

8-HALÁNÈ-720 ATHELREN, KALDOR

2ND WATCH [WARM, PARTLY CLOUDY, NORTH WIND]

In the morning, you awake to a new day. Berina's stomach wound feels better [-1 IP] and she does not have her morning sickness today.

After visiting the Aswain's for morning ablution, Rikoro heads down the stairs. Josrel and Lillia along perform their morning ablutions with Rikoro.

Arriving at the common room, the innkeeper asks if you would like a morning meal, saying, "We have soft cheese, chicken eggs, currants, and horse bread, along with a very nice pear cider, if you please. It will be 1d for the meal and 1f for a pint of cider."

Berina says, "I'll have the meal and the cider. Thank you." Addressing Davas and Lysada, Berina asks: "Do either of you want a meal and drink?" Speaking to Davas, she reminds: "Please be sure to pay the innkeeper for our room and last night's meal."

"Ees, if it please ee, goodwife," Lysada answers.

"Of course my love". Davas bows extravagantly and grins as he stands again. "... and yes, a meal and a cider before we go sounds like an excellent plan".

When you are ready to go, the innkeeper calculates your bill as, "2d for the room, 1d for the meal last night and another for the one this morning, 1f for an ale last night and another for the cider this morning, times three people...that will be 10d 2f."

With a smile, Davas counts out the silver, breaking off the farthings as necessary. "Thank you".

He returns the remainder of the coin to his purse with a thoughtful look. As they leave the inn, Davas says quietly to Berina "this traveling is hard on coin. Our need of work will be great when we arrive. I have but a few coins left .. we will need to be a bit careful - for a while at least."

"Indeed." Berina says. "I could almost wish for another battle with gargun to get a chance at more booty like we got at the Amba mine, but it would be just my luck that the Gods would grant such a request!" and she gives Davas a wry grin.

With a grin and a shake of his head, Davas says quietly "... almost ...".

Rikoro lets the innkeeper know, "As tempting as that sounds, I will just have the cider this morn please." He then finds a seat and settles in to enjoy the refreshing morning drink.

Josrel says, turning to Lillia, "Would you like to share the morning meal Love?" Josrel asks Lillia. Then orders the meal after her answer.

"Yes, dear," Lillia answers, "and will you be paying the innkeeper this time or should I take care of it?"

"I will take care of it my dear." Josrel says as he reaches into his pack to pay the innkeeper.

Before she leaves with the group Fyna wants to settle her bill with the innkeep. "Master Seto, how much do I owe you? I wish

to pay you for both last nights meal and the room that I shared. I also wish to partake in the morning meal."

Repeating what was said to the others, the innkeeper calculates your bill as, "2d for the room, 1d for the meal last night and another for the one this morning, 1f for an ale last night and another for the cider this morning...that will be 4d 2f."

Letting his companions first enjoy their meal, Rikoro states once they've finished, "We should be on the road now to get as much of a start as possible."

Looking up from his meal a little surprised, Davas asks "I though it was not far from here? Is that wrong?" His crestfallen look is only partly acting and it is obvious that he was looking forward to a short day.

As Rikoro heads for the door, the innkeeper steps forward and says, "Hold on now. There is still the matter of your bill, my good man...shared room, meal and ale last night and cider this morning...that will be 3d 2f if you please."

"Certainly" says Rikoro as he reaches into his pack producing the proper coin and handing it to the innkeeper. Then he adds, "My thanks for your fine service."

On the road the tall gangly Fyvrian digs around in his pack and produces his wrapped smoked rabbit. Taking his morning share, he offers to the others walking with him. After chewing down his food and tucking the remaining meat away, Rikoro says, "With time today I recommend once we arrive in Minarsis we immediately endeavor to establish ourselves. I plan to hold to Lillia's idea seeking out a patron for employ. The question is - who shall we use? None of us know anyone residing in Minarsis. Thus, we have no one to vouch for us. Still we have contacts. Donar of Harabor, an Ostler who has the nickname 'Mule'. And then there is the apothecary, Anesa of Fayrl. Likely with ties to the Guild of Arcane Lore. Perhaps I can find work of some sort at the latter's shop."

Berina says, "I agree. We should visit both people. What one doesn't know about with regard to employment for such a diverse group of people such as ourselves, the other might." Berina says. Turning to Davas, she continues: "I'd guess the Ostler would most likely know about any work for someone with your skills, while the Apothecary might know of someone needing my scribal talents."

"That is likely". With a sudden thoughtful look, Davas says idly ... "where do we know these folk from again ?" With a small shake of his head, he adds quickly "I'm just wondering why they might employ us ... or help us you see".

Leaning over to Davas, and whispering so only he can hear, Berina says: "They are the two people Sheriff Harabor told us about, if you will recall. It seems that I haven't been tickling you enough." And she suits action to words.

Caught by surprise, Davas shrieks like a girl, before recovering a little and trying to give as good as he gets. Once some decorum has been restored, he says a bit breathlessly through laughter "of course, of course ... it is well that I have a wife with such a memory ... at least for some things." With a grin, he tries a quick tickle and escape.

