

**5-HALÁNÈ-720 QUALDRIS, KALDOR**

5TH WATCH [COOL, CLOUDY, SOUTHWEST WIND]

Wandering around the town, you find two inns and three taverns: Handsome Pike Inn, Musty Peacock Tavern, Sleeping Unicorn Tavern, Angry Dragon Inn, King's Pikemen tavern, and Herder's House of Stew. You see a temple of Peoni but no others.

As you pass the Sleeping Unicorn, Isiel suddenly breaks his silence to say in Sindarin, "This place is run by one of my kin. I did not realize we had gone that far south."

Glancing up again at the sign after Isiel speaks, Rikoro comments, "Quite a bit of choice in this town. Shall we see about the prices inside the Sleeping Unicorn first? Let Isiel enjoy a bit of respite from us." Rikoro offers a playful smile to the Sindaran.

Berina asks Isiel: "What was that you said, Isiel? I'm sorry, I don't speak your language."

Rikoro interjects before Isiel has a chance to reply, "Ah he merely said this inn is owned by one of his kin."

"Oh." Berina says. Continuing: "Yes, let us have a look. And maybe the tavernkeeper, being Sindarin, might have news of Divlena."

Entering the common room, you see a hearth with a blazing fire and a cauldron of pottage. The rushes have been changed within the last week and you can smell pennyroyal and lavender strewn among them. There are four bare-wood, trencher tables and a stand up bar. The first table has a woman, dressed as a traveler, with a plate of food and a mug of ale in front of her. The second table has a man and woman...the man with a plate of food and mug of ale; the woman with a jug of wine and some dice. The third table is empty. The fourth table has two men and a woman...the woman has a plate of food and a mug of ale; the men each have a mug of ale and are listening intently to the woman's quiet instructions.

In an aside to Davas, Berina says: "Well now, this looks promising. If we can stay here...taverns don't normally offer lodging...and it's not too expensive, I'd just as soon stay here."

The sindarin tavernkeeper comes from behind the bar and says in Harnic, "Greetings folks. How can I help you?"

Before you can answer, he spies Isiel and exclaims in sindarin, "Mae govannen! It is one of my kin!"

The tavernkeeper and Isiel then speak very quickly and neither Rikoro or Josrel can keep up with what they are saying. Finally, the tavernkeeper turns to the rest and says in Harnic, "Excuse my manners. My name is Brenian of Karainna. Isiel tells me you are looking for food and lodging for the night. Normally, I am not allowed to provide lodging but in this case I can offer hospitality to Isiel and his companions. However, offering hospitality for free would be too much and would land me in trouble with the Mangai. Shall we say 6d per person for a room and meal or 1d for the common room and a meal?"

Speaking up in slow Sindarin, Rikoro says, "More than fair, and well met I am Rikoro of Drelin." Changing back to Harnic

Rikoro continues, "If my companions choose to stay I would like a room and meal please. I am sure the stay will be good on Isiel's heart."

Berina says: "I'd also like a room for my husband-to-be and myself, and a meal for each of us, if he's agreeable." Turning to Davas, she asks: "Davas?"

As Berina draws his attention back to her he mumbles "... hmmm? ... what? ... oh, yes ... of course". His eyes stray back to the cauldron and he licks his lips. More definitely, he says "yes. This ... feels right. And that ... smells wonderful. With a grin, he says to Brenian "to begin, some of that I think" he indicates the cauldron "... and some ale ... for us all". He looks to the others. "I think will suit well ... my thanks". So saying, he makes his way to the empty table, greeting the others already seated as he does so with grins and brief words.

"Thank you for your hospitality," Josrel says to the innkeeper. "My wife and I would also like a room, and for dinner I think the Boiled chicken."

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Once everyone has made their decisions known, one of the serving girls shows you to your rooms and says that, as soon as you are settled in, you should return to the common room for dinner.

For dinner, you are served peas a la vitellius for an appetizer, a choice of entrée (mutton olives, pike with galentyne sauce or boiled chicken) accompanied by sallat (medieval salad) cocket (cheap white bread) and ale (pale copper color, light pear-apple aroma, slightly oily texture, powerful taste of almonds that soon gives way to a pronounced and lasting bitterness) followed by a honey omelet for dessert.

Berina has the mutton olives.

Rikoro chooses the chicken for his meal. When it arrives he slowly carves it into slices while the others eat. He tries to inconspicuously listen in to the woman giving orders to the two men seated at the other table.

She notices him listening and says, "Obviously they teach not manners in this part of the kingdom. Do you mind? We are having a private conversation here."

A bit shocked, Rikoro stammers out, "A-apologies.. I was curious and decided to try and discern where you are from based on your accent. Absolutely no excuse on my part to have listened in."

As usual he finishes last and starts on conversation, asking Brenian, "Would you happen to have heard any word on the conditions of the road from here to Nubeth or even beyond to Minarsas?"

"Not recent news," the innkeeper says. "As I told my kinsman here, the last news I had from that direction was a few days ago when his...cousin was it?...passed by on her way to Erael."

In broken and halting Harnic, Isiel tells you that he was planning on leaving you in the morning and continuing south.

## ACT 4 SCENE 4 PAGE 2

In his best Sindarin Rikoro says to Isiel, "I wish all the best in journey and search. You will be reunite soon with your cousin" The Fyvrian Mage then offers a comforting smile to Isiel.

Isiel answers in Sindarin, "Thank you my friend. If fortune favors, I may return to visit some day."

Berina gives Isiel a warm smile and says: "When you see Divlena, give her my love, tell her I miss her and that Davas and I are to wed...she'll want to know about that."

With a laugh, Davas adds "she will indeed ... and I fear she will not believe you the first time you tell her either". Smiling only now, he says "wish her well when you find her ... and take care of yourself as well. If fortune smiles, perhaps we will meet again."

