

In the Catacombs

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“it is always the easy jobs that catch you out” the spectre rasped, tugging at the collar of his simple tunic “I survived the vipers nest of political scheming and my various benefactors jobs, I even joined the legion and spent 6 long months in that frigid hell called Hibernia just to slay the son of a noble who had slighted a patron over an insufficient wedding dowry.”

The chuckle that emanated from him was an ugly thing, sounding like a rake dragged across stone, grating out of lungs that had long ceased functioning.

“I was dispatched to Italy, tasked with rooting out the Christian plague whose proliferation was beginning to impede my master’s machinations. A paltry venture for one with my skills but I am but a scalpel to be wielded as the physician sees fit and not to question the infection to be cut out.”

“Through these wretched halls I stalked them, the faithful are always quick to talk when the prospect of meeting their maker is fast becoming a reality. Through the catacombs they scurried like mice, fleeing ever deeper into the darkness and away from my blazing torch, illuminating their fallacies and folly.”

The emaciated skin of the spectre’s lips drew back in a facsimile of a smile exposing rotting gums and a mouth of yellowed, jagged teeth.

“When killing vermin one is best to poison the bait, I have yet to meet any man or woman who isn’t a slave to their stomach, out of their bolt holes they carefully crept, examining the new delivery from their butcher, eyes darting from shadow to shadow, twice falling upon my hide and sure I was made I aimed the crossbow at the vermin but hunger can make even the hardened soldier lackadaisical and these were far from being worthy adversaries, as such I remained unseen, tucked in deep shadow with the ruin of several crates to camouflage my physique.”

“Ravenously they consumed the beef before passing the wine skin between them, quickly the tainted water took them, legs suddenly turning to lead as the stupor took hold, knives falling from limp fingers. Savage was my delight knowing the last thing they laid eyes upon was my form, a veritable avatar of the reaper.”

An almost serene expression passed over their gaunt features as it stared off into the distance, lost in their memories of the past.

“The human body is a fascinating canvas when creating art, but as a medium it can be quite temperamental, flesh can tear, sinew may lose its elasticity and on top of all that it’s called dead weight for a reason. Suspending them in a macabre mockery of their deity was particularly satisfying pay off for the time spent man handling the corpses into place. The stench of blood and offal was overpowering in the cramped halls, but its impact was worth the malodour and would undoubtedly lead more of the vermin to their demise.”

A slight drooping of their skeletal shoulder would suggest they are saddened by their current situation, but can one even connect such a human expression to such an inhuman entity?

“My arrogance caused my demise” the spectre remarked bitterly, “As I stood and appreciated the gallery of desecrated corpses, marvelling at how the blood pooled and slowly expanded, a constant drip, drip, drip from slashed throats. So, enthralled in the spectacle my assailant went unnoticed until stars exploded across my vision, and I was pitched forwards into the cold embrace of unconsciousness.”

The gaunt head slowly turns to regard me, dark pools of shadow obfuscate the revenants’ eyes, but I can feel their gaze sear into my soul, and I fight the urge to cower away from its scrutiny.

“I know not how long I slumbered but upon my return to the waking world I did not recognise my surroundings, slowly as I took stock of my situation I noticed the lack of weapons upon my person and cursed my foe’s lack of resolve to deliver onto me the quick mercy I offered their kin, but content to let me waste away in this catacomb, condemned to a slow and agonising death.”