

INTRODUCTION

The taproom of Melgar's Rest is small, has a low ceiling and smells strange. A mixture of sweat, wine and something undefinable. A few lanterns hanging from iron hooks on the ceiling provide dim light and cast restless shadows on the weather-beaten faces of the guests.

At this late hour, most of them are sailors. Soft murmurs can be heard at the tables, accompanied by the clacking of dice and the clinking of cups, occasionally interrupted by a cry of joy or a rough laugh.

If someone were to enter the inn on Long Coat Lane for the first time today, they would not notice anything amiss. However, you have been here many times before, whether to follow up rumors from Candarlin's underworld, to find a cheap place to stay, or just to get drunk.

Something is different than usual.

Usually there are more guests and the mood is more exuberant. The heavy drinking is supposed to be happier, more carefree ... Often a vagrant minstrel shows up at some point, and then people sing and dance late into the night.

Not tonight.

After leaning against the bar and looking around for a while, you turn around and exchange a few words with Melgar, the barman. He is polishing a mug.

“Not much going on today, huh?” you ask casually.

Melgar shrugs.

“No one would admit it, but ... There's fear in the air. The day before yesterday, another man disappeared here in the neighborhood. That's the third one now. The city guard thinks there's a murderer on the loose. Of course, word gets around quickly. It's not good for business.”

“A murderer?” you ask. Your curiosity is piqued, and you hope that Melgar can tell you more.

“Well, if you ask me ... I don't think so. They haven't found any bodies yet. Just blood. And a boot. Someone heard a scream. And that's it. It doesn't sound like a murderer to me, but something else. But that doesn't stop the guards from snooping around, searching houses, and interrogating people.”

“If it's not a murderer, then what is it?”

Melgar shrugs again and continues polishing his mug.