

Sanguinary Paperlouse

Trogium pulsatorium cruentorum

Description: when not battenning on blood, these are very, very tiny insects that eat library glue and paste. When they are battenning on blood, this is a collection/collective of blood-red, glowing, very tiny insects that very slowly and painfully eat human flesh. Think “leprosy” more than “piranha attack,” in terms of how quickly the damage spreads.

Evil magicians who don’t keep their magical books free from parasites tend to have short working careers. Or sometimes even lives. They let the parasites soak in the evil from the books, then the magician spills blood all over a grimoire, and then here comes the Sanguinary Paperlouse swarm and it’s all, as the apprentices say, suddenly an entire thing.

The trouble with getting infected with Sanguinary Paperlice isn’t that they’ll kill their victims right away (although, sure, if it’s not treated the condition is only going to get worse and worse); it’s that a Sanguinary Paperlouse infection thoroughly impedes a mage’s ability to do magic. The pain is a constant distraction, and if the

fingers are affected (they usually are) then the mage will discover that his ritual gestures have now become dangerously clumsy. And, again, it only gets worse as time goes on.

The good news? A Sanguinary Paperlouse infection responds very nicely to clerical healing magic. Even honest prayer, or immersing the infected parts in holy water, will do the trick -- provided that the victim actually honors the god whose holy water it is. This can be a bit of a problem for evil-aligned magicians; not many Dark Gods go in for holy water, per se, and the ones that do generally try to make their versions corrosive, explosive, and/or highly contagious. Lacking that, there's always the use of enough secular healing magic to simply arcaneously debride the infected parts and then rebuild the damaged flesh and bone from scratch. Which is, by the way, never cheap.

Yes. Many a black magician has sourly observed that this all seems rather unfair. Well, sometimes that happens to the bad guys, too. Suck it up and walk it off.

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