

9-HALÁNÈ-720 MINARSAS, KALDOR

4TH WATCH [COLD, CLOUDY, SOUTHWEST WIND, HEAVY RAIN]
Your trip to the lexigrapher is uneventful and, as you enter, the scribe calls out, "please remain by the door so you do not drip over everything. Now, how may I help you?"

Berina says, "Good day to you...Master Karbes of Runuld, is it?"

"Yes?" he answers.

Berina continues, "My name is Berina of Kyfa. I was just around the corner conducting some business with Master Anerd of Harabor, and he said that in order to look for work doing scribal chores I must first get written permission from you. Please, what are the requirements I must meet to get such permission."

"Take your coats off and hang them by the hearth to dry. This will take awhile," he says. "You must read, copy and sign the apprentices' oath. Then you must pay a tenth part of your expected earnings for a six month or an annual permit. A master scribe makes at least 540d in six months. You will be working at a journeyman level if you pass the writing test so you are expected to make a third of that. A tenth part of 180d makes the fee 18d for six month or 36d for a year."

Berina hangs her robe by the hearth as directed.

Following suit Rikoro gently takes off his cloak, trying to be careful not to splash the water around. He then hangs it by the fires heat and moves off to the side keeping near the warmth himself.

The lexigrapher hands Berina a paper with the oath written on it...

"Ye shall swear to be good and trewe to our sovereign Lord King and to his heirs. And well and trewly ye shall serve your master for the term of your apprenticeship. And ye shall be obedient unto the wardens and to all the fellowship of the Mangai. In reverence the secrets of the said fellowship ye shall keep and give no information to no man but of the said Fellowship. An if it fortune that ye part from the mistery ye shall not serve anyone out of the fellowship without license of the wardens. And in all these things ye shall well and trewly behave you and secretly keep this oath to your power by the gods, the goddesses and the book of the concordance."

He also hands her a quill, an ink pot and a piece of parchment of the same size as the oath. The parchment has been written on one side but is blank on the other.

As Berina works on copying the parchment, Rikoro asks, "Pardon Master Runuld, I was wondering if you knew of a jeweler in town? I have some coin I would like to change to some baubles."

"As far as I know we have not a guild jeweler," he answers, "I have heard rumors that my niece Benlealina of Runuld has done some jewelry work and Jinlilyne of Harabor has done some silver smithing but, as neither of them are guild members, there is no one who can vouch for their workmanship or honesty. In the case of my niece, our clan can pledge for her honesty but none of us are qualified to speak for the quality of her work. That means if you deal with her and her goods are not worth

what you pay for them do not try to bring her before the Mangai...as they sometimes say in such matters, 'let the buyer beware'."

Rikoro nods slowly, seeming to mill over the lexigrapher's words. Eventually he looks over to Berina while she works on transcribing the parchment. Then a look of curiosity crosses his face and he glances back to the shopkeep asking, "Forgive me for asking if you find I've overstepped my bounds, but how has business been with the additional taxes imposed upon your trade? Do you happen to know the reasoning behind it Master Runuld? We were all searched quite thoroughly upon our arrival into Minarsas and I found it intriguing."

"I see not how my business dealings are any of your affair," the lexigrapher says. "I question not the decisions of my betters and I try to deal with them as best I may." With a bemused smile he adds, "You people must have considerable patience if you only found the search intriguing. Most folks describe the experience with harsher words."

Twisting a bit to let the heat from the flames lick the other side of his lanky frame, Rikoro answers the lexigrapher, "As a follower of the Sage my curiosity often gets the better of me. I would never question the nobility's decisions, I merely wished to understand the root cause for the taxes. I find it better to understand and accept what is, rather than become futilely upset by it. Perhaps my questions one day will be the death of me, but for now I will settle for having upset you and hope you accept my apologies."

"Apology accepted," the lexigrapher says. "For me the 'root cause' for the taxes is that Lord Caldeth declared them so and I content myself with looking no further."

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Berina, under the guise of briefly examining the parchment, quickly reads what is written on what will be the back side of what will be her apprentice oath. She then checks the surface of the table (or whatever the parchment will be lying on) for irregularities and/or holes that might cause the quill to damage the parchment. Setting up (ie: moving the seating) to get the best lighting that is available, she examines the quill point and trims it if necessary. Then she arranges the parchment with the oath she is to copy, the parchment she is to copy to, and the ink pot, in such a way as to facilitate her task and minimize the possibility of overturning the ink pot.

Berina will then set to work...at a speed she knows will minimize errors, yet will finish the work in a timely manner.

After glancing over what appears to be a page out of a history of Minarsas, Berina does an adequate job of transcribing the oath. When she finishes it with her signature, the lexigrapher says, "That appears to be a good enough job. However, I saw you reading over what was on the back and I suggest that when you are on a job you should show discretion and not concern yourself with what is none of your business. If I get word of you poking your nose in what does not concern you while working as a scribe, I will have to pull your waiver. Now will you be wanting the six month or the year waiver?"

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Holding her anger rigidly in check, Berina says: "Six months.", gets 18 pence out of her pouch, and hands it over to Master Karbes. "Will you be employing me Master Karbes, or will I be looking for work as best I can?"

"No, I can neither employ nor recommend those who are not guild members," he answers.

Berina asks, "But, as I understand it, for the next six months it is legal for me to do scribe work for anyone who will agree to hire me?"

"That is correct," says the lexicographer, "as long as you do not violate the content of the oath you just signed. That means if you are convicted of any crime or attempt to give away guild secrets without permission (such as teaching someone to read or write), this permit is invalidated. You are not entitled to any guild privileges such as job referrals."

Looking a little bored and still dripping quietly, Davas shuffles from one foot to another. Each time the man finishes speaking he edges towards the door. Each time Berina replies, he turns and looks at them.

Berina starts to turn away, then says: "Oh, Master Karbes, could you please give us directions to the establishment of Donar of Harabor, please? I forgot to ask Master Anerd."

"I know not of who you speak," the lexicographer answers, "I suggest you pay some street urchin a penny and have them guide you."

As Master Karbes is replying, Berina puts the permit safely away in her pack. "Thank you Master Karbes. I appreciate your time and patience." Finally satisfying Davas' fidgeting, she turns to him and Rikoro and says: "Where do the two of you want to go now?" and she throws on her robe, heading for the door.

Lifting his damp, but warm cloak and putting it on carefully, Rikoro tells Berina, "For myself, just to Anesa of Fayrl's apothecary shop and then perhaps a hideworker for some leather gloves. Though the location of the latter I am unsure of."

Rikoro bids the lexicographer a good day and then steps outside, after raising his hood. Once out in the rain, he informs Berina and Davas, "Well let us make our way to the apothecary. I was told her shop was by the docks, thus towards the river is the direction we should head."

As Rikoro heads toward the bridge over the river, about an arrow's flight away from the lexicographer's shop, Berina and Davas hear from the other direction, "here now, you look like a healthy young lad who would be needing to take the King's shilling to stay out of trouble."

Looking in the direction of the voice, they see a guardsman leading a teenage boy down an alley next to a building with a sign of a pomegranate on a green diamond – the sign of an apothecary.

