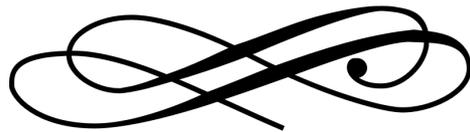


The Viper and the Urchin



by

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PROLOGUE



It was always a pleasure to kill, and never more so than when death was to be dealt as elegantly as what Longinus had in mind for that night. He smiled in anticipation as he skirted the warehouses that fronted Tinsbury Dock.

The dockworkers, as expected, paid him no attention. Dressed head to toe in black, his brow hidden under the wide brim of a hat, his chin and mouth covered with a black silk handkerchief, he blended perfectly with the shadows.

Blissful are the dim-witted. If only they knew how close they are to Damsport's deadliest assassin.

All the same, he wished they had at least enough sense to shiver with quiet dread as he passed.

Is it really too much to ask that the common dockworker experience a faint malaise in my presence? Obviously.

Tinsbury Dock was full of activity, despite the late hour. Shouts and curses echoed across the still water, steam hissed, and metal grated against metal as great steel arms swung overhead, unloading cargo from waiting ships. Vapour lamps, hanging from poles along the quay, bathed the enclosed dock in an otherworldly orange glow, creating shadows in the hollows of the dockworkers'

faces, so that they looked like animated skulls. Beyond, the night bristled with the naked masts of a hundred ships, stretching to the moon like skeletal fingers.

As Longinus reached the end of the dock, he cast a wistful glance over his shoulder. It would provide such a delightfully macabre backdrop to his art — a shame tonight's job was to take place in the neighbouring marina. Smaller boats docked in Smallport Marina, and it would be quiet at this time. That would, of course, make the job easier, but as Damsport's most elegant assassin, Longinus didn't care about ease; the art of assassination was all about theatrics. Killing someone on a dark and empty dock was as banal as rain in summer. Luckily, he had just finished creating a poison that had such panache, it should offset the mundanity of the night's work.

The noise from Tinsbury Dock faded away as he entered the marina, the silence now only broken by the creaking of ships as they swayed on their moorings. Longinus lowered his handkerchief. The air was cooler and fresher here, with only a hint of brackish water and salt. It was bearable, even to his delicate nose.

Longinus' target for the night — a sailor — sat at the other end of the marina. No one else was there. Longinus smiled wolfishly.

The stone walkway along the marina was narrow but lined with shaggy banyan trees, their aerial roots dangling towards the ground. Longinus walked behind them, hidden in their shadows, keeping a careful eye on the target.

The sailor threw his head back, his mouth clamped on a bottle's neck, attempting to coax out its last remaining drops. Longinus recognised the bottle as Smithy's Gold, a cheap, nasty rum. Sailors were so predictably devoid of

class. And taste.

He crept closer.

The Viper approached. He moved with feline grace, at one with the shadows as the moon glittered on the water, shimmering... No.

He paused.

As the water glittered... As the moon's reflection glimmered on the water, like so many diamonds.

He smiled to himself. That was a good line, very good.

He was now level with the sailor and he stopped behind a banyan tree, peering around its trunk. The sailor had made himself at home, with a second stool in front of him on which he had set out a bowl, a spoon and a flatbread. He put down the bottle and tore off a piece of bread.

Longinus retreated behind the tree trunk and pulled out his writing box from the holster that kept it strapped to his back. He had plenty of time, the mark had no idea that Damsport's deadliest assassin was closing in on him, and that last line was just too good not to write down.

He would give the Muse precedence over Death.

From the box, he produced a delicate mother-of-pearl dip pen, with a matching vial of black ink. He pulled out a sheet of paper and replaced the box's lid, the lacquered wood gleaming in the moonlight. He leaned the paper against the box's flat surface and wrote out his latest composition, smiling and nodding at his inimitable way with words.

Inspiration is flowing tonight. I called, and the Muse answered.

He wrote that down, too.

A noise sounding suspiciously like a boot against cobblestones startled him. He hurriedly put the paper and pen down and peered around the trunk. The sailor had also heard the noise, and was looking about him but thankfully away from Longinus.

A ship's hull groaned as the wood contracted in the cooler temperature. Nothing stirred.

The sailor relaxed and sat back down, but Longinus continued scanning the darkened dock. Was someone else out there? Still nothing moved.

