

26-NÚZYÆL-720 TR (FIFTH WATCH)

Brart of Tomar, journeyman miner, arrived at the house of Crissam of Devis, mayor of Kiban, with his tools and personal belongings. The mayor, a man of average height and weight with black hair and blue eyes, looks at the baggage he is carrying and turns to the guardsman escorting Brart, "What is all this then? I invited the man to dinner, not for an extended stay."

The guardsman gives Brart an evil look but doesn't reply. He nods to the mayor and leaves. The mayor tells Brart to leave his pack and tools by the door and invites him to the dinner table.

Dinner consists of several courses including pandemain, lenten stew in a bread bowl, stewed mutton, buttered vegetables, hot mulled wine and a desert of pears in wine syrup. During the dinner, the mayor asks Brart about his family, career and plans for the future. By the time the desert arrives, the mayor appears to have gathered all he needs to know and gets down to the real reason he has invited Brart here.

"A couple of days ago, I received a letter from Lusse Harabor, the daughter of one of the five possible heirs to the throne of Kaldor, informing me that she is investigating some decidedly odd occurrences that have happened recently. A young nobleman named Jak of Odasart leads the group sent by her. I would like you to act as guide to this group and render whatever services they need. You are to report their actions back to me in private and, in return, I will pay you a stipend of 1d per day until the issue is resolved."

Brart accepts the mission saying, "I hope I'll prove myself worthy of your honor's trust. I think discretion will be important or do you want me to take the group to a formal introduction at your house or office?"

"Discretion is certainly in order," replies the mayor, "I would like to have as little visible contact with these people as possible. They are, possibly, investigating my liege lord and if my involvement becomes common knowledge, my life could be forfeit." The mayor hands him a purse with 20d, tells him the group is expected to arrive by boat and that Jak can be identified by his family crest.

The mayor continues, "I am sure the first service they will require is lodging," the mayor continues, "As you probably know, there are three inns within Kiban, The Wall Watch Inn, Silver Way Inn and The Riverman Inn. As the Riverman Inn does not have lodging and the Wall Watch Inn is filled with construction workers, you should recommend the Silver Way Inn to them. "

"The silver way inn then," says Brart, "Do you want me to report daily or regular, perhaps every fifth day?"

"Let us say every fifth day and immediately if there is something important to report", answers the mayor.

2- PEÓNU -720 TR (THIRD WATCH)

Brart is standing at the docks speaking with a journey metalsmith friend of his who graduated at the same time as he did. At the same time, Brart watches a ship that has just arrived when sees three mercenaries leaving the ship. One of the mercenaries fits the description of the nobleman Jak of Odasart that he has been told to watch for.

Brart goes to the group, faces the nobleman and says, "Gentlemen, you happen to be Jak of Odasart and his attendants? I'm Brart of Tomar. Our mayor, Crissam of Devis, asked me to offer you my help, guide you around Kiban and render whatever service you might need."

Smiling, Jak nods and says, "I thank you, good Brart. May I introduce my comrades in arms, Mobon of Falen and Alegur of Thatain? Firstly, good Brart, could you take us to a decent inn!"

Looking over the new arrival with an appraising eye, Mobon smiles as well and extends his right hand. "I'll second that! Mobon of Falen...a pleasure."

"Is there any luggage I might help you to carry? Otherwise please follow me to the Silver Way Inn."

As they walk along, Jak says, "Thank you Brart, now why would your good Mayor find it in his interests to supply your good self to guide our unimportant selves?" Jak asks this kindly, not meaning any affront, with a slight smile. "Tell me about yourself Brart, what is your tale!"

"He received a letter from a noble family that asked for his help," Brart replies, "Our mayor is a very busy man, so he asked me to help you. I think the mayor asked me because he knows me from my former work for the city and knew that I'm currently unemployed. I have just become a journeyman after spending the last time of my miner apprenticeship helping to build this city's sewer system. I learned many things about more traditional mining before, but now it's time to make new experiences. I haven't exactly decided where to go yet, and my master, who will surely give me his advice, is away for a while."

2-PEÓNU-720 TR (FOURTH WATCH)

COLD, CLOUDY, LIGHT SNOW, BREEZE FROM THE NORTH.

Brart, your new guide, shows you the way to the Silver Way Inn, which he tells you is the best inn in Kiban. The innkeeper, a man that appears so average in every way that he is quite forgettable, introduces himself as Illion of Bydarf. When you ask about lodging, he tells you he only has a single four-person room vacant due to the upcoming fair. All four beds are available so you can have as many of them as you want at 12d each (obviously, a "special" price for the fair) and this price includes meals.

Mobon says, "Good sir, my employer, Jak of Odasart, has bidden me to finalize arrangements for our lodgings. We should like very much to take the four-person room. Also, would you be able to provide us with a stout storeroom or other secure place in which to place some of our additional equipment, such as my bow and shield? And finally, is it possible to order a tub of warm water of a morning for bathing purposes. We've had a wearisome journey to be sure and, while I know not when opportunity will present itself, I for one would favor a bath, which would, I'm sure, benefit my companions as well!"

The Innkeeper interrupts his tale of his experiences with the Khuzdul to answer Mobon. Some of his audience appears utterly fascinated and wait for him to continue. Others appear to be bored with hearing the same tale so many times and use the interruption to politely leave. "Yes sir," the innkeeper replies, "that will be 12d per bed, four beds, for a tenday coming to 480d. However, if you pay in advance, I will discount the

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amount to 400d. This is the best inn in the shire and it was built by the Khuzdul so all of the rooms have a stout lock on them and they are quite secure. I only ask that you allow the maid an hour to clean the room at dawn each day. Most of our customers that request a bath, have it prepared when they arrive of an evening just before dinner is served. If that is acceptable to you, I'll have baths prepared for you in your room this evening. Of course, we will have to have access to your room to prepare your baths as well."

"That sounds most acceptable, friend." Mobon says, "Let me but inspect the room and then, assuming all is well, we shall finalize our arrangement." While Mobon examines the room and the innkeeper waits at the door, he turns away from the innkeeper to extract the money from his neck bag and transfer it to his purse. He then returns and pays the innkeeper the 400d, leaving the remaining cash in his purse.

The inn is very clean, the rushes on the floor of the common room have been recently changed and the beds consist of rag stuffed mattresses on rope frames. A maid even brings a pitcher of water, towels and a washbowl so you can freshen up for dinner. For dinner, you have Nuttye (spiced chestnut cream), Rota (barley fruit soup), parsley bread, Blankmangere (chicken with cumin and cream), Lemonwhy (lemon rice with almonds), and Damson (plum and currant tart).

3- PEÓNU -720 TR

THE WEATHER WARMS UP AND THE SNOW ALL MELTS.

Throughout the day, Brart shows the visitors about the town paying special attention to point out the entrances to the sewers, the town wall and the new construction at the docks. Early in the morning at Jak's request, Brart guides the group to a clothier named Adda of Scintle. Jak describes his coat of arms and Adda says she can have three linen surcoats ready by sunset for 51d each.

Upon leaving the clothier, several guardsmen stop you and ask the purpose of your visit to Kiban and your purpose in carrying so many weapons. When Jak explains to the guardsmen that Mobon and Alegur are in his employ, the captain of the guard [Brart: same one that brought you to the mayor] says you will be allowed to carry one primary weapon and one secondary weapon or shield. Any more than that and your "private army" will need to discuss the matter with the Earl after a small wait in the dungeon until the Earl is available.

4- PEÓNU -720 TR (SECOND WATCH)

Cyben leaves the Temple of Peoni early, immediately after her morning meditation and devotions. As she works her way through the streets to the Silver Way Inn, she notes approvingly that even this early the streets are already abustle with folk preparing for the festival. At the doorway to the inn she pauses and visibly draws and releases a deep breath. She straightens up, smoothes her tunic, sets her jaw and pulls open the inn door.

Once inside, she glances quickly around the room before making her way to the girl tending the fire. As she does, anyone in the inn's common room to break fast has the opportunity to observe her. She is a young woman of about average height, with slightly stocky legs, broad hips and a somewhat heavy, fleshy body. She has a broad, round face with long brown hair, pulled back this morning into a ponytail and tied with a simple leather thong. She has a high forehead, gray eyes (which sparkle with

intelligent interest in the world around her) widely separated by a generous nose and a wide, mobile mouth, which looks like it would be quick to smile or laugh. The beginnings of a second chin give further evidence that she does not fear the plate or cup. She is dressed in a simple overtunic and hose of sturdy woolen cloth dyed the bright green instantly recognizable as the springtime color of Peoni's priesthood. She also has a pair of stout leather shoes, seemingly brand new.

She speaks briefly to the maid by the fire, who points over her shoulder at a table near the back. She makes her way there, moving cautiously in the crowded room. When she reaches Jak's table she blinks somewhat owlishly at him and squints a bit before drawing herself up, curtsying deeply and saying "My lord, do I have the honor of addressing Jak of Odasart, brave knight and noble traveler?" in beautifully accented Harnic. Of course, the Harnic may be perfect, but her voice is surprising. Rather than the mellifluous tones you are used to hearing from Peonian clergy, her voice has a husky, almost scratchy quality that must be hard to blend smoothly into the temple choir.

After being assured that she has found the right man, Cyben continues, "Greetings, good sir, I am Cyben of Kyfa, Ebasethe of the Temple of Peoni. It is a great honor to make your acquaintance."

She curtsies again before continuing, "My lord, as you are no doubt aware, today is the beginning of the great Restoration Festival here in Kiban. On this day wardens of the temple will be among the crowd collecting such fees and alms, as may be meet. It is my great privilege and duty to collect those monies from the wardens at the end of the day and bring them back to the temple. Festival days, even such sacred and precious ones as this day, are wont, I fear, to bring out some scoundrels as well as the many who wish genuinely to celebrate the day, the season and the Goddess' blessings. It has always been our way at the temple to rely about the stout hearts and bright blades of local gentlemen of high devotion to great Larani to ensure that a simple Ebasethe such as I can safely transport the silver to the temple. This year we find that the celebrations are so extensive and the needs of the people are so great that there are not enough pure-hearted defenders of the peace to ensure the safety of all. I have been told that you are such a man and, while not of Kiban and certainly not obligated to help us in any way, you might be one with the necessary generosity of spirit to offer us this succor. What say you, good sir?"

As she finishes, she takes a deep breath and gazes earnestly at Jak. Clearly she is quite nervous but determined to see this through.

Smiling, Jak rises to his feet and nods a polite bow. "Cyben of Kyfa, I thank you for your trust in my name, but I must insist that I am not a knight or even yet a squire! Still, if you would accept the sword of a mere man-at-arms, I would be more than glad to render what assistance to you that I can. Please, sit with us and join us in our merrymaking, tonight we greet good Brart of Tomar whom the worshipful Mayor has seen fit to guide our steps in this wondrous city and I would be honored if you would partake in the lady's bounty with us."

Leaning in a relaxed pose at the bench, Jak is an average sized, stocky man with long brownish blonde hair in unruly curls that just brush his shoulders, too long for a sensible soldier by today's

standards. He eats fastidiously, using his spoon and knife whenever possible and never dipping his fingers past the first knuckle, he never speaks with his mouth full or spits over the table. His clothing is dyed parti-colored in the Odasart heraldic colors, but he has no 'metals' (white or yellow) showing which to another soldier would betray his lack of knightly status. Jak is slightly more heavily armed than would normally be warranted, but not enough to excite comment, especially for someone with two obviously competent men-at-arms seated with him . . .

Mobon reacts instantly to Jak's movement, rising to his feet as well. When Jak is finished speaking, he nods as well and mutters, "Mobon of Falen, at your service, ma'am." before resuming his seat.

Mobon is a man of average appearance, neither particularly attractive nor especially homely. He has a dark complexion, revealing his Jarin ancestry to those familiar with that race. He is a touch over six feet in height, well muscled but not bulky. His medium frame is more lean and wiry, suggesting a balance of speed and strength. His brown hair is cropped short in a somewhat indifferent manner, with little apparent thought to style. He appears to be in his late teens or early twenties, but has old eyes of a deep, brown...almost black. His face and forearms show a number of tiny cuts and burn scars, barely noticeable unless one looks closely, and his hands are heavily callused, denoting a youth of hard labor. He wears a quilted tunic with leather leggings, both so heavily patched and so often washed that the original colors are indistinguishable. Both are clean however, and the repairs are neat and professional. The left arm of the tunic shows considerable wear, indicating to a seasoned fighter the frequent use of a shield, though here in the town, he bears none. These basic garments are accessorized with kurbal greaves & ailettes and ringmail half-helm sits on the floor beneath his chair. He too is unusually well armed, his waist girded by a belt bearing a finely made falchion at his left hip, balanced on the right by an extremely large, heavy dagger, nearly the dimensions of a shortsword. Both weapons have a common hilt design, indicating a matched set and they appear new.

Grinning in evident relief, Cyben says, "Thank you, good sirs, I am most grateful!" She sits down easily, almost unconsciously, as she plucks at her tunic and confides, "My green is newly granted and this is perhaps the last of my services to a temple which has been home and teacher to me for nearly eight years now. After the Festival, it is my honor to serve the Lady as an itinerant for a time, wandering the roads and trails of Kaldor in search of those needing Her aid and blessing."

She then falls silent for a moment, her attention diverted by a particularly gooey looking sticky bun. She demolishes it with evident gusto before flashing another smile and asking, "And what brings you good sirs to Kiban at this joyous time?"

Meanwhile...

Jarek had been skulking about outside the Silver Way Inn ever since first light, hoping to catch a glimpse of the nobleman who - rumors insisted - was staying there. He would have gone inside to spy, but the proprietor of the place was a rather bullish fellow

who did not appreciate Jarek's little jokes as much as some of the other merchants did.

Those glancing at his pacing form saw a good-sized boy -- around 5' 8" -- in his early to mid-teenage years. His lanky form knotted with pre-pubescent muscle, he seems almost like a coil ready to spring. He wears the clothing of a beggar, shredded and muddied with use. On a quick look, some might confuse him for a girl: his pretty, angelic face and longish, straight black hair seemed quite odd for a street urchin such as he obviously was. In his belt was tucked a butcher's blade, which he wore proudly. Adorned with bits of metal and bone, it seems now almost tribal in its appearance, and is quite obviously old.

The morning was growing late, and he was growing hungry, when the boy saw a sight that made his blood run hot: Cyben, his sister, entered the inn. An odd mixture of emotion swelled up in his breast: joy, love, anger, hurt... all felt in a moment. What was she doing there? Her place was at that ridiculous temple of hers, not in the streets. His legs moved faster than his mind, and in an instant, he had followed her inside, making certain that she did not see him.

He watched as she approached some men sitting at a table and gave her speech... she, too, had been seeking the nobleman! But what now? He could not approach him while she was around. He would simply have to watch and wait, and hope that he was not spotted.

And from another point of view...

The morning had begun like any other, but somehow the air felt different as young Kaden of Bassill began what had become a routine now that she was a journeyman and no longer beholden to the apothecary under which she'd worked for so long. She whistled as she filled her lungs with sweet air, looking forward to a day spent scouring the heather and gorse far outside of town. Shouldering her pack and a crude walking stick she'd obviously hewn that day, she strolled along Kiban's streets as she said cheery hellos to friends and strangers alike.

She planned on spending only a few more days inside Kiban, where she'd grown up -- just long enough to celebrate the festival, she thought with a smile -- before she set off for parts unknown in search of knowledge and exotic herbs and plants.

Passersby saw Kaden as a young woman of average height and frame, her simple dress hiding lithe muscles used to physical activity. Her shoulder-length brown hair was windblown, but somehow it looked right that way, framing gentle brown eyes that twinkled with a mischievous light. She moved easily and with confidence, obviously content with the world and her place in it. Her skin was slightly darker than some, although not terribly so -- perhaps the result of some Jarin blood. Slipped into her belt was a simple kitchen knife that nevertheless looked quite sharp.

As she passed close to the Silver Way Inn, contemplating far-away taverns and minstrels, she noted a roundish woman approaching the door to go inside. At first, she thought nothing of it, but something in her memory made her turn again to look. She stood there for several long seconds, trying to figure out what exactly her brain was telling her, until it hit her all at once: That looked like Cyben! A little stouter, perhaps, and a tad

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older.... but she was wearing the robes of Peoni, where Cyben had studied for the past few years. No, it HAD to be her! Kaden's curiosity demanded a better look.

Approaching the door, Kaden opened it to see the woman she thought was Cyben with her back to her, beginning to speak with a young nobleman and his table full of retainers. She inched along the side of the inn so she could get a better look at her face, hearing the entire discussion in the process. "By God, that's her!" she thought with growing glee and anticipation at seeing her childhood friend again. It was all she could do not to bowl her over with a hug.

She hopped back and forth from foot to foot, trying to decide what to do. She couldn't just barge up to a noble's table without a damn good reason. So when she saw Cyben sit down to help herself to a sweet, she tried to catch her attention. She jumped up and down in the corner opposite the young priestess, frantically waving her hands and hoping her old friend would see her.

Just after posing her question to Jak, Cyben squints across the room and says worriedly "Is that person alright? He seems to be leaping about quite frantically!"

She takes several steps in that direction and calls out, "I say, are you alright?"

After several more steps she blinks owlishly a couple of times and says, "Kaden? Kaden of Bassill is that you? By Her grace, it *is* you!"

She runs the last few steps and throws her arms around Kaden, giving her a big bear hug while babbling questions about how she has been and what she has been doing.

Kaden, overjoyed to see her friend, hugs her right back. She responds immediately to her questions, and between the two of them, their reunion creates quite a cacophony. "What about you? You smart old thing! Look at you in your robes!! How wonderful!" she says all the while tugging on Cyben's green cloth.

As Cyben is distracted from her question to Jak about his doings in Kiban, Jak sighs a little sigh of relief and shoots Mobon a questioning look, raising his eyebrows as he does so. Looking over to where the happy squealing is taking place, Jak feels his spirits lift and can't help but smile openly as Cyben returns with her friend Kaden.

Cyben takes Kaden's arm and leads her back to the table. "Good Sir Jak of Odasart and Mobon of Falen, this is my old friend Kaden of Bassill, who is now, I believe, a journeyman of the Apothecaries Guild."

Grimacing at being referred to as 'Sir', Jak grins and starts to answer...

As she lets herself be led back to the table where all the company is gathered, the attractive young apothecary has what appears to be a permanent smile plastered to her face. "Aye, a journeyman apothecary now. I can either cure you or kill you!" She says this to the group, but mostly it's meant for her friend, and she titters at her own joke.

Quickly, though, she seems to remember her manners. "Good sirs, it is my pleasure. Anyone who is a friend of Cyben's is a friend of mine." She curtseys low, and her smile fairly sparkles.

Her happiness is the infectious kind, purely of a heart glad to be reunited.

"Thank you, Kaden of Bassil. Good Cyben has graciously asked our aid in collecting tithes whilst the festival runs, and chivalry demands that we leap into the fray! Or fete, as it were." Jak hops up amidst the general making of room and smiles "Please, sit and join us in our meal, I think a toast to new friendships and old friendships renewed is in order. Once again I shall introduce goodman Alegur of Thatain, a yeoman archer from our home of Meselyneshire, as is Mobon of Falen whom you see returning. Here also is goodman Brart of Tomar, an accomplished miner and our gracious guide whilst in the city, sent to us by no less the personage of the mayor himself." Jak beckons to the potman with a smile and asks that more glasses and wine be brought to the table, and enquires if everyone has eaten, if there are still empty stomachs then Jak asks for more food as well.

Jarek watches the reunion between his sister and another woman as he endeavors to stay hidden. The other's woman's face seems somehow familiar, a half-remembered memory from his childhood. How was it that they had all been brought together at this hour on this day? It was an act of fate... though whether it was for good or for ill was still impossible to say.

The nobleman and his companions seemed less impressive than Jarek had hoped. They looked like rather plain men -- no doubt strong and well armed -- but there was no sparkle of godhood in them, no sign of greatness. Perhaps this had been a mistake, and he was considering making a hasty exit before his sister spotted him amongst the crowd. Even after all these years, she could probably recognize him.

The mere smell of food is causing the boy's mouth to water terribly. It had been long since he'd eaten a well-cooked meal, and the sight of the sweets held his gaze fixed. Subconsciously he was inching closer and closer to the table, forgetting to keep to the shadows as his stomach overwhelmed his mind.

Noting the poor beggar edging close to the table, Jak frowns "only in cities, by Larani" he mutters to himself. Waving to the waif, Jak holds out his gravy-soaked trencher "Here, umm, boy. Take this and be off with you, before the innkeeper whips you."

Her attention drawn by Jak's sudden movement, Cyben half turns in her seat to see what he is doing. As her gaze lights on Jarek, her eyes suddenly widen and her smile vanishes as she drops her cup with a gasp, oblivious to the clatter and damp destruction this wreaks. In tones of soft disbelief she cries, "Jarek? Jarek, honey, is that you?"

