

RESEARCH NOTES ON THE GNAWING PLAGUE

From: “A Comprehensive Treatise on Diseases of the Body and Mind” by Physician-Scholar Maelis Thornwright, Published 565 A.P.

In recent months, perhaps the newest disease that has been borne from deteriorating conditions in the southeast is a condition known colloquially as the Gnawing Plague. It presents with a constellation of distressing symptoms that progress in severity over the course of infection. Initial manifestations include pronounced facial tremors, often beginning in the muscles surrounding the eyes and mouth, accompanied by profuse sweating that occurs independent of ambient temperature. Patients invariably develop fever-like symptoms within the first day of exposure, though curiously, measured body temperature may remain within normal parameters in approximately one quarter of cases.

As the disease progresses into its second stage, typically within three to five days of initial infection, the characteristic splotchy rashes emerge across the torso and limbs. These lesions present as irregular patches of inflamed tissue, raised and warm to the touch. Most alarming is the subsequent appearance of white scales upon the skin, beginning at the extremities and spreading inward toward the trunk. The eyes become heavily encrusted with a thick, yellowish discharge, accompanied by excessive lacrimation that causes significant visual impairment.

In the most severe cases, which occur in roughly thirty to forty percent of those afflicted, the patient experiences profound mental deterioration. This manifests as episodes of mania characterized by aggression, paranoid ideation, and complete loss of rational faculties. Mortality rates in these advanced cases exceed seventy percent.

The historical toll of this plague cannot be understated. It reached its peak mortality during the Valamia Conflict of 563 A.P., where initial reports suggested some 90,000 souls perished in the battle. Of course, we later learned only some 15,000 actually died on the battlefield, the other casualties comprised of farmers and children, with a particular leaning towards the Elvish community that inhabits the region. Less than some more widespread plagues, yes, but it devastated Valamia and its surrounding communities, particularly with its high mortality rate.

From: “The Vector and the Victim: Understanding Disease Transmission and Curation” by Epidemiologist Corvain Blackmere, Published 489 A.P.

Certain illnesses distinguishes themselves from other epidemic diseases solely through their specific mode of transmission. Take the case of small outbreaks of a disease reported in the Zawma Empire that has been codeified ZWSW-487. Unlike the airborne pestilences that have ravaged our cities in centuries past, this affliction seems to require direct fluid transfer through bite wounds to establish infection in a new host. The primary vectors documented in historical records include zombified rats, which appear to harbor the disease indefinitely without succumbing to its effects, and wererats, whose dual nature may provide some resistance to the plague’s mental deteriorations while allowing them to spread it with terrible efficiency.

Human-to-human transmission occurs exclusively through biting, typically during the manic phases when the afflicted lose all restraint. It bears emphasis that casual contact, shared air, or proximity to an infected individual does not constitute a transmission risk. Those who exhibit no symptoms—whether in the early incubation period or among the rare individuals who achieve

spontaneous recovery—demonstrate no capacity to spread the disease to others. This finding has proven crucial in preventing unnecessary quarantine measures that would otherwise devastate communities.

Traditional herbal remedies offer little relief from the symptoms and no measurable impact upon the disease's progression. Bloodletting, humoral balancing, and spiritual cleansings have likewise proven ineffective. However, some esoteric fringe herablists have purportedly found success by extracting liquid from an exceptionally rare plant known as Sorrow's Wisp. I would personally dismiss such claims and be wary of sellers of these goods claiming a "magical cure", since as we know no thing exists, and we would have much more verifiable success either eradicating the disease or developing a widespread cure.

From: "The Mediata Savannah: My Journeys" by Manu Shamoon, Published 257 A.P.

One danger of the Mediata Savannah that few knew about, few warn about but numerous have suffered is a disease that roams the wastelands in the southwest, waiting to pounce with its vicelike fever grip on a parched, exhausted soul. It causes you to twitch, you forget your name, you wander the wastes with little purpose other than to find another soul, which is existentially unlikely. You even see hallucinations of others, which one may go up to and attempt to bite, only to realise such a mirage and feel even more enraged. I personally contracted this disease, and it was perhaps the lowest point of my life, in which in the fleeting moments of sanity I was surprised with in the heat, I seriously considered a better, more intentional way to go than this.

Luckily, I stumbled across this small oasis in the wastes near the coast, and while laying down, attempting to sleep as the sweating got worse and I could feel the necrosis in my arm try to find its way to my heart, I saw a this bulbous fruit, blue and pulsating ever so slightly with a serene glow, sitting amongst the shrubs.

This shrub, which the locals call "Sorrow's Wisp", cured my affliction, but not after much struggle. It was inedible immediately, and even after crushing it up, not only did I only extract the tiniest volume of sap, but at first I thought it didn't work, only making me sicker. Something inside me told me I must persist, however. Thus, through my toil, I impart onto you the knowledge of

how to defeat this deadly foe that afflicted mine and many a body: the Sorrow's Wisp must be harvested during the dark moon and boiled continuously for seven hours in purified spring water. Then, and only once the moonlight is reflecting upon it and it has been stirred thoroughly, the resulting decoction has the power to cure the afflicted. According to others in the southwest, when administered to plague victims in the later stages of infection than mine, it has demonstrated remarkable curative properties, being able to completely reverse the necrosis of tissue.

Later, I personally witnessed the efficacy of this treatment on one occasion during my tenure at the Sanctuary of Healing in Velthara. A patient who was lashing out at staff and yelling nonsense in a language I could not comprehend received the prepared Sorrow's Wisp weeks after symptom onset achieved complete recovery within a fortnight. The facial tremors ceased, the scales dried and fell away, and most significantly, no further progression to the manic stage occurred.

The primary impediment to widespread use of this cure lies in the extraordinary rarity of Sorrow's Wisp. A single fruit may fetch prices equivalent to a skilled craftsman's annual wages, and even at such costs, the fruit itself may prove impossible to procure.