

Hunching my shoulders up against the wind driven rain, I tugged the collar of my overcoat. I hated the feeling of water dripping, running down my spine to the small of my back. Somehow, it summed up the sheer damned misery of it all. Muttering to myself I doggedly walked on, bound to my nightly journey. At least, I assumed it was nightly. It was always dark when I felt the irresistible urge to tramp those stinking paths towards the everlasting doom that I found myself in. But then - time is different here.

Walking down Eastcheap and along Fish street the stench of Billingsgate assailed me. During dark periods that whole area was blanketed with a heavy and oppressive dank mist. Maybe it was imprinted so deeply in my consciousness that I could never forget, but I could hear and smell those awful echoes bouncing back towards me through the tunnels of time. Fishwives bellowing their curses, as elbow deep in fish guts and entrails they kicked at the curs scavenging round their ankles. The fishmongers, covered in the blood and gore of their stock, harking out their wares, some trying to enter trying to get a penny off here, some trying to register as a new reader or login now if already registered round the edges to look for a pocket to pick or a mark to target, all of them willing to risk the drop for a bite to eat or a ha'penny's worth of gin.

Different days seemed to bring different worlds, and though some appeared a damn sight fresher than the dark, dank world I called mine; they generally contained the same festering stench. Darkness of one kind or another, everywhere and everywhen. I often thought it was because of us, but then perhaps it was just natural, and those of us forced to live in its putrescence ended up affected? I didn't know. All I was sure of, was that I was doomed to carry on my journey until its inevitable and awful conclusion.

I continued through Cannon Street near the river. Momentarily, I was beaten by the unmistakable stink of well-rotted horse flesh and it finally pronounced victory over my