**Chapter 1: The Drunken Mistress**

Having reached the inn where he’d booked hospitality, the bard entered his room, put some of his new purchases away, and started cleaning himself up. He didn’t have an official gig that evening, but he thought he’d head over to one of his usual spots, maybe see if the barkeep would front him some ale and snacks in return for a few songs, hopefully bring in some additional customers if the place wasn’t already full.

And who knows? Maybe he could try to gather a little info on whether rats were becoming more of an issue later? Try to pick up any new rumors, see if any of the locals he knew had any light to shed on that. He brushed his hair, and made sure he had a pen and some paper in his satchel in case he needed to jot down some notes.

If nothing else, maybe he would work on a song about the bravery of young shopkeepers. He smiled as he headed back downstairs, nodded to the receptionist, and headed for the tavern just across the dirt avenue.

Landorin stepped inside the tavern, and scanned the crowd. He saw a few people he knew, including an off-duty veteran constable, a middle-aged human with a bit of a beer belly sitting at the bar, probably having an after-work drink before heading home to his family, and a pair of burglars from the local gang sitting quietly at a corner table. The constable and the burglars seemed to be paying no attention to each other, the tavern being somewhat neutral ground.

The place was only about half full, mostly sailors in port for a brief time, but a few working folks from nearby shops were there as well, at another table, and they perked up when they saw the bard enter, one of them lifting a mug in greeting, and Landorin responded with a smile and a nod.

Making his way over the bar near the constable, he nodded to the fellow, and asked Tomal the barkeep, “A bit of brew and something to eat later for a song or three? And maybe a refill for my friend Ned here?”

Making his way to the constable, Landorin got the small talk out of the way and mentioned that he encountered a few rats that were foaming at the mouth, and managed to skewer a couple but the others escaped out of sight.

“I heard about that... it’s happening all around the docks,” replied the soon-to-be-back-on-duty constable.

and outright ask if there have been any reports of unusual rat activity. He will do something similar with the burglars, and the working folk.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Landorin** | **Rank** | **Ability**  **& Mod.** | **Misc.**  **Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Diplomacy** | 1 | **Cha (+2)** | 3 | 6 | 16 – 20 | ?? |
| **Gather Information** | 1 | **Cha (+2)** | 0 | 3 | 6 – 10 | ?? |
| **Intimidate** | 0 | **Cha (+2)** | -2 | 0 | 6 – 10 | ?? |
| **Listen** | 1 | **Wis (+1)** | 2 | 4 | 11 – 15 | ?? |
| **Perform: Vocal** | 4 | **Cha (+2)** | 0 | 6 | 16 – 20 | ?? |
| **Profession: Sailor** | 4 | **Wis (+1)** | 0 | 5 | 11 – 15 | ?? |
| **Sense Motive** | 1 | **Wis (+1)** | 2 | 4 | 16 – 20 | ?? |
| **Bluff** | 2 | **Cha (+2)** | 0 | 4 | 6 – 10 | ?? |
| **Knowledge: Historical Research on the *drunken master* PrC** | 0 | **Int (+0)** | 0 | 0 | 11 – 15 | ?? |

*See below.*

Wandering around and saying hello to folks he knew, the divine bard also introduced himself to strangers as a singer and ex-sailor, referencing the ship that he used to work on, Wavedancer, and talked ships and the sailor’s life with men and women who’d sailed the seas far and near.

Fishing for stories involving vermin; other performers, as folks he might be able to work with; and any other rumors of interest, the worshipper of Selûne tried to be truthful while doing his best to deflect any pressing questions about exactly where he encountered the rats, as he didn’t want to get the shopkeeper in trouble. One wily fellow squinted and smirked at that point, suggesting that Landorin’s bluff wasn’t as ironclad as he’d wanted it to be.

He also smelled a few liars in the pack, but didn’t call anyone else out on their inconsistencies. All in all, he now had the knowledge that the farmlands to the east of the city wall were dealing with the rat problem as well as those in the docks. It wasn’t an infestation in any one part, but all in all, it was unusual. One sewer cleaner had gone missing on a shift, and he was now suspected of being eaten by the rats.