She stands up slowly, tears beginning to stream down her face. "I can't believe it! You're alive...and you're here! All this time! Where've you been? How are you? You're so tall now, honey...and so thin! Oh, where have you been? I've missed you every day!..."

She reaches out her arms to him, yearning to hold him but a little tentative, a little unsure before this wild and half-familiar creature, so like Mother yet so unlike too. She takes a step, watching his eyes for a sign of his reaction...

Suddenly rather embarrassed, Jak places the food on the table. "Umm, yes, well." He says, not quite sure what to say.

Jarek's first instinct is to run. His mind screams for his feet to move, but as usual, his heart wins out. His face knots up, and a

strange mixture of joy and pain washes over his features. Standing still as a statue, he waits for his sister to speak again, though there is so much his tongue wishes to scream, somehow he manages to bite it.

Kaden notes Jak's offer with approval -- a man with a heart. She makes a mental note to step outside when the boy leaves and speak with him. For he looks awfully familiar, and she would give him a few coins. But not in polite company.

"Yet another reunion," she thinks steadily as she watches Cyben's face turn from confusion to a mixture of joy and disbelief. "But that's Jarek? I would hardly have known under all that dirt. And all this time I thought he was still living at the castle. Poor boy."

Kaden remains silent but nods kindly at Jarek, hoping he won't bolt. Though he has the dirty looks of a beggar now, the little boy he once was well loved.

Watching the struggle in her little brother's eyes, Cyben whispers to him, as she has so many times before, "Come here, you knucklehead..." and pulls him into her arms, wrapping him in a hug that feels like it just might last forever.

Jarek returns the hug, bathing in his sister's warm embrace. He feels tears begin to stream down his face as half-forgotten memories flood back to him; for a moment, he is all-alone with Cyben, and the world grows silent and dim. Suddenly he snaps back into himself and pulls away from his sister, moving in front of the nobleman and -- not sure of the exact protocol -- drops to his knees. "Sir Knight, I am Jarek of Kyfa," he draws out the butcher's knife he carries at his side -- adorned with its bits of metal and bone -- and places it at Jak's feet. If the noble had known the kitchen's knife's history, he probably would have recognized the significance of this gesture.

"I pledge my blade to you. Please, will you take me on as a servant to defend your family's crest and uphold your name?" The boy grows silent, waiting for the answer.

Standing up, Jak looks down at Jarek and his short stature may not seem important anymore, as Jak's normally smiling face is impassive and severe. Unfortunately, the knife is an unknown to him, as is the dirty boy and he looks easily capable of demanding that the innkeeper throw him out. Long seconds pass, Jak stares at Jarek as if he's trying to see into his heart, before saying "Jarek of Tyfa, you come to me who is a representative of house Odasart and wish to enter service, this is a thing not done lightly and there are obligations and responsibilities for both parties, do you understand this? I am a man of war, you who are young will have to attend my person in the midst of battle, sleep at the door of the chamber and see to the accoutrements of war that I carry and ensure no dishonor is attached to them by neglect. I know little of you, except that you seem sincere and that your sister Cyben claims you as your own, I must know of your family to ensure that none who are dishonored or beyond the law is attached to my household. Who will vouch for you? Who can name your antecedents and their state?" The knife is still on the floor, and Jak seems not about to make this easy.

Cyben stands up as well and says proudly, "My brother is the son of Atamubain of Kyfa, good and loyal servant of the Earl of

Balim and the nephew of Obras of Kyfa, master weaponcrafter of Tashal. Our family has lived and served with honor and pride and there is not one among Clan Kyfa who would bring dishonor or shame to the house of Odasart. Jarek and I have been apart these last six years and his ways have grown strange to me, but I know his heart, and know it well. It is strong and good and loyal and his pledge is worth far more than those of many men who would be his betters!"

As she speaks, she walks slowly to Jarek's side, where she stands, her eyes flashing with love and family pride.

Jarek looks up at his sister, quite annoyed by her. She talked too much, and her speech was too long. He gazes up at Jak, still kneeling. "Which is more important, sir? The reputation of a family, or a man's word? Though you see me only as a boy, I have faced many hardships that I wager could make older men weep with shame. I wish to leave this city and donate my heart to a higher calling; would you deny me that chance?"

Jak nods, listening carefully to Cyben's recital of Jarek's antecedents and Jarek's proud answer, but his face remains impassive. "You may think me harsh, but to pledge your blade to House Odasart is no mean or lowly thing, and I must be sure in all ways before I enter into an agreement with you. It is the nature of life that to be worthy of service one must serve, I serve with all my heart and must unflinchingly take sides even be it a case of my heart's acknowledgement of my own dishonor. So too must a body page, he must follow the men-at-arms into battle and the teeth of the arrow storm that makes no distinction of prospects or age, he must endure tireless drudgery so he will know fully what he inflicts in others when he reaches higher estate, he must feel his bones break and his teeth crack under the foeman's blows because he has not stepped back from his patron's cause. All these things I must gauge with but a glance, a few words and my own gut feelings."

Jak leans down and takes up the butcher's knife, and says quietly. "I think we must get you a blade more seemly than this." He hands it back to Jarek, and says, "Place your hands between mine lad."

(If Jarek does)

Jak closes his hands around Jarek's and intones solemnly, "I take you into fealty, my law shall be unto your law, I shall be your protector and your liege. You shall look to me for food and lodgings, arms and tools. Together we reflect the ordained order of life, and shall strive to uphold that which is right and fair."

"Now boy, go see the innkeeper about food and a wash, frankly, you smell."

After the solemn exchanging of vows is done and the commotion and talking related to it have died down, Kaden makes a point of saying hello to those members of the party who have yet to speak with her. It seems as if Cyben has allied herself with the group, and as she plans to enjoy the festival with her friend, she desires to learn as much about them as she reasonably can.

"Well then -- who are you strapping lot?" she said with a smile, nodding at the three of them. Kaden's Jarin ancestry mostly served to give her skin a deep glow, adding a certain exotic beauty to her appearance.

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"Err...Mobon of...umm...Falen" Mobon answers, flushing slightly, then harder as he realizes his gaff. Clearing his throat, he adds, "Err...your pardon, lady...umm...a pleasure." Beginning to redden still more, he glances around self consciously, then continues, "Err...excuse me, my lady, but I must attend to some business."

4- PEÓNU -720 TR (SECOND WATCH)

CLOUDY, COLD, 2" SNOW ON GROUND, STIFF BREEZE FROM NW.

6 AM: You hear, "Warm your cods and break your fast, mulled ale and pottage will make warmth last" and you see a food vendor at the edge of the fair grounds. He's dressed in a party colored doublet, breeches, knee boots and a large brimmed hat with a large feather in the brim. He's as bald as an egg and has a large mustache. Tending a fire with two pots over it, you see he is the required distance from the other stalls to prevent the fire from escaping. One pot has a meat pottage, which smells very good (although you are not sure you want to ask what kind of meat). The other has mulled and spiced ale. He tells you the price is a penny for a bowl of pottage and a penny for a mug of ale.

Cyben is very focused on Jarek, wanting to hear all about what his life has been like the past several years. She will hustle over to the vender to get him some pottage and ale, urging him to eat up because he "looks like a stick!"

Jarek accepts any food that Cyben is willing to buy him, and quickly eats up. He still has not forgotten his angst in seeing her, but he chooses to keep quiet for now, deciding it was something that should best be brought up in private.

Up until now, Kaden had been reluctant to say much to Jarek, sensing his disquiet with his sister and preferring to leave the two of them to talk as much as possible. She wasn't close with him when she knew Cyben before, because he was still too young -- most of her interactions with him had been watching him get shooed away for trying to tag along when they went out to the woods. Still, she had a soft spot in her heart for him, remembering the cute, smart little boy he was.

Seeing him filled with food, which he apparently didn't get enough of, did her heart good, and she attempted some small talk in the lull created by his impromptu feast.

"I recall when you were just this high," Kaden said as he ate, raising her arm to belly-level as she tried to break the ice. "And I wasn't much taller myself." Kaden smiled at him, wanting to say more but not knowing how. "It's good to see you, even if you don't remember me."

Jarek looked up at her, his eyes searching her face. "I know you," he said plainly and then returned to eating an enormous turkey leg that Cyben had bought him. A moment later, he looked back at her. "You used to live in the castle too, did you not?"

"You DO remember! Yes! Yes, I did," Kaden said, stretching her legs so that she was practically standing on her tiptoes out of excitement. "My mum is a midwife for the earl's wife, and my dad is -- was," she said, catching herself as her eyes clouded with memory -- "was the earl's jester, Galot of Bassill."

Passing the pottage vendor, Kaden decides to buy a mug of ale. Grinning to her companions, she says: "6 a.m. is an OK time to

start drinking during a festival, right?" She is just taking her first refreshing sip when....

7 AM: A fight breaks out between a couple of the vendors and some visiting farmers on the path between you and the rest of the stalls. It is a full six minutes (unless you intervene) before some guardsmen arrive to break up the fight. By that time, some of the weaker stalls are smashed and their goods are trampled in the muddy snow.

The instant she notices trouble erupting, Cyben will hurry to the area and try to separate the parties, urging them to respect the peace of this holy day and offering her help in sorting out any problems. She will physically interpose herself between combatants as much as possible and do her level best to project an image of calm authority. She will resort to summoning down Peoni's Peace only if it appears that there is a risk of people getting seriously harmed. If she recognizes any of the parties involved she will call on them by name and try to enlist their help, likewise with anyone she recognizes among the no-doubt rapidly developing crowd of onlookers.

Jarek watches Cyben rush to the aid of these stupid merchants. Jarek knows one of them, and knows he is a dangerous and troublesome man. He draws in closer to the fight, keep one hand on the handle of his knife just in case Cyben gets herself into any trouble. He might be terribly angry with her, but she is his sister nonetheless.

Kaden gapes at the sudden shouting then forces herself to stifle a laugh at the men going at it like an old married couple. She reaches over to elbow Jarek about their foolishness when she sees the two men starting to actually exchange blows. The smile fades from her face as she begins to get concerned for the other festival-goers, and checks to make sure she still has her pack with her in case anybody needs sewing up.

When she sees Cyben sticking herself right into the middle of the fray, Kaden downs the rest of her mug, rolls her eyes and trots after her friend to help make sure she doesn't get pummeled or trampled or worse.

Wading into the middle of the melee, Cyben sees a fist coming at her and instinctively dodges it. Her impassioned words cause those near her to pause a moment and she quickly performs the prayer, gestures and chant to call down Peoni's Peace. Almost everyone within 150 feet of Cyben suddenly decide they no longer have the desire to fight. The rest are so surprised that they reconsider their actions and the fight ends as quickly as it started.

4- PEÓNU -720 TR (THIRD WATCH)

PARTLY CLOUDY, COLD, WINDY FROM SOUTHWEST.

8 AM: As the group passes a pottery stand and one of the crowd pushes past Kaden, she hears a "clink" from the direction of her bag, which is odd as she thought she had wrapped all of her jars in cloth to protect them from breakage. She looks at her bag and sees a pottery jar that wasn't there before. At almost that same moment, the pottery vendor points at her and yells, "Stop! Thief!"

Eyes narrowing, Kaden looks for whoever dropped the jar into her bag, then raises her arms palms up to the vendor and says rather loudly, "NAY! Careful who you accuse, man. I just heard some base lout put this into my bag." She'll quickly give

the odd jar to the vendor and then, if she spots a likely perpetrator, will give chase vigorously.

Munching on the pottage and unable to stray to far from the vendor, mainly because he'd be technically stealing the man's mug, Jak has a minor heart attack seeing Cyben rush in where armored guards fear to tread. He's just managed to wolf down the food (-1d) and is striding back with the intention to have a quiet word with the priestess about prudence being the better part of valor when the purse situation erupts. "What in Larani's sake is going on here?!"

[JAREK]

The same scene from Jarek's point of view is quite different. He sees a young lad smoothly swipe a pot from the potter's table and just as smoothly deposit it in Kaden's bag. Moving on, he positions himself behind Mobon. As soon as everyone's attention is on the hue-and-cry, the thief cuts Mobon's purse and moves off into the crowd. The whole operation is performed so expertly, the thief is moving away before Jarek realizes what has just happened.

[ALL]

Jarek was daydreaming about living in a big castle with golden walls when he saw a man rush by, place a pot into Kaden's bag, and then proceed to cut open the purse of another of Jak's companions -- the hunter, if he wasn't mistaken. In a flash, the thief was off.

"There! There he goes!" Jarek yelled, pointing as he began to run. "He stole your money, too!" he shouted at Mobon. Jarek was running now, drawing his knife as he tried to gain on the thief and use his smaller size to his advantage, weaving in and out between the fair-goers.

Kaden made a mental note of the vendor, so she can find him again later as she ran off after Jarek, cursing under her breath.

Jarek manages to catch-up with and tackle the thief, crashing into a cattle pen and freeing the frightened cattle. As they fall to the ground, Jarek suddenly realizes that the "lad" is really a "lass". "Let gaw uv me, ee lout!" she exclaims in indignation just as Kaden arrives on the scene.

Jarek has seen her on the streets in association with others that he believes to be part of the Lia Kavair, which makes him think carefully about how he will deal with her...one of the advantages of belonging to the thieves guild is that they take care of their own. Jarek mutters the worst curse he can think of and lets go of the girl's face, "Lia Kavair," he spits. "Has the guild sunk so low that it is now full of mere purse-snatchers? And bad ones, at that! Where is the money, girl? Give it up and I think we may let you go -- otherwise we will see to it that the noble we are traveling with hears of this, and he is not as forgiving." Jarek wanted to reach for his knife and threaten her with the blade, but something held him back. His words seem hollow in his own ears, however.

At the mention of the Lia Kavair, Kaden frowned. She was unused to dealing with this sort, and the two words out of Jarek's mouth alarmed her. However, she stood her ground unmoving, still holding on to the girl's arm, her other hand resting on her belt within a few inches of her knife. As she waited to hear the

thief's response, the adventurous part of her warmed to the idea of catching a dastardly cutpurse and taking her to task, her apprehension fading into the background.

Looming up at a trot, his heavy harness jingling and weapons clanking, Jak tromps over and says, "What in the Shattered Spear's name is going on Jarek?" Looking bleakly at the girl on the ground, he says ominously "And what do we have here?"

Kaden nodded respectfully at Jak as she caught her breath a bit. "This girl apparently placed a stolen pottery jar in my pack and then ran, trying to make me look a thief. I have yet to puzzle out why she'd put something IN my pack -- I thought thieves were more concerned with taking," she said with grim humor. She glanced down at the girl briefly. "And I guess she also cut somebody's purse, though I didn't see it; thank Peoni it wasn't mine."

Jarek looks up at Jak, "My lord, this girl is a member of the Lia Kavair. I saw her put the jar in Miss Kaden's pack, and then quickly cut open the purse of your friend -- Mobon, I think was his name? She ran and I pursued her."

One of the cows takes this opportunity to crash out of the pen and kicks the thief in the hip as it goes past. This breaks her free from Jarek's and Kaden's grasp and she squeezes through the gathering crowd to make her escape. Just before she disappears, she drops Mobon's purse unnoticed to the ground.

His answer drowned out by the maddened rush of cows, Jak winces as one of the cows kicks the girl (eww, that'd *hurt!) and backs away. "Cowherd! Your brutes are loose! Quick, they're running amok!"

Another cow escapes the pen. Jarek dodges it but it knocks Kaden to the ground. As this cow charges past Mobon, he manages to grab hold of it but, having no experience with handling animals, he's not sure what to do next.

Somewhat taken aback by the confusion and the sudden appearance of the cows, Mobon does the first thing that comes to mind. Seizing the beasts horns, he attempts to pull its head toward the side he's on. His goal is to get it turning in a tight circle, possibly back toward the pen but, at the very least, not letting it get away. He is leaning across the creature's neck, from whichever side it approached, and grabbing the horns from "behind" so as not to be trampled. He also bears down on the back of its neck with his weight, in an attempt to get it to kneel or lie down. Throughout the process, he attempts to calm the animal by muttering sweet cow-nothings in it's ear: "Steady there, old girl!", "Down, Bessy!", "Oww...not the foot! Easy there!", etc. The only previous experience Mobon has had with cows is at the dinner table, where they are remarkably easy to control.

Looking around her at what seemed like a scene out of a court follies, Kaden couldn't help but laugh as she sat splayed in the dust. The thief was gone -- but she was satisfied with putting a bit of a scare into the blackguard and apparently getting Mobon's purse back. She dusted herself off and got up, still chuckling, then tried to close the fence so no more cattle could escape. Noticing the thief drop the purse, she grabs it to give back to Mobon. Once the cows are under control, Kaden goes back to

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the vendor to tell him what happened and examine the jar the thief put into her pack. And to relieve Cyben.

Meanwhile back at the pottery stand...

Not having seen or heard any of this sleight-of-hand, but trusting in her old friend's character, Cyben steps up to the vendor and says "I can vouch for the honesty of the apothecary; she's a good friend to me and a loyal daughter of our Lady. I will wait here with you for her return."

"I cussen say mort vor 'er character when she runs off and leaves 'er friend een de lurch bit ee be obviously well-mannered so I will respect your judgement avore she returns. While ee wait would ee care to examine my wares to see if dere be anything ee like?"

All of his wares appear to be of average make: ceramic beads (6d / doz.), ceramic bowls (4d ea.), ceramic cups (1d ea.), ceramic flagons (5d ea.), 2 quart ceramic jars (10d ea.), 1 quart ceramic jars (5d ea.) and ceramic vases (5d ea.).

9 AM: As you are examining his wares, six cows come crashing through the crowds from the direction your companions had recently gone in such a hurry.

Bart, still standing in slight confusion while deciding what to do, tries to keep away the cows from the pottery stand. He has no experience in crowd or cow control, but he thinks more trouble with the pottery merchant will only be more trouble for the group and tries to intimidate the cows by waving his cowl and arms up in the air.

Bart and Cyben manage to keep the cows out of the vendor stalls and helped people avoid being trampled by the cows. Some of the visiting herdsmen got the cows calmed down and headed back to their stalls.

10 AM: At the cattle pen, the cowherd and some visiting herdsmen manage to get the cows back into the pen. As everyone regroup at the pottery stand to discuss the preceding events, an ale merchant in the next stall calls out, "Jerek, well dude! Ee handled dat situation well. 'ere, 'ave a weak ale on me as a reward."

Jarek recognizes the merchant and hops over to him. "Thank you!" he says as he takes the ale from the merchant's grasp. He downs it, and smiles as he wipes his mouth and sets the mug back on the stand. "I'll probably be leaving town soon, going with that noble over there and his band of travelers."

Jarek continues to speak with the ale merchant, laughing over some misadventures Jarek has had in the past. If the party begins to move off at any point, he will bid the ale man a farewell and join them, moving up besides his sister.

4-PEÓNU-720 TR (THIRD WATCH)

PARTLY CLOUDY, COLD, WINDY FROM SOUTHWEST.

11 AM: Continuing on through the faire, the next thing you pass is the livestock market. There are two large auction rings, which are surrounded by livestock pens. Three quarters of the pens are filled with sheep and the rest are divided equally between cows and pigs. The auction rings are busy as stock is brought into the pens, paraded round under the critical eyes of the local herdsmen and sold to the highest bidder. The herdsmen appear to have come from leagues around to buy and sell animals and to meet with old acquaintances to discuss everything from the price of

lambs to last winter's weather and the latest village gossip over a few mugs of ale. Mobon notices one of the cows, that looks like the one he was wrestling with, watching him with doleful eyes and licking its own nostrils.

"Hey Mobon," Kaden says teasingly. "I think that's your friend over there." She points at the cow watching him with a grin.

Glancing over at the animal, Mobon grins weakly back at Kaden and emits a sound halfway between a chuckle and a growl.

As you approach the market, seventeen lambs are brought into the auction ring. After they are paraded around a couple of times, there is a bid of 2d, followed quickly by bids of 2d 3f, 3d 3f, and sold at 5d 1f per head. Next into the auction pen is a single large boar.

When the whole group is together, Kaden approaches Jak. "So, how long are you bunch intending to stay in Kiban? And have you plans for where to go from here?" Her tone is one of non-threatening curiosity.

Smiling, Jak turns to Kaden and looks searchingly at her, its not obvious that he's hiding something but an astute person may pick up that something is not as it seems. "Why Kaden, I am here to find a use for my sword, Mobon, Alegur and I are errant warriors looking to do good and win admiration for our prowess. I cannot say how long it will take, the usual route to greatness is to find employment from a great personage, and first I must attract a great personage's attention."

Jak looks over at his two friends and grins. "We are not content to sit still and take root! We must wander the length of the kingdom, taking the cause of right and making a great name for ourselves!"

Kaden smiles at the reference to roots. "Nor am I, though I have plenty of roots in my bag," she says, patting her pack of herbs and potions.

