in ruins throughout the land. If any of the Player Characters would dare to take up the call, the players will find that the plague doctor class — despite its many nemeses — is ideally suited to triumph over pox and evil in the old school war campaign.



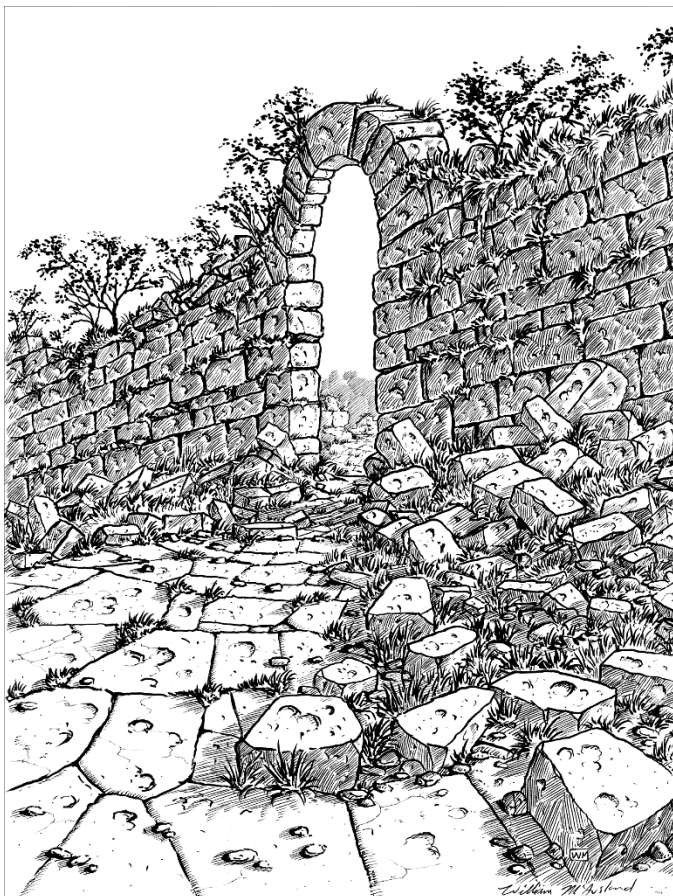
The Coming Apocalypse and End of Days

In the World of Oldskull campaign, there is a coming Apocalypse that is going to destroy the world if various heroes (PC and NPC) do not prevent it. I encourage you to add this mechanism to your own game world as well, because it creates a dark sense of urgency that might give players with higher-level characters a greater sense of purpose as the campaign continues into epic and multi-realm-level play. The Yellow King is believed to be the herald of Hell, the Abyssal Reach, Gehinnom, and the Outer Dark, to say nothing of the nightmarish under-realm eating away at the Dreamlands. As horrors of the Pegana Mythos and the Cthulhu Mythos return, and the titan horrors of Stygia and Hyboria awake from antediluvian slumber, terrible swarms of monsters and madness-inducing Chaos Beasts stalk the earth. When these things are allowed to plot, spawn, and summon, the dimensional rifts between Castle Oldskull, the realms of man, and the Beyond grow nightly larger. The doomsday clock is ticking and the adventurers are faced with the impossible task of seizing and turning back its ever-relentless hands.



You do not need to specify when the Apocalypse is going to occur; I personally use the Lovecraftian trope of “the delayed inevitable.” This means that if heroes stop fighting against the planar tide of evil, the Apocalypse will certainly happen within the heroes’ lifetimes; but with each small victory against the forces of the Apocalypse, the inevitable End of Days is pushed back by years or even decades at a time.

As you can imagine, the plague doctor (alongside its crusading compatriot, the paladin) is the class that most embodies humanity’s response to the oncoming Apocalypse and civilization’s defiance of the End.



The Apocalypse can manifest itself in many ways which directly inform campaign play. Villages can turn into dungeon sinkholes, as burrowers arise; undead epidemics can

become more common; legions of wererats and vermin can rise up from out of the netherworld; disturbing Chaos events can occur more frequently; and outlying unprotected towns can be turned into ruins (with enemy-filled dungeons just below the abandoned buildings and opening rifts, of course).

Further, the panicked exodus of citizens and nobles from various cities and strongholds can lead to them leaving desperate allies and hidden troves of treasure behind ... and therefore, displaced NPCs have a vested interest in hiring mercenary heroes to perform daring quests against the invaders and their domains!



In the World of Oldskull campaign, the Apocalypse is represented in part by the King in Yellow, the Lich Queen, the failing of the magical barriers dividing Castle Oldskull from the nether planar gates of evil, and the selfish machinations of the Demon Lords (Chaotic Evil), Daemon Princes (Neutral Evil) and the Arch-Devils (Lawful Evil). The fact that the evil lords and so selfish, disorganized, and splintered into factions has kept mankind alive. Most of these tumultuous events take place underground. Meanwhile, the lingering after-effects of the Chaos Plague are exemplified on the surface by the Realms of Entropy, which are minor planar incursions into the game world that periodically cause strange horrors to temporarily cross from the Outer Dark into the lands of men.

See the Wonderland Imprints supplement 333 Realms of Entropy for more on this campaign-expanding concept.



The surface-world events which I use to drive the Apocalypse meta-plot pertain to interwoven elements concerning the King in Yellow, the Pegana Mythos, the Cthulhu Mythos, the Masque of the Red Death, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, and the mythic Seven Seals. You can also use the calamitous Plagues of Egypt as further inspiration:

- **Waters turn into blood;** a sign that blood creatures (chiefly undead) are rising from the nether waters.
- **The teeming of frogs;** I use this to presage the coming of the frogmen and the Deep Ones.
- **The arisal of lice;** this can mean the coming of insect swarms, giant insects, and associated vermin.
- **The swarm of wild animals;** in general, this means that encounters with corrupted and/or giant animals (wolves, boars, wolverines, bears, etc.) become more common; and perhaps lycanthropy becomes resurgent as well.
- **The murrain of beasts;** animals become diseased (and either become zombified, or become corrupt “dire beasts” with twisted features born of Chaos).
- **The plague of boils;** sicknesses of all kinds become more common, the plague doctors must heed the class, and panic ensues.
- **The storm of hail and fire;** erratic magical / planar weather effects (fire storms, ice storms, poisonous gasses, etc.) become more common, particularly in the wilderness.
- **The rise of locusts;** winged beetles and plague insects become much more common, possibly associated with slimes, fungi, or molds.

- **The days of darkness;** darkness covers the land, increasing encounters with nocturnal creatures in formerly-safe places.
- **The death of the firstborn;** children die, causing panic, economic disruption, and the breaking of royal lineages (which in turn makes rebellions, usurpations, and various uprisings more likely).



In your own game you can introduce these effects periodically, with the populace knowing full well that these events presage the End. When evil is on the wane these events will decrease in frequency, and when evil is on the rise they will increase. The presence of plague doctors, monster-slaying heroes, and great scions of good (paladins, clerics, rangers, etc.) can turn

back the tide against these many evils ... at least, for a time.



Plague Doctor Races

So how does one embrace the covenant against the Chaos Plague?

Only humans commonly become plague doctors. And since (to date) only the human-worshipped gods have bestowed the powers of the plague doctor order upon the World of Oldskull, only half-human demi-humans may become plague doctors alongside humanity.

In game terms, this means that plague doctors must be either human or half-elven. If the GM permits, good-aligned half-drow, half-ogres, and half-orcs could theoretically become (low-level?) plague doctors as well.



The lore of the class is decisively human and very new to the world, as the formal and established order is less than a century old. As such, their lore has not yet permeated the ways of the demi-human races (dwarf, elf, gnome, halfling) and such characters cannot become plague doctors in the game. Other exotic races not mentioned here (e.g., centaurs, serpent folk, etc.) are prevented from becoming plague doctors as well.

If the waning and then resurgent Chaos Plague persists for hundreds of years, it is likely that the demi-human races would see an emergence of plague doctor neophytes in response to desperate prayer, just as humanity did; but demi-human enclaves are too orthodox, slow-changing, and traditional in their ways to embrace such upstarts for the time being.

Ability Score Requirements

The prime requisite abilities for the plague doctor are Constitution and Wisdom. A plague doctor character must have the following minimum ability scores to qualify

for the class: STR 6+, DEX 6+, CON 12+, INT 9+, WIS 12+, CHA 9+. Plague doctors can certainly benefit from high scores in the other four abilities (STR, DEX, INT, CHA), but these are not prime requisites for the class.

Experience Point Modifiers

If either Constitution or Wisdom is greater than 14, the character adds +5% to all experience points (XP) awarded by the Game Master. If both constitution and wisdom are greater than 14, the bonus is +10% instead of +5%. Plague doctors of lower natural aptitude (CON <14, WIS <14) gain no such bonus.

This potential bonus is quite important due to Player Characters due to the slowed rate of plague doctor leveling.



Experience Hierarchy

Due to the significant number of powers and abilities which are unique to the class, plague doctors gain levels more slowly than

clerics do. They advance on the same experience scale as paladins, requiring (for example) 2,751 experience points to attain experience level 2. This makes them advance in levels at a rate that is much slower than clerics, and even slower than magic-users. However, this is balanced by the plague doctor's considerable arrays of both special attacks and defenses that are attained over time.



Plague Doctor Level

Limits

Non-human plague doctors can attain a maximum experience level equivalent to the attainable cleric level of their race. Human plague doctors can reach any level theoretically, although there are currently no NPC doctors in excess of experience level 18 (and only one at that).

The majority of NPC plague doctors have short life spans due to their constant dabbling in infested and deadly environments.

