

7-NÚZYÆL-720 KIBAN, KALDOR

4TH WATCH [HOT, CLEAR, SOUTH WIND]

The next part of the faire grounds that you come to is the wrestling ring. Inside of a roped area is a large man who is stripped to the waist. He is breathing heavily and appears to be on the edge of exhaustion. Next to him is a smaller man, dressed in garish clothes of party colors, announcing, "Step right this way and make yourself five shillings for no more than a few minutes' mild exertion! All you need to do is last three minutes in the ring with the champion here! That is 100d if you last three minutes, ten shillings if you defeat the champion within that time!"

Looking toward Terias, he says, "You, sir – you look like you are ready to start some trouble with your sword. Are you brave enough to fight unarmed and not have to answer to the watch?"

Looking at another person in the crowd, he says, "You, sir – you look pretty fast on your feet – do you think you can stay out of trouble for three minutes? It is not that long, you know, and you will earn more than if you were cutting a purse."

Looking at Zedeon, he says, "You, there, sir – yes, you – why do you not show your lady friend just how much of a man you are? Just a 5d entrance fee and he is all yours."

Finally, to the crowd he says, "Come along, now, gentlemen, who will take him on? Just a five penny investment, and you can have it back twenty or forty times over in just three minutes! Why, if you were a moneylender, you would get locked up for charging interest like that!"

Terias looks over to Zedeon and mentions, "Sounds like a bit of fun to test your mettle against this fellow." Glancing over to Amyleryn with a request, "That is if the Lady will grant it."

With a mischievous gleam in her eye, Amyleryn says: "If you want to risk your personal funds, I have no objection. Just don't get injured...and above all, don't injure him!" and she hooks a thumb in the direction of the wrestler. "I think that's 'Crusher Bydarf', the son of the woman who made those wonderful meat pies, and I'd hate to have her ill will...we might not be able to get more pies!" and she breaks out laughing. After a moment, Amyleryn adds: "I'll wager that Crusher's look of exhaustion is an act, and that he's as fresh as if he'd just had a good night's sleep."

Terias replies in kind to Amyleryn, "Aye of course m'Lady. I'd only ever use my own coin for gambling. Though I'll not take your bet. T'is a rouse for certain."

The Matakea then glances over to Zedeon, and with a pat on the back and grin on his lips he says, "Once I lose you're more then welcome to prove your mettle my friend."

With those words spoke Terias steps forward and speaks up, "You've a challenger here goodman!"

"Stout lad," says the ringmaster.

Terias strips to the waist, leaves his belongings with his companions, pays his 5d and steps into the ring. Crusher circles Terias cautiously waiting for him to make the first move. Feigned or not Crusher moves slowly still looking tired.

Terias bounds around Crusher, with both arms raised defensively covering his head. He moves in with a quick left jab followed by a right hook.

Terias, being much faster than Crusher, throws his punch and the Crusher barely dodges away in time.

So that only Terias can hear, Crusher says, "I assume you did not hear this is to be a 'wrestling' match but if that is the way you want it I can do it that way as well."

In spite of his words, Crusher grabs at Terias waist. Terias manages to knock Crusher's hands away.

With a grunt after reangling himself to face Crusher, Terias nearly mumbles, "Thought wrestlin was a mix of grapplin' and boxin'. You want to just grab, fine by me."

Terias then tries to dart behind Crusher, in an effort to grab at his opponents neck to pull him backwards. At the same time the Matakea uses his knee to try and cause Crushers leg to give.

Crusher turns as Terias circles him and manages to stay out of harms way. He grabs at Terias in his turn but Terias dodges as well.

Making a last ditch effort, Terias charges at Crusher to dive tackle using his shoulder to take the brunt of the force.

Terias stumbles slightly as he makes his charge which the Crusher tries to take advantage of. He grabs at Terias once, misses, grabs again and misses again.

The ringmaster rings a cow bell to mark the end of the three minutes.

Crusher steps back and offers to shake Terias' hand, saying, "I have to admit, you gave a fair fight and you are much quicker than most."

In a low voice, Terias responds with, "Aye, though I have a feeling if you were at full strength things would've fallen in your favor. You don't earn a purse like that 'less you're skilled." Then with a wink he and a sheepish grin he continues "Though y'could be plannin' on roping the rest of the fellas in."

Speaking up and clasping Crushers arm firmly, the Matakea says, "If yer up to it some other time I'd not mind sparring with y'more. I could learn alot. Well met and well fought."

As Terias exits the ring, the ringmaster gives him a purse with 100d and says loudly to the crowd, "See how easy that was. Who will be the next to take our money?"

At least a dozen farmers step forward with their entry fee.

Terias pushes through the crowd and stuffs the coin purse deeply into his pack as he moves towards his group, mentioning, "Easiest wager I've made in a while. At your leisure m'Lady we can continue on."

"Well done Terias." Amyleryn says. Once the group is out of sight of the wrestling area, she says to Terias: "By-the-by, it might be a good idea to check the contents of that purse to see if it really has 100 pence...and if it even has pence. Not that it would be a big loss if it doesn't, but if you are making purchase plans based on having 100 pence more than you did a few

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minutes ago, it would be wise to make sure you indeed have it." Amyleryn gets a wry smile on her face and adds: "My suspicious nature showing through, I'm afraid. Not to insult your prowess, but your victory seemed too easy. I heard a saying somewhere that goes...'If something looks too good to be true, it usually is.'"

After Amyleryn is done speaking Terias nods curtly and replies, "Aye what you say rings true Lady Odasart. T'is the Peonian upbringing in me that's too trusting. Laranians should always have a watchful eye."

Terias dips into his pack and pulls out the purse, examines the contents.

As Terias assures himself that the pouch does indeed have 100d, Amyleryn notices several people closely watching him count his coins.

"Aye it's all there, let's head on M'Lady", Terias says confidently as he tucks the purse back into his pack.

"I should have waited until we were somewhere private before cautioning you about checking your winnings," Amyleryn says. "I saw several people giving you the eye while you were counting. One or more of them may be cutpurses. You will have to be extra vigilant now."

An impish grin playing on his features, Terias replies in kind to Amyleryn, "Nay, this time it wasn't small town upbringing, but Laranian teaching. Quickest way to catch a fly is to draw it out with sugar. Figure if we get a chance we'll find more information from one'a them then any other sort when they're caught red handed."

As Terias continues with the group his attention is spent focusing on those within his nearby vicinity as he tries to walk casually throughout the faire.

An old man in the crowd, gives Terias a toothless smile and says, "Us 'ave no cutpurses yer bit I be zure I can get ee zome uv dey flies if ee really want zome." Then with a cackling laugh, he turns and walks away.

Terias watches the old man blankly the entire time then says after he departs, "Eh well that may not be too good."

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Continuing through the faire grounds you see venders of bakery goods, fruit pies, mead, brandy, fish, dairy products, dresses and hot pottage. You also see three venders of geese, two venders of chickens, and two venders of salted pork. By the third hour of the fourth watch, you come to the south end of the commons, next to the river. The jousting stands have been set up here and there is a joust just beginning. After this last joust, you hear the heralds call, there will be a grand melee.

As the group passes Terias eyes fall on the jousting field, nearly bumping into a couple of people as he watches. The Matakea perks up at hearing the announcement of the grand melee. He starts peeking around to catch sight of the various knights participating in the event.

"Quite the faire. Quite -the- faire.", he mumbles to himself.

As Terias watches, he realizes that what is going on at the moment is not actually a jousting contest but a jousting

exhibition. The contestants stop at various points while the herald describes the fine points of the sport. Several of the nobility watching are discussing how good this technique is or how they would not use that technique.

"Let's watch the melee." Amyleryn says.

