



Dear diary,

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That opening sounds incredibly juvenile. Still, Cattie said that it might help - overcoming the hurdle of the blank page. She's a lot smarter than most people give her credit for. It's easy to underestimate someone who's like that. Nice. Sheltered. Happy. You had to get so damn cynical about everything? It's ridiculous. I guess this dad keeps one. His is a lot smaller, pretty sure it's that old one out of a set of 3 I gave him ages ago. He doesn't usually write at home so it makes sense that he'd prefer something a little more substantial. Still not really sure what the 'right' way to go about this is, but Cattie insists that there's no way you're supposed to, beyond just actually doing it. That it's supposed to be a judgement free zone. Sounds like a load of bullshit to me to be honest but I figured it was worth a shot. If nothing else it'll just be a good excuse to practice my handwriting ever since I graduated. It really haven't had much of any reason to practice that, really. Not like I have reams of paper to do, or anything. And anyways, if I do miss or some experiment goes catastrophically wrong then a paper trail and record might come in handy, right? Good documentation is something that is shockingly difficult to run across in most people's attempts at investigating what goes down in Duxenne. Thankfully, I'm not just like most people.

A good place to start would probably be talking about what the actual hell lives in the caves. Anyone who wanders in is immediately struck with the realization that either all of the people who came by to explore before them were massive idiots, or something is really, really wrong here. In Dordenne, it's way more prudent to listen to that little voice in the back of your head that insists on you getting the hell out of dodge because most of the time, it has the right damn idea.

Had to take a break and switch writing utensils. Taffy decided that what he really wanted, above all other things, was to steal my pen and make off with it. Thief. Suppose that I can't blame him. All cats are tiny bandits. Also, getting back on track. IF you've ever smelt the disgusting stench of someone dealing with a bad case of teeth rot, that's more or less what the place smells like. Putrid. It's just gross. Pair that with the rotting food sludge that is still stuck on most of the collected tin cans and used up lunchboxes and it's enough to deter your average honkey tourist.

I fucking hate tourists.

There's always at least one of those summertime pastel decked out idiots that stylize themselves as being brave and experienced with navigating the outdoors that tries to step in deeper. The kind of bravado riddled jackass that is dumb enough to ignore his sense

of danger is dumb enough to not bother
 with being careful with where he places
 his feet. Hell, sometimes they even go so
 far as to try to kick some of the juke. I
 swear that sometimes guys just believe some
 sort of brain rot. Wanting to show off how
 macho and so unafraid they are or making
 a big deal about clearing aside the clouds
 standing in between them and the path
 ahead - life isn't a movie scene, jackass.

Also, I'm realizing that this gel pen smells
 nauseatingly of artificial purple grape.
 I kind of wonder if the rest do as well?
 To different fruits respectively, I mean.

You can learn a surprising amount by what
 a predator leaves behind though. Teeth
 and claw marks on bone. Undigestibles
 hacked or excreted out in pellets. How
 it took its prey down, and what it
 left behind. I still don't know what a
 good name for them is. Crawlers? Cave
 rats is a pretty decent nickname the
 miners gave them. It's surprisingly under-
 stated, as far as what they do and are.
 Maybe it was a spot of dark humor -
 or a way to covertly talk about the horrors
 of these natural formations without upsetting
 the wife and kids. I just know that the
 miners must've seen more than they, or
 perhaps anyone ever let on.

Hell, maybe it was their way of protecting
 the people they loved. The Druclenne Police
 department certainly seem to think that that's
 the way to go. It took legislation being
 forcibly upped for them to be transparent.