Suggested Level Titles for Plague Doctors

Plague doctors go by many names, some of which are more kindly while others (more commonly) are infused with a sense of awe and fear. The following titles are most frequently associated with order members in the World of Oldskull campaign:

- **Experience Level 1:** Mercy Killer (most commonly), Initiate of the Covenant, Leech
- **Experience Level 2:** Prentice Empiric (most commonly), Adept of the Covenant, Corvus, Mercy Giver, Plague Warder
- **Experience Level 3:** Empiric (most commonly), Corvus Adept, Empiricus, Mercy Bringer, Plague Priest / Priestess
- **Experience Level 4:** Elder Empiric (most commonly), Grim Corvus, Pharmacopola

- **Experience Level 5:** Pox Ender (most commonly), Physicker, Physitian
- **Experience Level 6:** Scourge Healer (most commonly), Grand Physicker, Plague Healer
- **Experience Level 7:** Apothecary (most commonly), Apothecarius
- **Experience Level 8:** Grand Apothecary (most commonly), Magister Apothecarius
- **Experience Level 9:** Apothecarian Matriarch / Patriarch
- **Experience Level 10:** Plague Doctor (most commonly), Medicus
- **Experience Level 11:** Vaunted Plague Doctor
- **Experience Level 12:** Lord / Lady Plague Doctor
- **Experience Level 13:** Noble Plague Doctor
- **Experience Level 14:** Royal Plague Doctor
- **Experience Level 15:** King's Healer / Queen's Healer (most commonly), Ever-Esteemed Plague Doctor
- **Experience Level 16:** Archdoctor (most commonly), Archmedicus
- **Experience Level 17:** Sacred Archdoctor (most commonly), Sacred Archmedicus
- **Experience Level 18:** Archdoctor Patriarch / Matriarch
- **Experience Level 19+:** Divine Archdoctor (most commonly, in the future), Angel of Mercy, Divine Archmedicus



Plague Doctor

Alignment

Requirements

Plague doctors are sworn to, and empowered by, the act of healing and caring for the hopeless in deadly and desperate circumstances. By their very nature, they must be of good alignment. However, they can be either Chaotic Good, Lawful Good, or Neutral Good, as chosen by the player. Most NPCs (perhaps 75%) are Neutral Good.

In the triad (Basic / Expert) alignment system, all plague doctors are Lawful.

Unlike paladins, plague doctors understand that desperate times demand

alliances of convenience. As such, they can consort with thieves, half-ogres, half-orcs, and other sundry characters for a time. The presence of evil however will never be tolerated for long.

Deities of the Plague

Doctors



In history, plague doctors are associated with Europe and primarily with the late- and post-medieval periods. The countries that were hit the hardest by the Black Death tended to have the most plague doctors; this means Italy (foremost), England, France, Spain, Sicily, and Asia Minor. In the World of Oldskull campaign, these realms are known as Tyrrhenia, Britannia, Ghol / Aquitania, Iberia, Sicilia,

and Byzantia (and various petty kingdoms and city states in Asia Minor) respectively.

The Chaos Plague hit Tyrrhenia the hardest, by far. Therefore the order of plague doctors is based in the Free City of Grimrook, Serenisse, and other city states throughout the Empyrean land; farther chapters exist in other realms where the effects of the Chaos Plague were felt, but the effects were never as catastrophic as they were in Tyrrhenia proper.

In that realm, the primary mythologies of immortal power are the Empyrean (Roman) Mythos, the Etrurian (Etruscan) Mythos, and the Achaean (Greek) Mythos to a limited extent (particularly in the south). The worshipped deities associated with healing, health, and protection are primarily Neutral Good although their follows can be Chaotic Good, Lawful Good, or Neutral Good as they deem fit in day-to-day struggles and philosophy.

The Tyrrhenian deities most associated with plague doctors are therefore as follows:

- **Aius Locutius (Neutral Good):** The Empyrean Lesser God of Warnings and Vigilance.
- **Apollo Soranus (Chaotic Good):** The Greater God of Sun and Prophecy. Called Aplu by the Etruscans. This belief was brought in from Greece.
- **Asculapius (Neutral Good):** The Empyrean Lesser God of Medicine and Chirurgeons (Non-Magical Healing). This belief was brought in from Greece, where Asculapius was known similarly as Asclepius.
- **Bona Dea (Neutral Good):** The Empyrean Lesser Goddess of Women and Healing.
- **Clementia (Lawful Good):** The Empyrean Lesser Goddess of Mercy and Repentance.

- **Deverra (Neutral Good):** The Empyrean Lesser Goddess of Protection from Evil.
- **Febris (Neutral Good):** The Empyrean Lesser Goddess of Protection from Sickness.
- **Februus (Neutral Good):** The Etruscan, and Empyrean-worshipped, Lesser God of Purification and Underworld Explorers.
- **Felicitas (Chaotic Good):** The Empyrean Lesser Goddess of Luck and Accomplishments.
- **Meditrina (Neutral Good):** The Empyrean Lesser Goddess of Healers and Healing.
- **Minerva (Lawful Good):** The Empyrean Greater Goddess of Wisdom and Defense. Called Menrva by the Etruscans. This belief was brought in from Greece, where Minerva was originally known as Athena.
- *(Please note that there are several other Tyrrhnenian gods of healing, but they are generally of Neutral alignment.)*

In your own campaign, the plague doctors can serve in any land which was afflicted in the past by a major plague, undead invasion, and/or demonic incursion. The symbols and deities of the covenant might vary depending on which mythology (real-world, or your own) that you want to associate with the plague doctor order.

The beaked mask iconography can easily be replaced with masks that are animal-themed (African mythos), forest-themed (Celtic mythos), Pharaonic-themed (Egyptian mythos), and so forth. The powers and abilities of the class remain largely the same.

Here are some ideas for other gods and goddesses who will empower plague doctors in the various mythoi, according to GM preference. You will of course need to do a bit of research to discover the details pertaining to each deity, although the plague doctor class serving the deities will remain quite the same as outlined in this supplement.

- **African Mythos:** Agwu, Erinle, Loco, Osanyin, Xu
- **Aztec Mythos:** Ixtilton, Patecatl
- **Babylonian Mythos:** Nintinugga
- **Celtic Mythos:** Airmed, Alaunus, Atepomarus, Borvo, Brigid, Dian Cecht, Glanis, Grannus, Ianuaria, Iovantucarus, Lentus, Sirona
- **Chinese Mythos:** Pi Tong, Pian Que, Sun Simiao, Wong Tai Sin, Wu Ben
- **Egyptian Mythos:** Isis, Sekhmet, Serket, Ta-Bitjet
- **Greek Mythos:** Aceso, Aegle, Artemis, Apollo, Asclepius, Epione, Hygieia, Iaso, Paean, Panacea, Telesphorus
- **Hittite Mythos:** Kamrusepa, Shaushka
- **Indian (Hindu) Mythos:** Dhanvantari, Dhatri, Vaidyanatha (aspect of Shiva)
- **Japanese Mythos:** Ebisu
- **Mayan Mythos:** Itzamna, Ixchel, Maximon
- **Native American Mythos:** Angak, Kumugwe, Nuxalk
- **Norse Mythos:** Eir
- **Persian Mythos:** Haoma
- **Phoenician Mythos:** Eshmun
- **Slavic Mythos:** Zywie
- **Sumerian Mythos:** Ninazu, Ningishzida, Ninurta

- **Thracian Mythos:** Derzelas
- (etc.)

Hit Dice and Hit Points

The plague doctor has eight-sided dice (D8) per experience level for hit point determination. They are more stout and far more enduring than clerics, however, gaining 1D8 hit points per experience level up through level 9, and then gaining +3 additional hit points per level thereafter.

Grim Endurance: Due to frequently being around plague victims and surviving the process of care, all plague doctors are instilled with natural and divine endurance. This means that they have high Constitution-based hit point bonuses per hit die beginning at experience level 1. The bonuses are as follows: CON 12 = no bonus, CON 13 = +1 hp/die, CON 14 or 15 = +2 hp/die, CON 16 or 17 = +3 hp/die, and CON 18 or 19 = +4 hp/die. These bonuses apply up through experience level 9 and are the highest survivability bonuses available for a dedicated spell caster in the game.

Embrace of the Covenant: Due to their natural and divinely imbued endurance, level 1 plague doctors begin play with a full 8 hit points (plus CON bonus if any), without a 1D8 die roll being required. The Constitution bonus from Grim Endurance (if any) is added to the 8 hp; for example, a CON 16 level 1 plague doctor would begin play with 11 hit points.

Instillation of Purity: When rolling for new hit points with each further experience level (levels 2 through 9), the D8 roll is advantaged; the new die is rolled twice and the higher value is retained. For example, a plague doctor reaching level 2 would have new hit points diced for twice. If the rolls were 7 and 4, the 4 would be ignored and

the character would gain +7 hit points (plus CON bonus).

Over time these bonuses serve to give plague doctors a respectable amount of endurance despite their armor limitations, allowing them to be front-line fighters whenever necessary.



Limiting the Power of the Plague Doctor Class

If the Game Master balks at the sheer number of special abilities available to the plague doctor class (despite their inherent and unavoidable weaknesses), the author recommends two possible restrictions which can make the class less disruptive to your game:

[A] Enforced Rarity: The GM can dictate that a PC party can only have one plague doctor at a time.

[B] Limited Hit Points: The GM can reduce the class's D8 hit points to D6.

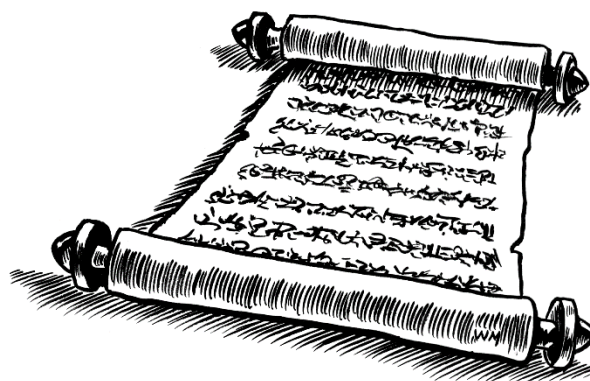


throws as clerics as well. However, plague doctors have significant bonuses when saving against some attack forms, particularly vs. poison and disease. These bonuses will be elaborated upon later in this supplement.

