**Oghma’s Faithful**

**by Alexis Álvarez and Microsoft Copilot**

**Chapter 3: Silverymoon**

27 Flamerule, 1372 DR

**Eldrin** adjusted his scholarly disguise, making sure every detail was perfect. He glanced over to **Copper** and **Sultry**, his companions in this covert mission, and nodded. The three had been through thick and thin together, and their trust in one another was unwavering.

“Alright, let’s make our move,” Eldrin whispered. “Copper, you’re up first. Stay sharp.”

Copper nodded and entered **The Fence**, her eyes scanning the room for anything out of the ordinary. She moved gracefully, her keen senses picking up on even the smallest details. Eldrin followed a few minutes later, slipping into the shop and pretending to browse. He watched Copper’s movements closely, ready to assist if needed. Outside, Sultry kept a vigilant watch, her senses attuned to any potential threats.

The elderly gnome shopkeeper observed Copper and Eldrin with curiosity but didn’t intervene. The shop was a treasure trove of artifacts, each item potentially holding a clue to the stolen Tome. Copper and Eldrin worked methodically, searching for hidden compartments or suspicious items. The air was thick with anticipation, every moment bringing them closer to unraveling the mystery.

As they carefully examined the items, Copper’s eyes fell on an old, ornate box tucked away in a corner. She signaled to Eldrin, who approached and inspected the box closely.

Meanwhile, Sultry noticed a figure lingering near the shop entrance. Her muscles tensed as she prepared for any confrontation as she recognized the woman as someone who’d made eye contact with them an hour ago outside the Spellguard. Could they have been tailed? The barbarian remained nonchalant in her body language.

Inside a rock gnome shopkeeper named Flurth nodded and bid Eldrin and Copper a good morning. “What brings you in today?”

**Eldrin** kept his demeanor scholarly and polite as he approached the shopkeeper. “Good morning,” he said with a nod. “I’m Eldrin Thistlebrook, a scholar from Waterdeep. My colleague and I are here to examine some items for our research. Specifically, we’re interested in ancient artifacts and any documents related to arcane knowledge.”

Eldrin heard some rustling around in the back of the shop as a young lad walked by the threshold of the door leading into the shop’s storage area. It was a younger gnome who must have been the owner’s son, and he was carrying a crate similar to those that Eldrin had perused in Spellguard this morning.

**Copper** subtly moved around the shop, her keen eyes scanning the shelves and the gnome’s reactions. The rock gnome seemed a bit put off by their presence, but that might just have been his normal demeanor. She picked up a few trinkets, pretending to inspect them closely, while keeping her senses alert for any hidden compartments or signs of illicit activities. She positioned herself strategically, ensuring she had a clear view of both Eldrin and any potential exits.

The shop’s wares and items looked in no way standardized; there were no two of any item, as all were likely consigned or pawned, reflecting ages of artisanship and craftsmanship.

Outside, **Sultry** continued to keep a casual yet vigilant watch on the suspicious woman. Her mind raced with possible scenarios, ready to spring into action if necessary.

The human woman outside the shop simply stood in place for the time being, facing front, as Sultry stood off to one side.

The shopkeeper took a moment to consider his next question. “I’ll be glad to help. What sort of items are you researching?”

**IC: Eldrin** maintained his calm and scholarly demeanor, thinking quickly to provide an answer that would align with their cover story and still be persuasive. “We are particularly interested in items of historical significance, especially those related to the arcane arts. Texts, scrolls, and artifacts that detail ancient magical practices or theories would be invaluable to our research. We believe that understanding the past can provide insights into the advancement of modern magic.”

“Indeed,” agreed the fellow gnome. “The Fence is at your service. The rustic section, as I call it, is just over there. This is all stuff from the last decade.” He led them to the area near the back of the shop. “This is where you’ll want to start. Anything in particular? Martial items? Perhaps timekeeping devices?”

**Copper** continued to move through the shop with practiced ease, her senses heightened and alert for anything out of the ordinary. As she examined various items, she made a mental note of their locations and potential value. Her eyes were drawn to the crate carried by the young gnome, and she wondered if it contained anything related to their quest. She kept a close watch on the young gnome’s movements while continuing to blend in as a curious customer.

