

Pestilence/January 27th, 2018

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Fighting the Plague

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You wish to study infected blood, but you do not have your trusty blood testing kit with you. No matter, you're a scientist. A good scientist understands every method that they use. You will be able to recreate the serums and equipment required to investigate tainted blood if you have some good references.

Get three different blood samples from healthy individuals. You may take a sample from yourself if you are uninfected. Once you've gathered all samples, destroy them and go to page **2**

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The results of your new test are consistent. Wonderful! Of course, if you wanted a truly reliable blood test, you would have used more than three samples, but you can't be picky during a plague.

Now is the hard part of your research. You need to find someone who is both infected and willing to give you blood. It's far too dangerous to go outside the shelter. Moreover, the townsfolk seem to have some superstitions about drawing blood. Such nonsense, but you prefer not to be drawn and quartered by the mob outside.

You can cause an infection through unsanitary practices. You can find the dead body of an infected person. You can *make* a dead body to infect someone with. The thought of inviting the very enemy you fight makes your skin crawl, but so does the thought of letting the hundreds of infected people outside die because you are too squeamish to do what needs to be done.

Draw blood from an infected PC. You may draw blood from yourself if you are infected. Consume the blood and turn to page **3**

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It's no use. You can tell the blood is infected alright, but little else. The frustration is eating you inside out.

Insult someone you don't like and then vent out your frustrations more productively to an understanding person. Once you've done so, open page **4**.

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You have a terribly short temper, you'll admit that. It embarrasses you to lose control so often. When you go back to the capital, you'll make sure to try some meditation. *If you go back.*

No, no need to be so pessimistic. If anything, the bit of raving managed to clear your mind. Venal blood offers no clues to the nexus of the disease, but would tissue or arterial blood be better? A chill runs down your spine. Considering the pathetic materials you have, your investigation will be too invasive for a living individual. You need someone dead.

Get access to the dead body of an infected person. Perform a three minute interruptible autopsy on them. Once you do, turn to page **5**.

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Hmm, decreased level of infection, but a large amount of plague specific antibodies. These antibodies couldn't help their host when they were alive, but finding them gives you an idea—an idea for a vaccine. Unfortunately, infected blood contains pathogens that you do not want to incorporate into your vaccine. Healthy blood does not have the antibodies you need. What to do, what to do.

Acquire the blood of someone who was infected and yet has somehow beaten the infection. You may draw blood from yourself if you meet the criteria. Consume the blood and afterwards, ask the blood donor out of character if they were truly infected and cured. If they were, turn to **6**. If they weren't, you are aware that you were cheated. Try again until you get the blood you need.

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You've done it! You have a vaccine! Open Envelope V. You only have the resources to make this small dose. Use it wisely.

You feel like you have missed something, however. Surely you can help those already infected. You are running low on medicine and material, so the prospect of a chemical cure is slim, but how about a surgical cure? Where does the disease gather and reproduce? Can you take out its little nexus? You've realized that the pathogens die too quickly after their host dies, so you doubt you'll be able to gather much information from a dead body this time. However, you know where to look now and you can examine a living body without killing your patient.

Knock out an infected person and perform a three minute interruptible biopsy on them. You may or may not obtain their consent beforehand. NPCs are scared of you and their family will interrupt your biopsy. Once you're finished, turn to page 7.

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You have good and bad news. Good news is that you know where the disease is localized in the body! Bad news is that you can't do much else. You don't have the tools to block the function of the infected marrows without killing your patient. This is impossible.

...unless Victoria knows something. All your time with her and the town has taught you to expect the unexpected once in a while. Is Victoria safe? Is she progressing on her research? Oh, please let her be alright.

Inform Victoria that you know where the disease is localized. Ask her how her own research is progressing. Once you've consulted with her, you will come to accept Victoria's magic, and her performing magical feats will no longer increase your belief score. You are close. So very close.

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Studying the Spirits

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They call your father a genius and a miracle worker. Soon they will use those words to describe you. You've never been formally introduced to magic, but you know well enough about the spirit world from other elders and shamans from your travels. Different religions with different trappings perhaps, but similar principles. But first, you must refresh your memory of the local magic.

Observe three feats of magic. As much as you hate to admit, your father or sister might be able to demonstrate some minor tricks for you. Once done, go to page **2**

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These feats boggle your mind. The spirit world is difficult to comprehend with the waking mind; perhaps that is why your old research failed so often. The sleeping mind is far more prone to suggestions. Ah, to sleep, perchance to dream. Despite what the pretentious doctor seems to think, there are people in town who read Western literature. It's unfortunate that you can't sleep soundly in the current circumstances. You'll have to rely on some more...err...percussive methods.

Get knocked out by a trusted person. After you wake up, go to page **3**.

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You were so close. You could almost see brilliant red of the earth's core. You reached to touch it, but the moment you extended your hand, the vision shifted and turned into that of Dr. Filin, glaring stubbornly at you. What on Earth is he doing in your vision? Could the outsider doctor know more about spiritual practices than he lets on? Earth forbid, is he a spy? Your family does have some enemies from old; you have heard rumors that your father forcibly ousted the previous elder from power. If the doctor is truly working for an old enemy, your mission to undermine that wretched snake has become even more pressing than ever.

Start a fight (verbal or physical) with Dr. Filin. Once you've done so, open page **4**.

If Dr. Filin is dead, simply continue with the notebook. This is an issue no longer.

