

**Doctor's Journal: 12<sup>th</sup> May 1349**

Today, I observed yet another man who was thought to have caught the Black Death. I was summoned to Baron von Lovell's castle to inspect him and determine the sickness that he had caught. He offered me a large sum of money for me to help him, so I took him inside and then lay him down on the bed where I could examine him thoroughly. He told me that his coughing had been relentless, and his sweating was also ceaseless. He talked about his high fever and how nauseous he felt. As he was telling me this, he began to pant heavily and gag numerous times, and he then promptly vomited. I then, inspected his body and found blue and purple buboes on his neck, armpit and groin. He claimed these 'lumps of pain' were itchy and tender. I pondered over his symptoms and came to an unfortunate conclusion. I feared that Baron Von Lovell had caught the pestilence.

**Personal Journal: 12<sup>th</sup> May 1349**

It wasn't unexpected. Everyone had been dropping like flies recently. Here and there I was being contacted throughout my region to tend to the sick. As one of the few doctors around, I am constantly needed. I'm picky with who I choose though. Times are tough, and as a doctor, it's hard to survive during this time of trial. So, the other day when poor peasant Mary asked me to cure her, I politely declined. However, when I received a call from Baron von Lovell, it was an easy decision. Why, of course I'll help him and his rich coffers! So, here I am. Tending to the sick. Helping our kingdom. I'll be honest with you though. I'm not so sure this is working. My theories seem to be backed up with evidence and thought but yet, everyone is still dying. My personal perspective is that the Lord controls your outcome. I've been a good Christian follower recently, always fasting, pausing to pray and attending mass. Maybe that's why I've been spared. But regardless, my duties as a doctor are heavily relied on by the rich folk, so I must go help. And also I'm no artist, but I attempted to draw the religious meetings occurring nowadays.



Praying for relief from the bubonic plague, Source: Hulton Getty.

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Through further observation, I was able to deduce that Baron Von Lovell had attracted the pestilence through inhaling miasma. Miasma is a toxic gas made up of decomposing particles which

could be identified by its foul smell. I believe Baron Von Lovell was exposed to the noxious air throughout his life. Having fought it off for his entire life, his body was exhausted from defending himself and let the miasma enter and infect his body. Entering through the mouth, the poisonous vapour travelled to the lungs, passed through the capillaries and made its way to the heart, contaminating the blood. Then, it was pumped all around the body, thus poisoning the Baron with this disease. The weakest parts of the body, the neck, armpits and groin, found it difficult to defend themselves from the disease, and this is why the lumps of infection have grown in those areas.

**Personal Journal: 12<sup>th</sup> May 1349**

I hope I'm right. Oh well, I'll pray for him.

Transcript of Doctor's Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, I'm so sorry you felt the need to punish mankind. I understand your reasons, but I ask that you please spare Baron von Lovell. The man has so much to live for and if he could stay alive for a little longer, it would benefit me financially. I thank you endlessly in anticipation. If there is anything I can do for you, let me know. Once my services as a doctor are no longer required, I will be joining the flagellants. I see them roaming from time to time in the streets. Whipping themselves for their sins, torturing themselves for the benefit of humanity. I saw them persecuting a group of Jewish children the other day. Although this doesn't appeal to me, I am willing to do it for you. Dear Lord, I want to show my love and devotion to you, the greatest power. Thank you for everything you have given me. Amen.

**Doctor's Journal: 13<sup>th</sup> May 1349**

Over the next few days, Baron Von Lovell will experience a lot of pain. If Baron von Lovell abides by my treatments, he has a high chance of surviving. The buboes will shrivel up, turn into scabs and then fall off. All of the poison will be emptied out of his body and he will no longer have relentless sweating and coughing. He will be immune to the disease and will be able to go back to his normal life. However, without my treatment, his life will be agony. The buboes will swell up with pus, blood and infection and cause great amounts of pain. A few days later, they will turn black and burst open. A foul smelling fluid will come out of the buboes and cause throbbing and discomfort. The poisoned blood in his body will affect his mental state. The pain from the disease will cause delirium and hallucinations. His liver will overheat, and his brain will become confused and frightened. The brain will overwork itself and become fatigued, causing drowsiness and weariness in the body.

