

[OOO Berina will have purchased three ration packs on her market expedition. They will be at the townhouse and available for Davas' use if he goes on to Minarsas without her.]

2-HALÁNÈ-720 TASHAL, KALDOR

5TH WATCH [COOL, CLOUDY, NORTHEAST GALE, LIGHT RAIN]

By the beginning of the fifth watch, everyone has gathered at the townhouse except for Berina who is long overdue. The last anyone heard, she was headed to the Garb and Flail to speak with the innkeeper.

Having been pacing more and more nervously for the past half hour, Davas suddenly stops and turns to the others. "Dammit, where is she?"

He looks from one to the next, only partly expecting an answer, then sighs gently and shaking his head. "I'm sorry ... if anyone should know, it's me ..." He grins "... and I don't. She was going to the Garb and Flail ...".

Obviously making a decision, he nods once. "... so that is where I will start. Please, make yourselves at home".

Isiel rises and follows Davas to the door. He wears his new cowl, looking inordinately pleased with it.

As he heads for the door, he mutters distractedly "... I bet she has annoyed someone ... hope she isn't in trouble ... getting someone else in trouble too now ..." Turning back to the others, he says quickly "I hope I won't be long ... sorry Qisse, again". He flashes her a grin as he turns to leave. Should anyone want to go with him, he ill grin quickly nod his assent and murmur his thanks.

"I am be coming with you," Isiel says. "For help you find."

"I will come with you Davas." Josrel states. Turning to Lillia: "Lillia stay with Qisse in case Berina returns while we are out. If she does, let her know where we went."

When he arrives at the Garb and Flail, he asks those present if they have seen Berina and if they have, if they happened to know where she was intending to go when she left.

Arriving at the Garb and Flail, you find the innkeeper cleaning up glass, lead and bits of wood from a shattered window. "She jumped into the middle of a riot and has been arrested to be taken to the goal," the innkeeper answers your inquiry.

Tapping the bar a couple of times before turning away, Davas mutters quietly "of course she has". He shakes his head, gives a halfhearted grin, turns to the others and says "of course she has".

"Well, I suppose we should go to the gaol and see what her fine will be ..." Sighing, he starts to leave, turning at the door to throw a "my thanks" to the innkeeper before exiting.

He will then try to remember where the gaol is. If he can, he leads on confidently.

Remembering the directions to the goal as told to him by Berina during her father's brief stay, Davas leads the way there. Upon arrival, the goaler asks, "What can I do for you folks?"

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You ask to see Berina and he tells you, "Not unless you are of her clan or of her frankpledge."

"Ah ... no, I am not" Davas says a little dejectedly.

Upon asking what her fine is, he tells you, "Ah, so you already know she is guilty then? She has done this sort of thing before, has she? You will have to wait for the magistrate to declare her guilt or innocence and set the punishment first...it is usually flogging or the pillory for what she is accused of. I doubt her trial will come up for several months...there being more serious criminals to try first. On the other hand, I have been known to be so fascinated by a pile of coins on that table over there...say 60d or so...that I have mislaid my keys for a short time and my prisoner has escaped...that is just how absent minded I am. If that were to happen, she would have to be out of the city before the gates close in a couple of hours or she and her accomplices would be punished in the proper time."

Obviously a little shocked (or possibly surprised) by this offer, Davas looks blankly at the others one after another, then back to the gaoler. After a moment, he looks up suddenly. "I am her betrothed ... that must count for something ... she is almost of my clan and I of hers. Surely I can see her? ... and she carries our child". He stands tall, awaiting the gaoler's answer.

"You know, that is a surprising coincidence," the gaoler answers, "last night I was with this bar wench and today she may be carrying my child as well. In other words, no, it matters not."

His shoulders slump a little and again there is a pause as he thinks. Then he sighs quietly and reaches absently for his purse, beginning to count what money he has. When he finds himself short of the mentioned sum, he goes quietly to the others and asks if he can borrow some coin, watching the gaoler's avaricious gaze follow him as he does so.

Should there be enough money between them to meet the price, Davas places it quietly on the table and waits.

When Davas places the 60d on the table, the goaler places the keys on the other end of the table and casually strolls over to slowly start counting coins. As he does so, he says, as if talking to himself, "I believe I last saw the lady in question residing in the first cell on the left. There are others in the cell and there would be serious repercussions if any of the others were released. It should probably take all of three minutes for me to count this money and again look for my keys."

Away from the Gaoler, Josrel quietly whispers to Davas: "You go get Berina I will stay with the Gaoler in case he changes his mind and alerts more sentries." Josrel strolls back to where the guard is seated and leans against the wall waiting for the others.

With a quick nod of thanks, Davas quietly picks up the keys and starts towards the first cell on the left. Reaching the door, he calls softly "Berina? ... " as he tries to find the right key for the door.

If she answers, he will tell her what is going on and to be prepared to leave quickly and help shut the door. He will then let her out as quietly as possible and close and lock the door quickly.

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If not, he will open the door (assuming he does find the right key) enter the cell, and, trying to imitate the gaolers voice as well as he can, call "Berina of Kyfa. Come, you are wanted". Once she has stood up and seen Davas, he will cut off any reaction she may have quickly, saying "no talking ... come quietly !" ... and adding almost under his breath "... if you can."

After Davas has explained about what can only be called a jailbreak, Berina says (in just above a whisper): "Are you out of your mind?! I'm here because a bunch of people were assaulting worshipers entering the temple of Halea. I broke it up...just as you would have if the same thing were to happen at the temple of Peoni. I'm in the right here, and I will not become a fugitive felon for doing the right thing! Get out of here before the gaoler arrests you, and anyone else you may have brought with you, for attempted jailbreak. Tell my father I'm in here so I can get fed...they don't feed you in here you know..., then tell the Aramia Silena of Ekair...she's the high-priestess of the temple of Halea...that I'm in here for defending the faithful. Finally, tell Lord Odasart.If he tells you that you have to go on ahead to Minarsas, then go. I'll be alright. Go...before you end up in here with me!" She then goes over to a corner of the cell and sits down.

Davas mouth opens and shuts a few times and his arms wave vaguely, but in the dim light it's difficult to see what he is trying to say or do. After a moments silence and inactivity, he splutters "but you could be in here weeks ... or months. Who knows how long? ... do you want our child born in prison?" His tone almost indicates disgust as he says the last sentence.

After a brief pause, he sighs, waves an arm vaguely and shakes his head. "... all right. I thought we had places to be ... but all right. I understand ... yes you may be in the right - but you are still in prison. If you want me to do as you say, I will. ... but I cannot control the outcome. Now, we can leave. Later? ... who knows."

He waits a moment longer, looking at her hopefully, then realizing she will not come, turns to the door. "Farewell my love" he says quietly. "I will do what I can ... " he turns back to her, flashes her a smile and adds questioningly "and try to stay out of trouble, all right?"

He turns quickly and goes, sighing as he turns the key in the lock once more, then quickly and quietly leaves the gaol, and as surreptitiously as possible replaces the keys on the table as he does so.