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After dinner and conversation, you retire to your rooms.

### 6-HALÁNÈ-720 QUALDRIS, KALDOR

2ND WATCH [WARM, CLEAR, SOUTHWEST WIND]

Berina is feeling very good as she is not throwing up and her injury is less painful.

Berina prays to Halea, and adds a little extra in thanks for feeling better.

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Rikoro gives a polite knock on Josrel and Lillia's door. When they answer he dips his head respectfully and lifts his wooden bowl saying, "I'm here to take you up on your offer for morning ablution."

Smiling at Rikoro, Josrel says, " Yes Yes come in."

Turning to Lillia, he says, "Lillia, Rikoro is here to perform our morning ablution. Shall we then."

Josrel then proceeds to perform the ablution and a sermon to follow.

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In the morning, you do your morning routines then arrive to break your fast and plan your day. The innkeeper serves fried perch, goose eggs, curds, currants, nut bread and Perry (pear cider).

Berina takes extra eggs and goes light on the perch

After wiping some of the nut bread out of his beard, Rikoro inquires, "Today is the day we cross the half-way mark in our journey. I myself am eager to get started, so if there is nothing more to attend to, let us be on our way."

Berina goes to the tavernkeeper and pays for her, Davas, and Lysada. Speaking to him, she says: "Thank you, and Isiel, for putting us up last night. If I come back this way, I'll be sure to stop in, and if you get an innkeeper's license, I will most definitely stay here. Again, thank you."

Lysada arrives, yawning, having awoken late, and says, "Dank ee, milady. I apologize vor falling asleep avore I could 'elp ee and milord properly give praise to 'alea bit I wuz zo tired. I baint used to traipsin' zo far."

Berina smiles at Lysada and says: "We've got a couple more days of this before we get to Minarsas, so you need to do things in the least strenuous way to save your strength." Berina gives her a gentle hug, then continues: "Having second thoughts about joining us?"

"Oh no, milady," Lysada answers, "I 'ave already zeen dings I niver wud 'ave if I ztayed een my village. I 'ave niver zeen wan aw'mun zindarin avore."

Davas looks dumbstruck at Lysada's comments but recovers his composure a little while Berina is speaking. There is a pause before he speaks. "Traipsing ... yes, that certainly sounds like us. By all means, save your strength for the road ... of course". He looks a little uneasy through a half hearted grin.

After another pause, he adds "... and how long are you going to stay with us? I ask because ... well ... it can be dangerous to be with us. Not everyone appreciates us ... many ... well ... let me just say that we have some enemies ... and we are getting nearer to some of them". He glances at Berina then back. "If you want to stay for any length of time, you should get a weapon. A staff perhaps? ... not to attack ... just to help you get away. What do you think?"

With a fearful, wide-eyed look, Lysada turns to Berina and says, "Oh please, do nat 'ave 'im zend me away. I 'ave dude nothing wrong and I weel be killed on my own...ur wuss."

With a motherly tone, Berina says: "Shush my girl. Davas is not saying that you have to leave us...just that associating with us is not necessarily the safest thing for you to be doing." She gives Lysada a weary smile and says: "We do seem to attract trouble like nectar draws bees." and briefly gives the others a wry grin.

"If you choose to throw in your lot with us, you can expect to see and experience many strange things. That being the case, Davas was just saying that it would be wise of you to learn a few basic ways you can defend yourself when trouble comes calling."

"Dey I 'ave followed ee dicky far zhowz dey I 'ave chosen to pitch my lot een way ee," Lysada answers, "I weel give my allegiance and my zervice vor what iver ee may wish een return vor ee providing vor me and protecting me. It be ees fay nat my place to be 'itting anyone way no ztick. If ee cussen zupport yer zide uv de bargain, tull me now and I weel return to my village and take my punishment vor running away - assuming I do nat dee along de way and ee 'ave no plans to zell me as a zlave in foreign places. I 'ave 'eard ztories uv zitch dings, I 'ave."

"Well...I'll take care of you as best I can." Berina says. "You don't have to worry about being sold into slavery with me around. At the very least, if one worshipper of Halea were to sell another worshipper of Halea into slavery, the Goddess would let bad things happen to the seller."

"So, tell me more about yourself. You've said that you cook and sew. Do you have any skills like alewife, knowledge of herbs, midwife, grow vegetables...that sort of thing? What do you LIKE to do? Do you sing, play an instrument, dance, draw or carve? I ask these things because I'll almost be making you a member of my family, and if I'm to have another sister, I'd like to know her better." and Berina gives Lysada a warm smile.

Lysada gathers her thoughts and answers slowly, "I can tend to de garden, I 'ave taken care uv goats and pegs, and I know a little uv 'arbs but I know nat 'bout brewing, playing music, drawing ur carving ood. I can zing a little and I know a bit 'bout buying and zelling fruits and vegetables."

Berina nods.

She glances around to see who's listening and then says quietly, "I can zometimes 'eal by de laying on uv fambles and zometimes I zee zpirits and zometimes I get feelings 'bout vokes and places – like wain I met ee I 'ad a vailin I could trust ee."

Berina asks: "What is fambles?"

Lysada holds up her hands and says, "fambles."

With a sheepish grin, she says a bit louder, "What I like be de art uv de bade chamber – bit I 'ave a lot to larn 'bout dey."

Berina laughs out loud at this and says: "The person who initiated you must have been pretty good!" She looks at Lysada with a knowing smile.

"Nat really," she answers, "At least I do nat dink zo. 'e zeemed too concerned way 'is own pleasure and unconcerned way mine. It wuz 'nuff to point out what I do nat know. Dere be a lot I can larn 'bout giving pleasure but I dink I could larn a lot vrim someone who be interested een mutual pleasure too. Now do nat take me wrong. I know my ztation een live and it be possible my fate be merely de giving uv pleasure. If dey be de case, I can be 'appy way dey bit even a cat can dream."

