

- You still there?
- Yeah.
- I see 'em now. They're coming.
- ...Shit.
- It's pretty beautiful, actually.
- Yeah?
- Yeah.
- Tell me about it.
- It looks like a big glowing sun, but blue.
- Blue?
- Yep.
- Wow.
- It's sort of... glimmering? Hard to explain.
- Glimmering. Right.
- Or like... y'know when it's hot?
- When it's hot?
- Like, on the horizon.
- Oh yeah. Shimmering.
- Shimmering. Glimmering. Whatever.
- Yeah.
- ...You seem distant.
- I'm sorry.
- It's okay.
- It's hard, knowing you're going to...
- Yeah, okay. I'm sorry.
- Don't be... I wish I knew what to say..
- Don't stress. Everything's perfect.
- You sure?
- A hundred per cent.
- Okay.
- Seriously.
- You feelin' okay?
- A bit dizzy. On shitty O2 here. Keep getting these... white things, in my vision.
- Like migraines?
- Yeah, exactly.
- That sucks.
- Tell me about it.
- ...You're doing something special, y'know?
- Shut up.
- I mean it.
- I know.
- There'll be a statue of you here.
- A plaque, maybe.
- I'll force the INTD to commission a statue.
- *Laughter* Oh yeah?
- I promise.
- You have the authority for that?
- Maybe after the promotion.

- ...
- ... After the promotion, after the promotion.
- *Laughter*
- *Laughter*
- ... Thank you.
- ... for?
- Calling me. Before this.
- Shut up. I owe you this.
- You owe me noth-
- ... Hello?
- ...
- ... You there?
- ... Hey?
- Hey. You disappeared.
- Signal's fucked. Think as it gets closer... I don't know.
- Right. Yeah. Makes sense.
- One sec. Grabbing my rifle.
- Okay.
- ...
- ...
- ...
- Hello?
- ...
- Anne?
- ...
- ... I love you.
- ...
End of Transmission

Day Eight.

Secluded study has tested the integrity of my mind. The contents of the grimoire remain incomprehensible, but in recent days I have found myself affected by its strange characters. I recall as an unlearned youth, being moved by classical readings despite not fully understanding the depth of their story and language. This is a similar feeling.

The temptation to leave the manor grows with each day, though the knockings at the door have ceased. I assume the villagefolk now suspect my pursuit of darker knowledge—they questioned the nature of my research even before I began to investigate forbidden texts. I know they would not eagerly receive the physical changes the book has imposed upon me if I were to make myself seen. I myself have become frightened by what returns my stare in the mirror. My blackened veins and yellowed eyes.

I must not let these worldly concerns influence my work.

Lord Haddon

Dear Magda,

They fixed my eyes yesterday. I saw the moon for the first time. I'm not sure why I thought it would be bigger. It was pretty all the same. I took a photo of it, as if I was never going to see it again. I realised how silly that was.

Have you noticed how much better my writing has gotten? I believe the neural implants have helped me come a long way. I read copies of my old emails to you and laughed at how different and stupid I was. Aren't I so much better now?

I have a consultation booked in the new year for my legs. Some of the newer models can be hooked up to your nervous system. Haptic Synchronisation, they called it. It shortens the time it takes to walk normally after the surgery. I think I will opt for that. That will cost the last of what Mother left me, but I am fine with that. I should be relatively normal by then.

Would you like to go for dinner with me once I have my legs? I know a great place downtown. We could even walk there.

Love,

Samuel.

Hey,

Angus from the bar (fuck that guy) asked me to ask you about a last-minute supply delivery. He said he's worried about all the shit that went down at the markets the other day. He's just itchy to pull a trigger if you ask me. Here's the list:

- 4 x *Sawed Offs*
- 2 x *M11 Wellingtons*
- 2 x *.44 Josephines*
- 1 x *AA Midwinters* (So much for "self-defence")
- 3 x *Gen-3 Drumsticks*
- *.75 Bolt-Actions* (Which we don't stock, so I assume he means the pneumatics?)
- ~~6 x UC-5 Blocks~~

He asked if he could get this all by Monday. What a joker. Waiting for your clearance.

Cheers

Paz

Senator Yorn,

The surveyors conducted their inspection of the damages last week, finalising their reports yesterday. We have summarised their findings for you.

The dockland will need immediate attention. Anything south of the Crown's harbour is devastated. The Western Gate has been lowered as a temporary measure to halt the spread of the homeless, though the Merchant's Guild has pressed the Senate for a statement regarding the reopening of foreign trade.

The southern ramparts, although damaged, are not in a critical state. While it is not safe to man the wall walks, the towers are largely intact and continue to be manned. The gate, however, has been destroyed, and although a second attack is unlikely, the cityfolk in the south have expressed their unease. The surveyors recommend a small repair effort to avoid unease becoming unrest.

While the central plaza saw the brunt of the ground forces, damage seems limited to the public monuments and central barracks. We have restationed central city guards elsewhere until the reconstruction becomes a priority.

A report on casualties should be with you tomorrow.

Chamberlain Cassius

- You definitely got the eggs?
- Yes. I got the eggs. Jeez.
- The vegetarian ones?
- What?
- Dude. Jamie is vegetarian.
- Yeah, I know that. All eggs are vegetarian.
- What?
- What do you mean 'what'?
- All eggs are *not* vegetarian eggs.
- Yes they-? Man, just- I got the right eggs, okay?
- If she dies, that's on you.
- Yeah, sure. Whatever.
- How long until you're here?
- Half hour? Forty five?
- FORTY FIVE!
- ... Thanks for bursting my eardrums. The party is in three hours. We'll be fine.
- Yeah, and the cake takes thirty minutes.
- ...
- ...
- ...
- Yo, Jake, you the-?
- You're the dumbest guy I know.
- You're a dick.
- Anything else?
- Uh, I don't think... What did you get her?
- What present did I get Jamie?
- Yeah.
- She's always harping on about how bad her poles are.
- Her hiking poles?
- Yeah. Got her a new pair.
- Nice one. I can pay you when you get here.
- Pay me?
- Yeah, we can split it.
- What?
- That's a pole each. It makes sense.
- Max, I am not splitting my present with you.
- What, why?
- Did you not buy *your girlfriend* a present?
- Nah, but I thought you'd come through.
- Get your own present, man. What's wrong with you?
- That's not cool, man. That is low. Even for you.
- What is that supposed-? Y'know what, whatever. You got time, go out and get her something.
- Not cool.
- I'll call you when I'm outside.
- Not co-