Plague Doctor Spell

Casting Ability

Plague doctors cast a unique set of spells as detailed hereafter. These thematic spells are derived from the clerical, druidic, illusory and magic-user lists. They pray for and receive their spells from deities, as clerics do. They do not possess spell books. They can cast from, but not create, clerical spell scrolls as well.



Plague doctors are therefore able to cast a unique repertoire of healing and utility spells, including a few cantrip-like “level zero” effects which are called orisons. These spells and orisons are received through meditation and prayer to the one god (patron deity) who has empowered the individual plague doctor with sacred

Keep in mind however that the class is intentionally built to be relatively powerful at low levels of experience, and it is intended to change your game by changing the expectations and interests of your players.

I recommend that you try the class in play before weakening it, as it is no more powerful than an Unearthed weapon specialist, barbarian, or cavalier. But if you need to rein them in, those two limitations (either, or both) should certainly do the trick.

Plague Doctor Combat

Ability and Survivability

In combat, plague doctors fight with the same level of prowess as clerics do. Similarly, they have the same base saving

magics in the name of purity and eradication.

Plague doctors however have few offensive (violent) spells available in their repertoire. And unlike clerics, plague doctors do not gain bonus spells from a high Wisdom score. However, plague doctors' other talents and passive magical abilities more than make up for this potential deficit in spell casting power.

Importantly, level 1 plague doctors can only cast orisons; they cannot cast higher-power spells. At experience level 2, a plague doctor can cast a single 1st-level spell, just as a level 1 cleric can. Plague doctor casting ability goes up at this rate (being one level behind a cleric of the same experience level) until experience level 16, when they have the casting capacity of level 15 clerics. Plague doctors never gain the ability to cast 7th-, 8th-, or 9th-level spells of any kind. However, at high experience levels they can cast spells up to 6th level regardless of their Wisdom score.

Spells Available by Experience Level

Specifically, plague doctors can cast the following numbers of spells:

- **Experience Level 1:** 3 orisons (3-L0), but no 1st-level spells (0-L1).
- **Experience Level 2:** 1 1st-level spell (1-L1).
- Alternately, a plague doctor can meditate to receive 3 orisons in place of the one 1st-level spell. This ability exists at all experience levels; any number of orisons can be learned so long as 1st-level spells are replaced.
- The most useful for general adventuring purposes are probably

Mask and Fire Finger, in addition to a new Orison called Salve.

- **Experience Level 3:** 2-L2.
- **Experience Level 4:** 2-L1, 1-L2.
- **Experience Level 5:** 3-L1, 2-L2.
- **Experience Level 6:** 3-L1, 3-L2, 1-L3.
- **Experience Level 7:** 3-L1, 3-L2, 2-L3.
- **Experience Level 8:** 3-L1, 3-L2, 2-L3, 1-L4.
- **Experience Level 9:** 3-L1, 3-L2, 3-L3, 4-L2.
- **Experience Level 10:** 4-L1, 4-L2, 3-L3, 2-L4, 1-L5.
- **Experience Level 11:** 4-L1, 4-L2, 3-L3, 3-L4, 2-L5.
- **Experience Level 12:** 5-L1, 4-L2, 4-L3, 3-L4, 2-L1, 1-L6.
- **Experience Level 13:** 6-L1, 5-L2, 5-L3, 3-L4, 2-L5, 2-L6.
- **Experience Level 14:** 6-L1, 6-L2, 6-L3, 4-L4, 2-L5, 2-L6.
- **Experience Level 15:** 6-L1, 6-L2, 6-L3, 5-L4, 3-L5, 2-L6.
- **Experience Level 16+:** Maximum spell casting ability. 7-L1, 7-L2, 7-L3, 5-L4, 4-L5, 2-L6.

Cabala of the Covenant: The Plague Doctor Spell List

The following lists summarize the (only!) spells that a plague doctor can pray for.

Please note also that plague doctors cannot cast reversible spells such as Darkness or Cause Light Wounds.

Level 0 (Orisons): Clean (MU cantrip), Exterminate (MU cantrip), Fire Finger (MU cantrip), Freshen (MU cantrip), Mask (Illusionist cantrip), Spice (MU cantrip). In addition to:

- **Concordant Salvation** (new level zero spell unique to plague doctors): Instantaneous, can be cast in combat. This spell can be cast on any fallen ally in sight within 60'. It will cause a bleeding and dying person (i.e., someone currently unconscious and between -1 and -9 hit points) to stop bleeding. Such a person will no longer automatically lose 1 hit point per round, but can still be attacked by nearby enemies. A person cannot benefit from this orison more than once per game month. It cannot be precast on someone as an aura of protection; it can only be cast when someone is already dying.
- **Misereye** (new level zero spell unique to plague doctors): Instantaneous, range touch, can be cast in combat. The plague doctor gives an NPC under his service (a mercenary, man-at-arms, henchman, hireling, etc.) a +1 bonus to his next upcoming morale check. If the percentile morale system is being used instead of the 2D6 system, the bonus is +10%. As this is a weak magic, NPCs of experience level 3 or higher cannot benefit from it. It only affects human or demi-human NPCs of level 0, 1, or 2. The magic fades once the next morale check is made, succeed or fail.
- **Salve** (new level zero spell unique to plague doctors): Instantaneous,

range touch, cannot be cast in combat. The doctor can heal himself or a preferred ally of 1 hit point of damage. Multiple salves can be cast on the same target, but each requires a separate round of spell casting.

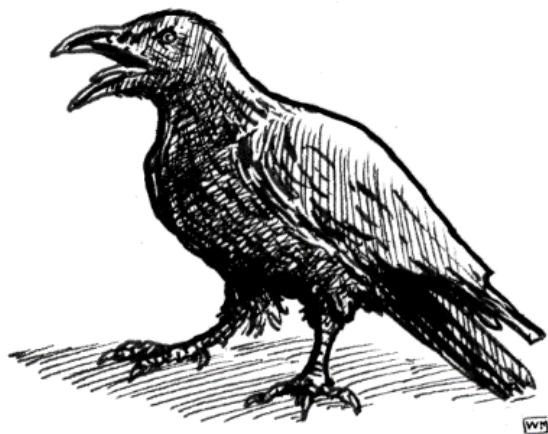
(Notations such as (C1) mean “equivalent to the level 1 clerical spell of the same name.”)

Level 1 Spells: Bless (C1), Ceremony (C1), Change Self (I1), Create Water (C1), Cure Light Wounds (C1), Detect Evil (C1), Detect Magic (M1), Detect Poison (D1), Endure Cold (C1), Endure Heat (C1), Friends (M1), Invisibility to Undead (C1), Light (C1), Protection from Evil (C1), Purify Food and Drink (C1), Purify Water (D1), Remove Fear (C1), Sanctuary (C1).



Level 2 Spells: Aid (C2), Chant (C2), Create Food (C3; 1 spell level lower for a Plague Doctor, but cannot be used to create water; see next spell), Create Water (D2), Cure Blindness (C3; 1 spell level lower for a Plague Doctor), Cure Disease (C3; 1 spell level lower for a Plague Doctor), Death's Door (C3; 1 spell level lower for a Plague Doctor), Detect Life (C2), Preserve (M2), Pyrotechnics (M2), Remove Paralysis (C3; 1 spell level lower for a Plague Doctor), Slow Poison (C2), Speak With Dead (C3; 1 spell level lower for a Plague Doctor).

Level 3 Spells: Continual Light (C3), Dispel Magic (C3), Fear (I3), Feign Death (C3), Glyph of Warding (C3), Gust of Wind (M3), Magical Vestment (C3), Monster Summoning I (M3) (summon crows or ravens only), Negative Plane Protection (C3), Neutralize Poison (D3), Prayer (C3), Protection from Fire (D3), Remove Curse (C3), Water Breathing (D3).



Level 4 Spells: Abjure (C4), Cloak of Bravery (C4), Cure Serious Wounds (C4), Dispel Exhaustion (I4), Exorcise (C4), Fire Charm (M4), Fire Trap (M4), Monster Summoning II (M4) (summon large or huge crows or ravens only), Protection from Evil 10' Radius (C4), Repel Insects (D4), Secure

Shelter (M4), Spell Immunity (C4), Tiny Hut (M3; one spell level higher for a Plague Doctor), Wall of Fire (M4).

Level 5 Spells: Atonement (C5), Avoidance (M5), Cure Critical Wounds (C5), Dispel Evil (C5), Faithful Raven (M5, similar to Faithful Hound), Magic Font (C5), Minor Globe of Invulnerability (M4; one spell level higher for a Plague Doctor), Monster Summoning III (M5) (summon giant crows or ravens only).



Level 6 Spells: Anti-Magic Shell (M6), Forbiddance (C6), Globe of Invulnerability (M6), Guards and Wards (M6), Heal (C6), Move Earth (M6), Reincarnation (M6), Repulsion (M6), True Sight (I6).

Level 7 Spells: (No level 7 or higher spell ability.)

Arsenal of the Mask:

Plague Doctor Special

Abilities

While plague doctors have somewhat limited spell casting capability compared to other dedicated casters, they also possess the plague covenant's remarkable array of survival skills and special abilities. In fact, they are the one character class with the most special abilities available, monks and bards notwithstanding.

These powers include:

I

Usable Magic Items

Plague doctors can use all of the magical items that clerics can, including most potions and protective scrolls and permanent items, with the following specific exceptions: they cannot use plate armor, shields, swords, or non-bludgeoning magical weapons.

II

Brew Medicine

This ability is first learned at experience level 1. Once a month, the plague doctor can spend 1D6 hours concocting medicine from easily-gathered healing herbs. For play purposes it can be assumed that the doctor gathers these materials over time (while adventuring) for future use, and no expenditures or purchases are required. A bit of divine intervention is required and so the ritual of brewing cannot be manifested more than once per moon.