A couple of watchmen stroll by and one turns to Amyleryn to say, "Are you lost, milady? If you are, I can guide you back to your host but, if you are not, I will have to ask you to move on. This tournament is by invitation only."

Amyleryn arches one eyebrow and says: "I'm newly arrived in Kiban. I didn't know this was by invitation only. Is there any way I could secure an invitation?"

"Not being of the gentry, I am sure I know not how to gain their hospitality and invitations to their events," he answers, "and since you admit you have not been invited, I must ask you to move on and enjoy other parts of the faire."

"Very well, we'll do that. Thank you." Amyleryn says, then adds as an afterthought: "Oh, by the way...does the Earl hold regular courts, and if so, when is the next one due to occur?"

"If he does, he tells not the town watch," he answers, "but I have heard rumors recently that he has not given as many audiences as he used to. I suspect he is just busy making the rounds of his domains. Now, please ask me no more questions as I have probably said more than I should already."

Once the party is out of hearing range of any town watch, or other locals, Amyleryn says: " 'Making the rounds of his domains.' my left foot! Town watches always know when high-level courts are set to occur...their workload always increases at those times. Lady Harabor is right. Something is going on around here, and we ARE going to find out what!"

Changing the subject a bit, she says: "Let's see what else the faire has to offer, then head back to the inn."

As Amyleryn speaks, Terias turns more vigilant as if remembering something yet again. He stalks behind her and the rest of the company trying to focus on those nearest and scanning outwards at others that pass.

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5TH WATCH [COOL, CLEAR, NORTHWEST WIND]

Returning north along the town wall, you see venders of wine, brandy, cider, beer, and honey. There are two tinkers selling copper pots, two venders of herbs, a fruit vendor, a vegetable vendor, a charcoaler and a spice vendor.

You then come to the freakshow where you hear, "Roll up, roll up. In just one turn of the glass from now you will witness the most original and astounding display of zoological curiosities ever placed on exhibition in the entire length and breadth of this glorious kingdom."

"Dr. Messunast's Zoocopedia – gathered for your entertainment and education, from the far corners of the known world at incalculable expense! The unusual! The bizarre! Yes, even the faintly disgusting! You will never see it's like again, my friends, not if you live to be a hundred!"

“Marvel at a myriad of malformities! Misbegotten things whose very existence defies nature! You will be amazed and astounded, my friends. I give you my personal guarantee of that!”

Behind him you can see a large wagon with several wooden cages all but one covered with tarps. The one that is uncovered contains a female gargun. A ragged looking khuzdul is opening the cage to feed her when she shoves him aside and races toward the town wall. Reaching her goal, she squeezes through the rusted bars of a storm drain at the base of the wall.”

Terias calls out to the announcer, annoyance lining his face, "Oi Doctor Foolpedia one a'yer 'creatures' just sprung free! Looked like a foulspawn t'me. If it was yer a right daft sort bringing one'a them into town!"

Terias then moves to help the Khuzdul that was tossed aside.

At that moment, the watchmen, you encountered earlier, arrived to hear your comments. “What is this of foulspawn?” pointing at Dr. Messunast he says, “You are under arrest for bringing a dangerous creature into the town and endangering lives by losing control of it.” Pointing at Terias he continues, “I will have to ask you to come with me as witness. If you are interested, I am sure the magistrate will authorize at least 50d to anyone willing to fetch it back...dead or alive.”

Dr. Messunast approaches and says, “I will match that amount for its recovery and destruction.”

Trying to offer a hand to the Khuzdul, Terias looks from the guard to Dr. Messunast and then to Amyleryn, "Aye I'll come as a witness, but I'm duty bound to Lady Odasart so it's her choice to allow me leave into the sewer."

Amyleryn says, "Yes, you have my permission to go as a witness, and to go down underground after it. I'll come along to witness, as well as to pursue it." Amyleryn smiles at everyone's shocked expressions...the very idea of a noblewoman rooting around in the sewers! "Oh, don't worry about me. I can take care of myself. But we need to see the Magistrate immediately. If that thing was pregnant, we've no time to lose!" and she follows the guardsmen.

With a shocked gasp, Felada whispers, “Milady! You need not announce such things to everyone.”

"Why ever not?" Amyleryn asks. "It is a noble's duty...even if that noble is a woman...to defend the populace, or at least lead in the defense. That being the case, it is good that the common folk know that a noble will not shirk his or her duty, even if the task at hand be disagreeable, or even dangerous. I'll hear no more suggestions that I should shrink from doing my duties as a noble just because I'm a woman!"

Amyleryn immediately relents in her stern manner, puts a hand gently on Felada's arm, and says: "I'm not angry with you, my dear Felada, and I appreciate your concern for my reputation and safety. Do not worry about me. You, of all people, know that I have...'ways'...to defend myself!" and she gives Felada a knowing smile.

“Yes, milady,” Felada answers, “It is just that...Yes, milady.”

As they're walking along, Amyleryn turns to Zedeon, she says: "Zedeon, you can come along if you wish, or you can remain above ground and take care of Felada."

Terias mouth falls agape at Amyleryn's words, but he keeps himself silent. As Zedeon ponders the question, Terias looks to the guard and says, "As the Lady said there may not be time t'spare, so if you've need of me to act as a witness let's make haste. Since we'll be going into the underground, I'm guessing it'll be as dark as the Lord of the Pitch's heart. You have any spare lanterns or torches for us? And maybe a map of the tunnels?"

“Since milady speaks with so little respect of the gentry, the magistrate would value just as little her word as a witness,” says the watchman, “in fact, he might be insulted enough to throw you all into the goal and charge you with sedition or inciting to rebellion. That will not get the gargun out of the sewers. Since this man is not resisting his arrest, I will take you at your word to make a report to the magistrate later and I will allow you to go directly to the sewers. I have no lanterns, torches or maps and you will be unable to squeeze through the opening used by the gargun. You will have to go to the Querina gate and use the larger entrance behind the Silver Way Inn – which I believe is directly opposite this wall.”

Terias appears to grow baffled as the Kiban Watchman speaks. The Matakea then counters with, "She was speaking quite highly of gentry to my ears. Not sure what you took offense to. Anyhow, I'm nay going into the dark without some form of light. It'd be like putting yer head into the bears maw."

Terias looks over to the showman and Khuzdul and asks, "You've got to have a lantern on hand for the nights."

“Oh do I now?” says the showman. “As it happens I do have a lantern and some rope which you will need to lower yourself into the sewer.” He tells the khuzdul to fetch them and give them to Terias.

Since Terias lept to her defense, Amyleryn controls her rising anger. She marks well the guardsman's face, and asks him...in an even voice...: "What is your name?"

“I am Rikeemeld of Gidall and my liege is Magistrate Haduygor of Rudethe,” he answers, “Now who might you be and who do you swear your allegiance to so I may make my report?”

Amyleryn says, "I am Lady Amyleryn Odasart, daughter of Lord Dalfougo Odasart, holder of Hesby Manor, and grandniece of Lord Fugys Odasart, Royal Weaponcrafter in Tashal. My allegiance is through them to the Crown." She lets him see her signet ring.

“Just keep in mind, milady of the country manor that nobody has heard of and subject to the crown as we all are, that does not prevent you from being arrested and fined for being foreign and disturbing honest folks with your foreign ways,” he says as he turns and leads the showman away.

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Turning to Terias, Amyleryn says: "In the confines of drainage tunnels, my mace will be an advantage. I still have those two

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shortswords. It might be wise for you to take one of them with you into the tunnels...at least until we know whether or not there will be room to swing your broadsword."