Berina continues: "I can teach you a fair bit. Maybe I should get Rikoro involved in your lessons, as I think he might do with some instruction as well!" and she laughs again. Becoming somewhat more serious, Berina says: "Rikoro also knows about healing. The two of you might be able to teach each other a thing or two."

Berina says, "When we have secured a room tonight, I'll see what I can do by way of a start in teaching you some lovecraft."

The Fyvrian mage perks up at hearing his name mentioned as they walk, glances over his shoulder to the two women, but decides to return his attention back to the path in front of him.

"Oh I know nat anything 'bout midwifery ur anything," Lysada says, "It be jist dey zometimes wain I tetch a person's wound dey feel better. I know nat how it works. If 'e wants to larn me 'bout 'ealing, I wud love to larn bit I wud 'ave to perform zome zervice vor 'im een return as I try to awiz pay my own way."

Speaking to Rikoro, Berina says: "Healing by the laying-on-of-hands...that sounds like a type of psionics. I don't know how to train someone in how to develop something like that. I would think, however, that if Lysada were to learn even basic healing techniques of the ordinary kind, that it would help to bring such psionic abilities to the fore, and provide a measure of control as well. I can't speak fore anyone else, but I'd appreciate it if you'd work with her on this. What do you say?"

Rikoro focusing on the path in front of him says to Berina, "Unless she's been unknowingly trained by a Fyvrian, I would have to agree with your ascertain. What's the Laranian saying

though - 'best not complicate matters with details?' It may prove more harm then good."

Rikoro grins sheepishly to himself then looks to his fellow Satia-Mavari slightly flinching as if expecting to be hit.

He then adds, while stroking his beard, "But yes I shall see what I can do. I'm not a Master myself so this likely won't stick. I think the best education in this case is experience. And with you beside her..."

Rikoro immediately trails off tipping his head to the side and away from Berina.

Berina feigns a slap to the side of Rikoro's head...to get him to lean over a little bit more...then tickles his ribs.

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Josrel says, "Thank you also from Lillia and myself. May Save-K"nor guide you through your financial endeavors." Josrel says to the Innkeeper.

Drawing out her purse and paying the tavernkeeper for her room and board, Lillia says to Josrel, "I believe he requires a little more than your thanks."

Rikoro rises from the table swinging his pack over his shoulder and balancing himself with his staff.

Reaching into his pack as an afterthought Rikoro retrieves some coin from within and makes his way to the innkeeper. Once Rikoro has his attention, he says in practiced Sindarin, "Fine tavern you have Brenian. Humblest thank you." as he hands the payment over.

Berina rejoins the others in time to hear Rikoro's statement. "Indeed, let's be off." she says, and gets her things settled about her person and heads for the door.

Turning to the group, Josrel says " Our journey know should turn northeast to Nubeth if memory serves me..two watches it should take us."

#### **6-HALÁNÈ-720 NUBETH, KALDOR**

5TH WATCH [COLD, CLOUDY, SOUTHWEST WIND, LIGHT SNOW]  
By the start of the fifth watch, you arrive at the village of Nubeth. The first watch of your journey was over rolling plains with little more than the paved road and grassy pastures. The air was merely cool but the wind chill from the gale force winds was fierce.

Rikoro takes in deep breathes of the fresh cool air, closing his eyes on occasion as he does. As he walks the Fyvrian seems to appreciate the beauty of the landscape before him, often times taking long glances off the path he walks to look over the green and brown colored fields.

Speaking to no one in particular Rikoro inspired says, "I am sure Isiel would enjoy this tranquility. I do hope he's found himself in a similar situation as us."

By the start of the fourth watch you had returned to more civilized lands with small villages along the way and isolated farms on the sides of the road. The wind had died down slightly

# ACT 4 SCENE 4 PAGE 4

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but the temperature dropped, causing the wind chill to be unrelenting.

As they near the first village Rikoro moves to speak with Berina, "You know I do not think I ever told you. But the staff you provided me with, I was able to discern its.. capabilities."

His neck twists in a slow dipping arc as he glances over each shoulder and then lowering his voice Rikoro nearly whispers, "It should be able to ward off morvrin up to several feet. Something to bear in mind should we encounter them." He then taps the staff he's using to walk with on the ground a few times contently.

Berina's face is stiff and cold from the weather but she is the most protected. Rikoro's and Lillia's hands and face are exposed, Josrel's head and hands are exposed and Davas' head, elbows, forearms and hands are exposed. Lysada, being the least protected, is shivering, her teeth are chattering and her skin is starting to turn blue – even with her obvious discomfort, she bears her misfortune without comment.

Rubbing his large hands together slowly but firmly Rikoro says to the others, "Our third waypoint reached, but I fear the weather grows colder than I anticipated. I may need to purchase some gloves and Lysada here, though she has yet to utter a word of complaint, may need a warmer outfit all together." Rikoro's eyes drift in Lysada's direction as he speaks his face showing some concern, "Let us see what sort of lodging we can find in Nubeth. Also Lysada if you have any pain or numbness please let us know. I do not have any experience with frostbite, but it should be properly looked after."

Lysada tries to answer a couple of times but is unable to get anything past her chattering teeth. Finally, she briefly holds up her hands and one of her bare feet, nodding with a pained expression.

Davas says, "Aye ... that wind is cold ... and so strong". He glances quickly at Berina and gives her a smile. "And it is possible we have been lucky so far, despite the snow. We must make sure that we are prepared before we go further". He pauses and looks slowly around. "I did not expect this .. perhaps I should have. But as you say Rikoro ... lodgings and warmth first. Perhaps someone there might know where we can get some warmer clothing". Almost to himself, quietly, he says "... I don't remember my hands ever being this cold ...".

