

The longer he stared at his reflection, the deeper the pits under his eyes seemed to grow, and the severity of his headache worsened. Once mirrors had been such simple things, reflecting a familiar face and little else. Now the man didn't know what was staring back. He supposed the figure could have been him once, but now the image was warped and crowned with an unfamiliar head of hair and wiry moustache. He looked a morbid joke. The reflection's shoulders sagged in defeat, and the light had long died behind his eyes, crows' feet and a miserable frown ageing their victim immeasurably.

Brisket strode into the dugout, breaking his rumination. 'Time we get out there and have it done with. I don't expect failure; if you can't keep up, give me the ball and I'll do the rest.' It was always the same sentiment before every game. Not one for rousing speeches or callous recrimination, she was a hard and blunt woman nowadays, with little sign of the easygoing attitude she reputedly sported while still a Butcher.

The man snorted. He certainly wasn't one to pass judgement. Once he had been a thespian. Scant indication of that vaunted profession remained about him, either.

Brisket pivoted on her heel and jogged onto the field, the crowd greeting her in a roar of approval. As the rest of the team filed out behind her, the man snuck a mouthful of the old Mald courage from a hidden flask. The fiery whiskey burned, but at least it began to dispel his hangover.

'Had a problem like that myself, once upon a time.' Spigot was the last to leave, looking over his shoulder, a strange, grim, sad expression on his face. 'Best kick that while you can, trust me. Doesn't end in anything but heartbreak.'

The man grunted. He didn't have half Spigot's love for the game, he was only here for the coin. A drop of gold was about the only way he could face the bloody proles and pretend to be a dead man, time after time. Sighing, he pulled on the hat. It was an ugly thing, a cheap replica made to match the original. He loathed wearing it for how much his brow sweat under the sun, the material permanently stained muddy brown. But wear it he must. *Bums in seats, lad*. Those were the words he'd heard all too often in the theatre and never had they been more apt now. The pitch was simply a larger stage.

He risked one final swig before losing the flask, straightening his braces and forcing his face into a smile. Throwing his arms wide, he stepped out onto the field with the rest of his team, the crowd's cheers rising to a deafening level. Despite himself, 'Harry' felt his smile grow wider. Playing the part of a dead man given life once more by Solthecus might be deceitful, but it certainly had its perks.