

Hearthfall: Ep. 1 | Rats In The Tower (Part I)

Grotto

GENTRY

You said... it was less... than 30 seconds... to swim in.

ILYA

What... too much... for you? Come on. Over... there.

Narrator

The two thieves collapse onto the rocky shore of the grotto, drinking in gulps of air like a starving beggar handed day old soup.

GENTRY

moderately catching breath Where are we?

ILYA

moderately catching breath Grotto. Should be under the tower.

GENTRY

How'd you know about this way in anyway?

ILYA

You know that barmaid from the Thirsty Goat? Helly, or Nelly, or Penny, or some shit.

GENTRY

You mean Lynn?

ILYA

That's it! Lynn. Knew I was close.

GENTRY

Penny and Lynn aren't-

ILYA

interrupting Anyways, turns out during one of his trips to court, Davos had taken a fancy to her. Ended up spending a lot of time in this tower of his. Wasn't

sure why a pretty young thing like that agreed to pleasuring the old wort at first. Anyways, the way I hear it ol' Dav-y has got a bit of a... specific appetite to him. And Lynn here ends up being of a certain... persuasion. Here, change into this.

GENTRY

What's this?

ILYA

Some dry gear. Kept 'em in the pack we got off Demi and his crew. Keeps 'em from getting wet. Can't be slopping around all over the tower.

GENTRY

What about y-

ILYA

Brought my own, too.

GENTRY

You brought an extra set for me?

ILYA

Yeah I knew you'd be too stupid to think that far ahead.

GENTRY

Oh.

ILYA

Like I was saying, one day Brynn-

GENTRY

Lynn.

ILYA

-decides to go peeking through some of Davos' more valuable commodities. She'd been pocketing odds and ends from him since the start. She wasn't one for charity when it came to amorous congress, if you hear me, but seems as though Davos was fine turning a blind eye. But what most people don't know is that she's got a penchant for moonsalts. It's why half of her face is all fucked up. Can't even smile right.

GENTRY

I thought you said she was pretty?

ILYA

Now, she starts going through Davos' personal stash, but Davos catches her.

GENTRY

Are you sure Davos-

ILYA

dismissively He's still in Durnhill. Thadd's been tailing him for weeks now, little leech knows his routine inside and out now. He won't be back until morning. Let's get moving, the sooner we're in and out, the sooner Corvo gets his fancy box, and the sooner we get paid.

NARRATOR

The companions rise, searching the unyielding stony walls. Gentry's eyes scan the cavern, lingering on the center pool from which they entered.

ILYA

Don't go getting cold feet on me now. Start seeing if you can find a way into the tower. In and out, you hear?

GENTRY

Yeah... yeah. I hear. Wait, if Davos caught Lynn, how did she get out?

ILYA

He *caught* her, but he didn't *catch* her. Loses his mind, he does, starts screaming at her, demanding to know what she took. So she bolts, Davos chasing her like a mad man all the way down here. She knows that its either dive into the water or get turned into something unnatural. So she dives in and just starts swimming. Makes it through that little tunnel, *not unlike* present company here, and finds herself just off the shore of Quillstone Lake.

GENTRY

And she told you all this, then?

ILYA

Yup.

GENTRY

flat, unbelieving Really?

ILYA

Yup.

GENTRY

Why?

ILYA

She got all sweet on me a fortnight back. Lovely gal.
Shame about her face.

GENTRY

Why would she get all sweet on you, of all people?

Ilya

Told her she had a nice smile.

NARRATOR

The older thief grins at his conquest of the moonsalt-addled girl.

GENTRY

-pause- So, we're looking for a box?

ILYA

Fancy box.

GENTRY

Does it... do anything?

ILYA

Holds stuff, I reckon. I don't know, it gets us filthy rich, that's what it does.

GENTRY

Why does Corvo want it?

ILYA

Didn't ask.

GENTRY

Why not?

ILYA

impatient We don't need to know, and he wouldn't have told us anyway.

GENTRY

Aren't you a bit... curious, though? Why would Davos have something Corvo wants?

ILYA

All I care about is getting that box, getting paid, and keeping my skin.

GENTRY

Keeping your skin? What do you mean *keeping* your skin.

ILYA

Corvo flays people that botch a job.

GENTRY

incredulous He *flays* people?!

