Thallan's Journal #1 - The Man's Promise.

Day 3.

Dear sister,

It always astounds me observing the invisible hand of self confidence in those oblivious to its exertion.

Only hours after the formation of our officers, do we rediscover confidence and embrace the heady aroma of pride. How the psyche yearns for dominance.

I fear we are not yet ready to partake in the comfort of self assurance quite yet.

And fears soon realized.

Our vessel, although now not plummeting to a pelagic demise is still but a leaking retreat. And our crew, if I may be so audacious as to label them thus, are disturbingly overt in divided loyalties. Confidence it seems can sever both ways.

But where the evidence of this escalated confidence in seemingly such dire circumstance? I will need to explain further of our recent events.

Our emboldened officers make landfall again to the nearby isle, now known to be beset with the undeath and flocks of enraged insects.

Each sharing an equal hunger to quarry themselves into our fleshy members.

Our island quest? To traverse the lonely mountain seeking a new mast and, concurrently to lay conquest to a previously spied redoubt and plundering therein.

Beloved kin, you behold the transition?

Initially our end was that of plain survival. Now eager eyes turn to subjugation, if even of putrid swamp and stench clouded mountain top.

Sister, I know you have already discerned how this will unfold.

Alighting among now skittish crabs, comfortably seen merely as food, their threat eroded over a single night's rest, we stride boldly towards the hilltop encampment.

Are scouts sent forward?

Perhaps a band circumvents the scene before the precious elite enter?

Nay, for we are now the vanquisher of this unrevealed realm.

The stench of undeath is unmistakable, even to the unconditioned nostrils of my colleagues. Yea, the cursed are that brash about us.

Yet we stride forwards, ever the invincible.

Long abandoned, the inner walls are engulfed in vines. A majestically withered tree resides over them.

Almost peaceful to mine eyes, if not the oppressive hang of death round about.

A single pond escapes through a pitiful stream away from this eerie visage.

A rickety hut stands yon. Enticingly.

Strangely at place in these ghoulish environs, our occultic physician has the prudence to probe the shack for unworldy auras at a safe distance.

I cannot help but feel the remaining cannot wait to storm to its interior, eager to plunder.

A simpletons steps are swift, yet the wise wayfare serenely.

Our militant members round the face of the hut. It's weathered rotten door hanging seductively open.

Blood of my blood, how the snare of seduction preys upon vainglorious desires!

I urge my colleagues to be mindful of our complete surrounds before entering.

Our band is capable yes, yet the breadth to action nearest the door is slim and oppressed. A mishap here could very well be our ruination.

Has your heart's pace quickened sister?

The hearty amongst us press forwards.

Of course I do not enter the now crowded margin. How could I?

So my recall is now at my cohort's recollection.

A partially gnawed and decomposed figure swings dreadfully from the feeble roof beams above. The frayed rope biting deep into the poor souls neck is self-afflicted. The upturned stool lying beneath the figure is testament to his deed.

A buzzing hum rests amid the noxious smell and rising unease.

The burly members of our troupe proceed further inwards, along with our masked enchanter. Fearlessness with curiosity.

The figure stirs. Somewhat unsurprisingly though macabre all the same. I pray I never bid familiar the sight of undeath. The living corpse tormentingly addresses the uninvited guests with repeated blabbering concerning goblinkin.

Our own mischievous imp, typically laissez-faire, takes opportunity offer riposte torment, riling the soul through native tongue.

A brief exchange, and our impish fellow casually affords permission to finish the dangling frame.

I remain unsure if pity or ruthlessness prevails in this act.

The next moments are unclear in the recollections of my peers.

Understandably as on approaching the ghoulish form, the surrounding vibrating din now erupts into a cloud of winged affliction.

I wrote of this aerial scourge not hours before. A biting, burrowing plaque of misery to be sure. A demanding ordeal in the open. Something else entirely within the confines of a tiny dwelling such as inhabited by my colleagues.

Perhaps it is well I was not among them, nor had I eyes on the suffering that ensued.

For my part I could only lend a menial ignition to a lone torch held at the doorway. Nature's elements it seemed were at least as efficient as wrought blades in these matters.

Then only in shouts and cries from within am I affiliated.

Perhaps at this I move forwards. O Annallee, how reckless have I become without your lenitive presence!

Through the doorway I sight our leading source of flame dwindling ineffectually on the tousled floor. A plume of alchemistic embers faltering nearby.