Josrel says, rubbing his ears and face: "This is exactly why I prefer not to camp!" Josrel move to Lillia and rubs her shoulders to warm her. Then goes to her pack to remove her blanket and puts it around her shoulders, as Josrel does the same for himself. "There, this should help keep the cold at bay until we can get some suitable cold weather clothing."

"Now do not fuss. I am fine," Lillia says, "Did you pay that innkeeper in Qualdris?"

Josrel, raising an eyebrow to Lillia's question, says: "I thought I saw you opening your purse to pay him. If you didn't then I will have to make amends."

Ignoring Lillia Josrel still wraps the blanket about her shoulder. "You will wrap yourself with the blanket. I will not have you coming down with sickness." Josrel states flatly.

"Well, we will not be welcome there again," Lillia says with a frown, "perhaps you should give me your money and let me take care of the finances from here on?"

Trying to stifle a chuckle at Lillia's remark, Rikoro quickly covers his mouth.

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Glancing over to Berina, Rikoro mentions, "Berina, I believe we are close enough to Nubeth to find lodging, and Lysada here needs immediate care. Perhaps you can .. pray .. to the Lady of Lust to -warm- Lysada's spirit and body for the remainder of our trip. Once we arrive at an inn I shall take a closer look."

Speaking to Rikoro, Davas, Josrel, and Lillia, Berina says: "Would the four of you gather around Lysada and Myself and hide us from any prying eyes, please"

Josrel does as asked.

Once the others have masked what Berina is doing, she says to Lysada: "You are going to have to trust me, Lysada...and you will have to keep what you see strictly to yourself." With that, she gets out the candle stub and lights it with her flint and steel. Once the candle is going, Berina performs Caress of Pelena on Lysada three times, starting with Lysada's foot. After Berina is done, she says to the rest of the party: "Let's find a place to stay, and I'll do the rest of you once I've gotten a little rest."

With each use, Berina's hands glow slightly and Lysada's eyes get larger but she does not utter a sound. [+3 Caress of Pelena]

After attending to Lysada, Berina extinguishes the candle, and puts it and the flint and steel away.

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Walking through the small village, you find three businesses with the sign of the heather. The first has a sign with one mug of beer and another of ale. The second has a sign with a shining metal hammer with "The Silver Hammer" written below in Lakise. The third has a sign with a bowman.

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

After a moments ponderance, Rikoro speaks up saying, "Hrm I believe the first one we found is likely just a tavern, let us try the sign with a archer." He then makes his way in that direction, leading with his staff as he goes.

"Three inns! That's a lot for such a small village." Berina says. "The Silver Hammer...which is what the writing on the sign says...is likely to cater to travelers and is probably more expensive than the others. The Beer and Ale probably serves the locals. I'm guessing that the Bowman serves mostly men-at-arms."

She pauses for a moment, then says: "A small village with three inns, one of which likely serves men-at-arms...do any of you know if there's a manor nearby, or even a baronial seat?"

Berina says, "Let's try the Beer and Ale first. Other ideas?"

Davas' slight look of surprise fades as Berina speaks to Lysada and he finds himself nodding. "Yes, that's right. It's only fair that you know what you are getting into. We mean you no harm ... so

if harm comes for us ..." he grins at Berina, then the others "... as it has before, it is only fair to warn you, yes ?"

"Now come ... let us get you, and us, warm. I fancy 'the Bowman' ... for no other reason than I carry one, so unless anyone complains, that is where we are headed ... now". He starts towards the sign, then stops and turns. "And before we go any further, we all make sure that our clothing and equipment is ... appropriate".

He turns once more and heads for the door.

With a sigh, Berina follows Davas and Rikoro toward the Bowman.

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Entering The Bowman, you see that it is a high quality establishment and there are four tables in the common room. At the first table is a man, dressed as a merchant, next to a tribesman – They each have a mug of ale before them and the merchant has plate of food.

The second table has a woman dressed as a priestess of Halea, a man dressed as a woodsman and a very large man-at-arms (size 9) – they each have a mug of ale and the man-at-arms has a plate of food. The third table has a man-at-arms – alone with a mug of ale and a plate of food. The fourth table is empty.

The female innkeeper notices your entry and says, "Welcome folks. How can I be of service?"

Berina says, "By having such a fine establishment, you already have. Do you have lodgings available, and if so, what are your rates?"

Rikoro clears his throat before replying to the innkeeper, "Good day to you. The six of us are traveling through and are in need of a place to eat and lodge for the night. We were wondering what the cost would be for your fine establishment."

"No, I have only a tavern license," she answers, "The evening meal is 10d. Beer, ale, cider and mead are all 1d per pint. For lodging, you will have to go to the Silver Hammer Inn."

"Hrm we should try to the Silver Hammer then as they sometimes offer meal included with the stay.", Rikoro mentions offhandedly.

Speaking to Rikoro, Berina says: "That's likely true, and we can go there, but I think we should stay here a little while and take advantage of the fire to get warm. Besides, we should buy a drink as thanks for the welcome and the information." Turning to the innkeeper, she says: "I'd like a pint of your mead, please."

Turning back to Davas and Lysada, she asks: "Do you want a drink, love? Lysada?"

With a quick questioning look to Berina, Davas says "if our coin will stretch to it, I think a mulled wine for all. That is the way to quickly warm your insides".

Lysada nods energetically and, when her mulled ale is served, she places her hands around the ceramic tankard and sits close as she can get to the hearth. She gradually recovers from the cold.

With a hopeful look at Berina, he sits at the free table, nodding to the other inhabitants and smiling as he does so.

Rikoro nods in agreement to Davas' words and moves to the same table. He pulls out a chair and settles down on it with a sigh of relief. After rubbing the back of his neck Rikoro's voice says wearily, "We're almost at the end of this journey. Today's leg was especially tiresome with the cold wind nipping at us all the way."