ILYA

Yup.

GENTRY

As in, tears off their skin. He flays people.

ILYA

Yup.

GENTRY

regretful You might have mentioned that...

ILYA

Just did, didn't I?

GENTRY

Would he flay... all three of us? You, me, and Thadd. Or just.. you know...

ILYA

impatient Stop asking questions and go that way, see if you can find a way in. I'll go this way. The girl said there would be a door.

NARRATOR

The two split up, Gentry lost in thought at the possibility of being undressed from his skin. He approaches a curtain of moss that glows with a dispassionate green light.

GENTRY

Haven't seen Vexil moss since I was a kid, not humid enough most places. We used to-

NARRATOR

Gentry glances over his shoulder, realizing he talks to no one in particular. He steps towards the moss, and a sharp crack rings out underfoot. He looks down. Bones litter the ground around him. He stumbles backwards, crying out, landing on the charnel ground. Torn clothing and tenuous sinew still cling to the remains. Some of it seems particularly fresh.

GENTRY

whispers Ilya. ***yells*** Ilya!

ILYA

Keep your voice down-, oh, shit.

NARRATOR

Ilya pulls him from the carnage, bones splintering as they give way to Gentry's weight.

GENTRY

panicked Ilya, it's a fucking graveyard down here.

ILYA

Well, we don't know, it could be anim-

GENTRY

Ilya there are fucking, human skulls!

ILYA

Yeah... yeah you're right. Looks like ol' Davos has got himself quite a collection down here. Unlucky sods.

GENTRY

calming down I thought Davos was just one of those book mages, that spend their days studying?

Pause.

ILYA

Everyone needs a hobby.

GENTRY

Ilya, look. There's a ladder behind the moss.

ILYA

A fucking ladder. That'd been nice to know Lynn. Look for a ladder, and *then* a door. ***sighs*** Up we go then.

The Study

NARRATOR

A trap door sits above them at the top of the climb. Gentry pushes it gently, and is surprised to find it unlocked. The two thieves emerge into a stone chamber, its walls lined with towering bookshelves full of tomes and scrolls. A leather-bound book lies open on a heavy oaken desk, the script on its pages glinting in the candlelight. Pedestals are scattered throughout the space, displaying curious trinkets and oddities. Centuries of magical study saturate the very stones of this sanctuary, the air itself thick with knowledge... and power.

ILYA

Get a move on, I'll check what he's got on the pedestals. You go check that door, and keep watch.

GENTRY

What, why? You said Davos won't be back until morning.

ILYA

That don't mean no one else is in the tower, genius. You ever stop to think before you talk? That group in the grotto is not the type of bone party I'm interested in joining. You keep watch, I'll look around.

GENTRY

Its locked. And... there's no handle. It looks like a handprint's been worn into the center. ***grunts*** Won't budge.

ILYA

Just listen for anyone coming.

GENTRY

sighs Alright, fine.

NARRATOR

A faint smirk spreads across Ilya's face as he turns his hungry eyes towards the room's treasures.

GENTRY

So what does this fancy box look like again?

ILYA

Small, about the palm of your hand. Black metal, gold inlay. Corvo called it an Aldaz Coffin. It's icy to the touch, though. And if you hold it, they say you can hear it whispering to you.

GENTRY

Whispering? Whispering what?

ILYA

No idea, we haven't had the pleasure of speaking yet.

GENTRY

So it's a cold, *talking*, fancy box. But it only talks if you hold it. Guess I'll go and hold every box in this tower, then.

ILYA

Shut up.

GENTRY

Why does Corvo want it anyway? I wouldn't want to cross Davos, even before the... bodies.

ILYA

You do realize you are quite literally in Davos' tower to rob him as we speak, don't you?

GENTRY

Yeah but... well, I mean Corvo's the one in charge of all this.

ILYA

And you think if Davos came back right now, you telling him that would make you pals? That knowing you aren't the brains of the operation, he'd just let you walk on out of here?

GENTRY

I mean... he might?

ILYA

You're an idiot. Nothing on these, gonna check the desk.

NARRATOR

Gentry notices that several pedestals no longer bear the artifacts they did mere moments ago. He glances at Ilya flipping through the pages of the leather-bound book. His pack is noticeably fuller.