While patting his sheath, Terias answers, "Mine's a shortsword, standard issue m'lady. I'll take a look see at the two you've got and see if they're any better though. I'm also handy with a dagger so if it comes to that I'll be fine."

Speaking to Zedeon, Amyleryn says: "If you decide to come with us, you could use your spear to thrust over mine or Terias' shoulder from behind us, if we end up in serious combat." Smiling at what she thinks is in jest, she continues: "Who knows what we might find down there besides one gargun?"

Continuing more seriously: "I suspect you will find more use for your dagger."

Chuckling gruffly, Terias comments, "The fella that looses a gargun into the town's giving me lip... Appreciate the aid and the extra thought for rope."

Once the Khuzdul returns, Terias loops the rope over his left shoulder and carries the lantern in his right hand.

To those present Terias then proclaims, "Well let's not dally 'round any longer. To the entrance."

Amyleryn gives Terias a wry smile and asks: "Don't you think it would be best if we went back to the inn first, so I can get my armor and weapons?" glancing down at herself, then looking at Terias again, she adds: "I'm not exactly dressed for combat at the moment." and she laughs. "You might want something more than that shortsword also."

Terias says, "Armor eh? Sorry m'lady, I'd not thought of you full metal. Might be tight t'move in tunnels. As t'myself, I travel light and carry all I own. Y'never know when the moment might strike. Part of military training.", says Terias as he falls in with Amyleryn.

Amyleryn says, "The bulk of my armor is kurbul. Restricts my movement less than you might think. In any case, I would need to go to the inn to get my mace. It's not considered a good idea to go about town armed to the teeth...makes the watch think you have no confidence in their ability to keep the peace. They, in turn, can cause you a good deal of trouble, all quite legally, for such an insult to their prowess. I will not go up against a gargun, and who knows what else, with just a dagger. Since the entrance to the sewers is apparently right behind the inn we're staying at, stopping to arm ourselves should take very little extra time."

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On your way through the remainder of the faire grounds, you notice nothing unusual. Arriving at the inn, you make your preparations and then go to the town wall behind the inn. Removing the wooden covering you see a deep, stone-lined hole and the gleam of water approximately 15' below. The top part of the hole opens out into the larger chamber after about 7'. The smell of mold and sewage wafting out of the hole is intense.

Terias makes a dower expression as he rubs under his nose at the rank odor and complains, "By the light, the kitchen mess I moved smelled like roses compared t'this."

Terias removes his pack, lute and longbow. Then reaches into his backpack and grabs the flint and tinder, first lighting the lantern and then tucking it away on his person. He then taps his sword sheath, spear on his back and right outside ankle confirming something to himself. Turning to Felada he asks politely, "If you wouldn't mind watching over these while we're in the thick of things down below I'd appreciate it Felada."

"Certainly, master," answers Felada, "what is it you want me to look after?"

While pointing to the three items at his feet, Terias replies, "The pack, lute and longbow. And you've my thanks."

Amyleryn looks around at the party and notices that NO ONE has a belt pouch! With an irritated look on her face, she reluctantly puts her flint and steel back in her pack. She knots four of the bandages to her belt so that they are at the small of her back.

While Amyleryn is preparing herself, Terias uncoils the rope and looks around for something to tie it too, he mentions to no one in particular, "Once we're in we'll need someone to undo the rope so we can take it with us. If we get lost we may need it to make an exit not from this point, especially since we have no map."

Terias finds he can tie the rope to a fence post on the inn's small commons which is close enough.

When the rope is tied off, Amyleryn ties a large loop that she can sit in, in the other end of the rope. She says to Terias and Zedeon: "I'll go first, as I'm lighter. I'll take the lantern, and you two lower me down. Be listening for my instructions. I'll call up for you to stop, start, and so on. It seems to open up about seven feet down, so I'm hoping there's a ledge or other landing there...I don't want to go right into the" here she pauses a moment "water if I can avoid it!"

She then hangs the mace on her belt, slings the shield on her back, and puts the loop of rope around her just below her buttocks. With Terias and Zedeon slowly paying out the rope, Amyleryn descends into the opening. She holds onto the rope above her head with her right hand, and holds out the lantern with her left. She uses her feet to keep herself out from the wall of the shaft.

When she gets down to the area where the shaft opens out, she calls out: "Stop here." Amyleryn looks around.

From the rounded dome of the ceiling to the water appears to be about 8'. The channel appears about three paces across with a walkway (one pace across) on either side. The walkway is about 2' above the water, which will mean those over 6' tall will find walking possible but awkward. Amyleryn finds she will probably need to be swung to one side or the other and then be quickly lowered to sit on the walkway.

Amyleryn takes in the surroundings, thinks for a moment, then calls out: "There are ledges on either side of the channel. I'm going to swing back and forth toward the ledges. You two just hold the rope at it's current height. At the far end of the swings, I'm going to set the lantern down on the ledge. If I'm too high above the ledge when I'm right above it, I'll stop the swinging and have you lower me however much I need to, to put the lantern down without dropping it into the water or breaking it.

Then I'll swing again and get the lantern set down on the ledge. Once I've done that, and stopped swinging again, I'll swing in a bit different direction. When I get to this part, be listening for me to call out 'NOW!'. The instant you hear that, let go of the rope. That will drop me onto the ledge. The swinging in a different direction is to avoid my coming down on top of the lantern. Now, repeat what I said so I know that you understand what I want."

Clearly struggling to hold the rope up with Amyleryn dangling from it, and angered at having to speak, Terias through his gritted teeth calls back, "Hold the rope .. while y'swing an' put the lantern ... down.. then keep hold a'the rope .. while y'swing a bit different so's y'don't hit the lantern an' when y'say 'now' .. we release .. the rope so y'can land." Terias takes in several deep breaths and grunts adjusting his hands as he keeps firm hold of the rope.

Once Amyleryn has gotten replies from Terias and Zedeon that tell her that they understand what she wants, she starts swinging. The direction of the swinging will not be directly toward the ledge (90 degrees), but at a bit of an angle. Since she's holding on to the rope with one hand, by leaning down somewhat, she should have a couple of feet of adjustable height to play with to be able to set the lantern down gently.

She won't try to set the lantern down on the first swing long enough to get to the ledge, but will get to the end of the arc of the swing a few times to get a feel for the height and the duration of the pause at the far end of the swing before swinging back in the other direction.

Once she has the proper height (and been lowered down if necessary) and a feel for the pause at the end of the swing, she'll go ahead and try to set the lantern down on the ledge.

Assuming the lantern ends up where intended (if it breaks or falls into the water, she will have Terias and Zedeon haul her out of the shaft, and try to come up with a different plan), she will start swinging toward the ledge with the lantern, but at an opposite angle (the ledge forming the base of an isosceles triangle with the direction of her swinging forming the sides of the triangle). Again, she will swing to the ledge a few times to judge the right point to have Terias and Zedeon let go of the rope. Expecting a slight delay from when she calls out 'NOW!', and when the two men let go of the rope, she will call out a split-second before the end of the swing.

Part of the considerations going into Amyleryn's actions, and just when they occur, is any spinning around that she may be experiencing down there at the end of the rope. Also, it's fortunate that she's in a seated position. The ledge is only two to three feet wide. Trying to land on her feet would be a very unstable maneuver. Landing on her butt is MUCH less prone to unwanted outcomes!

Amyleryn manages to place the lantern down, a bit awkwardly but safely. She then maneuvers to get herself on the landing much more gracefully.