Rikoro idly strolls towards the bridge, eyeing over the town as he walks with interest. The shuffle of people moving about their business seems to cause the lanky Fyvrian to drown out his own awareness by the sea of on goings of everyone else around him.

Noticing the sign, Berina reaches out and tugs on Rikoro's sleeve. When Rikoro turns to see what she wants, Berina points

out the apothecary sign and says: "I think our destination is over there."

"Hrm, oh.", Rikoro manages as he glances in the direction Berina indicates, "Oh, my I should better focus on the task at hand rather than get lost in idle thoughts. Sharp eyes Berina. Sharp eyes indeed." He then heads over to the shop, planting his staff firmly on the ground as he walks.

Already ahead of Rikoro a little, Davas remains hunched over, trying to keep the worst of the rain off. He grins at Berina, shakes his head at Rikoro, then stands by the door.

"Thank you." Berina says in response to the 'sharp eyes' comment. She follows Rikoro to the shop, and enters behind him.

Entering the apothecary's shop, you find her busy mixing herbs into a poultice. "Welcome folks," she says, "What can I do for you?"

Smiling as he steps inside, Rikoro offers a polite nod of greeting before speaking. "Master Anesa of Fayrl I presume?", Rikoro inquires.

"Yes?" she says with a quizzical look on her face.

After hearing the response, the gangly Sati-Mavari continues, "A pleasure, I am Rikoro of Drelin. The two with me are Berina and Davas of Fainovirs - husband and wife. We recently arrived from Tashal. Lord Worton of Harabor mentioned your name as someone we could contact upon arriving in Minarsas as we are on errand for him."

Berina smiles and inclines her head as Rikoro introduces her and Davas to Mistress Anesa.

"I know of the Lord you speak of," she says, "what is this errand and how can I help you?"

Rikoro then breaks from speaking to regard the apothecary's reaction if any.

He notices that below her apothecary-master's badge (a six-inch wide diamond-shaped cloth badge with a pomegranate) is another smaller green badge with a tree (the badge of a fyvria shek p'var)..

A gentle smile escapes Rikoro's lips as he spots the second badge, his voice seems to slow down as his body relaxes, "Simply put, we were asked here to investigate and document the on goings of Minarsas. He had given us your name because of the ties we share."

"I still do not understand what it is that you want," she says. "What is of interest to the great Lords of Tashal, here in the quiet town of Minarsas?"

While he talks, the gangly Fyvrian rolls his staff subtly between his forefinger and thumb in a nearly hypnotic manner. "I do not wish to impose upon you Master Anesa, if you are busy we can return later."

Nodding toward his hand gestures, the apothecary says, "Do your companions know of your 'interests'? Now is as good a time as any for me to talk but, if you would rather meet privately while your companions are about their business elsewhere, that is all right for me as well."

First Rikoro tugs on the braid within his beard, considering how to begin. Finally he takes a breath and starts slowly, but confidently, "The two with do indeed know and I trust them implicitly. Berina herself is a Satia-Mavari, but from the Peleahn convocation. Davas is her husband and a fine hunter. We have spent much time together in recent months and they have been there for me on many occasions. I consider them close friends and allies. There are also others with us, but we split up to perform different tasks so as not to overwhelm those we met with."

Hesitantly Rikoro broaches the subject of why the group is in Minarsas, "What I say here, I do so not only because of our shared background and thus ability to be discreet, but also because Lords Harabor and Odasart gave their recommendation of you. Bear in mind I come with no proof or evidence to what I speak. It is my hope that however slowly the rock of Minarsas has eroded, you may have felt the winds of change in one form or another. And thus your eyes will then focus on your surroundings with a bit more clarity"

Rikoro's tall frame begins to steady, his face growing more serious as he sets into his explanation, "The noblemen believe that Earl Declaen of Caldeth is being manipulated by several individuals of ill repute that have recently arrived in town. I am sure you are more then aware of the newly imposed taxes against those of scholarly pursuits, temples and those of different races. This is supposedly one of the seeds that have been sown in an effort to reap some sort of discord within the populace."

Having explained the main crux of their assignment, Rikoro eases his pensive tone but it is still lined with concern, "For what reason they seek to do this, I am uncertain. Lord Harabor is obviously distressed because many of his kin are situated here... though both noblemen likely also have political interests as well. The individuals of ill repute I spoke of require deeper explanation and on the major score Berina and Davas are better fit to explain it as they were successful in foiling a heinous plot involving a rogue Shek-P'var."

After a moments thought the lanky Fyvrian mage finally mentions, "I feel it important to state - we are not here to cause any sort of insurrection, discord or treason. Only to gather information as well as bring to light these people who seek to influence the town and perhaps even kingdom for their own nefarious purposes. I believe some of whom have outstanding warrants and have sought refuge here."

With his explanation over, Rikoro's blue eyes gaze at Anesa for her reaction and response. At the same time he sweeps back some of his unruly damp hair and then regrips his staff.

"I know not of who you speak regarding individuals of ill repute since you have not named them and the situation in Minarsas has been developing for sometime," she answers, "as to new people in town, there are always a number of foreigners, more than a few during the wool faire. I also know not of the other taxes but I believe the taxes on Shek P'var is due to the influence of that swine, Sir Gorlin Faragar, milord's chamberlain. Awhile back he asked me if I could get my hands on some fanosel. I reminded him that possession of fanosel is illegal throughout Kaldor. He then said that if I could not be of help to him as an apothecary,

perhaps I could be of help in warming his bed. I informed him that even if he was not old enough to be my father, I still would not find him appealing and I considered his attitude insulting. He said I would soon regret my words and shortly thereafter, the Shek P'var tax was declared."

Rikoro nods taking in what he hears from Anesa, before speaking, "Apologies I did not wish to overburden you with so many details, not to mention they are likely not going by their true names. The people we were asked to seek out include - Sir Erdais Bastune, Sir Anseri Walorn, Armenton of Soril. I believe all of whom are wanted in Kaldor for various crimes. Then there is another individual who uses the pseudonym Evida the Bearer of the Loam. Apparently he or she was the master to the rogue Shek-p'var - Tesial of Holsare."

"With the number of people you name and their titles, you appear to have some powerful enemies," she says. "I must warn you however, the guardians of the law in this town take their jobs very seriously. You should make sure you have more than suppositions of warrants for their arrest before you take action against them or you will be the ones in the goal."

"I am in complete agreement", Rikoro responds confidently, "This is why I made every effort to state we are here to observe. If we find proof of what I speak then we will provide it to the town watch."

Speaking up, Berina says: "Mistress Anesa, Armenton of Solil kidnapped a woman to try and force her to marry him so that he could acquire her inheritance. To do that, he had his then wife murdered. My friends and I foiled that plot, and the woman is now...of her own free will...married to one of those friends. She and her husband accompanied us here to Minarsas. In revenge for my part in stopping his plot, he tried to have a weaponcrafter murdered and arranged to have my father charged with that crime. When we were able to prove my father's innocence, Armenton's clanhead...his own father...declared him outlaw before the magistrate in Tashal. I was there, and witnessed the outlawry myself. I think his father delayed the proceedings to give him time to escape, as he was able to flee Tashal before he could be arrested. It's thought that he came here to Minarsas."