GENTRY

mutters Ah right, watch the door while I line my pockets. Seems right fair- what was that?

NARRATOR

An almost imperceptible melody pulls his attention from his self-indulgent partner. A single, smooth stone lies unimpressively on a pedestal. Gentry walks over, Ilya still enraptured with the tome's contents.

ILYA

Looks like Davos has been up to some dark shit.

NARRATOR

Gentry picks the stone up off the pedestal. It feels... almost, familiar?

GENTRY

Ilya, did you see this stone? It's warm.

ILYA

Great. We need one that's icy. And talks to you. And is a box.

NARRATOR

Gentry looks down at the stone and drops it silently into his pocket.

GENTRY

Better than nothing, I guess.

NARRATOR

Gentry walks over to the desk, one hand still on the smooth, reassuring stone.

ILYA

Listen to this. "My experiments continue to yield progressive, yet incomplete, results. The Durnhill woman showed..."

DAVOS

The Durnhill woman showed remarkable progress, though her soul clung stubbornly to its mortal coil. Feeding her a combination of lanster oil, pilgrim wax, and vexil moss extract seemed to strengthen her through preparation. However, like those before, her body could not withstand a secondary host. Her flesh simply... unraveled. The Aldaz Coffin alone may not be powerful enough. ***sighs*** Most vexing. Still, I grow closer. My stockpile has begun to dwindle, though my pet has been most accommodating in securing supplies - despite Renthir's insistence we refrain from his workforce. Soon though, I shall solve this issue of transference.

ILYA

hushed Fallen Lady... He's gotta be experimenting on folks. Explains all those remains in the Grotto. And this was dated almost a year ago.

GENTRY

What's the most recent entry?

ILYA

Not sure, after this one it looks mostly like glyphs and drawings that- Uh, Gentry. Why aren't you watching the door? -pause- Gentry, what the hells is *that*?

NARRATOR

An orb of silver light floats in the center of the study. It has no discernible eyes, although it feels as if it peers at them.

GENTRY

I think thats... a mote. They're like those ones that pop up to guide you in the forest, but these ones are supposed to protect you by warning you of danger.

ILYA

So is it protecting this room, or us?

GENTRY

I don't know.

ILYA

Can it hurt us?

GENTRY

I don't know.

ILYA

Can it see us?

GENTRY

I... don't know?

ILYA

annoyed The fuck *do* you know, then?

NARRATOR

As if in response, the orb floats over to the trapdoor to the grotto. For a moment it pauses, before disappearing beneath the floor.

GENTRY

I think it wants us to leave. Should we? Maybe it's protecting us from something in the tower.

ILYA

Or it's trying to protect the tower *from* us.

NARRATOR

The orb floats back up through the floor in the center of the room before once more disappearing through the trapdoor. It repeats this cycle over and over.

ILYA

mock teaching Rule of thumb, Gentry. Don't take orders from flying balls of light.

NARRATOR

Ilya walks over to the orb as it continues its endless cycle of floating through the trapdoor. As it rises, Ilya swipes his hand through the orb, where it dissipates silently.

GENTRY

whisper shouts Ilya!

ILYA

What, you wanted to leave it behind us? Lighting up our way out?

GENTRY

What if it was trying to help us?

ILYA

sarcastic Well now we know. That way is the way out. Thanks, light ball! Let's go, we need to check the rest of the tower.

NARRATOR

Ilya walks over to the door, pushing on it with both hands. It denies him. He attacks it with his shoulder, but try as he might it won't move. Gentry's hand absently finds the warmth of the stone in his pocket. He stares at the door, the desire to touch it nearly impossible to resist. He reaches out slowly. Something calls to him, urges him on.

Gentry pushes Ilya away, placing a hand on the door. Warmth radiates through his hand, the stone he holds almost sighing with satisfaction. The door creaks outward, obedient, giving way to the ancient circular chamber beyond. Gentry looks at Ilya, whose eyes are narrowed.

ILYA

suspicious How'd you do that?

NARRATOR

The stone Gentry clutches in his pocket pulses with indignant warmth. Ilya had overlooked it once, and now it seemed the stone wanted nothing to do with him.

GENTRY

fumbling I... I don't know. It just, it opened.

ILYA

So you just... pushed on it, then, yeah? And it just opened for ya? Without so much as a magical please, then?