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As the party travels along, Berina finds an occasion to speak to Lysada without being overheard. "We're quickly running out of money, so I won't be able to support you as I have done so far. Do you have any ideas for finding employment for yourself?"

"Well, I wud like a job where I could worship 'alea and dey ax nat 'bout my past, if ee know what I mean," she answers. "I baint a-veered uv 'ard work. Perhaps a back'ouze maid at an inn way a bit uv mutton-mongering on de zide. Do ee dink dey wud be possible?"

Berina says, "Maybe. There's no temple of Halea in Minarsas that I know of, but Minarsas is an important town for merchants and they tend to be Haleans. We'll have to ask around discretely and see what we can find out. We'll have to ask at inns in town to see about getting you work."

"Dank ee, goodwife Berina," Lysada answers, "I need nat a vool temple as I baint planning on becoming a priestess and ant de funds to convince dey to train me. I jst need to be around other worshippers and I can larn vrim dey."

8-HALÁNÈ-720 ATHELREN, KALDOR

3RD WATCH [WARM, PARTLY CLOUDY, NORTH WIND]

You begin your journey, passing villages and peasants at the their work. As you come to an isolated dip in the road, you pass six men sitting on a stone wall, eating a plowman's lunch. Upon seeing you they put down their food and two of them block the road.

"I think you people would not mind paying a bit of a toll for using this stretch of road," one of them says, "perhaps all of your belongings?"

Berina says in an aside to Davas: "Not as challenging as gargun, but they'll do." and she drops the glaive, shrugs the robe off and lets it fall, transfers her shield from her pack to her arm, and gets out her ball and chain

Having taken lead of the group due to his long stride and eagerness to finish the journey Rikoro stops in his tracks as the brigand makes his demands. Then with a sigh the gangly bearded Fyvrian mage says almost sadly, "Parlay with me if you would a moment. Would you be willing to let us pass without any toll? I know this sounds rather absurd, but hear me a moment. We have members of clergy in our company who have taken a vow of poverty. And the rest of us are so poor we can barely afford proper clothing." Rikoro motions to Lysada's feet as he continues on. "Surely the risk of angering the pantheon, not to mention the paltry sum you would come away with is not worth the effort. I tell you this in strict confidence. There is a merchant caravan traveling not far behind us which would be a much better candidate for your imposed road levy. If they were to hear commotion, however, they would likely find another path to traverse and you would be out a good days earnings."

Rikoro's eyes settle on the man before him, in an effort to show any lack of emotion on his face as well as keep a read on the highwayman's reaction.

Looking at Rikoro and then looking at Berina making her preparations, the Brigand says, "Your mutton there appears to have more stones for a fight than you, or something valuable she is protecting. I will make this bargain with you, if you convince the rest of your group to pass peacefully and the priest of Save

K'nor there..." pointing at Jethrul "...confirms what you are saying about a merchant caravan, then I shall let you pass. I agree to this since I know the honesty of the priests of Save K'nor is legendary."

Rikoro says, "Please ignore the others. They are a ragged mercenary escort put upon us and won't act until harm befalls him.", Rikoro then glances over to Josrel a moment in consideration, and then back to the brigand, "The Haliki is of Jarin decent. Notice his height and build? Unfortunately he speaks no Harnic. If you or your comrades speak Jarinese please feel free to ask, otherwise as his translator I can do so."

Fyna readies her bow and tells the outlaws, "This is not a fight you want my friends; it will surely end in either your death or severe maiming. Let us pass by so that we all will live to see another day. However, if you choose to fight, then so be it, I do not fear death." She looks the one who spoke straight in the eye as she speaks.

Speaking to the rest of the party over her shoulder while keeping her eyes on the brigands, she says: "Josrel, Lillia, Lysada, and Rikoro...throw rocks. Davas and Fyna, arrows."

Taking Lillia by the hand Josrel leads Lillia to the rear of the group and stands in front of her. Bending down to grab whatever stones are near and readies himself.

Watching Josrel pick up a stone, the Brigand says, "whether he speaks Harnic or not, his actions speak for him." He yells, "At them lads!" and they all move to surround the group and attack.

Berina moves so as to block the brigands from closing with the rest of the party as much as she can until some missile fire has occurred.

Caught a little by surprise by the demand, Davas looks from Berina to the man demanding tolls. He reaches for his bow, then stops and looks thoughtfully at the two men before him and the four others, waiting by the wall. "Not as challenging, to us ... " he says quietly to Berina, with a quick look at the others "... probably".

[OOO - how far away are the men?

The two blocking the way are two meters down the road. The four on the wall are also two meters away across a shallow drainage ditch.

What if anything are they carrying (except lunch :)) and what do they have close to hand ?

Bandit #1: handaxe in belt, throwing knife in one hand, two spears in the other. At the sight of you reaching for your bow, he throws the dagger at you.

Bandit #2: two slings on belt, small pouch on belt (unknown contents, club in hand. He attacks Berina with the club.

Bandit #3: Knight's target shield in one hand, ball and chain on belt, spear in other hand. He goes for Josrel and Lillia.

