

INTRODUCTION

Lady Lusse Harabor, the daughter of the Sheriff of Meselynshire, has been asked to travel to Tashal to be a lady in waiting to Princess Meliem Elendsa, niece of the king. As is proper to her station, she'll be accompanied by a large entourage, with an advance party to announce her pending arrival.

1-NÚZYÆL-720 TR

You have been asked to meet at the Standing Bear to discuss accompanying Lady Harabor to Tashal and, once there, you'll be in her employ for an indeterminate amount of time. If you accept, you should bring any travel belongings, as the party will be setting out early in the morning. Lodging and food for the night has been arranged and will be provided for those who accept.

As you approach the inn late in the forth watch, you notice that it is very cold and there is still a couple of inches of snow on the ground. This is going to be a cold trip unless the weather changes. The air is crisp and clean without the smell of horses and unwashed bodies that you get during the heat of the summer. When you enter the door of the inn, the innkeeper, a tall plain looking man, introduces himself as Haselun of Elathel and asks your name. You tell him and he shows you to a table.

There is a fire in the hearth, which gives off warmth and the smell of burning pine. Around the room are several large tables, with tablecloths and padded benches, most of them occupied. Light and the smell of beeswax candles come from the two chandeliers overhead. The floor is bare hard wood with Pennyroyal and Lavender leaves strewn about. The murmur of low conversations is mixed with the sounds of dinner being prepared in the next room.

ASSIGNMENT

Once everyone has arrived and been seated, Lady Harabor raises and taps a spoon against her wineglass to get everyone's attention. She says, "I have asked most of you here to accompany me on my journeys. I am prepared to pay each of you a penny a day plus food and lodging, which, I believe, is the normal wage of a journeyman in most of your professions and better than normal for the others. And now to introductions."

"First is Liese of Tirinas," she says pointing out an average looking woman of red hair and green eyes. "As a seamstress, Liese has been asked to prepare a wardrobe for me that is suitable to be worn at court. She can mend and sew clothes for the others of you but only if it doesn't interfere with her work for me."

"Next is Jethrul of Krarisen," pointing out a stout young man with brown hair and eyes. "He will be entertaining us with his musical skills along the road and at dinner each evening. The rest of the time, he'll help with light errands and deliver messages for me. However, we don't want to wear him out so his work only includes labor on my behalf. The rest of you can do your own work."

"Moile of Sorquill," pointing to a short attractive woman, also with red hair and green eyes. "is the daughter of the physician so she has some healing skills. Being a priestess of Halea, she has been trained to deal with money, so she will be handling our

financial transactions. I admit that I am a rustic with no ambitions for court or politics so my manners are not sufficient for where we are going. Hopefully, Moile will be able to teach me those skills as well."

"Since Liese and Jethrul are betrothed and not married, Moile shall act as Liese's chaperone. Moile and Liese should get to know each other tonight because they will be together most of the time. I realize that having a priestess of Halea as a chaperone is a bit unusual but, when I paid the church for her contract, they assured me she can do the job properly."

"Aliane of Eylanos," pointing out a short woman sitting next to her and wearing hard leather armor, "is my personal bodyguard. If you need to discuss something with me, make arrangements through her." Being of small build, Aliane looks out of place in armor but she appears quite comfortable in it.

"Jak of Odasart and Mobon of Falen will help Aliane provide protection for us. If you notice anything that may threaten the company, let them know and they will either deal with it or bring it to my attention. Jak is of noble birth so he can also settle any disagreements between you and he'll be in command of the fighters and scouts among us."

"As a hunter and scout, Alegur of Thatain will guide us and hunt for fresh game, once we pass Ovendell. Before Ovendell, all the land is cultivated and we don't want to trespass."

"Guras of Daleaster and Waede of Evynes," pointing out a very short man and a very handsome man, "are our teamsters. They will be driving the wagon and coach and they'll be caring for the horses and oxen. During the rest of their time, they'll be doing any necessary menial labor. As is proper to their station, they'll be taking their meals in the kitchen and sleeping in the stables."

"Finally there is Sylene of Vafeg, my lady's maid," Lady Harabor gestures over her shoulder to a average looking woman with black hair, "Whenever you encounter her, you should assume she is dealing with my personal business and shouldn't be interrupted. During any free time Sylene has, Moile is teaching her to be a priestess of Halea. I allow this as long as it doesn't interfere with her duties."

"So while we eat, and until we retire for the night, talk amongst yourselves and become acquainted. If you are unable or unwilling to take on the tasks I have given you, let me know but otherwise don't disturb my dinner. I am your employer not your bosom companion. Before you retire, examine the equipment we have prepared that is associated with your profession, and tell me if anything more is needed."

You notice that some of the people in the room were not introduced, including a noble lady sitting next to Lady Harabor. You assume they are guests of the inn, and are unrelated to your venture.

A PLEASANT MEAL

While you talk, a sumptuous meal is served in four courses. The first course consists of an appetizer, a spicy egg coddler called a Potrous. The second course is a choice of Charlette (a curded beef soup) or Sallat (a tossed salad). The third and main course consists of Joutes (herbed beets), Parsley Bread, and a choice of Mawmenye (lentils and lamb), Pyke en Doucette (smoked pike salad in pastry), or Mary Cobages (cabbage with marrow). The

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final course is Blak Perys (pears with carob cream) and mulled apple cider.

After you eat more in one meal than you're used to eating in a week (or at least it seems that way), the dinner things are cleared away and there is more conversation over a few drinks. Finally, you retire for the evening.

The bedrooms are also of a higher quality and cleanliness than you are used to. The beds consist of a down mattress on a rope frame, satin sheets and a down comforter. The rooms have locked chests for valuables. Once again you can smell lavender that has been strewn on the floor.

One of the innkeeper apprentices introduces herself as Gweyl of Lemra and tells you she will be sleeping in the hall should you need anything in the night. She can get warming pans, wash basins, linens or pitchers of water upon request. She'll empty the bed pan under the bed if need be and perform other services at your need.

2-NÚZYÆL-720 TR

You awake the next morning at a summons from Gweyl, the innkeeper's apprentice, and you quickly get dressed. Going down stairs to help with the packing of the coach and ox cart at the front of the inn, you notice that it has stopped snowing and may be getting warmer.

Once the packing is finished and the sun is starting to come up, everyone except the two teamsters go to the dining room to break their fast and for final instructions. You're served a porridge, eggs, sausage, toasted bread, dried fruit and spiced wine that has been heated. Lady Harabor tells you Guras will drive the coach with Aliane seated next to him. Waede will drive the ox cart with Jak seated next to him. Moile, Liese, and Sylene will ride in the coach with her, which leaves Jethrul, Mobon and Alegur riding in the ox cart with the baggage.

JOURNEY

Once everyone is fed and in their seats, the company proceeds through Mycepris Square to the Mesel gate. The guards ask Jak to remove his helmet so he can be identified and, when he complies, Moile pays the toll using part of the money Lady Harabor has given her for expenses. The company crosses Elendsa bridge, proceeds through Tentru village and, by the start of the third watch, are travelling south on the Heru road.

The road follows the Kald river for the first part of the journey and on the left, across from the river, is cultivated farmland. There are no people tending the fields at this time of year but you do occasionally see someone mending the dry stone walls along the side of the road or cleaning the irrigation ditches.

At Nevenfal, the road continues southwest but leaves the river, which turns southeast. A little further on, there is toll bridge at Greaven, where Jak is again asked to remove his helmet and Moile pays the toll. (The guards appear to recognize Lady Harabor's noble status by the family crest on the sides of the coach. Once they verify that Jak isn't a known outlaw, they accept his right to wear a plate helmet and carry a poleaxe by his association with Lady Harabor.) Shortly before noon, the road enters a forest and quickly comes out the other side.

AMBUSH

Just as the coach leaves the forest and before it crosses a bridge over a creek, you see a person crouched in the middle of the

road. The drivers slow down as the figure rises and turns to face you. To your horror, you see the severed human hand in its mouth and the green slime dripping down the rotting flesh of its face. Spitting out the hand, the creature rushes toward the coach with apparent murderous intent.