To his friends questioning glances he merely shakes his head and indicates they should leave. A little way down the street he turns to them again. "She would not come! 'I am in the right' she says. 'Go without me' she says. Ach! ... sometimes ... ". His grin surfaces quickly and he shakes his head. "I will NEVER understand that woman, but if that's what she wants, so be it". He sighs "and she is probably right".

Smiles sagely at Davas, Josrel puts his arm around Davas' shoulders in comfort. "Trust me Davas I know what your going through. They could be confounding at times, but we love them still the same. She says she's in the right then we should search out the truth."

Sighing and giving Josrel a grateful smile, Davas says quietly, "yes...you are right...and I'm sure...well, fairly sure" he grins "that shewill be in the right. The only problem is, the truth may take months to be found according to the goaler...nd we must be away in days. I am loath to leave her behind, whatever the circumstances. I may not understand her, but I think I have come to depend on her...at least in towns." He grins again. "Perhaps I should do so now? She may well know what she is doing...I suppose."

Davas continues, "Right. We must see to what comforts we may for her. When you return to the house, can you tell her father (he's across the road ... the metal worker ... yes?) that she is in gaol and that she needs feeding. I would ... but we must leave town in the next day or so. ... I suspect he will not believe it at first". Squaring his shoulders, he continues. "I must go to Aramia Silena of Ekair and tell her what happened. Hopefully she can help. Thank you my friends ... I will see you soon at home. Tomorrow we must see lord Odasart and ask him to say how urgent this Minarsas trip is. I thought it urgent from what I heard ... but I do not want to leave Berina in prison. hopefully he will understand. Farewell".

Before Davas departs, Josrel says, "if you would like some company and support I can come with you?"

Davas replies, "Friend Josrel, you would be very welcome...as always."

2-HALÁNÈ-720 TASHAL, KALDOR

6TH WATCH [COLD, CLOUDY, NORTH WIND]

So saying, he turns and marches in the direction of the Hanean temple. When he arrives, he asks to see Silena of Ekair.

The porter at the closed gate says through the spy hole, "If you are here to join the banquet, you are too late. It started yesterday. If you are here to join the protesters, you are too late for that as well. The guards ran them off and, if you stay, I will send for the guards to deal with you as well. Anything else will have to wait until after the banquet ends on the 7th. Come back on the 8th and make an appointment." With that said, she closes the small window in the gate.

For the second time today, Davas is speechless. He stands amazed for a while, and paces the street outside the temple, then turns back, squares his shoulders and pounds on the door once more. "Berina is in trouble – for trying yo protect your worthless hides," he yells. Realizing suddenly that he hurling insults at a closed temple door, he looks a little foolish, shuffling from foot to foot and looking around the street nervously. Without yelling, but still loudly, he says "the least you could do would be want to know what happened and where she is. What you should be doing is helping her. Open up I say!"

Again he pounds on the door, pausing only to listen occasionally to see if there is any sign of life from within. After a while of fruitless knocking, he stops, grins thoughtfully and mutters quietly, "at least they'll have to open up if they want to call the watch." He resumes knocking with renewed energy.

Putting his hand on Davas' shoulder, "Davas stop," Josrel says calmly "This is not the way to help Berina. They are an ally and we don't want to anger them anymore than they are now. They are celebrating their faith and we must respect that."

Josrel triesto turn Davas away from the Temple. "Let us go back to the townhouse and inform the others. Tell Berina's father what has happened and inform Lord Odasart. The Temple is not or only option here. Flying off the handle like you are will only wind you up in the goal next to Berina. She needs you out here."

Josrel, with his arm around Davas' shoulder, says,"Come on lets tell the others. We can divide up there some can stay here and help free Berina while others can travel to Minarsas and get started there."

In the quiet night, the only answer is the ringing of the curfew bell. At that moment, a watchman rounds the corner near the Garb ad Flail Inn. In answer to Davas' commotion, he says, "Stop that racket! It is time for all good citizens to be in their homes. Be on your way!"

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Looking around her cell, Berina can see a quiet, shivering, middle-aged man; an elderly woman who is praying to Peoni while holding a child's doll; an elderly man who is immaculately dressed and is trying to distance himself from the grimy walls and everyone else; someone huddled in a corner hidden by a heavy cloak; an elderly woman who is talking to herself but does not appear to be praying; an elderly khuzdul who spends his time examining the walls and shivering; a middle aged woman who appears to be trying to comfort the other prisoners and, without exception, is being rebuffed; an elderly woman who shows her years with rugged looks and clothes; an elderly woman who looks as if she hates all those around her or blames them for her misfortune; an elderly woman who is well dressed and has an angry look on her face; a middle aged woman who has an open face (whether gullible or overly trusting, you cannot tell); a middle aged man who looks a bit shifty; and an elderly woman who looks composed but unwilling to interact with those around her.

Getting up from where she has been sitting, Berina goes over to this woman and says: "You don't seem to be having much luck with this lot." Extending her hand, Berina says: "I'm Berina of Kyfa. I was trying to break up a riot outside the temple of Halea and got swept up with the rioters." After a very brief pause, she continues: "Who might you be, and what are you in for?"

"I am Benlyne of Canjental, the wife of the chamberlain of the hall of the Mangai," she replies, taking Berina's hand energetically. "I have been accused of intriguing, on behalf of my husband, with the Khuzdul against the crown. It is all a pack of lies, of course. I am sure you must be innocent as well. You look not like the sort of person who would disturb the king's peace."

Examining the light sources, Berina can see a single rush light attached to the wall across from the entryway, which is almost spent. The evening light was coming through a small, barred window but is now invisible due to the setting of the sun and the total lack of moon light. It will soon be completely dark and the goaler does not appear to be concerned.

Berina smiles and says: "Glad to meet you, Benlyne. I'll wager that you've met my father, Master Obras of Kyfa, Guildmaster of the Weaponcrafters of Tashal."

"I may have," she answers, "but I am usually busy helping my husband in running the hall and would not have been introduced. I know him not by name."

"As for my not disturbing the King's Peace," and her smile turns wry "I'm sure my father and my husband-to-be would wish it were so. Still, the rioters were assaulting worshipers going into the temple of Halea. I'm a Hanean, and I couldn't just stand there and not try to stop it. In any case, the rioters WERE disturbing the King's Peace, so I tried to stop it and...well...here I am." and she holds her arms out wide, taking in their surroundings.

"I am sorry but I know nothing of these foreign religions," Benlyne says, "we worshippers of Peoni try to forgive anyone and try to find a peaceful solution to any situation."

"Come, let us find a place to sit and talk some more."

She answers, "It has been a long day and, if it is all the same to you, I would just like to get some sleep."

Berina "By all means. Perhaps tomorrow."

