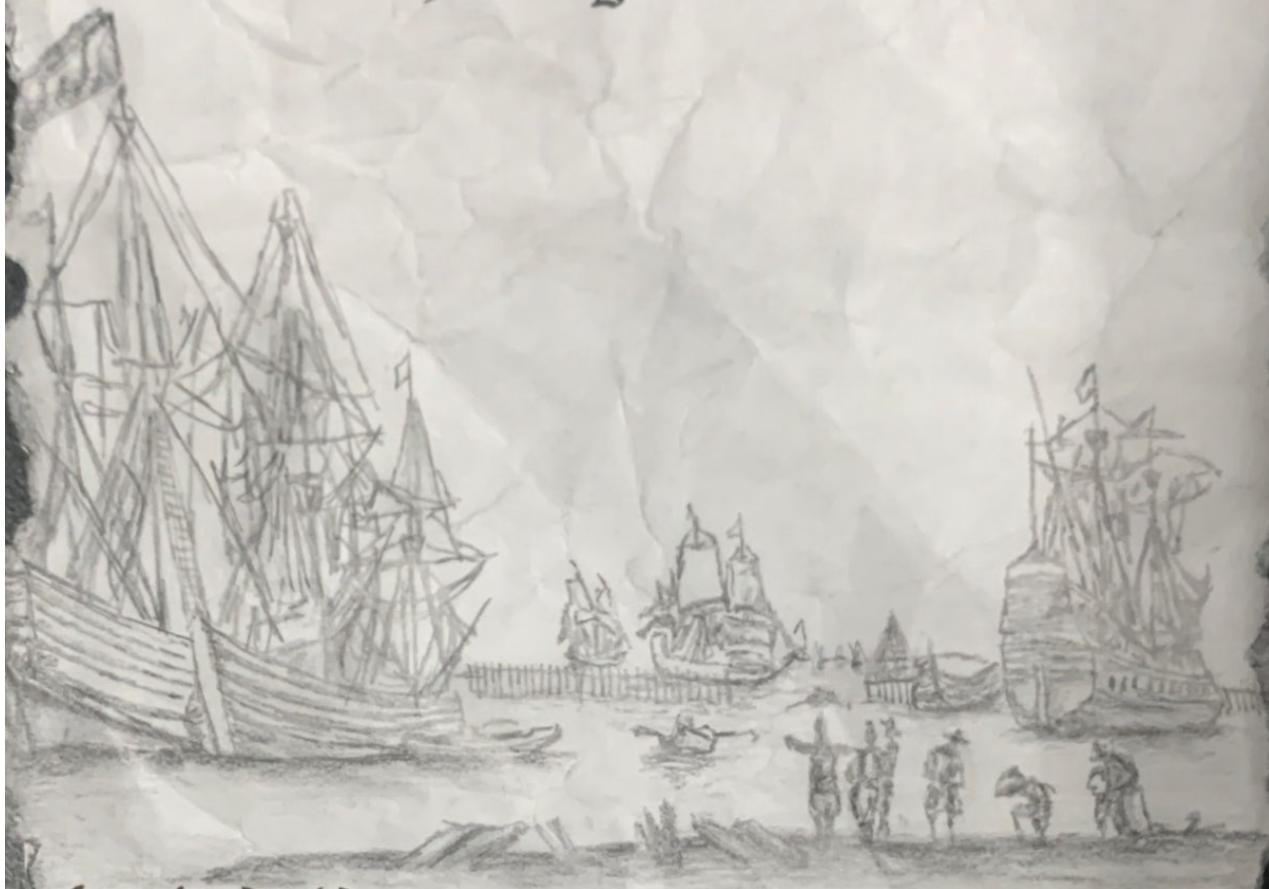


# Compilation of Dr. Spencer Whittington's letters



September 17, 1617

Thomas, you must be wondering how my journey to Montpelier had been overseas, but I am not too keen on dwelling on the miserable voyage along the coasts to France. Sailing on a crowded vessel, in which I believe was a merchant's ship, is certainly not ideal. I must say Montpelier is not as it had seemed from the articles I had read back in Cambridge, whilst the universite is quite impressive, the city pales in comparison to London. It hadn't been long since I departed, merely a month or so, yet I seem to be missing Cambridge more than I thought I would. I shall write a letter to Father soon to thank him for sponsoring my journey as a physician, and I do hope to repay him as a doctor with my degree and sterling reputation once I return home. I'll be years traveling and voyaging, and you'll go long without much news from me, but don't doubt me yet dear brother, as I will become a physician no doctor will want to reckon with.