Bandit #4: unstrung shortbow on back, falcastra in hand. He attacks Rikoro.

Bandit #5: staff in one hand but no other evident weapons. He appears to be going into a trance (or having a fit).

Bandit #6: Spear in one hand and battle axe in the other. He attacks Fyna with the battle axe.

Are they armoured or not ?

They are wearing mostly cloth and leather. The most prominent bit of armor is a kurbul breastplate and ring half-helm on bandit #2 and the rawhide outfit and kurbul half-helm of #4.

... and any sign of anyone else taking an interest ? :)].

There's no sign of anyone within view.

If they are close (ie if they could close within one round) Davas shakes his head and says quietly to Berina "I think not love. The two of us can hold them while the others ... drive them off". He grins at them as he says this, and pulls the axe from his belt, standing on guard as he reaches for his shield.

In either case, he raises his voice and says "... and by what right do you think to charge a toll of free men ? You should listen to our friend ... "

He nods his head quickly in Rikoro's direction. " ... he is a clever man".

* * *

Fyna readies her shortsword and shield as her opponent closes with her. Quick as a snake, she swings at his abdomen and slices through his shirt to deliver a small cut. The bandit, at the sight of his own blood, promptly passes out.

The bandit attacking Davas swings his weapon but Davas blocks with his roundshield. Davas returns the attack but the bandit dodges away unharmed.

The bandit at the wall continues to make odd motions and now you can hear a faint chanting.

An exasperated sigh escapes his lips as Rikoro readies himself for the assault. Then Rikoro turns and runs away from his opponent. When he is 40 ft away he turns to find that his opponent has only closed half that distance.

Lillia draws a kitchen knife to defend herself while trying to stay out of the way.

Berina does all she can to refuse engagement with bandit #2, and charge bandit #5. Berina also turns and runs away. When she has gone 33 ft, she turns back to find her opponent has closed most of the distance but is still three feet away from being able to engage her in combat.

Motioning to Lillia to stay where she is, Josrel walks over to Rikoro. In <Jarinese> "What seems to be the problem?" <Jarinese> Josrel asks Rikoro.

Then Josrel dodges out of the way of the bandit attacking him with a ball and chain.

* * *

Fyna charges around to Bandit #2's rear. She doesn't yell or make any noise as she does this. Her opponent watches her in

confusion and easily dodges her blow. He does not return her attack...apparently waiting to see what she will do next.

Bandit #1 attacks Davas with his spear but Davas blocks with his roundshield. You can hear a faint crack of splitting wood but it is difficult to tell if it is from the spear or the shield.

Davas yells and charges the bandit in front of him, his shield out. He tries to get right in close and then use his axe to hook his opponent's leg and knock him down. He is able to get in close and hood the man's leg but unable to get enough leverage to pull him off his feet.

Seeing Berina's charge, bandit #5 breaks off his chanting, swings his staff and connects with Berina's roundshield. Berina swings her ball and chain and strikes his right forearm. In spite of the injury, he manages to hang onto his staff.

Clearly annoyed the bandit he ran from is still giving chase, Rikoro reaches for the kitchen knife tucked in his belt. He grabs the make shift weapon by the blade and quickly hurls it at his oncoming foe. Once the knife is sailing through the air he steels himself, standing on the balls of his feet ready to duck away from any incoming assault.

The bandit dodges the flying knife and swings his falcastra at Rikoro. Rikoro dodges the attack unharmed.

Josrel draws his knife and attacks the Bandit with the ball and chain. The bandit blocks Josrel's attack with his shield and then swings his ball and chain – hitting Josrel in the chest. Josrel manages to bear the pain and does not pass out from shock.

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"Walk away and you'll live. Stand there and I will attack.", Fyna says to the bandit. She waits a moment for him to comply.

Her opponent looks suspiciously at Fyna and then briefly at his companion on the ground. Cautiously so that he can still defend himself, he backs away, then turns and runs toward a nearby forest.

Her previous opponent groans from where he is laying on the ground, then slowly regains his feet.

The man facing Berina, once again swings his staff but she blocks with her shield. Berina returns the attack with her ball and chain to connect with his right thigh and knocking him to the ground..

With a muttered curse, Davas shoves the bandit with his shield, again trying to overbalance him. The bandit frees himself from Davas' grasp and the sudden release of resistance just about unbalances them both. However, they both manage to stay on their feet.

Holding his staff in his left hand, Rikoro shifts his grip to using both hands and stabs his weapon towards his opponent. Obviously doing so in an effort to both harm the bandit and keep his distance.

He misses his opponent but, at the same time, foils the counterattack.

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The bandit attacking Josrel misses as Josrel dodges but Josrel also appears undecided on what his response should be.

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Fyna runs up to re-engage sleeping beauty...I mean sleeping bandit (Who is now awakening).

Fyna stabs her shortsword into the man's groin. He screams, falls to the ground again and promptly passes out.

Bandit #1 attacks with his spear, which Davas blocks with his shield after the spear puts a hole through the shield.