There was a band that had just arrived from Ilmwatch, and had been booked to play later in the evening. They were said to have arrived, and to be preparing backstage before their gamelan set was brought out. At the moment, the stage was mostly bare, with markers placed for the roadies that would later wheel and lug the instruments out. In a mood to perform a few songs, the bard took up a center-stage position, and prompted the crowd for suggestions. “I know some sea chanteys and such.”

A few local variants of standard numbers he knew were suggested, and he’d been in the area long enough to do them in the Impiltur style, with a downward vocal posturing and a swung rhythm that gave the impression of a sea-sickening, keeling motion. Landorin did *Wherein Doth This Want Meet Sang?*, *Trials and Tribulations*, and *The Ballad of Vrerah Cymbals*, and then encouraged the customers to, “have another ale if ye want another tale!”



After a hearty laugh and a sip of water, the elf decided to get folks laughing by performing *Drunken Master*, a song he wrote about a fumbling hero who succeeded at everything he did more or less by accident. Coincidentally, a woman who’d drunk more than others around her found herself reveling in the delightful melody, and dancing clumsily about.



OOC: Landorin imparted to the crowd about 30% of the information in Complete Warrior on the drunken master prestige class, the crowd’s reaction to Landorin has shifted from Friendly to Helpful.

Landorin winked at the “Drunken Dancer” as he hopped down of the stage, and grinned at the people offering to buy him drinks. “One drink at a time, lads and lassies, but if y’all want to pitch in a little each towards something a little strong than ale, I could not refuse!”

The lyrically inclined elf needed a breather, and now had a handful of spectators offering to buy him his next drink. He stepped off the stage. Making sure nobody was giving too much, he thanked them all and handed all the money to the bartender, enough for a nice brandy with a decent tip for the fellow. Upon getting his drink, he approached and introduced himself to the woman that had managed to dance with such abandon without causing any mishaps. Taking in her interesting footgear and nice flowing outfit, he had an idea...”

“Good day to you! I’m Landorin, and I was admiring your obvious enjoyment of my last song. Tell me, if you would - you wouldn’t happen to actually be a Drunken Master, would you? Or perhaps a trained dancer? Your moves were quite smooth!”

Her name was Mali, and she was a backup singer for the band whose gig this was. Attracted to the functioning alcoholic beyond doubt, he put the charms on the fellow elf with all his might.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Landorin** | **Rank** | **Ability**  **& Mod.** | **Misc.**  **Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Diplomacy** | 1 | **Cha (+2)** | 3 | 6 | 1 – 5 | ?? |
| **Gather Information** | 1 | **Cha (+2)** | 0 | 3 | 16 – 20 | ?? |
| **Perform: Vocal** | 4 | **Cha (+2)** | 0 | 6 | 6 – 10 | ?? |
| **Sense Motive** | 1 | **Wis (+1)** | 2 | 4 | 6 – 10 | ?? |

*See below.*

Mali’s day job was in the marketplace, working for a human named Dæsmon, whom Landorin knew, and now that she referenced him, he recognized her from the general store, where she’d been dressed with more salesmanship. She’d signed up to replace one of their backup singers the day the band had gotten into town, and with any luck, she’d be hired on as a regular, which would be her ticket out of this town... not that it was a dump, though it had a certain amount of baggage for her. “I should start getting ready for the set,” she said as she finished her current drink.

Landorin nodded as she chatted with him, and smiled, saying “Ah, I thought you looked familiar, I’ve seen you at the store! I’ve idly considered getting into a group, but I haven’t met the right people in the right circumstances yet.” He sipped at his brandy, and continued, “I’m definitely staying for the show, and looking forward to hearing you sing - I hope you get the gig!”

She seemed genuine in her gratitude for his well wishes.