Cyben's ears prick up at Jak's comments. She turns away from the lamb auction and says eagerly, "I, too, am called to a time of travel! When the Festival ends it is my privilege to begin a wandering ministry, seeking those in need of Peoni's aid and succor. I know that the Kingdom's roads can be dangerous places and would be very grateful for traveling companions. Would you consider allowing me to come with you when you leave Kiban? I have no fixed itinerary or destination, and I'm sure I will find souls in need wherever your path should lead."

She also glances as she speaks in Jarek's direction. It may be that the chance to travel with her brother is not unwelcome either.

Kaden eyed Cyben curiously as she asked to venture forth with the noble and his men. She was both surprised and proud -- the Cyben she remembered was generally more interested in reading than trekking outside, though they had many happy days in the woods together. "I, too, will be off a-wandering once the festival ends. Think of it! This very road, the one passing under all of our feet, soon will take me to who knows where."

Jarek says nothing at first, but looks long at his sister. For a moment all of the anger he had buried boils to the surface: "Must you follow me, Cyben?" he asks, sharply.

Cyben looks startled, then sad. "No, Jarek," she says, gazing steadily into his face, "What I must do is serve Peoni as well as I

can. But if there is any way I can do that while staying close to you, I will. Six years ago, I lost my whole family – there was nothing I could do about it. I thought I would never see any of you again until we were reunited in the Fields of Valon. But now here you are, like a miracle, a gift of grace. How could I walk away from that without doing everything in my power to keep us together, to heal the wounds of that terrible fire? I am your sister, Jarek, and I love you. No matter where we go or what we do -- that will never change."

She pauses for a few seconds before continuing reflectively, "It's hard for me to catch up to you. You were a boy, a little boy, when I saw you last. Now you are a man, grown up, it seems, overnight. That takes some getting used to. If I seem to forget sometimes, I'm sorry. Please try to be patient with me."

Brart turns to face Jak but glances around and speaks loud enough for the others to hear, "I too will have to start my journey soon, learning more about mining and the related trades. Until now I could not help you much, but would you mind if I travel with you after you have finished your business in Kiban?"

Smiling, Jak adjusts his gear and says, "Well, it seems we have quite a group, when we adjourn to the inn we must decide on further destinations it seems! Alas, now we must continue collecting the tithes, and I know for a fact that Mobon for one has been itching to see the cutler's stalls. Jerek too, we must see about getting you some gear as well as livery clothing, and it seems that all of us may wish to invest in travelers equipment." Jak leans on his halberd, a characteristic posture for him, and adds, "Who here is accustomed to ride a horse?"

Shaking his head ruefully, Mobon replies, "Alas, I can barely recall sitting on one, much less have any appreciable skill in its management." Glancing sidelong at Kaden, he adds, "I can barely manage a cow!"

Kaden frowned. She had not quite asked to go along, as did most of the others, nor had she been asked. But it seemed as if she was being subsumed into the group just the same. While the thought of adventuring in the company of friends -- Cyben and Jarek in particular -- appealed to her, she worried that tagging along in such a big group would not avail her the time to truly search for new herbs, as she had planned.

She grew quiet as the group discussed plans for later, her mind far away in the gorse she'd planned to scour but couldn't, while they spoke of cutlers and clothes and traveling equipment. She slowly and inconspicuously edged her way to the back of the group, feeling awkwardly outside of its discussion. Before she knew it, Jak was asking about horses.

She came to quickly, simply shaking her head. "Wait," she said quietly. "I am not a wizard, nor a strong-arm, nor can I call down Peoni in times of need. I'm a simple alchemist with a simple task. True, I can stitch you up, but my skills are still lowly. I can't ride, and much of my time will be spent off in the woods searching for plants. Do you really have need of me?"

"Absolutely!" Mobon says forcefully, and perhaps a little too quickly. Embarrassed by the sudden outburst, he adds haltingly, "Umm...that is, well...a healer could become an unfortunate necessity for our little band if past experience is any judge. And besides, your company would be welcome even if your needles

and herbs were not needed."

Kaden smiles at the soldier, obviously pleased at his words, and not a little flattered at his mien. But before she can speak, she sees her friend's expression, and pauses.

Cyben looks slightly amused, then turns her head slightly so Kaden can see her face but Mobon can't and gives Kaden a wink. She says, "I obviously can't speak for anyone else, but I've known you to get out of an amazing number of scrapes in our time -- wits like yours are probably worth an extra sword at least!"

Kaden grins and widens her eyes purposefully at her friend as if to say "Behave!"

With a more somber look Cyben glances at Jak in his harness and adds, "And wherever there are men in mail and swords, there is always need for the healer's hand, sooner or later."

"I thank you, my friend," Kaden said, mock curtsying to the priestess. "I must say, I was rather impressed at the way you calmed that crowd down. I thought you were sure to get yourself knocked in the gob over that one. Sounds to me like a rather impressive band of us all, then," she said, glancing over at Mobon. "And assuming our dashing lord approves...." she raised her eyebrows at Jak and waited for an answer.

Laughing, Jak says "Me, a lord? A long ways from such, if ever." Jak is still laughing, "I think your merry tongue would win you a place anywhere, Kaden of Bassil! Why, I can see no reason why my word would be against your traveling with us, so I shall not speak out."

4-PEÓNU-720 TR (FOURTH WATCH)

PARTLY CLOUDY, COLD, WINDY FROM NORTHWEST.

12 NOON: A garishly dressed showman stands in front of a roped-off area, inviting hopeful contenders from the crowd to fight the champion for a purse of five Khuzan crowns. "Step right this way and make yourself five Khuzan Crowns! That's right, sir, and five whole crowns, 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! Five Khuzan Crowns if you last three minutes, ten if you defeat the champion within that time!"

He points at one of the visiting farm boys and says, "You, sir – you look pretty fast on your feet – do you think you could stay out of trouble for three minutes? It's not that long, you know!"

"Finally, a little fun!" Kaden said as she eyed the boy, sizing him up. "Come on then! Take the brute!"

"Oh, no mam! My mother would tan my hide if I put mezel' een such danger, what with de ploughing needing to be dude and all.", says the boy. "I will left dat sort uv ding to professional soldiers like your man dere," he continues, nodding at Mobon.

At the words 'your man dere', Mobon's head jerks around in surprise. He glances nervously at Kaden, and then redirects his attention to the barker.

Jarek begins to wander towards the showman... five crowns was a lot of money! His hands tightened into fists, but he suddenly realized that his responsibilities were greater now. He had the other travelers to think of. Getting beaten and bruised was

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certainly no way to start a long journey. He turned back around and headed back towards the group.

"An interesting thought, here is a way to win renown! The odds seem interesting, a fortune if you win and half a fortune if you survive three minutes . . . perhaps it is not all as it seems?!", Jak leans over the ropes and shouts to the showman. "Goodman, show us your champion! Why, perhaps a stout soldier would grapple with him, but we would deign not hurt him unduly!" Says Jak, laughing again.

"Aye." Mobon calls in support, "Let's see this champion."

Realizing that some of "her men" were actually serious about possibly wrestling whatever beast lay hidden behind the showman's curtain, Kaden frowned a bit. "Easy lads," Kaden said lightly. "I'd not like to see your handsome faces split, and have to sew you up when we've so soon met!" But the spectacle was unlike anything she'd seen lately, so wrapped up in her work was she, and quickly the lines faded from her face as she watched Jak and Mobon parley with the huckster.

The barker gestures at the tent and his champion enters the roped area. He is 6' 3", 186 pounds, has brown hair and is only dressed in his hose.

Looking back at the others, Jak grins. "Would any care to take a clasp from the man who does such for a living in fairs across the land? Perhaps afterwards we could set up our own tent as a freakshow, 'see the twisted things from Meselynshire!' would our spruiker yell!"

"Depends on the rules, methinks." Mobon answers seriously. "I've seen such spectacles wherein many a complex rule apply, with this permitted and that not. Others I have seen which were simple brawls, with little concern but for keeping one's feet and liberty, whilst depriving one's opponent of the same." Raising his voice, he addresses the barker again, "What say you, good sir. What limitations and conditions do you and your champion apply to the manly arts in your ring?"

"Fair question," says the barker, "you each enter the roped area wearing only hose and with no weapons. If you leave the area, under your own power or not, you lose. If you are on the ground for a slow count of three, you are defeated. If you remain standing for three minutes, you get the five crowns. That should be easy enough so are you going to give it a go?"

Sobering slightly, but still sporting a smile, Jak adds "We should guard our purses here, such is a favorite place for dipsters, working whilst other gape at the spectacle."

"Aye, I'll have a try." Mobon says, backing off and beginning to strip to his hose. "Jak, I shall entrust my goods to thee for safekeeping as I fight, to ward against those footpads you mentioned earlier."

Once he is ready, Mobon will kneel and offer a short, silent prayer to Halea, through the offices of Thalia, her sixth handmaiden. He is not sure if the goddess will back him in such a blatant risk, but there is money in it and Mobon silently asks for help in claming Halea's share of it on her behalf.

Kaden claps with glee, bouncing on the balls of her feet. "Aye, a proper tussle!" she says excitedly. "This is the best festival I've been to in a yeoman's age! Give him a go, Mobon, the man can barely stand up straight," she says loudly and for the ringer's ears. Lowering her voice, she says to Mobon simply, "Easy

does it." She grinned then, patting her medicine pack as she continued, "I'd hate for you to be indebted to me after we've just met."

Cyben steps up next to Kaden and mutters to her, "This is madness, men battling each other for money like cocks o' the yard -- on the Lady's festival day, no less! And you, encouraging him!" But there is not real heat in her voice, more like troubled worry. She glances around the ring, taking in the crowd, gauging its mood and looking for signs of the darker passions such spectacles can arouse before saying to Mobon, rather abruptly, "Do no more harm than you must," and turning back away, stepping off to the side to offer a small prayer to Peoni for the safety, physical and spiritual, of all involved.

"Oh, fie, you worrier," Kaden said in response, still smiling -- some things just never change, she thought. "Don't fret so much, I'll be sure to give our kind lady, bless her to her toes, her due this day. But right now, we're to have a bit of sport! Later, when Mobon buys you an ale and a juicy shank, you'll not be so skittish!" She squeezed her friend's shoulder reassuringly and turned back to the preparations.

Kaden watches the match closely, keeping an eye out for anything amiss, such as the showman slipping the fighter something, or the fighter drawing something from his hose, etc.

Cyben, meanwhile, will watch Kaden's face for her news of how the bout progresses.

Jarek watches the champion move about the ring, searching for any signs of weakness. Mobon was no doubt quicker, but a single solid punch from the brute would probably end the match. Jarek has seen many fights on the streets, and this one is less interesting because it is staged. "I thought we were to be on the move," he says to anybody who happens to be listening. "Having one of our travelers beaten will not expedite our journey."

Jak and Mobon approach the ring and the barker introduces the fighter as The Croaker and tells them that, as Mobon's second, Jak is allowed to inspect Croaker to insure nothing untoward is happening. By the same respect, the barker examines Mobon to be sure he only has his leggings with him. Once the fight starts, Jak is to watch Mobon carefully to determine if he has had enough and wants to give in before he gets too hurt.

Mobon and the Croaker enter the ring and size each other up for a couple of seconds. Croaker moves in and grabs Mobon about the body with both arms. Mobon tries to strike him in the groin as he moves in but Croaker is quicker than Mobon expected. Croaker tries to throw Mobon to the ground but fails and Mobon breaks the hold. Croaker again tries to gain a hold while Mobon tries to dodge out of his reach. Mobon's foot slips slightly on the wet grass and Croaker again gains a hold about Mobon's body with both arms. Croaker tries to throw Mobon to the ground and Mobon breaks the hold. Mobon jabs at Croaker's arm but misses. Croaker moves like he is going to grapple again but instead punches Mobon on his right elbow and gives him a very slight bruise. Mobon again punches, this time at Croaker's groin, but he still misses.

Croaker grabs for Mobon as Mobon tries to strike him. The grapple is a success while the strike fails. As Croaker tries to throw him to the ground, Mobon breaks the hold. Croaker

punches Mobon again, this time in the left forearm and giving him a minor bruise. Mobon tries to punch Croaker but fails. Croaker grabs Mobon and attempts to throw him to the ground. Mobon punches Croaker in the right hip and breaks the hold. Croaker stumbles, and appears to be a bit stunned, but keeps his feet.

When the showman announced the name of the champion, Kaden couldn't help but laugh. "Croaker?" she said incredulously. "Croaker?? Cracker, maybe!"

Kaden has watched the match so far quietly for the most part, as the two men go at it with little gain or failure. But when she sees Mobon punch Croaker with a stunning blow, she whoops loudly in support for their soldier. "Come on Mobon, you can take 'The Cracker!'"

Before Croaker can recover, Mobon punches him soundly in the right shoulder, bruising him severely and rendering his right arm useless. Croaker backs off and the barker, seeing his condition, throws a towel into the ring calling a halt to the match and declaring Mobon the winner.

With a whoop, Kaden rushed up to the side of the ring to see if Mobon needed any care. "Have you any wounds that need looking at?" Kaden called up to him.

"Nay, no harm done here." Mobon says, stretching his right arm a bit, "Just a little minor bruising. Perhaps though, we should look into my worthy opponent..."

Moving across the ring, Mobon extends a friendly hand toward Croaker, saying, "Well fought, friend! An excellent bout!" looking to see if he is still incapacitated.

Smiling, Croaker replies, "Well fought indeed and ee have fairly won de purse. My name be Deerine uv Emaxisa and I awp us can have a re-match some time. Although, if it be vor money, it will have to wait avore I mend and rebuild de purse vrim de local farm boys." You can tell that he still can't move his right arm.

"Well met, Deerine." Mobon says heartily, "We didn't have time for formal introductions earlier...I am Mobon of Falen and I would be pleased to work out with you when you are feeling better. My victory today was clearly divided between luck and skill and there is no doubt much we can teach each other. If we're still in town when you're feeling better, perhaps we could set the money issues aside and simply spar together as friends and fellow travelers of the warrior's path, eh? What say you?"

"I say dat be a splendid idea and I look vorrard to it", Deerine says with obvious enthusiasm.

Kaden smiles, glad to see he is an honorable man. In addition to binding his arm wound, she'll also have a look at his hip. "Hurt here, does it?" she asks him as she probes near the bruise. "Hold still while I look at you." She'll also clean that wound with a dose of Calendula if she deems it necessary.

"Ow!", he replies barely stifling a curse, "Ees it hurts!" Hearing your mumbled question, he says, "A crown be 320d so ee man dere now has all uv our money which be ten years earnings vor your average craftsman."

Kaden whistles low at the mention of the purse. "A princely sum," she says with a grin. "Luck to you with all the farm boys

you'll have to best to make that up!" Then she turns back to the group, once done setting everyone aright, and appears eager to find their next amusement.

Once done with Croaker's wounds, Kaden will see to Mobon, using Calendula again to clean his bruises against infection, binding them with a linen bandage if necessary.

"Aye, men, always playing tough," she says as she fusses over Mobon. "Let me be the judge of whether you need attention or not."

Not displeased by his discomfort, which she couldn't help but notice, Kaden smiled at the soldier as she worked. "Hurts here?" she asked as she bound the wound on his arm. "But no, it couldn't possibly sting a soldiering man like yourself. That was amazing!" she said. "Where did you learn to fight like that? I thought you would win all along, but not quite so quickly. As for me, I can stab my knife a bit but I'm a pretty lowly fighter." She also was not immune to the man's obvious charms, but managed to do a better job of hiding it, allowing her fingers to linger only the barest of moments. But oh, what fun they were!

"Aye", Mobon says uneasily. He shivers slightly under the touch of her cool hands on his bare skin and shifts uncomfortably from foot to foot, his discomfort only heightened by his body's unstoppable reaction to the close proximity of the beautiful woman. To cope with the discomfort, he questions Kaden about her treatment, saying "The healing arts are of... umm... understandable interest to me... ahhh... K-Kaden. Being... er... you know... a soldier and all. W-w-what is that t you're...ummm...using?"

Kaden grinned at this, looking up into Mobon's eyes. The exuberance with which she spoke of her chosen vocation was obvious. "Well, well now, what I'm putting on you right now is Calendula. Folks from some parts call it Marigold. Know you it?" She paused.

"Err...no." Mobon replies with a rueful grin, "I've spent far more time in forges than fields, I'm afraid."

"Picked these myself, I did, down by the river. Pretty yellow flowers that make a powerful antiseptic poultice when prepared proper. Cleans out wounds, makes swelling go down, and should relieve some of your pain. It also makes a good tea, lifts the spirits right up." She looked up again to see if she was boring the man, knowing that she could have said twice as much as she did

Although his attention is obviously divided between botany and anatomy at the moment, Mobon's interest is obviously keen nonetheless.

After peering over Kaden's shoulder while she tends to the injured (and continuing to mutter quietly to herself about the utterly unnecessary character of it all), Cyben says to Deerine, "Good fellow, that shoulder will pain you greatly for a long time to come, and may never heal at all, despite my friend's best efforts here."

Frowning slightly at these words, Mobon listens more closely.

"You should go now," Cyben continues, "the sooner the better, to the temple of Our Lady in town. Ask there for Amangea of Karrish and tell her Cyben sent you. There are ways the Lady can heal you that are beyond the hands and minds of any man,

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and Amangea knows those ways well. Walk in peace." She touches his forehead briefly in blessing.

"Dank ee mam," he replies, "I will do dat anon."

Then she turns to Kaden and says, "Old friend, along the way in my training I have learned a little of the healer's ways. I have naught of tools or herbs, but perhaps I can be of some help when the need arises." She dimples slightly as she continues, "Although my touch may not always be so healing as your own!"

"I can think of nothing better than that!" Kaden says enthusiastically. "But make me one promise -- and that is, as we work, teach me all you know."

Once his care is complete, Mobon motions Cyben aside. Assuming she steps away from the others to speak to him, he asks, "Cyben...what sort of costs will this fellow incur to have this healing done at the temple? I have taken all his money..."

Cyben smiles at him and nods slightly. "Your concern does you credit," she says softly, "but I can assure you that Amangea will take keen measure of his hurts and none at all of the weight of his purse. The Lady serves all equally."

She holds his eyes for a moment, taking his measure, before adding, "Of course, there are many ways in which one who has much may honor his own good fortune by aiding those who have less."

"There certainly are." Mobon says with a smile, good-naturedly sidestepping the implication, "Thank you for putting my mind at ease, Cyben, for I would not have slept as soundly in the knowledge that I might have permanently crippled the fellow. Now, I must excuse myself, for I would not want to delay our movements further and must dress and see to business before we continue." With that, Mobon nods and dresses, settling his weapons into place and moving off to see about his winnings.

While Mobon was getting his wounds tended to he noticed an archer dressed much the same as Alegur was and watching Jak intently. (Alegur is still back at the inn as far as everyone knows.) The archer looks like he wants to speak to Jak but appears to be a bit intimidated by their apparent difference in station.

Smiling, Jak claps Mobon on the back (softly) and grins at Jerek. "I'm sorry Jerek, perhaps you can fight the next one! Try not to be over serious, honor and duty is important but nobody wants long faces around them all day!"

Looking at Brart, Jak assumes a face of mock surprise "What, Brart? I thought you'd have been first over the ropes, if only to show the doughty men the miners of Kaldor are!"

Brart replies, "Even my most stalwart fellow miners would have had a hard time in that ring. As impressed as I am by both fighters performance, I prefer tools for getting a job done. A broken tool can be reforged or replaced, broken men are a bit more difficult."

Jak feels good, he assumes his characteristic lean against his halberd and smiles, at peace. Jak looks across the market and sees Alegur, and opens his mouth to hail him, but stops when he sees it's not Alegur, but someone else...

Seeing the newcomer as well, Mobon steps forward with a smile, saying "Ho, lad! You seem to have business with us. If so,

step forward and let's be at it!"

Kaden merely nods to the man with a smile, unknowing of who he is but trusting in her present company not to keep with someone who would be unworthy of her welcome.

"Hail, I am Genado of Osyn", the man replies, "I must Replace Alegur of Thatain for a little while, for he must deal with a death in the family. I am his Cousin, and I shall do my best to serve you as he did." He shows Jak the folded surcoat with the Odosart coat of arms to prove that he is here to serve.

Somewhat formally, Jak says "Hail Genado of Osyn, I am Jak of House Odasart and these are my companions." Jak formally introduces the others and continues. "You are invited to wear my house's colors, but you must strive not to dishonor them, we are an old family who holds our land through none other than the King himself and we our proud of the distinction. I know you will try and do well Genado."

"Thank you, I will try my best to serve you and not let you down", Genado briefly speaks to the others in an attempt to make him-self feel more welcome with everyone...

Slapping Genado on the shoulder, Jak smiles and says "Good! My heart is sore for Alegur, he is a good companion and such a thing is never easy."