Medicine is typically in the form of cauldron-crafted herb-orbs, pellets, salves, or tinctures.



The medicine will allow a wounded person to heal damage. However, only the first dose consumed by a person in a 24-hour period will have a beneficial effect. In other words no character can heal in this manner more than once a day.

The potency of the medicine is equivalent to the doctor's experience level plus 1. A level

1 doctor's medicine heals 2 hit points, a level 2 dose heals 3 hit points, and so forth. The medicine cannot be beneficially taken in combat but can be consumed immediately thereafter. It can of course be supplemented by natural healing, potions of healing, or curative spells.

Plague doctor medicine can be sold if necessary, although it should (in the realm of good role-playing) always be given freely to the needy. A suggested value is 10 gold pieces per point of healing, per dose. A kindly GM will give a plague doctor +50 XP (at levels 1 to 5) or +100 XP (at levels 6+) for each needy NPC provided with medicine throughout his or her career.

III

Cure Natural Disease

This semi-magical ability is learned at experience level 1. It is a percentage skill. The base skill rating at level 1 is equal to either the doctor's INTx4 or WISx3, whichever is higher.

The skill has a chance to cure a non-magical disease. It is used when the doctor can stay at a diseased person's bedside for 48 uninterrupted hours (allowing for sleep, research, etc. but not movement away from the patient). A percentage roll is made at the end of the 48 hours, and if successful the effect is equivalent to a Cure Disease spell being cast on the patient. If the roll fails, the doctor can opt to remain for another 48 hours and try again ... provided, of course, that the patient has not yet perished.

If the plague doctor successfully performs this skill, he gains an aura that will give him an additional bonus of +5% XP for 30 days. Considering the high totals of XP

required to ascend in level, this is a worthy goal to aspire to on a monthly basis!

The doctor might choose to watch over a healing PC, or an NPC in need. This bonus is cumulative with other gains (such as for high WIS and CON), but does not stack; for example curing two victims would still only confer a +5% XP bonus.

After experience level 1, this skill increases by +5% per level to a maximum of 90%.

IV

Ease Pain

This is a non-magical percentage skill that is learned at experience level 1. The base skill rating at level 1 is equal to either INTx2 or WISx3, whichever is higher.

After any battle, if the plague doctor can tend to others and there is sufficient time to rest (for at least 1 uninterrupted turn), the plague doctor and any wounded person traveling with him will receive a personal Ease Pain roll from the doctor's care. A separate percentile dice roll is made for the doctor himself (self-care), and for each other individual. Each successful roll heals 1 hit point of damage for that specific person.

This effect can occur after every battle, but only a maximum of 1 hit point of healing can occur. Having more than one plague doctor in the group does not increase this 1 hit point healing limit, but if there are two doctors in the party then both could provide care, meaning two skill roll attempts for each person.

This effect is separate from the Brew Medicine ability, and both abilities can be used in conjunction for additional healing.

After experience level 1, this skill increases by $+(1D6+1)\%$ per level to a maximum of 90%.

V

The Holy Mask

Well-to-do plague doctors do not normally carry hand-held holy symbols. Instead, they wear beaked-and-goggled corvus masks, which protect them (somewhat) from disease while also serving as an iconic demonstration of the power of the healing gods in times of plague and contagion.

For a plague doctor, the worn corvus mask acts as a holy symbol in itself. This means that a plague doctor who is wearing a mask can cast spells which require a holy symbol as a component, while keeping both of their hands free to wield weapons and/or equipment. However, this also means that a plague doctor cannot attempt to annihilate undead while unmasked unless another normal holy symbol is carried.

VI

Identify Natural Disease

Beginning at experience level 2, a plague doctor has a percentage chance to identify a non-magical disease. This is a non-magical skill. The base skill rating at level 2 is equal to either $INT \times 3$ or $WIS \times 3$, whichever is higher.

The attempt to identify disease requires observation of the afflicted from fairly close range (up to 10') for $1D6+1$ uninterrupted rounds. If the roll is successful, the character will learn the disease's effects, potential cures, limitations, etc. as listed in the GM's game materials. If the roll fails,

another attempt cannot be made for that victim, although another victim could potentially be observed. The doctor can also self-diagnose if needed.

New diseases can be classified, although non-magical cures for new diseases will not present themselves without requisite research and experimentation.

After experience level 2, this skill increases by $+(1D4+1)\%$ per level to a maximum of 90%.

VII

Conjure Holy Water

This ability is first learned at experience level 3. Once a month, for a limited material sacrifice of wealth to the deity (typically one platinum piece, which vanishes in golden light), the plague doctor can conjure a non-magical vial of holy water into being. The doctor even could, for example, spend 1 round of combat — fighting ghouls, perhaps — to invoke a prayer, and would be holding the vial at the end of that same round, ready for use in the next round.

This quasi-magical (divine) ability improves over time. The doctor can conjure 1 vial at level 3-5, 2 vials simultaneously at level 6-8, 3 vials at level 9-11, 4 vials at level 12-14, and 5 vials at level 15+. The water could be used, given away, or even sold if the need is desperate. The water can be used normally as a curative or a weapon, and will not disappear until consumed (although the vial can be shattered normally).

VIII

Cure Magical Disease

This magical, non-spell ability is learned at experience level 4. It is a percentage skill. The base skill rating at level 4 is equal to either the doctor's INTx2 or WISx3, whichever is higher.

The skill has a chance to cure a magical disease of any power, up to and including lycanthropy, vampirism, and mummy rot. Curses and other magical afflictions that are not diseases cannot be treated in this manner, however.

The skill is otherwise identical to the Cure Natural Disease skill. This skill can give a +5% XP aura as well, just as Cure Natural Disease can; but the two effects do not stack!

After experience level 4, this skill increases by +(1D4+1)% per level to a maximum of 90%.

IX

Empathic Healing

Beginning at experience level 5, plague doctors can magically heal themselves whenever they cast a beneficial spell upon one or more allies (but not themselves directly). Examples of beneficial spells include Bless, Cure Light Wounds, Endure Cold, Protection from Evil, and so forth as adjudicated by the Game Master.

The important trigger here is that the plague doctor is benefitting someone else, and as a result is slightly benefitted in return. For example a plague doctor casting Cure Light Wounds on himself would not trigger the Empathic Healing effect; however, casting Cure Light Wounds

on an ally or ailing NPC *would* trigger the effect.

Empathic Healing heals the plague doctor, at a rate depending on his experience level. The healing rates are: 1D2 at experience levels 5 to 8, 1D3 at levels 9 to 12, 1D4 at levels 13 to 16, and 1D4+1 at level 17+.

A plague doctor can experience the benefits of Empathic Healing up to 6 times a day, if that number of beneficial spells can be cast. The player is responsible for tracking this rate if the doctor is a Player Character. The healing effect is instantaneous upon each successful spell cast, and can even occur during combat.

X

Brew Quicklime Flask

Beginning at experience level 6, the plague doctor can brew his own quicklime flask incendiary weapons (for an ingredients expenditure of 1 gold piece each). The batch will require 12 uninterrupted hours to create, regardless of batch size, as the doctor's skill to make larger batches improves over time.

The batch size is based on experience level: 1D3 flasks at level 6, 2D3 flasks at level 7, and so forth. The batches can be made at any time, although in practice the availability of materials will probably only allow the doctor to perform this task 1D4 times per game month (at GM discretion). If the plague doctor happens to have access to a village, a well-stocked ruin, or a humanoid stronghold, the chances are very good that he could brew up a small batch (1D3) of quicklime flasks in the field.

Refer to the combat ability section for details on the effectiveness of quicklime flasks.

XI

Distill Antidote

Beginning at experience level 7, the plague doctor gains this partially magical ability. Distilling an antidote requires rare materials, available in a large city, which cost 1D6x100 gold pieces per attempt. The distillation attempt requires 12 uninterrupted hours of work. The chance of success is equal to the character's (WIS x 2) + (experience level x 3). For example, a level 9 plague doctor of WIS 15 would have a 57% chance of being successful.

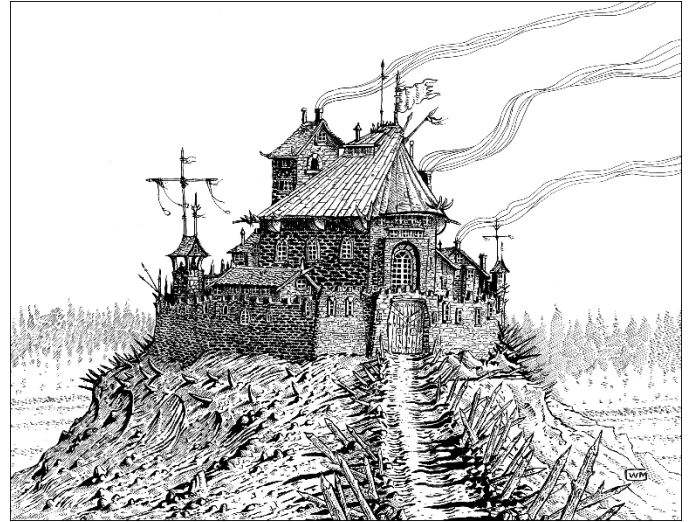
Distillation can be attempted once per month. If the roll fails, the materials are wasted. If the roll succeeds, it results in the development of a magical Potion of Neutralizing Poison, which acts as the spell of the same name for any imbibing character. The value of such a potion on the open market is 900 gold pieces.

XII

Patriarchal / Matriarchal Serenity

Beginning at experience level 9, the plague doctor permanently exudes an aura of Serenity. The effect is that all associated NPC men-at-arms, followers, henchmen, hirelings, etc. gain a morale bonus from following the plague doctor. The bonus is permanently +1 (on the 2D6 morale system) or +10% (on the percentile morale system).

Further, all followers of the plague doctor — including Player Characters — gain a +3 saving throw vs. magical fear. Even if the fear is of a type where a saving throw is not allowed, the plague doctor's presence will allow a normal (non +3) saving throw.