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Arriving at the townhouse, Davas, Isiel and Josrel are served their evening meal by Qisse and Lillia. It consists of lentils with chestnuts for an appetizer, an entrée of mussels with lentils accompanied by lemonhyt (lemon rice with almonds), manchets (hand-sized bread) and beer (dark brown color. light pear aroma. smooth texture. malty, roasted chocolate flavor that carries on to the sweetish aftertaste), followed by pears in wine syrup for dessert.

After dinner, everyone retires after what has been a long day.

Davas mumbles his thanks as the food is served. He is unusually quiet and picks slowly at his food. He drinks a little more than has been his habit recently, mumbles his good nights and goes early to his bed.

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Since he knows not how to cook, has no rations and no opportunity to buy any, Rikoro spends a hungry night at his new cottage.

3-HALÁNÈ-720 TASHAL, KALDOR

2ND WATCH [WARM, PARTLY CLOUDY, SOUTHEAST BREEZE]

In the morning, everyone awakes refreshed to break their fast with small ale, bread and gruel, while they discuss plans for the day.

Isiel encourages Davas to eat, since he only picked at his dinner the night before. "Is no for being hungry, when there is food," he says. "Hungry only when no food, yes?"

Before Josrel and Lillia head downstairs they will perform the morning ablutions for an hour together.

Upon arriving to the main room Josrel addressse Qisse: "Good morning Qisse may Lillia and I be of service to you this morning?" If Qisse needs help Lillia and Josrel will do what she needs.

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Davas greets the others and again picks at his food. Once the others are finished, he leans back and sighs, pushing his partly eaten meal away.

"I must try to see Lord Odasart this morning ... or to get an appointment perhaps? Does anyone have any suggestions about how to do this proper?"

Davas listens to any suggestions offered, thanks the person concerned and sits thoughtfully for a while, before standing.

"The sooner it is done the better. ... and the lord will probably want to know why she isn't at work anyway." He grows thoughtful. "... though how you tell a lord that one of their workers is in jail ... ". He shakes his head. "Ah well ... I'm sure he will have heard it before". He smiles at the others. "... and thank you all for your ... well for being here during another trying time". He grins. "I wish there weren't as many ... but ...". He shrugs and grins again before standing to go.

As Josrel performs whatever tasks he is doing he addresses Davas: "Davas, It is clear that you must stay in Tashal till Berina is free. If you need someone to stay for moral support I'm sure that anyone will stay if you ask."

"I do think however that some of us should travel to Minarsas to start in on the investigation of what's happening there. Lillia and I should go on to Minarasas and anyone else who wishes. It may also benefit us to go there separately to avoid suspicion of all us arriving at once."

Davas listens carefully to what Josrel has to say, a thoughtful expression on his face and nodding occasionally. When he has finished, Davas says "you may be right friend. The gods know I do not want to leave Berina here ... let alone a pregnant Berina ... and in jail". He rolls his eyes heavenward and gives Josrel a quick smile. "... but Lord Odasart may have ... other views. I can imagine him saying, for example, that 'Berina had brought it on herself' ... or that 'he cannot be responsible for what those who are not his vassals do'. ... you know what I mean". He looks away and mumbles "lords seem to have their own view of what is right".

Turning back to Josrel and the others, he says quickly "so, I fear we should make no plans until I have told Lord Odasart what has happened ... and have heard what he believes is best. Then perhaps we can decide". With a grin, he adds "... because what a lord wants is usually what a lord gets. Best I see him now, so we know".

As he moves to the door he says grinning over his shoulder "wish me luck".

"Luck?" Isiel cocks his head to the side and peers at Davas. "Is this a true wish?"

He then makes his way to see lord Odasart, striding purposefully and trying not to look worried. Once he arrives, he asks to see him 'on a matter to do with Berina of Kyfa'.

The chamberlain leads Davas into the greathall where Lord Odasart is breaking his fast.

"Davas of Fainovirs to see you sir on a matter regarding Berina of Kyfa," he announces.

Looking up from his meal, Lord Odasart asks, "What is it that has occurred?"

Shuffling occasionally from foot to foot and looking a little nervous, Davas begins his tale. "Ah ... my lord ... Berina is ...". He falls silent briefly, shakes his head and begins again with more certainty. "Sorry. My lord, I am Davas ... husband to be of Berina ... as you know ... of course. Sorry". Again he comes to a brief halt.

"My lord, Berina tried to interfere in a ... well in a riot I guess. She was passing by the Temple of Halea and saw an angry gathering outside shouting abuse and speaking against the Hanean ... festival ... that began recently. Of course ..." he pauses, looks quickly at the floor and shakes his head. With a grin he looks up. "... and of course, she tried to speak to them ... to get them to go about their business and leave worship to the worshippers". With a grin he adds "of course, they did not listen, angry words were said ... and some halfhearted blows and stones thrown I think. Then the watch came and ...".

He shrugs and looks away, obviously embarrassed. "She and the others were put in jail my lord. The jailer said it could be weeks ... or months before the case is heard". With a look of almost disgust, he says "the Haneans inside did not wish to know".

He looks worried and pauses. "Our journey to Minarsas ... will be delayed".

He quickly adds "well her's will be at least ... and with her carrying our child ... I ... my lord, I do not wish to leave her".

He looks hopefully at Lord Odasart. "Of course, if you insist, I will go.

She has family in the city and would not be entirely alone. I am sorry, my lord".

He stands nervously waiting to see what Lord Odasart will do ... or say.

With a look that gets angrier as Davas tells his tale, Lord Odasart says, "Cursed woman cannot stay out of trouble for a single day! I see that I must provide a bit of a shove to get her moving in the direction of doing my bidding. Goodman Davas, get your traveling companions ready to leave and be at the Ternua Gate by the start of the fifth watch. Fail me not and I will see that Berina is delivered to you at the gate. Be sure that you bring any of her belongings that you expect her to need as she will not be allowed to re-enter the city for at least a month. You, no doubt, have much to do so I will bid you a good day."

As lord Odasart turns away, Davas bows quickly. "Of course my lord ... at once". With a slightly worried look and much more tentatively, he adds "... thank you ...". He then hurries out and returns to the town house.

Once there, he explains to the others what lord Odasart said and suggests they make what preparations they need quickly if they are coming.

If any of the others are not there, he will ask someone who is to find them and tell them, or if that is not possible, he will find them himself and let them know.

Once Davas arrives at the townhouse, Rikoro listens and shakes his head the entire time Davas recounts the tale, but shows little

emotion one way or the other with what has occurred. Once Davas has finished explaining the situation Rikoro states, "I fear I will not be able to travel until tomorrow. I have purchased some items - a cloak, some rations and I water proofed my pack."

Looking to both Josrel and Davas, Rikoro asks flatly, "Do either of you know how to travel to our destination and how long it will take? If so what is the first waypoint along the way? That is where we will all have to meet before continuing our journey. Not to mention I need to know how much food to bring."

With a surprised look, Davas says "... um ... no. I know nothing of the route. I assumed ... ". He sighs. "Sorry friends, I don't know where we are going". With a grin, he adds "but I assume that the closest gate to Minarsis is the Tarnua gate. I hope Berina knows where it is".