"I and my clan have vendetta against Armenton, and while I will not initiate the breaking of the King's peace, if he tries to harm me or mine again..." here Berina pauses for effect "I'll defend myself and he'll not live to see another day!" The expression on her face should leave no doubt of her sincerity.

"As for Sir Erdais Bastune and Sir Anseri Walorn, Sir Anseri has been outlawed by his clan and is therefore no longer gentry. Sir Erdais is another matter and will have to be dealt with differently."

"Sir Anseri imprisoned his own father and outlawed his sister in order to usurp the lordship of Holdan manor. Sir Anseri and Sir Erdais, with the help of Tesial of Holsare, murdered a priest of Larani and caused his small temple to be desecrated by being infested with gulmorvrin. The three of them also managed in some way to turn Sir Anseri's father and several others into unspeakably hideous mutant creatures. I know of these things because the three of us," gesturing to Davas and Rikoro as she

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says this "and a few others, fought and cleaned the gulmorvrin out of the temple in order to use a tunnel that connected the temple to the mannorhouse. When we got into the mannorhouse, we had to fight the mutants, henchmen, and the three people I've mentioned."

"My husband" and she smiles with affection at Davas "dispatched the rogue Shek P'var, Tesial of Holsare, with a well-placed arrow to the stomach, but the other two made their escape during the fighting. It's thought that they may also have come here to Minarsas."

"Rikoro can give you better details about the mutants, and meaning no disrespect to you Mistress Anesa, but I should think that, as a Fyvrian, you'd be outraged at anyone who perverted the natural order of life by creating mutants from people who had been normal ordinary folks up to that point."

Realizing that she has given reign to her emotions, Berina blushes and says: "I'm sorry Mistress Anesa, I've let my emotions get the better of me just now. A good and true knight of Larani...Sir Arylen of Bassil...was killed in the fighting at Holdan Mannor, and if the child I am carrying is a son, we're going to name him Arylen in Sir Arylen's honor." Berina's eyes are shining with unshed tears, but she manages to hold them back.

"Strangely enough, in spite of what I've just said, the four people Rikoro has named, are not the principle reason we are in Minarsas." Berina says. "Certain others...whom I'm not at liberty to identify...have become concerned that Earl Declaen has not been seen in public in quite some time. As Rikoro has said, we are here to observe and see if the Earl is ok. While I would not be surprised to find out that the four people we've mentioned are involved somehow, they may have nothing to do with the Earl's situation."

"My word!" Anesa says, "it is clear you have strong feelings about all of this but there is no need to go into such detail to me. I was just trying to advise one of my order. When you explain all this to the watch, however, I am sure you will need much more than wild stories from a stranger. As to my own outrage, I have enough to deal with in my own community and cannot get emotionally involved with every minstrel's tale that I hear. I have already told Rikoro that I will help him as much as I can but I will leave what happens elsewhere in the kingdom until my chantry tells me to do otherwise."

Taking a brief respite from talking, Rikoro paces back and forth, milling over his thoughts. Eventually he turns back and asks, "Master Anesa, would you happen to know how long this Sir Gorlin Faragar has been in your lieges company?"

"He has been milord's chamberlain as far back as I can remember and for most of that time has been a decent sort if not a bit shy," she answers, "It was not until about ten months ago that he started acting odd."

Rikoro seems a bit disheartened as he nods, "Well I suppose it would not be as simple as that. A change in personality is something to look into though."

As the topic of conversation begins to dwindle, the Fyvrian Mage shifts his line of inquiry, "As we will be in town for the next several months, the other reason I sought you out was to see

if you had need of any sort of employee Master Anesa? I am a capable herb gatherer and have experience with alchemy, but not apprenticed. I am also open to simply cleaning and maintenance - I know my way around a laboratory so I would not disturb much."

"No, I am sorry but I cannot afford to take you on at this time," she says.

Disappointed, Rikoro says, "I understand, though I do hope you will have time to speak in the future. It does my heart and mind well to be in the presence of another Fyvrian."

"Certainly," she says, "anytime that I am not speaking to a customer or client, you are welcome to pass the time of day."

Berina says, "Mistress Anesa, I too am seeking employment. I have arraigned the necessary permissions to do scribal work at the journeyman level. Do you know of anyone who would have need of a scribe?"

"No, I know of none such," Anesa answers, "as you can see I am an apothecary by trade. I do all my own scribal work and I do not involve myself in other's business so know not what they read or write. If you ask me to guess, I would think the nobility, aldermen, litigants and such like deal with a lot of paper but again I do not know for sure."

Berina says, "Thank you for the suggestions."

"I will not hold you from your work any longer Master Anesa. A good day to you.", Rikoro offers a respectfully dip of his head after speaking.

The gangly Satia-Mavari turns to his two companions and asks, "Where to next? The Ostler? I shall need to re-think my plans for employment on the way." After pondering for a moment, "Perhaps a physicians aide?"

Berina says, "The Ostler seems good to me."

Davas stands amazed as Berina speaks of their previous exploits. Obviously comforted by Anesa's response, he relaxes.

"The ostler. Yes". He pauses, then grins. "It would be well if one of us had work ... and an income. This is starting to sound like an expensive city ... and they are all expensive". He looks quickly at Rikoro, then Berina. Turning to Rikoro again, he adds "perhaps you could learn to cook ... or mayhap stable work is your strength?"

Unable to contain himself anymore, he laughs as he turns to the door. "Come, let us be about it". With a final "Thanks" over his shoulder, he opens the door and steps into the street.

* * *

You walk casually on your way back to the inn and just before you reach your destination, a young man sidles up next to Fyna and says, "You looked as if you wanted to get into the manor. For a small fee I can guide you in through the back way."

Fyna looks back at her companions with a smirk and says, "I know we are going to get in trouble for this, but I am game if you are!"

"Josrel may go if he wishes but I should return to the inn to tell the others where you have gone," says Lillia, "Besides this man

is no doubt speaking of going through the catacombs and I would be of no use to you against the anger of the undead. All of these castles and old manor houses have catacombs do they not?"

She then turns back to her new found friend and says, "How much is a small fee?"

"Well milady, more than a penny and less than a pound," the lad says, "how about a shilling or 12d?"

Fyna says, "How about 6d and we will call it a deal?"

"Ah, I can see that your beauty is only matched by your generosity," the lad says, "very well then, for 6d in advance I will show you to the entrance and no further.

She turns and looks at Josrel, and inquires, "Are you up for this Josrel? I don't think it would be wise for me to go alone."

"I don't think it would be wise to go at all." Josrel states flatly. "But I have been known to make the wrong decisions at times, and a good bit a adventure hasn't killed me yet."

Turning to Lillia: "I shall be back when I am able, hopefully some useful information I can gain from this." Josrel kisses Lillia and heads off with Fyna.