Once Amyleryn is solidly on the ground, Terias lets go of his hold on the rope and looks to his hands before shaking them out. The Matakea glances over to Zedeon, to let him know, "I'll go

down much quicker, none of the acrobatics the Lady was just doing. Once I'm down can you untie the rope and toss it to me. If you have a change of heart I'm sure you can find more rope to catch up with us." Terias gives Zedeon a firm pat on the shoulder as he moves to the sewer entrance. He spits in both hands, claps them together and takes hold of the rope firmly. With a confirming nod to Zedeon, Terias glances down and calls out, "MLady watch yourself, I'm coming down."

As Terias descends he looks to the location of the ledge and begins to swing himself towards it in an effort to land soundly.

Terias makes it to the same ledge as Lady Amyleryn without mishap.

Looking in the direction of the city wall, the dim evening light, through the storm drain entrance, reveals that the tunnel turns south just before the wall. Looking east, the tunnel continues straight as far as the lantern light shows. In the dust of the walkway are fresh tracks leading east.

Terias crouches down looking at the tracks, choking back the intensity of the smell. He raises back up nodding to himself and looks to Amyleryn, "Well Lady's choice, but I'm thinkin' east."

Terias unsheathes his shortsword and swings it away from Amyleryn trying to test if he has room to maneuver.

He finds that since he is on the right hand walkway and he is right handed, the wall interferes with his sword work.

The Matakea then picks up the lantern while Amyleryn gathers herself and waits.

Looking at the tracks leading to the east, Amyleryn comments: "Well, that figures. The gargun would want to go away from us humans if it could. Also, if one or more tunnels come together further in, there would be a greater likelihood it would be able to find more things to eat. We'll follow the tracks as far as we can. If we lose them, we'll continue east." Calling up to Zedeon and Felada, she says: "We're going to the east, toward the center of town."

Focusing her attention back to Terias, Amyleryn asks: "Has the Lady of Paladins granted you any means to see or hear beyond the circle of lantern-light and my poor abilities?"

After a quick moments though Terias responds with, "Nay, but She's been granting me visions and the like as of late, so if something springs out I shall let you know."

Amyleryn says, "As we will have to give away our position because of our need for the lantern, we are going to have to rely on our ears to avoid being ambushed. With that in mind, we will not speak unless we find our quarry, are attacked, or a warning needs to be given. Any other communicating will be done with gestures...pointing and the like. Any questions?"

A grin forming on his lips as he shakes his head, Terias remains silent.

Amyleryn says, "Very well. Arrange yourself for combat in whatever manner you deem best. You lead. I will carry the lantern and cover your back. Let us begin." Amyleryn carries the lantern in her left hand and her mace in her right...leaving her

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shield slung on her back, hopefully to provide SOME protection in the event an attack comes from that direction.

Terias passes the lantern over to Amyleryn then slides his shield down his left arm and takes hold of it. He steps eastwards carefully, shield raised and sword held firmly to his side.

Occasionally the Matakea looks to the ground trying to keep an eye on the tracks.

After you travel approximately fifty paces, your light disturbs a number of bats. They fly around you and then off in the direction from which you had come. Even though you are both startled, you manage to dodge the bats while keeping your feet on the narrow walkway. The tunnel continues straight for as far as you can see.

Terias grumbles to himself, and looks over his shoulder to check on Amyleryn's condition. When he sees she's still standing he gives her a nod and turns back to continue onwards. Before walking though he pauses for a moment, sheathes his sword and crouches down. While examining the walkway for the gargun tracks, the Ataken pulls free his dagger from within his right boot sheath and stands up straight.

You follow the gargun's tracks for another fifty paces, where you come to a branching tunnel entering from the left side. The tracks continue forward.

Terias looks over his shoulder to Amyleryn, points to fingers to his own eyes and then motions straight ahead with his hand. He then continues stalking carefully forward.

Amyleryn nods in the affirmative.

Within the next fifty paces you notice a slight incline in the walkway and tunnel. The flame of the lantern seems to be getting blue in color and the stench of the sewer has gotten stronger. At the limit of the light, you can see a branching tunnel going south and a resulting six foot gap in the walkway.

Tapping on Terias' shoulder to get his attention, Amyleryn whispers in his ear: "This stench will burn if it gets thick enough. See how the lantern flame has changed color?" and she holds the lantern where he can see the flame. "If the flame starts flaring up bigger and brighter, we'll have to stop and go back, or we could set the whole underground on fire. Additionally,...as bad as it is already...at higher concentrations, it displaces the breathable air and we could suffocate."

With a slight nod Terias looks to the lantern light and then asks in a returned whisper, "Is it maybe the oil running low M'Lady? If nay then aye let's tred right careful."

Still whispering, Amyleryn replies: "The lantern started with enough oil for four hours."

Terias nearly gags as the first waft of the potent air enters his nose. He tries to make a conscious effort to breathe in through his mouth as he continues on. As he reaches the part where the tunnel splits, the Matakea slows his pace and then crouches down to examine the ground for signs of movement.

The footprints of the gargun go off the edge of the walkway...either it jumped to the other side or it does not mind trudging through the sludge.

The limit of the light (or the distance from where the odor was first detected to the edge of the walk way) is ten paces. Over this distance the smell got worse and then less. You would judge by this that, while you are not out of danger yet, you should be safe once you reach the opposite walkway.

Amyleryn breathes a sigh of relief as she sees the flame start to go back to it's normal color.

Amyleryn again whispers in Terias' ear, and says: "We need to get to the other side. Use your spear to test how deep this...water...is."

Acting on Amyleryn's plan, Terias crouches down and sheathes his dagger back into his boot then rises up and steadily yanks free his spear. He gives it the once over, before carefully plunging it in the sewage attempting to gauge the depth. In the process of doing so, Terias looks over the sludge trying to find signs of recent disturbance.

From the walkway to the water is five feet and when Terias reaches down at arms length he estimates the water is two feet deep. The sludge is too fluid to show any signs of passage.

Making sure Amyleryn notes where his weapon stopped, Terias then takes his spear slowly out of the murky muck. Working extremely carefully and in a direction away from the Lady tries to shake it clean. Finally Terias taps it as quietly as he can on the solid ground several times to let the chunks and particles still clinging on fall loose. Once Terias sheathes his spear, he turns to regard Amyleryn, and in a very quiet, near gravely voice says, "I'll jump across first M'lady. That way if I make it, I'll be there t'catch and help you when you land .. if you need it."

Upon hearing Terias' estimate that the water is two feet deep, Amyleryn sets the lantern down on the walkway and whispers to him: "Before you wipe off your spear, ground the wet part next to my leg. I want to see if my boots are tall enough to keep my feet dry if I wade across."

Terias simply nods in compliance and measures the spear up against Amyleryn's boots.

Amyleryn again whispers in Terias' ear: "I'll sit down on the ledge and raise my hands. You take my hands and lower me down into the channel."

Terias grows weary listening to Amyleryn, but again he nods.

"You then lower yourself down. I'll help steady you so that you don't slip. Once we're down, you use your spear to probe ahead of us to make sure we don't step into a deeper part."

"Once we're across, I'll cup my hands together so you can put a foot in them, and I'll boost you up on the far walkway. And don't argue...I've noticed on our journey that I'm stronger than you are. You can then reach down and help me out of the channel."

The Matakea lets a slight grumble escape from his mouth, but again he acquiesces to the request of the Lady.

Amyleryn hangs her mace on her belt, then sits down, dangling her legs over the edge of the walkway. Seeing that her mace will trail in the muck, she takes it off of her belt and sets it down next to the lantern. She holds up her hands for Terias to lower her down. Once down, she steadies Terias as he lowers himself down. She then reaches back and picks up the lantern and her

mace. She moves across the channel behind Terias as he probes for deep spots. Before she sets the lantern and her mace on the far walkway, she holds the lantern above the walkway they're about to climb up on, and gestures for Terias to look for tracks. After the check for tracks, she sets the lantern on the walkway.