The sound of a lyre tuning to the drone of a duduk’s A*#* became increasingly evident as the crowd’s dialogues died down and heads turned toward the still empty stage. The musicians were just behind the curtain, ensuring the tuning was just right, and Mali now smiled, thanked Landorin for the lovely conversation, and went backstage.

As Mali headed off to join the band, he made sure he’d have a good view of the stage, and settled in to enjoy the performance. It sounded like there were some interesting instruments, probably being played by interesting performers... He made sure the table surface was dry and as clean as he could make it, then got out pen and paper, to make notes on a few things he’d heard and perhaps what he was about to see and hear.

A person playing a banjo

Description automatically generated

The band came out a few minutes later. The first of them was a banjo-toting half-elf named Fring, who bowed slightly as he took up position left of center, and pointed with an open hand at the rest of the instrumentalists as they entered.

A person playing a lute

Description automatically generated

On the lute, there followed a human named Rumi, who had grown up in Uthmere, and enjoyed the relative warmth that Hlammach offered. A fellow human with a lyre was the next noteworthy musician to appear, followed by a few others whose roles were more accessories than central to the compositions they would soon unfold.

A person with red hair playing a harp

Description automatically generated

The redheaded human made eye contact with Landorin, who was standing near a torchlight, and he instinctively nodded back as his drunken friend came out among the backup singers and dancers.

“Well, hiya!” a halfling with a miniature lute came out from behind the drums, and surprised everyone with her commanding presence. “For those I haven’t met, my name’s Supper, and it’s a pleasure to make your acquaintance. For the family, I love y’all, and I’m thrilled to be back in Halammock,” she mispronounced the name of the city, “... I know, I killed it... I’m hoping’ to make up for it in a sec... speaking of which, here’s a number called, *‘The Night Is Still Middle Aged’*.”

A cartoon of a person playing a mandolin

Description automatically generated

The number lasted a few good minutes, getting a few extroverts on the periphery of the stage, which served as a dance floor.

Landorin had stood to better see the performers enter, and found himself distracted a bit by them, his paper with his pen atop it on the table in front of him. They were all eye-catching, though his murky eyes couldn’t make out all the fine details of their costumes. He did catch the names that were announced, though some of the performers hadn’t been introduced. He’d sat down once Summer started to introduce their first song, and found himself listening closely, trying to determine Supper’s accent, and while he wasn’t much of a dancer, he was tapping a toe to the beat of the song, which was definitely a good one for moving about to.

When the first song was done, Supper and the backup singers caught her breath, and the musicians rested their fingers and arms. “Whoo!” the halfling huffed. “For those just getting here, we’re just getting started, so find yourselves a nice bench to park on, and Merlina and her crew will get you all set up.”

A few instruments were retuned and the drummer announced the next number with a premonition of the upcoming rhythm, this one with a slower tempo. “So you might’ve heard, we’re from Ilmwatch, which pretty much means none of us grew up there; we all just drifted there and found each other, and somehow fate brought us here to you tonight.”

A melody began first on the lyre, then at the fifth bar the lutes came in one octave apart for intensity as Supper’s narrative wove itself into the song. “This here’s called, *‘From Ilmwatch to Your Doorstep’*, and it’s dedicated to anyone here who ever goes there... make sure you hit the Manticore’s Migraine if it’s still open. *Weeee raised the masssst... and hefted sails… we waited ‘til the weather’s fair, so says the tale... but in the end the storm claimed lives... and ours are testament to that demise...*”

This wasn’t as much of a dancing song, with its downbeat, unswung tempo and basic chord progression. It lent itself to the storytelling nature of the lyrics that Supper imparted as Landorin continued to study Mali’s performance, which consisted mostly of singing, clapping, and at this moment, playing the tambourine.

Three more songs regaled the crowd with enjoyable and at times sensational performances by each of the members whose talents were showcased in solos, acapella stints, and a Turmish dance involving castanets, waist bells, and goat-hook anklets. Mali held her own with the tenor portion of the harmony in the quartet of background singers who took the spotlight in the middle of a number called *Brubeck’s Breakfast*, and once done, the crowd stood from a silent spectatorship to an ovation that the singers didn’t expect.