With a grin and a flourish of his axe, Davas asks quietly "... shall we try again ... friend?" as he feints and attacks again. Davas' axe takes the bandit's left arm off cleanly. The bandit falls to the ground unconscious or dead.

Spotting one of the bandits run off from the corner of his eye, Rikoro informs his opponent, "It seems your numbers are dwindling. One of yours is down and another has run off fearing for his life. I suggest you have your men retreat. We were not as easy pickings as you first thought and your now overwhelmed. I can assure you my companions unfortunately will not give you quarter." Rikoro says a little more brashly, seeming annoyed by having had to enter combat, "Live today to rob another tomorrow."

"You assure me that your companions will not give me quarter so you are suggesting that I what...make it easier for you to butcher me like some swine?" asks the bandit.

The Fyvrian Shek-P'var repeats the same combat movement as before, but aims at the bandits face as he jabs with the staff in both hands. Hoping to fend off the foe and keep him off his toes, Rikoro tries to keep his distance while attacking.

Rikoro's attack misses and his distance does not allow him to prevent his opponent disengaging and running towards the woods after his companion.

Berina says: "Surrender, or I'll kill you where you lay."

Without waiting for his reply, Berina says: "You had your chance, now die!" She swings her ball and chain but her opponent rolls out of the way.

From his position on the ground, he swings his staff at her feet but she blocks his blow with her shield.

Josrel throws the rock he has clenched in his left hand at the bandit hoping to distract him, then tries to charges him and slashes his knife at his face. The rock lands between the bandit's feet.

Before Josrel can press his second attack, Josrel's opponent falls to his knees, dropping his weapons and begs for mercy, "Dey tull'ed me it wud be an aizy way to get bit. Dey ded nat tull me it wud be zo 'orrible. Dey weppins be nat even mine. Please, do nat kill me." He says sobbing.

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Fyna says a few quick words to Larani in the hopes that the man survives. She then strays no more than 200' away from the group. She quickly looks for tracks to see if she can determine the exact direction that they ran off in.

She does not see anything that is obvious and, anything not obvious is beyond her abilities (no tracking skill).

Davas stares a moment at the man's arm lying unmoving on the ground, then shivers and turns to see what is happening and if anyone needs aid. His eyes go first to Berina, then Lysada and Lilia, then the men and finally to Fyna.

After confirming that all is well with the others, he kneels quickly to aid the man bleeding on the ground before him. Shaking his head, he mutters quietly as he works "these bandits need to find another line of work. Methinks they know little of this business".

Turning quickly to the others, he calls "can anyone help this man? He is sorely wounded I think" before again applying what skills he has to help him.

Standing without his opponent any longer, Rikoro responds immediately to Davas' call for aid. He quickly strides to the man who lost his arm, gazing at the pooling blood without much reaction.

"I need something to stem the bleeding. Looks like you cut clean through it." Glancing up to the hunter as he crouches his lanky frame, "Davas, I recommend you and Fyna inspect our periphery for the two that rushed off. Make sure they are not plotting a counter assault or gathering more forces on us. I shall endeavor to add this one as best I can."

With that the Fyvrian Mage begins to untie the rope belt from around the downed bandits waist and uses it to tightly tie off his arm.

Even as he begins his ministrations, the blood flow slows to a stop and the bandit stops breathing...it is obvious that he is dead.

As the bandit is still resisting, Berina attacks again...this time without saying anything.

Berina swings her ball and chain to strike her opponent in the right thigh. This appears to be too much for him and he falls to the ground unmoving.

Knife at the ready Josrel shouts at the Bandit: "Throw your weapons away and lay face down on the ground!"

As he had already dropped his weapons, the bandit lies face down on the ground.

Providing the Bandit complies Josrel take the weapons that are laying around and glance around trying to find Lillia. As well as keeping an eye on the bandit. Upon finding Lillia Josrel will ask the nearest companion to watch his prisoner and run to Lillia's aide.

Josrel picks up a ball and chain, a knight's shield and a spear. As he approaches Lillia, struggling under his load of weapons, Lillia says in astonishment, "I knew not that you could be so fierce...or compassionate in letting your enemy go unharmed."

Josrel glances back at his opponent to see that the bandit noticed no body answered Josrel's command so he leaped up and is now running for his life toward the forest.

Lillia stifles a giggle at the look on Josrel's face.

Cursing under his breath Josrel turns back to Lillia chuckling "Neither did I, but it seems that I have not perfected my fighting style."

Josrel then drops all the weapons he is carrying, a grimaced painful expression on his face as he clutches his chest and drops to his knees.

"It seems that my plan to block his ball and chain attack with chest was not the best course of actions." Josrel gasps for breath.

"Perhaps someone can take a look at my injury for me?" Josrel asks as he opens his robe to take a look at the damage on his chest.

Kneeling by the one armed dead bandit, Rikoro sighs as the life escapes from the man he was trying to aid. The mage of the healing arts closes the eyes of the lifeless body, and upon hearing the clang of metal drop he rises up and looks over his shoulder.

Spotting Josrel hunched over on his knees, Rikoro rushes to the Haliki's aid.