Standing on his toes to peer over the ledge onto the walkway more closely Terias examines the ground for signs of any recent tracks.

That done, Amyleryn cups her hands for Terias' foot, and boost him out. She then holds up her hands for Terias to help her up and out of the channel. She keeps her hands out of his and indicates that he should lift her by her wrists.

Terias and his equipment weigh 203 lbs. With the 52 lbs., Amyleryn is carrying, she is unable to lift Terias. However, she is able to help him climb out of the channel. Amyleryn and her equipment weigh 206 lbs., so Terias is also unable to lift her out. He can help her climb out. [+1 climb Amyleryn]

In an effort to lighten the load on Amyleryn, Terias uses his full arms strength to pull himself up over onto the walkway.

Once they're up on the walkway, Amyleryn whispers to Terias: "Take the waterskin from my belt and squirt a little water on my hands so I can wash the muck off that I got from your foot." She then dries her hands on one of the bandages tied to her belt.

She then picks up her mace and the lantern.

"Aye m'lady", Terias says in a hushed gruff voice and proceeds to uncork the skin and pour some of the contents on Amyleryn's hands.

* * *

Following the tracks, you proceed down the tunnel and, after approximately 100 paces you come to a four way crossing of tunnels. Suddenly, there are rats everywhere...both on the walkway and swimming in the channel.

Terias takes a step back as he watches the rats come out, then kneels down and plants his shield edge firmly on the ground to cut them off. The Matakaea then glances over the crossing trying to take in the direction of the gargun track over the swarm of rats running about. He looks over his shoulder to Amyleryn and mutters in a low voice, "Wonder what's got the vermin scared."

The base of Terias round-shield does not slow them down as some squeeze under and others climb the rough walls and go over the edge of the shield...a couple even scurry along Terias sleeves headed towards his face. Terias cannot see the gargun's tracks on the opposite platform...just the tracks of the rats.

"Why Terias, you have a sense of humor!" Amyleryn says with a smile and in a low voice, as she casually brushes the rats off of Terias' arms carefully with her mace before they can get to his face

"I could be wrong, but I'd say that they are likely fleeing a hungry gargun. As they all came out of the tunnel straight ahead, that's the way we'll go...after the stampede has subsided, that is. We'll cross in the same manner as before, starting with a check of the depth of the...water."

As the rats start to crawl up his arm, Terias tries to shake them free, but keeps steady hold of his shield to prevent the majority of them from making it through.

Terias manages to shake off the rats and after several minutes (and a lot of rats), the vermin pass by.

The Matakaea stands up tall and turns to face Amyleryn, offering his sincere words, "Apologies m'lady if some of the rats got through to you. I did my best, but there was too many of'em to hold off."

"Do not concern yourself about that." Amyleryn says in a whisper. "I appreciate the effort. The rats fleeing like that must mean that our quarry is near. As they came from straight ahead, that is the way we will go. We'll cross in the same manner as before."

Terias removes his spear carefully and dips it into the muck beneath the ledge to test the depth. The depth here is approximately the same as before.

As Amyleryn comes off the ledge, she slips and comes down faster than she expected...splashing the muck above the tops of her boots. [+1 climb] Terias also splashes down faster than he expected and the sludge now thoroughly covers his leggings. [+1 climb] Climbing up the other side is accomplished with more skill and less filth. Cleaning up afterwards (as much as possible) uses the remainder of Amyleryn's water.

Looking about the dust on the walkway, Terias cannot see any gargun tracks, even where the rats have not obscured them.

Scratching the left side of his neck for a few moments, Terias rises back up to the level of Amyleryn and says, in a husky whisper, "Hrm can nay see any tracks. Either the foulspawn's walking through this sludge or something else scared the rats off. Which means we could be going in the wrong direction."

Speaking in a soft whisper, Amyleryn says: "The gargun's tracks may have led off in the direction the rats came from and were just obscured by them. In any case, in the absence of gargun tracks to follow, going in the direction the rats were fleeing from is still the best option we have. Traveling in a straight line for as long as we can, also helps to keep us from getting lost down here. Let's move on."

Terias nods curtly, retrieves his dagger and shifts his shield at a ready position before continuing straight along the ledge.

Speaking softly, Amyleryn asks: "Can you see if there are gargun tracks on any of the other walkways?" She then holds out the lantern as far as is safe to provide light for Terias to see all of the walkways at the junction.

"Aye I was thinkin' the same thing. Though I'm guessing I won't be able to see from here," Terias says this as he stands on his toes peering across to the other ledges.

Terias looks for tracks going south on the walkway he is on but can find none. He cannot see any of the other walkways well enough to tell if there are tracks or not.

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"Can't see a thing m'lady. Would you like me to cross and take a look see right quick?", Terias tells Amyleryn as he drops flat footed.

"That would be good." Amyleryn says. "We wouldn't want to miss a turn. Go ahead, but remember to probe for deep spots as you're wading around. I'll hand you the lantern when you're down in the...water."

With a single nod of understanding, Terias makes his way back to the ledge he and Amyleryn climbed up out of and sheathes his dagger again. He then carefully tries to climb down into the muck.

Once settled in the sewage Terias reaches over his back and yanks free his spear, then with his left hand takes hold of the lantern offered by Lady Odasart.

As the Matakea walks across to the northern ledge, he taps his spear in front of him feeling for dips in the surface as well as anything that may cause him to trip.

Finally across he very deliberately pushes the lantern onto the walkway, then sheathes his spear and attempts to pull himself up.

Terias comes down in the muck with a bit of a splash and slips a bit as he crosses the channel but keeps his feet and climbs back out with much less clumsiness. Once he is on the walkway he easily finds the gargun tracks among all the rat tracks.

Terias raises the lantern high and then nods in the direction of Amyleryn.

Amyleryn carefully lets herself down into the channel and follows the route Terias took. With his help, she will climb out. Whispering, she say: "Good work. Lead on."

After traveling approximately another fifty paces you come to a heavy door on your side of the tunnel. It has a small barred window, with blood around the opening, and a gargun footprint on the door just below the window. Peering inside you see a mostly bare room with a closed cabinet on the far side and a pentagram carved into the floor. The pentagram is enclosed in a circle of copper embedded into the floor. Between the door and the pentagram there are several bloody bones that appear chewed.

Whispering to Terias, Amyleryn says: "Looks like the gargun is no longer a problem. Unfortunately, it looks like we've acquired a bigger problem. See if the gargun tracks continue past the door. If not, then prepare for battle. We'll need to confront whatever is in that room to confirm that the gargun is dead. If the gargun was dragged through that little window, whatever did it can't be allowed to live."

Terias looks at Amyleryn confused and hoarse whispers back, "You think the Gargun's dead? Looks t'me she caught her quarry. Some daft fool making drawings on the floor looks like. Though maybe yer right an' something larger is inside."

Terias looks inside the room from the barred window, in particular the floor, for signs of further tracks.

He does not see tracks in the room.

The Matakea tightens his grip on his shield, readies his spear and glances to Amyleryn with a nod, and says under his breath, "Whenever yer ready m'lady I'll knock open the door and charge in. I'll take right side and guard my left with my shield and you come in after to the left of me."

"To your left. Give me a moment to get my shield on my arm." Amyleryn whispers. She sets the lantern down away from where the door might open if it swings outward, hangs the mace on her belt, puts the shield on her arm, and picks up the lantern again. Nodding to Terias that she's ready, Amyleryn crouches slightly.

Terias slams into the door but it does not budge. It is solid enough that it is probably locked or barred on the inside.