Longinus glanced at the sailor to find that he was spooning a dark mixture from the bowl and into his mouth. He ate messily, and a little had dripped on his chin and tunic. Whatever it was, it gleamed as black as blood in moonlight. At the thought, Longinus paled and staggered back, leaning against the trunk.

It isn't blood, it isn't blood.

He took a deep, ragged breath and closed his eyes.

The Viper was ready to pounce. The thought immediately made him feel better. Once the Viper had a man in his sights, death was inevitable. A paramount —

The sailor let out a loud belch and Longinus' delicate nose picked up garlic. His nostrils flared in disgust. He picked up his writing box again.

The Viper's aquiline nose, he wrote. Wait, does aquiline mean hooked?

Realising his mistake (for Longinus' nose was nothing if not a model of straightness), he crossed the sentence out. He continued to write, having thought of more delicious adjectives for his nose.

A flare of light startled him, and he looked over at the mark. The stool that

had earlier carried the food was now empty and had been demoted from table to footstool as the sailor leaned back against a gangplank, looking up at the stars. He had stuffed a long-stemmed pipe and he puffed away, letting out flat plumes of smoke from the side of his mouth.

Longinus put his writing box away, rubbing his hands. The target's night vision would be destroyed. Now was the perfect time to strike.

He pulled on thin leather gloves, overlaid with a fine but watertight mesh made from mineral fibres. One could never be too careful when dealing with poison, especially this newest one, and besides, they looked devilishly stylish in the moonlight.

He then produced an oblong box inlaid with the same mesh, inside which was a Talegian steel stylus and a tiny glass vial. He screwed the vial into the base of the stylus and slipped out from behind the banyan tree, his stylus at the ready. He only needed to write a period on the man's skin to paralyse him. A little more, such as a comma, would bring about death — thus providing punctuation with the fearsome respect it so deserved.

The stylus is mightier than the sword.

He smirked.

Longinus drew out the moment, savouring the anticipation as he reached the sailor. He watched as the unsuspecting mark blew smoke rings at the star-punctured night.

And then he struck.

With his free hand he grabbed the sailor's collar, yanking him to the ground, knocking his head in the process. His right hand brought the stylus to the man's

temple, resting its pointy tip on the skin.

“Don’t move,” he hissed.

The sailor froze, feeling the cold touch of sharp steel so close to his eye. A fatal hesitation. People always assumed that blades were the most fearsome weapon. Fools! As if any assassin worth his kills would allow a job to be marred by something so crude as a blade piercing skin.

The sailor’s hesitation allowed just enough time for the poison to travel along the stylus’ nib, and it dropped onto the skin, creating a perfect circle, a period, at the corner of his eye. Paralysis immediately began its inevitable course. The sailor made a garbled noise and jerked his head convulsively. His legs twitched, as though a puppeteer were pulling the strings attached to them. He tried to move his arms but they were no longer his to command and his face twisted with panic.

Longinus released the man and cocked his head, admiring his work and debating whether to turn the period into a semicolon. He went with a period, but couldn’t resist adding a touch of his natural flamboyance. With a flourish, he signed ‘The Viper’ on the sailor’s forehead. That done, he stepped back to examine his work.

Beautiful.

A vague gurgling marked the sailor’s last breath.

Longinus returned the stylus and vial to the box and pulled out a card, which he carefully pinned onto the body’s shirt. It looked like an ordinary playing card, but where an ace of spades would have been, a black viper was coiled, ready to strike. Tiny knives were drawn at each corner, with gleaming silver

blades. Longinus took great pride in his cards, designing them himself. He had tried to use cards with vials of poisons at the corners, but he had been mistaken for an exotic perfumer. This was, of course, unacceptable, and he had been forced to put knives instead, to drive the meaning home.

Crude, inelegant weapons. They lack all the refinement of poison.

It was tiresome to have to lower his standards to those of the little people, but it was necessary. It would be terrible for his artistry to go unnoticed, or worse, misunderstood. He blew at the card to make sure the wind couldn't dislodge it. It wouldn't do for some (lesser) assassin to try and take credit for his work, either. Like any artist, Longinus signed each and every one of his masterpieces, and this was one he was particularly proud of.

A small sound, like a light cough, broke the silence. Longinus froze. He scanned the marina.

The water lapped gently against the floating docks. His mind playing tricks on him, perhaps? And yet the sailor had heard something too, earlier. Maybe a fan of his work (of which there were many), observing from a distance? In any case, if it had been the guards or someone connected to the body, they would have acted by now.