XIII

The Hospitale Stronghold

When a plague doctor attains 10th level, he can at that time (or any time thereafter) choose to establish a Hospitale Stronghold. The community will contribute 1D10+10% of the total cost of such a stronghold's construction, provided the total cost is less than 250,000 gold pieces. The minimum expenditure for an effective Hospitale is 75,000 gold pieces. Other Player Characters can contribute if they would like to share a base of operations with the founding plague doctor.

The Hospitale is similar to a clerical patriarch's temple, in that it attracts followers (identical to clerical followers) and it provides a place of worship for the patron deity. However the Hospitale is more fortified, and is dedicated to magical and non-magical healing. The Hospitale will stand as a symbolic potential sanctuary against plague, vermin, invasion, and even legions of the undead. The entire building is permanently surrounded by a Protection from Evil aura.



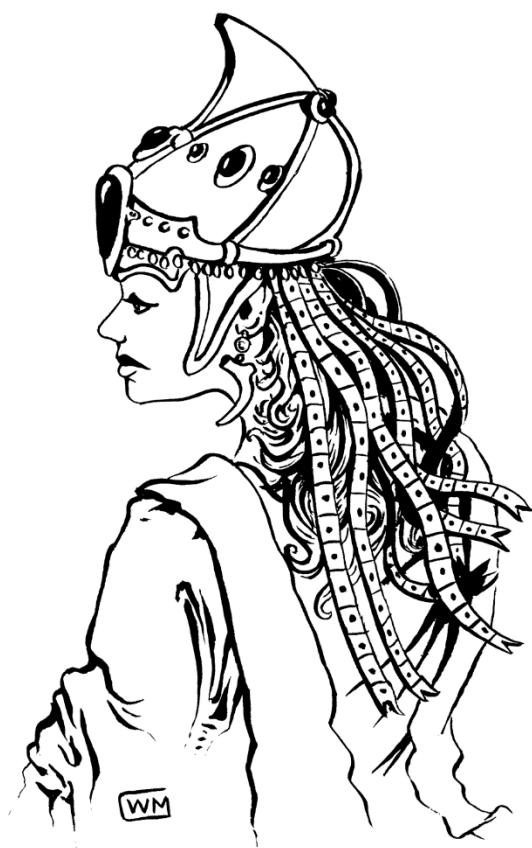
Some (typically neutral or evil) cities do not allow the construction of Hospitales within the city walls, because lepers and other fatally diseased people will be drawn to the temple from just about anywhere. But virtually all communities welcome the presence of such a place within their lands, and sometimes right outside the city walls. Alternately, the plague doctor could build a Hospitale in the wilderness to found a barony, although there would be no nearby community with the wealth to contribute funds to the building process.

The founder of a Hospitale who remains vigilant and true can stand assured of protection from the local lord and his troops. A PC founder can wander and adventure while the Hospitale is protected by NPC followers, as well as troops from the city. In times of extremis the plague doctor's deity will send a divine guardian — perhaps a winged serpent, lammasu, or shedu — to defend the Hospitale from violent evils.

The first clerical followers drawn to a Hospitale will all be in good health, as level zero normal human combatants (potentially, men-at-arms) with maximum hit points (7 hp each). These followers will create farms and homesteads to care for themselves outside of the Hospitale walls, and will further contribute a tithe of 15

silver pieces per individual per month to the plague doctor's cause.

Every year thereafter that the plague doctor holds and maintains the Hospitale, 2D6 new level zero followers will come to serve, and 1D4 of the previous level zero followers will become level 1 plague doctors of the deity, willing to serve as henchmen if needed; otherwise they will protect the Hospitale as devoted NPC guardians and healers.



XIV

Call of the Covenant

Beginning at experience level 12 and every level thereafter, the plague doctor will attract a new covenant zealot into service. This character will be designed by the GM

as a level 1D4 plague doctor henchman, who will serve fanatically without significant pay. (Empowering magic items and gifts of course will always be happily accepted.) Covenant zealots never check morale and are immune to magical fear. They will be attracted to service whether or not the plague doctor has constructed a Hospitale. As fanatics they are considered above and beyond a plague doctor's Charisma threshold; in other words, the plague doctor can have a maximum number of normal henchmen already and the covenant zealots will still be attracted to service.

These NPCs can defend the plague doctor's home base, or can adventure alongside the doctor. The level disparity will ensure that most of these characters will not be very long-lived, unless they are duly protected by the doctor and other strong allies. However, they will gain experience as henchmen and if the plague doctor PC should ever die, any one of the surviving covenant zealots can serve as the new Player Character for that player. In this way it is likely that a player will have a level 2, 3, 4, or even more experienced NPC ready to become a replacement PC on a moment's notice.

Covenant zealots can receive a fallen PC's treasures and gear if the PC's body has been recovered.

XV

Enlightenment

Upon attaining experience level 16, the plague doctor gains a permanent +1 bonus to Wisdom. If the doctor's Wisdom was already 18, then the doctor instead gains an automatic bonus one-time XP award equal to 15% of the total XP needed to reach experience level 17.



Arsenal of the Pyre: Plague Doctor Special Attacks

Plague doctors enjoy special bonuses against various types of pestilent enemies.

I

Annihilation of the Undead

This divine power is learned at experience level 1.

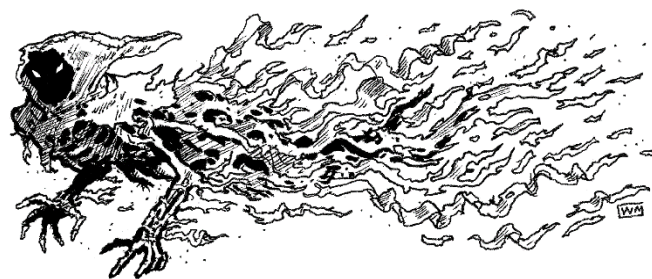
In a manner similar to clerics, plague doctors can affect the undead. However,

while clerics can either turn or destroy undead, plague doctors — as sworn enemies of the undead, who are in turn the harbingers of the dreaded Chaos Plague — can *annihilate* the undead. This ability affects fewer undead (than a comparable cleric might affect), but it instantly destroys the undead and provides the plague doctor with experience points and a passive self-effect as well. Unlike clerics, plague doctors cannot ever affect “special” unholy creatures, a category which includes demons, daemons, and devils.

The chances of a plague doctor annihilating undead are equal to the effects of a cleric of equal level attempting to turn undead. If the annihilation attempt is successful, then 1D2 undead creatures of the appropriate type are annihilated (and the plague doctor gains full XP for destroying them). A clerical T result means automatic annihilation of 1D3 undead, a clerical D result annihilates 1D4 undead, and a clerical D* result annihilates 1D4+1 undead.

After annihilating any number of undead, a plague doctor gains a 24-hour Aura of Divine Favor. This aura gives the plague doctor a +2 bonus to all saving throws, and all companions within a 30' radius gain a +1 bonus to all saving throws during the same time period. This aura could be continually renewed if the plague doctor were to continue annihilation ...

As an aside, it should be noted that undead which have been turned (by a cleric) can be annihilated if the plague doctor makes the attempt, but in that instance a failed annihilation attempt will result in the undead gaining self-control once more (and gaining immunity to being further turned for at least 24 hours).



II

Vermin Eradication

This non-magical skill is learned at experience level 3.

Plague Doctors of level 3+ gain the ability to inflict advantage damage when using any melee or incendiary weapons against vermin. Flaming oil is a favorite, particularly in tomb and dungeon settings.

Vermin are classified as creatures of fewer than 2 hit dice that are associated with pestilence, infestation, or disease. Here is a partial list for the GM to consider: Cave Locust, Ear Weevil, Gas Spore, Giant Centipede, Giant Cockroach, Giant Fly (HD<2), Giant Leech (HD<2), Giant Locust, Giant Rat, Giant Tick (HD<2), Insect Swarm (HD<2), Larva, Mold (including golden mold, but excluding umber/frost mold), Rat, and Rot Grub. (Slimes and fungi in general however are not included in this category.)

Also, Wererats — the nemeses of plague doctors — are regarded as vermin too, despite their higher hit dice.

III

Wield Aspergillum of the Purge

When the plague doctor attains a new weaponry proficiency slot at experience level 5, he has the option of learning to wield a flaming oil-throwing weapon which is called the aspergillum of the purge. Refer to the equipment section of this supplement for details.



IV

Alchemical Immolation:

Plague Doctor Incendiary

Weapons

Plague doctors are of good alignment, but they frequently find themselves in dire situations where they must quickly and violently deal with swarming plague rats, transforming wererats, parasitic infestations, vermin outbreaks, discoveries of infected bodies filled with vermin, rot grub swarms, summoned demons, or the rise of plague-ridden undead. Or worse!

The order has learned to protect itself from such horrors by using controlled short-range thermal weapons, which are frequently quicker and more effective than magic, improvisation, or conventional weapons would be. Proper plague doctors are supposed to use such weapons only against vermin and the undead, but strange life-or-death circumstances tend to occur in dungeons and in ruins, and there is no alignment penalty for using these weapons against other aggressive creatures of any kind ... unless the GM decides otherwise.

Normal flaming oil is available to plague doctors, as it is available to all adventurers. However, it is not the only option for the Order.

Greek Fire is typically *not* available to plague doctors, as it is made only by arcane alchemists who jealousy guard their greatest secrets. Also, that treads quite close to the use of firearms in swords and sorcery, which most old school GMs tend to see as taboo. Therefore I do not treat with that topic here.



Nevertheless, here are a few other options for the GM to consider while allowing plague doctors to equip themselves for truly interesting dungeon adventures:



IV-A

Caustic Quicklime Flask

“Whenever the barbarians through fear of war hid themselves in their caves, and, collecting all their plunder there kept

quiet, they could not be taken by any force ...