While Eldrin focused on presenting a façade of genuine interest—of which he had a bit—in the artifacts around him, Copper was better able to spend these moments gleaning visual cues. Although she’d not been the one conducting the research in the Spellguard vaults this morning, the diviner had more than a little awareness, and took notice of details, such as how dust free the shelves were, a sign of a meticulous mind running the shop. It was likely that this shopkeeper was as careful as he was orderly, and if he *was* colluding with Jorus Azuremantle in the nefarious plot that Eldrin was unraveling,

Outside, **Sultry** remained vigilant, subtly observing the woman who seemed to be keeping an eye on the shop. Her instincts told her that this was no coincidence, and she prepared herself for any possible confrontation while maintaining her nonchalant facade.

**Eldrin** nodded thoughtfully. “Thank you,” he said, following the shopkeeper to the rustic section. “We’re particularly interested in any texts or artifacts related to timekeeping and martial items. Anything that might have historical significance or be connected to arcane studies.”

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| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability**  **& Mod.** | **Misc.**  **Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Eldrin, Bluff** | 0 | **Cha (-1)** | 0 | -1 | 16 – 20 | ?? |

*Result of the shopkeeper’s Sense Motive check unknown to the PCs. See below.*

The rock gnome adjusted his monocle a bit as he considered Eldrin’s statement. In truth, Eldrin had no immediate interest in martial items or pocketwatches, but the answer would allow him the time and space needed to inspect all these items.

**Copper** continued her careful examination of the shop’s wares, her eyes narrowing slightly as she noticed the meticulous order and dust-free shelves. It was clear that the shopkeeper was very careful and organized. She couldn’t shake the feeling that there was more to this place than met the eye. As she moved closer to the young gnome carrying the crate, she made sure to appear casual, all the while focusing her attention on any markings or labels on the crate.

The creaky voice of an elderly gnomish woman in the back of the shop was now heard as she spoke to her son, calling him Junior and scolding him for some oversight. Copper had no line of sight to the area behind the wall, other than the threshold that led there.

Outside, **Sultry** maintained her watch over the suspicious woman. The woman seemed to be making no move yet, but Sultry was ready for anything. Her eyes darted occasionally to the entrance of The Fence, ensuring she could react swiftly if trouble arose.

“Well,” the rock gnome said to Eldrin. “Feel free to look around, and let me know if you have any questions.” He then went back to the front counter and picked up the book he’d been reading prior to Eldrin and Copper entering the shop.

**Eldrin** nodded to the shopkeeper, offering a polite smile. “Thank you. We appreciate your assistance.” He moved to the rustic section, examining the items meticulously, and taking mental notes of anything that could potentially be connected to their quest. His focus remained on finding clues that might link this place to the missing Tome of Clear Thought or the suspicious activities within the Spellguard.

**Copper** continued her examination, paying particular attention to the crate carried by the young gnome. She casually moved closer to it, trying to get a better look at any markings or labels. As she did so, she kept an eye on the young gnome’s movements, making sure not to draw too much attention to herself.

Meanwhile, **Sultry** maintained her watch outside, observing the woman closely. She noted every detail, from the woman’s body language to her subtle movements, ready to react if the situation escalated. She stayed calm, her stance relaxed yet ready for action.

**Eldrin** carefully examined the various artifacts in the rustic section, looking for anything that might stand out or provide a clue. He kept his ears open for any conversation between the gnomes in the back and remained alert for any changes in the shopkeeper’s behavior.

He began to get a better sense of what he was looking at, and his recollection began to link items here to entries made in the logs he’d copied with an *amanuensis* spell this morning. It would take another minute or so for him to make sense of it all. His eyes scanned each item, and his attention was drawn to details that the untrained person would have overlooked.

**Copper** positioned herself near the crate, using her peripheral vision to inspect any markings. She pretended to be interested in a nearby item, ready to act if an opportunity presented itself to examine the crate more closely. The gnomish woman became upset with her son, her voice now switching to Gnomish, which Copper did not understand, though Eldrin did.

