

Narrator: *Visions of events just recently occurred. The people of this narrative are:*

- Me, the NARRATOR.
- First we have AMADEUS, black rider of the Whispering Way, a powerful necromancer armed with blade and spell.
- Next is LAUREN, a young woman, barkeep of "The Walleyed Kraken"
- Next is TAM, a thin bald man, regular drinker at "The Walleyed Kraken"
- Next is JASPER, an old fisherman with weather-beaten skin and gnarled hands
- Last is VOICE, words from the darkness.

Narrator: *Night has fallen over Illmarsh. The wooden sign over the tavern's door depicts a squid-like beast with wide, silvery eyes, its tentacles reaching from the waves to grasp a gibbous moon. Amadeus shivers in the salty coastal air, and pushes open the door to the rickety building. Inside the flickering torchlight illuminates a number of patrons crowded round a small bar from which Lauren serves drinks. Seeing Amadeus, a hush of silence falls over the locals.*

Amadeus: I see.

Tam: What's that mean? "I see". You got something to say mister?

Amadeus: I see that the reception here is just as frosty as outside.

Lauren: Now sir, we'll have none of that language, you hear me. Now, sure, you ain't a local, and you proly ain't from Thrushmore neither, but I'll not have it be said that The Kraken ain't got no hospitality. You do want a drink dontcha?

Narrator: *Amadeus paces slowly up to the bar, his wide shoulders, black mist-shrouded armour and thick black cloak cutting a figure of power and wealth. From a black-gloved hand he slides a platinum coin onto the bar top.*

Amadeus: Indeed, I will have a drink. Elven wine if you have it. In fact, lets get *everyone* a drink. Let it not be said that the 'Merchants in Black' are not generous people.

Lauren: Elven wine it is sir.

Amadeus: And of course now comes the real reason for my drink. I would like some information. I am looking for a man by the name of Gaster Lucas my fellow, aha, 'merchant'. <he smiles>. Gaster has been staying in Illmarsh for the last few weeks.

Lauren: <glances at the patrons of the bar>. Gaster... Gaster... I'm sorry sir, I ain't heard of nobody by that name.

Amadeus: Oh come now, this is the only tavern in town. Gaster likes a drink as much as the next man; I'm certain one of you must have seen him. Tall man, goatee beard, black cloak. More gold, is that it? Another drink perhaps? <he tosses another platinum onto the bar>

Tam: You can take your gold mister, we ain't got no use for strangers' money here. There ain't been no one by the name of Gaster in here, not now, not ever. Take the lady's advice mister, and leave. We don't have no outsiders here.

Amadeus: Leave? I think not. I'm here for a business deal with Gaster, a very important business deal that could alter the destiny of thousands, including mine own. Do you know what I'm talking about?

Tam: No mister, nor do I think I want to. Like I said, no out-of-towners in Illmarsh at the moment, nor for a long time.

Amadeus: You're a damn liar.

Narrator: *Amadeus steps forward and whips a sharp dagger from his belt. With eldritch strength, he grabs the arm of Tam and thrusts it on the bar-top. Tam's ale jar falls to the floor, shattering pottery and beer. Amadeus raises his dagger and - slam! - there is a cry of pain from Tam as the dagger is thrust through his hand, pinning it to the bar. Blood seeps out over the bar top.*

Tam: Ahhhhhhhhh!

Amadeus: And now I have your attention. All of you <he waves his hand, crackling with black energy, at the rest of the tavern >. Don't even think of moving. I'll quarter the first man that comes at me, and don't think I haven't noticed you at the back with the knife. Now, speak. SPEAK! Tell me where Gaster Lucas is or I'll really lose my patience.

Tam: <obviously in pain> I've told you. Ahhhhh. There is no one by the name of Lucas. There ain't no foreigners in Illmarsh mister. Ahhhh.

Amadeus: And that's it. That is your final word?