“Now, Sertorius, thinking on all ... ordered his soldiers to take up some of the light ashy [quicklime] earth, and brought it right opposite to the hill to make a heap of it there. ... The hills were all covered with dust, the soldiers ... drove it against the dwellings of the barbarians, whose doors were open to the wind.

The barbarians, having only the single opening to breathe through, upon which the wind fell, had their vision quickly obscured, and they were speedily overpowered by a suffocating difficulty of breathing, by reason of respiring a thick atmosphere filled with [lime] dust ...”

— Plutarch’s *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans*, c. AD 100, as translated from the Greek, 1892

As first crudely used by the Tyrrhenian general Quintus Sertorius in the year 80 BC, caustic quicklime flasks are an interesting tactical option available to the plague doctor class and valorous allies. They can be used by any character who can use flaming oil. In the World of Oldskull campaign, they are affectionately known as “bug bombs.”

The plague doctor’s version is an hourglass-like flask, filled half with quicklime and an accelerant, and half with water. When thrown as a grenade-like weapon, the water causes the quicklime to burst in volatile fashion when the flask impacts and shatters. This creates a billowing cloud which burns skin (living or undead), kills vermin, and causes temporary blindness. It can also be useful to interrupt enemy spell casting ... particularly when several enemy casters

are in a tight area (such as 10'-wide dungeon corridor).

The damage inflicted by a caustic quicklime flask, when thrown by most characters, is 1D3 to all in a 10' radius of the impact area. (In rough game terms that's roughly 4 10'x10' squares where it's likely that creatures are affected.) The grenade rules are used to determine range and where a hurled flask lands. When the flask is thrown by a plague doctor (as opposed to a non-doctor), the damage is 1D4+1 instead of 1D3. Further, damage to creatures that are less than 2' long (giant centipedes, insect swarms, large spiders, or whatnot)

In addition to this damage, all creatures — friend or foe — within the 10' radius must save vs. poison or be blinded for 1D6 rounds. Therefore although this weapon is less damaging than a standard oil flask, it is ideal when used against spell casters, missile users, and other attackers who need line of sight.

Creatures of 2 hit dice or 2 experience levels or less (e.g., HD 1+1, level 0, level 1, HD 2, etc.) must make the save vs. poison at -2. Those of HD/level 3 or 4 save at -1, those of HD/level 5 or 6 make a normal saving throw, and those of HD/level 7+ make the save at +2.

Note that the effect is not fire, per se; it is a gaseous dust. Therefore the weapon is dangerous to use outside or in any windy environment. Effects are deliberately minor against non-vermin targets; GM can ramp things up if desired if you don't mind all of the PCs running around with these peculiar contraptions.

The cloud will persist in still air (such as in a corridor), hanging in place for 1D6+1 rounds. Creatures will move out of the cloud if at all possible. In particular, unintelligent creatures are likely to flee behind the cloud (away from the plague doctor) and not return unless attacked again. Creatures who are forced to remain

in the cloud will suffer damage every round, and those who leave the cloud and then return will suffer damage again. However only a single saving throw vs. blindness is required per hour, regardless of exposure.

Outside, the cloud will last for only 1D2 rounds in ideal conditions, or 1 round in poor conditions (windy, raining, etc.).

The cost to purchase caustic quicklime flasks is 3 gold pieces each. They are normally only available to alchemists, magi, and plague doctors. Plague doctor PCs will have this item available (in generally unlimited quantities, within reason) from NPCs of their order beginning at experience level 1. At level 6, they learn to make them for themselves.

If the players come to rely too heavily on these devices, do keep in mind that they are likely to fall into the clutches of evil humanoids and other creatures! Both sides can play the same game, as it were. In this instance it is important to know that a plague doctor's corvus mask provides some resistance to such attacks (as described later).



IV-B

Flask of Oil

Flasks of oil are as described in the general rules. However, note that if a flask is thrown by a plague doctor, it deals advantage damage; this means that the damage for each affected target is rolled twice and the higher result is used. And as a warning, this is not a controllable effect! This indeed means that any allies in the area of combustion will suffer this level of damage as well, just as intended enemy targets do.

Be careful where you throw those things!

IV-C

Fire Pot

A fire pot is a well-balanced, double-sized hurling flask of hot-burning oil which always inflicts an additional +1D4 damage when thrown by anyone, or +2D4 when thrown by a plague doctor. This bonus is added to normal oil flask damage. Range and area of effect remain unchanged.

Fire pots do not contain normal oil. They are expensive (100 gold pieces each) and experimental; only alchemists can make them. Generally speaking a plague doctor will only have the opportunity to purchase 2 fire pots per game month, at most. Alchemists are quite unlikely to sell fire pots to anyone other than a plague doctor in times of plague.

These stoneware things are bulky (5 lbs.), difficult to carry in a backpack, and quite fragile.

IV-D

Aspergillum of the Purge

Aspergillums of the purge are difficult to use. They can only be wielded effectively by a plague doctor of experience level 5 or higher, and they are only sold (250 gold pieces) to such characters by the Order. If a non-doctor character, or a low level doctor, somehow gets his hands on one the weapon only has a 50% chance per round of being used effectively. Wielding one requires holding the aspergillum in one hand, and likely a burning torch held in the other.

This is very similar to a holy water sprinkler, but it has been modified to hold two oil flasks, each with a twine-and-beeswax stopper in the flask neck. The flasks are held together within the iron head of the aspergillum. When the plague doctor chooses to unleash a strike, the stoppers' seals are broken and the aspergillum is swung with a "whiplash" motion overhead. (Caution: There must be at least 10' of ceiling space to use this weapon effectively!) The aspergillum's fluted head then disperses oil over a wide, and *relatively* predictable, arc ... thereby allowing for controlled oil use, instead of relying upon the randomness of a grenade throw.

A non-proficient user might well douse himself (or allies in ranks behind!) with oil while trying to master the whiplash swing, but a skilled plague doctor will be able to create a 10' wide by 30' long pool of oil beginning approximately 21' away from wielder. Therefore, in game terms if the plague doctor is in 10'x10' square #1, then squares #2 and #3 would be untouched, but squares #4, #5, and #6 would be doused in oil (as per a normal oil flask). It is then a simple matter to throw a torch into any part of the resulting oil slick,

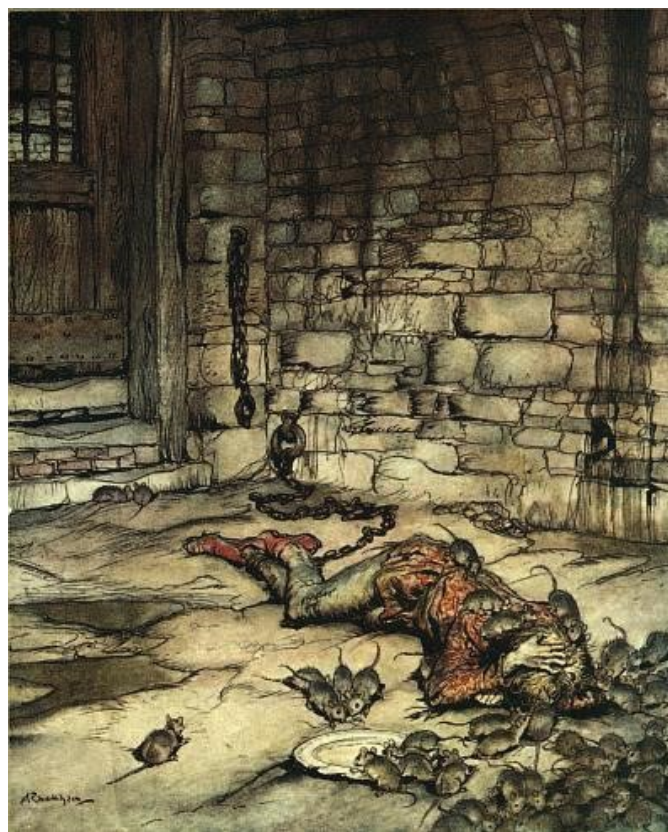
which the plague doctor or an ally can do in the same round as the oil aspersion.

By fire be purged!

The aspergillum requires the use of a weapon proficiency slot. NPC plague doctors will not teach PC plague doctors how to master this finicky weapon until they attain experience level 5. Then, the PC's player must decide to learn the new weapon instead of any other. It is technically a ranged weapon; it could be used to smack a target in melee (damage 1D4) and douse it with oil, but the resulting mess would also splash the plague doctor with oil that would be too dangerous to set alight.

Loading an aspergillum of the purge is a protracted process. It takes 10 minutes to customize the two flasks and to create their newly-twined and united seals, and then 1 round to load the flasks. Customized flasks are usually not carried outside of the aspergillum because they could easily break in a fall, or even from a violent blow. Therefore a loaded aspergillum is typically a "one and done" weapon, used once per combat at most ... and with a lengthy reload required after any encounter has taken place.

And yes, these weapons are very fragile. Try not to fall in any pits, or get hit by crushing blows. You might even want a zealous ally to carry it for you if they're willing. And definitely don't get covered in rats, or breathed on by a red dragon!



V

Eradication Mastery

This divine non-spell power is learned at experience level 7.

Plague doctors who possess Eradication Mastery do not roll for weapon or incendiary damage against vermin-class opponents. Rather, these creatures always suffer maximum damage from the plague doctor's non-spell attacks. A melee weapon or missile weapon would inflict maximum damage, as would flaming oil or caustic quicklime.

Of course, the aspergillum is included in this consideration. The resulting "eradication purge" can be a terrible thing to behold.



the parrying cane as their primary weapon of choice in many instances, regardless of the availability of incendiaries.

Arsenal of the Soul: Plague Doctor Special Defenses

Plague doctors have a significant number of special defenses, especially as they attain higher levels of experience.

I

Cane Parrying and Smites of Reprisal

Cane parrying is a non-magical skill learned at experience level 1. Plague doctors automatically begin the game in proficiency with the three types of parrying weapons (parrying canes, sticks, and staves) without expending a weapon proficiency slot.