After Fyna pays the lad 6d, he leads the way north of town for about an hour's walk. He stops at a broken down well and says, "This is a dry well. At the bottom is an opening that leads back to the manor. So I will leave you to it and bid you good day."

<http://www.duttond.topcities.com/Harn/Kaldor/Vemkhar01.jpg>

Raising an eyebrow to Fyna Josrel says: " So, maybe we should think about this before we jump in. Perhaps some rope and other items may be needed before we venture into this. Also we should inform the group of this as well."

Josrel scratching his chin: "I don't know how legal this is either. Basically we are breaking and entering. And this person who should us this how do we know how trust worthy he is. I think we should discuss this with the others and formulate a plan."

Fyna says, "Josel, you are right. Now that we know this location, we don't have to jump right into it. Let's go back and talk to the others, get any supplies we think we might need, and do some planning. Besides, some of the others might even wish to join us."

On your way back to the inn, you pass a couple of watchmen on patrol. One of them says to you, "You had best be getting to your homes folks. It is just about time for curfew."

The rest of your journey is uneventful and you arrive at the in by the middle of the 5th watch.

9-HALÁNÈ-720 MINARSAS, KALDOR

5TH WATCH [COLD, CLOUDY, SOUTHWEST WIND, HEAVY RAIN]
Once out in the street, you realize that nobody has gotten clear directions to the ostler. You look around but do not see the sign of an ostler or stable within sight. The cloudy sky and the advancing season makes it appear that night is coming sooner and it will quickly be dark.

A woman passing by looks at Rikoro and Berina, then to Davas she says, "Ee appear to be without companionship. Wud ee be interested een zomeone to warm yer bade, deary?"

Still grinning, Davas walks to the middle of the street, turns confidently to his left, then stops and looks first confused, then annoyed. "Damn !" he mutters under his breath, as he looks up and down the street.

As he stands there, puzzled he gives the approaching woman little thought. As she begins speaking, he looks vaguely in her direction once, smiles vaguely, then continues to scan the street while listening.

Realising what she has just said, he starts and gives her his full attention. "Ah ... I ... we are ... my wife is within" he blurts, waving his arms obviously flustered. He points at the door, then, giving her a lopsided grin and a nod, adds "... but my thanks. Were I not a married man ...".

As he turns quickly to scan the street, a thought strikes him and he turns to her again. "Oh ... and we are new to the city and" he shrugs and grins "lost I think. We seek an ostler ... are we near or no?"

Gesturing up and down the street, he says quickly "or if you know not, do you know which part of the city horses are most common? By gates I would think ... yes?"

She is a bit muscular and has brown hair and eyes. She would be considered at least attractive by current standards. She says, "As you can probably tell, I am a bit down on my luck at the moment but I know where the ostler is. What might such information be worth to you?"

Davas thanks her for any information she may give him.

Stepping forward and speaking up, "How does a single silver sound for directions to the ostler and a clothier?"

"That would be quite sufficient," she says taking your penny, "If you go in that direction you will come to the market square. You will see a baker in front of you and the watch barracks on your right. You will find a clothier behind the watch barracks and you will find the ostler behind and to the left of the baker."

As the woman walks away Davas says quietly to Rikoro "I do not think I will ever get used to that Rikoro. Is it ... common where you are from?" He sighs. "A pity Berina is inside. That would have amused her I think." He stops, and looks a little frightened. "... or perhaps not?"

Rikoro simply nods in agreement as Davas speaks.

He sighs again. "Sometimes I don't ...". There is a long pause and Davas looks around, distracted. "... did you trust Anesa?" he asks intently looking at Rikoro again. "Berina obviously did ... but sometimes I wish she would be a little more ..." he searches for a word "... careful, perhaps? I worry for her and for our baby" he grins "and I don't want this city to get as 'interesting' as some of the other places we have been".

"I trust Anesa, yes.", Rikoro offers Davas in a calming manner. "Not just because she is one of my convocation, but also because she was recommended by the one who set us to this task. Berina

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on the other hand is a storm to be weathered, not reigned in I fear."

With a lopsided grin, Davas replies "of course she was. I'll be forgetting my head next".

He stands a moment, before adding "Berina as a force of nature. Yes, well ... that would account for much. Interesting ... and me a man of the outdoors too".

He laughs, obviously more at ease. "Come. While we walk, perhaps you could tell me something of these .. convocations? Yes, I know ... Berina has one. Or is in one?" He pauses thoughtfully.

"She has told me something of how they work, but another view I would value. Perhaps from a still mountain tarn rather than a mighty storm?"

If you want to ... or feel you can of course ... but it might prove important that I know a little more."

Glancing around in a slow manner before speaking Rikoro lets Davas know, "Gladly, but considering our current predicament and need for secrecy I think it best to discuss it further in private. Tonight after dinner we can have an open discourse on the subject in one of our rooms."

"Oh. Of course, yes". Davas says quietly, looking a little chastised. Then with a grin "what would I use for a memory without you Rikoro. Again you are right. Well, let us do that".

Rikoro nods appreciatively to the "street" lady and then as she parts, looks to Davas, "Shall we head first to the ostler? I asked for the clothier because I wish to find myself some newer clothes. I would rather the coin I carry gets taken by legitimate 'thieves'. His final word is said mockingly and with a sheepish wink to Davas.

The remainder of your journey to the ostler is uneventful. Just as you arrive, you see Eredos of Lothlar (the watch captain) as he is telling the ostler, "I have told you before, if you do not remove the rubbish from the street in front of your stables, you will be fined. Now get it cleaned up before I return on the marrow."

He turns to go and says to you, "Good evening folks."

Thanks in part to the Captains warning, Rikoro narrowly avoids a steaming pile of manure on the ground. In return to Eredos greeting, Rikoro replies, "Good eve to you as well Captain."

He nods and continues on his way.

Davas gives him a nod and a smile, then looks around the ostlers to see what he can from the street.

Turning to face away from the stables, Davas can see a row of unmarked houses to his right with the last one having a sign with a toy wagon and a child's ball. To his left, he can see the bakery. He cannot smell anything baking, probably due to the lateness of the hour. Facing the stables, Davas can see a small wood to his right and a row of unmarked houses to his left. The building in front of him appears to be an ordinary stable with an enclosed common and a larger stable at the far end of the lot. The lot is enclosed by a small palisade. The stables look a bit shabby but

more like a talented ostler falling on hard times rather than one lacking in skill or initiative.

As he stops near, Davas, Rikoro tries to get the attention of the Ostler, the Captain of the Watch was speaking too, "Apologies good man, we do not wish to take your time as you're obviously busy, but we are looking to find and speak with Master Donar of Harabor."

"And you have found him," the ostler answers, "How can I help you?"

Rikoro lets a faint smile show on his bearded face before he begins speaking, "It is a pleasure to meet you. I'm not certain if you have time to speak, but it concerns an errand we were sent on by Lord Worton of Harabor. We were given your name as a point of contact. I am Rikoro of Drelin and the two others with me are Davas and Berina of Fainovirs." Inquiring with a curious expression, "Had you been informed of our arrival to Minarsas?"