With a wave of his hand, Jak says "We are protecting the good priestess Cyben collect the tithes due to the Lady Peoni at the fair, please wear the livery and trust to your judgment rather than ask me what to do. As a liveried retainer you may carry some weapons normally barred from those of humble birth, so you can refer problems to me but I expect you to be your own man!"

"Also in my service are Mobon who is a stalwart companion and a doughty man-at-arms and Jerek who serves as page, although I think the time is overdue that he trained in the fighting arts as well. All of us fight, including Jerek, when fighting is called for but at present we are at peace and may wear flowers on our helmets."

"If you are confused by this great city, as I often am, ask good miner Brart here for instructions on it's ways and he will instruct you. Also, good Kaden here is a journeyman apothecary and is very wise in herblore, any imbalance in your humors or biles can no doubt be cured instanter."

"Finally, good Genado, I am in no ways a knight and need not be addressed as 'sire'. Please call me 'Jak', and let us be friends."

"Well met, Genado, I am Kaden of Bassill, apothecary, and ever of this very town. I only wish our meeting could be accompanied by happier circumstances for your cousin Alegur. You are here just in time for Peoni's festival, though you have just missed our brave companion Mobon best a man in a prizefight! But come, there is much still to see." Kaden smiles brightly at the man, hoping to make him feel welcome.

Having already been introduced by Jak, Mobon simply offers his hand and says, "A pleasure, Genado. Alegur stood boldly at our side and I count him a friend. I'll look forward to doing the same with you."

Feeling Warmed by Jak's speech, Genado feels more at home and welcome with the group..."I Shall do my best to be my own man, and I shall try to be as good of a companion as Alegur was, and I Shall do my best in protecting the good priestess Cyben"

4-PEÓNU-720 TR (FOURTH WATCH)

PARTLY CLOUDY, COLD, WINDY FROM NORTHWEST.

2 PM: Next along the faire grounds is a large tent with the Dariune coat of arms, a white stag on a blue field. Two watchmen, armed with glaives, flank the entrance. There are two pairs of stocks outside the tent. One is empty. A man who is 4' 8" and has long black hair and a beard currently occupies the other. He smells of stale ale and is snoring. Jerek recognizes him as a Khuzdul named Giagan Tynnan. Some small urchins are throwing rotten vegetables at him, pulling his beard and otherwise trying to get him to react.

As soon as she sees the earl's coat of arms, Kaden hurries to the tent. She cranes her neck to see if she can catch a glimpse of the earl or his wife, neither of whom she's seen for a long time. She can see a little through the open tent flap but the guards move to intercept her and won't allow her to get closer. She does, however, recognize Scina Dariune, the earl's eldest son, as he holds court to some people with their back to the door. One of the guards says, "Sorry, miss, but only people on trial and their witnesses are allowed to enter."

Kaden smiles at the guards, nodding her assent. "Aye, good soldiers, I desire no admittance; I was only curious about whether our sire or his wife were inside. I used to live at the castle, and miss those days greatly. But tell me if you will, who is to be judged today?"

"I cannot say who it is at the moment as I have not been paying any attention to what happens inside. It is not my place to do so. However, none of the cases are of high import since this is just the faire court. Mostly farmers on their first trip to town having too much to drink and getting a bit rowdy. They are either fined or spend a short while in the stocks then they go on about their celebrating."

As she looks into the tent, she seems to notice the man in the stocks for the first time, and claps her hands hoping to shoo away the kids tormenting the wretch. "Away!" she said, but made no move toward them. "Go find aught to do. There should be plenty better, on our blessed lady's day."

As Kaden talks with the guard, Cyben keeps an eye on the urchins to see that they do scuttle off in search of new toys. The urchins move on but, it appears, more due to the lack of response from the Khuzdul than to any prompting from others.

Cyben approaches the guards as well, "Good day! I am Cyben of Kyfa and it is my honor to collect the fees and fines due to Our Lady's temple this festival day. I've not done so before, so perhaps you can help me. Should I come back here later, when his Lordship is done, or is it customarily handled elsewhere?"

The guard replies, "I am sure, my lady, that it is late enough in the afternoon to make a collection. Anything that is collected later can be delivered by Sir Dariune. May I know the name of your champion so I can announce you and he right after the current case is decided?"

She inclines her head and says, "Of course!" Turning slightly to indicate Jak with one hand she continues, "I have the honor and privilege of being escorted and protected this holy day by the stout and noble-hearted Jak of Odasart."

Shooting Mobon a glance, now the only other remaining member of the company that set out to verify Lord Dariune's presence, Jak nods to the guards and smiles at Cyben. "Thank you, Cyben." He says, "I am indebted to you, you always sing my praises like a herald!"

Kaden beams at her friend, full of pride and wonder at the change between her carriage now and her carriage years ago. "Go on then, I'll wait here, but you must promise to tell me EVERYTHING when you return!" Kaden whispers to Cyben.

In response Cyben grips her friend's hand briefly in her own, admittedly a tad damp with nervousness.

Mobon nods slightly in acknowledgement of Jak. As they wait for further developments, he walks over to the stocks and addresses the Khuzdul. "Greetings, friend Khuzdul I am Mobon of Falen. Please pardon my presumption, but I'm curious...what brought you to these straits? One does not often see one of your sort in these parts, much less in stocks." Mobon brushes off the remnants of rotten vegetables clinging to the fellow's head and face. The only response from the Khuzdul is more snoring as he appears to be a very sound sleeper (or well within his cups).

Mobon then scans the crowd, both for potential threats to their mission and others who contemplate throwing things at the Khuzdul. He sees no threats to the group (in fact, while they are standing in front of the judicial court, people seem to be deliberately not paying attention to them) and the hecklers have moved on.

Getting no response, Mobon moves back over toward Jak, hefting the heavy moneybag. He's a bit more cautious than usual, watching carefully for signs of trouble. When at rest, he holds it directly in front of him, resting it on the ground without letting go of it. Addressing his new comrade in arms, he says, "Well, Genado, tell me about yourself. Where have you been and what adventures have you had?"

"Well, from the way I look, I sure you can guess that I come from a poor background. I have mostly been at home and off learning what I can from the forest and the adventures I have had are few and not exciting, and I don't really count them as adventures because they have mostly been fights between me and others in my age grouping, so I guess you can say I am a really dull person, Oh well I guess you could say that I have had at least one adventure, and that would be the one on the way here, but nothing really exciting happened on the way here but it is one of the only times I have left my home to go any where for a long period of time... And I guess that is it about me, what about you Mobon?, what adventures have you had, and tell me more about yourself."

Genado finds Cyben and speaks to her to get more acquainted with her, so he knows what he is dealing with. "So good Priestess, why are you on this journey with these fine people?"

"Hail and well met, Genado of Osyn! I have just completed my training as an Ebasethe of Our Lady Peoni here at the Temple in Kiban. I have spent my whole life in this great city and my mistress and teacher, Solana Sarawyn, has arranged that I should spend some time as an itinerant priestess, wandering the roads of Kaldor, becoming familiar with other places and other ways, and along the way having the opportunity to serve those members of

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the Lady's flock too remote or unfortunate to have an Ebasethe of their own."

She spills this all out in a slight rush, her face colored with the excitement and wonder of it all. After a short pause she continues in a somewhat more confiding manner, "It's all just a bit wonderful and overwhelming still, to tell you the truth. Every time I say it the whole thing starts to seem a little more real and a little bigger. I'm awfully glad that our Holy Mother has seen fit to provide me with a chance to start my journey in the company of such stout and jolly companions. I look forward very much to getting to know you better."

Then, glancing over her shoulder at the Earl's tent, she says, "But now I must humbly beg your leave. I have one last, and very important, duty to fulfill for the temple this day before I leave. I have fines and levies to collect on behalf of our Lady from the Lord Dariune, who sits in judgment this faire day, and I may not tarry while that duty lies undone!"

As the current case concludes within the tent, the guard introduces Jak and Cyben to Sir Scina Dariune, Kiban's warden and the Earl's eldest son. "I ask you not to take offense but I must ask each of you a question to determine your identity before I hand over the money. First Jak, I only know of one Odasart and that is the Lord of the Royal Weaponcrafters. Perhaps you can tell me his name, his liege, and his relation to you."

After Jak responds, Sir Dariune turns to Cyben, "I was told by mistress Sarawyn to expect you. Can you tell me what her title is and what her main duties are?"

Curtsying low, Cyben says, "Certes, my lord. My mistress and teacher Sarawyn is Solana of the Temple here in Kiban, the mistress of apprentices. She is also, of course, midwife to your great father's family and house."

Jak replies, "Yes, my lord, I am proud to do so. My great uncle Fugys of Odasart is the most noble Lord of the Royal Weaponcrafters and he is the servant of the Marshal of the Royal Guard, Koris of Harabor. A great man and a wise one, I am proud to number him amongst my family."

Sir Dariune writes on a piece of parchment for a moment and asks each of you to either sign or make your mark. As soon as you do, he hands Cyben a bag of money and dismisses you so he can get on to the next case.

4-PEÓNU-720 TR (FOURTH WATCH)

PARTLY CLOUDY, COLD, WINDY FROM NORTHWEST.

3 PM: As you return to the city, the last tent before the city wall has a growing crowd of excited on-lookers and a show owner who is busily drumming up customers, "Roll up, roll up, in just one hour 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 glorious Kaldor! Doctor Endrados' Zoocopeia – gathered for your education, entertainment and edification from the far corners of Hárn 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!"

On either side of the tent is a wagon filled with tarpaulin-covered, stout, wooden cages. Brart and Jarek notice two humanoid creatures escaping a cage, dashing past the gate guards and crawling into a sewer entrance just inside the gate. They are both about three foot tall, covered in streaked-brown fur, with claws on their fingers and toes, pointed ears and they are only dressed in loincloths. It is apparent, as the leading one disappears into the hole, that she is fat, female and just barely makes it through the hole.

Brart yells, "Genado, look over there. You're the hunter. Have you ever seen one of these?" In a quieter voice he says to the group, "I'm afraid we'll need somebody with tracking experience or a hunting dog if we want to track those beings. Perhaps we should ask that doctor Endrados what they are and if they are dangerous. If they happen to be dangerous, I must inform the mayor."

As the conversation between Brart and Genado attracts Kaden's attention, she turns to the barker and says, "Oy, 'doctor,' I think two of your monstrosities are escaping down the sewers. What were they?" She yells as she starts walking toward the sewer entrance where Brart was pointing. Kaden frowns, looking concerned. She tightens the straps of her pack about her, anticipating going after the things. She'll not have them running around HER city, if she has anything to say about it.

Cyben, who was talking to Jak and saw nothing, jumps when Kaden yells and says, "Monstrosities?! What monstrosities?" She looks about nervously.

Looking in the direction that Kaden indicated, the showman goes very pale. "I'm ruined. The gargûn have escaped.", he says in a small nervous voice. In a louder voice he says, "Sorry folks, the show is cancelled", as he jumps off the small stage and runs to the judicial tent.

Looking alarmed, Kaden turned to find Brart. "Where do these things come out, friend? Maybe we can get there before they do."

"The water and dirt all comes out at the riverside," he replies, "but if these gargûns run uphill, they might as well leave at any of the street sewers or in one of the houses of the nobles, merchants and guildsmen that paid for individual flushed baths. Usually that part of a house isn't guarded."

He ponders a moment and says, "The more I think of it, the more concerned I am. The elder miners told stories of gargûn queens nesting in old unoccupied mines and swarming from there, robbing and killing like really big and deadly hornets. My master, who will know more than me, is away. Now, old folks talk a lot when the winter evenings are long and cold, but what if there's some truth in it and the big-bellied one is a female going to cast some gargûn puppies. I've been told stories of rats taking over whole mines and those gargûns looked more intelligent and dangerous than rats. They wore loincloths, so they must be intelligent, and they may know how to open cages and other doors. I'm really worried, but I'm worried about the large sum of money we're carrying, too. We should pass the temple on our way to alarm the mayor."

"Aye," Kaden said, face suddenly somber. "Let us not tarry then, every minute we jabber is another minute the beasts get

further from us." At this, she sets off toward the temple, hoping everyone else is in tow.

Cyben looks from Kaden's back to the sewer opening and back again before straightening up and barking, "Mobon! Come with Kaden and me! Jak, Brart and Genado should follow the creatures, keep them from getting safely hidden away!" Then she begins to puff determinedly in Kaden's wake, heavy bag of silver slung over one shoulder.

Whipping around to Jerek, Jak says "Quick lad, run to the Lord Dariune's pavilion and tell the guards that what seems to be a pregnant gargûn has disappeared into the sewers! Meet Mobon, Kaden and Cyben at the sewer opening and we will leave marks for you to follow!" Jak draws his shortsword and hands it to Jerek, hilt first. "Today you are a soldier Jerek, do not disgrace this blade, I have had it from my father."

Jak grabs his halberd and tightens his beavor, and charges over to the sewer opening. Grinning, he turns to Brart and Genado and says, "Well, my brother always said this is where I'd end up!"

Mobon moves to follow Jak, obviously struggling with his heavy bag. "Jak..." he begins, wincing slightly as he drags his bag up beside him, "your valor is unquestionable but, with respect, I must question the sense of this course. Your weapon is ill-suited to tunnels and you have surrendered your most suitable weapon to Jerek. Allow me to enter the tunnels in your place, I beg, for I am better equipped to do so. Take my bag of money...I would trust no man sooner with it, and see it and the ladies to the temple. I'm sure the priestesses there will guard my gains well. Then, your duty to Cyben discharged, you can recover my spare shortsword from the inn, which is only a few minutes walk from here, and return to join us!"

Genado follows Mobon. "I agree with Mobon, but you are ill-suited to the tunnels, let me and Mobon go in and you can get more suited for the tunnels and then join us, but right now we need to make haste so the gargûns do not get somewhere, we will not find them..."

Holding out his halberd, Jak spins the head slightly and shows the 'advanced guard' stance with the spear-like tip to the fore. "Friends, I take your point, but my weapon is only just over a fathom long and the point is as deadly as the blade. Also, it keeps an enemy at arm's reach of me, I can stab but a sword-armed foe cannot retaliate. Finally, if I can't use the spear aspect of my weapon, it's time for everyone to reach for their daggers!"

Jak looks at Mobon straining under the weight of the two money sacks, and shakes his head. "You'll never get to the temple and back in time with those Mobon, neither would I in fact. Genado is needed to show us the creature's trails, even now they get further away, I think we should deposit the funds with the Lord Dariune, whose probity is beyond question and seek the gargûn immediately!"

As this is said, the crowd parts for the approach of Sir Dariune, his guards and the showman in shackles. Sir Dariune addresses the crowd and says, "I have been informed of what happened and I offer a gold crown as a reward for the male gargûn, dead or alive. The reward for the female, if she is returned before she gives birth, is two gold crowns." Those nearest also hear him

mutter, "If she gives birth, rewards will have no meaning when we are up to our armpits in gargûn."

Mobon pivots to face Sir Dariune as he approaches and renders appropriate courtesies. "You are most generous, my Lord." he says. Dropping his equipment bag, Mobon divests himself of all but his armor, basic clothing and weapons (falchion, coustille and dagger), dropping any extra items from his person into his equipment bag. He retains the smaller moneybag around his neck, under his armor though and is careful not to reveal it in his preparations.

With a sigh, Mobon hefts his bag again and places it at Jak's feet saying, "Very well, Jak...I shall trust my funds to your judgment. Best that you make the arrangements, as I think his word to a gentleman like yourself will carry a bit more weight and it would likely be beneath his dignity to treat with one such as I. Whilst you do so, I shall accompany Genado into the tunnel and allow him to get a look at the trail's beginning. When you return, we shall begin the hunt!"

Turning to the miner, he adds "Brart, we will doubtless need light below, eh? What would you recommend? Torches? A lantern?"

Then addressing Jak again, Mobon concludes, "We'll need to arrange for that as well."

Brart recalls that the sewer system consists of a stone-lined entrance-hole that is 2 ½ feet in diameter and 7 feet deep. It opens in the center of a rounded-ceiling passageway that is seven feet deep and 10 feet across at the bottom. The bottom of the passage has 2 ½ foot walkways on each side and a 5-foot square canal between to carry the rainwater and sewage. From the ground level to the bottom of the canal is 19 feet. The usual way to enter is to climb down the tube on a rope, then swing to one of the walkways. It is very dark and some sort of light source is always needed.

Brart replies, "We prefer solidly build lanterns, but we build the sewers big enough that torches will do too. We need lighting, but as important are one or two ropes or a ladder. Just jumping down a sewer is rather dangerous. All we need is in my master's house, but fetching it will at least take ten minutes. Perhaps we can borrow some equipment from the guards or the animal handlers might have some useful stuff at the cages. We should ask those anyway for more information on those gargûns. I think when we ask them with your weapons just being present they will spare us with the spectator-aimed bullshit."

One of the nearby vendors overhears your conversation and says, "If ee plan on gwain arter dose varmint, ee be 'omley to iny spare tent ropes and torches us have. How mort do ee dink ee will need? If I do nat have what ee need, I can get it vrim de others."

"Brart, are these tools adequate for this task?" Mobon asks, as he finishes his preparations, flexing his sore muscles gently to test their strength. He winces slightly, but masks the expression with one of grim determination as he eyes the entrance to the hole. Turning to Kaden, he asks, "Kaden, might you have any herbs or concoctions about you to dispel weariness? I must admit to feeling a bit winded and stiff, but we must press on and overtake these creatures before they spread."

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Mobon will crouch near the entrance, peering down into it and getting what rest he can before the group is ready to descend.

Hearing Mobon speak her name, Kaden turns back around to face the group and its suddenly appearing entourage. Spotting Sir Dariune, she couldn't help but smile. "Cyben, perhaps we can leave your money here with Sir Dariune -- surely he would watch it for us as we went down with the rest of the group. I admit I'm a bit nervous about trying to find them once they've already gone down. Also, I thought I heard Mobon call for some attention." Turning on her heel, Kaden grabbed the bag of money Cyben was carrying so she could help her heft it a little easier as she half-dragged her friend back toward the royal entourage.

Staggering with the sudden shift of weight and momentum, Cyben spins around and willy-nilly half-walks, half-jogs in her excited friend's wake. She wears the bemused look of someone experiencing a powerful moment of *deja-vu*. "Eh? Sir Dariune?" she asks mildly, "Isn't that a little presumptuous?"

Curtseying as she reached Sir Dariune and his entourage, Kaden introduces herself. "Kaden of Bassill, whose father Galot served our lord faithfully, sir. I am an apothecary, and would accompany these fine men who seek the beasts." It was all she could do to keep her voice from squeaking with excitement.

"Yes, quite," says Sir Dariune, seeming a bit distracted. "You there," he exclaims to a peasant with a small wagon, "you have just decided to loan us your wagon for these volunteers to place their excess belongings." He then directs one of his guards to watch over the wagon until they return or he says otherwise.

After asking Mobon to repeat the question, Kaden responds, "Aye, I do, several things that might ease your fatigue. But unfortunately, one requires steeping into a tea, which is time we simply don't have if we're to catch the gargûn, and the other must be mixed with honey, of which I have none. I'd planned on buying some after the festival, but these louts charge too much during for my meager means." She shrugged helplessly.

Indicating the bulging sack containing his winnings, Mobon says, "Take what you need. I can ill afford to go weary into such a mission as this."

Remembering how Kaden used to use just that exact tone of voice to wheedle "extra provisions" for her forays to the woods as a kid, Cyben rolls her eyes but can't help grinning very slightly to herself. A bit red-faced from some combination of exertion and embarrassment, Cyben also curtsies before Sir Dariune and says. "Your lordship, I'm afraid that while my companions are engaged in pursuing these creatures it is not wise for me to carry the temple's silver unguarded. Might I beg the boon of having your men watch these bags while we seek to recapture the beasts?" She keeps her head bowed while she waits for his response.

"Yes, yes," says Sir Dariune, "put it in the wagon with the rest. At the mention of silver in relation to the large bag, a greedy look passes over the faces of several of the peasants. The guard assigned to watch over the wagon suddenly gets a very pained expression as he realizes how dangerous this assignment has just become.

Realizing her mistake, Cyben winces apologetically at the guard before curtsying again and saying, "Thank you, my lord." She

then walks over to the group clustering around the sewer entrance.

With a sigh, Mobon ties off his bags securely and hefts them into the wagon. He kneels, makes a show of securely retying his boots and palms 10d from his purse. Reaching out to shake the guard's hand, he discreetly presses the coins into the man's palm as he says, "I realize that you do this as a service to your Lord, but don't think I don't appreciate your efforts just the same!"

Brart responds, "I recommend two of us should be carrying a rope, everyone a lit torch and one or two spare ones. We should carry some small ropes for binding the gargûn, if we have surrendered them. We will need a third rope and a solid pole of wood for descending into the sewer, but these will remain at our entrance."

