

I will be as plain as I can possibly be.

I will tell you of how we came to this city, our reasons for leaving and what I witnessed as we fled.

Why would I do this?

I tell you as it is my duty to ensure our story lives on, long after we are food for the worms and souls reside above.

Never once did I imagine that the world I inhabit would be consumed in flames. In a rapid rush contouring its way through the once peaceful streets of our home, until it reached the monstrous doors.

I woke to a sound as if heaven and earth were crashing together, each fighting for the space the other once held.

I woke to the light of opportunity flooding through my window and lifting my spirit higher.

I'll never know why I was compelled to be amongst it, but something within my soul, as if God himself was controlling it, made me leave and wonder into the streets.

I had not imagined that it would be so tragically beautiful.

Once amongst the crowd I was pushed forward, it was impossible to turn against the tide and I fear what would have happened if I had.

They were full of the hope of God.

Their mission was to spoil that which was against God.

A mission in which they would not stop until it had succeeded.

Around me they danced, and cheered with such a wild rage that you would think they had gone mad.

But I have come to realize, as my wisdom grows, that it was merely the hope of freedom. Hope that if they did this, then it would stop.

They would no longer starve as the Church was made fat with its bloated extravagance, that God was blessing them in their mission to be who he wished them to be.

This was why they cried Vive les Gueux. Long live the beggars!

I found myself within Our Lady church, I can honestly say I do not know how I came to be inside its imposing walls, but I was there.

The once holy walls had felt as if they judged us but now all that was gone. The heresy they represented was being leached from them and pushed down to hell.

What I witnessed there was the most marvelous piece of work, that ever has been seen done in the shortest time, yet so ferocious in its craftsmanship that one would fear to think to long on it. More like a taunting dream than a piece of work.

They broke, tore, destroyed the images, pictures, shrines, anything deemed by the villains that inhabited this world to be sacred. Nothing was held to be sacred, they tore with desperate hands at the tombs of priests and even disturbed their once peaceful corpses.

Some of the men, seemed to me, possessed as they smeared their shoes in holy oil, defiled the church vestments with their stinking piss and daubed the books with butter before tossing them into flames.

They held the very statue of the virgin high above their heads, as if taunting those who worshiped her over God.

Two Sundays past she'd been paraded through our streets and now the hands of mortals touched her.

Now I watched on as a man, who resembled a starved corpse, possessed with madness raised an axe and chopped her head clean off. Cheers echoed as her face was trampled on. As the face of saints were destroyed.

When I found my way home, and in the embrace of my family, glared at by my father for leaving its safety, I had time to think.

Yes, I praised God, yes I took some delight in the work they were doing.

But something in me feared. Feared what was to come.

Feared what would be done to us.

The breath of fresh air we'd clung onto ended as quickly as it had arrived; fear who had haunted us from the shadows of our minds emerged with vengeance between its teeth, gnashing with rabid jaws.

It consumed us as the stories trickled down from village to village, town to town.

The tales being chased by the thundering hooves of the Devil and his accursed company, as he made his way towards us.

He was coming with no mercy, sent from a King who cared little for anything but his desire to please his own monstrous ego.

People were dragged from their homes, all condemned in the black eyes of the Devil. Dragging their feet in the hope they would be spared, but there would be no mercy shown on them. Pushed together so closely that, as I gazed from my window, they looked to be one heaving being, rolling together closer and closer to their eventual death.

I couldn't help but notice that there were few tears, they seemed peaceful with their fate. All knew what was to become of them, everyone knew.

We'd seen it before.

We'd smelt it before.

The sweet smell of burning flesh wafting through the air serenaded by a choir of screams as their bodies were consumed by the starving flames.

We were spared by the letter.

An invitation.

A simple piece of paper that gave us the chance of freedom.

That changed our lives. That changed our fates.

Father said it was God's work, Mother praised the English. I knew this would be the last time I'd see this place; I knew there would be no going back.

I welcomed it with a heavy heart, but welcomed it all the same.

Simply put we'd been saved by the clacking of Father's loom. His hard worked skill had paved us a path to a new home.

Where they needed us, they needed our help.

They invited us to come, they were desperate for help.

So we answered their call.

As our cart trailed its long and winding path away from our home and towards the coast, I sat looking fondly at what had once been my home.

I thought of my childhood, of playing in the streets and laughing with my friends. Some of whom had found their peace in heaven now.

I thought about the time spent in the summer markets and the joy we'd felt on holy Festivals.

I also remembered the fear in my father's eyes as things got worse, how he'd spend hours from the breaking of the day to when the sun fell to its sleep hunched over this ever clacking loom. How desperate we really were, and how hard he and mother had tried to hide it from us. Eventually as we reached the peak of the hill, I turned away.

It would do no good to dwell on these memories. I had to focus on what was to come.

The waves kissed the the hull of the boat as it rocked over the rolling tides.

It was carrying us to our promised land, our land of freedom.

Land of God.

I had never actually seen the sea before, a strange thing it may sound to you, but it was miles from my home. It was vast, I couldn't imagine it possibly ending at any point. It seemed to go on for eternity.

As the spray of its salty waves hit us in the face, reddened our noses and cheeks I felt free. Like I had that night in Our Lady, like my spirit was rising higher and higher looking out for the shores of England.

It had been explained to us we'd arrive in Great Yarmouth, a port town and then have to make our way to Norwich, which is where we'd been asked to settle. The Captain spoke a little Flemish but not much, and mumbled to himself in English. I listened carefully, trying to pick up phrases, but I was not convinced they'd do me any good.

Eventually we arrived at the shore, it ran as far as the eye could see and to feel the sand upon your feet felt strange.

People fell to their knees kissing it and blessing God for our safe arrival.

I did not.