

# HORROR at the DOLL MUSEUM

FOR YEARS THE OLD DOLL MUSEUM OF OUR LITTLE BOROUGH HAS LAIN ABANDONED AND, PRESUMINGLY, EMPTY. BUT THAT IS NOT THE CASE, AS THIS PLUCKY REPORTED RECENTLY DISCOVERED AFTER A SIGHTING OF A LION CUB PROWLING AROUND THE MUSEUM

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The **Doll Museum**, long abandoned, long presumed to be empty, but in reality home to a strange community of **Mock Dolls**; a rare breed of the Mockeries we all know and love. For years now 'tourists' have been visiting this museum, sneaking in through the boarded-up windows, taking a peek at the non-living dolls gathering dust in their old display cabinets, avoiding (sometimes trading) with the Mockeries that have made a home here. Sometimes, so it is said, these tourists go missing, but that's nothing new in our borough (just ask the refugees about the Old Mother, or the Water-rats about their Merman, both now missing),

and there are those who blame the disappearances on these mockeries. But maybe there's another reason. I was chatting over an imported Cat Coffee the other day, to one of these tourists, who was visiting the museum by herself a few nights ago. While there she encountered a band of familiar-looking folk that said they were Council members looking for a lion cub: a scar-faced man, a fashionable woman carrying a rather large rifle, a herby man and someone who looked like they just stepped off the train from the *Deep Country*. Faces this gossip paper has reported on before. Not really members of the borough's Council (they're not lions) but our very own urban-heroes (or vagabonds, the jury is still out on that). According to my source these strangers saved her from what sounded like a gang of mischievous (dangerous?) Mock Dolls that were playing



JUST SOME OF THE DOLLS FOUND BROKEN AND ABANDONED IN THE DUSTY OLD MUSEUM

tricks, and then proceeded upstairs to the top of the old lighthouse: as she left the museum she heard gun shots, screams, and lots of shouting. She didn't stay around and fled back home.

Curious about what went on, this courageous reporter ventured into the museum and sought out the Mock Dolls that lived there. I was somewhat worried when I was confronted by a gang of club-wielding dolls of all shapes and sizes, but a flash of my camera and press-badge convinced them that I was not a threat, and they took me to see their leader, the Last of the Mock Council, a red-headed porcelain doll in a tuxedo who introduced himself as Barnaby.

This fortunate survivor, as he thought of himself, told me of how these four strangers burst into their council chamber and, without any provocation whatsoever, attacked them. As he puts it: "These savages opened fire as soon as they saw us, blasting

my colleagues arms and legs clean off, stabbing my dearest love, the sweetest ballerina you ever did see, with some rusty old spear. Then they held me hostage so that they could escape. They would have killed me too if I hadn't managed to slip away as they scrambled through a window, slipping away in the night like thieves. I have no idea why they attacked us or what they were doing in the museum, but I can tell you now, if I ever come across them again, they'll

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pay for what they did". He went on to explain that although they had tolerated, even welcomed, tourists before, they were now shutting their doors and outsiders would no longer be welcomed in their museum. You have been warned!

Intrigued by this attack, which sounded similar to others we have reported on, this investigative reporter decided to find out more about these strangers. I was curious about the lion cub that they had been looking for, and a few enquiries around the borough revealed that a missing cub had been reported by the Lion Council and had been spotted taking a walk with four familiar faces: our scar-faced, fashionable, herby-smelling, yokel vagabonds, seen visiting the market under the Bends, asking about meat of all things. They were seen talking to a chain-smoking Mock Chicken, a known agitator and animal-activist called Camila, but then disappeared for a few days. No one seemed to know where they had disappeared.

Asking around the market I encountered a local butcher by the name of Insy, a Mock Spider who claimed to have had dealings with these strangers, although he didn't know their names. He told me: "They seemed like perfectly fine folks, paid me for a large portion of meat, seemed well-off compared to how they looked." He seemed shocked when I told him that they were believed to be trouble-makers and associated with several recent shootings around the borough. "No, I don't believe that," he said. "If they were involved in any such dealings, I am sure they had good reason".

I wanted to find out more, but there was little else to find out, at least from the stall-owners at the market. Wondering where on earth such folk would be found, this stubborn and determined reporter went looking for more clues as to who these people were.

It must have been my lucky day, as I hailed a local taxi and found myself ferried across the borough by one of the Lunar Lord's minions, a Moon-faced chap called Jimmy, moonlighting (no pun intended) as a taxi driver for a bit of extra cash to fuel his love of old records. He had recently picked up the foursome I was looking for, driving them from Junction 7 to their home, or what he presumed was their home... However, he would not tell me where they lived, saying that it was "Driver, Passenger confidentiality," but did tell me that they paid well, seemed to really like raw meat, and were always well-armed. Decent enough folk, a bit stingy when it came to tips, and looked like they could handle themselves in a fight. He also spilled the beans on a few jobs they had done for his boss, the mysterious Lunar Lord, but he wouldn't go into details: "Procurement jobs" was all he would say.

After dropping me off by the old council estate of Apple-tree Square (a dump if ever I saw one) I headed home, determined to learn more about these meat-loving, gun-toting strangers who seemed capable of murdering Mockeries without apparent reason, had money to pay for taxis and sackfuls of meat, and appeared to be decent folk by the few people I have encountered who have had dealings with them.

So, who are they? What do they want? What's with all the meat? This Answer-seeking reporter will find out, and you, dear reader, will read about it here, before anyone else!