"No, I cannot say that I have as I am not regularly notified of strangers in town," he says, "What is it you want of me?"

The Fyvrian mage lets out a winded sigh as his gaze moves to his two companions and then back to the Ostler. After a brief moment of conjuring his thoughts Rikoro replies, "Apologies, I had hoped that Lord Worton had sent word ahead of us to confirm we are to be trusted in some capacity. I would rather not speak of the details in the open Master Harabor. Needless to say we were sent here in part because of concerns your clan was in potential danger."

Rikoro shifts his stance, putting more of his weight on the staff he carries before continuing on, "If there is somewhere we could speak without concern or if you would be free at a later time we can discuss the matter in depth and then you can ensure the legitimacy of our claims at your leisure."

"Well I have a about a turn-of-the-glass more work before I have my dinner," He answers, "if you have arranged for lodging, perhaps we can dine together? Where are you staying?"

"Of course. We are staying at the Green Dragon Inn as we just arrived yesterday.", Rikoro informs the ostler.

"Very well," the ostler says, "I will meet you there for dinner at about the middle of this watch."

"Grand to hear. There may likely be another three people with us as well. See you then Master Harabor.", Rikoro informs him, then looks to his two companions.

A faint smile creeps onto his features as the Fyvrian mage asks Berina and Davas, "Silence and awe from the two of you? Any other matters we need to attend to or should we return to the inn and prepare for the meal?"

Berina arches one eyebrow and gives Rikoro one of her looks that says there may be a severe tickling in his future.

Rikoro wisely chooses to keep his distance from Berina as he begins to walk away from the ostlers.

Berina says, "I suggest that we return to the inn. We need to dry both ourselves and our clothes."

Feeling over his cloak and nodding slowly Rikoro acquiesces, but with humour in his voice, "Agreed. The problem with the

isle is that we spend more time damp than dry. A bit of advice though Berina, unless we want to shrink to Davas' size it is best we let the water evaporate from us slowly."

Davas looks to Berina then Rikoro as Rikoro speaks and stifles a grin quickly. He nods at the suggestion to return to the inn, adding "I can ask for work when he visits. No need to bother him here".

"Good thinking." Berina says. "Nothing like a full belly to make a person agreeable."

He grins when Rikoro mentions shrinking, then giving Berina a quick cuddle, says quietly "at least I don't have to duck under doors".

"Mmm." Berina murmurs when Davas cuddles her. She kisses Davas passionately, then says: "Haven't done that in...what...a few hours?" then chuckles.

Just as you are turning to leave, a man is passing by and appears to hear the remark about looking for a job. He turns to Davas and says, "You appear by your clothes as one who is familiar to a game trail. If you are looking for a job as a hunter, I could use some help. My name is Eochiebin of Elwudadril and I am responsible for putting game on milord's table. If you are interested, meet me at the gate of the manor palisade at the start of the third watch on the marrow."

Davas nods vaguely, somewhat surprised, then smiles and nods quickly. "You are right friend. I am a hunter by trade and Davas of Fainovirs is my name". He offers his hand. "I am new to the city ... and interested indeed. I will see you on the marrow at the third watch". He turns to go, then turns back. "Oh ... and my thanks". He smiles again, nods, then turns to go.

After the mention of a hunting job, Berina says: "Wow! Peoni must be looking out for you. Now all I need is for Halea to send a scribal job my way." and she grins at her husband.

Still grinning, Davas nods quickly, then suddenly looks more serious. "You are right. Peoni is taking care of me ... of us. I must find a temple and attend a service. Tomorrow morning."

He grins again sheepishly, shakes his head, then whispers in Berina's ear "I have not before thought of Halea as a patron of scribes. I will never look at one quite the same again".

Your trip to the inn is otherwise uneventful and, entering the common room, you see that three of the tables are mostly full and two others are completely empty. Lillia arrives at the common room at the same time as you do.

Selecting whichever vacant table is closest to the fire, Berina spreads her robe to dry. Spying Lillia entering, Berina waves her over to the table. Seeing that Lillia is alone, she asks: "Er, what are Josrel and Fyna up to?"

"Nothing of the sort I am sure you are thinking of," Lillia says with a tight smile, "some street urchin said he could lead them to a back way into the manor and they decided to follow their impulses to see where it would lead them. Since they have not the least equipment that such a venture requires, like light and rope, I am sure they will be along shortly."

"And you lot call ME reckless and headstrong!" Berina says and rolls her eyes toward the ceiling. After she thinks about what Lillia has said, Berina asks: "Light and a rope? I suppose you're thinking of a tunnel of some sort?"

"We were standing in the road not far from the gates of the palisade of the manor and their guide pointed north so underground is my guess," Lillia says, "besides he did not disagree when I suggested they would be going through the catacombs."

A light chuckle escapes Rikoro's lips after hearing Lillia's response to Berina, but then his jaw drops open hearing about the back way the Fyvrian mage stammers out, "Was .. was there something nefarious unfolding at the manor that they decided to try such a route?"

"Not that I know of," says Lillia, "I suspect that Fyna, being a warrior type, was more interested in action than in talking. It has been my experience, that sort of thinking just leads to trouble...something that some of us here are familiar with."

Rikoro stifles a chuckle which turns into a snort and says, "I'm surprised Josrel did not try to sway her. Perhaps he went as Fyna's conscience. Were you barred entry or a chance to schedule a meeting?"

"We were indeed barred from entry but that surprises me not considering our common status," says Lillia. "The guard said he would deliver a message but I would not expect an answer until this evening at the earliest. In fact, with the nobility, it may be several days before we hear from him."

"Most likely." Berina says. "I have the rest of yours and Josrel's share of the booty." she says in a low voice so as to not make it city-wide knowledge. "I don't want to be showing a lot of coin in public...for obvious reasons...so I'll bring it to your room when we all retire for the night." Turning to Fyna, she says, again in a low voice: "I have yours as well and will bring it to your room later also."

After gaining the innkeepers attention, Rikoro informs both him and Lillia, "This night's dinner we will be expecting a guest. The Master Ostler, Donar of Harabor will be joining us."

"As a guest, I take it you mean you will be paying for his dinner?" asks the innkeeper. "Otherwise, seating is what is available...if it's not available, they will have to wait."

The Fyvrian mage simply nods to the innkeeper in agreement chiming in with, "Yes, that is what I meant. I did not wish to burden him with the cost. Should I pay in advance or in the morn?"

"You can pay when you pay the rest of your bill," answers the innkeeper, "which will be just before you leave or once a month if you stay that long."

* * *

At the middle of the watch, Fyna, Josrel and the ostler all arrive at the same time. Also, at this time Melenda, the innkeeper's wife approaches to take your order, "Sorry for the delay. It is a busy night. Tonight we are having jusselle dates (dates stuffed with eggs and cheese) for an appetizer; cobages (cabbage and

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almond soup) for the soup; a choice of entrée: mawmenye (lentils and lamb), luce wafers (a delicate fish cake), or blankmangere (chicken with cumin and cream); accompanied by fruytes ryal rice (artichokes with blueberry rice), wastel (first quality bread) and ale (yellow color. slightly fruity aroma. creamy texture. complex, vinous-toffee flavor. slight bitterness in the finish). So what can I get you?"