The nearby vendors quickly gather two 50' coils of heavy rope, 10 torches and a leather bucket filled with sand. They mention that a pole of sufficient strength cannot be found quickly and, with such a small hole, it would just get in the way.

Brart takes the plan of the sewer system, his fire making tools, some drawing equipment, chalk, his purse and money. He knots one of the ropes knot approximately every foot for easier climbing. Several of the vendors hold the rope while Brart climbs down and swings to the right hand walkway. Next they light a single torch to lower it down in the sand filled bucket, followed by the other coil of rope and the rest of the unlit torches.

While preparations for descent are being made, and after she and Mobon have finished talking about fatigue and healing options, etc., Kaden will look for the barker (or anyone else about who might look like they would know the answer) and corner him.

"What manner of beasts are these that you've unleashed on my fair city? What do we need to know about them as we go to capture them?"

With a bit of a smile at "my fair city", the guard says, "Sorry miss but I cannot allow you to harass the prisoner. Besides, we have already questioned him and he knows little more of them."

Cyben steps forward and peers down the hole rather dubiously. Then she takes a deep breath, grabs the rope and lowers herself into the sewer. Cyben has no problem climbing down the rope but finds the maneuver of swinging to the walkways a bit difficult. Finally, she makes it to the left walkway opposite the others.

Brart hangs the coil of rope around his chest and places the torches and the bucket some fifteen feet away on the ground while assisting the others to come down. Afterwards, he stores two torches in the back of his belt and lights a second torch. "Well then. Who will carry another torch? I think the unlit ones should be evenly distributed, so if somebody falls down and gets wet, not all our spare torches will be useless at once. Oh, and don't worry about falling down. Whatever you'll meet down there was once probably good enough to eat. "

Cyben smiles a little wanly at Brart's good humor and offers to carry the other torch. Cyben bows her head and in a strong, steady voice meant to cut across the chatter and jingle of the group's efforts to arrange themselves she says, "May Our Lady Peoni bless and keep this little company, who seek today to protect and serve the people of Kiban. May she ward us with a

loving hand and guide our path in wisdom and mercy, to put right that which is wrong and to bring peace where there is fear and danger. By the Light, the Love and the Honor, so be it." Then she looks around and takes stock of how the group is ordering itself.

Moving back to the hole, Mobon climbs down into the tunnel. He too finds that it easier to climb down the rope than it is to swing and jump onto the walkways. However, he makes it to the right walkway without mishap. Once down, he draws his coustille and extends his free hand, saying softly "I can carry a torch."

Brart gives him the one from his right hand, taking out the sewer map instead. "Want a spare torch too? Genado, can you make out any tracks? Do you have enough light when I'm standing behind you?"

"Aye, I'll take one," Mobon says, temporarily resheathing his weapon to accept the spare. "Brart..." he continues, looking around the tunnel, "how small can we expect these tunnels to get?"

Hearing Cyben's prayer as he climbs down, Mobon says, "Amen, Lady." Silently, he offers a prayer to Halea, not for himself, but asking that she ward his funds from loss. He realizes that she might object to his leaving the bag behind, but begs her endurance, as a plague of gargûn would drastically diminish the opportunities for pleasure and profit in the region.

"Men!" Kaden says under her breath as she watches Mobon. "All that mental effort, and there he goes down the hole!" Once he makes it down, she follows him, watching what he does so she can mimic where she needs to go exactly. She makes it to the right walkway with much less effort than Mobon.

Kaden lands with an unceremonious thump on the right walkway but manages to keep her feet, which is good, considering what she's standing in. "Gor," she said rudely, covering her nose with her sleeve. "Festering gargûn can have this place!" She looks around her, then wedges herself firmly in the middle of the group as she peers around, half-expecting the beasts to come charging at them at any second. Kaden reaches her hand out to take a torch from Brart.

Mobon asks, "Kaden, do you have any preventative medicines to protect us from bad humors and creatures dwelling herein that might find our bodies more congenial homes than their present surroundings?"

Kaden thought a moment, mentally going over her herbal store as she pursed her lips. Finally, she shook her head. "Nay, I've naught, friend," she said ruefully. "Unfortunately my bag is stuffed with common herbs you'd find 'round these parts, more suited to the mundanities of life -- things that help once you've been hurt mostly. I've nothing to deal with any rutting, tick-infested monstrosities. I'm afraid all we have to protect us for now is our good lady." Kaden said a brief and silent devotion to Peoni. "But if you get a wound of a normal physical sort, now that I can set aright."

Returning from his fruitless quest to find Jerek and making a mental note to ask Cyben about her relative, Jak notes that preparations have almost finalized and prepares to clamber down the rope. He ties his poleax to the rope and lowers it down to

where Mobon can catch it then swarms down the rope himself. Kaden shouldered a coil of rope and took a torch from Brart, gamely smiling as she motioned toward the deeper part of the sewer.

Cyben shoulders the other rope and tucks a couple of unlit torches under one arm. She lifts her lit torch as high as seems prudent in the space and moves to stand a bit behind Jak, eyeing the length of his poleax with some suspicion. She looks around this spot one more time, as if trying to memorize it, and says quietly, "Well, then, we'd best be on about this, I suppose."

As the party sorts itself out, Mobon asks Brart to hold his lit torch for a moment while he doffs his hood and cuts a suitably sized piece from it to tie around the unlit torch head. As he works, he says to the miner, "Well, Brart, it looks like you're the closest thing we've got to a tracker now. Can you see any sign of the beasties' passage?" When the torch is properly wrapped and stowed in the back of his belt, Mobon will take back the torch from Brart, draw his coustille once again and stand ready to depart.

"Well, I can look if I see anything that does not look like human footprint in the dust or washed up mud. If you were fleeing, would you run upstream or downstream? I once heard a soldier say hunted people run uphill, but what looks like dead ends to hide in are in both directions. Of course they aren't that dead when the lid is opened some fools above, but what do gargûns know about flushed toilets?"

"I know little enough of them myself!" Mobon chuckles, then proceeds in a more serious tone, "I would think that their first priority would be to find a concealed place to allow the female to give birth...a lair, if you will. We must rely on your knowledge of the sewers to discern such locations for us, friend Brart. Give us your best estimate and I, for one, will gladly follow your lead."

Jak leans out, holding out the halberd's handle for Cyben to grasp so that she can use it to steady herself with in her leap across then leaps across himself.

"Brart, I will loan you my shortsword," he says, "if you will. If it comes to close grips, my dagger will avail me the best choice I would think, otherwise I would prefer to keep a foe at point's end."

Jak turns to look at the two women with frank admiration "There are few who would venture here, unarmed as you are. You have my respect, good ladies." Jak looks back down the dark passage and adds "but if either Mobon or I should fall, it would be best to retreat forthwith, arming yourselves from the weapons we bear. I am a babe in the woods here, and can make no sense of these tricksey turns and curves the tunnel makes, it is Brart who holds the key to our return it seems."

"Thanks. Do you use it for pushing the point at the enemy or do I just chop down with it?" Brart folds the plan away in his belt pocket after memorizing it once again and takes the shortsword in his right hand. "Actually escaping the sewers is easy. Just follow the sewers downstream and sooner or later you will just walk out at a grated door to the river. It is bolted to keep animals out, but you can grip threw it to push the bar open"

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Cyben looks around the shadowy, stinking tunnel again and shakes her head. "This really isn't the way I pictured my last day in Kiban -- the Festival day no less! Well, the Lady makes the trails. We but follow them. Good Brart, pray tell us how large a warren is this that we must search? Does it run under the entire town?"

4-PEÓNU-720 TR (FIFTH WATCH)

4:15 PM: Looking around near the entrance hole determines that the passageway travels 20' back towards the city wall where it is loosely sealed off with stones. Water flows through the stones, from an underground stream or spring, to slowly pass the sewage down stream. In the other direction, the torchlight allows you to see clearly for 20' and another 10' dimly with a confusion of flickering shadows. You gradually get used to the overpowering stench to the point that you can almost ignore it.

Travelling downstream, you quickly come to the point where the passage intersects with another on the right-hand side. While you decide whether to turn right or to jump the 5' channel and continue forward, you hear a loud shriek from the forward passage. A couple of minutes later you hear the patter of hundreds of small feet coming in your direction.

Cyben jumps at the sound of the shriek and tries to lean out to the side a bit to peer around those in front of her. "By the light of Her Eyes! What was that? It sounds like someone's been hurt. Quickly, Brart, let's get down that passage!"

Holding up one gauntleted hand in warning, Jak says "Careful, Cyben. We must first see what it is that has hurt them!"

Brart says, "That may be rats! We better will stay on this side, so we have only to handle those that get across and we may meanwhile examine the map deciding where to go next."

Brart notices on the map that the forward passage goes in almost a direct line to the castle then turns right toward the river exit downstream of the docks. The right passage travels in a large curve through the marketplace and down to the same exit. "We're lucky. If that noise was made by the gargun they have chosen the sewer part with lesser hiding places. Any problems with rats may have slowed them down."

Hefting his weapon, Jak nods grimly. "Well, let's get this over then. I'm not happy with killing unarmed creatures, but I guess there's little choice otherwise."

Kaden jumped at the shriek, eyes growing larger as she heard the footsteps and the accompanying discussion about rats. "One or two rats is fine with me, but that sounds like thousands!" she said, clearly unhappy. "I need one hand free to defend myself... I have a knife and know how to use it, but I think a lit torch might be a bit more effective against a large number of them."

"I agree, Kaden." Mobon says, extending his torch, "Here, let me light one of your spares for you. We can extinguish it later to save the light but, I'm thinking we can't have too much fire just now!" Mobon remains poised and ready to employ both torch and coustille, if needed, against the rats.

"All right, then -- light me!" Kaden said, grinning at Mobon as she thrust the unlit torch in her right hand toward him for lighting.

Cyben says, "Brart, is there a way we could go around the rats and come upon the gargun from another direction?"

"We could go down to the river and then back again," Brart replies, "but right now they are in hearing distance. Till we return from the other direction, they might be anywhere."

Cyben continues, "We should consider splitting up. One group could cut them off from escape to the river and surrounding lands while the other pursues them directly."

"I hate the idea of splitting up as long as we don't know how dangerous these garguns really are", answers Brart.

Shaking his head vigorously, Jak says "I agree with Brart, splitting up will weaken us and we have no way to communicate, the gargûn may well find allies here in this dank world and attack us piecemeal. It is best if we strike quickly, strike hard and keep on striking."

Waiting restively as new torches are lit, Jak nods and says, "Now it is time we sortie, I must ask that we all watch for one another, we are far more likely to die if we fall into the sewers in a swoon when hurt than from any club the gargûn may have found."

Jak is clearly eager to follow up the chase; he constantly swings his head from side to side as if trying to get a good fix on the quarry. "By my hilt, if we let these creatures get much further ahead of us they may disappear up a side adit and not be seen again until ready to do their worst!"

Cyben says, "I agree that whatever we are doing it is best done swiftly. But let me remind you all that the Lady works in ways many and sometimes mysterious, and these creatures, while dangerous, are still Her charges too. If fate and Her Grace should give us the opportunity to capture the beasts alive without putting ourselves or others at undue risk, it is our sacred duty to accept that gift." She is particularly watching Jak's face as she speaks, trying to gauge his reaction and the strength of the battle lust in him. From what she can see of Jak's face above the bevor, he appears to have the expression of an unhappy man keen to get a nasty deed over with.

"Aye, there is no glory slaughtering unarmed creatures in a sewer, but Stern Larani demands that we protect the weak and if that calls for wading through a cesspit I will do it, by my blade. It is not these creature's undoing that a yearn for, but to safeguard those above in the byways and shops of the city."

Jak starts to look for a safer crossing point in preparation to jumping over. "First they will seize children and the infirm to supply themselves, as by all the tales they are addicted to cannibalism. Then sectors of the city will be unsafe, and stout troops will have to be sent into the sewers where they will be beset from ambushes, all because we stayed our hands and gave way to pity. If there is any risk of these creatures escaping to breed or somehow call their fellows to them, we must have no hesitation."

"I, for one, will offer no such pledge." Mobon's say as he lights Cyben's torch, "Our current problem stems from the foolish attempt to hold these creatures in captivity and I will not participate in repeating that mistake. I respect your beliefs, Cyben, and honor you for them. I would not seek these creatures in their own lands and slay them for sport. However, when they menace human society, they must face their fate, as must we all. Unless Jak, who is my liege, forbids it, I will dispatch any such creatures that come within my reach, keeping them alive only long enough to wrest from them the locations of others of their

ilk in the area and then sending them to whatever punishment or reward awaits them at the hands of their gods." Mobon says this with no excitement or battle-lust, but with a quiet manner that speaks of grim determination.

The halberdier nods silently, in total agreement with Mobon. "Enough of these fractious discussions, we argue over what may never happen, let us sally over the sewer channel and come to grips."

"Of course, good Jak," says Cyben, "we must be about this business. But I would be remiss in my duty to you did I not remind you that even fierce Larani allows a place for mercy where it is possible...and that a slain enemy is not always the best security."

Kaden largely stayed silent during the discussion about the gargun and whether to destroy them or not. She wished no harm on innocent creatures, but wasn't entirely sure that these were innocent. All she knew is that she'd defend her comrades and herself however she had to.

At this point in the conversation, the patter of little footsteps resolves itself into hundreds of sewer rats pouring out of the passage ahead of you. The ones on the right walkway follow it around into the passage to the right. The ones on the left walkway follow that into the passage behind you. Some of the ones swimming in the sewage go down each passage. A few try to climb onto the walkway where you are standing but a few swings of a lit torch discourage them and they follow their fellows. In general, they appear to be too frightened of what is behind them to be very concerned of your presence. After a minute or two, they pass and, once again, everything becomes quiet.

Standing with one leg raised in a vain attempt to stop a horde of lumpy little wet fur-critters clambering up his boots, Jak's eyes are a little wide and he lets out a long held breath. Looking from side to side, and then up the dark passage, he says "Well, that doesn't exactly fill me with enthusiasm."

"That's not the rats I'm used to know. Whatever is up there, the garguns or whatever must be real frightening. But I fear we will have to go on, there is not much space for reinforcements anyway and time is valuable."

Kaden stayed stock still as the rats rushed past, waving her torch only when necessary to ward off the creatures. "Be careful," she whispered as the group gathered itself to move forward.

Cyben peers across the channel at the tunnel on the far side, straining her eyes and ears to catch any sense of further movement or life on the far side. She see's nothing but darkness and hears nothing other than the dripping of water and the discussions of her companions.

Swallowing nervously, Mobon clears his throat and says, from his position as rearguard, "Well, whatever frightened them, we'd best get moving, hadn't we?"

"I hate being avant-garde," says Brart, "please leave me some way. I'm jumping much better with decent start-up. Could you shortly put the shortsword in its sheath again, so I will have my right hand free." Brart checks the floor for greasy places or debris, roughly removing what could make him slip and stumble,

runs form a seven-foot distance and jumps. Easily jumping twice the necessary distance, he holds the torch arm upward, assisting the others with his right arm and takes the sword again, when all have arrived.

Jak leaps twice as far as necessary as well while mumbling something about, "a leap into the dark . . ."

Once Jak has jumped, Cyben follows, thanking Brart for his assistance. Cyben easily jumps twice as far as necessary.

Kaden jumps in her turn to a distance of 5' 4", right at the edge of the channel and, with Brart's help, manages to not fall in. Kaden squawked as she felt her feet slipping, just before Brart helped her. "Thank you!" she whispered urgently as she cleared the way for others to come over.

Once the others are safely across and after sheathing his blade, Mobon attempts the jump. He, too, easily, jumps twice the distance necessary, redraws his weapon and resumes his rearguard position. Once Mobon is across, Brart crowds his way back to the front along the 2-½ foot wide walkway. Before moving again, he checks how much torch time is left and guesses there is about an hour and a half left.

Moving along at the rear, Mobon suggests, "Perhaps we should extinguish all but Brart's and my brands. They seemed to serve before and we'd not want to run out of light down here." He focuses his primary attention on the wall opposite and behind the group, peering into the shadows to try and spot any potential hazards. He does not move forward without looking ahead and checking his footing however. He is also careful to maintain several feet between himself and Kaden, to allow him freedom of movement if he must act quickly.

"Sounds good to me," says Jak as he hefts his longer weapon, refreshing his grip, "shall we move on?"

4:30 PM: At the very edge of the light from your torches, you can see a figure entering through a hole similar to the one where you entered. The figure swings to the walkway then, with a twist of the rope, grabs a grappling hook before it can fall into the sewage. The figure proceeds down the tunnel away from you at a fast limp. Shortly after the figure disappears into the darkness, you see a light from the right hand side (as if a door was opened), and then the light once again blinks out leaving only darkness.

Jak hisses, "Did you see that?! Let's investigate!" Jak cautiously walks up to where the light was, and examines the area.

Kaden's head whips around when she sees the figure limping. "There! Did you see it? Let's go! "

Brart whispers, "I think we should leave it alone for now, just mark it on the map. Whatever is going on will not like exposure, so it will still be there after we've found the gargun." Brart knows of several doors in cellars that were used while building the sewers and he suspects others could have been made afterwards. He also knows the Lia-Kavair use the sewers as well.

Grinning from under his helm's brim, the chin-piece hides his mouth but the twinkling in Jak's eyes can be seen "They may not like the exposure, but they'll have to put up with it if I have this" he says, holding up his axe. "Do you think they'll know where

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the gargun could be? If they live down here, they'd have to know all the haunts that the creatures could lurk in . . ."

This particular door is a hardwood, ironbound door that was obviously built at the time the sewers were created. Examining the map he see's that it is approximately under the house of the master mason in charge of building the city walls. It appears to be bared or blocked from the other side and it will take Jak's halberd some time to chop through. This will likely ruin his halberd as a weapon.

Brart still whispers, "I wonder who and how many of them lurks behind the door and still I'm not really feeling prepared to meet just those two small garguns."

"Well! That certainly was odd," says Cyben, "But the door is locked and I can't see that this fellow can have much to do with the gargun that we know are...scurrying about at the moment." She makes a bit of a face and glances out at the darkness again. "Perhaps we'd best focus on that now and worry about this later."

"I'd have to agree," comments Mobon, peering intently into the shadows in both directions, "It would be unwise to put forth the effort to breach such a formidable portal with less than half our party fighters and no idea who or what waits within."

4- PEÓNU -720 TR (FIFTH WATCH)

5:00 PM: After travelling for another half-hour, you see a door on the left-hand side that is just open a crack. You hear what may be a deep rumbling voice on the other side but you cannot tell what is being said. Suddenly there is some high pitched screaming which is abruptly cut short.

Brart stops and turns around whispering, "When we jump over to investigate, we will probably be heard. Would it make sense to jump directly into the door?" While he waits for the others, especially the fighters, to make up their mind, he tries to remember where this door might be leading. Brart estimates that they are just across the moat from the castle. From here the sewers turn right and follow the moat to exit at the downstream side of the city wall (about the same distance that they have just traveled).

Mobon, already keyed up by the tense pursuit and delays, reacts instantly to the screaming, springing across the stream. He leaps a distance of three feet and lands feet first in the waist deep sewage. He tosses the torch onto the left walkway and clambers up to take position next to the door, which is partially open into the room, and draws his coustille. A small patch of oil continues to burn on the stone walkway where the torch lay before he recovered it.

At the sound of the scream, Cyben is frozen in startled dismay. Jolted out of it by Mobon's leap, she readies herself as best she can on the walkway and easily jumps across, making sure to do so well out of Mobon's way. Taking position behind Mobon, she whispers, "I can hold that torch for you, if you want."

Jak nimbly jumps across and takes position on the other side of the door.

Sighing at yet another jump and remembering her near-miss last time she tried it, Kaden jumps over in her turn, making sure she has someone nearby to reach for in case she doesn't make it. "Please!!!" she thinks desperately as she launches herself to the

far side of the channel. Jumping a distance of two feet, two inches, she lands feet first in the waist deep sewage.

Cyben reaches out to take Kaden's hand, then braces herself as best she can and tries to help haul her friend up out of the muck, doing her level best to keep a completely straight face (and avoid "collateral damage" as Kaden clambers up!).

"Gor," she says rudely. "Wouldn't you just know it?" She complained loudly to no one in particular, handing one of her torches to Cyben before she tries to climb back out of the muck.

"So much for stealth," Brart hisses while he prepares to jump...dry ground, no visible obstacles, some six feet from the others, as he will arrive juggling a torch and shortsword...and he easily reaches the other side, safe and dry.

Kaden simply makes a face at Brart's remark, vowing silently to rub a filthy leg against his hose later.

With a nod to Jak to coordinate their actions, Mobon kicks the door sharply, attempting to knock it wide open and bang it against its stops (in case someone's behind it). He enters the room leading with the torch and holding the coustille at the ready. He does not penetrate the area beyond deeply until he knows what he's looking at. Just a couple of steps in and slightly to one side to clear Jak's line of attack with the pig sticker, should such be necessary.