Quickly stabilizing himself, Terias makes a conscious effort not to slip off the ledge. Once he's gotten his bearings he turns to Amyleryn, trying to keep his voice low, "Hrm y'know I'm thinking the Gargun's nay in there. If anything the bloody thing smelt the blood an' bones in the room and thought it was an easy meal. Gave the door a swift kick, hence the print and found it locked like us and moved on."

Terias turns his attention to the ledge in front of him and looks for any sign of movement continuing on away from the direction they came.

He finds no tracks but, when he next looks through the window, he sees a thick black smoke begin to form in the center of the pentagram.

While Terias checks for gargun tracks on the walkway, Amyleryn examines the door, with extra attention to any hinges or handle(s)/lock part(s) on her side of the door. She will keep one eye on the window in case anything tries to reach through it.

She does not find hinges or locks on this side of the door. Peering through the crack of the door, she can see a bar blocking the light which is high enough that someone could possibly stand on their toes and reach through the window to grab the bar. She can also see the smoke forming in the center of the pentagram.

As Terias stands beside Amyleryn peering into the barred open window, his eyes widen in amazement. Instantly he starts to run through his head having ever seen the symbol on the floor in his studies he didn't sleep through.

He does not know any specifics but he has heard tales of pentagrams being used for summoning of demons. [+1 folklore]

Muttering to no one in particular, "Don't like the look a'that. Not one bit." Unconsciously the Matakea tightens his grip on his spear, while performing an air sword cross with his left hand across his body to Larani.

"This is bad. We have to get in there right now! I think I can reach in through the window and un-bar the door. Stand ready with your spear in case something tries to grab me while I'm doing that." Amyleryn tells him in a voice at ordinary volume. She stands on her tip-toes and reaches in to try to get the bar out of it's brackets.

Realization dawning on Terias face, he mentions casually, "Oi from what I remember that symbol's a pentagram.. used to summon.." He suddenly cuts himself off as events unfold.

As Amyleryn unbars and opens the door, the smoke coalesces into an eight-foot-tall, humanoid form with horns and cloven hooves. In a booming voice, it says, "YOU DO NOT BELONG HERE! LEAVE NOW BEFORE I AM COMPELLED TO DESTROY YOU!"

"Aye.. that'd be about the sum of it.. a demon.", Terias says clenching his spear then muttering a curse about Balgashang.

Speaking to Terias, Amyleryn says: "Terias, do not look at me as I do this or you may be blinded. In any case, as I finish, I'll bump you. When I do, close your eyes." As she is saying this, she drops her shield and sets the lantern down. Using the light of the lantern as a focus and her rose quartz ring as the source, Amyleryn gestures and chants loudly as she tries to do the Hlandor's Flash spell. When she gets to the last couple of words of the spell, she reaches out with a foot and taps Terias on any available body part.

Somewhat mystified by Amyleryn's request, the Matakea looks to the demon and in a distracting mocking tone says, "Y'know I've never heard of a creature from the pits of Balgashang offering folks retreat. Honours not high up there for yer lot. How's about you go back where y'came and we call it a day?"

Once Terias feels the tap from Amyleryn he closes his eyes, holding his shield up protectively.

Not wanting to waste an opportunity to strike, after a few brief moments of waiting, Terias opens his eyes and plunges his spear towards the creature, keeping his feet grounded.

As Amyleryn begins her ten seconds of chanting, the demon says, "AH, A WIZARD! YOU WILL MAKE A TASTY TREAT." He rushes to the edge of the circle towards you and draws back for a punch...

Suddenly a bright purple flash of light emanates from the crystal. Terias can see the light through his closed eyelids but it does him no harm.

The demon appears to strike out blindly and Terias' attack misses. The demon's blow is more successful...striking Amyleryn a grievous blow to her right hip and knocking her back out of the room.

Terias' eyes widen and his nostril's flare in anger as he witnesses Amyleryn get hit. He calls out to her, attention focused fully on the demon before him, "M'lady, m'lady if you're able to - fall back! I'll hold this cursed beast off as long as I can!"

As the Matakea speaks those words he raises his spear over head, and drives it down with his full weight aiming for the demon's chest. "Larani smite you, you foul thing!"

The spear misses on the low side, gets tangled up in the demon's legs and it falls to the ground.

From the ground at the doorway, Amyleryn gives free reign to her anger so as to be able to focus through the pain and invokes Beam of Nolar. She will chant loudly and gesture as much as she is able.

Hoping to take advantage of the situation, Terias hefts the spear high and brings it plunging down towards the prone demon's midsection.

Terias' spear hits the demon squarely in the chest but fails to penetrate its tough hide. The demon regains its feet saying, "YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED. NOW YOU DIE."

Amyleryn finishes her chanting but nothing happens other than her feeling more fatigued.

The Matakea doesn't seem fazed by the demon's threats, instead he takes a step back from the pentagram just outside the doorframe in an effort to block off where Amyleryn is. While doing so Terias begins to chant to Larani for 'Orthas' Faith', his eyes fiercely fixed on the demon the entire time.

The demon swings at Terias but misses, appearing to be unable or unwilling to step outside the circle. It then grabs the door, slams it shut in Terias face and you hear the bar drop into place.

"AND STAY OUT!" you hear it exclaim.

Somewhat shocked by what just occurred, Terias tapers off his chanting.

With the door latched shut, he turns to Amyleryn and crouches by to aid her. After looking over the hip wound the Matakea does not hesitate or even ask the noblewoman if she is alright. He immediately closes his eyes, setting down his spear and rubs his holy symbol gently while beginning the ritual for 'Bandage of St. Perelyne'.

Amyleryn's hip feels a bit better.

Assuming that Terias is invoking some sort of healing prayer, Amyleryn stands leaning against the wall, the injured hip outward so he can clearly get to it. She closes her eyes and tries to relax, to help the healing and clear her mind.

Once Terias is done, Amyleryn says: "My thanks for that." She carefully limps to the window and looks the room over thoroughly.

She can see the demon standing in the center of the circle and glaring at here. "I TOLD YOU TO STAY OUT!" it shouts.

Speaking softly, Amyleryn says: "I have to rest for a while." and eases herself down to a seated position, with her back against the tunnel wall. She is lost in thought for a goodly time.

After about fifteen minutes, Amyleryn says: "We are going to have to go back in there, if for no other reason than to retrieve the lantern. If I'm right, someone in this town is trafficking with Agrik. This must be stopped."

Holding up her hand to forestall a response from Terias, she continues: "I'm certain that the demon is prevented from leaving the circle...otherwise, we'd both be dead by now."

There's no other reason for it to settle for closing and re-barring the door."

The Laranian priest nods curtly at Amyleryn's words, likely having come to the same conclusion.

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Changing tact a little, Amyleryn asks: "Did you see that skull in the middle of the pentagram?" Not waiting for an answer, she continues: "I think that it may be the key to dealing with the demon. It's the skull of a male Khuzdul. I want you to tie a loop in one the end of the rope. When that's done, hold on to the loop and feed enough of the rest of the rope through the window so that it is possible to reach through the window and throw the loop into the pentagram with the idea of getting the loop over the skull and pulling it out of the pentagram and circle. Once that's done, we'll unbolt the door again and see if the demon re-appears. We'll stay here, out of it's reach if it does...but if it doesn't re-appear we can check out that room with an eye toward bringing this foul trafficking to an end and see whoever is responsible brought to justice!"

Terias nods his head a few times, growing more vigorous as he listens to Amyleryn's plans, then offers quietly, "Aye, I thought the same too on the skull. I stepped between the demon and you to guard while I prepared a blessing from the Lady to make my aim true. I planned to toss my spear at the skull to shatter it. Your plans a fine one m'lady, since the smoke didn't rise until you had the door unlatched, we should be safe to try."