"I'll have the mawmenye, please." Turning to Rikoro, Berina says: "Rikoro, why don't you introduce everyone."

"Excellent choice," says Melenda, "Oh, and I forgot to mention, the dessert will be quynade (quince sauce)."

Berina says, "Sounds wonderful, thank you. If you have time later this evening, I'd like to speak to you about money matters if I might."

"If it is in the manner of financial advice, it will have to wait until tomorrow's daily mass," says Melenda, "If you are unable to pay your bill, say so now so we can work out other arrangements."

Berina says, "It is a matter of advice and can wait until tomorrow, but it needs to be discussed in private. Current bills are not a problem."

Rubbing his hands, partly for warmth and partly in anticipation, Davas says quietly "mawmenye for me please ... it all sounds good and I had forgotten how hungry I am". He nods to Lillia as she sits before turning his attention to the ale with a smile.

* * *

Sitting next to Lillia with a heavy sigh Josrel says breathy "I will have the blankmangere, what you like Lillia?"

"I will have the same," Lillia says.

After Melenda leaves the table: " So Fyna and I were lead to an abandoned well that leads into the Manor. Fyna was approached by someone who lead us there. Of course not having any equipment and being only the two of us we decided to come back another day. Besides the fact that it is illegal to enter the Manor in such a way." Josrel raises and eyebrow to Fyna. "And as most of you may be aware I am not the most bravest of adventurers when it comes to subterranean places. Not to mention the fact that this person who told us about the well may not be the most trustworthy."

Rikoro just seems at a loss for words, or trying to search for them very carefully, when suddenly Berina interjects.

It is all Berina can do to keep her jaw from hitting the floor as Josrel speaks. She kicks him hard under the table. "Illegal hardly describes it." she says with a slight nod of her head towards the master ostler sitting at the table with them, and giving Josrel a glare that would melt stone.

"I'd say that the two of you must have 'gullible' written all over you. Think about it...hidden entrances into places are not common knowledge available to anyone on the street. Something can't be hidden if everybody knows about it."

"The existence of such a thing might be, and probably is, the subject of rumors, but if the rumors happened to be true, the

people to whom the hidden entrance led would destroy it in a heartbeat as soon as they heard such a rumor."

"I'm surprised that the two of you would even think of trying to sneak into the castle, anyway...unless you both have a wish for death I was unaware of."

"So..." Berina asks, "how much did this 'reliable' information cost you?"

"Ouch.." Josrel mumbles as he rubs his leg returning Berina's glare ."Now Berina did you REALLY think that I would go into a well, into an abandoned castle given my aversion to dead people."

"I really had no intention of going into the castle at all." Josrel states off handly casting a glance to Fyna. "And ruin any chance I would have with a meeting with Sir Aswain." "I have seen the gaols before and have no intention of spending anymore time there. Just doing a little site seeing is all."

A look of relief washes over Rikoro's features after Josrel explains himself. Then the gangly bearded man lowers his head slightly, with downcast eyes and shakes it slowly.

With a slight chuckle, Donar says, "Oh the story of the khuzdul stronghold under the castle is quite well known, as is the entrance under the well. However, everyone that has actually tried to pursue it has either said there is nothing but caves under the well or they have not returned. Now-a-days, it is the subject of courage-tests among young lads or ways of bilking foreigners out of money. Nobody truly believes the stories, although the attempts by the gullible to find hidden treasures can be quite entertaining. I am sure that madam is correct in one respect...if anyone suddenly popped up in the middle of the castle, they would be promptly executed without question. There was an assassination attempt awhile back and milord Caldeth has been overly concerned with his safety ever since."

"An assassination attempt?" Berina asks. "I hadn't heard about that. What do you know of it?"

"I am afraid I have said too much already," Master Harabor says, "Perhaps I can tell you more after I have gotten to know you better."

Fyna rolls her eyes and says, "I guess I will have the blankmangere. So who is going with me to the gate tomorrow to try and visit my friend?"

"If you would also like to see this Sir Aswain," says Lillia, "You would be advised to send a messenger. Since you did not leave a message with the guard, I cannot believe you would have a better reception than today...that is, at the front gate." She adds with a smile.

"Well I would" says Davas "but I have a job offer at the third watch ... and something that I am good at too". He pauses thoughtfully. "Actually, it may be useful to our purpose as well, being at least attached to the lord's retainers" he said quietly. With a grin he adds "we shall see."

Josrel, nodding in agreement, says: "Lillia is correct Fyna, I asked you if you required anything, after I told the guard to give my message to Sir Aswain. You gave no answer so Lillia and I

moved on. I am sorry if you didn't hear me. Perhaps you can leave a message with the guard in the morning."

"I will go tell the guard that I wish a message to be delivered to Sir Petral that I wish to visit him.", Fyna says as she gets up and leaves.

* * *

In an attempt to change the topic, or steer the ostler's attention away from Josrel and Berina, Rikoro inquires, "Master Harabor what would you prefer for dinner meal?"

"I will have the mawmenye," he answers. "so, have you been here long? How is the entertainment in this place? I have not been here before and know nothing of it."

Rikoro runs his long spindly fingers idly through his beard as he speaks, "The establishment is Hlean run, though we have only been in Minarsas a day. I can not speak to the entertainment, but the service here is impeccable and prices more then fair." Leaning forward to inform Donar, Rikoro continues, "Beyond that we have focused primarily on the task at hand. Once we arrived we set out to immediately establish ourselves. Both in finding contacts such as yourself as well as endeavoring to gain employ as we will be here until the Wool Faire."

Curiosity laced in his voice, Rikoro inquires, "What of yourself Master Harabor, have you been residing in Minarsas long?"

"Only all of my life," Donar says, "I have kith and kin all around here and, even though we have small disagreements at times, we mostly stick together and help each other. To give you an example of the seriousness of our disagreements, something that I am sure you will soon find out is that the clan no longer allows me to sell the sorkan blues, the mules bred and raised by the Harabors. That is as serious as it gets, which you must agree is not very serious."

Considering for a moment Donar's words, Rikoro nods in agreement, but adds, "Unless sorkan blues are highly sought after in Minarsas. That would then affect your trade and livelihood."

"Oh they are highly sought after in all of Kaldor and it greatly affects my trade," Donar says, "but it is the manner of a clan dispute. I meant it was not a serious thing outside of my clan."

The Fyvrian P'varian leans back in his chair, trying to relax his lanky frame. As he does this, Rikoro politely asks, "Since you have been here all of your life, would you mind giving us some news on recent events Master Harabor? It would help us considerably gain our footing and keep our conversation light until after the meal is finished. Unless you wish to do away with decorum and prefer to hear about us and why and how we arrived here that is."

"You have an interesting opinion on what is light conversation," Donar says, "I would prefer to wait to find out what you are about before I start spreading local gossip. I could make my relations with my clan worse if I were to say the wrong thing to the wrong person."