He’d settled in to listen and absorb the music as the set continued, still taking occasional notes, a few of things he might adopt for himself someday, others critiquing the various performers. He applauded appropriately after every song, but not obnoxiously so, merely appreciatively.

Before their first out-bow, they played a medley of two well-known ditties from the region—*Carry Me to the Apothecary*, and *I Have Love for No Bugbear*—and at the request for an encore, the performers came back out for another collective bow whilst holding hands, then took up their positions, with some even trading places and instruments for this last one.

A very satisfying experience, and after applauding the last song he checked his purse for any change he could spare to tip them with - if anyone started tossing coins up on the stage. He planned to do the same. It looked like they might do an encore, after which he looked forward to possibly talking with some of the band afterwards. He thought perhaps someday he might have some band mates of his own, though he hadn’t yet found a proper fit for a long-term group. He had time, of course, being an elf... Gestures of gratitude were thrown his way in exchange for the tips.

“Alright, you asked for it: this is called...” Supper inhaled and exhaled as anticipation built up, then screamed, “*Troll Slashed Up Yer Mates*!”

“Woohoo!” many in the crowd cheered as the drums came in heavy and loud, setting the tempo and tone for the now magically amplified string ensemble that crackled arcs of pyrotechnic light at the somatic behest of the lead singer and the duduk-playing musician whose haunting scales now emanated along with a mist that undulated across the stage and unto the rest of the establishment.

The song they were playing was a banger from a few summers back that had been released by a Thayyan band of arcanists whose dabbling in music theory had led them to create a series of “recorded” songs, which could be heard on wands or other magic devices. They were not performers, and could never actually play the instruments they’d rendered for the “tracks”, but they inspired practical musicians like this band.

Landorin was pretty sure those Thayyan arcanists were the ones who came up with the Ghostharp spell he’d heard about, a Bardic cantrip that replayed a tune played in the vicinity within the previous day. No doubt they’d come up with even better spells which they had kept out of the public domain... He was considering learning that cantrip at some point.

Everyone was sweaty—including the crowd—by the time the song was over. Some kept jumping up and down a bit after the music was replaced by cheering and whistling. The musicians gave a third bow as Supper called out their names, and closed up with, “... and we—are—the—Wyyyyyvernnnns! Thank you all so much for having us back. We’ll be leaving tomorrow, and hope to come back as the leaves start to fall.”

Landorin approved of each musician’s technique, and the magic touch at the end was very much in line with his own craft. The main mass of people was shuffling out of the establishment, giving the dance floor and table space a bit more wiggle room for servers and patrons. He saw Mali exiting the stage alongside her bandmates, and wished her luck in becoming a regular with these troubadours and percussionists.

Landorin headed back to his room, and upon arriving looked carefully at the used sap he’d purchased, which looked close to falling apart at the seams. Focusing his intent, he spoke the words and made the fairly simple gestures needed to activate his *mending* spell, fixing some tears and stitching to repair the weapon.

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| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Value** |
| Sap | 1d6 | 0 | 0 | x2 | Bludgeon | 2.0 | 1 |

The spell worked splendidly, and he now felt confident that he could use it to reliably render a humanoid unconscious.

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The next morning, our hero awoke to some commotion outside his window. Staying out of sight of those outside, he stood behind the curtain and listened as he continued waking up. There were two parties—outlanders and locals—arguing about a wagon being parked in someone else’s private space. “... where do you get off coming to *our* city and taking our spots?” a rhetorical question was thrown out before an insult, and then another question.

Landorin decided perhaps some soothing words could be in order, before the argument turned into a melee, or perhaps a distracting song would turn things around. Opening his window and leaning out, still in his night clothes, he picked what he thought was an appropriate ditty, and belted out loudly,

“What will we do with a drunken sailor?

What will we do with a drunken sailor?

What will we do with a drunken sailor?

Early in the morning!