When the innkeeper returns with any drinks ordered, Berina pays for hers (and Davas' and Lysada's if they order), then says: "My name is Berina of Kyfa. What's your name?"

"I am Sudiene of Daarienna," she answers, "if there is nothing else I must see to my other guests. I have no time to chat now."

Berina looks for an opportunity to go speak with the Halean priestess when doing so won't involve interrupting the conversation she's engaged in. If the priestess goes to leave before Berina can speak to her, Berina gets up and moves to intercept her, saying: "Excuse me. Could I speak to you for a moment, please?"

"Certainly," she says, "How may I please you?"

"I have need of your advice." Berina says. "I am a follower of Halea. My husband-to-be follows Peoni. Neither of us sees a need for the other to change who we're worshipping. This is causing us to have difficulty finding clergy to marry us. What would you suggest?"

"Strictly speaking, it is not necessary for religious blessing to be married. Although that may change in the future," she answers, "Neither is the usual permission from a liege, publishing of the banns or even witnesses. The only thing that is absolutely necessary is the consents...you say to him that 'you consent to be his wife' and he says to you that 'he consents to be your husband'. Marriage is usually a business arrangement to provide for future children. Permissions, banns and witnesses are only necessary if you foresee someone contesting the marriage or if you have a lot of wealth to be distributed. Otherwise, I would suggest you have a couple of your closest friends witness your consents and be done with it. However, you should consider that marriage is much easier to enter than it is to set aside. Getting out of a marriage is only done in the direst of situations."

Turning toward Berina and the Priestess: " If that is the case I could marry them then?"

To Berina Josrel says " I was under the impression Berina that you were told that you needed permission by both of your religions. If that it not so I would be more than happy to marry you. That is if you wish it. I understand you wanted to be wed by your own religion, but the offer is there." Josrel smiles.

Berina says, "I'd like that very much. Davas?"

"If you do this as a friend," Lillia says, "there will not be a problem but, if you do it as a priest of Save K'nor, you will be claiming that Save K'nor blesses this union. Whether Save K'nor does or not is arguable but I know there will be serious disagreements from the authorities in the temple and you will be in trouble for making such assumptions."

# ACT 4 SCENE 4 PAGE 6

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Turning to Davas with a huge smile, Berina says: "My love, we can do it right here, right now!" Waving her arm to take in the rest of the party as well as the other people in the common room. "Our friends," indicating Josrel, Lillia, Rikoro, and Lysada "and the other fine people here, will make excellent witnesses! Would you like to do it right now?"

Davas was most interested the Hlean priestess' words on marriage and what was an was not needed. As she finished, he was smiling, obviously realizing that it was not, perhaps, as difficult as they were making it for themselves. "Thank you, that is good news" he says quietly with a smile.

As first Berina, then Josrel speak, he turns more and more quickly from one to the other with his mouth open as if to say something. When Berina is looking at him waiting for his answer, he stands a moment, almost stunned, then shakes his head, grins at everyone, and says simply "yes ... yes ... let us do it now". He turns to Josrel with a quick glance and a smile at Berina. "I ... we ... would be honored if you would Josrel". He takes Berina's hand and gives her a huge grin. "It will make things easier when she is next arrested too. Come ... let us do this".

"Arrested?" the tavernkeeper says. "If you are outlaws, you will have to be on your way. I will not have such goings on in my tavern."

"Do not worry on that point." Berina says. "A riot was going on in Tashal...a bunch of people were stoning worshippers entering the temple of Halea. I stepped in to try to break it up. I was successful to the extent of having the rioters turn on me. They stopped stoning the worshippers and followed after me. The city watch then arrived and I got swept up with the rioters...ended up in gaol. Most people...it seems...were content to leave restoring the King's peace to the city watch, but not me. Besides, as a Hlean, I couldn't stand by and let fellow Hleans be assaulted like that. A short stretch in gaol while things got straightened out was worth it, as I feel that I did the right thing."

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After drinks have arrived, and while Berina is waiting for her chance to talk to the Hlean priestess, she whispers in Rikoro's ear: "Say Rikoro, Lysada has some healing talent. Without giving away your status as a Shek P'var, you should talk to her and see what she can do." Speaking out loud to both Rikoro and Lysada, Berina says: "You two should compare experiences about healing."

"I overheard your conversation whilst we walked," Rikoro mentions in reply to Berina. He then looks to Lysada and says, "I would be more than willing to share with you what I know of the healing arts. As I said I don't have any experience with the cold, but the time I spent aiding at the Peonian temple I learned a good number of remedies surrounding poisonings and bites, not to mention physical injuries. Perhaps tomorrow when we walk - to pass the time we can exchange knowledge."

Lysada says, "I be willing if ee be bit I be zure ee weel get de poor aend uv dey cheap. I do nat know anything dey I could larn ee."

Rikoro nods slowly at Lysada's words and offers in return, calmly, "I'm afraid I'm not a master in the area myself. I have a

grasp of the basics, so it may be difficult to teach you. Like the blind leading the blind. If we were sharing our own experiences it would have been easier to build on. Still there is a great value in having an understanding of the healing arts if you are traveling on your own and with this group. Especially with this group."

Rikoro tips his head in Berina's direction grinning sheepishly then mentions, "That is how you will be able to repay the teachings should it hold."

Hunched a little at the table and sipping his mulled wine, Rikoro looks over to Josrel and Lillia a moment in thought before inquiring to the both of them, "Haliki's, do you either of you know if there is a temple or chapel in Minarsas? I must confess I grew rather comforted with having such a large space to practice in Tashal. It did my mind well being there."

Pursing his lips, Josrel says, "I know what you mean, unfortunately I do not think there is a KNorrian Temple there. But it will be the first place I plan to seek out once were settled."