The Matakea then sets to work on the rope, in an effort to tie a loop on one end.

At this point, twenty minutes have passed, and Amyleryn says: "Help me up and lets get to it." and holds out a hand for Terias to help her up.

With a bit of effort, Terias pulls Amyleryn to her feet as gently as he can.

Terias motions Amyleryn away from the door and asks in a low voice, "M'Lady, you have any more tricks up yer sleeve like that flash you threw out? I'm thinking of giving my spear a toss through the window, but t'was a hard throw without the door being shut. I figure it's worth a shot to try for the skull." Seeming perturbed he then adds, "I don't want to leave that thing down here."

"No, do not throw your spear through the window." Amyleryn says. Continuing: "Too great a chance you'll miss...then your spear will be gone for good. I have another spell I can fire through the window without the demon being able to counter-attack. I don't know if it would harm the demon any more than your spear did, but it's worth a try. We need a light source, but without a source of light to see by down here in the sewers, I think we're as good as dead."

Trying to force his way along the discussion they're having, clearly apprehensive about the subject matter, Terias asks, "Eh will the 'spell' y'have .. will it damage the skull m'lady? I'm thinking we should try fer that first. And do you have a way to maintain that flash you cast when we first met the demon? That'll provide more then enough light for us to leave if need be. As for my spear t'is something I can easily replace. I'd rather try and miss then not try t'all."

Amyleryn continues, "I'm inclined to just continue on and get help to come back here and deal with this...thing. The problem, as I see it, is that so far, no-one seems willing to believe a thing I say. It's as if they all WANT to die...or worse."

Looking through the window of the door, Amyleryn can see a mostly empty room with no evident windows or doors. There is the pentagram and circle covering most of the floor with the khuzdul skull and demon in the center. A cabinet sits on the opposite side, locked by a padlock.

Amyleryn smiles wanly at Terias, and says: "So many things to respond to, good Laranian fighter." Gathering her thoughts, she answers: "Yes, the spell I had in mind would probably destroy the skull...as might your spear. But if either of us should miss and damage the circle, that might release the demon to cause carnage far and wide. Are you willing to risk that?"

With a deep frown, Terias shakes his head. Clearly he is torn as he does so.

Amyleryn continues, "The flash cannot be maintained...it's instant. I DO have another spell that would serve, but I have no way to tell how long it will last."

"It goes against my very soul to leave this demon undefeated, but I fear we have no choice. What I worry about, is that around this town, I can't seem to command the respect my rank should entitle me to. I can just about assure you that if we get out of here and say that there's a demon of Agrik in a room off the sewers, we'll be mocked to the point where we might as well go home in disgrace and leave these poor fools to their fate!" Amyleryn sighs deeply and seems to be in a depressed state.

Terias nods slowly and then pitches in his two farthing worth, "Aye, m'lady I wouldn't tell the local guards or the nobles in town. Best to let the Laranian temple know. They'll be prepared to deal with it. T'is what the Ethelanca was built for."

Shaking off the mood, Amyleryn says: "Relax. This may take a while. Casting spells is a hit-or-miss process until one reaches a high level of mastery. I'm pretty much convinced that the gargun met it's end at the hands of that demon, but I suppose I could be wrong. We'll keep looking through the sewers until we find it, or we've explored the whole place and found nothing more." With that, she casts Beacon of Isala until it succeeds.

In spite of her pain, she casts the spell on her first try. [+1 beacon of Isala] The resulting light is half again as bright as the lantern.

Terias lowers himself down on the ledge and glances around for potential tracks or signs of movement.

Once the Beacon of Isala is in operation, she waits for Terias to check for more gargun tracks. If the gargun tracks end at the door to the demon, she'll say: "Well...we might as well see what other secrets these sewers contain before we return to the light of day."

Terias can find no further gargun tracks but, approximately five paces further down the tunnel, he can see that it ends at a north south branching.

Rising from his kneeling position, Terias asks Amyleryn, "I'm nay sure how long your. light will last m'lady, but shall we check just a further bit up ahead since I can't find anything here?"

* * *

Meanwhile at the sewer entrance:

After taking a few moments to gather his surroundings, Zedeon turns to find Felada. "I'm at a loss, as of right now, as to what we should be doing. I would like to go down and help them, but unfortunately I know of notta one other way down," Zedeon whispers to Felada. "If you have no objections, I say we grab what we can, and find another route. I don't much like leaving everyone behind in a hole of unknown danger."

"I think there is naught else we can do, master," Felada says. "It is too late to follow them and if you enter by other means, you would be lost and never find your way. It is not for me to tell you what you should do but, as for myself, I will be returning to the inn to await milady's arrival as she commanded. If they return not by morning, we could try to get others to look for them but, from what we have seen so far, I think the local townsfolk would do nothing. I will aid you if you still want to enter but you will need some rope and a source of light."

Zedeon glances in the direction of the Inn. "The Inn first to grab my things," Zedeon whispered to himself. His stride back was on the edge of a jog. When Zedeon arrives at the entrance, he slowly opens the door and scans inside for any going's-on.

Entering the inn, you see that three of the tables are occupied. The first table has two freeman, one is dressed in rawhides. They each have a plate of food, a mug of ale and, the one in rawhides, has a number of arrows on the table in front of him. One of them says to the other "The Mayor found a rare a priceless first edition book of unknown antiquity near the city wall."

The second table has a woman dressed as a priestess of Peoni. She has a mug of small ale and a small purse in front of her.

The third table has the guardsman Rikeemeld of Gidall, whom you had met earlier. He is chatting with a blonde female harper who looks to be preparing to perform. "...and then she asks me my name like she was the Earl himself, and says she is going into the sewers to chase a gargun. I tell you if you want material for your songs, there can be nothing dafter than a noblewoman chasing gargun in the sewers. If she catches the thing, you have material for an epic tale. If she does not, you can make it a comedy."

Susi, the harper, looks in the direction of the door to see Zedeon (a craftsman) and Felada (a lady's maid) enter.

"Here comes a couple of her companions," says Rikeemeld, "What Ho! Has your lady returned yet with her quarry?"

Zedeon, leaning against Felada, walks with her towards the second table. In a soft whisper he says to Felada out of the corner of his mouth, "Pay no mind. We follow me, we might find out more interesting information here."

Zedeon arrives at the table with the priestess (assuming there's no interaction with the rantings of Gidall, which I'm sure there will be), bows his head slightly, and in a soft voice says, "if it would please you ma'am, would you care for some company on this night?"

She answers, "Certainly, young master. Would you be interested in making a contribution to aid the poor?"

Zedeon reaches into his purse carefully to pick out a random coin. "This, unfortunately, is all that I can spare. How fairs things for you m'lady?"

"Times are difficult as there are many in need," she answers, "and few of the generous. Most consider not that someday they may need the charity of others."

Zedeon says, "True. It is unfortunate that some end up on the more empty side of the coin purse."

Susi says to Rikeemeld, "There is a Gargun in your sewers?"

"Yes," Rikeemeld answers. "Some fool brought it to the faire for his freak show and let it escape. The showman is with the magistrate now."

Susi asks, "Did the noblewoman go after this Gargun alone then?"

"I think not. These two here were only part of her companions," Rikeemeld answers, "Their presence here shows them to be cowards but the priest of Larani must have gone with her. If he turns out to have no courage, the temple would punish him severely."

"How brave!" Musing to herself, but loud enough to be heard....."concerned for the safety of her companions, the brave noble lady ventures forth alone into the vileness below the city in search of her accursed quarry.....I need to know how this plays out!"

"I thought that would be of interest," says Rikeemeld. "Come and I will introduce you."