9-HALÁNÈ-720 MINARSAS, KALDOR

6TH WATCH [COLD, CLOUDY, NORTHWEST WIND]

You finish your meal and, as you settle back with after dinner drinks, Master Donar asks, "Well now, what is this business that brings you to our fair town?"

"Well, I guess I'll just get right to it." Berina begins. "Word about the new laws and taxes has gotten back to Tashal. Your kinsman, Lord Wroton Harabor, engaged us to come here to Minarsas and look into what's going on."

"While he didn't detail the underlying reasoning for his interest in the goings on here in Minarsas, it's not hard to figure it out, both from the way he said things, and from looking at things that are common knowledge."

"The common knowledge part, is the age of the King and that he hasn't named an heir. That, and the fact that several powerful people have strong claims to the succession...including Earl Caldeth."

"The inferences I draw from the way your kinsman talked about what we were to look into...and, yes, I understand that this is just my opinion...is that when one of the people with a claim to the succession engages in out-of-the-ordinary activities, the other claimants get a little nervous and want to know what's going on. I wouldn't be surprised if they thought that the new taxes were intended for the hiring of mercenaries to be used to seize the throne when the King dies."

"Frankly, I hope I'm wrong on that. Open warfare over the succession would tear the Kingdom apart."

"Things I've seen and experienced in the last few months that lead me to believe that there are forces at work in Kaldor that would dearly love to see a civil war...not to be able to pick up the pieces, but to actually destroy the Kingdom."

"Whenever I've talked about the things I've seen and done, people just dismiss what I say as...at best...tall tales and fantasy, so don't ask me about them unless you're prepared to believe some pretty amazing things."

Realizing that an underlying anger is rising in her, Berina clamps down on it and says: "I'm sorry if I seem to be getting overly emotional. I'm just heartily sick of being taken for a liar or madwoman. It seems as if every hand is raised against me. I truly feel that the kingdom is in peril, and if I have to save it single-handedly, I will!"

Taking a deep breath, Berina says: "If you'd like to know something about me personally, just ask."

"My word, that does appear to be a ponderous mission you have set out on," Donar replies, "My only questions would be...do you have any sort of letter of introduction to back up your claims? And, what is it you expect of from me, a humble ostler? It is all very well complaining about people's disbelief regarding what you, yourself, describe as amazing but what do you expect from people? Open rebellion? That would bring on a civil war just as quickly and even suggesting such actions could land you in the gallows. I can let you know who is who and who is where by I am not privy to milord's counsel as to the why's and wherefores of his decisions. I just assume that he makes his

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decisions on his own experiences and the advice of about a dozen counselors."

Having been the last as usual to finish his meal, Rikoro settles his utensil's down and takes a sip from his drink to wash down the remaining remnants. Then trying to smooth things over in a calm manner, Rikoro lets the ostler know, "Excuse Berina's ... passionate temperament. Despite her disposition her head usually helps guide her heart. We're here to simply collect information on Earl Declaen Caldeth. As well as root out a few outlaws who have stationed themselves here in recent months. Though the two could be tied together. Our task does not include insurrection. Thus what we will be endeavoring to do is make subtle inquiries with people about town as we establish ourselves here."

After dabbing at his mouth with a piece of cloth, the Fyvrian mage says with a sigh, "On the subject of proof that we are who we say we are and why we are here we have none. This is why I inquired when we first met. It is also the reason I seemed so surprised. Lord Harabor had pushed us out of Tashal with the threat of the gaol. Yet his own urgency seemed to extend no further than that. Of course being a noble he has likely had other matters to concern himself with. Is there any way to expediently make contact to confirm what we have said?"

Rikoro rests his long arms on the table and looks to the others before glancing back to Donar, "I do not wish to put any undue pressure on you Master Harabor until then and understand your need for discretion. Our time line is to remain here until after the spring wool faire as there are fears open rebellion could give rise past that point. Our cover is to act as buyers for sorkan blues. Perhaps a jest or jab on your Lord Warton's part eh?"

"Are you of the nobility then that you expect messengers sent to herald your coming?" Donar asks with a perplexed expression, "Usually when commoners travel, they make arrangements before they leave and take letters of introduction with them. Why did my kinsman want you out of town so fast if he thought the problem was not going to be resolved until the spring. Did you make plans with him or just rush off to do his bidding? It all seems a bit peculiar to me. The only way I know of to get a message to him is to send a messenger and I have not that sort of money nor have you shown me reason to pay to verify who you are. As to the mules, I used to sell them and I doubt that Lord Warton knows of my current predicament."

After listening to the Ostler, Rikoro takes in a deep breath as he gathers himself before responding, "As peculiar as this situation is to you, it is more so for me. We were thrust into this with little choice in the matter or planning. Perhaps this is my own feeling. I am one who prefers to prepare then to simply react. Had I the luxury of time, I would have certainly made arrangements before leaving. However, it was out of my hands. The timeline given is that Lord Warton believes come spring the matter will have escalated into full scale rebellion, -not- that it will be resolved. Unless you consider rebellion a resolution. He wished us to somehow quash that as best we can before the spring faire. Your name was given as a point of contact. One would think the contact would be informed of such. To me this is an impossible situation made more difficult by lack of support. To be frank I am not even certain why I am involved in this. If I were to meditate on it I imagine I could find many more reasons

not to, but I have formed a friendship with these people not to mention now that I have stepped so deeply into this bit of intrigue would rather not gain the ire of a noble for walking away."

Changing tact, Rikoro sighs and shakes his head then asks, "What would you do if you were placed in this situation? Perhaps our approach to the task is failing because we lack outside perspective. A learned man such as yourself could have valuable insight."

Donar chokes on his ale and, recovering, says, "a learned man such as myself! Now I know you are pulling my leg. I have no need of all your knowledge and education. To sell mules, you just need to be smarter than the mule. And see where your book learning has gotten you...jumping into a situation with both feet and now trying to find an honorable way out of it. What I would do is send a message to Lord Warton to say you cannot accomplish his request without support and, since the gentry knows squat about money, tell him exactly what support you need and even what reward you expect. He was probably just as surprised as you that you hied off without such an agreement. You should not continue to work on an impossible situation but should fix it before you continue. Simply complaining about it will get nothing accomplished. Even if he decides what you ask is not worth what he will receive, he will make a counter offer or dismiss you...either way you are no worse off than you are now."

When Donar chokes, Rikoro appears concerned then relaxes when he hears the Ostler's retort and advice. Content with what he has heard the Fyvrian mage smiles and responds, "I assure you Master Harabor, you undersell yourself greatly. One does not become a Master without learning something. In your case the trade of being an Ostler is something I could barely grasp at. And your advice here and now is without price. The dinner this evening is a small measure of the thanks we owe you for your time."

As he sweeps back a few errant blonde hairs, the lanky bearded man changes the course of the conversation, "Perhaps until our identities have been confirmed we can discuss some matters of a more common nature. I fear we did not negotiate very well.. actually at all with regards to reciprocity for the work we were tasked with, as such we are all in need of finding various types employ. Berina for example has been given permission to find work as a scribe of sorts and paid her dues. Would you happen to know of anyone in need? As to myself, I tried with the apothecary - Master Anesa of Fayrl, but she did not have the means to support me. Are there any other alchemists in town? Or perhaps physicians that could use an aide that you may know of?"