September 24, 1617

I received my personal quarters and my curriculum for the time being, and I recommend you keep up your Latin studies with Father. I know mother and Elizabeth would have taken quite a liking to the view of the city streets from here as well, and I'll be sure to give them my best wishes in a letter. My French studies at Cambridge have become vital to fitting in here and if you are to follow in my footsteps you must keep up with these studies as well. Though if you lack the skillful determination one needs, I will be sure to tutor you once I return.

Recently, I have been studying with Pierre Boutilier and Antoine Debrune, two Frenchmen I have become acquainted with very closely over the past few days, and in return for their tutoring in French, I have been educating them in Latin. We will have an anatomy session on le bras today with doctor Girardeau and I certainly look forward to watching his meticulous instruction. Quite frankly Thomas, I could spend hours analyzing my own palm, curling and uncurling my nimble fingers... furling and unfurling my brow as I observed the delicate movement with intrigue. The mere thought of it is riveting, and it is compelling the gears within my head to sputter and shift about.

September 26, 1617

Dearest Thomas, I was not very fond of your last letter, jeering at my enthusiasm to watch a simple anatomy session, though siblings are this way I suppose. You certainly resemble a queen's jester, and after all, you do take after our uncle Charles. However, do not mistake my extraordinary curiosity for mere enthusiasm, as doctor Girardeau was very pleased at my attentive prowess. In fact, he personally invited me to tomorrow's dissection in which not all students are given such the honor. For your benefit I shall do my best to describe it to you come morning, but until then, I have much to take note of.

September 29, 1617

Before I detail the execution I witnessed today, I must share doctor Girardeau and doctor Valois's stimulating dissection from not too long ago.

Antoine and Pierre attended as well (given my good-natured praises) and stood beside me as the two doctors gathered us around the corpse of François Guillory. I heard he was hung at the gallows for attempted arson, but his crimes are not of importance to us anymore—at least that was what doctor Valois had mentioned before picking up the scalpel to begin. The body lay scrupulously on the wooden table and I fought to get a better look at doctor Girardeau's movements. Between the every-so-often glances towards the table, I noted his words insistently onto a fresh page of parchment. I shall copy them here for you, as I know you will ask for them:

"The arm, cleanly shaven and severed, had already been prepared for dissection. Doctor Valois had taken the scalpel gingerly and parallelly slid the blade down the inner portion of the arm twice, detaching a wide strip of the outer skin from the forearm with ease. The arm was clearly fresh as its crimson blood streamed down to the rim of the fingernails.

Doctor Girardeau pulled the skin down, past the palm, and to the fingertips of the hand, revealing the conjunction of muscles and bones underneath it. To my irritation, Debraux pulled me aside:

'C'est un processus minutieux, la dissection, c'est pourquoi il est essentiel de connaître la structure de l'os avant de disposer le muscle externe.' (Dissection is a meticulous process, which is why it is essential to know the structure of the bone before dissecting the external muscle)

I simply nodded at his words, taking my pencil and using it to indicated up and down the arm from afar,

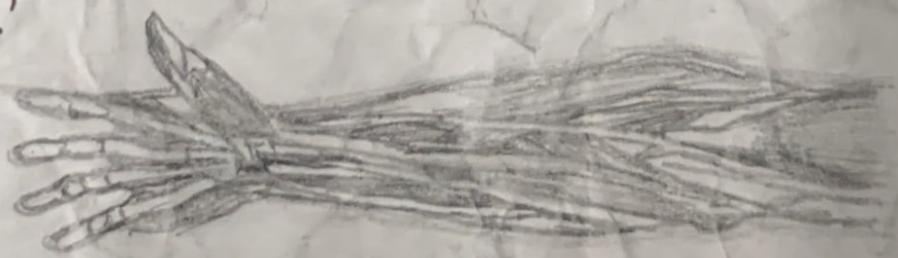
'En effet, les muscles prennent naissance à la tête de l'os puis s'étendent jusqu'à leur caudal où ils sont rattachés par des tendons. Nous devons connaître les deux structures de manière égale.' (Indeed, the muscles originate at the head of the bone and then extend to their caudal where they are attached by tendons. We need to know both structures equally.)

