

really?

From the twelfth floor of the Nottingham Royal Infirmary, Luke watched the sunrise (turn the sky the colour of blood) Beneath him the whole city slept, but here he stood, pushing through into the final couple hours of his shift. Even those who had gone ^{to} Emma's leaving drinks would be tucked up in bed by now, ~~probably~~. Loads of the old crew ~~from medical school~~ had come back to see her off and ~~he knew~~ the party would have been a right laugh, ~~just like the old times~~ ^{of being there}. But instead, he'd been here all night. In the hospital. Again.

This was his fourth night shift in a row and it had been a bad one. The past nine hours were a blur, like every patient in the hospital had needed a piece of him. ~~He hadn't had chance to stop, or to sit down,~~ ^{had given} he'd barely had time to pee. His exhaustion ~~was so complete~~ that the world ~~had~~ a slanted perspective, ~~as though~~ ^{going} reality itself was fuzzy round the edges. ~~At least it kept him busy~~ ^{The only consolation was that all of this kept his mind off what was coming later.} ~~At last,~~ ^{he had one last thing to do before} things had settled down and Luke thought about stealing half an hour to ~~find a quiet corner~~ and rest his head. ~~Christ knows he deserved it~~ ~~but there was one more thing he needed to do first.~~

He had a bad feeling about Mrs Cunningham on Ward 6F. Nothing he could put his finger on, ~~nothing that showed up on her obs chart,~~ ^{wanted} but something told him that he needed to check on her ~~before the end of the night~~. If this were a normal ward round, his registrar Matt would come out with some shite about 'the enduring utility of clinical gestalt,' but then Matt was always trying to use fancy words in front of the boss.

A pool of yellow ^{light} spilled from the nurses' station at the end of the ward. Soft and not-so-soft snores rose from the patients around him. Luke ~~tried~~ ^{read} lightly. Mrs Cunningham's bed was by the window in the second bay on the left. ~~It's probably nothing,~~ ^{as} he thought. ~~He~~ ^{her} pulled back the curtain ~~from~~ around Mrs Cunningham's bed, ~~fully~~ expecting to find her sound asleep. He was wrong.

"You got him yet?" Harry shouted.

set scene first

↳ "Hardly!" Jacob replied. The strength of the creature they faced was overwhelming, only with the pair of them working together could they hope to subdue it. Jacob found himself longing for his trusty service revolver, or better yet a Vickers machine gun; crystals tied to a three-foot stick felt hopelessly ineffective.

stronger opening

[The snapping of the beast's jaws mere inches from his nose reminded him to focus. Resisting the temptation to turn and run he wielded his staff (don't call it a magic wand, the trainer had repeated) and summoned the energies latent within it. With a glance at Harry he drove this power forward into the monster's chest. It staggered slightly, its roars abruptly halted, and it looked quizzically at him for a second before Harry's own blast knocked it lifeless to the ground.

what does this monster look like?

"~~Very~~ Good show, lads," Christopher Grey shouted from his position on the sidelines. Checking the stopwatch in his hand he made some notes on his clipboard and nodded approvingly. "And a new record ~~for your current group of recruits~~." He shook the hands of the other men around him, but made no move towards the recruits now getting their breath back.

Harry and Jacob exchanged a handshake of their own and walked over to inspect the defeated beast. About the size and shape of a bull, matted black hair hid its powerful muscles and made it appear even larger than it already was. Poking at its head with his staff, Jacob saw the once jet-black eyes beneath its thick fringe were already faded to a milky-grey colour.

Is it really a large cow? Don't tally with the large jaw

Mr Grey gestured to a small man beside him who reluctantly separated from the group of observers and walked over to the beast. With a quiet "excuse me, gents," he reached under the creature's fur and unclipped a thick metal collar.

Godric had been walking through bleak terrain for days. As the vibrant rainfall started he stopped and detached his crow mask. He smiled as Morcant, his crow guide, took flight. The Rain God was always punctual with this twice-daily heavenly shower, ever vigilant ~~with its duty of~~ pushing back the uncanny confusing olive fog. Mercifully the slightly raised ancient road kept most of the fog at bay, no one knew why.

set scene, don't backstab the world building

The rain was refreshing and curiously warm, plus he loved the accompanying pleasant pitter-patter as the divine droplets landed on his grey robes. Whilst the herbs in his mask's beak helped, this ritual was the only thing keeping him truly lucid on this cursed quest. He once again pondered why the Palliative Priesthood had insisted on sending him, a lone Remembrancer, to visit the Lords Temporal; they'd not even given ^{him} have a message to deliver.

stay in the present. This is messy (why?) look forward to it.

Godric's reflecting was interrupted as Morcant started cawing in alarm. He nervously looked around, but struggled to sense anything beyond the downpour; the irony that the Rains of Clarity were obscuring the danger was not lost upon him.

mention it earlier.