At last, when still nothing had stirred, Longinus prepared to leave. He glanced at the body and his stomach contracted at the sight. He had stayed too long. The eyes had turned a pale, milky blue, and the veins on the man's face stood out, dark and inflamed, fanning out from the writing on the forehead.

Longinus staggered back, knocking over the stool. He fancied he could smell it, all that blood encased in a thin sack of skin. So easily spilled.

He clamped a hand over his mouth against the nausea rising in his throat and ran away on shaky legs, his black cloak flapping behind him.

CHAPTER 1



Rory congratulated herself on her timing. She and Jake had just reached the end of the lane and, peering around the corner, she could see the mark a few yards away. He was a trader with a belly that hung over his belt and a self-satisfied air. She could already tell how pleased with himself he would look when he stepped in to save the poor, scrawny urchin girl from a beating.

Moron.

She counted down silently with her fingers. Three, two, one.

Rory launched herself into the trader's path with a shriek. Startled, the man jumped back just as Jake burst into the street, his face contorted into a perfectly fearsome mask. He grabbed Rory with his paddle-sized hands, lifting her off the ground.

"Help!" she screamed, kicking her legs in the air, careful to miss Jake.

Jake drew back a meaty hand as though to strike her. She screeched again, waiting for the mark to react. Any moment now, he would step forward, his face a sneer, his rapier drawn, and he would tell Jake to 'let the girl go.'

Jake snarled, and raised his hand further behind him. Rory cowered in his grasp.

"Please not again, please no, please..." she gabbled.

The target stood aside, gawking, as though seagulls had pecked out his brains.

“Teach you to try and run away,” Jake grunted.

Still nothing.

Crap.

Rory had picked a dud.

Nothing for it, Jake was going to have to follow through and hit her or the game would be up.

Jake’s hand came down in a wide arc, just catching her cheek. Rory let her head snap to one side, howling out to make it seem more painful than it was. Still the merchant stood watching. She cursed under her breath. If he was going to be cowardly, the least he could do was leave and be cowardly somewhere else so they could end this charade.

Jake raised his hand again.

“Not so fast now.”

At last, the melodious sound of a rapier being pulled out of its scabbard. The trader pointed his blade at Jake.

“Put the girl down.”

“Not your gods-damned business,” Jake grunted.

“I’ve just made it my business. Put her down.”

Jake glowered ever so convincingly at the man, and let Rory drop to the ground. She made a show of collapsing onto the cobblestones before scrambling up towards the trader.

“Now go.” The man raised his chin haughtily behind his rapier.

Jake grunted again, and skulked off down the lane from which they had come, making it look all the more narrow as he squeezed his massive frame through it.

“Thank you, sir, oh thank you!” Rory grabbed the trader’s distended waistcoat as she pulled herself up. “I been trying to escape for months sir, months!” She squeezed out a few tears for good measure and sniffled loudly. The mark she could feel on her cheek no doubt made it look all the more realistic. Maybe having Jake hit her wasn’t such a disaster after all.

“Now see here —”

“I got no one, sir,” Rory continued, still clinging to him as though she was drowning and he was the last plank of wood left in the world. “I’m an orphan and all alone, my family died.” At this she began to wail loudly.

The trader extricated himself from her clutching fingers, his philanthropic aspirations rapidly vanishing.

“There, there...I’m sorry but, er, I can’t do anything for you. I’m only passing through Damsport, you see.”

That was a lie, he was clearly a Damsian.

“Please, sir!” She wailed louder, clutching at him faster than he could remove her hands. Her fingers felt his purse, and she was delighted to find that it was as fat as he was.

“Now see here,” said the trader. “I have to leave, my ship... Will you just...get off!”

He gave her a shove and she staggered back, the purse vanishing into one of her pockets. She gave the trader a forlorn look, cutting a pathetic figure in her

rags, mess of rope-like hair, and snotty nose — the gods be thanked for her ability to sniffle on demand.

The trader hurried away without looking back.

When he had turned the corner, Rory spat once on the cobblestones.

“Hypocrite.”

Saving the girl always worked, but no one wanted to actually save the girl. They only wanted that brief moment of glory when they pointed their rapier at Jake. That was fine by Rory, they just had to pay the price of their purse for the privilege of feeling like a hero for a few minutes.