The creature rushing the coach causes the horses to panic and bolt, snapping their traces. Guras, who is gripping the reins, is pulled off the coach and dragged across the ground behind the horses. Aliane struggles to apply the brakes and stop the coach from crashing into the trees. Meanwhile, Waede brings the wagon to a stop and the two soldiers jump to the ground; Jak with his buckler and poleaxe ready, Mobon with his tower shield and shortsword ready. Their combat training allows them to reach the ground safely and to ignore the horror of the creature confronting him.

The creature moves close enough to attack and Mobon, being much quicker, stabs with his shortsword (he is slightly surprised that the creature not only doesn't try to defend itself, it actually tries to attack with its clawed hands). Mobon delivers a serious stab wound to its neck.

Jak moves in from the other side and swings his poleaxe (the creature appears stunned and does nothing to defend itself.). Jak strikes with the edge of his poleax on the creature's right shoulder, knocking it to the ground unconscious and bleeding freely. Before anyone has time to do anything more, it dies.

Now that the battle is over and Jak has a good look at the body, he realizes that he knows this man as a runaway serf named Bakack of Hulgaer. A year ago, Bakack developed a strange skin disease and started acting odd. To hide his affliction, he would go around with a bag on his head. The last Jak heard of Bakack was when Lord Odasart sent a message, six months ago, asking him to watch out for the escaped peasant.

As everyone tries to regain their composure after the brief excitement, they hear crashing sounds coming through the forest underbrush. Weapons are readied for another battle, when you hear, "It's okay! It's me Guras!" and Guras stumbles out of the forest scraped up from being dragged by the horses.

Then you hear the screams and animal howling coming from over the rise on the other side of the bridge...

2-NÚZYÆL-720 TR (THIRD WATCH)

Jethrul, being concerned for his betrothed, ignores the brief battle and runs to the coach. He arrives just in time to see Aliane apply the brakes and bring it to a safe stop. Of the horses and the driver there is no trace (other than the drag marks going towards the woods). He insures that the ladies inside are unharmed and turns just in time to see the driver come limping from the woods, much scraped and bruised.

Meanwhile, Waede appears to be in a panic, yelling at Guras and trying to turn the ox cart. The oxen appear unconcerned and remain where they are. Guras yells to Waede, "Steady on lad. Avore ee get dat cart turned, a oard of gargun could be upon us, slaughter us and be away without breaking a sweat." Oblivious that this is not the thing to say to calm Waede down, Guras continues, "If ee want to make yerzel useful, get down from there and fetch de osses. Dey won't ave gotten far avore dey calm down." Guras glances at Jethrul then turns back to Waede to say, "Matter of fact, if ee be lacking the spine to gaw off een

de woods alone, I'm sure the crowder ere weel gaw wi' ee. Ee sure wuz quick enough to come running to de aid of his fair luvver, although what he would ave done if she wuz een trouble be beyond me."

Approaching the bridge, the fighters see the trees on either side of the road. Anything shorter is obscured by the high brush along the stream and, to make the situation even more miserable, a drizzling rain has started. Upon reaching the rise of the bridge, they look out over a scene of carnage. An overturned wagon lies across the road with its two horses struggling to escape the wreckage. A mutant with a large body and an incredibly small head is hacking maniacally at them with an axe. Lying on the ground next to the wagon and screaming in pain, is another mutant with the head of a dog. Blood pumps from its leg while a third mutant (this one with a pointed head) tries to bandage the wound. Another mutant, with cloven hooves for feet, feasts on the body of a small child. Finally, they see a mutant with scaly skin searching through the scattered bodies while it carries an unloaded crossbow.

BATTLE OF THE MUTANTS

Since the mutants are busy with their various activities and unaware of the arrivals at the bridge, Aelgur has plenty of time to prepare his first shot. His target is only moving normally, there is a slight breeze blowing the drizzle directly into his face, range five meters, aim at the chest...and he releases the arrow. The arrow strikes soundly in his target's chest and it goes down without a sound.

Aelgur loads another arrow into his bow and prepares to fire on the creature with the cloven feet. Suddenly, its very quiet as the mutant lying on the ground stops screaming. Startled, Aelgur's arrow sails over the target's left shoulder to plant itself into the ground. The two remaining mutants grab their weapons and charge.

The creature with the cloven hooves reaches the bridge before Aelgur can ready another arrow. Mobon, on the other hand, has had plenty of time to prepare himself. As soon as it is in range, Mobon stabs with his shortsword at the creature's head and neck but the creature dodges his attack. Very quickly after, Jak stabs with his poleaxe but the creature dodges this attack as well. The creature stabs at Mobon with its javelin and Mobon easily blocks the attack with his tower shield. However, the glancing blow of the javelin takes a large gouge from the tower shield. Meanwhile, Aelgur manages to fire an arrow at the mutant with the pointed head as it rushes to attack. The arrow sails over its right shoulder, missing completely.

Mobon stabs at his adversary and delivers a minor wound to its left cheek. This is just enough of a distraction that it is unable to defend against Jak's attack. Jak stabs the creature in the neck with the point of his poleaxe and the creature falls to the ground, killed instantly.

The creature with the small head appears extremely quick, but not overly bright, as it attacks Mobon with a handaxe. In the process of blocking the handaxe, Mobon snags the bottom of his shield on the edge of the bridge...but he manages to maintain his grasp. Mobon stabs toward the small head. The creature tries to

deflect the blow with its left hand and receives a small cut on the palm.

At the same time, Jak stabs at the mutant with the pointed head. Both of them, hampered by the awkward positioning and the rain slippery ground, stumble and fall to the ground. Mobon stabs at his opponent's head and it dodges the attack. The creature swings his handaxe at Mobon and he, rather awkwardly, blocks the blow with his shield. As Jak and his opponent attempt to regain their footing, Alegur, who has changed to his shortsword, steps past Jak and stabs the creature in the abdomen. Alegur returns to his position behind Jak as the creature falls to the ground...dead.

Mobon's opponent, seeing its companion die, turns to flee. Mobon stabs solidly into its neck and the creature falls to the ground and dies.

The fighters prepare themselves for further attacks but it's all over. The only sound is the patter of the rain.

CONCLUSION

After a brief search of the edges of the nearby woods to determine that there are no more hostile forces nearby, the fighters return to the coach. Lady Harabor asks if any of them are injured and instructs the priestess to attend to any wounds. She suggests that Jak and Mobon search the bodies of the victims to determine their identity, so next of kin can be notified, and she reminds them that part of their agreement with her is that they get to keep a tenth of any unclaimed loot. Finally, she instructs Alegur and Waede (and Jethrul if he wants) to capture the horses and get them harnessed to the coach.

[OOC: I will be keeping a treasure registry with information that is not readily apparent. The numbers in square brackets are index numbers into this registry. Whenever you ask anything about these items, please include the registry number. Let me know what you take and who carries it.]

On the victim at this side of the bridge, they find 28d, 4 Khuzan gold crowns, seven small scrolls of parchment and ink [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7], and an ounce vial containing a milky liquid [8]. The body of Bakack is too disgusting to even contemplate searching.

Continuing the search on the other side of the bridge, they find 2d, 2KGC and a handaxe on the mutant with the small head. The mutant with the cloven hooves has 6d, a handaxe, a knife and a javelin. The one with the pointed head has 6d, 10 arrows, a longbow, a dagger and a falchion. The mutant with the bestial face lying next to the overturned wagon has 6d, a ball & chain and a shortsword. The one with the scaly skin must have been looting the bodies because it has 50d, two small scrolls [9] [10], a small cut gem of velvet black color [11], a gold amulet [12], an uncut velvet-black stone [13], an ivory ring with five black & white stones and three translucent what stones [14], a silver broach [15], two slates with chalk writing that is mostly washed off by the rain [16] [20], a piece of vellum with ink writing mostly obliterated by blood and dirt [17], two parchments with ink writing in good condition [18] [19] and a wax tablet with an attached stylus and runic writing. Piled next to the mutant is a handaxe, a roundshield, a spear, a crossbow with 10 bolts and a shortsword. Searching the bodies of the three commoners,

Peonian priest and the child gains nothing more as they have all been looted.

Just as they are concluding their search and are returning once more to the coach, Mobon discovers another body at the edge of the forest with a crossbow bolt in his back. Turning him over, you are astonished to discover that he is the exact twin of Jethrul. Searching his body, reveals 26d and two parchments with ink writing [22] [23].