The doctors demonstrated each muscle one by one, diligently pointing their position, their structure, and their function. Directing our attention to the fingers, they pulled at the tendons gently, before lecturing about the joints and their movements. With one hand doctor Girardeau sliced through the fresh flesh and with the other he pointed down at the layers of muscles.

Each, layered four over four, or two over two, stretching from the wrist to the fingers over the palm. Tracing few veins, he lectured about their thickness and their color, calling our attention once again to how the sinews connected the thin layers of muscle to the finger bones.

It was quite the beautiful sight.

With that he set the arm along with his instruments down on the table and called over his shoulders. He declared: 'Please read Galen, *De anatomicis administrationibus*, before our discussion of the forearm tomorrow.'

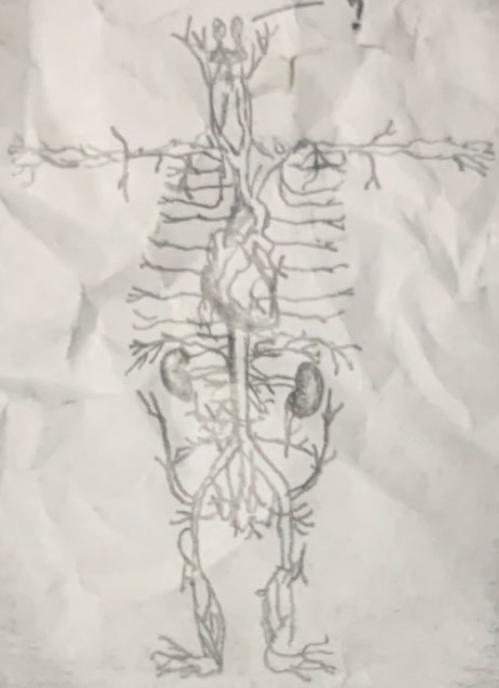


October 16, 1617

I am writing this to you as your impatience has become quite the bother to me and my fellow acquaintances who toss the mail into my quarters with heavy sighs. Poor Mr. Rohr, between his apprenticeship at the apothecary's and his small job delivering letters, he must be exhausted at your pointless remarks. I had promised you a note about the recent execution, however, with all the lectures and notes I have become very busy. Nevertheless, I had jotted some small notes.

The gallows were dark, a heap of pyre lay below the empty noose. Mainard Drait was his name, if I remember correctly. He stalked forward in chains, with two guards posted at his sides nearly jostling him towards the platform. Mazin Faraj (another student from Montpelier) joined me as monsieur Pierre had left Montpelier that morning. Monsieur Faraj had spent a few months in England and spoke very well. We had traveled together to arrive at the execution and had much to talk about. He directed towards the execution site as Drait was led to the noose.

He mumbled beneath his breath what sounded like Bible verses and folded his hands together as he calmly prayed. The guards hoisted his body up before lighting the pyre without remorse. Just as the flames reached his toes, and bulbous blisters formed along the sole of the foot, he was hung, and his neck snapped to his breast without movement. We watched as his limbs burned before our eyes, and monsieur Faraj and I directed our attention to the bones beneath the melting muscle and blood. The skeleton was soon nothing more but a heap of ash to replace the heap of pyre that once was below the noose. I was impatient for Pierre's return, but it had seemed as if his family in Nîmes had kept him up longer than I had expected. Do not fret brother, I shall inform you of the second execution before you send another dozen letters.



He had been the fifth criminal of the day who had been executed. Beheaded at once; his four limbs severed soon after. It was not much to comment as it had been fairly quick. Both subjects perished after a long imprisonment as Protestant heretics, as it seems the tumultuous religious warfare had its blatant hostility. It has been over two weeks now and I am thrilled to know Elizabeth has taken up the harpsichord.