She hurried after Jake, grinning. He was waiting for her at the rendezvous point.

With an exaggerated flourish, she pulled out the purse she had lifted and dangled it next to her ear.

“It speaks to me... It says...half coins inside!”

Jake grinned. “Give it here.”

She threw it at him and he hefted it appreciatively as they walked. “That’s got a good few coin bits in it.” He felt the purse between his fingers. “I think I feel a couple of whole ’uns too.”

“Yeah, a good taking.”

“Aye. Plenty more than you need.”

Rory nodded and her stomach briefly knotted with excitement and nerves. It had been two years of scrimping and saving, and despite getting shaken down twice in the rare moments she had been without Jake, she could finally meet Master Xian’s price with a little to spare.

Jake threw her the purse and she squirrelled it away in one of her many pockets, surprised at how nervous she was now that her lifelong ambition was about to become reality. She would leave with Master Xian, the most famed sword preceptor in Damsport, and travel with him as his pupil and assistant. It was so close, she could almost taste the salty spray that would spatter her face once they were out at sea.

“What time’s the steam galley again?” asked Jake.

“I’m to meet Master Xian at six at the Starry Inn.”

“Plenty of time. What say you to a celebratory pint?”

“Don’t think I could drink right now,” she said. “Stomach’s doing all sorts of flipping.”

“Suit yourself.”

They continued walking in a comfortable silence, punctuated only by the tinkle of the talismans that hung around Rory’s neck, a hangover from her days of begging at the temples.

“You sure you want to leave?” asked Jake. “We got a good thing going here.”

“Yeah, I’m sure.”

“You never told me what the big deal is with learning to fight with swords, you know.”

Rory shrugged with all the nonchalance she could muster. It had been ten years since she had met the Scarred Woman, and she had never breathed a word of it to anyone. Not even to Jake. The years had washed the woman’s features from her memory, but to this day Rory could still picture how her rapier had

gleamed, how smooth and fast her movements had been, and how easily she had despatched that giant of a man. Rare was the night when Rory didn't dream she was the Scarred Woman.

“Just something I've always wanted to do, that's all.” She kicked a piece of unidentifiable rotten fruit out of the way.

The truth was that it consumed her. She thought of little else — all she wanted was to be a warrior, a hero, like the Scarred Woman. She was also well aware of how ridiculous that ambition was, coming from her. She had been sixteen for about two years now — not knowing exactly how old she was, she picked whatever age suited her — and although she knew her real age was probably around eighteen, she was still small enough to pass for fourteen. And a scrawny fourteen-year-old at that.

The reaction of the last sword preceptor she had approached before Master Xian was still as fresh as ever in her mind. She had laughed. A big belly laugh, as though Rory's dreams were a joke. Rory clenched her fists at the memory. The sword preceptor had shooed her away like all the others, and her apprentice had given Rory a good kick up the arse that had sent her sprawling out the door and into the gutter.

“Gutter rats don't wield rapiers,” the lad had said before slamming the door.

Passersby had laughed too, a few shaking their heads and wondering at the delusions of an urchin trying to become a swordfighter.

Master Xian hadn't laughed, he had simply named an eye-watering price.

“You still gonna be a cobbler?” she asked to change the subject.

“I reckon so,” Jake said. “My Da was a damned good cobbler, and I

remember some.”

“Well, when I’m a famous hero, I’ll come to you and only you to fix my boots.”

Jake grinned. “Aye, and I’ll only rip you off by half.”

Rory punched him on the arm. “As if I’d believe you’d rip me off for anything less than the rest.”

“Fair.”

They reached the chaotic warren of lanes that was the Rookery, and the air became thicker, full of the cloying stench of mould and decay. Banyan trees poked out randomly from streets and houses, their roots crawling through the cobblestones, their dead leaves and inedible fruits covered in guano, rotting on the ground. Shacks were built resting against their trunks, some turned into little stalls from which cobblers, minor-repair machinists, and other small tradesmen operated. Men, women, and children milled about the streets, calling, shouting, fighting, hawking wares, and arguing, their voices louder than the seagulls.

Rory and Jake walked past houses that sagged on rain-saturated wooden frames; only a few had been able to afford the conversion to steelwood beams. Some covered their beams with tar, and the rest made do with houses that sweated and rotted under the weight of the humidity.