"Apologies, Haliki, had I known you were injured I would have tended to you first rather than these brigands.", the tall bearded gangly man says with concern etched across his face and voice. As Josrel opens his robe, Rikoro focuses on the wound trying to assess the extent of it and what to do.

Examining the wound, Rikoro decides that what would be best is to soak a cloth in an infusion of betony or pennyroyal, swing it through the air to cool it off and bind it loosely onto Josrel's chest. If this is done, the bruise should be gone by morning.

Rikoro lifts himself up with the aid of his staff and offers a soft smile to Josrel, "Hrm I believe I can aid you with the injury Haliki. This should cause the bruise to be gone by morning. Once we arrive in town I can do it as I will need some boiled water. Though I should look for the herb as we walk."

Rikoro then glances to Lillia and Josrel, "If either of you have any experience with herblore the ones that would be most useful are betony and pennroyal so keep your eyes about you. I shall inform Davas as well. As an outdoorsman he probably has the sharpest eyes and knows them well."

"I only know of cooking herbs," answers Lillia, "Betony and Pennyroyal are ones I have heard of but know little of their use. Pennyroyal is what you strew among the rushes to keep down vermin."

Tilting his head to the side and lifting an eyebrow Josrel turns from Lillia to Rikoro: " So...What is it that you are treating Rikoro? My bruises or helping to keep the vermin from running up my robes." Josrel chuckles then starts to cough as he wraps his arms around his chest. " Laughing hurts too much."

Davas chuckles at Josrel's words, before seeing that his laughter pains him. A little more serious, he says "well, vermin up the robes is not good either. How were you hurt ? ... is it bad ?"

After speaking with Josrel and Lillia, the Fyvrian Mage moves to recover his thrown kitchen knife from the ground. To himself he mutters, "Perhaps a bit of practice at throwing will do me

good or how to use a blade. Though the thought of killing another..." He cuts himself short and shakes his head somberly.

Once he's tucked the makeshift weapon under his belt, he looks over those present and decides to move to the unconscious bandit. He crouches low, but keeps a bit of a distance to look over the extent of the wound inflicted. Then looks up and asks those present, "Before I begin ministrations on this one, is anyone else from our group in need of a slightly trained physicians eye?"

Placing his hand on Rikoro's shoulder Josrel replies: "Please no apologies needed. With all the excitement I didn't notice the pain till we were out of immediate danger. The Brigand you were attending, did he pass on?" Josrel asks

Upon hearing Rikoro confirmation: "Once we have tended to my wound I will pray that The Keeper of Knowledge lead them to their rightful place of ascension." Josrel grunts as Rikoro tends to his wound.

Turning to Lillia, Josrel says: "Lillia were you injured at all in the confrontation?" Josrel asks quite concerned.

Smiling sweetly, Lillia answers, "No my champion. They did not come anywhere near me or Lysada."

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Berina glances around quickly and sees that the battle is done. She then hangs the ball and chain back on her belt and draws her knife. Approaching the now fallen bandit from his head [Ie: his head is closest to her, his feet farthest away.], she kneels and places the blade of her knife against his throat. She growls: "If you're faking it, I suggest that you don't move or your throat will be instantly cut."

Maintaining the knife against the bandit's throat, Berina takes the staff away from him and throws it aside, out of reach. She then...knife still at the ready...searches him from head to toe, removing everything except his basic clothing. She will also remove his footwear.

The only belongings Berina finds are the staff [#94] and a brass ring with a purple stone [#93]. The only footwear he has are cloth swaddles. As Fyna passes by on her way to the forest she notices the staff has a slight green glow about it and she hears a voice in her head saying, "take the ring".

Fyna goes over and examine the "curious" ring that talks to her. As she moves it around her palm toying with it, she tells the party, "We sure do fight well together!"

From his position, Rikoro looks distractedly over to Fyna as he works. Rikoro then asks, "I suppose you did not find any trace of the ones who accosted us?"

Fyna says, "No Rikoro, I did not, though I am not much for tracking. Perhaps one day should try to learn how to do it since it would be useful. Are you ok?"

"I am my thanks. As to tracking I have some meager experience at it, I imagine Davan could aid you best.", responds Rikoro.

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Fyna continues, "Also, would you mind if I kept the ring? I am sort of taken by it! It would go well with my necklace!", as she says this she slips the ring on her finger admiring it.

Rikoro watches Fyna a moment head cocked to the side, but says nothing. The Fyvrian mages then returns his attention to the groaning unconscious man before him.

Picking up the staff as Fyna puts on the ring, Berina says: "Someone has to carry it, but Rikoro will need to examine it."

Fyna holds out her hand for Rikoro to inspect the ring, but she won't take it off to be inspected (unless asked).

Again perturbed by the interruption Rikoro comments without lifting his gaze, "Yes a very fine ring. I shall 'study' it later when appropriate and let you know of its origins."

Fyna blushes and says, "oh sorry! It can wait." She goes back to admiring her new found possession.