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That was a rather uncharacteristic outburst of you. You are a little ashamed of wandering from your task so eagerly. Whatever you learned or did not learn, it's not an essential part of your mission. You need to focus your mind.

Perhaps you were aware of your next task and wanted to delay it as long as possible. If sleep does not work, death is the next step. You don't wish to cross the line entirely, but you must be close. To know the ways of spirits, you must let go of your body.

Find a way to reach CR 0 or less. You've never been good friends with alcohol, so perhaps that will help you. Failing that, there must be some disgusting concoction you can mess your body with. Just make sure not to get too poisoned. Once you're done, turn to page **5**.

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Yes, yes! For the first time in your life, you hear their voices. They speak through the din in your ears. They guide your failing limbs, and though the world blurs, the clouds in your vision begin to form a peculiar shape. Something is close.

You may open Envelope T. You've gained True Sight. You feel your new powers already, but you need proof before you can believe. Use your new ability to detect a creature that cannot be seen through normal eyes.

If someone is dead, you could try and find their ghost. On the other hand, your new senses strongly suggest the presence of an earth spirit, a shabnak-adyr, within the shelter. If you can dislodge it from whatever it is bound to, you might be able to perceive its true self. A shabnak-adyr's body is made from clay; destroying it is no more heinous than breaking a vase. You just need to be certain you are attacking a shabnak-adyr.

Once you've used True Sight, go to page **6**.

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You can see it, but you cannot capture it. To capture it, you must become its kin. You must breed its children within your body and feel its pain as your own. A healer must first be wounded.

Get infected. You may skip this step if you were already infected at some point, even if you are now cured. Once done, turn to page 7.

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It's done. Your body is wretched and destroyed, but it's done. You understand the spirits now. You are as great as your father and sister, perhaps even greater. If only your family had given you their secrets, if only your father had trusted you, you wouldn't feel the searing heat and stabbing pains throughout your body. It does not matter now. You can contain the plague. You are doing good work. You need no one else.

You may open Envelope E. Willpower holds up what your bones cannot. Your CR and gamma score increase by 1.

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Refining Your Powers

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Due to your old research on blood magic, you have power over the body even without the earth spirit's help. It's concerning that your notes are gone, but you can start without them. Magic is a matter of practice and intuition rather than rigid instruction. If you listen closely enough, you can hear the rush of blood and feel the rub of muscles against bone. Perhaps this power might help you fight the plague.

Study the inner workings of three different healthy PCs who are not you. To do so, stand within one ZOC of the target for one minute without speaking. NPC will be creeped out by you and move away before you can study them fully. The action is interrupted if you speak or if the target is more than one ZOC away. Once done, go to page 2

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Happy families are all alike, but every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. Tolstoy wrote that, you believe. You could say the same about the human body. Healthy bodies at least are surprisingly similar. Listening to them gave you a good understanding of the lines that should run through a body. Now you need to examine an unhealthy body somehow.

Find an infected PC and listen to their body for a minute. The infected person can be you. NPCs will refuse to consent as usual. Once done, go to page 3.

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It's all becoming clearer. Your firsthand knowledge of the body, coupled with Dr. Filin's anatomy textbooks, gives you an idea. You wonder if you might be able to control a body from the outside, without making any incisions. You should try it on yourself first.

Find somewhere that you consider safe. Once you've done so, open page **4**.

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Your CR is reduced by 1 for 10 minutes.

It didn't go terribly wrong. You feel a little weaker, but for a moment, you could control the beating of your heart and the flow of blood in your veins. You would have been more careful if it weren't for the urgency of a plague beating down on you. You realize that you should carry more experiments just to make sure, but you can barely wait. If you can't find some way to help the infected before the army arrives, the infected will be left for dead. Sure, *you* might survive, but how much will your life be worth by then?

It's time for accelerated research. You're going to try your psychic surgery techniques on someone else. Find a willing participant for your experiment. Once you do, turn to page **5**.

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Oh, no! You didn't mean to do that! Your test subject is wounded.

You could try to help them, but you don't want to risk it again. Find someone who knows first aid. As your test subject is being revived, turn to page **6**.

If your test subject dies, you fall into a spiral of grief and guilt. If your test subject is healed through magical means or if they were healed back to consciousness while you were away, you're paralyzed by your feelings of incompetence and uselessness. In both cases, skip page **6**. Go to **7** only if you learn that Dr. Filin has completed his research.

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At first, the first aid doesn't seem to be working. You've messed up something terribly. You're falling into panic. It's all your fault. This plague, this mess, now this death, it's all your fault, your fault, your fault...no, no, no. You did this. Only you can fix this. You sit beside your test subject and reach into them again. Clot the blood here and there. Mend the flesh. Reduce the swelling. The patient is starting to breathe normally. They're safe. You may or may not roleplay this process as the patient is being healed.

Either way, the first aid works as normal. You may open Envelope F after the patient wakes.

You still can't detect the nexus of the plague within the body. If only you knew, you would be able to move the blood here and there and nip the disease before it could kill its host. Wasn't Dr. Filin studying the localization of the disease? Science might have the answers that elude your magic.

When Dr. Filin completes their research notebook, turn to **7**. If Dr. Filin is dead or if the notebook is destroyed, you are stuck. You can make no more progress.

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That's it! That's it! He is describing a difficult procedure, but the notes are thorough enough that you might be able to pick it up. Hope fills you again. You can fight this.

You may now open Envelope C.

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