\* \* \*

Speaking to Josrel, Berina says: "Your wife is likely right. Just be a witness. If someone should question our marriage, as a Haliki, your word will have weight. Thank you for the offer." and she gives Josrel a warm smile.

Smiling Josrel says, as he shrugs his shoulders " As you wish Berina this is your day. However you I can help."

Berina turns to face Davas, now holding both of his hands in hers, looks deeply into his eyes, and says: "Davas of Fainovirs, I, Berina of Kyfa, do consent, with all my heart, to be your wife."

Looking staright at Berina and surprisingly serious, Davas adds "... and I Davas of Fainovirs, willingly take my beloved Berina of Kyfa and pledge before these witnesses" he indicates their friends "to be a loving husband to her".

He grins hugely at last, kisses her and turns to the others, holding her hand aloft in his, before taking Berina to the others one by one and accepting their congratulations.

Once this is done, he turns to Berina again. "We must celebrate ... let us see what our purse may provide ... and start with a drink I think. Come wife" he adds sternly, before grinning again. "I like the sound of that".

Berina gives her new husband the most insincere meek expression he has ever seen, then smiles broadly at the look on his face.

Rikoro claps his large palms together loudly a few times a broad smile painted across his bearded face, while making various proclamations, "Well done, congratulations, all the best, to a great marriage and lovely children.. one to be named Rikoro!"

Berina laughs hardily, then says: "It'll have to be no sooner than the second child, as we have decided to name or first son, Arylen."

Josrel says, firmly shaking Davas's hand and kissing Berina on the cheek; " Yes congratulations and may your lives be filled with joy."

"I mean not to run you off," says the tavernkeeper, "but as you said you were looking for lodging do you not think you should inquire at the Silver Hammer before it fills up and you end up consummating your new marriage in the streets?"

Chuckling merrily, Rikoro utters, "Yes.. yes a good point. In our celebration it seems we lost our heads. And forgot our stomachs too. We should find out about a meal as well. We can continue this fine eve once we've settled in properly."

He looks to the tavernkeep asking, while reaching for his pack, "What do we owe you for the drinks?"

"That was six mulled ales and three were paid for by the new bride," she answers, "that will be 3d remaining."

"Well worth it, they warmed us up from the days cold having worn on us." Rikoro says as he reaches into his pack and offers payment to the woman.

Handing the woman the balance of the bill, Josrel says, " Thank you for the warmth of your establishment."

Rikoro spots Josrel trying to pay and shakes his head, telling him, "Haliki I have already covered the remainder of the cost. No need to pay again."

The Haliki bows his head respectfully to the Shek Pvar, "Thank You."

Berina says: "Yes, let's go see what the Silver Hammer has to offer. My thanks to you, Sudiene of Daarienna, and especially to you good priestess!" then heads for the door.

Davas bursts into laughter, subsiding only gradually. "Yes ... yes of course ... my thanks, we will indeed." Still smirking, Davas leads Berina in the direction of the Silver Hammer.

\* \* \*

You enter the Silver Hammer Inn, at the middle of the fifth watch, and find an average sort of common room. The lighting is provided by the fire in the hearth and several rush lights in the darker corners. There are three wooden trestle tables each with no table cloth and with a tallow candle burning at the center of the table. Two long benches along either side can accommodate six people at each table.

The first table has three travel stained men sitting with empty plates and half filled mugs in front of them. One seems to be dozing while the other two examine a small box. They appear to be deciding on whether it opens. The one dozing wears armor and shows signs of recent injuries. The other two are dressed in leather and one has a nasty bruise on his jaw.

As Rikoro passes the men, he eyes over the box with a curious expression.

A dark, curly-haired woman sits at the second table, playing idly with a small knife. She keeps her gaze directed downward, but still seems aware of things around her. Occasionally she takes a sip of her drink and mutters softly under her breath.

A jeweler with a guard sits at the third table, appraising a ring being offered to them by a nervous-looking young man in a pale green cloak.

A female innkeeper passes with a tray of drinks and pauses to say, "find a place to sit and I will be with you in a moment."

Berina indicates for Davas and Lysala to sit at the table of the dark, curly-haired woman. Once the three of them are seated (leaving Rikoro, Josrel and Lillia to sit at whichever table they choose), Berina turns with a smile to the woman and says: "Hello."

The woman stabs the knife into the table and says, "I weel nat 'ave 'im trait me dey way." Finishing her drink and retrieving her knife, she storms out the door."

With a shocked look, Davas turns to Berina. "Ah, love, as much as I hate to suggest this, being our marriage day and all" he gives her a grin "and given that some of us have been known to get into trouble for doing good, I liked not the sound of that ... or the knife". His now serious expression goes from the hole in the table to the door the woman left through. Thoughtfully he asks "we might prevent damage to someone ... or we might get into trouble. Perhaps the innkeeper knows her ... and if this is, well, normal seems like a strange word for what we just saw".

Speaking to the innkeeper, Berina asks: "Who was that? She seems like a woman not to be trifled with."

"That is the wife of one of the villagers and she suspects her husband of having a mistress," the innkeeper answers, "but I should not be airing the village laundry among strangers."

Berina says, "It may seem strange...coming from me..., but this is one fight I'll pass on." She holds up her hand at Davas' surprised look, forestalling a response, and continues: "Hear me out. How others conduct their marriages, what assumptions they make with regard to what is, and is not, acceptable behavior, is their business...and that of their clans...and none of ours."

"Before you ever consented to marry me, you knew I was a Hlean. You also know what sorts of things go on at a Hlean worship service, because I've told you, and..." here Berina gives Davas a sultry look "we've been practicing some of those things on a regular basis!" and she laughs.

Continuing: "I've also told you those things about Hlean worship services that I no longer do...and why." Her hand goes to her belly. "This will probably shock you, but I wouldn't necessarily object if you wanted to take a mistress."