Then my companions; scattered, almost spent by the tumultuous malady mix of bot-flys and arachnids spiraling within.

I yearn to provide redemption but I cannot. I am not yet able.

Oh sister, how frustratingly unfacile I stood. Knowing I was only yet partially learned of the more potent mystical elements. How effective their production could have been. I must intensify my attainments!

So I do what I am able.

I invoke a phantasmal embodiment to reach out in my stead. There is no doubt it will fair better than my frail frame in such a tumolt.

I raise the torch from its rest, and catching a gulf of the swirling air, it licks into a healthier flare. Perhaps the swarm can be dissuaded from their malign insistency?

Now a fallen fellow is writhing near my feet.

Suddenly, compelled by my very intercession, the swarm is upon us. Upon me!

How did I not foresee this? Sister, can passion so easily cloud my judgement? How undisciplined have I become in these recent times?

From the lowliest of nature's creatures, I have not known such pain and discomfort. And in truth it was but a taste of what my companions must have endured. I must caution myself now not to judge these fellows by their acumen alone. Their deeds, though brash are not without considered merit.

Irori be praised as somehow the blighted miniatures do not find anchor on my frangible person. I doubt I would have had the constitution to dig them from my own flesh!

Retreating to a safe distance, there is the lure to keep moving. To escape this madness imposed by reckless audacity. The remembrance of a familiar slumped frame lying at the doorway requires my composure.

Somehow in my panic, my phantasmal hand has remained firm. Perhaps my inner world is not as chaotic as my external? I reach deeper into that world and ask for clarity.

Apparitionily the torch surges to and fro over my fallen cohort. The flare whorling as furious as the swarm it sought to contradict.

Dear sister, if you are appeasing your hunger or thirst while reading this, I humbly advise you empty your palate for the upcoming buffoonery.

You recall our beloved swollen-nosed slugger who would have been captain if not for bludgeoning his own face?

It is about this moment when he strides purposefully through the doorway, at considerable pace, carrying the very corpse, that was just moments prior, tormenting us with jeering babble, and quite possibly the sole source of the malignant infestation that now plaques us.

Did he mean to use his rotting baggage to induce the swarming plaque away from us?

Of course not dear sister. For that would have been a cogent enterprise.

Nay, he sought to bludgeon the swarm with his prized gangling and headless corpse!

Are you not now thankful of my warning to remove any gustation? As I'm sure you have now involuntarily done so in laughter!

Thankfully the demi-orc had wits enough to heed my abrupt instructions.

For my intention was to see that corpse as far from our locale as possible with the hope of taking the swarm with it.

Certainly not to have seen it shattered all over the doorway's mantle in a mindless rage!

The brute hurled the festering frame fifteen feet or more. What strength! I found new found pity for his smashed nose. What a bludgeon he must have gifted himself!

Concurrently our captain laid another alchemistic charge. Together with the propelled cadaver, dispersed the last of the flies.

We had prevailed.

However, our newly appointed officer ranks made for a very compunctious scene. Few had withdrew unscathed. Indeed some were in mortal peril.

Our caliginous mender, doubtlessly had kept our party alive, was now in her own mortal demise.

In our post-vistory, all were eager to see her yet live.

However, amazingly she seemed selfishly resolved in this task.

In her thankfully ineffectual resistance to our aid, I saw facets of myself.

Sweet Annallee, you know I mean not of somatic assistance for my frame is always asking in this regard. Of course I refer to my autonomy of mind.

Is this the destination in the path of self-assurance? If so, the arrival now seems all the less attractive.

So with my hands among that writhing, scratching flail of well-worn bandaged limbs, I felt both compassion and revulsion.

In that simple shanty, the officers of the The Man's Promise spent their full and found their limits.

Our thoughts were now only in the returning to the safe confines of our beleaguered vessel and enjoy its false refuge.

The invisible had of confidence that had assured our return to this isle had well departed from us.

I for one am thankful for its departure. For the next shack encountered may bear more than just biting mites.

An addendum.

Lying now in my bunk, I will admit, I am unduly weary from today's events. Both the vigorous externalities and revelations-intimate further burden my mien.

A small mercy however. Perhaps it is this weight that has has finally prosecuted the yearning of crude drink from me.

So for now I will find deeper solace in my research. Then dreams of our reunion.

Good night beloved.

Thallan