Fyna says, "Instead of interrogating him, why don't we just ask him what he was up to and how he came upon this circumstances? We don't have to torture him. I think we would be remiss in letting him go since they will prey on other poor unfortunates if left to their own devices."

As she moves to 'loot' the body of bandit #1, Berina calls to Rikoro: "Rikoro, given who had them, I'd like you to do your object read on this staff and the ring Fyna put on. They may be magical."

She finds nothing other than his weapons and clothes.

Not paying much mind to Berina, Rikoro simply nods as he continues to try to aid the fallen road bandit.

After thoroughly checking the body of bandit #1...and gathering up the hand axe, knife, two spears, and anything else of value...Berina goes to where Josrel dropped the knight's shield, ball and chain, and spear he took from bandit #3, and add bandit #1's weapons to the pile. Placing her hand on Josrel's shoulder...gently, so as to not cause his wound to pain him more...Berina says: "Attacking a well-armed man with just a knife may be crazy, but it's also one of the bravest things I've ever seen. Well done!" Turning to Lillia, she says: "Lillia, if you didn't know it before, you know now that Josrel's a keeper. Take good care of him."

Blushing Josrel shrugs and says, "Faith and a healthy fear of losing loved ones can work wonders. Thanks Be to Save-K'nor."

Going over to where Rikoro is tending to the injured bandit, Berina lays the staff down on the ground next to where Rikoro is kneeling and says: "Here's that staff. When you get the chance, check it out, please." She then...working around Rikoro's ministrations...proceeds to relieve the bandit of everything but his clothes. Going back to the pile of weapons, she adds bandit #6's battleaxe and spear to the collection.

"Mm yes, yes.", Rikoro practically says dismissively. His concern clearly on the 'patient' before him. The gangly bearded mage seems to grow impatient as Berina begins to jostle the bandit around in order to get at his things. "Please must we strip him..." he cuts himself off and shakes his head slightly trying to do his best to ignore what is going on.

Berina searches the unconscious man and finds 24d, 4 Khuzan crowns and three small scrolls (#95, #96, #97). In spite of her caution, she gets in the way of Rikoro and his patient dies.

Rikoro rises up erect straight away looking rather frustrated and annoyed. He then states rather curtly, "Well, you can add another to be buried. At least we managed to keep his personal belongings from escaping."

Opening her mouth to speak, Berina closes it again at Rikoro's statement. With an angry look on her face and an angry tone to her voice, she says: "That was uncalled for! Understand this...it was not my intention to interfere with your treatment and cause this man to die. You would do well to remember that just a few minutes ago, he was trying to kill us. Given what he and his companions had on them...knightly shield, battleaxe, more money than anyone would expect peasants or simple freemen to possess...I'd say he had plenty of blood on his hands. It's unfortunate he chose to become a bandit...but it could have been us breathing our last! That and the fact that an unknown number of innocent people won't be accosted, and maybe killed, by him now, forces me to say that I won't shed a tear for him."

Composing himself as the Peleahn Satia Mavari erupts, Rikoro stands stoically still. Once Berina finishes to catch her wind, he interjects with, "My memory is as good as yours. When we stop showing compassion for others the line between 'us' and 'them' blurs."

Calming down a bit, Berina continues: "Also think on this...had you saved him, he would have been turned over to the tender mercies of the local authorities. Your imagination is unlikely to provide you with even a small part of the suffering he would have had to endure in their care."

Almost smiling and then frowning Rikoro retorts lightly with, "I have just now realized I am my father's son more so then I imagined when I say this - but it is not our place to usurp the law and be judge and executioner. Any man deserves as much. Still I am not angry with you. This ordeal has left me shaken. It is the first time I have been directly involved in something like this. Not to mention the thought of taking a life does not sit well with me. Especially considering my.. 'studys'. Beside which he could have been playing possum and had a concealed weapon, you did right to search him."

Pinching the bridge of her nose between a thumb and forefinger...a gesture Rikoro has come to know well...Berina says: "Yes, every person should have a chance for justice when trouble comes to their door. Hopefully someday that will be the norm."

Berina places a hand gently on his forearm, looks up into his face, and goes on: "What was done to him and his companions," and she gestures toward the other two dead men "was done in self-defense. I did not 'execute' him. IF my actions contributed to his death as you were trying to save him, I apologize...to you, not to him. I note that from the start of the fighting, we offered the lot of them the opportunity to avoid harm...and three of his fellows wisely took us up on our offer."

Berina says, "I feel presumptuous saying this to you, but as a Fyvrian, I thought that you would be more understanding of death...as that is all part of the natural cycle. Nature...without the

influence of us humans...is a place where death is all a part of the whole. When you eat, something has to die to provide you with the sustenance you need to go on living. All things wish to go on living, but some things must die that others may live. This is how the Gods have ordered things."

Stifling a chuckle Rikoro counters with, "Berina in my time I have only seen you stoke or usher forth fires from within you. Never quell. All coins have two sides. As do we. I, of course, appreciate death and the cycle of life, but where possible choose to aid those rather than .." the Fyvrian searches for the word "dimish or cease their existence."

