

I arrived this morning by horse. After checking in my steed with a very amenable and friendly stablehand, I sought to enter the gate. The guards gave me no trouble - no doubt word of my arrival had been sent ahead. Whatever ill is worrying this town is clearly of great import to their local Lord. I look forward to meeting him tomorrow.

The inn I am staying at does a lot to contrast the dreary weather. Like those outside the town's walls, the staff here are exceedingly welcoming, even going so far as to have a room ready and waiting for me. The barkeep looks old, but he carries himself with a spirit unmatched by many of my youthful peers. His assistant, a young woman, seems quiet and reserved, but I imagine so would I when compared to the barkeep.

The room itself is quiet. A bit damp, but for a port town it is remarkably well insulated from the salty breeze, and even the heavy mist currently about us barely seeps through the shutters. I unpacked my things, and found to my dismay that I had not brought my journal. Fortunately this book was in a draw beside the bed. Presumably a prior guest's, there are a couple of pages of writing, though they are written in some arcane text I cannot fathom. I asked the barkeep his thoughts on the writings, and he just looked at me like I was crazy. Not one for prying through old customer's things, I imagine. The only parts of note on the first few entries are what look like water damage, where thumbs might hold the page. Not particularly surprising, given the location, but their being solely on the inscribed pages does make me wonder.

The Lord sent for me this morning. The guards knew my name, but did not give me theirs. Anonymity helps them stay distant I suppose. Once in the small fortress that is used as the town hall, I was escorted to a minor antechamber, whereupon the Lord examined me with watchful eyes.

His tone, when he spoke, was one of a kind friend, taking pity on me as if I had suffered something unfortunate. A little unnerving, I admit, but I can only assume he is projecting some sort of sadness for his town's fate onto me, such that I can appreciate the grief that haunts him.

He told me of the disappearances. It started with a couple, guests to the town, who had visited as part of a tour of the coast. They had arrived, been as polite and generous as visitors are expected to be, and had asked to visit the mines. As I understand, these mines are not closed fully, but work on them had stopped for the season as weather prevented the current export from being fully completed. Once in the mines, both the couple and their guide did not return.

At this point the Lord had presented me with a bowl of fruit. I took one, graciously, but I admit it seemed rather sour. I tried my best to pass off the tang as

something else, but I fear my bluff was unconvincing, for he did not take a fruit of his own, and set the bowl aside, out of reach.

I finished my conversation with the Lord and made my way towards the mines. The guard outside nodded me in, though he looked rather confused as to why I was there. I told him of my investigations and he seemed a bit more assured, though there was still that slight edge of disbelief. His rather simplistic tour of the - admittedly equally simple entrance cavern - displayed a lack of attention that demanded I enquire after most of the relevant details. He gave them to me, after a pause, but did so in such a tired manner that I wonder if I am the only investigator on this case.

A lady stopped me as I returned to my room, looking quite distraught. From her appearance - and many other patrons' - it appears a lack of sleep drove her babble. A few words, I understood - dog, help, rat, sorry, please - and - fortunately for me - she ended by handing me an address. I reassured her that I would come first thing in the morning, as I have no other real leads, and try to help her as best I can.

I am rather startled, to say the least. I had begun to suspect this investigation would be closed quite soon, but today I felt something. What it was, I am not certain, but there is certainly something.

I went to see the old lady, who explained to me, in various forms of dialect, that she had a rat problem in her basement rooms. As someone well acquainted with rodents, I was more than happy to assist in clearing out some of the pests. What I saw down there was extraordinary. Huge rats, almost a dozen of them, covered the floor. One of them was about the size of my old dog - whom I used to bring with me on investigations such as these - and reached almost my hip when it reared to attack. That was when I felt it, something in the way it looked at me, with almost feared familiarity.

It was an unnerving few minutes that followed as I steadily dispatched the rats, each looking more ragged and sinister than the last. When I rose back to the lady's main rooms, she looked at me in a sort of quiet sadness, and - most strangely - let out an odd whining noise before collapsing in tears. I stayed with her a few moments to help her calm down, and with surprising clarity she explained to me how it almost felt like the rats had been her friends, since they had been down there for so long. The relief of being free of the problem and the conflict of her weird emotions towards the vermin had clearly released her mind of the madness she'd exhibited prior.