Turning to Rikoro, he says "... as for where we wait for you, again I do not know. I am sorry ... but we will find some way I am sure".

Rikoro interjects with more questions, "Will Lord Odasart recompensate us for our travels - food, lodging and so forth or will it be taken from our own purse? I would hope it is the former, but I have not traveled before on errand by him. If this is the case how will we be reimbursed? Before or after the task is complete?"

Again, Davas looks surprised for a moment. "um ... I'm sorry ... again I do not know. He gave me no money so either it is later, or not at all". More brightly and with a big grin he says "... and we have to eat no matter where we are. Never fear, we will not starve on the journey".

Davas also lets Berina's father know that they will be gone for a while, trying not to say why.

Before he does so he draws Qisse aside and explains quietly. "Qisse, our thanks for all you have done for us while we were here. We will be gone for at least a month". Obviously a little embarrassed, he adds "... at least. Berina has been ... sent away for a month". He looks up at her, smiles quickly and continues. "Please, take care of yourself and the house while we are gone. Is there anything you need?" Davas will try to provide Qisse with whatever she requests, then he will begin to pack for himself and Berina.

"No, ee 'ave already tull'ed me dey Lord Odasart weel zee to my needs zo I believe I be set," she answers.

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As Davas leaves to go to Lord Odasart Josrel prays as he leaves "May Save-K'Nor grant you wisdom of words as you meet with Lord Odasart."

Turning to Lillia "Well Lillia my dear it looks like we have some time. What say you we see if we can find someone to tell us how to get to Minarsas. Let's start with Harar'bis of Aweil at the Temple maybe he could give some directions."

"You need not my company to do that," Lillia answers, "and I would prefer to stay here and help Qisse with the extra housework our stay has caused her."

Josrel frowns at Lillia and shrugs his shoulders " Very well." Turns and heads to the temple.

Josrel turns to Qisse " Qisse if Davas returns before we get back tell him we went to the Temple."

* * *

Rikoro awakes with nothing to break his fast.

Rikoro rubs at his grumbling stomach with a bit of a sigh. Once Terrefan has arrived for the days labors Rikoro asks, "Good morn. Is there a market around that I could purchase some food? If not I shall have to forage for something near by to sate myself for the day."

"Nay maister, us be only allowed a market wance per tenday and de next wan be nat vor four days. Ee can gaw to de market een Tashal bit, as ee be nat a citizen, ee weel nat be allowed to enter avore an 'our arter everyone ulse. De market opens at dawn zo, if ee left now, ee better way arrive jist een time to enter. As to foraging, ee weel find naught at dicky time uv yer. It weel likely take ee all day to find wan meal – if ee be lucky," he answers.

A half frown appears on Rikoro's face listening to Terrefan's response. After a moments consideration the Satia-Mavari says, "Fair enough. I suppose I will spend the day in studies hungry and then return to Tashal come nightfall. As I informed you earlier I will be away on errand for a time, so this will have to be a goodbye for now. When I return though I would like to spend some time aiding and learning from you how to tend to the land properly."

"Vrim what ee 'ad zed, I doft yer companions wud 'ave come to fetch ee by now. Ee weel be ztaying de darkmans een Tashal den, I take it? Jist make zure ee arrive at de get avore it closes at zunset," Terrefan says. "As to teaching ee my craft, dey weel require more uv my time – meaning I weel need extra payment vor my efforts."

Rikoro says, "Well I do need to return for some purchases I made and I planned to meet them at the townhouse rather than make them come all this way for me. As to the additional payment for the teaching, I understand completely and once I return we can speak on the matter more fully."

With that said Rikoro offers a polite good day and continues his spell research outdoors. An hour and a half before sunset Rikoro makes the trek back to Tashal in an effort to give himself plenty of time to arrive.

3-HALÁNÈ-720 TASHAL, KALDOR

3RD WATCH [WARM, PARTLY CLOUDY, SOUTHEAST BREEZE]

Your journey to the temple is uneventful and, when you ask to see Harar'bis you are told to wait as he is busy now. An hour later, he rushes out to meet you and apologizes for having you wait.

You ask him for directions to Minarsas and he shows you a map,...

<http://www.duttond.topcities.com/Harn/Kaldor/Kaldor.jpg>

...saying, "From Tashal, it will take you one and a half watches to get to Ternua but it is best to stay the night there as there are

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no convenient stopping places further on. On the second day, it is best to get an early start and press on briskly as it will be three watches to get to Qualdris. On the third day, it is a more leisurely two watches northeast to Nubeth. On the fourth day, you have a choice of a leisurely two watches to Athelren and arrive at Minarsas on the next day or a hard march for three watches to arrive late at Minarsas."

Josrel stares at Harar'bis for a moment silent. "Five days march. Wow. Are there any Temples along the way? Or does this Temple have any correspondence that needs to be brought that way. Since I'm going that way it would be no trouble to make any deliveries. "

"Sorry, but no to both questions," Harar'bis answers, "our religion is not as wide spread as we often wish it to be."

Sighing Josrel replies disappointedly "Ah, very well.... Thank you for your time." Josrel turns to leave the office.

Josrel stops to pray for an hour in the temple. Then heads back to Berinas Townhouse.

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From her cell, Berina can hear the voice of Lord Odasart raised in anger, "NO, I do not want to speak to her. I want her to be delivered unharmed to the Ternua Gate by the first of the fifth watch. She is to be escorted by members of the guard so that she is not detained again on the way to the gate. Her 'punishment' for disturbing the king's peace will be recorded as banishment from the city for the rest of this month. Am I quite clear?"

In a much lower voice, Berina can barely hear the goaler say, "Yes, milord. It will be done as you say, milord. Good day, milord."

3-HALÁNÈ-720 TASHAL, KALDOR

5TH WATCH [WARM, PARTLY CLOUDY, SOUTHEAST BREEZE]

Rikoro arrives at Tashal shortly before the Ternua gate is closed. There is little traffic on the roads is sparse and his trip is uneventful until he reaches the market. In the market square, the venders have closed up for the day. A young lad (mid teens) approaches Rikoro and says, "Ee appear to be a traveler, zir. Vor a modest fee, my maister can zalt mate vor ee zo dey it lasts to yer next destination."

Rikoro glances down to the bow, a smile appearing on his lips. "Ah good lad, I am indeed traveling. You have quite the keen eye. Tell me what would be the cost of such a service?"

"I cussen cut vor zartin as I be jist an apprentice bit I dink it be 'alf again as mort vor zmoked mate and twice again as mort vor zalted," he answers.

After tugging on his beard for a brief moment, Rikoro responds, calmly "Then I propose we meet again tomorrow. You will have some prices and I will have a better idea of what I need, not to mention if the expenses will be reimbursed. A good day to you lad."

With that Rikoro offers a pleasant smile and nod to the teenager and makes his way to the Berina and Davas' townhouse.