At this time, five mounted knights ride toward you from the direction of Owendel. They demand that you account for yourselves and, once they hear your story, two of them accompany your company on to Owendel. As you leave, you see the others righting the overturned wagon, calming the horses and start to pile the bodies onto the wagon. Just as the sun is setting, you arrive at Owendel.

2-NÚZYÆL-720 TR (FIFTH WATCH)

As you enter Owendel, the most prominent feature is the stone tower and wooden palisade surrounding the manor house. The reason that it commands attention is that it is built right in the middle of the road forcing travelers to go around it. Jak follows the knights through the gateway of the palisade while the rest of the company approaches the inn to the west of the manor house.

Entering the great hall, Jak notices that this is definitely the residence of a military man. There are practically no decorations other than the prominently displayed weapons and armor and even those look well maintained and ready for use. The knights quickly tell what they saw upon arrival at the scene and introduce Jak to Lord Dasarayne. They further tell their liege lord that Jak is of noble blood, has shown his courage in battle and is a spokesman for Lady Harabor, the sheriff's daughter, and her company.

Jak approaches Lord Dasarayne, removes his helmet and kneels in salute. Straightening, he says, "Grevious news my lord, horrid creatures, warped monstrosities, have waylaid a group of travelers on the King's road. We approached the group and were attacked, so in Lady Harabor's name we slew them thusly after a terrific battle. One of the foul things was the much warped escaped serf that my father has been seeking for this year's hence, I can vouch that his, its, countenance was of such foulness that some foul pestilence or influence is at work."

Lord Dasarayne ponders what he has heard briefly and says, "You have done well this day. Return to Lady Harabor and inform her that I will ensure her safety while she is here by posting patrols all night. If she wishes to continue on her journey, tell her that I can deliver messages to her father, the Sheriff. If any of the rest of your party wants to send messages in that direction, I'll have those delivered as well. I'll even notify the next of kin of any of the victims you were able to identify.

If you feel those in your company can protect her on the road, it will allow me to have full use of my men to protect this area. However, if you feel the need, I can send some of my men with you, as the safety of the Sheriff's daughter is most important.

Go now with my thanks and I'll speak with Lady Harabor on the morrow."

MERMAID AND WEREWOLF ALEHOUSE

Meanwhile at the inn, the ostler and his two stablehands take charge of the coach and the oxcart. As the company enters what appears to be another excellent inn, the innkeeper introduces himself as Cahar of Glolaan. He has a large staff in attendance and it is a slow part of the season so everyone will be well taken care of. He says he was well informed of the Lady's arrival by her scout, Valdaen of Rylin, who passed by on the previous day. You are all shown to your rooms where you freshen up before returning to the common room for a drink before dinner. Moile lags behind to discuss money with the innkeeper then leaves with Guras to go to the shrine of Elomia and have his injuries tended.

If Waede takes Jak up on his offer to be trained as a valet, he'll be shown to Jak's room. Otherwise, he'll be shown to the stables then returned to the kitchen for his dinner.

The warmth of the hearth fire and the spiced wine are welcome after travelling through the rain all day. The only other guest is a slightly thin young man with brown hair and gray eyes. By his comfortable demeanor, it appears that he has been here for awhile. When Jak returns from the manor and asks the innkeeper for a teamster, he is told that this man, Daarin of Crasele, is a journeyman merchantlyer but has done teamster work to feed himself in times of need.

Just as the previous dinner (was it only yesterday?), this meal is served in four courses. The first course consists of an appetizer, a spiced chestnut cream called a Nuttye. The second course is a choice of Rota (a barley fruit soup) or Sallat (a tossed salad). The third and main course consists of Flore Frittours (fried squash flowers), Burrebrede (shortbread), and a choice of Canelyne (beef pie), Porpoise Pudding (oat-stuffed pike), or Smalle Byrdes (game hens stuffed with dates and mustard). The final course is Damson (plum and currant tarts) and mulled pear cider.

After dinner, there is a short time for more drinks and conversation before you go to your respective beds.

3-NÚZYÆL-720 TR (SECOND WATCH)

When you awake in the morning, you notice that it has gotten very cold overnight. Mobon returns from his morning exercises and tells everyone that yesterday's rain has frozen to create a layer of ice on everything. You break your fast much like yesterday with porridge, eggs, sausage, toasted bread, dried fruit and heated, spiced wine.

Lord Dasarayne arrives soon after and Lady Harabor arranges for a private conference with Lord Dasarayne, Jak and Aliane. She immediately gets to the point by saying, "Lord Dasarayne, I thank you for your offers and I've drafted a letter to be sent to my father. Until now, everyone has been told that the purpose of my journey is to be lady in waiting to the Princess Meliem Elendsa. While that is true, there is much more to my mission. I have decided to inform those present of what I know so you can advise me on how I should proceed."

"For some time now, there has been no word of the King or of Lord Dariune of Kiban. Since my father is one of the five possible heirs to the throne, he is quite concerned and needs information so he can make plans. From a young age, I have been trained in the skills necessary to be my father's spymaster so he has sent me to get him that needed information."

“Until yesterday, I planned to go to Tashal, check on the King, then proceed to Kiban afterwards. After our encounter, I have come to believe that time is of the essence. What I now propose is that we go to Tashal and, while I check on the King, Jak takes as many of this company as possible on to Kiban. With our lack of information, these people are the only ones I am sure we can trust.”

“Since Jak doesn’t have the authority to just go in and start asking questions, I suggest that he travel under another guise. This person here named Daarin, gave me the idea of travelling as a merchant company. Jak will have to determine his character as we travel to Tashal. If this plan is agreeable, Jak should consult with the others to estimate what resources will be needed for the journey and we can provide for those needs using the newly acquired loot. However, I caution you, tell the others as little as possible. Even though I believe you can trust them, a chance remark may be heard by others.”

“So what are your comments.”

3-NÚZYÆL-720 TR (SECOND WATCH)

The meeting with Lady Harabor and the preparations to depart take less than an hour, although Alegur leaves immediately to scout ahead along the road. The others continuing on the journey are Lady Harabor, Aliane of Eylanos, Jak of Odasart, Liese of Tirinas, Jethrul of Krarisen, Mobon of Falen and Daarin of Crasele.

Alegur keeps a look out for tracks of game with the intention of hunting any that don’t take him too far from the road. He sees tracks of a boar (over a half hour old), a deer (over a half hour old), a stray cow (not very old but probably belongs to a local farmer), another deer (almost two days old) and another boar (over three hours old). None appear to be worth following up. He waits at the gates of Heru for the coach as it is starting to get dark and he is entering cultivated areas again. When the coach arrives, he accompanies the group the rest of the way to Tashal.

As the coach travels through the forest, it passes some farmers who appear to be searching for a stray animal and, arriving at Heru, passes some more farmers finishing their work for the day and heading for their evening meal. Otherwise, the road is empty and the journey uneventful. They reach Tashal shortly after sundown.

3-NÚZYÆL-720 TR (SIXTH WATCH)

Just after it gets dark, the coach pulls into Tashal through the Heru gate. Lady Harabor tells you this is where the group splits up, she to the castle with Aliane and Liese and the rest to find an inn to stay at while they prepare for their journey to Kiban. Even this brief conversation proves to be difficult due to the crowd around the gate. Agents of the various inns are yelling “Iron Bell, the finest inn in town!”, “Stay at the Tower Inn – the finest foods and the best beds”, “The Spurs always provides a rollicking good time” and “The Garb and Flail – quality service at a reasonable price.”

Daarin notices a thief at the edge of the crowd cut a purse string and run off down an alley with his prize. It happens fast enough that he is unable to say anything before the incident is over and, with the thickness of the crowd, it probably wouldn’t do any good anyway. Welcome back to the big city.

Meanwhile, Jethrul notices two people in the opposite direction, one is watching the crowd and the other is looking directly at Jethrul. The one looking at Jethrul scratches his left ear with the little finger of his right hand. When nothing happens, he repeats the gesture several times, each time getting more pronounced. After awhile, their expressions change when they notice a stocky man standing in a doorway. They smile and follow him into the doorway.

4-NÚZYÆL-720 TR TO 14-NÚZYÆL-720 ALEGUR

Your first night in Tashal, you stay at the Garb and Flail Inn while you decide what you’re going to do for the next two ten-days. When the innkeeper, Jaril of Varsin, first sees you, he seems a bit startled. After a dinner of an excellent vegetable pottage and brown bread, you get a chance to talk to him and learn that you are the image of his son, who died many years ago. A friendship develops and, while you still must pay for any drinks, he refuses to take your money for food and lodging.