Leading her to Zedeon, Rikeemeld says, "While your appearance goes much against my stomach, the lovely minstrel here would like to hear the story of your lady...that is up until the chirping of crickets caused you to abandon her. May I present Susi of Molanth, the most promising new lutest in the kingdom. Susi, this is Zedeon of Jaheraka, journeyman weaponsmith, and Felada of Yaandy, lady's maid."

Susi says to Zedeon & Felada, "Greetings!, As Rikeemeld says, I am a minstrel, and am very interested in tales of bravery and feats of valor, would you be willing to share this lady's tale with me?"

Zedeon turns to look at the lady. "How interested might you be m'lady?"

Susi then says to Rikeemeld, "You must admit, the lady's actions are bold...were you not even TEMPTED to offer your assistance?"

"Aye, tempted," says Rikeemeld, "but my duties, as laid out by the aldermen, are clear – I am to protect the citizenry above ground at the fair. Especially the ladies and children of the gentry who know their place and provide proper examples for the rest of us. If I was so ordered, it would have been more than proper for me to go forth. Speaking of my duties, my respite is over and I must get back to the faire."

"Pleasure ma'am. Shall we go to a more secluded table, as this one could lead other ears to hear the tale that you want to hear so much?" Zedeon asks.

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Susi says to Rikeemeld "Thank you for your protection, and fare thee well as you go about your duties."

Turning back to Zedeon, she says "Would you be willing to share the lady's tale with me? Do you suppose she would allow me to follow her for a time, to watch her brave deeds?"

Zedeon nods to the Peonian priestess, then turns in his seat towards the inquiring Susi. "I would love to discuss such things, but at a more secluded table, if you please." Zedeon swivels his head towards his companion and whispers. "Would you think MLady would mind tellin her tale?"

"As long as you keep it to the level of 'a tale told by minstrels' and do not divulge specific names and places," says Felada, "it should be all right. Leave the specifics to milady's discretion."

The innkeeper approaches the table and says, "Are you folks ready for your dinner now? Tonight we are having an appetizer of jusselle dates (dates stuffed with eggs and cheese); a rota soup (barley fruit soup); a choice of entrée: roste (beef roast with crisps), porpoise pudding (oat-stuffed pike), or fesaunt and gelye (baked pheasant with cold herbed jelly); accompanied by caudele almaunde (a nut dish served as a vegetable), wastel (first quality bread) and ale (with an amber-copper color. pear aroma. firm texture. malty-nutty flavor, quite dry with underlying bitterness. that develops a bitter aftertaste); followed by quynade (quince sauce) for dessert." Indicating Felada and Zedeon, he continues, your meal is included in your room charge and", indicating Susi, "Your dinner is provided in exchange for your entertaining."

Susi says to Zedeon "Would you join me at another table, where we could eat and you could share the tale with me?"

Susi notices the magistrate's son, Ralif, enter the inn, listen to their conversation and, at the mention of Amyleryn's name and mission, he hurries out of the inn.

As you are moving to an empty table, Felada tells the innkeeper, "I will have the fesaunt and gelye for my entrée." She nudges Zedeon and, when he still does not respond, she mutters, "some people need to work on their social skills."

Turning to Susi, Felada says, "You will have to forgive him. We are from a country manor and he is not used to speaking to minstrels."

"Very well, I will tell what I can of my mistress," Felada says, "As I said, Lady Aymlyern and her companions are from Hesby, a country manor near Olokand on the other side of the kingdom. She was a difficult child and her father sent her off to be schooled far from home. When she returned, she was slightly more subdued but she still has her eccentric moments. She met, and became friends with, the sheriff's daughter, who arranged for her to be taught certain social graces and other skills to help her make her way in the world."

"Recently, the sheriff's daughter and milady's great uncle, asked her to go on a mission of investigation for them. Her great uncle shares Amyleryn's hot temper and, in discussing the details of the journey, they got into a huge argument and we left Tashal in a rush...possibly less prepared than we could have been."

"When we arrived here in Kiban, we went to visit your excellent faire and, being of the country gentry, milady failed to make the

good impression of herself with the local citizenry that she expected and she did not receive the reaction from them that she expected. Never the less, when she learned of a gargun who escaped into the sewers, she was not loath to go in after it...where others would fear to tread, so to speak. One of her companions, a Larani priest named Terias of Forniad, accompanied her but Zedeon here spent too long day-dreaming and they were gone before he could follow."

"Milady's last words to me were to return their belongings here to the inn and await their return. So does that answer your questions?"

Susi says to Felada "I suspect they will return here, but maybe we should try to find them...perhaps we could witness a heroic battle, or offer some assistance?"

"Oh no miss," says Felada in alarm. "They will certainly return here to get their belongings and, if they found me missing, they would surely have me beaten as is their right. I would not like to test the limits of milady's displeasure. Did I mention her temper? Of course you are free to go as you will but, following them into the sewers, will most likely have you IN one of your heroic adventures...not just witnessing it."

Susi says to Felada, "Let us enjoy our meal then and await their return." "I must play a bit of music as well."

After her meal, of which she paid very little attention to what she ate, Susi plays her lute. Having trouble concentrating with her mind on other things, her playing is merely adequate and not as good as normal.

Zedeon sits looking very content and relaxed looks at Felada "She looks nervous"

"Oh, you are awake...I was wondering because of your silence," says Felada. "Perhaps, she is unused to being snubbed so. You should apologize when Susi returns and tell Lady Amyleryn's story from your point of view."

* * *

A brief flashback:

On the day after Ralif had been accepted into the Rydequelyn, he was preparing for his journey home to Kiban when Ibarti Erdaris of Elway entered the room to say, "I wanted to congratulate you again on your acceptance into the Rydequelyn and to wish you well on your journey. I would also ask that you do a favor for the order. We have learned that Lord Fugys of Odasart, the minister for the royal weaponcrafters, has sent one of his relations to Kiban to learn the cause of the absence of Earl Karison Dariune. From what we hear, Amyleryn of Odasart is a headstrong girl and she has no official backing for this investigation so she may be doing her duty with reluctance. We ask that you find her and render what aid as you can without making public any information that would be dangerous or frightening to the citizens. You are to ridicule such information or show proof that it is false, whether it actually is or not. You may inform her of your identity if you feel it be prudent but do not enlighten her own your real purpose and report any dangerous information you find, to us as soon as you are able." He hands you a foot long wooden rod and says, "Use this to encrypt your information."

He then gives you a full description of Amyleryn of Odasart.

It takes several days over land to arrive in Kiban and your family greets you warmly. You mention to your father that you will be looking for Lady Odasart and he tells you that he had heard she was staying at the Silver Way Inn. "Although, I know not if she will be found there as she has ventured forth into the sewers to capture an escaped gargun."

You travel to the Silver Way Inn as the sun is setting and arrive in time to hear a guardsman say to a pretty minstrel, "says she is going into the sewers to chase a gargun". Eavesdropping on the conversation, you watch as the guardsman introduces the minstrel to some people at a table and she asks to be told the story."

Returning to his uncle's house Ralif finds him reading in his study. "Uncle," he says, "I need to descend into the sewers to search for Lady Amyleryn. Can you spare a few torches and some rope?" Before his uncle can even respond, he pipes in again, "And where is Dagyathar? I'll need his help." When his eyes narrow at the thought of two of his foster children exploring the sewers of Kiban, Ralif reassures his uncle, "just to lower me down, Uncle..."

"You what?!?" his uncle sputters, "I suppose it is one of those priest things. Yes, you can find a few torches in the cellar but rope will not be necessary as I have an entrance to the sewer in the cellar as well. While you were away, your brother has become a journeyman merchant and moved to a house on Neph street towards the docks. I suspect he is at the Hall of the Mangai at this time of evening."

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