GENTRY

Yes!

ILYA

There something you ain't telling me?

GENTRY

No, I mean, it just opened. I dunno. It just opened. Should... should we go in?

ILYA

Yeah... yeah. After you.

Grand Tower Hall

NARRATOR

Gentry slips past the thief's outstretched arm into a large, circular room. Four massive pillars ring the chamber, their surfaces etched with faded runes that seem to shift in the flickering torchlight. Iron sconces bracket each column, their flames casting long shadows that writhe across the granite walls.

GENTRY

This place is massive. How are we supposed to find a little box in here?

ILYA

voice low Take this.

NARRATOR

Ilya eyes the dancing shadows along the tower walls warily as he pulls out a Moonstone. The soft blue glow illuminates his rough features. He might have been handsome... once. He tosses it to Gentry, who misses, fumbling the stone through his clumsy fingers.

ILYA

Shhh! Get moving. And shut up.

NARRATOR

Gentry bristles at the admonishment and crosses the room towards large twin doors opposite him. He gives them a gentle tug, and again to his surprise, they open.

GENTRY

Ilya, look. These doors lead outside. Could- could we have just walked in the front door from the beginning? I nearly drowned swimming in here.

ILYA

Just because something opens from the inside, doesn't mean it'll open from the outside, you twit. And since we went through all that trouble getting *in*, do us a favor and try to find something *inside*. Would you close 'em, already?

GENTRY

Alright, alright...

NARRATOR

The two thieves prowl the perimeter of the room, approaching another door with the same indentation marks on its surface as the first. The same anticipatory warmth of the stone tickles Gentry's palm. Again, he reaches his hand towards the door, until Ilya smacks it away.

GENTRY

Ow! What was that for?

ILYA

Something's not right here.

GENTRY

alerted, looking around What, do you see something?
What is it?

ILYA

No, something's not right with you. How come these
doors open for you and not me? You been here before?

GENTRY

What? Of course not. Maybe this one will open for you?
We don't know that they only open for me.

NARRATOR

Ilya gives Gentry a flat look before making a show of
struggling against the door. He finally steps aside,
gesturing mockingly at it.

GENTRY

Huh.

ILYA

You keepin' somethin' from me?

GENTRY

incredulous laugh Right, I'm the one keeping
something from you. And nearly everything worth taking
in the last room just magically appeared in your
pocket. You plan on sharing that with me?

NARRATOR

The stone pulses approvingly. Ilya advances on his
companion until their faces are inches apart, the
stench of his stale breath hot against Gentry's face.

ILYA

voice low, dangerous Not what I meant. This is *my*
job and *I* brought you on. Corvo trusted me with this.

GENTRY

Alright, alright I get it. I just-

ILYA

I don't think you do. Cause you double-cross me, you
double-cross him, you hear?

GENTRY

confused Double-cross- what? Ilya what are you talking about?

ILYA

getting angry, voice rising I put that snake Thadd on tailing Davos for a reason. You, I brought because-

NARRATOR

He stops, his cold, greedy eyes searching Gentry's face for answers that neither of them had.

ILYA

serious Can I trust you or not?

NARRATOR

Gentry avoids Ilya's gaze. It does not go unnoticed.

GENTRY

Ilya, you can trust me. You can trust me.

NARRATOR

The threads of this selfish pact begin to fray at their carelessly woven edges. The stone in Gentry's pocket warms with glee.

ILYA

We'll see. Well, on with it will ya? Open it.

NARRATOR

Gentry steps forward, mysterious warmth in his hand as he presses his palm against the door. The door swings open silently. Ilya stares at Gentry impassively, waiting. With a sigh, Gentry crosses into the next room.

The Workshop

ILYA

Well this looks promising.

GENTRY

It looks like a workshop.

NARRATOR

A workbench stands against the wall across from them, laden with foreign items. Glass cases display bottled substances and alchemical equipment. Chests sit resolutely along the walls.

ILYA

Start digging through these chests. I'll see what ol' Davos has stored in the cases. Ulfrim will pay a lot for these, those alchemist types are always buzzing around his shop.

GENTRY

Aren't we just here for Corvo's box?

ILYA

mimicking Aren't we here for Corvo's box? Shut up and look for it then. Dunno why you're so chafed at me grabbing shit if you're not even gonna grab anything yourself.