As she turns away from Rikoro, Berina sees Josrel saying a prayer for the dead bandits. Going just a little way to one side, she spends five piety points on a simple prayer to Halea on behalf of the bandits' unknown previous victims. This prayer is audible to anyone of the party who cares to listen to what Berina is doing.

After Berina finishes the prayer, she will put the money away in her pack, then read the three scrolls.

They appear to be bearer bonds for £4, £2, and £4, respectively.

"Looks like our money troubles have eased." Berina says.

Curiosity peaked by Berina's activity Rikoro heads over to her glancing over her tall frame to catch a gander.

"So it would seem. So it would seem", Rikoro replies in consideration.

After a moment the Fyvrian Mage reaches down and retrieves not only his staff, but the additional one Berina left by his side. Rikoro glances at the new one curiously, sighing a bit to himself.

Looking at the staff, he notices that the grain of the wood appears to form a symbol of "life" (e.g. an ankh).

While trying to glance at the parchments, Rikoro mentions to Berina, "It seems the staff has a symbol for life etched upon it. I shall spend some time tonight investigating the matter. You mentioned another item found with this one? In my focus I was not paying much mind." Rikoro then tacks on, "These brigands whilst in poor form certainly carry items far above their merit."

Berina says, "Could it be that we've been fortunate enough to find an item of your convocation?"

Rikoro nods slightly and adds, "One could say the staff I currently hold shares properties of my schooling. Still it will prove interesting what Uhla unveils on this new one."

Fyna holds forth her ring for inspection by Rikoro by waving her ring hand in front of his face. "What about this?" she smiles.

Rikoro gives the ring a quick once over to take note of the ring itself and if there are any particular etchings. He then looks at Fyna and says, "Eh, well, I shall need to study the ring for the next few nights to determine if there is anything special about it. A mere wave of it on your finger will not do I fear. Was this what was found with the staff?"

Berina says, "Yes, it is."

Stepping away, Rikoro surveys the others around him and then states, "We should be on our way. We have been delayed enough from our final destination. I would like to see to the Haliki's wound as soon as possible."

Fyna says, "I think that as we move forward, it would be wise to have the ones with shields walk in the front just in case we are accosted again."

"As an attack could come from any direction, I'd say one shield in the lead, one shield bringing up the rear, with the third shield in the middle ready to move to either end at need." Berina suggests.

Berina says, "Is anyone interested in burying the two dead men? At the very least, we should move their bodies off of the road." and she looks questioningly at the others in the party.

Moving next to Berina, Josrel says "I would like to pray over them." Josrel says. "As for burying them we know not their religion and the wrong type of burial may condemn their souls. So maybe just move them off the road."

Josrel adds. Then kneels down beside the dead bandits and asks Save-K'nor "Oh Great Keeper of Knowledge guide this man's spirit to his place of worships eternal resting place." Then walks over to Rikoro : "Thank you Rikoro for your healing efforts." Notices Rikoro examining the staff Berina gave him: "Something special about this staff?"

Waiting until Josrel has finished, Davas stands guard, bow still in hand. Once he has moved away, Davas looks around once more, makes sure someone else is watching, then puts the bow down. "I will get them off the road. That much we owe to other travelers at least". So saying, he looks around for a good close place and suits action to words.

Davas walks over to the low wall to see what is on the other side of it. With a grunt and a nod, he turns, walks back to the first corpse and drags it to the wall. With some effort, he lifts it and pushes it over the wall. He stands a moment, says quietly "may Peoni guide and forgive you".

With another small nod at Josrel as he helps, he turns to the next body. Once the grizzly work is done, he wipes his hands on some long grass, then looks to see what the others are about.

After finishing his prayer for the departed Josrel rises and tries to help Davas move the bodies off the road as much as he can without further injuring his chest.

After helping with Davas Josrel turns to Rikoro" I would like to have a look at the staff as well, maybe between the two of us we can get some solid information on it. So yes we should be on way way then."

Offering a kind smile to Josrel and nod, Rikoro replies calmly, "Of course Haliki, of course. As the Sage would probably say, 'two minds are better than one'. Does 'He' grant you insight into objects origins?"

"Sometimes yes he does grant me a vision. Usually they are somewhat cryptic and leave more unanswered questions, but it is a starting point." Josrel returns "Between you, myself and Lillia we may be able to piece things together. You say there is a

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symbol of life on the staff so it must have some importance to someone." Josrel says. "Does the symbol have any significance to your convocation or Berina's? I will have to do some research to see if it has any religious connections. But first some meditation on it is needed." Josrel states excitedly.

* * *

If the bandit is truly unconscious, Berina puts her knife away for the moment, takes the bandit's belt, roll him onto his stomach, and tie his hands behind his back.

Once the bandit is bound, Berina uses her knife to cut a strip from the bandit's clothing and gag him with it...being careful not to cause him to suffocate.

At this moment, possibly due to the rough handling, the bandit dies.