Way, hey, and up she rises

Way, hey, and up she rises

Way, hey, and up she rises

Early in the morning!”

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Landorin, Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Perform: Vocal** | 4 | **Cha (+2)** | 0 | 6 | 19 | 25 |
| **Profession: Sailor** | 4 | **Wis (+1)** | 0 | 5 | 2 | 7 |

*See below.*

He sang the song a bit like a drunken sailor, but the regionalisms were lost on the outlanders, who frowned with confusion at some of the inflections and vowel shifts before everyone nodded at the end—even bystanders—and some clapped and cheered the pillow-headed bard.

“Go buy a new head,” he thought he heard a young human lad call out before continuing on his way.

The divine bard smiled down at the two parties, and called out, “What seems to be the problem, me hearties? Y’all don’t want the constables to come a running, now do ye?”

The outlanders continued on their way without another word, removing their horses and wagon from its place, and making their way westward. The locals remained, and all in all, he was standing in his window before a dozen or so people, including the proprietor of the lot across the road, where his wagoner was now leading *his* horses and wagon.

“Are you that historian that’s been stirring up trouble in town?” the well-dressed merchant who owned the house across the street asked Landorin.

“Uh... probably not,” Landorin thought to say. “What *sort* of trouble?”

“Treasonous trouble... talkin’ about awakening the people to their own oppression, and overthrowing the Hlammachian state,” another man spoke out, “I’ve heard him talk, Blarth,” he faced his neighbor. “His name is Nimby the Nihilist. This isn’t him. The man you speak of is a human,” he waved a hand at Landorin, dismissing him as the suspect of such heresy.

Landorin chuckled at the kid’s remark; his hair did need combing and braiding, but it had worked to imply the argument had just woken him up.

He was quite pleased that his impromptu performance had hit nearly the perfect chord, as it were - even if he’d misjudged the outlanders slightly, his voice had carried well and defused the brewing fracas.

Waving back at the man who’d pointed out he was no human, tucking some of his wayward hair behind an obviously pointy ear. He called back, “Nope, haven’t met or heard of this Nimby fellow, does sound like a troublemaker though; I’ll keep my eyes out for him.”

Taking a breath, he continued, “My name’s Landorin, sailed on the Wavedancer for a while, now you can catch me singing for my supper here and there around town. You all have a great day, may your gods smile upon you!”

Closing the window and the curtain, and ignoring the landowner who now stared up in interest, Landorin set about getting ready for the day. Hmmm, Nimby the Nihilist, he thought - human, male, historian, and apparently of the opinion that the people were oppressed? Might be an interesting person to track down and chat with. He thought maybe he would chat with some of his contacts, see what they might know or at least suspect about the fellow.

His day was rather routine:

Morning (6 – 10 AM): wake up whenever, get up, clean up a bit, tie my hair back etc.; make a little small talk with the desk clerk, maybe have a snack of some sort, and some tea or coffee; today it was tea.

Midday (10 AM – 2 PM): go out and wander the streets a bit, different routes from day to day. Chat with local constabulary and/or rogues gallery types, merchants, basically gathering news and gossip, passing along some news in return, being generally nice to ordinary people. At some point have a light meal; I figure elven physiology doesn’t need a lot of calories, and generally eat fairly cheaply from local vendors.

It was around this time, at an establishment called the Pointy Elfboot—a tavern that served primarily elven-friendly libations—that he ran into a woman named Sarai with whom he’d rubbed shoulders on the ship that had brought her here tendays ago from the Lyrabar Harbor. The unforgettably comely woman had given him the cold shoulder while aboard, maybe on account of his working-class stature and sailory disposition, though he suspected that there were layers of complexity and vulnerability rustling behind her iron curtain. As they were reaching Hlammach’s port, he’d walked into the Captain’s quarters to report the sighting of land, and instead had found her snooping through his personal belongings.

A person in garment with elf ears

Description automatically generated

From that moment, she was even more guarded, *[DM assumption; edit as needed]* though he never reported it to the Captain. He greeted her and instantly got the message from her duly polite but curt counter-greeting that she was still uninterested in having any type of dialogue with him. She left the tavern a minute or so after having passed by Landorin, and he suspected he would see her again.