* * *

At the start of the fifth watch, those at the Ternua Gate, see Berina walking in between four guardsmen. Arriving at the gate, one of the guardsmen announces loudly, Berina of Kyfa, for the crime of disturbing the king's peace you are hereby banished from the city of Tashal for the period of no less than thirty days. If you return before that time, you will be immediately arrested and will be subject to further punishment. Is that clear to you?"

Fighting to keep a grin off of her face, Berina says: "Perfectly."

The guardsmen remain at the gate until Berina is met and heads off down the road or until the gates are closed for the night.

Davas shuffles from foot to foot waiting for the punishment to be spoken, then, a little embarrassed, smiles, hugs Berina, tells her what he has packed and hurries her out the gate with the others.

After Davas lists what he brought, Berina pinches the bridge of her nose between a thumb and forefinger...a gesture he has come to know so well...and says:"You couldn't have known exactly what I was bringing and what I was leaving behind, but...the pan?! I left it with Qisse. Didn't she say anything to you?"

After a pause, she continues: "I intended to leave the pan and the lantern behind. You'll have to take them back tomorrow before we start out. I'd do it myself, but..." and she gives him a smile and the look that says 'you know why I can't.'

"I think I can manage most of these things, but I need you to carry the lantern, the pan, and the travel rations, as well as your things. I was hurt a little during the riot, and I need to carry a bit less than I would otherwise until..." and her voice trails off.

Berina gets thoughtful for a moment, then turns to Rikoro and says: "Say, Rikoro, how would you like to practice your spellcasting? I got hit on the belly during the riot and bruised pretty badly." She pulls up her shirt so he can inspect the bruise and continues: "Do you know any spells that can heal me, or speed up my normal healing? If so, could I prevail upon you to help me out in that manner, please?"

Appearing a bit flustered by the proximity of the gate and Berina's brashness, Rikoro muddles through his sentence saying, "Ehm, well, I can take a look. Though I would prefer to do so away from prying eyes. Let us move a little further towards the inn and I will see what I can do."

"Now that was an entrance Berina." Josrel says jokingly. "How was your stay at the gaol. Treat you well I hope?" Josrel says smiling.

"Harumph." Berina grunts. "What with my father's and my stay in gaol, the Kyfa clan is going to get a reputation as scofflaws and felons." Berina relents and chuckles a little, then turns to Rikoro: "While I was in gaol, I met Benlyne of Canjentel. You may know her...she said that she is the wife of the Chamberlain of the Hall of the Mangai. She was in there for supposedly intriguing, on behalf of her husband, with the Khuzdul against the crown. After that whole thing with the Khuzan bellows, I wonder if someone is trying to stir up a war between Kaldor and the Khuzdul." Speaking to everyone, she asks: "Thoughts?"

"Intrigue? ... against the crown?" Davas frowns and shakes his head as he says "I know nothing of the first and little enough of the second ... but even I can tell that putting the two of them

together sounds like ..." he looks up with a grin "well it sounds like a good thing to keep well away from. I think that's what we should do. So ... no more jail for you ... it makes you suspicious".

"Hmm..." Josrel rubs his chin "You could be on to something Berina, maybe we should be alert to the interactions between Khuzdal and Kaldorians when we arrive at Minarsas."

After stroking his beard in contemplation, Rikoro shakes his head, "I do not believe I met her husband. Though I was at the Mercantylers Guild for only a month and I did not have the chance to meet many from the Mangai Hall. As to the charges of intrigue surrounding this Benlyne and the Khuzdul, I can not even fathom a guess. Nor would I wish to make such assumptions."

* * *

Once they've traveled a good distance away from the city limits, Rikoro glances to Berina with a slight nod and moves towards her to inspect her stomach. After a moment he says, "Let me endeavor to aid in the recovery time. You should feel significant improvement by tomorrow, if not then I shall tend to you again."

Gripping his staff firmly from a genuflected position, Rikoro mutters an incantation to himself for the 'Nurture of Isla' and then touches the wound on Berina's abdomen gently.

Nothing appears to happen.

Seeming a little wobbly as he rises up from the ground with the help from his staff, Rikoro musters the words, "It does not appear to have worked. Let us be on our way and I will try again tomorrow."

* * *

"I have taken the liberty of finding a route to Minarasas. It should take us about five days to get there," Josrel says confidently.

"One of our Teachers at the Temple..." Josrel indicates himself and Lillia "...Master Hara'bis has told me how to get there. We first make for Ternua which he states should take us a watch and a half. He also warned me that we should stay there the night for we won't reach the next suitable place to stop by night fall which is Qualdris. And Qualdris is three watches from Ternua." Josrel smiles to the group.

Berina says, "Good work."

Rikoro traipses along with the others and listens with a disappointed grin. Once Berina is left to her own, he moves in closer shaking his head and says to no one in particular, "Well it is better then a month in the gaol."

"Strange as it may seem to you," Berina says, "I would have liked to stay in there for another day. I would have loved to pump Benlyne for more information. Ah well, I will not look a gift horse in the mouth...and conditions on the outside ARE more enjoyable." and she gives him a big grin.

* * *

While you are discussing your plans and the sun sets, the guards close the gates (with you on the outside). Looking around, you see a small village around the theatre. When Isiel visited the theatre, he saw a small inn that mostly caters to actors, minstrels and other players, although it is not of a very good quality.

Josrel says, "So I guess we will start out in the morning then. Unless anyone has objections. Now where to stay tonight." Josrel states contemplatively.

Sighing gently at the sound of the gates closing, Davas says quietly "so ... let us find out if there is a real inn near the theater ... and if they serve ale". His tone seems to indicate a low opinion of things to do with theaters in general. "Tomorrow, we can make sure we have what we need. He turns to Berina with a grin. "A glaive? ... what were you thinking? ... you could really hurt someone with that".

Looking back at the gates and upwards then over to the crowd Rikoro contributes, "Well we should find lodging and food for this evening and then discuss how to proceed tomorrow. Thanks to Josrel's investigation we have a route, but I still have some things I need to tend to in Tashal and some questions Berina can hopefully answer."

Davas says, "Yes ... questions and plans tonight. We can do any little things tomorrow ... and if we leave by a little before lunch, we can get to ... the first place we need to get to tomorrow ... yes?" He looks questioningly to Josrel.

Josrel nods "Yes, According to what I've been told Ternua is the first stop about a watch and a half from here. I did get to see a map and the route will take us south through Ternua to Qualdris. Then north to Nubeth, Athelren and on into Minarsas. Around five days depending on how hard we push ourselves."

Adding as an afterthought, Rikoro says, "I have a cottage that is an hours walk from here, but I must really eat as it's been over a day since I had a meal. Does anyone know of anything just on the outskirts of Tashal?"

Looking up in surprise, Davas grins. "How long have you been a landowner my friend? ... and did you have to use all your food to pay for it?" With a laugh, he claps Rikoro on the shoulder. "Come, it is always a good time to eat".

With a false exasperated sigh, Rikoro claims "Not long enough. I procured it for some peace and solitude to perform studies .. and now we are off."