Donar says, "If you decide to send a messenger to Tashal, perhaps you could clarify your financial situation...a fast messenger could be there and back in a tenday or two...although that would be more expensive. I have no need for a scribe and know of nobody who does. With the scribe taxes, scribes are charging more to make a profit so people are considering how much their need is worth very carefully. You had best look to those who do a lot of paperwork such as the guilds, the Mangai, litigants and the nobility. I believe Jita of Vaben has started making potions and acting as midwife but she has not a

franchise. The town's physician is Barint of Ikabir but he is not very good at his trade. Milord's physician is Sir Petral Aswain and he lives at the manor. Those are the only ones I know of."

Rikoro bobs his head and in a polite manner mentions, "Master Harabor I appreciate the predicament you have been placed in and apologize for it. I shall leave it to the others to decide what our next action is. My thanks also for the information."

At the mention of Sir Petral Aswain Josrel perks up and adds : "Master Harabor it is Sir Petral that I have some interest in. You see I am of the same Sir name as Sir Aswain. I am Josrel of Aswain and have made a request to see him at the gate and am awaiting a response from him. Have you seen or made his acquaintance before?"

With a loud "Haw", Donar says, "You people will be the death of me. What would a humble mule seller know of a great and noble physician? Are you now claiming nobility? No lad, I know of him but we have never met."

With surprise Josrel returns "My Good Man I never said I was Noble. I merely stated we share a name. And wanted to see if we are Kin. I have No desire to be Noble. Just looking for family is all. I mentioned it to see if He was the sort of Noble who made himself available and I should wait for a reply or if I should just stop now inquiring of him. I know the Nobility have better things to do than answer a message from someone they know not. But, simply if you had any dealings with him, is all I wanted to know."

Rikoro glances over to Josrel and Lillia, "Haliki's I am unsure about the work you two wish to perform, but since we have Master Harabor's ear it may help hasten your search."

"Well, it is getting late and I must be on my way to my bed," says Donar, "I bid you good day and it has been pleasant meeting you all."

"The feeling is shared Master Ostler", Rikoro says in kind.

Lillia gives a surprised look at Josrel and whispers, "Lord Wartan threw you out of town too? I thought it was just Lord Odasart because Berina was in the goal. And you left town without an agreement on support or reward? Why did you not tell me about this? I could have negotiated for you if you felt you were not capable of it."

Leaning into Lillia as to hear her whisper Josrel rubs his chin: "You are correct to my knowledge about Lord Odasart and not Lord Wartan. As for the agreement of support it seemed that Lord Odasart didn't want to be associated with us. Whenever any of us made inquires to him about this excursion we are on he grew more angry with us and told us if we didn't leave he would place us in the gaol." Josrel whispers back in Lillia's ear. Continuing to whisper to Lillia "Maybe we could try to get this agreement now that some time has passed, and make a report to him. As well as get an agreement of support. We can make the journey what do you think."

"I thought, from what you had said, that he was angry because of the trouble Berina was causing. What inquiries did you make that made him angry?" Lillia whispers back. "As to returning to report status, it would probably be unseemly and expensive for

all of us to spend several days returning and confronting him enmass. It would be better for us to draft a message and pay a professional messenger with a fast horse to deliver a message. We can all go over the message to ensure it is worded properly and we can share the expense. If we can find any Save Knorian in this town, they are sure to recommend a reliable messenger."

Josrel says, "I had not meant that all of us go, just you an I go. I did not make any inquires of him as I said he was very upset with the lot of us asking him questions and aide on this matter as well as the fact that he asked us to come here and assumed we had. But, we kept showing up and asking him questions which irritated him. Also with the trouble Berina gotten into really set him off. So not wanting to cause him any further irritation we thought it wise to be off." Josrel adds "I have had my share of irritating my superiors, The Olunar and I have had a rough relationship as of late and I have learned my lesson to not bother my superiors if I can help it. In the Morning we can see about finding another Knorian if we can then we should go ahead with your plan if we can't what say you about us going?"

"We can discuss this further when we are alone," Lillia says, "but I trust not our chances of surviving such a journey alone at this time of year and I know not the other's minds well enough to represent them truthfully...Do you?"

After Donar leaves, you all finish your conversations and make your way to your rooms for the night.

Once in his room, Rikoro unpacks his journal and quill and begins and goes through his nightly routine of scribing his daily events into it. When he completes his regimen, the Fyvrian mage returns the items and takes hold of his newly acquired staff with both hands gently grasping it.

"Let us learn a bit more about your history shall we", Rikoro mutters as he closes his eyes and tries to focus his mind on his esoteric teachings.

Rikoro gets no new impressions. [+1 psychometry]

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Once everyone has retired to their rooms, Berina goes to the room Fyna is sharing, knocks on the door, and calls out softly: "Fyna? It's Berina." When the door opens, she says: "Could you please come to mine and Davas' room for a couple of minutes? Bring your pack."

After the two of them have entered the room, Berina closes the door behind them. Getting her backpack and opening it up, she counts out 209d into a pile on her bed and says: "That 209d plus the gold Crown is your full share of the booty. Please take it. Being responsible for other people's money is a burden I don't care for."

After Fyna has put the coins in her pack and goes to leave, Berina picks up her own pack and walks Fyna to the door. As Fyna heads back towards her room, Berina says: "Good night Fyna. Sweet dreams."

Closing the door behind her, Berina walks to the room Josrel and Lillia are sharing. Knocking on the door, she calls out softly:

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"Josrel, Lillia? It's Berina. May I come in for a couple of minutes, please?"

Going to their bed, Berina counts out 222d and says: "This 222d plus the gold Crown and two pound note you already have, is the full share of the booty for the two of you. Thank you for your patience in this matter." Closing up the backpack, she says as she goes to leave: "Good night to both of you. Pleasant dreams and thanks for all that you do."

Back in her room with Davas, Berina snuggles up to him and says: "That gets everyone their shares except Lysada's, and the rest of ours. For that, we'll need to get the other four pound note redeemed. I don't know how I'm going to get that done. I'll ask Mistress Melenda for advice about that tomorrow. I hope you don't get mad at me, but I took the liberty of absorbing all of the usurer's fee from our share. I didn't want there to be even the slightest appearance of shorting any of the others. I know, I know...they're our friends. I want them to remain so. Nothing can more certainly ruin friendships, than disputes over money."

Sighing, she says to Davas: "While not completely taken care of, a fair load is off my shoulders, thank Halea! Let's make love, then get some sleep." and she proceeds to suit action to words.

* * *

Fyna's trip through the night's darkness to the manor gate is uneventful. She finds the gate closed so she bangs on it to get the guard's attention. A voice calls down from the top of the gate tower, "Who goes there and what do you want that cannot wait until a decent hour of the morning?"

Fyna says, "It can wait until the morning, my apologies. I will come back tomorrow first thing."