Afternoon (2 – 6 PM): continue wandering but visiting various venues, checking to see if they need or want a singer that evening or in the near future, i.e., job-hunting, and make any arrangements needed for future shows if available. Do any shopping needed. Continue to chat with local constabulary and/or rogues gallery types, etc., as appropriate; not in any great hurry.

He stocked up on a day’s worth of the healthiest food that was still reasonably priced, having found recently that the average traveler’s daily rations were not quite optimal for an active body like his. Even when he was in a settlement like this one, he was hardly a sedentary soul.

Evening (6 – 10 PM): depending on how the work search went, either follow through at a venue performing that evening and grabbing dinner at some point, or else find an acceptable place to busk on the street.

As with the provisions he’d scored during the Afternoon, Landorin by now had a good sense of where the best prepared food could also be found, which was not far from the general store adjacent to the boardwalk where he’d encountered those rats just yesterday.

Landorin similarly knew of a few places where the locals were not bothered by a bit of entertainment, and even looked into license requirements, which were surprisingly not in enforcement. He resolved to go and earn some coin at one of his favorite dining spots, the Charcuterie d’Aglarond, specializing in the cuisine of that peninsula to the southeast.

There were usually few younger folks in his audience, seeing as how the venue was more of a watering hole for artsy, up-and-coming gentry trying to buy and schmooze their way into noble statuses. Still, enough of them brought youngsters such that his *prestidigitation* spell got their attention, and their enthusiasm prompted the tips to go up a bit. There was also plenty of opportunity to chat with others there.

He asked a few folks if they’d heard of Nimby. One woman had by name; and another by his words and deeds. Apparently, he was an ousted academic from one of the arcane academies, and had lost a civil suit against the academy, whose name he didn’t get. The disgruntled orator was known to speak at certain private events, but more notably had published a few treatises that were available for purchase, as well as at the local library. He also made enough coin to pay for the food he’d bought hours earlier, and was given a free meal that sated the senses to no end.

Midnight (10 PM – 2 AM): Return to the inn. Use *prestidigitation* to remove stains and dirt from his clothing, and to clean up his room a bit, etc., before settling in for his night’s sleep.

Wee hours (2 – 6 AM): sleeping, maybe get up for a bathroom break, or if he has a vivid dream, might get up to make notes before going back to sleep.

He had a rather erotic dream featuring Mali and Sarai, and opted to not write that one down.

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18 Flamerule, 1,352 DR

Landorin awoke to a much quieter street outside, and having gotten relatively sound sleep, he looked outside the window to find the usual light traffic of pedestrians and horse-drawn wagons and carts. He prepped for another day, and ate from his high-quality rations as he got dressed.

Heading out, he ran into Mali, or rather passed by the tent in the marketplace where she worked, and struck up a conversation. He quickly learned that she’d been hired by the Wyverns, and that they were also auditioning for a male backup singer, presenting an opportunity for a traveling gig along the coast, which was their planned itinerary for the time being. Their gigs more than paid for the passage from port to port, and Mali mentioned that a sailor might even trade labor for passage.

He considered the option to audition to travel and sing with the group, and incidentally travel with Mali, which could lead to some romantic interludes and possible entanglements or stay here and continue day-to-day busking. He could tell offhand that Mali seemed to be just looking for a good time or wanted a longer-term relationship, or possibly just wants to offer him an opportunity as a potential friend since she got hired? The probability tree grew about ten initial branches in his mind, and as he snapped himself back into the moment, he considered the prospect of some work as a backup singer while riding the waves up and down the coast.

“I can’t say I’m not intrigued,” the man admitted, hoping Mali would follow up on the question until the moment he spotted an out-of-place woman standing a few tents away staring at him. She turned away as soon as she noted the eye contact, and began to turn back.