You discuss with Jaril your plans to hunt, trap and forage for herbs and he tells you that it should be alright as long as you stay on the west side of the river and offer the best of your catch to the king through the gate guards. Don’t set any traps though as the Kath tribes in that area get a bit upset about that. Herbs, on-the-other-hand, are a different matter. He questions you a little and tells you that your foraging skills are adequate for searching for eatables but without some knowledge of herblore, will be useless for finding useful herbs. However, he knows a bit about herblore and, if you allow him to dispose of the remainder of your catch, within a couple of ten-days, he can teach you the rudiments of herblore.

The next day you leave at first light during the second watch and arrive at a sufficiently wild area by the third watch. For the first league, you accompany a troop of soldiers on a routine patrol and they give you directions to where hunting is allowed and where it isn’t. That is, allowed by the king. Your relations with the Kath are your own affair.

It takes an hour to find your first game trail but it appears to be a couple of days old so you decide not to pursue it. A half-hour later you find another trail, which appears to be of a deer passing this way a little more than a half-hour ago. It takes about an hour to follow the trail to within sight of the deer. You approach to within ten feet, unnoticed in spite of the icy ground, and take your first shot. It is a clean hit and you fell the deer in one shot. It takes the rest of the day to carry the 150-pound deer back to town. When you offer the guards a portion for the king, they tell you he will take one of the haunches after you have it skinned and butchered. After deducting the cost of having it cleaned and dressed, you have enough to repay your host for your living expenses and training in herblore for the full two ten-days with 18d left. This allows you time to devote yourself to your studies, which you do for the next few days.

During your field trips during the rest of the ten-day, you find one broad-leafed plant called Adder’s Tongue, four plants with purple flowers and long winged leaves, called All-Heal, and seven low-growing plants with blue-white flowers called Tirageyth, Jaril tells you the Adder’s Tongue is used for internal wounds and to prevent vomiting, All-Heal is used as a purgative

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and a sedative, and Tirageyth is used to make an addictive drug which is illegal in Kaldor.

JAK

Your first night in Tashal, you stay at the Garb and Flail Inn while you decide what you're going to do for the next two ten-days. The next morning, a messenger arrives from your great uncle, Fugys of Odasart. He heard about your arrival last night from Lady Harabor. He is currently the Lord in charge of the Royal weaponcrafters and answers to the Marshal of the Royal Guard, Koris of Harabor. Since he is getting on in years he would appreciate it if you visit with him for the next ten-day to let him know all about what is happening in the rest of the family.

You spend 6d for the night in the Inn and, the rest of the ten-days, room and board are provided by your great uncle for the rest of the ten-day.

MOBON

Your first night in Tashal, you stay at the Garb and Flail Inn while you decide what you're going to do for the next two ten-days. The next day, you get directions to your father's rival, Obras of Kyfa, and ask for a job. Obras gladly gives you a job for 7d a week plus room and board at the level of a master craftsman.

When you first arrive, you show Obras the weapons taken as loot and ask if he'll buy them for a fair price. You have already decided that, if they were new and you were buying them retail, they would be worth around 700d. Selling them used and wholesale, you expect to get no more than 10% so you are quite surprised when Obras gives you twice that (140d).

Obras gives you tasks of a journeyman and ignores the fact that you frequently foul things up (you barely have the skills of an apprentice). He keeps a flow of conversation going at all times and it takes you awhile to notice he is subtly questioning you about your father's trade secrets.

During the week, Obras tells you of this place, a couple of doors down the street and down the alley, where young men can "indulge their urges" (an obvious attempt to keep you from getting any ideas about his daughter). You manage to get down there a couple of days during the week where Wenden shows you her considerable skills of Halea for the reasonable cost of 10d per visit.

On the tenth day as you finish the days work, you are talking with Obras' daughter, Welusna (you had met her years ago and became close friends). Her father has been selling substandard weapons and she informed on him to the guildmaster. She asks you to give her an alibi, standup for her or figure some other way out of her situation.

On the night of the fourteenth, Mobon has a very vivid dream. A tall maiden clad in a white gown with red trim and circlets of silver about her head and waist, appears before him and says, "I understand you want to leave my worship. While it saddens me to lose any follower, I consider your devotion and think it is probably for the best. I would like to propose a bargain with you. If you choose to follow any that are not my enemies and if you convince your noble friend that worshipping me is in his best interest to achieve his goals, then I will speak on your behalf to your newly chosen deity. I also propose a bargain with

your noble friend. If he returns the holy artifact in his possession to my temple, I'll see that he will escape the embrace of the Whore of Heaven without ill effects. However, I will not wait forever for this to come about. It must happen by Yaelmor of this month." Mobon awakens in a sweat.

DAARIN

Your first night in Tashal, you stay at the Garb and Flail Inn while you decide what you're going to do for the next two ten-days. The next day you go to see Querene of Valain to tell her of your journey and to inquire about part time work. She tells you the only work, she knows of currently, is a noblewoman who needs her bookkeeping straightened out.

Querene gives you a letter of introduction and, later in the day, you report to Laelen Tesla, Chief Bard of the Chamber and daughter of Baron Tesla. The clerk of her household is terrible at bookkeeping and it takes most of the tenday to get her accounts put in order. At the end of the week, the Lady is grateful and pays you 120d.

15-NÚZYÆL-720 TR TO 24-NÚZYÆL-720

ALEGUR

During the past week, while you were helping at the inn, a minstrel that sometimes entertains there, Yuilina of Coralartak, learns of your prior battle and hunting prioress. She manages to become friends with you and starts making, and performing, songs that sing of your heroic deeds. Regarding the Tirageyth, Jaril recommends you take it back in the wilderness and bury it.

On the 15th, you head for the wilderness to do some hunting, accompanied by Mobon. You reach a place where you can hunt by the start of the third watch and the day is starting to get quite warm (which is refreshing after all the cold weather of the week before).

It takes most of the third watch to find the first game trail. However, the trail turns out to be of some of the local natives instead of game. A half hour later (at the end of the third watch), you find the trail of something that you can't identify other than that they are small and there appears to be a half dozen of them. You are of mixed opinion whether to follow the trail or look for another so you follow the trail while watching for another.

An hour later you still haven't come upon the small herd of unknowns but you do come across a very fresh trail of a stag. This is much more what you're looking for and you follow the stag's trail. It is a very easy trail to follow and, when you sight the stag, you are already within attack range. You and Mobon both ready your bows at the same time (you intend to let Mobon take the first shot but will fire soon after so your quarry won't have a chance to flee). Both shots hit but the stag doesn't go down. The stag slowly limps for cover and both hunters have a chance for a second shot. Mobon's shot misses but your shot brings down the stag. The two of you manage to get the 320 pound stag back to town by nightfall.

On the second day, the minstrel's tales and your offer of extra meat for the guards, encourages the captain of the guard, Eafild of Ibin, to offer you a job of teaching the city watch archery for the rest of the week. Mobon also attends your lessons to learn the basics of the longbow. (You do notice that he could pull a much heavier bow and you suggest he get one.) Teaching the

bow, helping at the inn and learning of herbs, fills your days for the rest of the week and you are unable to take any field trips.

Since the first deer was ample repayment for your stay at the inn and your lessons in herblore, Jaril tells you he cannot accept all that he takes in from the second deer. He gives you 96d as a fair wholesale price for a deer of that size. At the end of the week, Eafild pays you 17d for giving lessons and tells you have a job in the future when you need one.

Game Summary

Contacts:

Yuilina of Coralartak, Hf, harper, Tashal.

Guras of Halerenas, Hm, clothier, Tashal

Skill Usage, Development & Training:

Longbow +1

Valuables:

Deer (+96d), job (+17d), Gambling (-10d)

Equipment:

Ditched the Tirageyth, dark blue linen cloak (83d)

Peity:

N/A

Companionship:

Your relations with Yuilina satisfy companionship requirements for this month.

Notes:

Yuilina thanks you for the cloak. In your conversations, you had mentioned that you will be continuing your travels soon so Yuilina asks you to keep in touch and look her up when you return. Eafild also says he's enjoyed your company and for you to keep in touch.