As Jak performs a similar move to take station on the other side of the door, Mobon has a strong feeling that something very evil has happened in this room.

Looking into the room, you see pieces of the ripped apart garguns. In the middle of the floor is a 15' diameter and 3" thick ring of copper embedded into floor. In the middle of the ring are engraved symbols that you would guess to be occult since none of you have ever seen anything like them before. In the exact center of the ring is some type of large beast's skull, around which is written in chalk, "Salutare Ingens Ilvir". The side of the skull is smeared with blood. In one corner of the tapestry-covered walls is an iron cabinet with a small pool of blood in front of it.

As quickly as you take all of this in, a thick, black, oily smoke starts to issue from the skull and fill the circle. The smoke coalesces into a human sized creature with a goat's head, large bat's wings, clawed hands and prominent fangs.

Mobon sucks in his breath involuntarily and grips the torch tighter, thrusting its pure flame out ahead of him in an attempt to ward off this evil. He stays tight on the wall next to the door and offers a prayer to his Divine Lady, "Thalia, Princess of Fortune, I beg you to intercede yet again on my behalf with our Divine Mistress, that I receive the guidance and wisdom to take the proper course here."

Skidding to a halt, Jak's eyes bulge as the monstrosity coalesces in front of them, he holds out his halberd to ward it off and starts to backpedal. "By the ninety nine hells, what is that! Ugh, and by the three ladies, the stink!"

Brart, feeling committed to enter the room being the last armed man left, quickly decides to throw his torch at the beast, changing sword and torch before and taking the sword in the right hand again after watching the torch reach its target.

Time seems to slow as you watch the torch fly end-over-end towards the circle. When it reaches the cloud of smoke, the dust and fine oil particles ignite with a resounding BOOM! The force of the explosion throws Brart back out the door, across the sewage channel and into the wall. He takes a serious bruise to his back, knocking the wind out of him, and briefly stunning him into inaction. Mobon is slammed against the wall, suffering a minor bruise to his left calf and a bit singed but otherwise unharmed. Jak is also slammed against the wall, slightly bruising his right shoulder and causing him to drop his poleax.

From the center of the circle comes a loud booming voice, "BEGONE FROM HERE! YOU DO NOT BELONG HERE ANY MORE THAN THE TWO WHO CAME BEFORE YOU! BEGONE BEFORE I HAVE TO DO TO YOU WHAT I DID TO THEM!"

Scrabbling for his weapon, Jak almost jumps a mile when the great voice booms out. Snatching up his halberd, Jak glares at the creature and pants rapidly, too scared to act and too proud to retreat.

Cyben grasps her holy symbol in both hands and offers a brief and fervent prayer to Peoni, "Blessed Lady, Guardian of the Innocent, protect and guide us all," before stepping into the room to see what is happening.

Kaden ducked as soon as she heard the explosion, covering her eyes and head as she pulled back away from the door. When she saw Brart come flying out, her eyes widened. Head still reeling from the force, Kaden watched with horror as her friend went back inside. "CYBEN!" she yelled. "Are you mad? Get out of there!"

Glancing around, she saw that Brart was unmoving. Alarmed, she readies herself to jump back across the channel and look at his wounds. In her concern for Brart, Kaden easily jumps the gap without giving it a second thought. She examines Brart and determines he has fractured a couple of ribs. He'll need splints and bandages to make a truss and a compress of crushed briony (changed once per day).

Wincing at his injury, Kaden gently examines Brart. "Try not to move," she says softly. "I don't know what was in there, but it sure did you up good. Looks like you've fractured some of your ribs." Kaden thought a moment. "You'll need a splint, and I've naught to make it with, unless we can find some boards down here in this cesspit."

Back inside the room, Mobon pushes off from the wall and shakes his head to clear it. He gazes at the monster before them for a moment, considering what he's seen and thinking over his options. Then, with a slight nod of resolve he eases his torch to the ground, careful not to extinguish it, and moves sideways along the wall toward Jak and Cyben.

When she first sees the creature, Cyben gasps and takes a half-step back, nearly colliding with Mobon as he slips past.

"Nobody step into that circle..." Mobon says in a voice so tightly controlled it was almost monotone. His eyes never leave the thing as he moves.

Calmed by Mobon's quiet courage, Cyben straightens up and stares at the abomination, like a dimly remembered lesson on the horrors of Evil come to terrible, inexplicable life.

When he reaches Jak, Mobon whispers, "The skull's the thing...we should bust that skull to pieces..."

Only dimly aware of the whispering warriors, Cyben grips her holy symbol tightly and thrusts it forward, a focus and beacon of her faith and duty. Her voice quavers a bit but gains strength as she cries, "In the name of Peoni, Lady of Light, Keeper of the Good Earth, Preserver of the Sacred Balance, I command you to return to the foul pit whence you came!"

"YOU DARE COMMAND ME IN THE NAME OF THE LADY OF LIES, THE EVERLIVING DAUGHTER OF LOST VIRTUE," replies the creature, "THE ONLY ONE WHO COMMANDS ME IS THE SERPENT THAT DWELLS BELOW, PRINCE OF THE FATHERLESS MULTITUDE, AND MASTER OF ARAKA-KALAI. FOR THE LAST TIME, I TELL YOU TO BEGONE FROM THIS PLACE OR I WILL TAKE GREAT PLEASURE IN RIPPING YOU ASUNDER."

"Jak, Cyben..." Mobon whispers, "I'm going to try something. Don't interfere. Jak, when you see an opportunity, smash the hell out of that skull, but don't enter the circle unless I do first. If you do, do what you gotta do and get out fast!" Straightening, Mobon draws his coustille into his free hand and stares fixedly at the creature, mustering his courage. He takes a step forward, and then speaks again, not looking back. "If I'm wrong, give half my money to the temple of Halea, then split the balance between those of Larani and Peoni." Setting his jaw firmly and squeezing the grips of his weapons, he advances slowly and deliberately to the outer edge of the circle. He is careful to not let any portion of his body, even his weapons, touch the circle or cross its edge, stopping with several inches to spare. He holds his body loose, ready, and primed to move defensively, if necessary.

Quietly sidling further around the circle, Jak takes careful aim at the skull lying within the pentagram with his halberd, looking over at Mobon he nods grimly. He aims to belt the skull with all his might and then wade into the demon in case it stays put regardless of Mobon's plan, hacking at it with his weapon.

As soon as Mobon approaches within a couple of feet of the circle, the creature rushes to the edge of the circle. Without leaving the circle, it reaches beyond it to try and claw Mobon. Mobon stops just beyond the creature's reach. Noting the creature's apparent reach, Mobon abandons his plan to circle behind it, realizing he would be easy prey to the grasping claws on those narrow paths along the walls. "Cyben!" he says, "You can do little here...check on Brart and Kaden!"

Mobon swings his falchion hard at the creature's arms as it tries to reach him, being careful not to overbalance himself and stumble into the circle. He nicks the creature in the left eye. It bellows in pain and rage and steps back, watching Mobon intently.

Recognizing the truth to Mobon's words, Cyben backs slowly toward the door, keeping her eyes on the monster. "Watch yourself, Mobon!" she says, mock-severely. "Don't make me have to come back in here and haul you out -- you look heavy!" Then she turns away abruptly and steps back out into the sewer,

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pausing a moment to survey the situation. She spots Kaden with the crumpled Brart on the opposite side and quickly launches herself back across the "stream" to see if she can be of any help. She jumps a total of 2' 9" landing with a splash in the middle of the waist deep sewage.

She stands frozen for a moment, stunned by the sudden passage from bizarre, otherworldly horror to horror of the most appallingly mundane sort. Finally, helplessly, she begins to giggle hysterically before slogging to the edge of the muck and hauling herself out to collapse on the walkway on the far side. "Whew, that stuff is nasty!"

Stifling the urge to laugh, Kaden simply held her nose in mock disgust. Actually, truth be told, she was a bit disappointed that she wouldn't be able to menace Cyben anymore with her stinking dress.

Seeing now that the demon can reach beyond the ward, Jak shakes his head. "I'm getting back beyond the sewer door Mobon! You go first and I'll keep it at bay if it rushes us, then I'll follow you!"

After completing her look at Brart's wounds, Kaden shook her head. She knew what was wrong and how to fix it, but whether or not she could apply that knowledge safely was a gamble. "Your back is quite bruised, and those broken ribs," she said, trailing off as she tried to ignore the sounds coming from the room. "You'll need a proper compress and a splint to help you heal. It is fairly serious, and my skills as a physician are still developing. Less serious wounds I'd be more confident about, but this one -- you may prefer to wait until we go back above, and see a proper physician. I can't guarantee that it'll heal properly if I attend to it now. What would you like me to do?" Pain writ Kaden's face, wanting to help but not knowing whether she should try.

"I think we should just wait if our brave fighters get rid of this beast," says Brart, "I think I can not climb out of a sewer, so I have to walk down to the river. Will be a slow walk and I'll need assistance but basically I'm fine for now, inside they might be in more need of help soon."

"Look, you've got broken ribs," Kaden said, frustrated with the whole male ego thing. "It will injure you further if you try to walk or climb around without something to help your innards stay put." She put her hands on her hips, clearly not to be dissuaded from her task.

"I am not going to move without proper dressing of my wounds," replies Brart, "but it will be much easier if you just go up and get the right stuff in a moments notice instead of improvising down below."

Kaden shook her head. "The whole point was to make a temporary splint so you can get out of here at all -- as for dressing your wounds fully, I'm not sure that I can do that without hurting you more. Maybe, and maybe not -- that's your choice, whether you want me to try or want to just wait until you can get upstairs to a physician. So those are the choices. Let me splint you so you can walk and then either take care of you fully upstairs or send you off to see a doctor, or not."

"You're welcome," answers Brart.

Cyben rolls her eyes at Kaden over Brart's head.

Meanwhile, in the room...

"Aha!" Mobon cries in triumph, clashing his hilts together briefly, then resuming his guard, "How like you the feel of *my* claws, monster?"

"Nay, Jak!" he continues, eyeing the beast, "Step up and prod the thing a bit with your halberd! Drive it back toward the far end of the circle!" Flushed with accomplishment, he attempts with difficulty to ride down the urge to charge into the circle after it. Chest heaving with both fatigue and excitement, he feels his warrior spirit drawing him forward, as it drew him from the forge to a leave behind a life of smithing for one of smiting! He watches the creature carefully, knowing that one mistake could be his last against such a foe...

The creature waits as well as if it had all of time at its disposal. It appears aware that, in its confidence, it made a mistake and it is determined to not make another.

Outside on the walkway, Cyben says, "I, also, should be able to offer some aid and comfort for your injury once we are away from this place. Peoni's gifts are very healing, but act slowly, aiding natural regeneration rather than replacing it."

"Kaden, might a good binding of his ribs help him walk for now, keeping the movement of the broken ones from moving too much, even if it does little to actually set the bones to right?"

Kaden nodded, thinking. "I'd considered that, and..."

As the beast's angry bellow echoes out of the door across the way, Cyben's head snaps around with a worried look. "Aye, 'twould be a great comfort to see Jak and Mobon come striding back out of that door. Bad as gargun in the sewers might be, whatever we have stumbled across here is something far worse, and much darker. May the Lady preserve us all!"

Rummaging through her supplies, Kaden could find little that would make a decent splint. She had neither leather nor wool -- though perhaps her compatriots might. "Cyben, have you any stiff material that might make a decent splint for Brart? Leather, or wool, such as that? Otherwise he'll have a heck of a time getting out of here."

"Oh, let's see. Goodness, nothing like that with me," Cyben says as she looks down at her own and Kaden's garments.

Kaden frowned as they both examined their dresses. "Gor, and to think this is all we've got to bind a wound with. Not proper at all to be near a wound, fouled as they both are by this festering spittoon of a trench...if we cut our dresses up to where they're clean, we'd be indecent, by Peoni."

"Aye, these filthy dresses won't do...and I'm not sure what Solana Sarawyn would make of us running half-naked out of the sewers!" Cyben says with a laugh.

"But," she continues, pulling off her wimple, "I think we can turn this into something useful. And fortunately I kept my feet in that muck so this is still clean."

She shudders briefly and makes a face at the thought of the possible alternative as she hands the wimple over to Kaden.

Kaden grinned, both at Cyben and Brart, as her friend handed over her wimple. "Thank goodness for little favors," Kaden said as she took the garment carefully. Using the utmost care she could, she sat Brart up and began to ready her equipment. Hearing his words to the affirmative despite her worries, Kaden began to remove a briony leaf from her pack and bruise it with

her mortar and pestle, then made it into a compress. Once ready, she applied the compress in the proper place to help Brart's ribs set, and set to making his splint with Cyben's wimple, then bound him up tight so that he could get out of the sewer under his own power. If at any time she thinks she needs Cyben's help she'll ask for it.

Cyben will hold the torch for Kaden as she works. She will also keep a close eye on the door across the way and scan up and down the tunnel periodically.

Kaden successfully applies the compress and splints Brart's ribs (H5) and she learns a little from the experience (+1). Grimacing from the pain, Brart goes pale and begins sweating. He finds he is too weak to do more than walk slowly or rest. Kaden realizes he has gone into shock.

"Thanks" Brart mumbles while trying to support himself on the wall in the least hurting way.

Glad for what seemed to be a successful treatment but worried at Brart's color and heartbeat, Kaden scrambled for something to cover him with. (If he has a cloak, she'll wrap it tight around him.) "He's going into shock," Kaden said to Cyben. "We need to get him out of here, someplace warm where he can lie down and rest. Tell the others, and see if anybody has a cloak they can spare -- we have to go now or he'll worsen. If the lads are still up top where we left them, maybe they can help haul him up, for I doubt he can climb himself and the walk out would be too far I think." Kaden's face was grim but determined as she motioned for Brart to stay as still as he could.

"I'd really prefer walking out to the river. It's probably shorter and remember, we had to jump to get here," says Brart.

"Well, all right -- you know these sewers best. I'll defer to your judgment in what is the best route to take. But whatever route we decide on, we'll need to get started soon. Maybe Mobon and Jak can carry you so we can proceed a little more quickly, too," Kaden said.

Cyben nods her understanding and makes another attempt to leap the sewer ditch. She successfully jumps across to make her way to the door to check on Jak and Mobon.

Meanwhile, within the room...

"Jak...back me!" Mobon called, eyes nervously shifting from the doorway to the creature in the circle. He wanted to back toward the door and try to rally the other man back into the fray but something...some inner sense told him that this was a mistake. It was time to act...now...before the thing could gain any kind of advantage.

"Jak!" he called one last time, hoping against hope that his friend would return. Then, without even looking to see if Jak was coming or not, he squeezed the grips of his weapons, whirled them once in his hands to loosen his wrists, and attacked.

As soon as Mobon steps into the circle, the creature moves incredibly fast and claws at Mobon's stomach. Mobon feels the claws rip through his surcoat, through his tunic and into his flesh. Bleeding and going into shock, it is all Mobon can do to stumble back out of the circle. As he tries to recover, he notices

the creature glaring at him intently. Mobon begins to feel very warm.

"N-o-o-o!" cries Jak as he stabs at the creature to force it back away from his friend and to guard Mobon's retreat from the room. While the creature remains prepared for another advance into the circle, he does not leave it.

Terrified at the speed and power of the creature, Mobon staggers for the door to the passageway calling, "Kaden! To me! I'm wounded!" As he gets out into the corridor, he slams the door shut and leans against the wall next to it, quickly slumping down until he is seated.

At Mobon's cry for help, Kaden's head snapped toward the entrance to the fell room. In a flash, she was standing. "Stay still," she admonished Brart, then gathered the tools of her trade in her backpack again and leaped back across the ditch to Mobon's aid, saying a silent prayer to Peoni that whatever this creature was would not destroy them all. After jumping half way and landing in the sewage once again, she helps pull him to safety away from the creature's gaze, eases him down to the floor, and begins to examine him quickly.

She determines that before she can treat the wound, she must stop the bleeding by applying pressure, cleaning and dressing. Treating the wound after the bleeding stops and treating the bruise on the back of his leg can then be accomplished by applying a herbal poultice to draw any infection. She also determines that Mobon is already suffering the effects of shock. Mobon suffers a little blood loss while she is examining him (1 IP).

Back at the sewer entrance a short while ago...

After running to Lord Dariune's tent and finding him already gone (refer to Act 2 Scene 4 Page 1), Jarek returned to where he left his companions and found they had left without him. Some of the merchants give him a torch and helped him climb down a rope into the sewer where he swings to the walkway on the left-hand side. Just as he manages to get the torch lit he hears a shriek from the darkness ahead.

Troubled but intrigued by the shriek at the end of the tunnel, Jarek continues down towards it. However, he proceeds with caution. Holding the torch straight out in front of him, he begins to grow nervous thinking of what lies ahead.

As he travels along, he comes to a place where the sewer branches to the right but he is on the left-hand walkway and cannot easily get to the branching tunnel. From the tunnel ahead, he hears some high pitched screaming which is abruptly cut short. Continuing down that tunnel, he comes to the rest of the group. On the right-hand walkway, he sees Brart leaning against the wall and looking a bit pale. On the left-hand walkway, he sees Jak and Mobon quickly coming out of a door and closing it. Mobon appears to be hurt and is also a bit pale. His sister, Cyben goes to their aid at the same moment that Kaden tries to jump across the sewage channel...and fails.

"Blast!" Kaden said as she found herself once again slogging through the muck. Ignoring the sludge as best she could, she hauled herself out and up to where Mobon was emerging from the door.

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Shaking her head, Kaden began working on Mobon. "I've got to stop your bleeding," she said, glancing up at his face to check his color. "That thing really swatted both of you. I'm sorry, but this is going to hurt."

Pulling a clean linen bandage and some astringent from her pack, Kaden begins to clean and dress Mobon's cuts, hoping to stanch the bleeding. For his leg, she'll apply a mix of marigold flower (*Calendula*) and lanolin to form a poultice, then apply it in a compress.

Once done, if Mobon has a cloak, she will wrap it tight around him to help fight off the shock, urging him to stay still. "We need to get these two out of here quickly. They're both in shock now."

Catching a flash of movement out of the corner of his eye, Mobon jerks away from Kaden and surges to his feet, snapping out his coustille and hissing, "Hisst...someone comes!" The sudden movement is too much for his shocked condition, his balance fails and he sags against the wall with a groan, stomach churning. Pain rips through his midsection from the wounds there as he slides back down to the floor. Through cloudy vision, he just manages to make out the approaching form of Jarek.

Rushing to catch his friend before he hits the floor, Jak stands over him and menaces the figure with his halberd. "Who goes there!?"

Cyben stands stricken, looking from one injured comrade to another. Then she calls to Kaden, Jak and Jarek, "Come, we must get these two to where they can rest and receive further aid! Obviously leaving the way we came in will not do with such injuries. Good Brart, let us follow your map to the nearest exit we may walk out of!"

"Aye," Kaden said to Cyben. "We need to get these men out of this filthy place, fixed, and ourselves cleaned up as well. Let's go."

Resheathing his coustille, Mobon begins to struggle upward again. "Jarek, my lad!" he says, albeit in a somewhat croaky voice, "Glad to see you...might I borrow your shoulder for the walk out of here? I'm feeling a tad under the weather, just now..." He makes sure that Jarek has a lit torch in his other hand, before they move out.

4- PEÓNU -720 TR (FIFTH WATCH)

COLD, PARTLY CLOUDY, WIND FROM NORTHWEST

7:00 PM: Moving slowly with the continuous encouragement of the women, you reach the sewer exit in about an hour. The metal latch on the gate is slightly rusty but you manage to get it open. Looking about you, you see the sun setting behind the end of the city wall on the west, the river in front of you to the south, the city shipyards and docks to the east and the backs of a carpentry shop and a residence behind you to the north. Stepping away from the sewer walkways onto level ground, you breathe in great lung-full's of clean air. You can still smell the sewage on your clothes but that is nowhere near the stench inside the sewer.

Checking Mobon's wound, Kaden determines that the bleeding has been stopped but both men's wounds will need cleaning and tending very soon. It is also likely that the innkeeper of the Silver Way will not let you anywhere near the inn in your present state.

"For a start," says Brart, "we might return to my masters house and try to tidy up a bit before we contact the authorities. Actually I'd just want to lay down and rest before I'll try anything else, but those of you who represent higher powers might want to send for more respectable clothing before officially appearing again. Now that the immediate danger is gone we should take that time."

Cyben answers, "I think it is far more pressing that we get you and Mobon some more treatment for your wounds! We can worry about your clothing afterward. Come, let's go straight to the temple; it is this way [points in the appropriate direction]. There is much more that can be done for you there... and we may give thanks to the Lady as well for our deliverance from that creature!"

"Aye," Kaden said succinctly, agreeing with Cyben. "Our first priority must be your wounds. We need to get you away from this filth where I can properly clean and dress them, as soon as possible." Kaden shouldered one of the injured's arms as best she could, helping him walk.