NARRATOR

Ilya turns away, quickly lost in thought as he pulls elixirs off the shelf, stuffing the occasional one into his pack. Gentry turns, his own greedy eyes searching for valuables mere moments after questioning Ilya for the same. Oblivious to his own hypocrisy.

ILYA

mutters Looks like Davos isn't the healer type...

GENTRY

sighs Hope Thadd is right about Davos not being back until morning.

NARRATOR

Gentry walks over to a glass display case. Potions and reagents. Long pieces of metal that look like surgical instruments. He begins to turn away when he freezes. A small, black box with golden inlay sits within the case. Slowly, he looks over his shoulder at Ilya. He's still distracted, now stuffing entire rows of bottles into another empty sack.

ILYA

muttering Ulfrim will pay a hoard for this.

NARRATOR

Gentry slowing reaches into the case. Surely others besides Corvo would pay highly for this. His fingers brush against the dark metal box. Smooth. And icy. His heart pounds in his ears.

Ilya is selfish. Greedy. He's already pilfered enough to earn a small fortune.

Gentry wraps his hand around the small box. Ethereal voices fill his mind, whispers of laughter. Heart ache. Of secrets... and loss. Are these... memories? He must move quickly. The coldness of the box begins to burn his skin. He quickly pulls it out of the cabinet, knocking a bottle to the ground where it shatters, before shoving the box into his pocket.

ILYA

What're you doing? I told you to get the chests... what've you got there?

GENTRY

defensive What, you're the only one that gets a swipe at Davos' private stash? You're not the only one Ulfrim buys from.

ILYA

Is that right.

NARRATOR

Gentry looks at Ilya's unreadable face. Ilya glances down at Gentry's pocket, where the icy Aldaz Coffin now sits.

ILYA

What is it, a potion?

GENTRY

Yeah, little green one. Not sure what it does.

ILYA

-pause- Show me.

GENTRY

What, why?

NARRATOR

Time seems to crawl. Gentry's hand instinctively drifts towards his dagger. Ilya notices.

GENTRY

It's my loot. You got plenty already. I'm not giving you mine, too.

ILYA

low, dangerous Don't care about your loot, Gentry. But that right there don't look much like a potion.

GENTRY

Ilya we don't have time for this, what if Davos-

NARRATOR

Gentry stops, blood draining from his face. A shadowed behemoth stands in the doorway, unmoving. The gleam of the room's torches dances in its eyes, and not just those on its face.

GENTRY

whispers, stammering Ilya. Ilya.

ILYA

Just show me what you got, Gentry. This doesn't have to get ugly.

NARRATOR

Reflected flames shine over the creature's entire body. It steps forward, revealing its sewn-together, patchwork frame. Dozens of faces. All eyes trained on Gentry, their slack-jawed mouths open, drooling.

GENTRY

whispers Ilya. Please.

NARRATOR

The golem trundles forward, its long arms nearly dragging across the stone floor. Its eyes continue to stare at Gentry, his own eyes locked in horror. A guttural moan comes from a mouth on the golem's shoulder.

NARRATOR

Ilya whips around at the new voice, drawing his dagger. His eyes widen in fear, darting between the stitched-together abomination and the open doorway behind it.

GENTRY

screams Ilya!

NARRATOR

The golem lifts a massive arm, slamming it against Ilya. The short man flies through the air, crashing against the wall and sinking down onto the workbench.

NARRATOR

The beast turns toward Gentry, raising its arm again. It smashes into him, sending him hurtling into the chests and crates on the opposite side of the room. Ilya shakes his head clear, his vision focusing just in time to see a small dark object tumble from Gentry's pocket and skitter across the stone floor. Gentry does not move, his head lolling to the side. As the golem lumbers toward the unconscious Gentry, Ilya launches himself onto the creature's back, driving his dagger deep into its thick neck. It grasps for the thief, who scrambles around to its front, desperately stabbing at the cluster of eyes sewn into its belly. Black ichor spurts from the wounds. The golem's leg sweeps forward in a powerful kick, sending Ilya sprawling across the floor in front of the workbench.

ILYA

gasping Gentry wake up!

NARRATOR

Gentry stirs. A mouth beneath one of the bleeding eyes speaks.