Father is as usual I presume, and you, how are your studies going dear brother? It has been long since I have asked about your tutoring, I only hope you haven't lost your focus with all the women sauntering about.

October 17, 1617

Doctor Friedrich Strauss conducted the lecture today. He was thorough as all physicians usually were, but he was not as eloquent as some of the others. He instructed on about Vesalius's *Tabulae Anatomicae Sex*. I shall do my best to copy down a sketch of what his figures looked like for your benefit Thomas, but know I am no artist of the kind. I am curious of the *rete mirabile* he draws along the base of the neck. It looks quite like an important network of veins, essential, as Galen thought of it. It was where the vital spirit entered and was transferred throughout the nerves of the body. Seemingly, it turned out difficult to see during dissection and Berengario da Carpi thought it was fictitious. Quite the scandal, I would say. When Vesalius published his *De corporis humano fabrica libri septem* he had the evidence that it did not, in fact, exist in the human body and that Galen (and himself) had been utterly wrong.

I believe it is because Galen could not dissect humans, only mere animals. Doctor Strauss had elaborated on this fact and yet had still given us the task of analyzing Vesalius's six figures in comparison to his De Fabrica work.

November 2, 1617

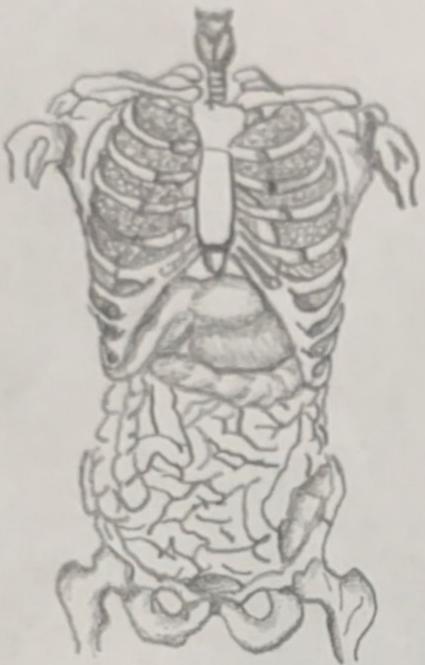
Pierre returned this evening, just in time for the dissection of the lower abdomen. During the ongoing lecture about the humors by Doctor Léveque, we received news of the freshly hanged bodies for dissection being conducted by Léveque himself. He motioned, with one swift movement of his arm, towards the board and the room refocused on Galenic humoral theory once more.

'Il paraît que Léveque est protestant. Il doit être bien énigmatique pour disposer le cadavre de l'hérétique qui vient d'être pendu ce matin.' (It seems that Léveque is a Protestant. He must be quite enigmatic to dissect the corpse of the heretic who has just been hanged this morning)

'Announce it any louder Pierre and we might be the next ones on the table.'

'Il n'est pas en grand danger maintenant, mais vous avez raison, nous devons rester prudents quant aux informations que nous possédons.' (He is not in much danger now, though you are right, we should still remain cautious of the information we possess)

Doctor Léveque had whipped his head back for no more than a split second to glance our way. His eyes gleamed with a sharp irritation, a tedious weariness, and an unmistakable disbelief before he returned to pointing at the discoloured liver. He directed at the kidneys next, indicating the uterus, then moving towards the bowel. At some point during the lecture, Léveque had instructed Ketham's reading of *Fasciculus Medicinae* and an annotated visual of his wroscoopy wheel for our next lecture in which you should already have a copy.



I am curiously awaiting for your interpretation of it, Thomas.

November 16, 1617

I have fallen quite ill, and have been sent to the infirmary for treatments. I believe it is due to the cold weather that I must be purged of this excess liquid to return my humoral balance from its upset state. Let Father know I will be traveling to Nimes when I recover. I will be assisting doctor Girardeau on his journey to Paris. Antoine will be attending as well, as his family is not far from Nimes. His hospitable father has invited us to stay until our next trip north from here. I shall do my best to detail my travels in a letter, Thomas, as soon as I am settled and well. Until then, I am bedridden and ordered to rest until the illness passes.