"Sounds like a good idea," says Jak, "I'll watch our back in case that thing gets loose and follows us."

Leaning wearily on Jarek, Mobon says, "Jak, I doubt it will get out of that circle unless someone lets it out. May I suggest that you hurry to the local temple of Larani, if there is one, and inform them of that monster? It seems to be in their line..."

"Once we're out of these damned sewers," replies Jak, "there may be more than just that thing back there lurking around here, and we're covering new ground. Thank the three ladies that we can at least confirm that the gargūn are dead, I've lost a lot of my fire for poking around in these stinking culverts!"

"Point taken..." Mobon replies, breathing heavily.

Passing between the shipyards on the right and the carpenter shop on the left, you enter Neph Street. Turning right in front of the Riverman Inn, you follow Neph Street east until it turns to the north at one of the unfinished watchtowers. At this time of evening most of the shops have closed and there is very little traffic on the streets. The people who do pass by, give your group a wide girth. Your injuries and filthy state makes them think you must be troublemakers. Continuing along Neph Street, you turn east in front of the Mason's Guildhall, pass between the mayor's house on the left and the castle entrance on the right, to intersect with Shebra Way at the Temple of Larani. Pausing here, you can see the Temple of Peoni about a hundred yards north along Shebra Way.

Arylen of Bassill, a newly ordained priest of Larani and cousin to Kaden, is standing at the temple entrance talking to the Obasaran (Master of Secular Affairs). The Obasaran has been instructing Arylen to go in search of a missing priestess of Peoni who was sent to the fair to bring back the fees set aside for the Temple of Peoni. At that moment they notice the half-dozen, filthy and injured people coming along the street toward them. One of them may be the missing priestess and another may be Arylen's cousin.

As the group approached the temple of Larani and Kaden noticed her cousin standing there, Kaden breathed a sigh of relief. "Cyben, if you will -- I see Arylen, my cousin, standing at Larani's entrance -- so let us rest here for now, where we can

doctor our wounded, for they need attention immediately. You can proceed on to our good lady's house if you like, while we attend here, or we can join you once I have helped them."

"Arylen!" Kaden called out as she caught sight of her cousin. "'Tis Kaden, your blood, and these, my friends, need help after being wounded on a mission for Sir Dariune. Might I tend to them inside Larani's walls?"

"Somebody should go and release that soldier from guarding our collected possessions," says Brart, "Some of them will be much safer in the temple, too. We should inform the authorities that at least the gargun problem is solved, though I'm afraid I won't be of much use as a guide for a while."

"Nay, Kaden, we are nearly to Lady Peoni's temple. Let us go there, where the healing sisters, or I, will be able to supplement your doctoring with the Lady's Grace. 'Twill make our friends' healing faster and more sure."

"Why don't you invite your cousin to come along?" she continues, "I'm sure that he -- and his temple -- will want to know about what we saw down there as soon as possible."

Kaden shrugged. While she would prefer to rest in her own lady's temple, Larani was a kind goddess with a closer walk at the moment, and her ties to her cousin were significant. Besides, some of their wounded worshipped Larani, and might prefer to rest in her house. "I think Mobon, at least, reveres Larani -- perhaps the wounded should decide where they will be patched up?"

"Nay...though raised in her flock, I have come to follow Halea."

Mobon mutters weakly, clutching his midsection, "I respect the Lady of Paladins though, and her followers would likely be best equipped to deal with the thing that gashed me."

Arylen smiles suddenly "Kaden it is you, come quickly let me help you inside to tend your companions." He turns to the Obasaran "With your permission Master" he says respectfully.

"I think the temple of Peoni is better equipped to handle that sort of thing. You have my leave to accompany this priestess of Peoni for an extended amount of time for the purpose of her protection. However, you must report here, or at the nearest temple of Larani, from time-to-time so that we know your situation."

"Thank you master, I will drop by as often as I can. May Larani guide." He bows to the master before picking up his bag and hoisting it to his shoulder. With a last look at the temple he moves to join his cousin.

"Good day, Obasaran! Greetings to your Lady and temple," says Cyben, "As always, Larani's aid is most gracious and welcome."

The Obasaran returns her greeting, "And to you and yours as well. Now if you will excuse me, I need to be about my duties so I bid you all good evening." With that he returns within the temple grounds and closes the door.

Turning to her companions, Cyben continues, "Come on, everybody, we are almost there. Kaden, maybe you'd like to fill your cousin in on what has been happening?"

Kaden nodded, glad to have the discussion out of the way and headed toward Peoni's gracious mercies. "Arylen, it is good to

see you. It's been far too long. But I see you wearing the robes of Larani! So your training is complete?" Kaden grunted as she hurried as best she could toward the temple without injuring the wounded further. "These two fine men, friends I count them, were stricken by a fell demon as we were chasing two gargûn through the sewers. It was rather exciting, I must say, though I regret their wounds!"

Mobon answers, "Wounds are the stock and trade of warriors, Kaden. There is nothing to regret but that we failed to fell the foe."

Arylen smiles at his cousin "Yes too long, I completed my training and have been spending most of my time in the temple. What have you been up to since I last saw you and who are your companions?"

Kaden nodded as he talked. "As for me, I also completed my own training, as an apothecary, and was on my way out of town for meadows unknown, searching for herbs and cures, but happened upon Cyben here -- surely you'll remember Cyben, my old friend -- and ended up staying through the festival with her and her own new companions. There is Mobon, warrior supreme." With this, Kaden winked at the man, hoping to shore up his spirits. "and Jak, our young noble of House Odasart. Then there is Brart, a stout miner. Of course Cyben herself has just completed training as an ebasethe for Peoni, small world it is. And Jarek, Cyben's brother and my wonderfully quick friend. He's already helped me out of one scrape, and I'm sure will be helping me out of many more, if I know myself at all." At that, Kaden screwed her face up, "Anyway, we were all listening to a hawker who had several gargûn in cages when two of them escaped through the sewers, and we gave chase. But the gargûn were killed by a fell demon dwelling down below! And our two wounded here, noble men, were stricken by that same demon as we entered the room where it had its evil circle. Frightful and exciting, I can hardly believe how much has changed just since yesterday."

Waiting quietly while all this priestly welcoming is done, Jak feels out of his depth with this religious aspect and gives Mobon a shoulder to lean on. "Here, brave Mobon, lean on me and my halberd will be our walking staff. Soon the Harvest Queen's surgeons well set your hurts aright."

"Thank'ee, Jak..." Mobon says, moving to his liege's side. Turning to speak to Obasaran, he notices that the Obasaran has already re-entered the temple and closed the door.

Sagging against Jak's shoulder, he nearly sobs with pain and effort.

4- PEÓNU -720 TR (SIXTH WATCH)

FREEZING, PARTLY CLOUDY, BREEZE FROM NORTH

8:00 PM: The porter of the temple of Peoni sees you approaching and fetches the Lerovana (Mistress of Healing) from her bed. "Cyben? Is that you?" she says, "We have been worried sick about you. We sent you off to fetch the temple fees this morning and then we heard nothing of you until you come dragging in at this late hour, looking like you fell into a privy..." She continues her invective while she awakens the rest of the temple to divide you into three groups: men, women and injured.

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Cyben attempts to explain to the Lerovana and anyone else who will listen what happened with both the money and the events in the sewer. She is unable to give way and rest until she is sure that someone has understood the import of what happened. She does her best to explain the location of the creature (with reference to Brart's map) now, before time and sleep dull her recollection.

"Yes dear," the Lerovana answers, "but you must be exhausted from your ordeal. Whatever you think actually happened, what you say is just not possible. There was a town crier, about an hour before you showed up, saying the town was safe and the gargûn had been killed by some falling crates in a warehouse near the docks. So don't worry yourself and try to get some rest."

"What?!!" Cyben exclaims, "No, Lerovana, with all respect, that is impossible! I saw it with my own eyes; it was terrible! And Mobon's wounds! He did not get those falling into muck! Someone is very confused here... the Earl should know! Something must be done before this creature escapes! Please, mistress, you must believe me!"

"The Earl already knows as he sent out the town crier," she says, "Now try and calm yourself and we will get it all sorted out in the morning. Do you need something from the infirmary to balance your humours and calm yourself?"

Confused, Cyben settles back down. "No, no, I am alright. Perhaps I just need to spend a little time with our Lady. Yes, I will pray a little, for clarity and guidance. This has been a very strange day, indeed. Thank you, Lerovana, very much for your care and guidance. I am very sorry that I brought concern to the Temple."

When she is alone again, Cyben kneels and prays for as long as her strength allows. She seeks peace, acceptance, clarity and guidance, relying on many of the most basic and traditional prayers that novices use, gaining comfort from their familiarity. When her eyes and mind begin to dim she goes to bed, planning to rise in the morning as early as she can to seek the solace of morning services and perhaps a confession.

With the hearth fires stoked, water is heated, you are all stripped, bathed and put to bed. (They tell you that all of the cloth items of your clothes, except Brart's waterproof items, are ruined and need to be replaced. When you are ready to leave, they will loan you some clothes that have been donated for the poor.) The injured are tended to and the rest are put to bed. Brart and Mobon both recover from their shock and Mobon's untreated wounds are cared for (H6 for the calf bruise and H5 for the abdomen tear) before they too fall asleep, exhausted.

Washing the muck off, Jak sadly watches as his nice new hosen and doublet carted off to become rags. Frankly, he's not convinced their not savable, but it doesn't do to argue with priestesses in their own temple and he resigns his clothing to their fate to keep the peace. Still, he's not totally cowed and strides off to see the wounded members of the group (and no hatchet-faced nurse will divert him). He sits quietly away from the action ready to talk if any of the wounded wish to talk. He tarries about an hour before heading off to his own bed and carries out any errands the nursing staff requires of him in the meantime.

Kaden, grateful for even shabby clothes that were clean, profusely thanks her benefactors, and after checking on the wounded, spends the evening in pious reflection and prayer, glad to be under Peoni's protection. (+1 PP)

5- PEÓNU -720 TR (SECOND WATCH)

COLD, PARTLY CLOUDY, GALE FROM NORTHWEST

6:00 AM: The temple clergy awaken Arylen, Cyben, Jak, Jarek, and Kaden at dawn as they bustle about doing their morning chores. Kaden and Jarek are given clothes similar to what they were wearing only slightly shabbier. Jak's clothing and armor have been cleaned and returned to him (since he never fell in the muck, his shirt, cowl and hose merely needed cleaning and were not replaced). Arylen's clothes had never been soiled so didn't need to be replaced. Cyben is given a replacement spring outfit and asked to treat these better than the last. Then they are provided with gruel, bread and cider to break their fast.

After getting into new clothes and such, Jarek looks out at his surroundings. "So, what have we in store for us today? Kaden, what's the current condition on the previously wounded?"

Cyben feels better after her hour of prayer on the previous evening and the hour of prayer this morning. As she prepares what she wants to tell her confessor, she can't help remembering the dream she had last night. It started out with a boy playing with a marionette of a demon. Then the vision changed to a demon playing with a marionette of a boy.

Cyben is quiet during breakfast and looks troubled. As soon as she has eaten enough (with much less than her usual gusto), she stands and excuses herself. As she starts to leave, she suddenly turns back and gives Jarek and Kaden fierce but unexplained hugs, bows slightly to Jak and Arylen, then hurries off.

Once morning dawned, Kaden rose and stretched out luxuriantly, glad to see the brightness of a new day. Rising from where she had slept, she felt immensely better than she had the night before. A demon -- could it have been? It had scared her so, but her evening of penitence had erased most of her fear. She knew her fate was in her lady's good hands, and would not allow any fell beast -- or demon, for that matter -- to sway her. Or maybe she was just basking in the bliss of the ignorant -- either way, she felt better.

After breakfasting, Kaden made her way over to the two wounded men. Pursing her lips, she asked whether she might inspect the healers' work, to see how their wounds were knitting.

But at Cyben's outburst, a dark cloud passed over Kaden's face. She hugged her friend back, and though she was dying to ask what troubled Cyben's mind, she allowed her to leave without a word. She knew that some of it must have been their encounter the day before with the demon's grim visage.

"Aye, glad I am that we ended up so close to our temple," Kaden said, breaking the silence after Cyben left. "Some of your wounds would have proven a great challenge for my yeoman skills. But, I am certain that I can make sure you keep healing, if we decide to depart for other places. Speaking of which, we should visit Sir Dariune to report our news and collect our reward, aye? Or should we wait for Cyben to return?"

Cyben's Confession:

Cyben knows that any temple priest or priestess can hear confessions so she seeks out Sarawyn, her old mentor, to hear

her confession. She pours out the story of yesterday's events again. Then she talks about her fear, uncertainty and even moments of doubt in the face of this horrible demonic creature. Her faith in her preparation to face the world outside has been shaken; this is not what she expected. Also, she is confused and frightened by the disconnect between her experience and what everyone else believes. She was there, it was real; if others say otherwise they are either misled or lying....how can that be? Why? Then finally she relates her dream and its seemingly ominous warning. She knows that sometimes dreams are messages from Peoni and sometimes come from other sources.

What she seeks is threefold. She needs to unburden herself. She wants reassurance that her faith and her world remain whole and fixed. And she very much craves guidance over what this all means and what sort of role Peoni is calling her to in these matters. And it is not just herself. She fears for the well-being (and souls) of her friends, both new and dear, as well. Finally the rushing flood of words slow to a trickle and stop as her inner reservoir empties and she waits, with hope and fear, for her confessor's guidance.

Sarawyn ponders for a moment on all that she has heard, then says, "Ah Cyben, we send new temple priests and priestesses out in the world so they can experience what the world is really like. It is not all peace and goodness, which we followers of Peóni would like it to be and, due to the Concordat of the Illimitable Tome, Peóni cannot always force things to be right, even if that was her way. But we did not intend for you to have such a harsh lesson in so short a time."

"So let us go back over your day's events. Your solution in quelling the riot was admirable. Unfortunately, it went down hill from there. Your new friend who went into the wrestling match seems a violent sort who has been entirely misled by the immediate gratification promoted by the worship of Haléa. You should have done more to persuade him not to indulge in such violence. However, temptation to evil starts in subtle ways and his opponent paid the price."

"Next you followed your new friends into the sewers in chase of the Foulspawner's creations. It is true that they needed to be captured but you should not have abandoned your duties to the temple to do so. It is true that gargûn have no soul so it of less consequence that they were killed rather than captured so I will assume that capture was your intention."

"Finally, you find what appears to be a demon confined within a circle. Again, your violent friends chose to attack under the assumption that it was evil. They were injured when the creature defended itself since it is also a creature of violence. Hopefully, they have learned what we are taught, that violence only begets violence."

"You are surprised when things are not always as they appear. If you learn nothing else from the day, you should learn this one thing: not everything is as it appears and not everyone is working toward the purposes of Peóni. That is what we strive for but it does not exist yet."

"As to your dream, if it is truly a message from Peóni, she is probably telling you that some misguided soul thinks he is controlling the situation but in reality the demon is controlling

him. If what you say about the confined demon in the sewers and the death of the gargûn was not an illusion caused by the noxious gases in the sewers, then the report of their death in a warehouse could be a diversion to distract everyone's attention. It was possibly spread by the same person who thinks he is in control."

"Now, your penance is to immediately retrieve the temple's money as you were assigned to. Upon your return, you are to help the Lerovana in the infirmary, tending to the most menial of tasks. Any of your free time should be spent listening to the injured so in the future you will remember that violence only results in violence."

"On the marrow, you can accompany your new friends with their investigations. They appear to be of an honorable sort even if a bit misguided and you still have much of the world to learn about. If you want, I will speak with this nobleman and priest of Laráni to impress upon them the importance of keeping you safe."

"Thank you, Sarawyn!" Cyben replies, "Sometimes I don't know where I would be without your wisdom. You have helped to clear my vision most wonderfully."

"I know that pride is a dangerous sin, but I must admit that I would be embarrassed to have you speak so to Jak and Kaden's cousin. I would like to try again to find my own path to the wise balance of safety and service that must be the wandering Ebasethe's guide, if I may."

"I fear that, as you say, some sort of misdirection must be afoot. I thank you for the leave to stay with my friends while they seek to get to the bottom of this, as I am quite sure they will want to do."

"Thank you again, and I will take myself now in search of the temple's monies. I suppose the Earl's castle must be the place to start, as it was his man who was charged with guarding our goods."

Sarawyn answers, "I would think it more likely that your possessions were brought to the castle over night and that they will be brought back to the festival court when it resumes at noon."

5- PEÓNU -720 TR (THIRD WATCH)

COLD, PARTLY CLOUDY, GALE FROM NORTHWEST

8:00 AM: At the request of the Lerovana, Quosso of Fabun, the Kiban physician, pays a courtesy call to examine Brart and Mobon. He wakes them and tests their humours. Brart's bruise feels slightly better (+1 IP). His cowl and boots are cleaned and returned but his shirt and hose needed to be replaced by shabby donations.

Mobon's right elbow and left calf are completely healed. His left forearm feels much better (+2 IP) but the wound on his abdomen is only marginally better (+1 IP). Mobon's pieces of armor were cleaned and returned but his surcoat, cowl, tunic and hose were ruined. His tunic and hose are replaced by shabby donations and he can't wear his ring half-helm until he gets a replacement cowl. They are given warmed vegetable broth, bread soaked in milk and cider to break their fast.

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Mobon offers profuse thanks to those who assisted him from the temple, then checks his weapons, cleaning and lightly oiling them to prevent any damage from the trip through the sewers. After breakfast, he addresses the other party members, saying, "Friends, my thanks for your aid in getting me away from that foul pit. May I suggest that we check on the status of the funds and other items we left in care of our noble lord and inform him of the horror beneath us? Then, I'd say the next order of business would be to replace our damaged clothing, eh?"

"There is no need to thank me Mobon," Jak says, "it is but my poor judgment that resulted in you being sorely wounded, the least I can do is replacing your lost attire and accoutrements."

"Thank'ee, Jak." Mobon replies, rubbing his midsection and wincing slightly at pain both real and remembered. Turning to the others, he adds, "What say you all...are we ready to go recover the monies and make our report? I myself am prepared to leave at once."

"Am I feeling ready?" says Brart, "I'm not sure. There's a lot of things to do, but I still feel injured."

"I am prepared to face what the day brings," Jarek says to Mobon. However, he is pondering as to what might be troubling his sister, Cyben.

5- PEÓNU -720 TR (THIRD WATCH)

COLD, PARTLY CLOUDY, GALE FROM NORTHWEST

11:00 AM: Leaving the temple of Peoni, you turn right down Shebra Way, between a hideworker shop on the left and an apothecary on the right, through the Shebra gate to reach the fair grounds by eleven o'clock. There is still a stiff wind making the air cold, crisp and clean. Standing next to the animal pens of the "Zoocopeia", you can see to the tent of the festival court, which is not open yet. Looking around you, you see that most of the stalls at the festival have opened earlier or are just now opening.

In a crowd to your left, you hear someone yelling, "Kethira is doomed! Look to the face of the moon!" Looking to the sky, you see that the moon, Yael, appears to be completely normal. Then as you watch, you see a small red moon moving into view from behind Yael. (None of you had noticed that Kethira had a second moon before.)

Listening to the crowd, Kaden frowned as she tried to puzzle out what they were referring to. "Curious," Kaden said as she craned her neck to look up. "Do any of us know aught of the stars? I don't, I fear."

Cyben stares upward with horrified fascination. "Nor do I, dear friend, but that ill disk was not there yesterday. Of that, I'm quite sure."

Doctor Endrados calls to you from his Zoocopeia, apparently oblivious of astronomical anomalies, "How are you my friends? Why don't you come over and have a brandy with me? Thanks for attempting to catch the gargûn yesterday. To bad they got out of the sewers and were killed in that warehouse. I understand that the townspeople didn't want them alive but I can't understand why the town clerk won't let me have the bodies. I could have them stuffed and mounted."

More lines creased Kaden's brow as she listened to the hawker. "What do you mean, they were killed in the warehouse? Who told you that? We saw their bodies splattered all over the sewer walls."

"Why, that's what the town crier said at dusk yesterday, miss," he answers. "Of course, if you saw their bodies splattered all over the sewer walls, that would explain why the townspeople won't give me their bodies back," he says with a worried smile.

"Yes, indeed," Cyben replies, "There are no bodies left to return. The town crier was most certainly mistaken. With such a strange and alarming occurrence as escaped gargûn, it's no surprise if many tales are spread, not all of them true."

Peering at the man's eyes as if to see whether he was lying, Kaden finally nodded and broke her gaze away from his. "Very curious. More questions than answers, aye? Will you be in town for the rest of the festival?"

"Yes, miss," he answers, "I will not make as much as I would have with the gargûn but I still have to make my living. I will stay until the festival ends on the day after the marrow."