Davas splutters through a partly inhaled mouthful of ale at Berina's last comment. Once he has recovered a little, an embarrassed grin is seen and he waves his hands vaguely and stares fixedly at the table. "You ... you what ? ... " he mumbles before subsiding into vagueness once more.

After Davas has reacted to her last statement, Berina continues: "If you do take a mistress, I have three conditions and an observation. First, that the relationship we currently have continue as it is...with all the same love and passion, partnership and support. Second, that whoever she is, she be a good and worthy person. If all she has, is the correct genitalia, that is not acceptable. Third, that you bring her to meet me. I have such trust in your judgment of the character of people, that I'm sure that any woman you were to take as a mistress, would become a good friend to me. I care greatly for the men in my life," and she

## ACT 4 SCENE 4 PAGE 8

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gestures to indicate Rikoro and Josrel "but I desire more outstanding women friends. Lillia is turning out to be wonderful, and Lysada shows much promise, but I'm greedy and want more."

"The observation is...if you take a mistress under those conditions, don't be surprised if she becomes my mistress as well!" and she laughs then kisses Davas passionately.

Having sat quietly, Davas looks up with a start as Berina mentions Rikoro and Josrel, then quickly back at the table. His ale, though, remains firmly on the table clutched in his hands. He looks up in shock at the prospect of Lysada becoming involved with Berina, and his shocked expression grows as she talks of taking mistresses and he looks intently at the ale pot.

Davas is taken by surprise at the kiss, only slowly responding, a blush coming to his cheeks, then once they have surfaced, a lopsided grin is seen. He responds to Rikoro's toast with a grin and by raising his tankard and saying softly "... and to friends. Our thanks" and sipping carefully, watching Berina while he does so.

"Now see? I warned you that you would be shocked." Berina says with a loving smile for Davas. "I'm not saying that I WANT you to take a mistress, just that such a relationship is always a possibility...who knows what the future holds? The Gods do, of course, but not us."

Gathering her thoughts, she explains: "Love and such feelings are not something each of us has in some finite amount...to be shared among a limited number of people, and once it's all been parceled out, if a new person comes along that you want to love, you have to take love away from somebody else to give to the new person. For instance: Once our child is born, I fully expect that you will love him or her. That being the case, will that mean that you will have to love me any less? Or your parents? Or your siblings?"

"I fully understand that men's eyes wander. I heard a saying somewhere...using a stroll through a marketplace as an example...that says 'Just because I have no money, doesn't mean I can't look at the goods on display.'" and Berina gives Davas a broad grin. "In fact, if we walked past an attractive woman somewhere, and you didn't look, I'd think that there was something wrong with you!" and she laughs.

Berina continues: "Sometimes, more than a man's eyes wander. That there is such a concept as mistresses, is proof that it happens. Now, whether YOU would wander is something only you and the passage of time can answer. So...if, bearing in mind my three conditions, you find that you're falling in love with an additional person, don't treat that extra love as some sort of shameful secret you have to hide...bring them home and we'll add them to our growing clan." Here, Berina gets a look that is both serious and wistful, and says: "I think I'm safe in assuming that you'll agree, that there is not an excess of love in the world. I feel that wherever love is found, it should be nurtured." and she again kisses Davas...this time soft and gentle.

When Berina stops kissing Davas, she moves slightly so she can whisper quietly in Davas' ear so that no one else can hear: "I think you'll agree that Lysada is an attractive woman. She wants to be a Halean, but she's so inexperienced, I'll have to train her in

lovecraft. You know what that will entail. The outcome I'm looking for, is to get her and Rikoro together!" and she moves away from Davas' ear, glancing momentarily at Rikoro then back at Davas, and laughs delightedly.

\* \* \*

Rikoro settles down at the table with the three men offering a polite silent nod of greeting.

They nod as well, watching Rikoro cautiously.

The innkeeper delivers the drinks to the first table and then returns to you to ask, "Now, what can I do for you folks this evening?"

Easing back into his chair and relaxing slightly, Rikoro says, "A few things if you would not mind. Of primary concern is lodging and a meal. Would you have space for the six of us?"

"Yes," she answers, "I can accommodate you. Shared rooms are 6d per night and include two meals and two drinks. Sleeping in the common room is 4d and does not include any meals or drinks. The evening meal alone is 2d, the morning meal is 1d and most drinks are 3f per pint."

Berina adds quickly: "One room for the two of us." and she indicates Davas and herself. "We'll pay for Lysala here" indicating Lysala "as well."

"Are your shared rooms large enough for three people?" Berina asks.

"The could even accommodate four but that would be a bit snug," she answers.

"Excellent. We'll take a room for the three of us." Berina says with a gesture including Davas and Lysada. "What are the choices for the meal tonight?"

"Ah then I shall take a shared room and a meal please," Rikoro quickly responds.

With an idle gesture of his hands making a circular motion, Rikoro asks, "Second would you happen to know of any place in town, come morning, we could visit to purchase some warmer clothing?"

"For normal wool clothing, there is Dyrert the tailor...he makes a reasonable quality of clothes at a decent price," she says. "If you are looking for something heavier, there is Rersil the hide worker...his goods are also of reasonable quality but of a more normal price."

Rikoro bobs his head and says, "Appreciated, come morning I shall seek them out."

Rikoro leans forward towards the innkeeper, showing further interest in the answer, "Lastly, out of curiosity, do you would happen to know of the road conditions between here to Minarsas?"

"All I have heard is that there is a big search north of here for a serf who has walked out from his obligations," she answers. Taking a closer look at Davas and Lysada, she continues, "You two look like serfs. I hope you have proof of your freehold status or permission from your liege for being away. I want no trouble here and I will not harbor outlaws."