I made my way back to the inn, and to my surprise it was much emptier than it had been the last few nights. What few conversations were in progress came to a gentle pause as I entered, but slowly resumed as I retrieved a drink and retreated to my room. The barman looked pale, almost sickly, tonight. Actually, many of the patrons also looked a bit exhausted too. Perhaps an illness has begun to spread. I shall wrap up warm tomorrow.

Rain. More rain than I have seen in a long while. I stayed at the inn most of the day, as the torrents poured down outside the windows. Not many braved the elements to reach the inn, either. A day wasted, but also spent recovering from yesterday's violence. Perhaps this is a good excuse to sleep some more.

The fog that enshrouded the town as I arrived has seeped through the streets in a low mist. Whatever illness wracked the town has clearly claimed several in the night. The streets have a body on each corner, and a quiet squelch under my feet makes me suspect puddles of blood hide underneath the mist.

Whilst doing my best to ignore the disturbing street decor, I revisited the Lord. He confirmed my suspicions of the plague, though he said he knew not what kind of illness it was. His eyes told a different story. I asked if I was at risk of catching it, and after a brief pause, he said no. I will keep cautious regardless, though his attempts at reassurance did have some effect. I barely noticed the squelching on my return.

I noticed for the first time today, that the inn has very limber wood for its flooring. Springy, and with a soft bounce that doesn't so much as squeak. I almost feel like my shoes sink ever so slightly into the floorboards as I walk, which is a new experience. I will ask what kind of wood it is in the morning.

As I walked past the town chapel this morning, I noticed something most peculiar. A badge lay on the soil, turned over and half covered. I picked it up, and found to my surprise that I recognised it. It was of my organisation, my guild of investigators. I went to compare it to my own, but it seems I left that with my journal at home. Still, it is strange that I should find it here. It does strengthen my suspicion that there is another at work in this town, although I am curious why we have not been informed of each other by now. As I turned to leave, I almost felt like someone was watching me, but as I turned I caught my coat on a hedge, and startled some wildlife. As such, I was too slow to catch any watchers that may have been there.

As for my investigation, I am making slow progress. Although, I have managed to secure an interview with the priest of the chapel to ask about my associate. We meet soon, so I shall finish this entry later.

I arrived this morning, my arduous trek finally reaching its destination. My feet are most sore, and I look forward to finally getting some rest. I stumbled past the rather vacant looking guards at the gate, and into the inn. The barkeep barely said anything as I

secured a room, and asked no questions, presumably seeing the tired state I was in. It is fortunate too, for I was distracted greatly by the facial hair that seems to be the style in this town. All the patrons had these wispy, pointy moustaches that only served to make their noses appear large.

The barkeep handed me this notebook as I headed for my room. There are other entries, other pages, filled with various writings that aren't in the common tongue. Some sort of guest book perhaps? I keep a journal myself when at home, and had intended to do so here as part of my investigation, though I fear I have lost my notebook in one of the scuffles with the local fauna on my way here. This book will suffice for now, and if the barkeep is upset by it I will replace it when I leave.

My fingernails caught me today. It seems my journey has let them grow long, almost claw-like. Not difficult to take care of, but striking in that this has not been a problem before.

More importantly, today I saw the Lord of the town as an official start to my investigation. He had this sad, contemplative look in his eyes as he explained the sickness wracking the town to me. Halfway through our discussion he drew a bowl of fruit from under the table. I took one, and was amazed at how rich it was. I can only assume the Lord has his fill of the fruit when he likes, for he took none as we spoke, despite my raving on the quality of his fruit. I do wonder if perhaps he has an allergy to them, for there was a brief moment of something - envy, remorse, pity? It was difficult to tell, the flash of emotion so quick across his face.

I am keen to start, and I have heard that there will be rain tomorrow, so tonight I am to do a bit of snooping.