

The Mysterious Disease

By Charles McLean Redding

Once upon a time, there was a Good Doctor who lived in the city. Now, it wasn't a very nice city; it was very dirty and it rained almost every day.. The doctor wore a long black coat, and a wide brimmed hat, to keep the dirt and rain away from his clean clothes.

The city was also filled with all manner of diseases and ailments, which is why the Good Doctor lived there. He wore a mask with a long beak as he went about his business, to make sure he didn't get sick. You see: the beak of the mask was stuffed with pleasant smelling flowers; this ensured that if any bad germs tried to infect the Good Doctor, they would get distracted by the pretty smelling flowers along the way, and he wouldn't get sick.

Every day the Good Doctor went out among the sick people in the city, doing whatever he could do to help them.

"I have a terrible chill!" One man said.

"I have just the cure for you!" The Good Doctor proclaimed. "The problem is that your blood is moving too slowly. So I'll put these leeches on your arms and legs. They'll get your blood moving faster, through the power of suction!"

"Oh Good Doctor, I'm nauseous, and I can't eat a single bite!" Another person told him.

"Don't worry, we'll find the answer together!" Said the Good Doctor. Then he asked them questions like:

"Have you eaten anything strange lately?"

"No, Good Doctor"

"Are you getting four hours of rest every night?"

"Yes, Good Doctor"

"Are you bathing every day?"

"Yes, Good Doctor."

"Eureka!" The Good Doctor shouted, "That is your problem! You see, The more you bathe, the more you strip away your protective humours and invite evil influences to infiltrate your corpus. You must stop all this washing immediately, and never bathe again!"

"Good Doctor, you must help my father, he has a terrible fever!" A man said, laying his sick father down on the Good Doctor's table.

"A-Ha! That is a dangerous condition which we must take very seriously," The Good Doctor said, taking it very seriously. "But fear not, for I already know the solution. His brain is overheating, you see, so we must cool it down by drilling several holes into the skull! Yet be warned! Brain fevers are very dangerous, and even with my treatment: he may die. But we will do our best!"

So that was how the Good Doctor went around, helping the sick people of the city as all Good Doctors should.

Yet one day there emerged a case so baffling; so mysterious, enigmatic, and strange, that the Good Doctor scarcely knew where to begin.

"Good Doctor, please look at my daughter, she is terribly ill!"

"I will do what I can, my fine fellow. What seems to be the problem. Cough? Rattles? Rash? Weeping sores?"

"No, Good Doctor, none of those!"

The Good Doctor was startled.

"What, none? Surely there is some coughing."

"No, Good Doctor, not even a little one! Not even a sniffle!"

The Good Doctor was now taken aback.

"And her skin is completely clear, you say? No boils or blisters of any kind?"

"No, Good Doctor, her skin is free of the slightest blemish!"

Now, the Good Doctor was positively shocked.

"I see." The Good Doctor said. "This is very serious indeed. This may be the most serious case I have ever treated. You see, I have encountered this condition before. I call it The Mysterious Disease. And the only times I've ever seen people with symptoms matching these... they were already dead!"

"Oh no! What shall we do, Good Doctor?"

"We must perform tests! Many tests and many treatments to see how she is surviving in such an unnatural state. We must be quick, my fine fellow, before this Mysterious Disease does to her what it did to all the others!"

And so the Good Doctor's tests began.

First, they submerged her in water, to see if they could flush out the Mysterious Disease. They held her under for several minutes, and although she coughed and spluttered for a bit when they brought her out of the water, she soon returned to her irregularly normal breathing pattern, and her skin developed an unhealthy pinkish color.

"This is not good at all." The Good Doctor stated. "Do you feel any different?"

"I feel quite cold," the young woman said.

"Eureka!" The Doctor exclaimed, "Leeches it is!"

But after applying the leeches for hours to her arms and her legs, the next morning she had gone right back to her strange condition.

So they starved her, to make sure the Mysterious Disease wasn't being fortified by her diet. After a few days, she started to feel nauseous and had stomach pains, which the Good Doctor took as a good sign that the disease was clearing out of her body. Yet, terribly, tragically, she didn't develop a healthy cough, or the slightest lesion.

"Good Doctor, I'm really not feeling very well at all," she said.

"Don't give up hope!" The Good Doctor said, "That is very encouraging, but this Mysterious Disease is truly insidious. If we don't snuff it out, it is sure to return and plague you the rest of your life."

At last, after many more such tests, the Good Doctor was nearly out of ideas.

"Only one more test remains. I must examine her lungs, visually, to see where the problem lies."

Now, obviously, this was a very dangerous procedure, so the Good Doctor wore his thickest coat, and stuffed the beak on his mask with the freshest finest flowers.

The Good Doctor was only halfway done sawing through her rib-cage when something terrible happened. The young woman stopped screaming, which the Good Doctor knew was a very bad sign. He had to act quickly.

"The Mysterious Disease is taking her!" He said, "Quick, fetch my drill!"

They worked through the night, applying every treatment they could; yet in spite of his

dedication and most knowledgeable and skilled efforts, he was unable to save the young woman.
Once again, the Mysterious Disease had struck.

"My fine fellow, I am so sorry. This Mysterious Disease has bested me. However," the Good Doctor said, puffing out his chest and rising heroically, "I make this vow, for all of you, and in her name: that I will never rest! That I will dedicate the remainder of my days to uncovering this Mysterious Disease, finding the true source of these unnatural symptoms! If I have to drown, leech, starve, cut open, and drill holes in the head of every single person in this city, one by one, I will do what it takes to root out this terrible, insidious, merciless, Mysterious Disease!"

And so the Good Doctor did, spending the rest of his days working on the problem of the Mysterious Disease. Until one month later, when he died of the plague.

The End.