<< You ingrate! >> she insulted Junior in Gnomish, perking up Eldrin’s ears to the conversation. << If it weren’t for... >> Eldrin couldn’t hear who was being referenced, << We’d all be on the street singing, ‘Please, mercy, a crust of bread’ to the passersby! You should be *grateful* that we have this chance. >>

The boy replied in the Common language, “Mom, I’m not saying that...”

**Sultry** kept her watch outside, her eyes never leaving the suspicious woman. She observed the woman’s movements and prepared to signal Eldrin and Copper if needed.

The gnomish mother hushed her son and told him, << Get back to work! They’re going to be here soon, and we want to have this ready to go with no delays. You saw what happened last time.”

**Eldrin** continued to browse the shelves, occasionally picking up an item and inspecting it closely. He made sure to keep track of Copper’s position and actions, ready to support her if necessary. **Copper** subtly shifted her position, attempting to get a better view of the crate’s contents without drawing attention. She listened carefully to the gnomes’ conversation in the back, hoping to glean any useful information.

The tension in the shop was palpable, but Eldrin, Copper, and Sultry worked seamlessly together, each playing their role to perfection. Their shared determination and trust in one another propelled them forward as they sought to uncover the secrets hidden within The Fence.

The shopkeeper continued to read his book until his wife’s banter began to wear on him, so he went in the back of the shop, and Copper heard him murmur, “You know we have customers right now...” before asking a question with a more hushed tone.

The trio continued their careful search, each playing their role to perfection. Their combined skills and determination drove them forward as they sought to uncover the secrets hidden within The Fence and bring them closer to their ultimate goal.

Another minute passed as Eldrin acquired a greater sense of what was around him. Some of this stuff was mundane—even worthless as historical artifacts—but a handful of the smaller items were things had had been directly referenced in the documents he’d copied. They were standing in a waystation for goods outright stolen from Spellguard and the Arcane Sanctuary!

**Eldrin**’s heart raced as he realized the significance of the items before him. They were indeed standing in the midst of stolen goods from the Spellguard and the Arcane Sanctuary. He carefully inspected the smaller artifacts, making mental notes of their details and connections to the copied documents. His mission had just taken a critical turn.

**Copper**’s eyes widened slightly as she caught sight of Eldrin’s expression. She continued her inspection, but her focus was now heightened, knowing that they were onto something substantial. She subtly moved closer to a crate near the back of the shop, determined to uncover any additional clues.

Meanwhile, **Sultry** remained vigilant outside, her eyes locked on the suspicious woman. The woman hadn’t moved, but Sultry could sense the tension in the air. She prepared herself for any potential confrontation, ready to act at a moment’s notice.

Eldrin carefully lifted one of the smaller artifacts, an ink pen, examining it closely. He whispered to Copper, “These items are stolen from the Spellguard. We need to find more evidence and get out of here without raising suspicion.”

Copper nodded subtly, her mind racing as she continued to inspect the crate. Her keen eyes caught sight of a hidden compartment within the crate, and she carefully opened it to reveal a collection of scrolls and documents.

Eldrin moved closer to Copper, glancing at the contents of the hidden compartment. “This could be the evidence we need,” he whispered. “We should gather what we can and make our exit.”

Copper carefully retrieved a few of the scrolls, tucking them discreetly into her satchel. She gave Eldrin a slight nod, indicating she was ready to leave.

Eldrin glanced around the shop, ensuring they hadn’t drawn too much attention. He moved towards the exit, giving Copper a silent signal to follow, but it became clear now that the shopkeeper had overheard them, and was now standing in the way of the front door. A moment of uneasy silence and eye contact communicated all that was needed. “Maaargen!”

“Yes, dear,” his wife replied in common as she now stood behind the heroes in the threshold of the door to the back of the shop.

“It seems these folks came for something more than the regular merchandise,” he smirked, keeping his eyes on the diviner and archivist.

“Is that so?” the woman behind them spoke. Eldrin turned around to see a woman of perhaps 100 years of age—late middle age for a gnome—holding a hand crossbow in one hand and smiling. “I heard them talking too. Junior, get the gear!” she instructed her son, who was too far in the back of the shop to be in view.

