

Marcomir quickly finished his breakfast excusing himself through the growing crowd. He liked to eat early as the food was fresher and so was the air. There weren't many places to eat in Port Elry and too many unwashed miners liked to crowd into the Fisherman's Wife before heading off to prospect for the day. He scowled at how many times he had heard that sordid joke in a matter of days.

He brushed his jacket off lightly and gingerly stepped out into the street. His beautiful boots, polished to a fine sheen when he had arrived looked a ghastly fright three days later. The mud, the dirt, the salt brine, filth of every type and description was everywhere. But so was easy money and the fever that goes with it.

The town of Port Elry had once been a fishing hamlet, a quiet, quaint, clean, orderly sort of place with a few stone buildings perched on the small hills where the Radiant River met the Jade Ocean along the Remnant Coast. Then two very large changes occurred which changed the fate of this idyllic have a fishing village forever. Last Autumn the foreboding island now called Brocard's Folly rose from the sea in a week of storms and quakes the likes of which have not been seen in a lifetime. The storms caused much damage that is still needing repair. The following spring, salts were discovered and apparently overnight every down on his luck, good for nothing brute flocked to Port Elry to strike it rich.

The town now had ten or so small buildings in varying states of structural integrity, struggling to billet the two hundred souls all depositing their belongings, their hopes and their filth on these shores. Of these buildings only one, the Fisherman's Wife tavern, had more than one story. Basic town services such as an earth circle were in place, but that was as far as anything resembling amenities reached. Scattered haphazardly everywhere were the tents of explorers, miners, settlers, and other transient types all seeking their fortune or glory in this remade land.

The sight of change and competition was everywhere now, most notably in Susmere Deep the new channel between the Remnant Coast and the Isle, where Marcomir could see immense sailing ships from Misahn, Nalvarene and Taldref all keeping a safe anchorage from one another and in doing so keeping the tenuous peace between the major powers in Hiraeth.

When the Empress herself asked him to visit and write a piece extolling the virtues of the latest gem she wished to add to her crown of colonies Marcomir jumped at the chance to be of service, assuming the glowing stories of this place were true. As he sat down at his writing desk in the tiny rented room in the hovel he had paid too much for, he thought long and hard about how to best serve Her Eminence. He packed a bowl of tobacco, sprinkled a dash of red salt into it and drew heavily on his pipe...

Dearest readers, I am so excited to share with you my impressions of the most wondrous and beautiful town of Port Elry. Never has a town been blessed with such a picturesque setting! The rolling hills and sweeping forests basking in the sun and a sweet sea breeze, takes your breath away at first glance. It truly is a town of unlimited beauty, growth and prosperity. No one who comes here and wishes to find work is let down and those that work hard have a real chance of also getting lucky and striking it rich. Just last night a man in the most garish yellow waistcoat turned a five silver investment into five gold nearly overnight! There are so many fantastical

finds here and there, I daresay you wouldn't believe me were I to name them all. But a posting goes up weekly in the tavern and money changes hands. The money is clearly being put right back into the town as buildings of all shapes and sizes are being erected daily to provide much needed goods and services to this rapidly expanding haven.

The island you have all heard so much talk about sits just there on the horizon across the Susmere Deep. Its mystery and pristine beauty are both inviting and tempting though rumored deadly. I have arranged a small expedition to explore and map parts of it tomorrow. I am sure you will be reading my account of my discoveries in my next column!

I have had the fortunate opportunity to explore a bit on the outskirts of town! It is only a ten minute walk to forests so serene and beautiful that it makes your heart soar. They said there was danger, but being as well travelled as you and I my dear readers, I thought pishah! I am an explorer! What is a bit of danger to you and I? It didn't take but a little wandering to find the glory and beautiful majesty of the Old Kingdom of Taladorn. Mighty ruined stones from before the Great Cataclysm stand sentinel in the sun dappled wood. Sitting among them imagining the great city they once held up transports one back through history to the stories of chivalrous knights, beautiful queens and horrid monsters.

If ever there was place to make you long for the old ways and the old values, Port Elry is that place. It is truly a new chance, for a new life, in a new world to be built upon the lessons of the old. I urge each and every one of you my beloved readers, every one of you with a shred of curiosity, a heartbeat of wanderlust, or a breathless longing to make a new beginning to come to Port Elry as fast as you can. Don't delay, board whatever ship, caravan, pack mule or pilgrimage will have you! Come now and make your mark, make your name and make a new world!

*With most grateful thanks for your continued readership,
Marcomir Bardanes
Explorer Extraordinaire*

He quickly sealed the article and bounded his way down the street to catch the courier before the great airship left its docking. The courier, as instructed by his draft from the Empress paid him in gold and he smiled as he walked away with the heavy purse. He decided to visit his salter and enjoy his afternoon in the company of tender flesh and swirling smoke. As he walked the alley to the street below, a foul odor made him cover his nose, and then he saw the garish yellow waistcoat, now stained rust, the blood dried and crusted, the vacant staring eyes, the gaping gashed throat. His breakfast came up instantly and added to the filth on his beautiful boots.