Most plague doctors tend to use parrying small canes, which are defensive bludgeoning weapons (described in the equipment section of this volume). These are narrow steel-cored weapons encased in wood. Most NPC plague doctors will select



If an enemy in melee misses an attack on a plague doctor by only 1 point in the dice roll — for example, if the attacker needed a 13 to hit the doctor and a 12 was rolled by the GM — the doctor can make a parrying move if he is wielding a parrying cane, parrying stick, or parrying staff. Your Game Master will inform you whenever these near misses occur.

In parrying the blow, the plague doctor takes no damage (it was a miss, after all)

and also gains the opportunity to make a smite of reprisal. This is a free attack, even though it is not the doctor's turn to act. The free attack has a normal chance to hit (based on the plague doctor's level, the opponent's Armor Class, etc.) and if it hits it inflicts 1D4 damage, plus any Strength modifier.

The plague doctor can only make 1 reprisal strike (hit or miss) per round at experience levels 1 to 4; 2 at levels 5 to 8 (with damage increased to 1D4+1); 3 at levels 9 to 12 (with damage increased to 1D4+2); and 4 at levels 13+ (with damage increased to 1D4+3). Due to the quirks of the dice however, getting more than one reprisal strike in a melee round will be a rare occurrence.

II

Doctoral Courage in the Face of Death

This is a divine effect which begins at experience level 2.

Plague doctors gain a +1 bonus against fear spells and dragon fear at levels 2 and 3. At levels 4 and 5, the bonus is +2. At levels 6 and 7, the bonus is +3. At levels 8 and 9, the bonus is +4. At level 10, the bonus remains at +4 but the doctor also gains the ability to make a saving throw (at no bonus) against fear effects which normally allow none.

III

Disease Resistance and Disease Immunity

Disease resistance is a semi-magical power that is learned at experience level 3.

Through being exposed to plagues, endurance training, and divine instillations of essential power, plague doctors gain innate disease resistance. This gives them a +1 to any applicable saving throws vs. natural diseases, magical diseases, or parasitic infections at experience level 3.

This saving throw bonus increases to +2 at level 4, +3 at level 5, +4 at level 6, and +4 at level 7. This bonus does not apply to magical diseases however.

- At experience level 8, the plague doctor becomes completely immune to non-magical diseases.
- At level 10, the doctor becomes immune to lycanthropy.



- At level 12, the doctor becomes immune to mummy rot.
- At level 14, the doctor becomes immune to vampirism (but not to energy drain).
- And finally at level 16, the plague doctor becomes immune to magical diseases of any kind.

IV

Poison Resistance

This divine non-spell protection is bestowed at experience level 4.

At level 4, a plague doctor gains a +1 bonus to all saving throws vs. poison. This applies to natural or unnatural poisons, monstrous or otherwise.

The saving throw bonus is +1 for levels 4 to 6, +2 for levels 7 to 9, and +3 for levels 10 to 12. At level 13, this power is replaced by the Mithraditic Blood ability (below).

V

Granted the Sacred Mantle

As noted in the equipment section, plague doctors have access to unusual suits of light armor, called mantles. Mantles can be worn by anyone, but in donning a mantle a character is very likely to be mistaken for a plague doctor.

At experience level 5, plague doctors gain a form of divine protection, but only while wearing a mantle. At levels 5 to 9, the doctor gains a +1 bonus to Armor Class. This is an invisible protective aura (divine) which cannot be dispelled.

At levels 10 to 14, the Armor Class bonus is +2, but only if a silk, samite, or spider-silk mantle is worn.

At levels 15 and up, the Armor Class bonus is +3, but only if a samite or spider-silk mantle is worn.

This AC bonus applies to all attacks, whether they be made against the doctor's flank, back, while prone, etc.



VI

Divine Stamina

Divine Stamina is a sacred non-spell power that is learned at experience level 7.

When attaining level 7, a plague doctor gains a permanent +1 Constitution bonus, up to 18. It is possible that the doctor's already-high hit points will need to be recalculated as a result.

At level 14, another +1 CON bonus is gained, up to a maximum of 19.

No additional Constitution bonuses are gained after level 14.

Please note however that this impressive power can be countered by an affliction which plague doctors suffer upon resurrection, as described in the Special Vulnerabilities section hereafter.

VII

Mithraditic Blood

Beginning at experience level 13, plague doctors can never be killed outright by poison. Instead, a failed saving throw vs. a poison will cause them damage (typically 1D8 points per hit die of the creature, or 4D6 damage for a non-monstrous poison), and the damage can never reduce their current hit points below 1.

Of course this will make them highly open and vulnerable to other attacks, which can certainly kill them; and a poisonous bite's impaling fang damage might still kill them, while the poison itself does not.

Legacy of the King in Yellow: Plague Doctor Special Vulnerabilities

Plague doctors have a few unique vulnerabilities and weaknesses as well.

These weaknesses balance the class and should not be revoked under any circumstances.

I

Exclusivity Requirement

Plague doctors are never multi-classed. The demands of the order ensure that all human and half-human plague doctors will always be single-classed.

II

Visions of Torment

Atmospherically, plague doctors frequently see the dead (or soon to die) in their dreams, meditations, and times of solitude. The dead will not attack or directly communicate, but the doctors will see terrible things indeed as they age and endure the martial demands of the sacred covenant.

As a side effect of the visions and the lack of peace of mind, plague doctors can never be psionic.

Also, they suffer a permanent -2 penalty to all saving throws vs. mind attack spells and powers (as if they had a low Wisdom score, which they do not).



III

The Curse of the Lich Queen

When the Lich Queen was imprisoned, she swore a terrible arcane curse against the order of the plague doctors. The effect of this curse is truly disconcerting: *All plague doctors have a chance of spell failure whenever they cast a spell, regardless of their Wisdom or experience level.*

Whenever the plague doctor attempts to cast a spell, the Game Master (for an NPC) or the player (for a PC) must roll percentile dice. If the spell fails, it is wasted (as if cast), the plague doctor can attempt no further actions that round, and the spell fizzles with no effect.

The odds of spell failure are as follows:

- **Wisdom 11 or lower (due to any affliction or permanent disability):** 8% chance (01-08)
- **Wisdom 12:** 7% chance (01-07).
- **Wisdom 13:** 6% chance (01-06).
- **Wisdom 14:** 5% chance (01-05).
- **Wisdom 15:** 4% chance (01-04).
- **Wisdom 16:** 3% chance (01-03).
- **Wisdom 17:** 2% chance (01-02).
- **Wisdom 18:** 1% chance (01).

This weakness is intended to make plague doctors more reliant on their skills, incendiaries, and allies in times of mortal crisis, as spell casting in combat can be a truly life-or-death affair.

IV

The Burden of the King in

Yellow

The King in Yellow, and other terrible powers of evil, actively plot against the order of plague doctors. The result is an irrevocable curse-like burden of ill omen, which causes an experience penalty over time. This effect is compounded by the fact that plague doctors already suffer under a relatively low pace of level advancement.

At experience level 1, the Burden is not yet felt.

At level 2, the Burden is -1%. This means that the Plague Doctor suffers a -1% XP penalty to all XP earned. Please note that the Burden penalty can be somewhat countered by exceptional ability scores; for example a level 2 doctor (-1% XP due to Burden) with ability scores giving a +5% XP bonus would have a net effect of +4% to all XP gained.

At level 3, the Burden is -2%. At level 4 it is -3%, and so forth.

Characters who attain high experience levels will do so at a slow pace, and their accomplishments will be worthy indeed.

The Burden cannot be removed by any spell, up to and including a Wish. Theoretically, it could be removed if the avatar of the King in Yellow was somehow destroyed and forced to relinquish its unholy domain over the Material Plane.



V

The Price of Goodness in the Realm of King Death

Any plague doctor who willingly abandons good alignment will forever lose all of his powers. Even full atonement would simply turn the former plague doctor into a cleric of equivalent level. This terrible curse does not apply to any situations where a character is *compelled* to abandon alignment, such as through wearing a cursed helm or undergoing demonic possession.

The Game Master should warn the plague doctor's player when alignment is wavering due to questionable acts; but three such

warnings given in any single game session will almost certainly result in eradication of the character's pure alignment.

Let poor role-players and selfish bastards all beware!

VI

Vile Affliction of the Risen

Perhaps most importantly, as a game balance mechanism plague doctors are quite penalized when they die and are then resurrected (or brought back with a Wish spell). They are scions of divine protection and retribution, and their deity loses a slight amount of power whenever a mortal plague doctor perishes. This affliction reverberates in the doctor's risen soul as well.

A resurrected or risen plague doctor suffers a permanent -1 loss to a random ability score (D6, 1 = STR, 2 = DEX, 3 = CON, 4 = INT, 5 = WIS, 6 = CHA). If an ability score is lowered to the point where the character would not qualify any longer for the plague doctor class, the character then remains a plague doctor but suffers an additional penalty of -1 hit point per level. For example a level 8 plague doctor upon resurrection would permanently lose 8 hit points from his maximum amount in addition to the ability score penalty.

Obviously, repeated deaths and resurrections would tend to make a plague doctor completely unviable over time.

In short, you're a mortal exemplar of survival against the odds, and the survival of your companions. They are relying on you. Don't die!

The Arsenal of the

Flesh: Special

Equipment for Plague

Doctors

I

Allowable Shields

Plague doctors also cannot use shields of any kind. However, they have unique parrying and riposte abilities while using their parrying canes.

II

Allowable Weapons

Like clerics, plague doctors are forbidden from wielding martial and bloodletting weapons. In practice, this means that they cannot use slashing or impaling weapons, but they can use bludgeoning and crushing weapons (including ranged ones, like slings and staff slings).

There is nothing in the world physically preventing a plague doctor from picking up a sword and hacking away with it, but the player should be aware that in any game session where the plague doctor carried and attacked with a non-bludgeoning weapon, all experience point gains for that session are nullified (reduced to zero).