He recalled reading that a whole castle had been lost in this area, another victim of The Forgetting. That usually meant ghosts, but those were routinely dismissed by the Rain God, which implied something far worse. Morcant suddenly raced ahead, Godric's instincts insisted that he run, he didn't argue.

stay in present. No immediate

Running on the ancient road was fortunately easy, due to its firm paved surface and straight design. Unfortunately his heavy backpack and wet robes hampered his movement. Godric stared ahead, through the now thinning rain he could make out sparse roadside vegetation, thankfully no threats. He glanced behind but he couldn't make out anything, then suddenly a tree disappeared, quickly followed by a bush. He didn't need to see more, he'd read about this. ^{An} Absence was after him.

Act more, explain less.

more sense of menace

Xanthar Lo'Raqis was a decorated soldier, banner-man to the Raven King's own guard, and as (fearsome a warrior as you'd hope not to meet across a battlefield) He was also, at the present time, hiding in a ditch.

good but awkwardly phrased. Make clearer?

He sighed, shifting slightly to ease the pain from a dozen small wounds, then shifting again when the ^{puddle in} ~~water that covered the bottom of~~ his hiding place began to seep through his clothing. The day had started well and ended badly. Worse than badly. Catastrophically. ~~If Xanthar had experienced a worse day he really couldn't~~ ~~feath~~

no need to emphasise it.

Tears pricked his eyes, not as a result of his wounds but at the thought of his lost comrades. Treachery had been the order of the day and only Xanthar had escaped the slaughter. . .

~~He thought back to that morning and tried to work out when it had all gone~~ ~~wrong.~~

some work does this task for you.

#

'A nice day for a fight, eh Xanth?' Kardan, the Raven King, Lord and Master of the Three Kingdoms, swayed gently in his saddle, moving with the rhythm of his mount, as he looked across at his banner-man and most loyal soldier.

The King was still a young man. Well, young enough, and fighting fit. There was a light in his eyes as he rode out to war. Not at the prospect of battle itself, he ~~was an accomplished warrior but~~ did not delight in the death of other ^{men} ~~men~~ as some ^{do} ~~do~~, but at the freedom he felt. A campaign was an opportunity to escape the ^{usual} ~~round of~~ stuffy diplomatic meetings ~~that would normally be his day~~ and to get out in the fresh air, on horseback, and see what was over the horizon. The King had an adventurous spirit and found the restrictions of his position chafing.

'Yes, sire,' Xanthar grunted, 'it's a shame it has to be against some of our own.'

Why not here?
This is backstory.

ANONYMOUS SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL BY ANONYMOUS



The Feidi is still burning as the cab winds its way through The Lower City towards the Tian Ti space elevator. Ahead, a food depot has been reduced to a burned husk, smoke drifting from the empty sockets of broken windows. A truck, half-loaded with salvage, sits by the side of the road, surrounded by gloomy-faced workers like a circle of mourners.

comparative language & efficacy

spell check pl.

I wince as something scrap^es the roof of the cab: a piece of red and yellow tarpaulin, like the ones covering the Mboga market stalls. How far are we from the *Two Horsemen*? Is anything left of ~~that place~~^{it}?

I close my eyes. I don't want to know. In an hour I'll be in the elevator, out of Kenya and out of Earth for close to a century. By the time I return--if I ever return--nobody will remember what I've done.

I clench my fist, the warmth of Jason's tiny fingers imprinted into my flesh. *Where are you going, auntie? Will you bring mummy back?*

Sorry, kiddo. Nobody can bring your mummy back, nor your daddy. They're both dead, and it's all my fault.

On the cab's windscreen, the news cast flickers soundlessly, a mirror to the devastation outside. Thirty dead by now, three hundred wounded. The investigation's already starting, angry voices calling for the leaders of the riots to be brought to justice. Justice [A hollow chuckle shakes my frame, even as some part of me demands that I stay here and face them, that I tell them why I did it and demand they prove me wrong.]

Too many metaphors

clearer character motivation makes more compelling read. Mystical isn't engaging.

It won't work. They'll find a way to hide the truth; they always do.

You can't take care of that kid from jail. I shudder as the memory returns: the words, barely louder than my heartbeat, Stepan's closing eyes, the smell of his blood on my hands. The sound of my footsteps as I run away, broken and numb.

prologues. More effective to hide a clip of blood? Has a wild animal doctor?

I'm doing the right thing. Jason doesn't need *me*; he needs the money ^{for} that will give him a good start. I'm no use to anyone in the Feidi--but out there I can make all the difference. I'll be saving lives. This must be more important than watching over the ghosts. It must be.

Good sense of music + world.