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Skill. It seemed to work out well enough that I didn't wince up or anything, and happily I remember that she held my hand for a little moment, enough to squeeze it. Not hard to be hurt by just so damn tiny. But just an affectionate squeeze like when she picks up Tuffy in both hands because he's so cute that she can't resist and lightly squishes him. Squishes? God, my reliance on autocorrect is atrocious. I can practically hear Tony's catty voice making one of her classic sibilant comments on how back in her undergraduate days, they had to write whole essays by hand, or on a typewriter if they could afford it, or to polish up a final draft...

ugh. Dinner happened, so I went ahead and nabbed Felix's pen while I was downstairs. He has a whole bunch of them anyways. It's not like he's likely to notice or anything. He's alright, and all - but the dude has the world's most annoying habit of blasting the same songs on repeat. He's obsessed with the band "The Gloaming" and it's a total mood killer when you wind up listening to moody celtic when crooning into the microphone for the nth time that damn day. (I guess it is kind of cute when he sings to Joshua, though. I'm a leech that dad has someone who takes him back, though. He deserves it.)

Like I was saying, before mash and peas. They're surprisingly weak, as far as something that stylizes itself as a predator. It's really only numbers that they have significantly on their side. A bit like Piran has in that sense - you could dispatch one or two, but get swarmed once it's enough to take down things magnitudes higher up in terms of being a threat.

Catie says that my boots are very "chic" (I think it's cute that she tries to look up and learn slang on her own, like studying algebra, it's damn endearing how hopeful she gets after trying out a new shiny little con of a phrase she's been saving up) but beyond being practical in terms of navigating the rocky terrain up by the bluffs when Tim's helping deal catch the "cuckoos" because he needs that one of them has got to hold the key to solving one of his pet cold cases, once I'm way faster than he is about it, my dodging skills are pretty legit, but they're also damn good for crushing skulls in.

Normally you never want to back yourself up in a corner with anything that lives down there. (This pet smells kind of like cucumbers and melon.) But with the cave rats, you can really use the anchor of the wall to your advantage, in terms of pushing off of it like a spring board to kick their shit in. You can't force your boot into their mouths once breaks their jaws by forcing it down their throats.

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like you can with most animals that
lunge at you and try to bite. Their
jaws can come and try to bite. Their
unhinged, like some practically all the way
snare. (The kind of fucked up
fairly flimsy, though, and you can wedge
a sharp object and sweep it side to
side to deal with them.) The flat of
their faces are surprisingly delicate,
though. I've never been able to
stuck one of their corpses up close and
personal, though, so I can't make any
definite statements on why or how
their anatomy works, but I think it's
because they had to compromise on
rigid shielding to allow the gross
distending of their jaws, and without
viable edges, evolution didn't particularly
favor bony orbital sockets to safely
nestle them in, anymore. So they
just lost them, over time.

They're glass cannons in general. I don't
think they were ever really suited to
direct, individual hunting tactics -
they act more akin to scavengers or
opportunistic communal hunters, if I had
to try to classify their behaviour. You
can deal some serious damage with a
blunt weapon. Blades tend to get
stuck inside the wings of their spines
or noxae - they're full of annoying
slots that can easily entrap something
thin. And good damn luck with a gun,
all you'll do is wind up summoning
the rest of the population in short order,
even if you can ever nail a couple of the
bastards. They're damnably fast, if
nothing else, so it'd be a hard sell. No,

a blunt object - like clack's old baseball bat) is the best way to go about it. No worries about it getting stuck, no extreme risk of calling up a crowd, and infinite reload. Rather, reloading isn't a worry. They're easily distractible with sound, and the thump against flesh sounds not too dissimilar from the sounds that they make when one falls down from the ceiling as it stands down Taffy keeps trying to stick my pen around. But that he wants to steal it to return to the cats like some kind of hare. Cattie thinks it's a that he's "trying to learn from you!" But sometimes the cat just... it's too smart, in a sense. It's uncanny.

I mean, how many cats get their own personalized bibles (you know) or know how to open up the birdboxes along Tilrose Lane to sink a claw into a silver or iron ring (chain and drag it along with himself when he decides to go after walks? How come no one bats a damn eye at how many case reports involve that thing being a phantom, or leading investigators to whatever awesome remains are left of tourists splattered into the gravel like the time Cattie accidentally upended the entire hatchup bottle over her Patine order? (That was a tragedy. It ended up staining her dress and she cried so hard about it that she ended up puking. She's always been really attached to her vintage pieces, I guess.) I've never asked her about where she got them. Probably should next time or dare.