Rory waved and called out greetings while Jake stayed silent, only pushing the low-hanging laundry lines out of his way. He had never been one for social niceties. Rory, on the other hand, understood the importance of having friends. The kind of friends that, if you asked after her, would say, ‘Rory? Never ’eard of her. Not seen anyone like that in these parts. You must be thinking of some

other lass.’ Those kinds of friends were invaluable, especially when you were in the business of relieving people of their belongings.

Rory and Jake reached a deserted lane that was more rotten than the rest, and they made their way to a solitary house, its neighbours little more than a pile of rubble overtaken by banyan trees. One side of the house had caved in so that it looked lopsided, like an old man after a stroke. A banyan tree had sprouted on what was left of the roof, its web of roots stretching down what remained of the house’s front like a caul.

Rory went in first. Inside, there was no first floor to speak of — only a few beams remained. She found the familiar footholds on the wall and began to climb towards the yawning hole in the roof.

When she reached the top, she walked carefully along an exposed beam until she reached a single black steelwood pillar that stuck out of the house’s side like a finger. A thick coil of rope was tied to it, and she threw it down to Jake.

Jake lifted himself up the rope easily, the muscles on his bare arms bulging under his brown skin. Rory left him to it, making her way over to their little shelter by the banyan tree. It had taken them a couple of years to build something that could withstand the summer storms, and while the current effort didn’t look like much, it kept out wind and water.

Rory walked past the shelter and lifted up a couple of tiles, uncovering a niche that held two bulging purses. She took them out, checking their weight, and sat down cross-legged with the purses between her legs to keep them from rolling away. Jake heaved himself up, pulled the rope with him, and came to sit next to her. He picked up his purse, hefted it with one hand, and his normally

ugly features broke into a delighted grin.

“That’s a good bit of coinage, that is.”

Rory began counting out the day’s takings. Some silver bits, a couple of half coppers and half silvers, five full coppers and a single, beautifully whole and shiny silver. Rory held it up with an appreciative whistle. It was almost perfectly round, if you squinted and ignored where the edges had been shaved or clipped.

The process of sharing out the loot began. They each hunted around their purses for silver and copper bits to make change for the whole and half coins, carefully weighing them out in their hands to make sure the trades were fair. The flip of a coin, spun just right by Rory’s expert hand, determined that she would get the full silver, and in exchange she gave Jake a few silver bits. He got the extra full copper in a similar arrangement.

“Coming to the Old Girl’s Arms, then?” asked Jake, carefully putting his coin pieces away.

“Nah, told you, don’t have the stomach for it. Gonna wait here until it’s time.”

“Come on, don’t be boring, come for a drink. My treat. Old time’s sake and all that.”

Rory hesitated. She knew it would be fun to go to the Old Girl’s Arms and chew the fat with Jake, but she couldn’t risk being late and missing the steam galley. Besides, with Jake it was never just the one drink.

“Not gonna risk it,” she replied. “You could wait with me, though. Escort me to the docks, make the most of my sparkling conversation while you can, and all

that.” She winked.

“Your conversation would be a hell of a lot more sparkly if I could experience it with a pint of cider in my hand.” Jake stood up, pocketed the purse, and stretched, his back cracking like the knees of an old supplicant.

“Gods’ breath, that feels good!”

“The purse or the stretch?”

“Both.” He grinned. “Come on —” He nudged Rory with his boot. “Come to the Old Girl’s Arms. Just one, and that’s a promise.”

Rory was tempted — if anything, it would steady her nerves before her adventures began.

“Well, alright...maybe one.”

“Atta girl! Reckon you’ll see something real special, too. I feel a lucky streak coming on.”

“Hold on — you’re going gambling?”

“Just a little flutter. I got plenty to spare —” Jake patted the pocket containing the purse “— and I’m pretty sure today’s gonna be my day.”

“Seriously? Jake, how many times you got to lose everything for it to register in your thick head that nobody’s ever lucky with cards? Anyone would think you wanted to be poor for the rest of your life.”

A chill settled, despite the sweltering midday heat. Jake didn’t reply, looking sulkily at the ground. Rory looked away, frustrated with his stubbornness, and annoyed at herself for lecturing him when she was just about to leave Damsport.

The silence stretched on, heavy and uncomfortable.

“Well, I guess that means you’re not coming,” Jake said at last, breaking the

silence, “so I’ll see you when I see you.”