While parrying canes are iconic for the class, plague doctors in more martial conditions can certainly choose to use more common bludgeons such as clubs, maces, flails, throwing hammers, and so forth.

III

Other Unique Equipment

See the descriptions prior for details on incendiary weapons. In addition, the following pieces of equipment are available to plague doctors:



III-A

Mantles

These are special forms of sigil-painted, non-magical armor that look like robes. They include gloves, hoods, and foot

coverings, and sometimes even hats. But they do not include a mask.

Mantles have no significant effect for non-plague doctors, or for doctors of low level. For doctors of level 5+, they confer an additional divine Armor Class bonus as described in the Granted the Sacred Mantle section.

The following types of mantles are available:

- **Canvas Pox Mantle:** Equivalent to light padded armor (AC 9), but very light (equivalent to normal clothing, zero encumbrance). Cost 5 gold pieces.
- **Leather Pox Mantle:** Equivalent to leather armor (AC 8), and very light (50 coins or 5 lbs.). Cost 10 gold pieces.
- **Heavy Leather Plague Mantle:** Roughly equivalent to studded leather armor (AC 7), and quite light (100 coins or 10 lbs.). Cost 25 gold pieces.
- **Silk Plague Mantle:** Supplemented with glued canvas and padding, and surprisingly difficult to puncture (AC 6). Quite light (200 coins or 20 lbs.). Cost 100 gold pieces due to materials and craftsmanship.
- **Spider-Silk Plague Mantle:** A rare garment, similar to a silk mantle but made from resilient giant spider silk. Very difficult to puncture (AC 5) and still quite light (200 coins or 20 lbs.). Cost 1,000 gold pieces due to rare materials and exquisite craftsmanship. The craft is rumored to have been learned from imprisoned dark elves. Rare, and likely not sold to plague doctors below experience level 3.
- **Samite Plague Mantle:** A double-woven mantle with leather underwork, very difficult to puncture (AC 4) and still fairly lightweight (300 coins or 30 lbs.). Cost 1,500 gold

pieces. Very rare, and likely not sold to plague doctors below experience level 5.

The GM might opt to include magical mantles (+1, +2, or +3 at most) in the game as a form of rare treasure.

Most PC plague doctors will likely opt to wear scale mail or chain mail or similar heavy armor early on, although mantles might be an attractive counter-option due to their very low encumbrance ratings. Further, all mantles allow a character to move at full speed (120') unless otherwise encumbered by carried gear or treasure. The sole exception is the samite plague mantle, which reduces movement by -30' (90' for most races).

Aside: As a matter of game balance, a GM might decide that magic-users and illusionists can only wear canvas or leather mantles, but nothing heavier. This armor is intended primarily for plague doctors and not to make magic-users into defensive tanks.



III-B

The Corvus Mask



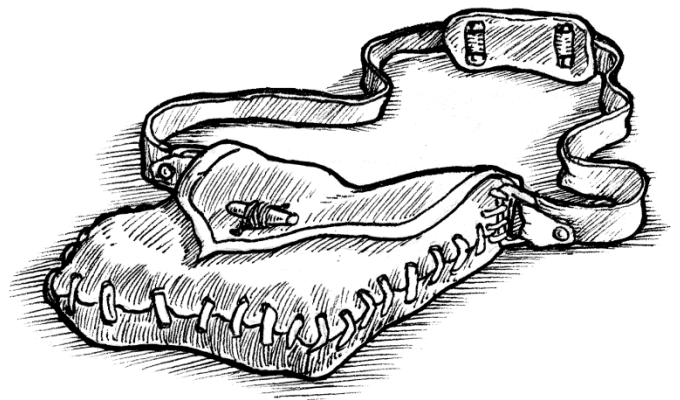
The corvus mask is the iconic beaked mask of the plague doctor order. It is a full-head stitched leather and canvas hood-mask, with a reinforced leather beak and lenses made of special crystal. The breathing holes are in the bottom of the beak.

The masks are very expensive, at 200 gold pieces each. It is very likely that a level 1 plague doctor will not be able to afford one at the beginning of his career. Masks can be purchased from the order but will only be sold to plague doctors, because any person seeing one will fully expect the wearer to be able to act as a plague doctor in all ways. This could create significant confusion in battle if a mask wearer was not capable of healing and protecting the weak!

Anyone wearing the mask, if it is fully infused with spices and aromatics, gains a +1 bonus to saving throws vs. inhalation. Inhalation effects would include gas breath

weapons, poisonous gases, stinking clouds, mold spores, quicklime, and so forth. This effect would indeed be conferred to a non-doctor who is wearing one. And for a plague doctor, this might well be added to other saving throw bonuses vs. disease or poison, depending on the circumstances; for example a plague doctor with a +1 saving throw vs. poison would have a +2 save vs. poisonous gases (+1 for the poison, and +1 for the mask).

The cost of the blessed spices is 25 gold pieces per satchel, and a satchel will remain potent for 30 days. After that time the spices will no longer confer the +1 saving throw bonus and should be replaced. The first 30 days' worth of spices are included in the 200 gp purchase price. The blessed spices must be purchased from the order, although beginning at experience level 7 a plague doctor could bless his own (reducing the effective cost to 5 gold pieces per satchel).



Non-plague doctors who wear the mask will be at penalties of -1 to hit, -5% hear noise, and -1 Dexterity. Plague doctors, trained to wear the masks and to fight in them, do not ever suffer these penalties.

Evil characters communicating with someone who is wearing a plague doctor mask will experience a -2 penalty to their reaction rolls toward the wearer.

Also keep in mind that plague doctors (only) can use the corvus mask as a hands-free holy symbol; refer to the Holy Mask section of this supplement.

III-C

Steel-Cored Parrying

Weapons

There are three types of parrying weapons that are favored by plague doctors. Other classes can certainly use these weapons, but they cannot perform smites of reprisal, which makes these weapons rather sub-optimal for other wielders. They are defensive weapons and are inferior options for low-level doctors in most cases.

At experience level 1, plague doctors automatically gain proficiency in one of these weapons (player's choice) without the expenditure of a weapon proficiency slot. Other classes do not gain this ability freely.

The three varieties of parrying weapon are:

- **Parrying Cane:** One-handed. Damage 1D3, cost 1 electrum piece.
- **Parrying Stick:** One- or two-handed. Damage 1D3 (1-handed) or 1D4 (2-handed), cost 1 gold piece.
- **Parrying Staff:** Two-handed. Damage 1D6, cost 2 gold pieces. Extendable and collapsible, and can serve as either a 10'-long prodding pole or a 5'-long weapon. Changing the weapon's form requires 1 round of activity.

A plague doctor (only!) who wields a parrying weapon gains a +1 bonus to Armor Class vs. melee attacks from the front. This does not apply to flank attacks, rear

attacks, or missile weapon attacks. This benefit is in addition to the smites of reprisal special ability.

Deadlier weapons can be wielded by plague doctors, but only these three weapons allow the use of the smites of reprisal. A savvy PC might well choose to carry three different weapons (a parrying one, a heavy melee one, and a ranged one) for various circumstances, in addition to any incendiaries.

A kindly GM might decide that +1 magical parrying weapons exist in the realms as treasure.

Thou Art Ready, Neophyte!

And there you have it. Know no fear. Go forth, inspire, and destroy!

About the Author



Beginning play as a chaotic neutral normal human with one measly hit point to his name, KENT DAVID KELLY eventually became apprenticed to a magic-user of ill repute ... a foul man who dwelt in the steamy deeps of the Ivory Cloud Mountain. After this mentor carelessly misplaced an intelligent soul-sucking sword and then died under suspicious circumstances, his former henchman Mr. Kelly escaped to the deeper underground and there began playing Satanic role-playing games. This, the legends tell us, occurred in the year 1981.

Hoary wizard-priests who inspired Mr. Kelly in his netherworldly machinations included the peerless Gygax, Carr,

Arneson, Cook, Hammack, Jaquays, Bledsaw, Moldvay, Kuntz, Schick and Ward. Sadly, a misguided made-for-the-basements movie entitled *Mazes and Monsters* gave Mr. Kelly's parents conniptions in 1982. As a result of that blasphemous Tom Hanks debacle (and other more personal lapses in judgment), Mr. Kelly was eventually forbidden from playing his favorite game for a considerable length of time.

Nonplussed but not defeated, he used this enforced exile to escape to a friend's alehouse, and there indulged himself in now-classic computer RPGs such as *Zork*, *Telengard*, *Temple of Apshai*, *Ultima*, *Tunnels of Doom*, *The Bard's Tale*, *Phantasie*, *Pool of Radiance*, *Wizard's Crown* and *Wasteland*. He then went on to write computer versions of his own FRPGs, which led to his obsession with coupling creative design elements with random dungeons and unpredictable adventure generation.

Mr. Kelly wrote and submitted his first adventure for *Dungeon Magazine* #1 in 1986. Unfortunately, one Mr. Moore decided that his submission was far too "Lovecraftian, horrific and unfair" to ever serve that worthy periodical as a publishable adventure. Mr. Kelly, it must be said, took this rejection as a very good sign of things to come.

In the late 80s and 90s, Mr. Kelly wrote short stories, poems and essays ... some of which have been published under the Wonderland Imprints banner. He wrote several dark fantasy and horror novels as well. Concurrently, he ran *Dark Angel Collectibles*, selling classic FRPG materials as *Darkseraphim*, and assisted the *Acaeum* with the creation of the Valuation Board and other minor research projects.

At this time, Mr. Kelly and his entourage of evil gnomes are rumored to dwell in the dread and deathly under-halls of the Acaeum, Dragonsfoot, ENWorld, Grogardia, Knights & Knaves, ODD, and even more nefarious levels deep down in the mega-dungeon of the Web.

There he remains in vigil, his vampiric sword yet shivering in his hand. When not being sought outright for answers to halfling riddles or other more sundry sage advice, he is to be avoided by sane individuals *at all costs*.



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