GENTRY

drowsy What is happening...

ILYA

Gentry get the fuck up!

ILYA

panicking Gentry fucking get off your ass!

NARRATOR

The golem advances on Ilya, as another mouth gargles.

NARRATOR

The golem grabs Ilya by the throat. Ilya kicks pathetically at the monster, precious air denied to his burning lungs. A mouth sinks its teeth into the flesh of Ilya's leg. A silent scream escapes his lips.

NARRATOR

Gentry gasps, thrust back to reality from blissful unconsciousness. A shard of wood sticks painfully out of his thigh. He looks at Ilya, whose eyes now bulge in their sockets. Gentry struggles to his feet, but freezes when he sees the small black box on the ground a mere armlength away.

Ilya reaches behind, grasping for anything that may give him a few more precious seconds of life. He grabs a quill and jams in repeatedly into the golem's arm, causing the beast to drop one hand from Ilya's throat.

ILYA

large gasp for air Gentry what the fuck are you waiting for!

NARRATOR

Gentry looks up at Ilya's pleading face. The golem grabs Ilya's arm, forcing the quill from his grip. Gentry scrambles across the floor, snatching the box and shoving it in his boot before looking up. Ilya's eyes are locked on him, his face a mix of confusion and betrayal as the golem snaps Ilya's arm with a sickening crack.

ILYA

screams

NARRATOR

Gentry limps to the glass cabinet, snatching multiple bottles. Ilya hangs limply in the golems clutches, his skin pale.

GENTRY

panicked One of these has to do something. Come on, come on. Come on! ***throwing grunts*** Come on, dammit!

NARRATOR

Bottles repeatedly shatter against the golem until flesh begins to sizzle, smoke rising as liquid trickles down its form, digesting everything in its path. It drops Ilya on the table as it dissolves into a puddle of bile and viscera. Gentry staggers over to Ilya, shaking him awake.

GENTRY

Ilya, wake up. Come on, wake up!

ILYA

groans What in the hells... what happened. Where is that... that thing?

GENTRY

Its... there. On the ground. Threw a bunch of Davos's bottles at it and it just... melted. We gotta go.

ILYA

What was it talking about? Those things it was saying?

Gentry

I... I think those were their faces. The people it killed. Look, we have to get out of here, what if there are more of those things!

NARRATOR

Ilya slides off the table, cradling his arm against his chest. His boots land in the simmering puddle of gore beneath him. He glances down, disgusted.

ILYA

We keep going.

GENTRY

Ilya!

ILYA

We keep going. We don't finish this job, we're good as dead.

GENTRY

If we stay here, we ARE dead! Look at us! Your arm is near snapped in half. I got a damn spear in my leg, and-

ILYA

sudden What's in your pocket?

GENTRY

Ilya are you serious? We have to go-

ILYA

I saw something come out, and you grabbing it while... while that thing had me.

GENTRY

Ilya there's no time-

ILYA

Show me.

NARRATOR

Suspicion lies thick upon the air. Gentry hesitates before pulling out the smooth stone, which vibrates in anger at being removed from its comfortable home.

GENTRY

It's the stone from the first room. I didn't want you to take it like the rest.

NARRATOR

Ilya plucks the stone from Gentry's hand, turning it over in his own.

ILYA

Flat. Not delivered suspiciously, but not believing of Gentry's story either Huh. Doesn't feel warm to me. Must be pretty important to you, going after it in the middle of all that.

GENTRY

Ilya-

NARRATOR

Ilya tosses the stone back to Gentry, who quickly places it back in his pocket. Ilya's eyes flash down at Gentry's boots before turning for the doorway.

ILYA

We keep on. We're not leaving without that box.

NARRATOR

Gentry stumbles after Ilya, his punctured thigh screaming with every step.

Grand Tower Hall

GENTRY

Ilya. Ilya, I really think we should g- oh, gods...

NARRATOR

A man hangs against a pillar, suspended against the stone by a large hook pierced through his shoulder. His eyes stare lifelessly; his body riddled with trauma. Blood drips unnaturally loud into a pool that collects beneath him. Half of his face hangs loosely off of the meat underneath, a single surgical laceration running below his chin and around to his ear.

GENTRY

shocked Oh gods is.. is that...

ILYA

grim It's Thadd.