JAK

On the 15th, you say your farewells to your great uncle and move your belongings back to the Garb and Flail. You pay 60d for a week's room and board in one the inn's two private rooms (apparently Mobon resides in the other one). After spending a pleasant evening swapping stories with your friends, you retire for the night.

In the middle of the night, a messenger comes pounding on the door of the inn and, when the innkeeper lets him in, he arrives at your door to wake you up. The tragic message that he delivers is that your great uncle's mansion has burned to the ground. There was enough warning that nobody was injured but only half of his belongings were salvaged. The mansion is isolated enough that the fire was put out before it could spread to other buildings. Whatever free time you have during the following tenday is spent helping your uncle salvage what he can and transport him to one of his country manors.

On the evening of the 24th, a large man with a bushy beard approaches you and introduces himself as Josriath of Coryerdan. "I'm looking for Daarin of Crasele," he says, "and I was told by

the lady mercantylor that a young noble staying at the Garb and Flail could tell me where I can find him. I have a cargo that I'm delivering by riverboat to Kiban and what I need is a crew and some investors. My informants tell me Daarin might be able to help me with both."

42' Talbar with 34 berthen. 3 lots (8 tons/1440d/thatcher's straw, 6 tons/1260d/lamp oil, 3 tons/660d/21 casks mead)

Game Summary

Contacts:

Meda of Gedmere, Hf, armorer, Tashal

Kuvel of Charin, Hm, weaponcrafter, Tashal

Kolyn of Armel, Hm, clothier, Tashal.

Aseodor of Sethsen, Hm, weaponcrafter, Tashal

Skill Usage, Development & Training:

None at this time.

Valuables:

-60d food and lodging, plate cuirass (396d,AQ+2), plate ailettes (49d 2f,AQ+2), plate greaves (198d,AQ+2), plate vambraces (82d 2f,AQ+2), plate rerebraces (99d,AQ+2)

Equipment:

Broadsword III (173d, WQ+2, +2 edge, +2 point), sword scabbard (24d), leather gauntlets (11d), doublet (leather shirt, 94d 3f), boss gore (12d)

Piety:

None at this time.

Companionship:

Your needs for companionship are fulfilled by the same priestess of Halea.

Notes:

Meda tells you she can make kneecops for the knees (49d 2f) and coudes for the elbows (33d) but she doesn't know how to do the other areas. She can have what you've ordered finished and delivered to your uncle by the end of next month. A chain mail "skirt" would quickly fall about your knees and trip you. Most knights get a full mail habergeon (639d) and will take her an additional month to make. A small hauberk (same as habergeon plus covering the thighs) or a long hauberk (plus the knees) can be made in approximately a week more for 846d / 891d respectively.

It is easy to tell the excellent craftsmanship in your new broadsword, especially the very sharp edge and point.

Kolyn tells you that he can sell you leather gauntlets (11d) and a leather doublet (94d 3f) but he doesn't work in leather and can't guarantee their workmanship.

Your uncle doesn't deal with money directly and he is a bit concerned with his own problems now. However, he does refer you to his chamberlain who tells you the way business is done is

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that you get user notes from a local usurer that you trust and who has a good reputation in other places. Your family does their financial business in Tashal with Querene of Valain. When you go to her, she writes you out a user note for six pounds and takes 1440d. She doesn't charge a fee but she tells you there will be a fee when you cash it.

MOBON

When you break your fast on the morning of the 16th, you hear of the misfortune of Jak's great uncle, Lord Odasart. You go to offer your help as quickly as you can find directions. Jak introduces you to his great uncle and tells him of your willingness to help. Lord Odasart thanks you for being such a good friend to Jak and for your offer. He says you can help by standing watch over his belongings as they move the rest to his country estate. Mostly, however, he needs the emotional support of his family.

One of the neighbors standing nearby, overhears this conversation and proceeds to introduce himself as Maryl of Sarl, chief herald of the Enclave of the Holy Oak. He says that you have a noble character that he wished some of those born of noble birth shared. If you ever want to trace your ancestry or if you are ever granted nobility, he'd like to offer his services for a quarter less than normal.

For the rest of the week, part of your day is filled with archery lessons and part of your night is spent standing watch for Lord Odasart. At the end of the week you prepare to pay for your room and board but you find out that it has been taken care of by someone who wishes to remain anonymous.

Game Summary

Contacts:

Fugys of Odasart, Hm, Lord of Royal Weaponcrafters, Tashal.

Etes of Odasart, Hm, Odasart family herald, Tashal.

Kuvel of Charin, Hm, weaponcrafter, Tashal

Meda of Gedmere, Hf, armorer, Tashal

Kolyn of Armel, Hm, clothier, Tashal.

Huyka of Garaeka, Hm, bowyer / fletcher, Tashal.

Skill Usage, Development & Training:

Longbow OML 26

Valuables:

Tip to Innkeeper (-5d), Living expenses (-60d) paid anonymously.

Equipment:

Peity:

Visits to temples of Larani and Halea. (-20d)

Companionship:

Couple of visits to Wenden (-20d)

Notes:

Most of the nobility refuse to discuss heraldry with commoners, considering it to be a waste of time. You do, however, manage to get the information you need from Etes of Odasart, a younger cousin of Jak's and the Odasart family herald, for the price of a few drinks (6d). He tells you a search for a family tree costs 150d per month for as long as it takes to travel the country and search for it (which sometimes takes a considerable amount of time). If you become knighted and don't have a coat of arms or your family's coat of arms belongs to someone else, you can register a new coat of arms for 5000d (half paid in advance). The only place you can register a coat of arms in Kaldor is at the Enclave of the Holy Oak.

Accompanying Jak, one of the first things you determine is that he is going to the best craftsmen in town (and therefore the most expensive). At first, Kuvel doesn't allow you to handle his merchandise as you don't appear to be the type that can afford to buy it. However, when Jak buys his broadsword, Kuvel asks you some questions about the type of weapon you are looking for. He then shows you a falchion IV of exceptional quality (+1 quality, +2 point), telling you that is your optimum weight. You can have it for the bargain price of 150d. At first he's confused by your desire for a lighter shortsword since you can obviously handle one that's heavier than the one you currently have. When he hears you want to use it in your secondary hand, he understands and shows you a shortsword II of such balance that it will only reduce your skill, with your off hand, half as much as usual (-5 Se, +1quality, +1 edge, +1 point). The shortsword can be yours for a mere 115d. Finally, Kuvel shows you a dagger also of outstanding quality (+2 quality, +2 edge, +2 point) that costs 30d. You notice that most of the weapons here have the same sort of style and handle (probably as a promotional thing) so the falchion, shortsword and dagger appear to be a matched set. When you inquire about trade in value, Kuvel's smile falters for a brief moment. He informs you he only deals in quality merchandise of his own making and doesn't deal in used goods. He demeanor brightens again as he tells you, if you buy all three, he'll arrange to have the scabbards you want free of charge.

Meda says that what your looking for is a hauberk. For a person of your size he can make one of scale for 621d in a month or in ring for 435d in half that time.

Kolyn tells you a brown leather doublet with green trim will cost 113d and take 3 days to make. Green hose would be 40d and 1 day. Calf boots to match the doublet would be 42d and 1 day. A belt and decorated dagger sheath would be 44d and 1 day. These can be worked at the same time so they can all be ready in 3 days.

Huyka and Alegur advise you that you could easily pull an 80 pound bow. These normally cost 72d but with the trade-in of your old bow you can have it for 54d.

[Considering the amount of money you have left, when you make any of the above purchases, let me know if it comes from the 140d that you got from the sale of the weapons or from the 2 gold crowns. As to sleeping with a dagger, if you have it under your pillow there won't be a penalty but strapped to your waist you'll need more sleep to get the same value. This won't be a problem until your recovering from fatigue or healing wounds but I figured I should mention it now and not surprise you later.]

Standing watch on a temporary basis in a fixed location does not get you any extra privileges. The situation might be different if you permanently worked for nobility and/or if your job included bodyguard duties.

After several visits to Wenden you start to get to know her better. The impression that you get is that she is very attractive, very skilled in bed and very dim witted. She's not the most honest person in the world but she's not totally corrupt either. Mostly she doesn't do anything dishonest because it doesn't occur to her and she's not smart enough to get away with it.

