

Bedlamite Dust

Everybody gets excited about *Victorian* Mad Science. That's the sexy Mad Science, what with all its gauges and brass fittings and bizarre rays -- and, sure, the clothing options really do sell the concept. It's a legitimately enticing well of organized insanity, coupled with scientific revelations, and powered by potent metaphysical energies.

It's still not the *only* time these conditions existed, dammit. Restoration-era England has a lot to offer the would-be Mad Scientist! A wicked court that still valued scientific enquiry! The Golden Age of Alchemy! Truly impressive wigs! Admittedly, it all got shut down the next century when Sir Isaac Newton decided to mainstream *his* Mad Science and make it stick, the cad -- but there are things that can still be properly mined.

Alas, one of those things is Bedlamite Dust. You get it by bleeding a madman of his black bile, then alchemically boiling the humour through a fine-mesh golden strainer. The residue left on the strainer is then collected, wetted, coalesced into a mass, carefully dried, then powdered. One constantly raving madman can produce a single dose per month without taking harm; that same madman can be terminally harvested for a single dose. Most creators of

Bedlamite Dust tend to be on the more callous end of that particular production spectrum.

The results are arguably worth it. A dose of Bedlamite Dust is a cure-all, in fine homeopathic fashion: whoever takes it is immune to all forms of disease for the next month (with two exceptions). This absolutely includes things that would be otherwise untreatable, like certain mental illnesses -- or aggressive Stage IV cancers. Current cancers disappear; future cancers never form. For the next month.

Unfortunately -- well, actually, this entire situation is *already* unfortunate. I mean, milking a human being for selfishly therapeutic purposes is already pretty dark, all on its own. What makes it worse is that Bedlamite Dust also encourages a certain mental instability in the long-term user (this is one of the two exceptions to the Dust's powers). The effect usually can be countered with a judicious course of regular antidepressants, which is admittedly a small price to pay for an otherwise disease-free life. Most people taking the drug can handle it. After all, it's not like they're going to get melancholic over the human cost, are they?

There's one other problem, though. You see, even Mad Scientists get sick -- but taking Bedlamite Dust is

contraindicated for them. Mad Science itself is not treatable by Bedlamite Dust, you see. In fact, it makes the condition *worse*. The antidepressants will quickly do nothing, either. That would be normally an indication that the cure might quickly become worse than the disease. And that it should be avoided entirely by the sensible.

...So, remember how they call it *Mad Science*, again?

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