Lillia speaks up to say, "my friend Senata of Gwyffid works at the Curtain Call Tavern over there and we may be able to find lodging there. I have never been there myself so I know not the quality of the food and lodgings. She tells me they mostly cater to thespians and I am sure you know how dirty that bunch is."

Smiling at Lillia, Josrel says "Sounds great my Love, lets go Rikoro can replenish himself as probably we all could." Josrel adds as he rubs his belly. "We then could stay at the Tavern for the evening or continue on to Rikoro's Cottage if the Tavern is not to our liking. That is of course if we are welcome in your cottage Rikoro, not wanting to impose of course," Josrel adds. Josrel takes Lillia by the hand and starts to head toward the

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direction Lillia indicated. Walking a few yards, then turning to see if the others are following.

Rikoro follows Josrel's lead after Lillia's suggestion of the nearby tavern.

With an eloquent grunt, Davas begins walking in the direction Lillia has indicated.

Berina looks at Lillia with a slightly troubled expression on her face. She says: "Yes, let us go to this tavern. If Lillia's view of thespians is accurate, we'll need to watch our purses and other property more closely." and Berina gives Lillia the troubled look again.

* * *

You enter the Curtain Call Tavern an hour and a half before the end of the watch. The rushes on the floor appear to have not been changed in months. The windows are shuttered and covered with tallow smeared parchment. There is a low fire in the hearth which warms a large cauldron of odious pottage. Seated at one of the two tables is a man who looks at you expectantly but quickly loses interest when you are not who he appears to be expecting. Seated at the other table, are two men playing chess who are intent on their game and ignore your entry.

The innkeeper approaches you and says, "Welcome folks! You are just in time for dinner. Tonight we are having porridge for starters, followed by broiled venison steaks and cheat bread. Then dessert will be honey toasts with pine nuts. Dinner and two drinks will be 3d. What can I get you?"

Rikoro steps into the tavern and offers a nod of greeting to the innkeeper then after hearing the menu says, "Do you have any rooms available for sleep this eve? Regardless I will have the meal kind sir, as I am famished."

"I only have a tavern franchise and not for an inn. I can offer you lodging here in the common room for 4d per night but I have no private rooms," he answers, "I will see to your meal right away."

Rikoro finds a suitable table for the group and settles down one of the chairs, lowering himself down with the aid of his staff.

The table with the two chess players has a bench on either side so can seat four more. The other table has four stools so can seat three more.

After glancing at the two tables, Rikoro makes a request of the innkeeper, "Would you mind if we took two stools from the one table and put them on either end of the benches for our group? We need to discuss some matters over the meal and it would help if we were all together."

"Yes, I mind," the innkeeper replies, "trying to rearrange the furniture, getting in everyone's way and disturbing my regular customers...If your conversation is so private, take it back outside."

With a bit of disbelief on his face, Rikoro retorts with, "Two stools is furn.", but then cuts himself off shaking his head. "Fine if you wish us to yell over your patrons across the room to each other so be it."

"You can take your yelling outside as well," says the innkeeper, "If you have so little respect for my hospitality, perhaps you should find another establishment that is more suitable to your 'noble' selves."

For the first time, annoyance flashes over Rikoro's expression, and he just about rises up, before a wave of calmness flushes over him and in response he simply says, "We will abide by your wishes goodman. The meal please."

Rikoro turns and heads in the direction of the benches.

Once everyone is settled Rikoro begins to speak, "We should take this time now to catch up on matters and discuss our plans. I know I have an outstanding question concerning this journey. Davas and Josrel were unsure, thus they fall to you Berina. Mainly it falls to re-compensation for the journey itself. Will the food, lodging and so forth be covered to and from Minarsas?"

Glancing over to Berina with a sheepish grin and a wink, Rikoro states, "Also because our departure was rather abrupt I would suggest pondering our needs on the road and gather them tomorrow from Tashal. I know I have two items in wait and need to meet with another regarding travel rations."

Nodding to the innkeeper, Davas says "and yes, dinner and drinks".

Glancing at Berina, he adds "for two. Thank you". He smiles, then sits and looks around as the others speak. Once the others have said what they need, Davas adds "... and yes, perhaps a weeks rations ... in case. Otherwise I think we are ready ... unless Berina wants something?" He looks again to her.

Berina takes a deep breath, then begins: "First of all, I am NOT going to pay 4d for the privilege of sleeping in this filth and acquiring an infestation of lice!" and she gestures to the rush-strewn floor. "I'll curl up in my robe outside somewhere. I suggest we camp."

Rikoro hesitantly glances around and then sighs, "I agree, but please let us get our meal rather than be thrown out. As I stated we can rest at my cottage, but the accommodations are rather sparse and the walk is an hour away."

Addressing Rikoro, Berina says: "After the debriefing from the Holdan manor business, Lord Odasart said that there would be pay for any missions...such as this one...that he would send us on. I was on my way to see him about arraigning for pay when I ran into the riot. For obvious reasons, I can't do that now...so unless one of you will go see him and see if he'll agree to provide funds, we're on our own. If one or more of you decides to do that, please tell him that I'd like to swear vassalage to him...if he's still willing to have me after all that has happened. I've asked Davas to return a couple of things to the townhouse, so the two of you could go back into Tashal together."

Nodding as Berina speaks, Rikoro adds once she's finished, "I need to return myself so I shall request an audience with Lord Odasart. My total count from the Haliki's words was five days of travel. Our morning and evening meals would be covered by the inn so we would need rations for the afternoon whilst we walk. Assuming a modest fee of 5d for the lodging and two meals that would be a total of 25 plus the cost of rations. By my

count there are six of us bringing the total to 150d plus six times rations cost for five days."

Rikoro pauses to regard those present, "Do any of you disagree with my figure? And has anyone already procured rations for the sojourn? That would help immensely in my calculation. Otherwise I will know tomorrow when I speak with a merchant I have an appointment with."

Berina says, "Davas and I already have rations that should last us for the journey if we're not profligate with them, and do a little legal foraging."

Looking at Josrel, Lillia, and Isiel, Berina says: "If any of you can think of anything else you'll need on the journey...travel rations have been mentioned...tell Davas and Rikoro what you need, ask them nicely, and give them money."

Smiling at Davas and Rikoro, and giving them exaggerated batting of her eyelashes, she coos: "You boys would do that for our friends, wouldn't you?"

Laughing aloud and with a quick glance at Rikoro, Davas says "of course ... of course" through his grin. Turning to Rikoro, he says just loudly enough for Berina to hear "... you see what I have to put up with? ... all the time?"

Having embraced him, Berina whispers in Davas' ear: "Oh, you poor suffering child." then proceeds to nibble on said ear.

Speaking up Rikoro states, "All of our waypoints will be within towns, this means we won't require setting camp. However, with the days growing colder I would recommend obtaining a cloak if you don't already have one."

Nodding to Riko: "Yes five days travel, depending on how fast we travel, of course."