Lauren: You heard what Tam says. You'll get the same words from all of us. We never heard of this man. Now you leave, you leave this place now sir. I'll be telling the sheriff about this in the morning, you can be sure of that.

Narrator: *Amadeus looks around and wrinkles his brow. For a moment, the only sound in the tavern is the low moaning of Tam.*

Amadeus: You lot aren't even worth zombie fodder. And if the sheriff comes after me I'll kill him and feed him to the grave-worms. Tell him just that. I'll find Gaster, you mark my words. And when the New Order arrives, this piss-hole of a village

will be wiped off the map.

Narrator: *Amadeus turns and exits "The Walleyed Kraken", the stares of the villagers following him as he leaves. Back in the darkness of the village, he buckles his cloak up and strolls down by the wharf, past fishing nets, coiled rope and empty barrels. He looks out into the blackness of the bay.*

Amadeus: Dammit Gaster, where are you? Don't screw up now. We need the Raven's Head or ...

Narrator: *His voice trails off as he sees, at the edge of his vision, illuminated by the gibbous moon, a colossal 'thing' rise out of the water. Perhaps the head of a huge sea-serpent, or the tentacles of a great kraken, it is unclear at this distance but one thing is for sure, it is big, very big. The head or whatever it is rises out of the water before diving again and disappearing beneath the waves.*

Amadeus: What in Urgathoa's name...

Jasper: In who's name?

Narrator: *Amadeus spins around, drawing an exquisite sickle and throwing up a shimmering magic ward in one quick move. But standing before him, bent double with a catch of fish is no great warrior but the old fisherman, Jasper.*

Amadeus: <lowers his blade>. State your business fool, before I remove the head from your shoulders. Not that such a thing stopped my brother, but it would end your faint flicker of a life I assure you.

Jasper: No need to use that kind of language sir, I'm just gathering my nets for the evening. I'll be out of your way in a jiffy, you have my apologies.

Amadeus: What was that thing?

Jasper: What was what thing?

Amadeus: That frackin' great serpentine beast out in the bay! What do you think I meant?

Jasper: Sorry sir, I didn't see anything out in the bay. It is rather dark. Have you been listening to Lauren up in the 'Kraken? She does like to tell a good story sir, ever such a talkative lass is she.

Amadeus: Yes, well I found her a little less hospitable. So you're saying you saw nothing. And I suppose next you'll be saying you've never heard of a Gaster Lucas, my companion, who has been staying in this little village for several weeks. Tall man, black cloak, just like mine.

Jasper: No sir, I can't say I do know him, very sorry. Now if you'll excuse me sir, I need to get the fish in, I surely do.

Amadeus: Yes, yes, whatever. Leave me, old man.

Narrator: *Jasper hobbles away into the darkness carrying his fish. Amadeus turns back towards the waters and screws up his face like he has bitten down on a lemon. Visions of glory flash through his mind, just out of reach. He sheathes his sickle which hangs limply by his side. He stands this way for some time, in silence. Just as he turns to go, a small glint of metal from underneath a fishing net catches his eye. He bends down to pick it up. It is a jewelled broach fashioned in the shape of a gagged skull. He turns it over and inspects the rear... "G.L." is carved in the back. His eyes narrow and he gazes back at the village.*

Amadeus: Old man! Return to me and explain this. Come back or I swear by all the gods I'll flay you and rip out your bones!

Narrator: *But there is no reply. He stands in the empty dock and screams into the night, waving the badge in the air.*

Amadeus: Listen to me you ignorant peasants. I am a servant of the Whispering Way. I wield power you can't even begin to imagine. You WILL answer me. Where is Gaster?! Where is the Raven's Head?! I'll kill you all if you don't answer me. I'll kill you all you hear! TELL ME NOW!

Narrator: *But the only sound is silence, and the lapping of the waves against the stony shore. Then, from behind him...*

Voice: Welcome to Illmarsh, Amadeus Rask.

Amadeus: Gaster, is that you?

Narrator: *He turns around and we fade to black.*