A study in vättar

by Windfighter

Summary

A Vätte has followed the crew back to the known world and it is now stuck in a facility in Mora. Will it ever get some food?

Notes

Inspired by a comment by wavewright62 in the comment section of Stand Still Stay Silent. Beware of misspellings and stuff, I haven't actually proofread it to catch them since I gotta hurry to work now and I want to throw this up before I leave!

"Fascinating."

"Intriguing."

"What do you think it is?"

"I'd say it's a Vätte, just look at it."

The three scientists looked at the creature on the other side of the glass. 90 years ago it would have been a human, but now it was a vicious creature that could kill them if they got too close to it. It had been brought back to the civilized world by a group of explorers and how it had passed the safety check in Iceland was still unclear.

"What do you think it wants?"

"food", the creature suggested.
"I'd say it wants something to eat."

"A light snack perhaps."

"Maybe we should feed him your assistant Jörgen!"

The two older scientists laughed, but the younger crossed her arms over her chest.

"Jörgen has a family to go home to, maybe we should feed him one of you two instead."

The laughter subsided just as quickly as it had started and the three looked at the Vätte again. It looked small, thanks to the rolled up position it had taken, but they all knew it was bigger than it looked. It was covered in mud, moss, leaves and twigs which helped further the illusion of its tinyness.

"food?" it asked again, looking straight towards the scientists.

"It is kind of cute, maybe we should give it something to eat."

"Our offer to grab Jörgen is still open."

A glare and then silence again.

"hello."

"It's very polite."

"It's just a ruse to get us into grabbing range."

"We might have an apple in the fridge, I'll go check."

The oldest scientist left, his labcoat swooshing dramatically behind him. The vätte's gaze followed him until he disappeared behind a corner and then settled on the remaining two instead.

"I heard it just followed them onto the boat and no one dared cross its path."

"But the Icelanders are trained to shoot on the slightest suspicion of an infected."

"I know, that's what's so weird."

"But why did it end up here?"

"hello."

The vätte moved closer to the glass and the two scientists took three steps back.

"You think it's going to attack?"

"I don't know, do you think it is?"

"How can you tell if a Vätte is about to eat you anyway?"

"food?"

The vätte nodded in the direction of the disappeared scientist. The woman nodded.

"Yes, he's getting you something to eat."
"Do you think it understands us?"

"It seems intelligent, doesn't it?"

"But the infected usually only have one thing in mind."

They fell quiet. Steps echoed in the corridor and the third scientist returned. He opened a small hatch in the door and rolled an apple to the vätte. The vätte blinked, stared at it and then leaned down. They couldn't hear any chewing, but a minute later the vätte came up to the glass.

"That was much better, my dear chaps."

The three scientists blinked, didn't know what to say.

"You have no idea how hard it is to talk without a potato in your mouth."

The scientists exchanged glances, looked at the Vätte, looked at each other again.

"An apple is of course far from the same as a potato, but I'm not picky, any food will do in a pickle. Even a pickle, if I may be so bold."

"Did it... did it just try to joke?"

"Of course, potatoes are also known as apples of the earth so maybe they're not that different from a potato."

The vätte looked at them, blinked.

"Ah, my dear friends, I apologize. It has been a long time since I had company so I might have forgotten some of the finer rules so socializing. May I ask what your names are?"

It sat down on the floor, its eyes still locked to the three scientists, who were moving uneasily under its gaze. The oldest scientist coughed, scratched his neck.

"I'm Yngve, the other two are Lisa and Arvid."

"A pleasure to meet you all. Tell me, why is it you have put me into this room?"

"You... you do know what you are, don't you?"

Lisa's voice shivered and the vätte looked at the roof.

"I used to call myself Oscar, but that was a while ago. A human just like you. But I assume things have changed since then. It really has been a while, hasn't it. Tell me, what year is it?"

"91", Yngve answered.

"91? Have I travelled back in time? But surely they didn't have buildings as complex as this back then."

"No, we started from zero after the illness hit..."

"Ah yes, the illness. I vaguely remember it. It took most people in my village. Perhaps that is why I am here?"

"You tell us", Arvid said with a laugh. "You're the one who followed them here."
"I did crave company. You see, it has been so very lonely. No potatoes either so I haven't been able to talk to anyone I've met. Me deepest thanks for the apple, I have missed conversating a lot during these years."

Lisa scratched her arm.

"You... do realize that the illness took you as well?"

"Are you saying I'm dead? Am I stuck in Limbo or Hell? Not that I believe in either of them, but of course one can never know until one sees them."

The vätte pressed closer to the glass.

"Say, you don't happen to have any cards, do you? It has been so long since I last played and I fancy a game of poker."

They could see the apple moving around in its mouth as it talked and they took another step back, shook their heads.

"Are you afraid I'll eat you? Never seen someone like me before, have you?"

"N-no... Not really."

The vätte gasped, took a step back and rolled itself into a ball.

"Never seen a Dane before, have they? My country-men, all lost to the same illness that took my village, my family, myself? What fairness is there in that I, alone, have survived to carry the memory of my people, my country?"

"Ah... no, there are Danes", Lisa moved closer again. "We've just never stood eye to eye with a Vätte before today."

"A Vätte?" the Vätte blinked.

"Yes, that's what we call creatures like you."

"Creatures? Me, a human, being degraded into a 'creature'? What fairness is there in this, I ask!"

"In our defence", Yngve tried, "none of the infected so far has shown this much intelligence. Nor willingness to communicate. Mostly you just... you know... try to eat us."

"I would never!" the vätte exclaimed. "The nerve to suggest something like that! Eating another human being... just the thought of it makes my blood cold. And the risks! Eating humans is not without its risks you know!"

The vätte chewed a little on the apple in its mouth and looked towards Yngve again.

"It seems my apple is starting to run out. Could you be so kind and fetch me another one so we can continue this charming conversation? I am quite interested in learning how the world has changed. I only know what I could see from my house, but I am confident that the three of you could provide me with a greater insight of today's unwritten rules and the state of our countries!"

Yngve glanced at Arvid and Lisa before nodding and fleeing down the corridor again. This creature, brought back from the depth of Denmark, the Silent World, might be able to teach them as much about the infected as they could teach it about the new world. In any case it'd be an interesting study that could result in several papers for the academia! He found another apple in the fridge and smiled.
when he took it out. It wasn't often one was faced with an opportunity like this.

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