Looking at Lillia "I don't think there is anything we need?"

Indicating the rolled-up beaverskin robe attached to her backpack, Berina says: "My robe should serve me well for cold weather." Turning to Davas, she asks: "Love, do you have something warm to wear if you need it?"

With an expressive shrug and a slightly hangdog look, Davas smiles. "For the days, I'll cope - I have before. At night ..." He grins broadly "... I'm not expecting cold to be a problem".

Berina embraces Davas and says: "I like the way you think." and kisses him soundly.

3-HALÁNÈ-720 TASHAL, KALDOR

6TH WATCH [COOL, CLOUDY, SOUTH BREEZE, HEAVY RAIN]

The innkeeper serves you a meal which is not the best you have had but also not the worst – it's hard to judge as, with the exception of Davas, none of you have ever had venison before. By the end of the fifth watch, you have finished your meal along with your conversation. You step out the doorway of the tavern to find that a heavy rain has begun.

Rikoro glances to the sky, and then to the others saying, "We've quite a walk to the cottage, and the rain will only make it worse. Let us hope no one catches ill tomorrow."

With that he sets off in the direction of his abode. Rather than his languid walk though, Rikoro uses the full length of long stride, clearly trying to escape the harsh weather conditions.

Berina puts her beaverskin robe on over her armor, then wears her backpack outside the robe.

Glancing quickly at the sky, Davas grunts in disgust. "An hour you said? Ah well ... if this is the worst that happens we will be lucky I suppose".

Turning to check on Berina, he smiles at her, nods, then hunches his shoulders against the weather. "Lead on Rikoro ... and let us hope there are some trees along the way. They would help keep the worst of it off us".

[OOO: Looking over everyone's equipment, I see:

Isiel: all's well except for the vellum and wooden items. These won't be ruined by the rain as long as they are carefully dried as soon as possible.

Davas: items in the saddlebags are safe as it is waterproofed. Leather, cloth and wooden items in the bag and pouch need to be attended to as soon as possible. The 3 days rations are in a cloth bag and will be ruined by the rain after one day – they can be safely consumed anytime before that.

Josrel and Lillia: Everything is protected by the leather pack except for the blanket tied on top. That will need to be carefully dried afterward to prevent mold from ruining it.

Berina and Rikoro: everything is protected by leather pack.

...and for everyone not in an all-enclosing leather robe or cloak, all of your clothes will need to be carefully dried afterwards.]

* * *

After slogging through the rain for a turn of the glass, you reach the village of Kaldel and Rikoro's cottage. Inside, are a cold fire pit in the middle of the room, a trencher table with two benches, and four raised wooden platforms which can be used for laying out a bed. Rikoro remembers that Lord Cynarayn mentioned that part of his lease was 1d per acre for foraging rights but, in his studies, he never got around to gathering fallen wood for his fire.

Squeezing some water from his beard by running his large right palm downwards through the tangled wet mess a few times, Rikoro mentions, "Unfortunately I am not prepared for guests as you can see. The place is quite Spartan having just attained the land recently. Nor did I think to begin preparations due to our assigned task."

Then Rikoro suggests to the others, "If Davas, Isiel and Josrel are interested in remaining wet a bit longer we could try to find some wood outside for a Berina stoked fire, while the two ladies prepare the beddings and lay out our belongings around the fire pit for drying."

Taking off his pack and finding a place to hang his blanket: "Well since I am wet already and we will need a fire to dry out lets start looking." Josrel agrees and heads out the door in search of the driest wood he can find.

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With a wry grin, Davas puts his belongings in a pile by the door. "Let us do so my friend ... while I can dry myself with a little help" he glances at Berina and grins again "my belongings are not so lucky. Let us be about it. Where should we look?"

Rikoro shakes his head at Davas' inquiry, "I'm afraid your guess is likely better than mine Davas. I have yet to have a chance to survey the land, so I'll take the woodsman's knowledge over my own."

Once Rikoro settles his pack on the ground he leads the others out into the darkness hoping to forage for some wood and kindling.

With a quick grin, Davas puts out his hand to stop Rikoro as he goes to the door. "If you can wait a minute or so, I think this will be better done with a little light". He rummages in his equipment a moment and brings out a couple of torches, then begins searching again. Sitting up suddenly, he looks to Berina. "Ah ... I was looking for flint and steel, but you may be ahead of me in the fire starting". If Berina has the candle going, he will light a torch off that, otherwise, he will continue his search for flint, steel and tinder, getting a light for one torch.

Berina smiles at Davas, goes over to where he's rummaging through his stuff, and says: "Davas my love, my flint and steel is out on the table. I can light a torch for you, but..." and here she pauses, the corners of her mouth twitching upwards a little, "since you brought the lantern I intended to leave behind...and it is full of oil...don't you think a lantern will protect the flame better than a torch that's exposed to the rain?" and she chuckles, then laughs gently.

After standing briefly with his mouth open, Davas laughs, shakes his head and then nods. "You are right. Just as well one of us can see what is before us. I hope this does not bode poorly for our search for wood."

Taking Davas in her arms, Berina kisses him lightly, then says: "I love you." in the manner of lovers who have become comfortable with one another. "Give me the lantern, and I'll get it going." She uses her flint and steel to light the lantern in the conventional way.

With a grin, he goes on his way.

Speaking to Rikoro, Berina says: "If you don't mind, I'm going to re-arrange the 'furniture' in here to make the most of the fire I hope to make."

Rikoro simply nods at Berina's request, then chuckles softly, "If it is even that, but yes feel free too."

* * *

Berina places the two benches on opposite sides of the fire pit, back far enough so that the people sitting on them won't get singed. She will put the trencher table on a third side of the fire pit, back far enough so that things hung from the edge of the top won't singe or catch on fire while being dried.

While waiting for Davas, Isiel, and Josrel to bring back firewood, Berina gets out her flint and steel, as well as her candlestick and the stub of candle...placing them on the trencher table.

Taking the lit lantern, Davas tucks his axe into his belt, picks up his bag and leads the way to the door. "Let's make this fast ... I have desire to remain wet for longer than necessary" he grins. Once outside, he picks a likely place to search, preferably under some trees to keep the worst of the weather off.

On your way to the forest, you see a man, dressed as a peasant, standing under the eaves of the door of a cottage. He says, "Bene aivmin gentlemen. May I ax where ee dink ee be gwain?" Before you can answer, he appears to notice Rikoro and says, "Ah, dey be ee, maister Rikoro. Lord Rikeonton tull'ed me ee 'ad jist become 'is vassal. My name be Kathar'rri uv Ibodarliis and I be de woodward. It be my job to notify de flogging-cove and de lord uv de manor whenever I find poachers. Ee be, no doubt, lukin' vor ood vor yer 'earth. Ee be gwain een de rate direction. Jist be zure to only take fallen ood and bide out uv de fields."

Rikoro's face seems to lighten into a smile as Kathar'rri speaks to him, "Well met Kathar'rri and the directions are much appreciated. I wasn't expecting to be back again to the cottage and I'm ill prepared. Only the fallen wood it is. Now to make haste and get out of this rain!" He then continues on his way with a purposeful stride.