December 3, 1617

We have just arrived at Nimes, and it is quite the beautiful city. You would have loved the scenery more than I. We had run into Mr. Rohr, as he was delivering a message abroad. He did not seem to have much time to chat as his maître had requested him to roll several dozen

more pills to sell when he returned to the apothecary's shop. Doctor Girardeau's patient was Johann Weisz—a wealthy noble who had two young daughters and a charming wife. And though I thoroughly enjoyed doctor Girardeau's lectures, I became absorbed seeing him as a physician and not an instructor. We had been led to the drawing room where doctor Girardeau had taken a seat and pulled out his sole journal to take notes. As Weisz articulated his conditions, Girardeau elegantly interpreted his illness, commenting that the upheaval of the humors has caused his body to produce excess heat and blood that has led to his feverish symptoms.

I had read a similar section in Galen's *On Prognosis* and assumed it was based on this theory that Johann's pulse had become more rapid now that the excess blood has been forcing his heart to beat faster than habitually. I was given a glance of approval before doctor Girardeau prescribed time and perhaps a blood-letting if his conditions continued to worsen.

He promised to return come morning.

Frankly, I am ecstatic brother! Doctor Girardeau had praised my observations and I had never felt so accomplished in one sitting. Antoine recommended we visit the Pont du Gard as a celebration for my acknowledgements, thus I will be sure to draw you its beautiful Roman arches before we travel through Lyon.

December 24, 1617

I must say, you have become a riot with your sarcasm. I was almost sure your last letter was purely written to insult me; however, we shall see if you are this jubilant when you cease to receive my letters. Traveling to Lyon from Antoine's dwelling had been uneventful as the French countryside was as still as the courtyards at Cambridge during the wee hours of a frigid winter morning. The only movement seemed to be the rustle of the flora and the soft dotting of snow. If I cannot send a letter to you soon, I wish you the best of holidays as my journey through Lyon is only passing.

January 2, 1618

Dijon's architecture is as stunning as I imagined. I was not aware of doctor Girardeau's reputation in France. He must be exceptionally well-known to have accommodated our stay with Etienne Boubier de Chevigny. Being from England, you must not know of him as I had not, but I was told he is a magistrate and adviser to the Parliament of Burgundy. Monsieur Boubier must have loved Italian architecture as I am most sure his style reflects the art of the Italian Renaissance. The portico itself was unlike anything I have ever seen before: three arches framed the entrance, each with modeled rich detail on the spandrels in which one could see from the gardens and the courtyard. The glazed tiles of the rooftops were beautifully crafted as a mosaic. Amal, the third honored student to travel along, had informed me that it was very much a Burgundian style rooftop. Can you imagine how colourful London would seem with these intricate tiles?

That evening, doctor Girardeau had led us to another execution. Maurice Favre was the fourth criminal standing at the gallows and had been condemned to death after a series of burglaries.

As customary, his limbs were dismembered following his death from his beheading. A false coiner had then been hanged on the same platform. I could predict it now: the swift tightening of the noose, the piercing snap of the spine, and then at last, the collapse of his head against his breast. The third execution was quite a shock to me as I had recognized the man from a small gathering in Montpelier. He had been the husband of Agnes Parris—a lovely commoner involved in the crafting of herbal medicines. I had spoken to her only briefly, mesmerized by her latest purgative cure to treat fever. I was unaware of her husband's crime, only that it must have been grave as it was punishable by death. For now, mother would insist I write her a generous letter sending my condolences, however, I am certain to also ensure she is well once I return to Montpelier. I will be in Paris in time to have an afternoon tea with Father as I heard he was traveling south to France for some time. It certainly will be a quaint reunion as I know he has business to attend to, and of course, since you will be unable to join us due to your studies.

January 4, 1618

I apologize Thomas for leaving you so distressed in your solitude during these terrible times—things are, regrettably, much worse than I expected they would be. I arrived in Paris with no knowledge of the occasion until doctor Girardeau had suddenly enquired about Father's request for an autopsy:

'Je voudrais d'abord vous présenter mes condoléances pour le décès de votre tante...' (First, I would like to offer my condolences on the death of your aunt.)

'La mort? Docteur, je ne comprends pas...' (Death? Doctor I do not understand.)

