

July 23, 1587

Thomas thought a fool of me when I purchased this journal. "What are you going to do with such a silly thing, father?", he asked. I would not expect a boy of his age to understand how drastic this change is. It is my belief that this journal will be the only thing to tie me to my sanity during our time here on Roanoke. The life of a colonist is hardly fit for a banker, but I must do what is best for my family. I have done all that I can to ease my wife's sorrow. The Roanoke colony is our last chance, and I terribly hope this new life will help my dearest Joyce to forget about our stillborn child. She hardly speaks anymore, and I can sometimes hear her faint weeping at night. All I can do now is pray and hope that I have made the right choice.

August 14, 1587

It seems I will never grow accustomed to the rugged life of a settler. The nights will chill you to the bone, and the afternoons are so hot you feel as though you may blister, but the land is honest and the work is good here. I've not once in my entire thirty-four years planted a single thing before coming here, and now I mind a small garden. It most certainly is not England, and that is what saddens me the most. I still dream of it sometimes. I long to once again breathe Bristol's air and hear the symphony of horseshoes against its cobblestone alleys. My heart aches when I think of home, but I know we cannot go back. It is more for my wife's sake than my own. The memory of our departed daughter would be too much for her to bear.

August 18, 1587

Rejoice! Mrs. Dare has finally delivered her child, a young girl bestowed with the name Virginia. The entire colony will certainly make merry this evening in honor of the first child of English blood born on Roanoke Island. Mrs. Dare even allowed Joyce to hold her new child. Her eyes sparkled with a wondrous twinkle, and she actually smiled. I have not seen my wife smile in a very long time.

August 27, 1587

Governor White departed for England this morning. "Four months," he said, "is how long I shall be. When I return, I promise you Roanoke will have plenty of food, fresh water, blankets, and England's approval to relocate as requested." My concern is that in four months he will be too late. I fear my son has taken ill, and Doctor Mylton does not have enough medicine. I cannot afford to lose my only child, but I can only pray that Thomas will overcome his sickness.

August 31, 1587

Thomas has shown no improvement. He has throat-tearing coughs, and he often complains of headaches. Joyce, who recently began to speak and sleep soundly again, is once more distraught. It also seems that it is not only Thomas who has become ill. Mr. Tayler and Mrs. Chapman both complain of the same ailments. Joyce and I fear it will spread throughout our entire settlement.

September 9, 1587

There has been a disturbing change in my son. He no longer coughs, but he is instead frequented by nose bleeds. This is not the worst of it, though. If he is not aimlessly wandering the house, he merely lays in bed, vacantly staring at the wall. I am unsure if he even blinks anymore. I brought him to Doctor Mylton who said he would do all that he could. Two more people have fallen ill this week. I will not lie; I am very frightened.

September 15, 1587

Doctor Mylton stormed into my little garden as I was harvesting my maize. A bloody linen cloth covered one of his hands, and before I was able to get a word out, he angrily shouted, "Take care of your beast of a son yourself! I will not tolerate such atrocious behavior from my patients, Mr. Archard!"

"Pardon me, doctor?" I asked.

“Your boy, if you could call him that, bit me! Right here,” he said, gesturing his bandaged hand. “I held up a cloth to wipe the blood from under his nose and he lunged at me! I

Pg.3

would have expected someone of your kind to have raised a boy to be a gentleman. It seems I was mistaken.” Then he bitterly marched away. If he can not help my son, I fear nobody can.

September 19, 1587

Nine people. That is how many now carry this plague. After we retrieved Thomas from Doctor Mylton, he became even more violent. So violent in fact, that we’ve taken to keeping him locked in his room by lodging a wooden stool under the handle of his door. Every day I hastily open his door a bit and leave a small bowl of bread and a pouch of water in his room. He never eats, though. To my knowledge, he doesn’t sleep either. He simply wails and shrieks all day and all night. I can sometimes hear him scratch and pound at his door. My son is not even ten years of age, but he is old enough and disciplined enough to know that such behavior can only be matched by that of a feral beast. These things would be enough to drive anyone mad, but I will *not* give up on my son.