A person in a black dress

Description automatically generated

Mali was facing the opposite direction, though she saw something catching Landorin’s attention, so she turned around to see nothing out of place (anymore). “What is it?”

“Not sure,” Landorin replied, trying to spot the odd woman again. “Saw someone who seemed odd, out of place somehow but I blinked and now I’m not sure what I saw. I got the distinct impression of crows or perhaps ravens, and her hair and apparel were all of the same shade of black, at least at that one glance.” He shrugged his shoulders, but his mind quickly tried to match that glimpse to any descriptions of famous ladies in black, perhaps even goddesses... “Sorry,” he said to Mali grinning sheepishly, “sometimes my imagination falls overboard and I have to throw it a life ring and pull it back into my brain.”

Landorin, deciding he wanted to get to know Mali a bit better in any case, and perhaps learn a bit more about her impressions of the people in the group, smiled at her with a twinkle in his eye.

“I’d like to learn more about you, if you’re willing to share. Would you do me the honor of having dinner with me? I know a nice little place, not too fancy, but the food is good, and the staff are friendly, where we could get a small booth and be able to chat about whatever we like. What do you say?”

Mali had no particular plans for that evening, she did have to check in with her new boss regarding some details that Landorin didn’t need to know about, but that shouldn’t take too long. She suggested she could meet him there, and they agreed on a time.

He told her where the little seafood place, the Hook & Reel, was located, and they parted, both looking forward to the dinner. Landorin continued with his usual, albeit not rigorous, routine, and made sure to arrive at the restaurant a bit early in order to secure a cozy booth.

Mali arrived only a little past the agreed time, and they enjoyed a nice dinner with drinks—not too many, Mali was a little tipsy but still quite graceful—and talked about a variety of things, the conversation flowing pretty easily. After dessert, Landorin paid the bill with a decent tip (despite starting to be a bit low on funds again as a result) and then walked her back to her room.

She invited him to stay ‘for a nightcap’, and he did go inside with her, but she seemed pretty tired, so after a little cuddling and caressing, he kissed her goodnight and headed back to his own lodgings. It had been a very pleasant evening, and he found himself singing a nice romantic tune softly as he strolled along. Still, he kept his eyes open, wary of possible rats, whether on four feet or only two, but none bothered him.

Turning in, he found himself dreaming of dancing women with hearty appetites...

~\*~

18 Flamerule, 1,352 DR

The next morning, the bard rose to find a letter that had been slipped under the door while he slept. He’d actually snoozed a bit more than usual, and the sun was already in its second hour of shining across the city from the eastern horizon. It was wax-sealed with an unfamiliar herald stamped into the red seal, which he broke effortlessly.

“Dear Sir, blah, blah, blah… oh…” he stopped reading aloud and scanned the rest of the page silently, gleaning that he had apparently impressed the neighbor across the street the other day with his ability to arbitrate the argument that had ensued just outside his window, and that he was invited to join the Viscount Bergère—that was the landowner’s name—for brunch today if he was not otherwise engaged.

“Hm…” he pondered. The language failed to express it, but it was implied that this was to be more than just a brunch, serving as the setting for a proposition of a professional nature, particularly in a reference to relics and fine art. The man was apparently a patron of the arts, and his family name—now that he read it—*was*, in fact, an established lineage among the founders of the city centuries ago. It carried a certain weight with him simply based on the opportunities that he might leverage with such a connection, though Landorin noted that his house was hardly the estate of a Viscount, at least by his own account. Perhaps he had other properties in the countryside.

In any case, such an invitation was not to be set aside, it could be an excellent opportunity! He got dressed with the idea of calling upon a nobleman in mind, and while he didn’t walk the streets unarmed, he figured he certainly didn’t need his bow, and he expected to set his arms aside upon entering the Viscount’s property. With the house being just across the street, he didn’t figure he’d need his armor and buckler either; wearing it would imply his host couldn’t protect his guests!

With invitation in hand, at the just before the appointed time, having made himself as presentable as possible with a prestidigitation spell, he presented himself at the doorway to the Viscount’s dwelling.