Father arrived before doctor Girardeau could reply and sat me down to explain it all delicately. I had never experienced such grief and such ominous waves of pain in my chest before the very moment he had informed me of Aunt Margaret's passing. He had notified me that her death had been unexpectedly sudden, and Uncle Charles had requested the autopsy immediately. Doctor Girardeau understood if I was unable to attend the autopsy, but I was reluctant and slightly infuriated at her early departure.

Father had her body transferred from London to Paris and doctor Girardeau offered to conduct the autopsy in his establishment not far outside the Parisian outskirts. Seeing her lie on the table was as harrowing as reminiscing on my memories of her euphoric gaze and charitable appeal. Doctor had asked for any blatant symptoms she had experienced, and Father responded with knowledge of the sudden aches in her lower abdomen and head trauma.

Throughout the entirety of the autopsy, I noticed doctor Girardeau being fairly cautious at the words he used when lecturing about the possible causes of death, but Father and I, while grieving her loss, were both far more inquisitive than anguished. He had carefully inspected the exterior of her body for any abnormalities as any physician would have done. What had you suspected Thomas? You had seen her not days ago alive and well, hadn't you?

Doctor Girardeau instructed Amal to shave her head and prepare her for the autopsy, allowing him to note the large tender swelling just above her ear. As doctor Girardeau took the scalpel and drew a wide incision from aunt Margaret's temple to the back of her scalp, then around towards her other temple, Antoine readied a saw to reveal the damage underneath the skull. With the flap of skin pulled back with a retractor and the saw carefully breaking through the thick bone of the skull, doctor Girardeau was able to inspect the brain.

Father watched dreadfully as copious amounts of blood drained from the bulge beneath her temple where putrefaction had been occurring. He concluded an exterior trauma had caused the brain to bleed out and clot, in which the now clear necrotic tissue had caused aunt Margaret's untimely death.

Turning his attention instead towards her abdomen, he made another large incision from her sternum to her lower abdomen. Antoine and I observed questioningly as doctor Girardeau furrowed his brow. I had never seen him freeze during a dissection before this one.

'Qu'est-ce que c'est?' (What is it?) I had asked, but doctor Girardeau seemed to be more in shock than the rest of us.

'Votre tante porte un enfant depuis plusieurs semaines maintenant.'  
(Your aunt has been carrying a child for several weeks now.)

He paused.

'J'ai confirmé que l'hémorragie interne causée par le traumatisme crânien a provoqué sa mort soudaine.' (I confirmed that the internal bleeding caused by the head trauma has caused her sudden death.)

To be frank Thomas, it left us all speechless.

January 7, 1618

I do not think I can continue my journey at Montpellier with all that has happened. Amal and Antoine had been supportive over the past few days, but I am still restless. I have had more than enough sleepless nights, a lack of appetite, and an unwillingness to continue my work with doctor Girardeau. Father returned after the autopsy to inform the rest of the family, and I am contemplating my return as well. I hope you are doing your very best to console mother and Elizabeth as this has truly become a tragedy.

January 8, 1618

I left for London today, which must seem discouraging to you and your journey towards becoming a physician. After aunt Margaret's passing, the provost had recommended I take time off of the morbidity in Montpelier and return to my artistic studies at Cambridge. With a stubborn and reluctant posture, I nodded in agreement and refrained from letting out long sighs of wistful disappointment. My departure from the acquaintances I had made at Montpelier was most heart-wrenching, yet I do hope to return, such that God will permit it. You shall hear of my arrival soon enough brother, perhaps now I can tutor you in the French you so desperately need to improve on.

March 31, 1618

Despite my complaints, you have convinced me to return to Montpelier to finish my degree, though I am most certain Father would have forced me to return anyway. The voyage back to Montpelier had not been any different from the first and I will resume my studies as soon as I arrive. To my relief, Pierre had informed me that my quarters had not changed and everything was as I had left it, though I could not help the disappointment I felt leaving in the first place. I will send you all a letter once I am readily acquainted.

April 3, 1618

I came across Mr. Rohr in the following days and he had offered me an apprenticeship at the apothecary for several days while he would be away. He was journeying to foreign lands for the time being and Anne de la Fontaine (the owner of the apothecary shop) requested help sorting her medicines. I was not too keen on the idea, but I agreed out of courtesy and worked for the next few days until Mr. Rohr returned. It was not as glamorous as I believed it would be.