The priest of Larani tells you that their purpose is to uphold the principles of feudalism and chivalry. Worshipers traditionally came from the nobility but more-and-more heralds, ostlers, weaponcrafters, yeomen and other free warriors are coming to the true faith. Larani teaches that Halea weakens our resolve and saps our strength. We must not allow the pleasures of this world to distract us when the battle is on.

The priestess of Halea tells you that truth and insight can only be found in the senses and the emotions. Knowledge can mislead us and the only true perception of the world comes from the feelings within. Larani teaches loyalty and honor and this is fine if your opponent follows the same rules but how many do so in the heat of battle. Moral dilemmas and mindless loyalty serves your master but will not save your soul.

24-NÚZYÆL-720 TR (FIFTH WATCH)

WARM SW: 1	
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Josriath of Coryerdan sends a messenger to the Garb and Flail asking your company to join him at the Seaman and Demon Tavern to negotiate your passage to Kiban. The messenger leads you down a long dark alley near Halea Square and you arrive at the tavern. Along the way, you hear muted music and smell various perfumes from the brothels and gambling halls along either side of the alley. Several prostitutes make indecent proposals and criers tell you how their gambling hall is the best in town. The Seaman and Demon Tavern appears to be frequented mostly by rivermen and sailors. The interior is decorated with nets, seashells, and various ship parts (although Tashal is a long way from the sea).

Josriath greets you, buys the first round of drinks (the specialty drink here is a potent minty drink called Metheglin) and proceeds to explain the position he is in. The seaman's guild in Tashal is very small and most of the ships are headed north so he is in a bit of a bind to find a crew to Kiban. He is already obligated to travel to Kiban on the first of the month so he is considering hiring unguided and unskilled seamen. The positions he can offer you, and the normal associated pay, are:

- a) Marine lieutenant (Jak - 2d per diem and two liberty chests).
- b) Marine (Mobon and/or Alegur - 1d per diem and one liberty chest).
- c) Supercargo (Daarin - 7 shares and 4 liberty chests).
- d) Deckhand (any, that just want to learn shiphandling skills to join the guild - 2f per diem).

If you don't want a working passage, steerage will cost 5d plus 1d per day, a shared cabin costs 20d plus 2d per day and a private cabin costs 80d plus 8d per day. However, there is only one cabin available with four berths. All of this is negotiable, as is your patronage in buying part of the cargo. Currently, he has five more tuns of cargo space available.

After briefly answering any of your questions and letting you know where you can contact him, he buys another round of drinks and leaves you to discuss among yourselves what positions you want to take and your positions relative to each other. [Since you are no longer working directly for Lady Harabor, you'll need to decide who works for whom and for what rate of pay.] He'll need your answer by tomorrow evening since he plans to leave on the first to arrive in Kiban by the Peoni Restoration Festival on the fourth.

LET'S YOU AND HE FIGHT

Shortly after Josriath leaves, a tall, gaunt man, with aquiline features and a deep scar along his left cheek, saunters into the tavern. As he walks across the common room, the dim lights of the candles shine dully on his black leather clothing. Many of the patrons flinch visibly as he passes and they decide to call it an evening. He demands a bottle of brandy from the landlord and throws a handful of silver coins onto the bar. He then walks over to a table in the corner of the room, whose occupants rapidly vacate it.

Shortly after this dramatic entrance, a couple of young nobles, and their four bodyguards, enter the tavern. "I saay chaps! What a quaint establishment!" they giggle to each other in high-pitched, aristocratic tones. One of them swaggers over to the bar and says, "Two of your finest beverages, landlord."

The two nobles are both already drunk and giggle a lot. They are generally obnoxious and insulting to all in the tavern, calling them "filthy commoners" and "smelly oicks". Before long, they start a drinking competition, which involves gulping down pints of ale and then throwing it up over anyone in the immediate vicinity. Unfortunately, this just happens to be Jak. Both young nobles think this is great fun, and the other one aims a bellyful of beer over Mobon.

Everyone at your table immediately stands and Jak's face shows an ice cold, murderous rage. "So, you have vomited on the colors of House Odasart, have you? I am Jak of Odasart, you foul cur, scion of Odasart and great nephew of Fugys of Odasart." Jak darts his eyes over the bodyguards, his frown deepens even further, "Don't you dare raise your hands to me, you base louts, or I'll have the hides whipped off you. This is a matter for nobles."

Looking back at the dribbling fools, Jak says icily "I demand satisfaction, only blood can wash your filth off me, prepare yourself."

Other than the sound of the rain outside, the room is suddenly deathly quiet. The two nobles turn pale and appear to sober up a bit as they step behind the protection of their bodyguards. In a dry and rasping voice, the man in black says, "Gentlemen, none of you does honor to your houses by engaging in a barroom brawl. If you'll accept a peaceful solution, I'm sure these young men will agree to a fine of two crowns each to pay for a new

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outfit and to compensate for any insult. If violence is the only answer, behave in the manner of your rank and arrange for a proper duel, in Kald Square, supervised by the nobility. If you continue here, then rank is not an issue and someone is very likely to get hurt.”

Daarin steps forward and gently touches Jak’s elbow, “Master Jak... If I might...”

After a moment’s hesitation, Daarin turns to the man in black, “Sir – your words are wise and sensible. I am sure that the arrangements you suggest would be preferable to any unpleasantness.”

Trembling with anger, Jak darts an angry glance at Daarin, seemingly wanting something to trigger his emotions into a physical release. The dark stranger’s and Daarin’s sensible words calm Jak and he releases his pent up breath and nods briefly.

“Yes, it is well said, I thank you stranger as I have no desire to break the King’s peace and a killing here would be even less honor than this sordid event.”

Jak turns his gaze back to the fool who threw up on him, “I give you the chance to live, assuage my anger to the best of your ability, or meet me outside the river gate at sunrise and die with sword in hand – there are no alternatives. The fine mentioned is sufficient to abate my ire, but a humble apology must be tendered along with it.”

Jak pauses, and then says, “A ‘public’ apology...”

The stranger collects two gold crowns from each of the nobles and hands them to Jak, “I suggest the public apology should be tomorrow at midday in Kald Square before the magistrates. I’ll escort these men to their home to ensure they have no changes of mind.” With that the guards, nobles and the stranger all file out of the tavern.

When things settle down, Mobon asks the bartender and the barmaid for more information about the people that have just left. The bartender asks an unreasonable amount for such information but the barmaid speaks with Mobon quietly suggesting she could tell him for 100d.

“Done,” says Mobon. Sizing her up, he adds, “I will have to get the money, as I do not carry that sort of cash around with me. It will not take long. Perhaps you know a place where we could meet and discuss the matter...privately?”

She replies, “I’m allowed to ‘entertain’ customers privately in my room. When you return, pay the bartender 2d and ask for Eysea.”

When Mobon returns and they go to Eysea’s room, she says, “I hope you have more in mind than information because otherwise the silence may get the bartender suspicious.”

At the proper time, Eysea tells Mobon that the people that caused the ruckus have done that sort of thing several times before. The nobles are from one of the country manors nearby and come to town for their vicious fun. They hire some bodyguards and hire Klol (the man in black). Then they come here and insult commoners until they’re ready to fight. Klol takes over and beats the commoners senseless. The bodyguards are instructed not to interfere except to protect the nobles. Until now, it has been safe for the nobles because the commoners

were afraid of the repercussions of attacking nobility. Klol is certainly a mercenary and, she suspects, he may also be an assassin.

25-NÚZYÆL-720 TR (THIRD WATCH)

WARM SW: 1	
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When you awake, there is a message from Josriath. He has hired his crew and they will have the ship loaded by the 29th so they can have their normal day off on Yaelmor. Those of you who have taken positions as marines should report to the ship early on Yaelmor with your belongings and whatever you want to put into your liberty chests. You will guard the ship that night and we’ll leave early the next day. He still needs a decision from Daarin regarding whether he wants to be crew or passenger.

Your group arrives at Kald Square by the middle of the third watch.

25-NÚZYÆL-720 TR (FOURTH WATCH)

COOL SW: 2	
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You watch as a couple of the aldermen hold court and try various cases. By the end of the fourth watch, the aldermen finish all of their cases but neither the nobles, their guards nor the stranger in black shows up.