“Landorin of Gildenglade, accepting Viscount Bergère’s kind and generous invitation to join him at brunch,” he announced with a smile, showing the letter to the person at the door.

~\*~

The huntress had been following tracks that led her to a stream. She’d been trailing a fledging vampire who only days ago had been bitten by a coven matron, and had probably completely turned by now. The warlock fearlessly entered the body of water that to a human would have been opaque under the moonlight, but to her it was quite clear.

A person in a garment

Description automatically generated

Using her sense of smell, she noted the emanations from the uphill direction that got her to come out of the water on the other side, and turn northeastwardly. It did not take long for her sense of sight to corroborate the scent trail with a few footprints that looked like they came from upriver, and as she got back on the trail, she drew her blade and prepared her eldtritch invocations for the former human that was surely near.

Her eyes scanned the branches above, bushes around her, and the trail behind her for any movement, and her ears picked up every slight motion around her now that she walked unhooded.

~\*~

The bard had spent the better part of the midday with the Bergères, and had gathered quite a bit of lore on their family and its role in the city’s prosperity. As a merchant, the Viscount’s late father had risen to the stature of an aristocrat within a single lifetime, and the Viscount had taken his father’s baton, increasingly focusing on rarities and contemporary art.

The Viscount chose a moment after brunch to broach the subject of a job. He’d been vetting the bard for the last few hours, and was now confident that he was the person for the task. In short, about 15 miles from the city proper, there allegedly was a manor owned by a rival collector of precious goods, and therein was an item of great importance to the Bergères: the Amber Sprite.



“What’s the nature of the item? Why is it important to you?” Landorin was curious.

The benefactor of the arts explained that the item itself was not reputed to have magical properties, though like most petrified materials, it could be imbued with arcane or divine power. The item had been stolen by the Scargill family, who owned the estate being discussed, and because the Bergères had no proof of this, they could not prompt a formal investigation without tarnishing their own name with scandals. Such information in the public eye would prompt more opportunistic thieves to exploit any security deficits that had been proven to exist when the Amber Sprite was stolen earlier this year.

“So you are proposing that I steal it back for you?” asked Landorin as they walked down one of the corridors of the modest mansion.

“Not exactly,” clarified the nobleman once his family was out of earshot. “I have a confiscator in mind for this job, but a diversion will be needed, and your persuasive performance yesterday gave me the confidence to entrust you with this.”

“Ah, you want me to distract your rival’s household—including their guards—while your thief pulls the heist?” the singer-sailor now understood.

“Yes, and for this, I will not only pay you a thousand gold—half of it in advance—but you may have this space as your study,” the Viscount opened a door once they reached it, and showed the musician into a room that already had a few musical instruments and other accoutrements associated with the bardic arts.

“For how long?” asked the bard, liking the space quite a bit.

“My nephew used this study in his spare time, but has given up music, and is now in Cormyr studying jurisprudence, so you may have it for the time being, and if it’s agreeable to you, I may ask you to occasionally entertain the family and our guests,” offered the Viscount, whose first name was Gilgamesh.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Knowledge: Bardic** | 1 | **Int (+0)** | 0 | 1 | ?? | ?? |
| **Sense Motive** | 1 | **Wis (+1)** | 2 | 4 | 11 – 15 | ?? |

*See below.*

Landorin had never heard of this Amber Sprite, though he detected no deceit from the Viscount.

“I accept your proposals. We’ll need to discuss the distraction service further of course, to work out the details, but I have no qualms assisting in the recovery of stolen property.”

“As for use of your study, I appreciate the privilege you offer me! Furthermore, it would of course be my honor to entertain in your service! I do have one stipulation, which I’m sure you’ll understand—I prefer not to break any commitments already made, as I sometimes perform at various locales in the city, and wish to maintain good relations with those who have provided me the opportunities. And of course, if you request my services for a specific time in advance, be assured that I will be ready, willing and able to entertain!”

“Of course!” the Viscount replied. “We will not impinge upon you excessively.”