**Personal Journal: 13<sup>th</sup> May 1349**

It's funny, I haven't caught the pestilence myself. You'd think since I'm always around these dying patients that I too, should be sick. I'm on God's good side, that's definitely it. My family weren't though. My father and siblings preferred to dictate their own lives, however, my mother was very religious. She would always carry her cross somewhere on her body. It's ironic that she was the first to go. She lay on the floor, writhing with pain, screaming out in agony. I tried my best to care for her, but I gave her treatments that inevitably made it worse. I was just glad she went quickly, and that she wasn't in pain for a long time. Later, my father and my siblings met the same horrific end. It's strange to see people in that light. Begging so strongly for their life. Every one of them would do anything to survive, but that's not how life works sometimes.

**Doctor's Journal 13th May 1349:**

I have concocted many clever remedies that will cure Baron Von Lovell and save him from the wrath of the wretched pestilence. I have fumigated this house with herbs, dried flowers and myrrh to purify the air that Baron Von Lovell breathes. This clean air will be distributed throughout his body, and completely get rid of the infection. Or, to put it more simply, the good air will cancel out the bad air in his body. Another treatment that I have formulated is bloodletting. My method is using

leeches to suck the infected blood out of the body. Once the infected blood has left the body, and the heart produces new, healthy blood and the person is able to recover. I have also prescribed Baron Von Lovell to a particular diet. Mustard, mint sauce, apple sauce and horseradish are ingredients that the Baron needs to consume every day. These ingredients balance wet, dry, hot and cold in his body and can help regulate body temperature to stop the Baron from sweating too much. I will also lance the buboes, which will drain the infected fluids helping to remove the disease from the body.

#### **Doctor's Journal: 16<sup>th</sup> May 1349**

I don't want to catch the plague while treating my patients, so I must follow a few precautions in order to minimise the risk. Whenever I am near the Baron, I will wear a birdlike beak to protect myself from the foul miasma that causes this disease. Packed with dried flowers, herbs and spices, my beak fills my lungs with sweet smells which ward off any bad air that could cause the pestilence. A wooden cane is another tool I use to limit my contact with the patient. I use my cane to examine the patient without touching them, thus minimising my risk of contracting the pestilence. Thick waxed clothing will prevent the disease from entering my body and I must be extra careful when I am in close proximity to my patients to ensure I don't catch the disease. For the edification of the reader, I have attached an illustration.



A Woodcut of a Plague Doctor, Source: Unknown

#### **Personal Journal: 17<sup>th</sup> May 1349**

Listen, I'm sorry I haven't written for a while. I've been up to my knees in dead bodies. The stench is horrible. I've started to wear my beak everywhere, it's so awful. The streets are strewn with lifeless, limp humans that have succumbed to the disease. The air that once held so much hope and love, now smells of rotten carcasses. I'm finding it hard to see the bright side. I try to think of the old days, of cheer and fun. But the harsh reality that I currently live in is always tugging at the corners of my mind, threatening to frighten away the good memories. I'll be honest. Life is tough now. I have nobody left. I just don't see the point in continuing anymore.



The harsh reality that I live in, Source: Wellcome Images

#### **Doctor's Journal: 19<sup>th</sup> May 1349**

Unfortunately, my treatments aren't working. Instead of curing the baron, he is experiencing more pain than ever. My remedies are failing me, and I don't know what to do or how to help him. The only thing the baron can do now is pray. He must pray to the lord God, beg for mercy and ask for forgiveness. God sent the pestilence to punish us for our sins, and by praying to him and showing his dedication and faithfulness towards Him, the terror will cease to exist. Baron Von Lovell is getting weaker by the minute and I believe that he will depart from this world soon.

#### **Personal Journal: 20<sup>th</sup> May 1349**

I am trying to sleep, but I can't. Baron von Lovell pleaded with me to stay overnight. I am now, in the adjacent room, listening to him, panic stricken and weeping uncontrollably. The fear in his voice is terrifying. His raw, throaty screams continue. Shall I put him out of his misery? It's a dilemma I've faced many times before. I get up out of bed and walk to his room. I catch a glimpse of him through the slight crack in his door. The baron's arms and legs are flailing, his throat has been ripped raw from screaming. I feel visibly disturbed by seeing this. Not that he's about to die. I've seen plenty of that. What disturbed me is that this personal moment of his, I've completely intruded on. As I leave to head back to my room, I hear a series of choked sobs. One final wail. And then silence. I sigh deeply and ask myself how many more lives the pestilence will take from this world.

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