He patted her awkwardly on the shoulder and turned away. Rory’s stomach lurched. This wasn’t how she had wanted to part ways. She tried to think of something to say, but no words came to her. Jake disappeared down into the ruined house.

She stared at the space where he had been for a moment, a tight feeling in her chest. Of course she was still excited to leave and become a hero. Of course. But dammit if she wasn’t sad now, too.

CHAPTER 2



Longinus sat at a corner table in the Hand and Tankard, surveying the room. He had swapped the black silks he wore as the Viper for simple leathers, the better to blend in with the crowd. He found it best to tone down his natural elegance when mixing with common folk. That said, he was unable to compromise on the cut of his clothes, and he had had his leathers tailored to within an inch of their lives. A shame that he was sitting down, really; they showed off his figure so exquisitely he should have stood at the bar, the better to be admired.

He listened to the talk around him, waiting for the gossip on the Viper's exploits. He had spent the last few days locked away writing pamphlets about his most recent kill, and he had left them at the docks first thing that morning for a lucky few to find and read. He liked to think that his prose did more than inform the wider public of the Viper's actions — it elevated their minds, too.

Which was why he was growing rapidly annoyed with the direction the conversations were taking: the weather, the upcoming Revels, and speculation as to whether the Old Girl, the Marchioness of Damsport, was going to pass the torch to her daughter. All of it without interest. It was incredible what mundane

banalities the small-minded could find interesting.

Unfortunately, he had to rely on them to spread his reputation about town. His notoriety was improving, but it was nowhere near what it ought to be. The guards always tried to hush his activities, so he had to help things along by distributing his pamphlets. Notoriety helped him get commissions, but most importantly, one could only be an artist if one was spoken of. There was nothing worse for an assassin than obscurity.

At last, a woman he knew by sight on account of her starched white apron arrived. Mistress White Apron sat down and regarded the others around her table with the kind of smugness particular to a woman about to unveil a fresh piece of gossip.

“Have you heard the latest on the Smallport killing?”

At last! Longinus smiled. Mistress White Apron could always be counted on. Maybe he should find out where she lived and distribute his pamphlets directly to her door.

“Yeah, I hear it were that Viper character again,” said a sailor.

“Everyone knows that,” said the woman with contempt. “He leaves a card behind. But have you heard the particulars? Hmm?” She looked at the faces of her audience, so puffed up with self-satisfaction she almost seemed to be expanding. Longinus beamed. The saintly woman was about to unveil his new poison.

Mistress White Apron leaned forward. “I have it on good authority that he skinned his victim. Slipped the skin right off, like you do with a rabbit.”

Longinus almost fell off his stool. Skinned? Skinned? Had that idiot even

read his pamphlet?

What is the point of me writing them if these simpletons blithely ignore them?

“Oh really? I heard it were poison,” said another woman.

“Not this time,” said Mistress White Apron. “I heard it from my cousin’s sister-in-law’s nephew. He works with the guards.” She lowered her voice. “I hear the Viper even drinks the blood of his victims, like a vampire.”

Longinus felt himself go green at the thought.

Ridiculous, this is ridiculous...

But there was nothing ridiculous about the image that was now firmly imprinted in his mind.

“You’re making it up,” said the sailor, obviously disgusted.

“I am not,” sniffed Mistress White Apron. “Just because you can’t handle —”

“If I might interrupt,” said a small pinched man at a table next to them. “I saw the body myself and...”

Longinus couldn’t listen to any more. The butchery of his art was almost as unbearable as the thought of the Viper drinking blood. He fumbled into his purse and produced two coins, which he threw on the counter before hurrying out.

“Hey, I haven’t weighed them,” shouted the barkeep.

Longinus ignored him, pushing the door open with trembling hands. Once out, he leaned against the wall, taking deep gulps of air. The barkeep hadn’t run out after him, and he guessed that his coins had been heavy enough for his meal

and drink. Not that it was a surprise: Longinus' fingers were unrivalled in their ability to estimate a coin's weight.

When he felt steadier, he peeled himself from the wall. He needed to get home to rest before the night's job, and tomorrow he would address this gross misunderstanding of his art. He couldn't have all these ridiculous rumours circulating about the Viper. He would simply have to increase the volume of pamphlets and distribute them more widely.

The propensity of the common man's mind to turn to the violent and bloody really was intolerable.

To be continued