28-NÚZYÆL-720 TR

[Mobon]

At the temple, you are able to learn very little in just the one day. Due to your large donation, the corthina (Mistress of acolytes) says she’ll have some introductory material copied and delivered to the ship by late on the 29th or early on the 30th. However, they seldom write things down as the sensual things that give meaning to life are always changing. The priestess that “prays” with you is skillful but with your mind on other things, you don’t appear to give her any pleasure.

[Jak]

During the last couple of days, you learn a lot about the worship of Larani and you feel a sense of comfort from providing the small service of returning the holy water.

[Alegur]

The morning of the 28th is snowy and cold but by the start of the 3rd watch the snow stops and it gets warmer. The warm air passing over the cold ground causes a heavy ground fog to set in. Yuilina says she’d be happy to stroll with you but she doesn’t think a picnic in this weather is a good idea. As an alternative, she suggests going to the open-air theatre outside the Ternua gate. This is a holy day for Peoni so the theatre group is performing this evening.

By the start of the 5th watch the fog lifts and the sky clears. The theatre group is performing the Tragedy of Prince Brant. Being from Olokand, you know the legend quite well but this is the first time you’ve seen a theatre group perform. Dividing your attentions between Yuilina and the play you thoroughly enjoy your evening.

After the play, you escort Yuilina and her aunt back to their home. She invites you into the inn to have a mulled cider to take the chill off (you can tell she is reluctant to have the evening end). She shows you a carved wooden spoon that an older

cousin gave her. (He carved it while serving as a river sailor.) Since you are leaving tomorrow, she wants you to take it with you to remember her by. She also believes the dragon will protect you until you return.

As you return to the Garb and Flail, you notice the horizon brightening with the dawn. With one thing and another, the whole night has gone by.

29-NÚZYÆL-720 TR

By evening, each of you has moved your gear on board the ship. Since the ship is moored outside the city walls and you job is now to protect it, you are relieved to be able to arm yourselves to the teeth for the first time in weeks.

Josriath greets you all and reminds you that there is only one four-person cabin available. A young girl, whose passage has already been paid for, will take one of the births. Since Daarin hasn't taken a job as deckhand, supercargo or marine, Josriath is assuming Daarin is going to be a paying passenger and will take a second birth. Jak, being of the gentry, gets a third birth. That leaves one birth for Alegur or Mobon. The other will have to stow his gear among the cargo topside with the rest of the crew. If Daarin or the young girl doesn't show up by the time that we weigh anchor, the marines have first choice of any empty births.

30-NÚZYÆL-720 TR (YAELMOR, FIFTH WATCH)

COLD	
NW: 2	

After your break your fast and the rest of the crew leaves for their last day of liberty, you draw lots to determine the watch schedule. Alegur stands the 2nd and 5th watches, Jak stands the 3rd and 6th watches and Mobon stands the 4th and 1st watches. The watches are uneventful and rather boring until nightfall at the end of the 5th watch. Just as Jak is preparing to relieve Alegur, an arrow, with a flaming rag wrapped around it, flies out of the darkness and lands solidly in one of the barrels on deck.

“What the ...?”, Jak goggles at the flaming arrow momentarily, then leaps towards it to wrench it out of the barrel and fling it over the side into the river. “TO ARMS! TO ARMS! ‘WARE ARCHERS!”, he bellows.

Below decks, Mobon hears Jak’s cry, springs to his feet and quickly dons his armor, weapons, arrows and arrow bag. [OOC: I calculated how long this takes and it requires two minutes for the armor and another minute for all the weapons. Each combat turn in Harn is ten seconds so this is eighteen combat rounds.]

Alegur sees that Jak has taken care of the fire and has raised the hue-and-cry so he prepares to return fire to the assailant. Seeing a Bowman near a small brazier, Alegur looses his arrow and the Bowman immediately goes to the ground. Alegur sees a second Bowman just as he looses a flaming arrow, which misses the ship completely to fall in the river. Before Alegur can fire a second arrow, the Bowman also goes to the ground.

Suddenly, all is quiet except for Mobon rushing on deck, weapons in hand, to find a defensible position at the ship’s rail.

Jak, suddenly realizing that the gentle rocking of the ship is not caused by being under way, swears foully, leaps to his feet, draws his sword and dashes down the gangplank. Using his buckler to guard his vitals and using all the available cover, he

heads towards the hiding place of the Bowman. Half way to his destination, Jak kneels behind some stout cover and calls out, “Mobon, advance to here! Alegur, feather any swine that shows himself!”

“Damn!”, Mobon mutters, dropping bow and arrow and scooping up his shield as he too bolts for the gangway. Settling his shield on this arm, he draws his falchion and descends the plank.

When he reaches the dock, he follows Jak’s path moving in a zig-zag pattern and covering himself with his shield. Upon reaching Jak, Mobon drops to one knee beside him, grounding his shield in the best position best suited to cover them both.

“Sir...”, he says, panting slightly from a combination of exertion and excitement, “I think Alegur hit one. There’s a brazier over there with what looks like a body next to it.” He gestures with his falchion to indicate the location.

“You have keen eyes Mobon, as does Alegur it seems! I shall investigate this fallen foeman, will you come and watch my back? I like not this hunting about in the dark.”

While Alegur watches over his companions, Jak runs towards the brazier in a hunched scramble, expecting an arrow to fly out of the darkness at any moment. Mobon follows about three feet behind to allow himself freedom to maneuver. Once they arrive at the brazier, Mobon crouches close trying to cover Jak with his shield. Jak cautiously prods the fallen archer to see if he’s still alive. Getting no response, he drags the body back to cover while Mobon provides cover.

Once more in relative safety, Jak notices the body has the arrow of a longbow in his chest and the bolt of a crossbow in his back. The only other noticeable items are that the palm of the left hand has been painted yellow and the man hasn’t bathed in some time. While Jak examines the first body, Mobon notices a second body, also with a crossbow bolt in his back and a palm painted yellow.

With the exception of the crackling of the fire in the brazier, the night remains deathly quiet.

“It seems we have an unknown benefactor, one that prefers an arbalest...” Jak’s voice trails off as he grabs the dead man’s weapons and anything else of value. “I think these curs are best given to the river, Mobon. There’ll be less interest in our mission if we dispose of them now. Perhaps Daarin or Alegur can shed some light on their yellow hands.”

[4d, 2 quarterstaff IV, dagger, keltan, glaive VIII, shortbow 60, longbow 60, 21 arrows (10 with incendiary heads, 2 with whistling heads and 9 normal heads)]

“Far more likely that he employed these men to attack us, then silenced them treacherously from behind to prevent idle gossip,” Mobon replies, while he assists Jak in disposing of the bodies, “Remember, we have quite recently crossed paths with a known criminal and assassin.” Mobon reassures himself that the hands are merely painted yellow and don’t have any other mystic symbols on them.

Jak removes Alegur’s arrow and unceremoniously dumps the body into the river, allowing the current to roll it away. Mobon

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does the same with the other body, cautiously watching out for the mystery crossbowman.

Carrying the captured bows, Jak rejoins Mobon. "Let us return to the barge. No sleep for us tonight it seems."

Mobon, eyes darting about the darkened docks, follows Jak back to the ship.

1-PEÓNU-720 TR (SECOND WATCH)

WARM
SW: 2



By the middle of the second watch, all of the crew are aboard and casting off the dock lines. When the ship is underway and you are preparing to get some rest after the long night, you overhear some of the sailors talking about two nobleman that were found murdered yesterday afternoon. Apparently, the town-watch are looking for a nobleman, a merchant and their two bodyguards, for questioning since they were seen arguing with the nobles in a tavern some days ago.

"Ho, friends!", Mobon says, out of earshot of the ship's crew, "It seems we'll have a bit of explaining to do when we return. It seems to me that our antagonists ran amiss of their friend Klol. Perhaps he took offense at their choice in 'victims', heh?"

Mobon chuckles slightly, then becomes serious again. "Still, it is not good to have such questions bandied about in our wake. Might lead to our acquiring a bad reputation. Let us hope we can conclude our present business quickly so we can return and clear matters up."

"The matter of the 'nobles' who were slain in town concerns me to no small degree as well, Mobon," replies Alegur. "There is a young lady in town who interests me, and I would hate for her or her family to believe me to be naught but a common ruffian or assassin."