Turning to her friends, Kaden spoke again. "Something's not right here. Perhaps we're going to need to pay the town clerk a little visit." Face tight with confusion, Kaden looked back up at the sky. "Perhaps it is an omen," she said, trailing off as she crossed herself against devilspawn.

"Aye, Kaden," Cyben answers, "That would be well. I'm sure the crier simply reported what he was told, but the clerk must know more about this matter.... or at least he certainly should!"

To the group she says, "I have an errand to complete here, but I hate to delay the rest of you. I'm sure the earl can provide me a suitable escort to the temple, where I have further duties awaiting me." This last is said with a slightly rueful twist of her mouth. "Why don't you all go visit the clerk and see if you can find out more about what is going on? I'll speak to the temple masters and mistresses regarding this strange moon and we can meet again later back there."

"I'll stay with you, Cyben." Mobon says, "I have money to retrieve from our Lord Earl as well, then will need to change them into a more easily transportable form before I can go on about other business."

Bowing her head slightly, Cyben replies "Of course your company would be most welcome, Mobon, if the others feel they can spare you," with a quick glance at Kaden.

Kaden glared at her friend briefly, but then found her face cracking into a grin. "Absence makes the heart grow fonder, aye?" With that, she winked at Mobon and turned on her heel to gather up the other group to go speak with the town clerk. "Jak, Brart, Arylen -- shall we?"

Pulling Cyben aside discretely, Mobon adds quietly into her ear, "I trust not this business of false tales about the fate of the gargûn. I am not satisfied that the Earl is not involved in them, nor in the presence of that dark temple. You should not face him alone."

Struggling mightily to prevent her face from showing the profound shock she feels, Cyben whispers back urgently, "Nay, good Mobon, you do not know our Earl well, not being of these parts! I grew up in his household; he would not be involved in something vile such as we saw down in the sewers. He is a good and noble lord, you may rest assured!"

"I hope you're right, for all our sakes." Mobon concludes in the same low tones, before stepping away and resuming the more

public discussion. Mobon addresses Jarek, saying "Care to accompany us, lad?"

Cyben throws her arm around her brother's shoulder and adds, "Yes, brother, do! We had so little chance to get reacquainted yesterday and we have so very much to catch up on! Your company would be a wonderful boon to me today."

"Absolutely, Mobon." Jarek will follow with Mobon, while trying to make sense of the strange astronomical happenings. Glancing at Cyben, he says with a smile, "Yes indeed. We have much to talk about."

Rubbing his freshly shaven chin, Jak wonders out loud. "Would there be an Astronomer in this town I wonder?" He looks over at Brart quizzically, "maybe we could pay them a visit if there is one. Brart, you are born and bred here, is there such a sage here?"

"Never wondered about Astronomers. I'm spending too much time beyond the ground to care about the sky. We might go to town hall looking for said clerk, as we should report our adventure to the authorities anyway, but shouldn't we recover the various possessions before we decide whom to trust?"

Kaden shrugged. "They're going to collect Peoni's money as well as ours, so why not do a bit of poking around while they're gone, before the day gets too long?"

"Back in the sewer room?" Brart asks.

"I guess we could go check it out," Kaden replies, "although it seems like last time we were there things went from bad to worse really fast. I meant going to see the town clerk to see why there's a discrepancy in what we know to be true and what he's reporting.

"I'm not sure whom to trust," says Brart. "If we start asking questions we might raise attention. Nearly getting killed once is sufficient for me, so I'd like to find out beyond whose buildings the two chambers probably are first."

"Well, maybe. But we can hardly find anything out by not asking any questions at all. What else do you propose, then?" Kaden asked, clearly frustrated with the idea of waiting around.

"Take the map, follow the sewer system and try to estimate what we saw where", he answers.

Realizing that there is no such thing as "the town clerk" and that Dr. Endrados referred to his informant by that title, Cyben turns to that worthy to ask, "You say that 'the town clerk' wouldn't let you have the bodies. Can you describe this person and how you came to approach him, or vice versa?"

"Ah miss," he answers, "one clerk looks pretty much the same as another to me but I spoke with him when I was paying my fine at the town hall. I believe you call it the Hall of the Mangai."

Cyben, with Mobon and Jarek in tow, moves off toward where she recalls the Earl's pavilion to have been yesterday. As they walk along she asks, as casually as she can manage, "Jarek, please tell me more about what you have been up to for the last few years. I feel like I have missed so much of your growing up."

5- PEÓNU -720 TR (FOURTH WATCH)

COLD, CLEAR, BREEZE FROM NORTH

[Cyben, Mobon, Jarek]

12:00 Noon (Festival Court): The tent for the festival court opens and the guard at the door announces, "Hear Ye! Hear Ye! The festival court is now in session. Mayor Crissam of Devis presiding." A line of petitioners quickly forms and there are several people in front of you by the time you arrive. To the left of the tent, you see a tarp covered wagon watched by the same guardsman that you left your belongings with yesterday afternoon.

Cyben says, "Mobon, doesn't that look like the fellow who was guarding our goods? Maybe he still has them in the wagon there. Jarek, would you please hold our place here while we go take a look?"

"Aye...appears to be the fellow." Mobon replies, hooking his thumbs into his belt and waiting for Jarek to reply before walking over.

"Of course, sister." Jarek says with a smile.

Heading over to the wagon, Mobon hails the guard, "Friend!", says he, "I pray your duties have not left you here throughout the night on our behalf! Have you our goods still within your wagon?"

"No," the guard answers, "service for the young master is not that harsh. We brought the wagon to the castle stables and then returned here this morning. I think you will find all of your belongings just as you left them."

Taking three pennies from her purse and pressing them discreetly into the soldier's hand, Cyben says, "Thank you so much for watching our things! I know our request left you with some extra duty and I much appreciate your help."

Looking a bit uncomfortable about taking money from a Peoni priestess, he says, "That is not necessary, mum. Please, donate the money to the temple for me."

"Bless you! And so I shall!", she answers.

"Aye, thank 'ee!" Mobon says, reaching into the wagon and pulling the bags to the edge. "What hear ye o' the beasts?" he asks, as he checks on his belongings and those of Jak, leaving Cyben's to her care.

"Well," the guard answers, "soon after we got back to the castle, the Earl's younger son and the mayor sent for witnesses that the gargûn had been killed in a warehouse by the docks then, after they returned, a crier was hired to announce to the town that the danger was over. Thank the Lady of Paladins for that as I hear those buggers can be nasty if they get out of control."

"Aye, I've heard that as well." Mobon says as he gives his bag an experimental heft. The pain in his midsection gives him pause and he begins to wonder how he's going to move the bag. Leaning against the bag, he asks the guard, "So, do you remember about what time of day the bodies were found? I'd like to know how much time I wasted down in the sewer, if they were going to be found crushed under a box!" He offers a slightly strained laugh, rubbing his midsection.

Cyben collects the Temple's money from the wagon and, after lifting it down, she turns to speak to Mobon. Noticing the strain

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he is under, she turns back to Jarek and calls, "Jarek, come on over and give me a hand, would you please?"

Jarek hurries over. "Yes, sister, what can I help with?" The line in front of the judicial court closes to fill the gap created by Jarek's leaving.

Answering Mobon, the guard replies, "Cannot rightly say for sure as I was busy with my duties. At a guess I would say about sundown, about an hour or two after you went into the sewers. Speaking of my duties, now that you have retrieved your goods, with your permission, I have to be about my other responsibilities. You can return the wagon to that farmer over there when you have finished." Noticing Mobon's difficulty, the guard says, "You can probably hire the farmer to accompany you with his wagon to your inn for a penny or two. Good day to you."

"Good day, and thank you again," says Cyben, "May I know your name? I'd like to have you and your family in my prayers today."

"Alsyk of Caplaisa, captain of the town watch," he says over his retreating shoulder.

Turning to Jarek, Cyben says, "Dear brother, please watch my bag here and keep an eye on stout Mobon as well. Don't let him do anything foolish...like picking up that great jingly sack of his! I'm going to speak to the owner of this wagon about getting a ride to the temple; I'll be right back."

Walking to the farmer indicated by the guard, she notices that he and his family are setting up a canvas stall to sell some mulled ale. "Good day to you, Goodman, might I have a moment of your time? I am Cyben of Kyfa, Ebasethe of our Blessed Lady Peoni. It is my honor today to carry the kind offerings of the people of Kiban back to the Temple. The generosity of our neighbors has been wonderfully great and I find that I could use some help in bringing their gifts to our Mother's house. I understand yon wagon to be yours; might we rent its service, with yourself or another of your choosing as driver? For a fair price, of course..."

"Ees fay, mam," he answers, "I be happy to see my wagon returned as I expected de nobility to jist keep it like dey sometimes do. Would a penny be too mort to ax vor a days service?"

"Nay, goodman," she responds as she turns to look back toward the wagon, "That certainly seems rea..."

Mobon joins Cyben, though he lets her take the lead in speaking to the farmer about arrangements. If the ale is ready serve, he inquires about prices.

Seeing Mobon attempting to drag the moneybags with him, Jarek intervenes, "Nay, Mobon!" he says, "Cyben will be furious if you try to carry those. Let me assist you!" Hefting or dragging the bulging sacks, as needed, he accompanies Mobon.

Cyben's eyes narrow slightly before she says, just a tad too sweetly, "I thought you fellows were going to wait for me...sensibly...by the wagon."

Cyben turns back toward the wagon just in time to see Mobon coming toward her carrying his pack that he retrieved from the wagon, Jarek struggling to follow Mobon while carrying 80 pounds of money and a couple of thieves disappearing into the

crowds carrying the belongings of Jak and Brart that were all that was left in the now empty wagon.

"...Eeek! Stop, thief!" she shouts, pointing at the fleeing larcenists and starting to run in that direction. "Hold those men, please, someone! Five-penny reward!"

Since most of the crowd knows that they can be fined for not responding to the hue-and-cry, the offer of a reward merely adds speed to their response. The thieves carrying the bulkier items drop them and escape. The only one to get away with his loot is the one making off with Jak's purse.

[Kaden, Jak, Brart, Arylen]

12:00 Noon (Hall of the Mangai): You travel back through the Shebra gate and follow Shebra Way past the temple of Peoni, some burned out buildings, and the temple of Larani. At the castle moat, you turn right down Neph Street past the castle entrance, and the mayor's house to arrive at the Hall of the Mangai. Entering the waiting room, you see a clerk busily writing in a ledger. He motions for you to have a seat on the benches along the wall.

Ignoring the motion, Jak remains standing until the clerk looks up again. "Goodman clerk, we must speak *immediately* with someone of importance regarding the gargûn that escaped yestereve. I make it clear to you, that a dire danger exists and delaying may cause the harm or slaying of innocents unless we act immediately!"

Jak leans forward, his hands on the clerk's desk. "I ask you now, in front of these honest and true witnesses, to arrange an immediate meeting with your superior the guildmaster. If any are slain through delay, it is not of my responsibility which the duke's court can attest!"

"And I ask you, young country noble," he answers in a strained voice, "to remove yourself from my desk and wait your turn. The gargûn have already been taken care of. If your news is so important and you are so familiar with the Earl's court, I suggest you take up your case with them. The protection of the 'honest and true' citizens of this city is not a concern of the Mangai. Unless you are making the treasonous suggestion that the Earl is not doing his duty in protecting us. In which case, these 'honest and true' people will be witnesses to that when you go before the Earl's court."

Smiling, Jak responds, "Ahh, but good clerk, I was a witness yestereve of the death of the gargûn, not in the warehouse as is wrongly stated but in the sewers at the talons of a demon pent in a warding! Now, the matter is being brought up at this moment with the Earl I should think, so I must ask the Guildmaster where the false rumor arose that the gargûn was slain within the warehouse! Thus, I make haste not only to save the lives of innocents but to bring the news to the guildmaster . . ."

"So are you saying," he says with painful disdain, "you have evidence which should be brought before the Earl, you have evidence that you are working under the Earl's authority or that you are lodging a complaint about a false rumor? If it is the latter, I must inform you that I myself saw the remains of the gargûn being pulled from the warehouse as I was asked to be one of the witnesses. And this guildmaster you speak of, which guildmaster would that be? It is also a crime against the kings

peace to incite a panic, so I would be very careful about all this talk of the 'lives of innocents', if I were you."

Throwing his hands in the air, Jak seethes with frustration. He storms over to the bench and slumps down, fingering his sword hilt and thinking un-peonian thoughts.

Kaden, for her part, remained quiet and tense. All these accusations flying made her uncomfortable, particularly where it concerned Lord Dariune. She knew him to be a good man, and could hardly countenance such words... though, she admitted that something didn't quite add up. Quietly, she watched Jak return to a seat nearby the rest of them.

Fidgeting, Jak slowly rises to his feet again and says to the clerk, "Good clerk, can you help me with this? I saw the gargûn die, but you have seen their bodies under a warehouse crate; you strike me as an honest burgher so now I wonder if there are more gargûn than first thought! Could you tell me more of when you were summoned to stand as witness? Then I will go and bother you no more."

Sitting quietly Arylen watches the young noble growing increasingly frustrated. As the clerk begins to tell his story the young priest begins a quiet prayer and makes small gestures.

"Very well," answers the clerk. Searching through some papers and finding a particular one, he continues, "The guildmaster of the mason's guild and I were summoned by the mayor around the middle of the fifth watch. We went to a warehouse, just down the street from here, to witness some laborers remove the remains of at least two gargûn from underneath crates where they had apparently been crushed to death. I have no information on more gargûn but I doubt it as that is not such a common occurrence." Arylen has no indication that the clerk is lying.

Bowing as graciously as he can muster, Jak says solemnly "I thank you good clerk, I shall make haste to ensure that I have not erred and thus waste the esteemed Guildmaster's time." Jak walks back to the group at the bench and says quietly "I think it is best that we leave now, I must see Mobon and discuss something with him, then I may have some more information for us all. Regardless, I think it is best that we guard ourselves, all is not as it seems."

While listening to what the clerk says, Brart stays silent, appearing somewhat distracted.

Seeing how he's not responded to, Jak's eyebrow's rise and he leads the strangely quiet group back to the inn. Once safely in his room away from prying ears, he says "What next? It's obvious that the mayor himself," Jak shoots Brart a quizzical look, "does not wish anyone to know about the demon in the sewers, and has taken steps to ensure that the story of the gargûn is settled. This worries me, they must know that we've stumbled upon something but we've received no summons to the hall, no quiet explanation about public good, no tinkle of coins or trip to a cell which as foreigners would be all too easy to arrange, those of us which are foreigners I mean."

Jak sits heavily down on a chest and frowns. "I can think of very few reasons for this, I will elucidate: Primus, the Mayor is blissfully unaware of the gargûn's fate and someone owning the demon has arranged this little story for him. This person is

unable to dispose of us and unwilling to bribe us, thus is now biding their time to see what we shall do. Secundus, the Mayor himself is responsible, but the matter is so secret that he must move cautiously, and thus bides his time. Tertius, I'm living in a hopeless fantasy world where I see dark deeds in every corner. Although this does not explain a very real demon in the city's sewers."

[Cyben]

02:00 PM (Temple of Peoni): You complete your assignment by delivering the temple's money to the Avasana (Master of Archives and Treasures) [+20 piety] and begin your penance by assisting the Lerovana to tend to the ill and injured. As soon as you enter the infirmary, a man jumps from his pallet and yells with glee, "Doomed! We are all doomed! Chaos is upon us! The signs are everywhere." Then he dances around the room managing to keep out of everyone's reach while chanting in a low guttural mumble, "I see seven, and I see nine, all they had will be mine, mine, mine! The star within the circle is the sign of death. Beware the man who is not a man." With that, he races out the door into the crowded streets."

Cyben dashes to the door of the infirmary and peers out, trying to see where the man is going. Unless she sees something very compelling, duty will conquer curiosity and she will return inside. Then she will find a scrap of paper to write on so she can record the man's strange words now, before her memory of them fades. In light of what is happening they sound much more like prophecy than raving to her mind. She glances around the room to take stock of others' reactions to him and his words. Then she will throw herself into her duties, trying to bring herself back to the ordinary and more predictable world she thought she inhabited until yesterday.

[Kaden, Jak, Brart, Arylen]

02:00 PM (Silver Way Inn): While you deliberate in your room, you hear a commotion in the common room. Going to investigate, you see eight large men, apparently common laborers armed with clubs, threatening the inn keeper. The innkeeper points in your direction and the largest of the thugs approaches Jak, "We've got a message for you. Keep your noses out of what don't concern you or you might wake up one morning at the bottom of the river. Why don't you try your luck somewhere else, eh? I hear Tashal is lovely at this time of year." With his speech delivered, he and his companions back out the door and disperse in different directions.

Brart tries to remember if and where he has seen the men before.

He realizes that although he hasn't seen any of them specifically, he can tell, from their manner of dress and by a medallion some of them wear, that they are dockworkers that work for the bondmaster to load and unload cargos.

"Oy, who do you think you are, talking to him like that?" Kaden yells after the common toughs. Her face is stern and alive with indignation at Jak's treatment, but inside she is quivering.

[At this point, we're losing at least three of our key players so we'll conclude this adventure and start a new one with a new set of players.]

ACT 2: SHADOWS OVER KIBAN PAGE 32

6-PEÓNU-720 TR (FIFTH WATCH) [ARYLEN, KADEN, BRART]
COOL, CLEAR, WIND FROM SOUTHEAST, 1½" SNOW ON GROUND
You each receive a personal invitation to dinner and the Earl's court. The invitation is delivered by several of the Earl's soldiers who wait to escort you to the castle. When you arrive at the great hall of Caer Kiban, you notice several of the other guests also have a military escort including Karison Dariune (the Earl's youngest son), Crissam of Devis (Kiban's mayor) and most of Kiban's aldermen. Karison and Crissam seem especially well guarded. Scina Dariune (the Earl's eldest son) sits at the head of the hall and the Earl is not present.

Dinner consists of the finest food you have every had and includes such dishes as dressed peacock, pike with galentyne sauce, and honey toasts with pine nuts. After everyone has eaten their fill and the dishes have been cleared away, Scina Dariune calls for attention and formally starts the Earl's court.

"My father, the Earl, was abducted at the first of this year but has recently been recovered. There was no need for a ransom as my brother and the mayor perpetrated the abduction. The Earl is fine although recovering from his weakened state. The decisions that I present to you today have been made after a lengthy consultation with the Earl."

"First, the mayor will be imprisoned, until the Earl recovers, then executed for high treason. It was decided that the part in this affair played by the Kiban aldermen was partly under duress and partly under duplicity. Therefore, they will be allowed to go about their business under probation. They will be watched and if they are involved in other wrong doing or if they speak to anyone of this affair, they will be punished severely."

"We have decided that my brother was not completely responsible for his actions as he was misinformed by the mayor and one other. We will be investigating this other person in the future to insure they are brought to justice. My brother will be delivered to the Lord Warden of the Chelmarch where he will either prove himself by his actions or be brought to justice by the Lady of Paladins."

"I have spoken with Jak of Odasart, who brought this affair to my attention. He has returned to his liege with instructions regarding what he can speak of and what he cannot. He has given his oath of honor that he will follow those instructions and I trust in that. I have gotten the pledges of all of Jak's companions who have had any exposure to this affair with the exception of the three that are present today: Kaden of Bassill, Arylen of Bassill and Brart of Tomar."

"Kaden I have known all of my life and I will take her oath, if she gives it, that she will follow my directions. After consultation with the priests of Larani, I have decided that Arylen's oath can be trusted with the support of the temple. Brart is unknown to me so I will require Kaden's or Arylen's confirmation that Brart's oath can be trusted."

With this said, Scina dismisses everyone except Kaden, Arylen, Brart and their accompanying guards. Once he has your pledges, he continues (anyone not giving their pledge will be escorted to take residence in the dungeon for an indefinite amount of time). "Even though I trust you were not involved in perpetrating this affair, I cannot risk any word of this getting out so I am going to ask you to leave Kiban for an indefinite amount of time. I will give you until the end of the month to settle your

affairs and for me to gather a little more information. At that time, I will provide you with letters of recommendation to masters in your respective fields, passage on a riverboat and instructions on how you can help me continue to investigate this affair. Providing this help will shorten the time you must stay away from Kiban by demonstrating how much you can be trusted. During the remainder of your stay in Kiban, you will be watched to confirm your silence. If there is anything else that will make this situation more palatable, let me know now and I will see what I can arrange."

Kaden curtsied deeply as Sir Dariune completed his speech and requested her oath. She was shocked at everything that had happened, and in such a short time, but was glad the Earl was safe again inside his castle's walls, or so she presumed.

"Sire, it is my duty to honor your noble house, as it was for my parents who served gladly at your father's pleasure. You have my word that I shall follow your instructions as best I can. It would be an honor to help with the investigation, however I can. I am yours to command. As for Brart of Tomar, I will vouchsafe his oath; he served nobly by my side these long days."

With that, Kaden curtsied again and took her leave once dismissed.