September 26, 1587

Thomas... my son. Rest my boy’s poor, young soul. What I find to be the most disturbing of his passing is not the gaunt state in which I found him, but what happened when I went to bury him. After the grave was dug, I went to retrieve his body which had mysteriously vanished. I was shocked and asked everyone I could. Nobody had the faintest idea as to what happened to him. My only explanation is that he was, unfortunately, dragged into the mountains by an animal in the time it took me to dig his grave. I cannot even give my son his final rest, and this breaks my heart. Joyce has stopped speaking once more. She sobs for most of the day and sleeps long hours. She hardly eats anymore. I was forced to give Mr. Dare a whole pot of corn soup today because she refused to eat. I once knew a man in Bristol who raised only two of his six

children. A month after their fourth child died, his wife hung herself out of grief. I pray it will not come to that.

Pg. 4

September 28, 1587

Fifteen people are now unwell, and that is not the worst news. Today, as Mr. Jones was tending to his garden, Mrs. Jones attacked him from behind with a tree branch. From what I heard, she would have killed him had his shrieks not drawn the attention of Mr. Dutton and Mr. Wright. It took both men to tear her off of her husband. According to Doctor Mylton, he may be blind in one of his eyes. Mrs. Jones however... Mr. Wright was forced to shoot her with his arquebus.

October 5, 1587

Of the nineteen colonists who were ill, only ten of them remain. It starts with the violent coughing, then the vacuous wandering and staring. After the blood comes from the nose, any manner of things can happen. Some screamed as my son did, some never made a sound. Some attacked like Mrs. Jones, others never left their beds. And yet, when the time came to say a final peace, their bodies had all mysteriously vanished. I soon concluded that this was no longer the work of wild animals. Someone surely would have noticed by now if a wild dog or bear entered the settlement. My concerns now turn to Joyce. I pray every night that this phantom illness will no longer trouble my family.

October 12, 1587

I should have known coming to Roanoke would bring me nothing but grief. This land has taken more than it has given, and now I want nothing more than to leave. If only we stayed in Bristol, if only I never had the notion to come here, my son would still be alive. Another three people have become sick this month. Worse yet, Joyce has begun coughing. She insists it is nothing, but I have seen it enough to understand what it means.

October 28, 1587

I've taken on the belief that this monstrous plague may only be the work of the Devil himself. People dying left and right, bodies disappearing... I feel as though I'm dreaming. It seems I will wake up any moment now and when I do, I will be in my oak

Pg.5

bed in England, covered in wool sheets with my wife next to me. And when I walk down the hall, I will enter Thomas's room and he will be soundly asleep. But this is not a dream. I am in a nightmare that refuses to end. Joyce stays in bed and I do my very best to ease her suffering. Most days it is bringing her her favorite stew, or brushing wisps of her silky, brown hair out of her face because she is too weak to do it herself. I picked a bundle of small yellow flowers and left them by her bedside. She always loved the color yellow. I pray for her everyday. I can sometimes hear her talking to Abigail, our daughter. "You were so beautiful when you were born," she'll say. "I held your hand, but you did not hold mine. You couldn't, and I am so sorry for that, my dearest Abigail. Mother will be with you very soon."

November 21, 1587

It has been some number of days since I last wrote in this silly old thing. Since then... my wife. My poor Joyce. She was but twenty-nine. She would have been of thirty years today. She passed calmly, not like Thomas. She was peaceful, draped comfortably in her favorite quilt. I wrapped her body in linen and placed a bundle of those little yellow flowers in her hands. I did not bother to dig a grave. Her body was, like the others, gone not an hour later. My family, my little son and wife, have both passed. Sleep has grown pointless; I almost always awake in the dead of night, screaming from the nightmares that wrack my body with fear for the rest of the evening until the sun rises. Food seems to have lost its taste as well. I find it difficult to accept the fact that now it is only me. And I have never felt more alone.