"Show her your ring, love." Berina says as she holds out her own citizenship ring for the innkeeper to see. "He used to be a serf, but recently was able to purchase his freedom and that of his family. Now he's my husband!" she says with a look of joy flitting across her face. Getting a more neutral expression, she continues: "Lysala here is working for me...that's why I asked you about whether your rooms could take three. She's helping to carry my things, as I was injured recently."

With an overly meek "yes dear" and a grin, Davas extends his hand, obviously proud of both the ring and Berina.

"I can accept that answer as I have no reason to suspect you of an untruth," the innkeeper answers, "but I hope you have some documentation of that if you are asked officially."

Berina is obvious in listening to the innkeeper's answers to Rikoro's questions.

The man with the bruised jaw sitting next to Rikoro says, "Just passing through on your way to Minarsas, are you? I hope you are not one of those Shek Pvar fellers. They accused me of being one and that is when the fight started. I have no patience with the consorting with demons and such like; and I like not someone accusing me of it."

When the man with the bruised jaw says this, Berina's attention shifts to the table with Rikoro and the three men.

Rikoro turns his attention to the men as the innkeeper speaks with Davas and Lysada. He shakes his head plainly stating, "Oh my no. No. I am a follower of Save-k'nor, perhaps that's what made you think such." Rikoro idly thumbs his hyrack, "My scholarly pursuits lie with herbalism and healing. Can I ask why you were accused and who thought such? I fear if you think me one, then I shall be suspected as well. And I'd not fair as well as you in a fight. Best to avoid that altogether."

"It was the guards at the outskirts of town," he replies, "and, to be honest, they were asking everyone. They have a bunch of fool laws to tax or track the Shek Pvar...they even have a law taxing paper, parchment and vellum...can you believe it. The whole town has gone mad."

Berina glances momentarily at Josrel and Lillia when the man makes his remark about a paper, parchment and vellum tax.

Josrel moves over to the table with Rikoro at the mention of Parchment: "Excuse me good man, but I couldn't help overhearing your conversation with my friend here." Josrel indicates Rikoro "Did you say they are taxing writing implements? You wouldn't happen to know what the tax is? You see I do a bit of writing and would have to pay this tax?"

"Literate man are you? No, I do not carry such items, and have no use for tales written by those usually long dead," he answers, "I work for my living...but, from the responses of the others, I know it was enough to alarm them."

A look of confusion on his face Josrel questions the man: "When did this tax go into effect? Recently?"

"I know not and had no reason to ask," he answers.

Rikoro hrms to himself and then asks, "So I'm guessing the scuffle did not see you inside the town? I'm wondering how much worse it is inside. Did you happen to hear any word beyond your experience?"

"Naw," he answers, "It was at that point that I decided that I wanted no part of such nonsense so I left. I arrived here only a few hours before you did and it was me who told the innkeeper about the search for the runaway serf."

Rikoro bites his lower lip to contain himself, but then blurts out, "Forgive my curiosity, but as a devotee to the Sage, I'm bound to ask. The box you toy with, is it a puzzle of some sort?"

"So I have been told by my brother-in-law," he replies, "He tells me it is from Melderyn and it is supposed to open somehow. Useless waste of time if you ask me but, if I cannot figure it out, he will gloat about how much smarter he is."

Berina looks more carefully at the box from where she is seated. She exhibits normal curiosity at such a statement.

Rikoro smiles broadly and nods as the man speaks, "Oh Melderyn. Interesting. Heh brothers, I have three sisters myself so I know the taste of sibling rivalry all too well. If you would allow it, I can try my hand and if I succeed you're welcome to take credit for it."

"I suppose that would not work as that is him snoozing next to me," he answers, "As soon as you started, he would awake and give me scorn. Thanks for the offer though."

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For the evening meal you are served patina of elderberries for an appetizer; a choice of entrée (beef olives; pike with galentyne sauce; or suckling pig a la flaccus) accompanied by sallat (medieval salad), cocket (cheap white bread) and beer (pale-golden color. light fruity aroma. quite full, oily texture. light, fruity taste that carries on to the sweetish aftertaste). Your dessert consists of stuffed dates.

Berina has the beef olives.

Turning to Rikoro, Josrel says, "Would you like to share a room with us Rikoro?"

"I would if indeed if it isn't too much trouble, my thanks Haliki", answers Rikoro.

Smiling as he nods to Rikoro, Josrel says, "We three will share a room as well." Josrel indicates to Lillia, Rikoro and himself as he addresses the Innkeeper.

Turning to Lilla "What would you like for dinner? Whatever she likes I will have the same as well."

"Then we will have the fish," says Lillia.

Josrel nods to the innkeeper.

Recovering his composure somewhat, Davas adds quietly "and the beef for me, if you would be so kind".

Rikoro selects the suckling pig for his main course and as the food arrives he watches as the others eat before taking his first bite.

## ACT 4 SCENE 4 PAGE 10

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Because of his slow eating habits he finishes last and then politely calls for the innkeeper. When she arrives, Rikoro makes a request, "If it wouldn't be too much trouble, could you bring us another round of the beer please. We're celebrating the union of Davas and Berina."

"Yes, of course," she answers, "I will add 4d 2f to your bill and you can pay before you leave in the morning."

Once the drinks have been served, Rikoro rises up from the table and raises the pint into the air. His cheeks are clearly flushed from the previous two drinks and a warm smile plays on his lips. The Fyvrian mage says to the others, looking towards Davas and Berina, "It is odd to think I have only known the two of you for the past three months. Yet our lives have become so intertwined I feel as though you are childhood friends. I suppose nothing brings one closer than shared experiences and deep trust. This is what I see when I look to Davas and Berina's union. It is why I now toast to their future, even though it may already be foretold in the Illimitable Tome." Rikoro takes a deep swig from his beer and lowers his lanky frame back down.

"Thank you, Rikoro." Berina says.

After dinner, drinks and conversation, you all retire for the night.