Rolling pills for hours a day before reorganizing the shelves in a specific rotation. The only part I must say was quite intriguing was watching her mix the ingredients for her potions and cures. She fused together herbal liquors along with utilizing a mortar and pestle to grind several medicinal leaves into a fine paste capable of being molded as she saw fit. Few customers would pass through during a day, most with prescriptions that had most likely been filled out by physicians from Montpelier. As I had replenished and managed to restock her storage compartment, she bid me adieu and I returned once more to Montpelier with this new valuable knowledge prodding the depths of my mind.



April 9, 1618

Before I detail the events of the past few days, I shall warn you not to advise Father of the news. I do not think he would be too keen on knowing what it is I have been involved in, yet I believe it might entertain you (as it should).

I had never snuck inside a cemetery before, but Antoine was good friends with the bishop so it did not cost us much effort to furtively dig up a grave. He had given us a time frame of an hour, and as we worked to free the newly buried body from the tomb, I shall sketch for you our work before dissecting the body.

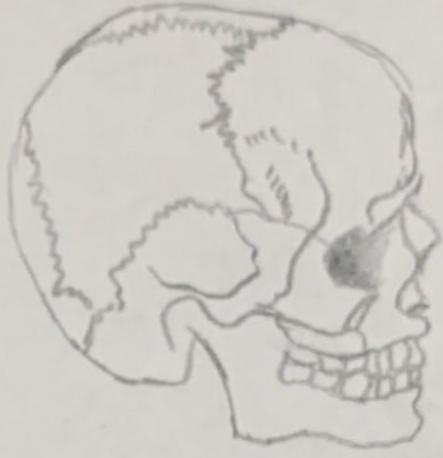
That night it had become peculiarly dark, and the thickening fog settled just below our waists as we trekked towards the back gate.

Antoine led us through, with a covert wave towards the bishop just around the church corner. The corpse was of a stout man, about the same height as I was, but with much more flesh. Antoine and Pierre both had carried their rapiers and as we snuck out through the gate with the exhumed body, we covered it with large sheets and cloaks. He was pale and difficult to lift, however between the three of us, we were successful in conducting our dissection in a secluded open patch of grass not too far from the university. His body showed small lesions around the abdomen, but as we conducted our autopsy, Pierre turned away, revolted at the putrid stench. I was aware that the autopsy we were conducting was gravely illegal, but it was not our doing that the church had turned a blind eye at our actions. An investigation was held come morning but we were never caught, much less suspected for the exhumation of the body.



April 26, 1618

Oscar Santos's last anatomy session was about the human brain. It was anatomy I had already studied in my previous months here at Montpellier, yet I still found it as a fascinating review. You must be curious of how the human skull as I had become after Margaret's autopsy. He had shown us several images and assigned various readings of mostly Galenic origin. I shall draw you a quick sketch of one of the images. Hopefully you will take as much interest as I have:



July 1, 1618

Thomas, I am ecstatic to hear you will be joining me at Montpelier. This shall be my last letter as I hear you will be traveling in a fortnight. The ships are exceedingly crowded, and the ports will appear foreign to you, but dear brother I will meet you at the plaza upon your arrival. Not many students attend before fourteen, but I am positive you will thrive here. I am sending you my best wishes and look forward to the arrival of your ship. May you prosper here (though not more than 1) on this journey of ours to heal and diagnose those lacking the knowledge to do so themselves. Until then, Thomas.

UPON THE SECOND DAY OF THOMAS'S TRAVEL, PLAGUE HAD SPREAD AMONG THE CREW AND THE PASSENGERS ABOARD THE MERCHANT'S SHIP. THOMAS'S ARRIVAL HAD NEVER BEEN OFFICIALLY DOCUMENTED AND WHILE DOCTOR SPENCER WHITTINGTON'S LETTERS HAVE BEEN PRESERVED, THERE IS NO FURTHER DOCUMENTATION OF ANY FUTURE WRITINGS TO HIS BROTHER. KNOWLEDGE OF HIS SURVIVAL REMAINS UNKNOWN.