November 30, 1587

There was few over one hundred of us when we first arrived. Now there is only about sixty of us, and our numbers continue to shrink. Mrs. Viccars gave me her husband's rifle, his arquebus, after he passed. I do not plan to shoot anybody, but should the

situation arise, I must do what needs to be done. Mr. Chapman barreled past me the other day, his arms occupied with sacks of his belongings. "I had to do it... I had to!" he mumbled as he marched past me. When I turned my head to find the source of his

Pg.6

distress, I saw that he had set his own home ablaze. It was only after the cries were loud enough that I realized his wife was still inside. I am unsure if she was sick. Now her screams are one of the many things that inhabit my nightmares. Many, including myself, have suggested moving further inland, or possibly leaving Roanoke and sheltering with the Chowanoke Indians. I would honestly like nothing more than to leave this wretched place. I know more will die, and they will die very soon... God help us.

December 3, 1587

Eight more people have died. Three had to be shot, and one attacked me. I was harvesting grain from my garden, which has grown into a small orchard, when a sudden yowl caused me to pull my eyes away from my work. When I looked up, I was greeted with the sight of Mr. Wotton charging toward me, a crazed and wild look in his unblinking eyes. I stumbled back, reaching for my arquebus, but I was too slow. Moments later, I was struggling to keep the skinning knife he held from plunging into my chest while shouting for help. I locked eyes with him for a second, and I wish I had not. He glared down at me, seemingly looking into me, into my soul. I cannot describe the fear I felt when I looked into his eyes, nor can I describe the look in his eyes. They simply no longer belonged to him. They were no longer a man's eyes. They were the ones of a monster, and looking a monster in the face is a truly terrifying thing. I placed my feet under his stomach and kicked him off of me. He staggered back and I finally got a hold of my weapon. I aimed for my desired target, but missed. Instead of hitting him in the chest, the ball tore through his shoulder and he howled in pain. Mr. Tydway ran up with his gun and shot him through the heart. I am glad that I was not the one to shoot him.

December 16, 1587

How many more people have to die? Why am I not one of them? I long to once again be with my family. I long to hold my son in my arms and wake up next to my wife. Some nights I read through my journal and weep. Not because it smells like home, not because it reminds me of my family, but because I believed. I *really* believed that I could

Pg.7

make things better. I really believed that we would have a new, happy life here. I ached to live happily, but now I am afraid I will die despondent.

December 27, 1587

I am surprised I have not gone mad. So many people are gone, and every day people still fall victim to this ruthless sickness. Governor White should be returning soon, but I fear he will have nothing to return to. There has been talk of other colonists on Croatoan Island. There has been much talk of transferring our settlement to theirs. I hope they are not harried by the sickness.

January 10, 1588

It has been two weeks since the last death. Nobody else has died. Nobody has even shown any signs of the illness. No coughing, no bleeding... no death. Unfortunately, there are only twelve of us left, including Mrs. Dare and her daughter. As for Governor White, he will return to empty graves and rotting fire wood. I am joyous that there is no more death, but I am also disheartened that Joyce and Thomas are not standing here with me. The final decision has been made to leave Roanoke -- forever. We leave for Croatoan Island tomorrow. In the event that somebody does find the remnants of this place, I have carved the word CROATOAN into the tree that those little yellow flowers blossomed around. When they see the word, they will know where we are, and they will know we are safe. We have agreed to dismantle our homes, pack our valuables, and leave this place behind us and never look back. I know that someday, when my heart no longer beats, people will walk the very shores of this place and never know of its dark secret. Children will sing and play over the graves we never filled. I believe that there is a difference between the things we cannot understand, and the things that will simply

never be understood, such as the purpose of this plague. Roanoke has left a hole in my heart and a spot on my soul, but it did not take me.

It did not take me.