Once the bandit is secured, and in response to odd looks or questions from the rest of the party, Berina says: "At the beginning of the fighting, this one" and she points to the bound bandit "was gesturing and chanting. Either he's a rogue Shek P'var or a priest of one of the dark Gods. At the moment, I don't care which. His hands need to be kept bound to prevent any gesturing, and he needs to be kept gagged to prevent any chanting...except for when we question him. As for removing his footwear, ask Lysada about how far he's likely to get barefoot in this weather if he tries to run!" and she chuckles an evil chuckle.

Turning to Lysada, Berina says: "Lysada, see if his footwear" and she gives the bound bandit's footwear to her ", or that of the dead man, fits you, or can be made to fit."

Looking at the dirty rags of the foot swaddles, Lysada says, "if it be all de zame way ee. Goodwife, I wud zoonder bide way what I 'ave."

Berina says to the party in general: "Has anyone checked the body of the dead man yet?"

Looking slightly frightened, Lysada says, "No, goodwife, and nobody 'as checked de other wan dey be unconscious."

Finally noticing Rikoro tending to Josrel, Berina exclaims: "Josrel! Rikoro, how is he?" Looking around almost wildly at the other party members, she continues: "Davas, the rest of you...is anyone else hurt? By the Gods, I can be so dense sometimes...I'm sorry!" and she seems almost ready to break into tears.

With another look at the injured man, Davas nods, stands and begins to examine the area for anyone or any thing unusual.

Other than the signs of the battle on a quiet country road, he finds nothing unusual.

Keeping a wary eye on the direction the escaping bandits made off, Davas returns to the group in time to hear Rikoro mention herbs.

"Betony? I think I have some of that Rikoro. Keep you a watch yonder where our attackers went and I will look". He points in the direction the escaping bandits went, then crouches and looks through his saddlebag. He mutters quietly as he does so, then with a grin and a flourish he looks up. "I though so. Here ... how much do you need?"

With a frown, he adds as he turns again to the bag, " ... pennyroyal I think I have not" then partly to himself "... is there anything that I do have that could serve ... ?"

Again he looks through his bag, looking for a substitute. Once he has given Rikoro what he needs of the Betony and satisfied himself he has no pennyroyal or anything that could substitute, he shuts the bag and slings it over his shoulder. If he knows where and when to find pennyroyal, he will tell the others.

He knows very little of pennyroyal.

"Just a single dosage will do Davas", Rikoro replies with a soft smile. Once he has the herb he tucks it away safely into his pack say, "We shall have to wait until I can boil some water. Considering the proximity to Minarsas and the danger we've faced out here I believe it best we do so behind the safety of walls. Haliki will you be fine to walk for the remainder of our journey?"

As he goes to sling his shield, a muttered curse escapes his lips. He holds it in front of him and stares at it. "A pox on them ! A perfectly good shield ... apart from that hole".

"I may be biased, but I'd say yes!" and Berina gives her husband a passionate kiss.

Davas pokes his finger through the hole, then sighs and grins. "Still ... better in this than in me, yes? Some of them had shields they will not be wanting. Did anyone leave one of theirs whole?" He looks seriously around at the others, before grinning and adding "... or mostly whole?". He wiggles his fingers, still poking from the shield, as he says this.

"Just the one," and Berina picks up the knight's shield "but you won't be able to use it. It's a knight's shield, and being caught using it could send you straight to the end of a rope." She looks over at the injured bandit and says:"The authorities are going to want to question him to find out where his companion got it." and she shudders, clearly imagining the form the 'questioning' will take. Holding the shield up, she examines the front.

She finds the shield is blank.

Once other shields have been examined, Davas says quietly to Berina "my love, those bandits ... I think they were new to the life ... and I wonder why? They seemed not to know about ambushes, to fall quickly and, apart from Josrel, who is perhaps not our most experienced fighter, I think they hit no one, so ... why were they doing it."

Berina says, "I don't know, my love. That is another question the authorities will be seeking an answer to."

He looks around cautiously. "I am minded to follow them and ask if this fellow will not say" he nods at the unconscious one " ... but I do not want to put us in more danger". He grins at her, then indicates Lillia, Josrel, Lysada and Rikoro "though Fyna seems to know well what she is about". He looks over at her, grins and nods once.

Turning to Berina again, he says quietly "what think you?" with a quick grin, he quips "and can you question bandits without killing them or should someone else do it?"

Berina looks like she's about to tickle Davas, then her expression changes and she gently embraces him instead. "I think we should

leave the interrogation to the authorities. If he regains consciousness and talks freely to us, that's fine, but I have no stomach for the sort of 'questioning' techniques that the authorities use in cases like this." She looks over at the wounded man and an expression of pity comes over her face. "He might have been better off had we killed him. It wouldn't take much to convince me to try and find some place we could leave him and let him take his chances. The only problem with that, is that we would then be aiding and abetting a bandit. If he were later caught and told how we let him go, the authorities would then be after us." Here she pauses, then says: "Of course, if he were to somehow escape from us on the way to turn him in..."

Turning to the bandits' escape route, he looks thoughtful, then unslings his bow. With a glance at Berina he says firmly "in case".

"Indeed." Berina says in all seriousness and with one raised eyebrow.