"Frowning, Jak removes his helm and looks at the passing scenery. "This Klol may well have a penchant for crossbowery I think, perhaps we should take pains to talk to friend Klol if the situation arises. I profess to say, it pains me not to hear that those two fools met their ends so, perhaps they have puked on more than just us in the past."

Settling his helm back on, but tilting it back so he can see from under its rim, Jak continues, "I think you need worry not, friend Alegur. Your young mistress will know of your good character, and no doubt will hold fast to your faith. What perplexes me is this wearing of yellow on the hands of our unknown attackers, where they after the barge or was it us they had a grievance against? I am beginning to wonder if the items we have recovered have a bearing on this matter..."

Mobon examines the captured weapons and quickly determines that a glaive handles very differently than a staff type weapon [polearms skill]. There is no difference, however, between the skill of using a longbow and a shortbow. After discussing this with Alegur (since there is no room on the rocking ship to test the weapons), Mobon learns the only difference between longbows and shortbows is their available draw weights. His eighty-pound longbow is more accurate at longer distances than the captured sixty-pound shortbow.

Walking over the rocking deck to the two men at arms, Jak looks at Alegur with interest. "I think it is time I took the bow to

hand again, this naval pastime of ours makes it difficult for me to close to sword strokes with our foes, I also would appreciate your advice Alegur." Alegur works with Jak for awhile and tells him at his current skill level, the best for him is a forty-pound bow.

About this same time, the clouds burst and it starts pouring down rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning. The captain gives the command to furl the sails and man the oars. With the current swelled by the heavy rain and the oarsmen using all their effort to stay in the middle of the river, the countryside goes by in a blur. It is easy to tell the less experienced sailors by the ashen color of their face.

A color shared by Mobon, who spends much of his time at the rail, alternately feeding the fish (so to speak) and scanning the shore for signs of anyone pacing the ship from the riverbank. During his brief scans of the shore, he does notice some nobles that appear to be questioning peasants but the ship quickly passes by before he can determine anything else.

Smiling sympathetically, Jak stands alongside Mobon amidst the downpour and ensures he doesn't pitch over the side. "You have my sympathy Mobon, my brother too has the illness of the belly when a boat rocks, although by my sword arm he will turn green at the slightest pitching of a rowboat. I was born under the sign of Masara, and the water has ever been my friend. It is said that if one keeps his eye upon the horizon the illness does pass more quickly." Since the "horizon" appears to be moving as well, this advice does little to ease Mobon's discomfort.

At the start of the rain, Mobon checks with the captain to see if there is any oilcloth or similar waterproof material to wrap his bow and a few arrows in, so he can keep them on deck without getting the string and fletchings wet. Josriath provides all of the bowmen with oilcloth to wrap their bows in but tells them they must stay wrapped except for emergencies. If the bows, bowstrings or fletchings get wet, they will quickly become damaged.

Jak spends his free time fishing, his whole being intent on the aquatic hunt. It is obvious to any observer that fishing is a passion with him but it is equally obvious that he is spending this time to calm his mind and think since it is highly unlikely that he'll catch any fish in the swift current and heavy rain.

Alegur spends his time aboard observing and learning the ways of sailors, especially the helmsman and pilot.

By the end of the second watch (and much sooner than anyone expected, the ship reaches the point where the Nephen river joins the Kald river. The captain orders the ship to be brought to shore so it can navigate the turn to go upstream to Kiban. Mobon recovers enough to make sure his weapons are ready to deal with any possible trouble from shore.

Speaking to the captain, Jak says "Good Captain, will you go ashore or do you just intend to come closer to the bank? If you would land the barge my friends and I shall go forth to secure your landing place on our arrival I would think. What say you my friends?"

"No time for that now," yells the captain. "This is a complicated maneuver, my lord, so I merely ask you and you men to try to stay out of the way of the crew."

1-PEÓNU-720 TR (THIRD WATCH)

WARM SW: 2	
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Peering through the continuing rain, you notice some men with mules tied to thick ropes wrapped around trees on shore. When the ship slows enough, the captain runs a signal flag up the mast. The men on shore throw the loose end of the ropes to the ship and the crew secures them to the ship.

“Hang on,” yells the captain and the ship swings around the bend to practically stop in the on rushing current. The ropes are released and the captain throws a small bag of money to those on shore. The crew resumes their place at the oars and the ship moves up the river at a much slower pace. By the end of the third watch, the ship has only reached the town of Ternua.

1-PEÓNU-720 TR (FOURTH WATCH)

WARM SW: 2	
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During the fourth watch, the rain continues as the crew continues to row against the current. Passing the Malvern forest by the end of the fourth watch, the ship pulls into the docks at the town of Esenor. The crew is allowed to go ashore but they must be back on board by the start of the second watch tomorrow. Anyone not back by the time the ship leaves won’t get paid.

The captain leaves the duty of guarding the ship and shore leave for the marines, to Jak. He tells you that although food and drink are available, Eesenor is about half the size of Olokand so there won’t be a lot of excitement.

Watching as everyone leaves the barge, Jak raises an eyebrow at his two friends and leans on his halberd, saying “perhaps now is time to find out if the barge is the target or not, would you say? Would you two good men carry out a search of the barge and see what it is we are carrying? I will keep watch while you are engaged.”

“I’m sorry, Jak,” says Alegur, “but although you are in command of us in our duties as marines, and even though I count you as a friend, I cannot violate the trust of our employer and do as you ask. I hope you understand.”

A smile plays across Jak’s lips and he says, “Good Alegur, I would never ask you to do something against your principles and, indeed, it was not an order but a suggestion. I hope you do not mind me searching. This yellow hand business has me alarmed and I would know that our employer has no part in it. Fear not, I will not take anything. That is not my way.” Jak is absolutely serious and his voice shows no trace of condescension.

With a brief bow and a smile to Jak, Alegur says, “I fear I cannot sleep right now. Perhaps you will allow me to take your watch upon the deck, Jak, and you may then feel free to...stretch your legs with a good walk around the barge. I’ll sound off if anyone approaches the plank.” Alegur takes his post and begins to diligently watch the approaches to the boat.

“Well,” Mobon says, with a glance toward Alegur, “I for one have no problem with finding out what’s on this tub, nor do I consider it a violation of our employer’s ‘trust’. How can we suitably protect his cargo if we don’t know what it is, eh?”

Jak and Mobon proceed to examine the cargo strapped under a tarp on the deck and below decks. On deck, they find eight tun sized barrels labeled “lamp oil” and smelling of whale fat. Below decks they find many bales of straw and nestled within the straw, three tuns labeled Kass’ Nutty Mead.

The rumbling of Jak’s stomach reminds him that he and his men haven’t eaten since the broke their fast this morning and they haven’t slept much in the last two days.

“Well, sir...”, Mobon says at the conclusion of the search, there seems to be naught amiss here! I’d venture to say that we brought those troubles on our employer, not the other way round!”

Feeling the rumbling in his own stomach as well, Mobon adds, “I must admit to being assailed by both weariness and hunger. Might I suggest that we dine and then try to catch up on our sleep? We must be at our full strength for the trils ahead! If two of us rest out here on deck, fully armed, whilst the third watches to give alarm if needed, we can quickly respond if trouble threatens. What say you, sir?”

1-PEÓNU-720 TR (FIFTH WATCH)

COOL NW: 2	
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Taking turns going to the nearby inn, named the Olive Markethouse, you have an average meal of lenten stew (fish pottage), brown bread and a lackluster ale. While the meal fulfills your needs, it is not exceptional. The small inn is filled to capacity with the crew of the ship.

The rest of the night you take your watch and spend a restless night trying to sleep in your armor, crowded under the tarp next to the barrels of lamp oil.

2-PEÓNU-720 TR (SECOND WATCH)

COLD NW: 2	
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By the start of the second watch, the crew has returned and your journey continues. The thunderstorm of yesterday has been replaced with a slow, miserable freezing rain. You reach Kiban docks at the end of third watch.

The most prominent feature of Kiban is the wall being built around the town. Watching the captain paying the wharf fees, and the longshoremen unloading the ship, you briefly take the opportunity to watch the masons working on the wall. Finally, the captain thanks you and pays you as agreed.

[Jak: -1d for dinner, +4d pay; Mobon: -1d for dinner, +2d pay; Alegur: -1d for dinner, +2d pay, open seamanship skill; This concludes Act 1. Stay tuned for Act 2: Shadows over Kiban.]