Davas adds a nod and his smile to Rikoro's greeting, then follows him into the woods.

* * *

Once the firewood has arrived, Berina arranges a reasonable amount of it in the fire pit. Using the flint and steel to get the candle going, she uses the lit candle as a focus for the Finger of Marlas to get the fire going.

Berina concentrates on the candle and points her finger at the firewood. A few seconds later and stream of fire pours out of her finger to embrace the firewood and start it ablaze.

Davas jumps a little as Berina lights the fire. "You know, I'm not sure I'll ever get used to that" he says with a grin and a shrug. "It sure can be useful though ... that wood ... well, it would have taken a while to get a small fire going with just flint and steel".

Once she's gotten a fire going, Berina will sit at one end of one of the benches to soak up the warmth.

As Berina sinks to the bench, Lillia watches agape. She quietly whispers, "Josrel told me you did magic but I did not expect anything so...spectacular. Does it hurt when you do that? Did you have to sell your soul to a demon for your magic? Will you now have to find a baby to sacrifice? How soon can you do it again? The rest of the firewood is still wet."

Davas grins while Lillia speaks, until she gets to selling souls and sacrificing babies. Then he sits very still, waiting for Berina to reply.

Berina's eyes widen at Lillia's rush of questions, but by the time Lillia has finished speaking, Berina is chuckling...the chuckling having a rueful tone to it. She replies: "No, it does not hurt...but it is fatiguing. I can attempt it again and again until I become so fatigued that I go unconscious. As I'm still injured and with child, that would not be a good idea. The rest of the firewood will just have to dry in the ordinary way, by being next to the fire."

Realization sets in on Rikoro's face after he's had a moment and slowly asks, "... with child.. you're pregnant?"

Rikoro glances over to and from Berina and Davas and a knowing smile grows on his face. He then offers the following words, "My congratulations to you both. I hear Rikoro is a fine name for either a male or female."

Chuckling a little, Berina says: "Thank you. We have, however, decided on names. If it's a boy, he'll be called Arylen. If it's a girl, she'll be called Divlena." and she glances at Isiel.

Berina continues, "I'm a Shek P'var. The Shek P'var use magical energy that is all around us and everywhere. No recourse to anything supernatural is required," a slight pause here as Berina pinches the bridge of her nose, "so no, no dealing with 'devils' and no human sacrifice...babies or adults. I'm surprised that you don't know more of the real facts about Shek P'var...especially as most Shek P'var worship the Sage of Heaven. I myself am something of an oddity among Shek P'var, as I worship Halea. Of course, you could be playing dumb in order to loosen my tongue." and she arches one eyebrow.

"No one person can know everything and," Lillia says, "due to the nature of my duties, I am frequently not told the truth and must rely on the gossip and rumors that I hear. For you see, I am a member of the Rydequelyn and it is my job to lessen the apparent importance of dangerous information or mislead people into believing otherwise. This may make me seem lacking in intelligence but that is often necessary for me to do my duties well."

With a grin, she adds, "And if I did need to 'loosen your tongue', it does not appear to take any great effort."

A sheepish grin playing across his face, Rikoro adds, "Quite astute! It does not, nor does it take much to loosen her temper either."

Davas grins broadly at Lillia's comment and is unable to contain a huge laugh at Rikoro's. "He speaks the truth ... though temper is not what I would call it. Perhaps ..." he is merely chuckling now and looks into the distance for a moment "perhaps riteous ignation? ... I think that's what it is? Like when you speak out of turn to a lord ... or to a priest and they tell you the error of your ways? ... in a fairly complete manner?" He is now grinning and keeping a watchful eye on Berina.

As she is sitting next to Davas, Berina reaches a hand over to him and tickles him lightly.

Berina continues, "You should have asked your husband. He would have told you to just ask me what you wanted to know."

"I'll tell you some things anyway, as we are going to have to work together to do Lord Odasart's bidding, and if we are to get the task done with a minimum of trouble and danger, we will need to know one another enough to be able to trust each other in a crisis situation."

Mumbling to herself, but out loud: "Where to begin?", Berina starts: "Shek P'var specialize in one of six different types, or areas, of magic. There is a seventh area that touches on all of the other six, but such individuals are extremely rare and I've never

met one. For myself, I'm a Peleahn...a fire mage. You've never seen me do magic before, because extensive use of fire spells in a built-up area like Tashal is not a good idea for reasons I'm sure you can imagine. Also, for some things...like lighting a cooking fire...it is easier, faster, and less tiring to just use flint and steel. I did what I did just now because the wood was wet, and we need a fire to warm ourselves up and dry out our things."

Marshalling her thoughts, Berina continues: "For centuries, the Shek P'var have followed the path of secrecy...worried that people might think that those who can do magic would use their magic to subjugate those who can't. There's some justification for that worry, as renegade Shek P'var have done some very bad things. Just ask Josrel about the situation that occurred at Holdan Manor."

"Personally, I have a problem with all of the secrecy. I feel that, while some things do need to be kept secret, blanket secrecy breeds ignorance and fear. Your comments about demons and sacrificing babies is the perfect illustration of my point. I won't stand on a rooftop and shout the details of Shek P'var magic for all the world to hear, because that would be silly, and because Shek P'var masters would come after me. As impressive as what I did looked like a little while ago, a Shek P'var master could snuff me out without exertion."

"Yes, magic is a wonderous thing...and it pleases me greatly that I have what it takes to do magic...but there's more to life than that. Equally wonderous to me, is having won the love of a good and brave man." and here her eyes get a dreamy, far-away look to them. "And I do mean brave. Davas and I have stood shoulder-to-shoulder in battle against the undead...twice! And at Holdan, it was his arrow that took down the renegade Shek P'var...not my magic. I can't tell you how happy I am to be carrying the child of such a man!"

As Davas listens to Berina quietly explain magic and some of it's intricacies, he visibly relaxes, the tension visibly leaving his posture and face. He sits back and listens, grinning as she says how happy she is and reaches to give her hand a squeeze.

Berina slides closer to Davas and cuddles up to him, resting her head on his shoulder.

Berina concludes, "If you have other questions, please ask. I'll tell you what I can. If I don't know the answer, I'll say so. If I'm bound to hold my tongue, I'll say that too."

Speaking to the party as a whole, Berina says: "Place more of the firewood next to the fire to start drying out so we can keep the fire going. You can hang things that need drying from the edge of the table...shifting it from time to time, to make sure it's completely dry.

You can also hold some things in your hands to dry as you sit by the fire. Just be careful to not get them too close."

Turning to Isiel, Berina says: "You had some vellum or parchment didn't you? I'd dry that first."

Josrel snaps his head toward Berina eyes wide with fear: " Oh My..." Josrel cries as he goes to his pack to check on his vellum. As he does he rearranges his blanket, cloak and Lillia's cloak for drying.