Outside, Sultry noticed Eldrin and Copper emerging from the shop. She kept a close watch on the suspicious woman, ready to intervene if necessary.

With their evidence in hand, Eldrin and Copper stood motionless for a moment as they considered their next move.

Round 1

The tension in the air was palpable as Eldrin and Copper found themselves cornered by the gnome shopkeepers. Eldrin’s mind raced as he considered their options, realizing that quick thinking and decisive action were needed to avoid a potentially dangerous confrontation.

**Eldrin** quickly cast **Obscuring Mist** *[expired on Round 51]*, hoping to create a thick, concealing fog to obscure their movements and provide a chance for escape. The spell created a dense mist that filled the shop, limiting visibility and giving them a moment to act.

**Copper** took advantage of the cover provided by the mist. She drew her short sword and positioned herself defensively, ready to strike if the gnomes attempted to attack. Her eyes scanned the area, trying to determine the best route for their escape.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** |
| MW Short Sword | 1d6 | +0 | +1 | 19-20/x2 | Piercing | 2.0 | 4 |

*Ready to attack.*

Outside, **Sultry** noticed the sudden change inside the shop as the mist began to billow out. She remained alert, her muscles tensed and ready to spring into action if the situation escalated.

The woman outside the shop turned around and immediately entered the shop, and the *obscuring mist*.

Inside, nearly the entire public-facing floor space was enveloped in the mist spell. Eldrin’s quick thinking and Copper’s readiness set the stage for their next move, using the cover of the mist to navigate their way out of the shop and avoid confrontation. The trio’s combined skills and determination would be key to their successful escape and continued quest.

They could not see past 5’ of where they were, and although they could see one another, they didn’t spot the woman entering the shop until they were nearly at the door, by which time she had drawn her scimitar, and now swung at Eldrin.

*1d100 = 16, concealment bypassed.*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| MW Scimitar | 1d6 | +1 | 1 | 18-20, x2 | Slashing | 4.0 | +4 | 3 | 7 |

*Miss.*

Round 2

Eldrin and Copper could walk around their assailant, but one of them would likely incur an attack of opportunity as they slipped by her.

**Eldrin** quickly assessed the situation, knowing they needed to act swiftly to avoid further confrontation. He decided to cast **Hold Person** on the woman with the scimitar, hoping to paralyze her and prevent any further attacks.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**  *hold person* | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Human woman, Will** | **3** | **Wis (+3)** | 0 | 6 | 5 | 11 |

*Fail.*

The human woman remained held in place for the moment as the gnome woman crept up behind Copper and aimed her hand crossbow at the diviner’s back.

Unaware of the gnome’s position behind her, **Copper** positioned herself defensively, ready to strike if needed. She moved closer to Eldrin, preparing to slip past the woman and make their escape. Copper’s agility and quick thinking would be crucial in navigating through the mist and avoiding an attack of opportunity.

**Sultry**, outside, noticed the commotion inside the shop and realized her companions needed support. She approached the shop’s door cautiously before entering.

With Eldrin’s spell cast and Copper ready to move, the trio braced themselves for the next critical moments, determined to make their escape and continue their quest. Copper took a few steps forward before the shopkeeper woman fired her crossbow into her back point-blank.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg** | **+ Mod** | **TH+** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| MW Hand Crossbow | 1d4 | 0 | 1 | +6 | 17 | 23 |

*Hit. Dmg: 3 [14/17 hps].*

Round 3

Copper was at the front door now, and Eldrin was right behind her, now looking at the gnomish and human women who were both 5’ from him.

**Eldrin** quickly reassessed the situation. With no immediate spells to dispel and the gnomish woman wielding a hand crossbow, he decided to use his **Invisibility** spell on **Copper** to help her slip past the woman and reach the exit without drawing further attacks.

**Copper** felt a strange sensation as Eldrin’s spell took effect, rendering her invisible. She carefully moved towards the exit, using her newly gained invisibility to avoid detection and any potential attacks. Her short sword remained ready in case she needed to defend herself. She knew she would dispel the invisibility if she attacked, so she opened the door and slipped out, now facing Sultry, who could not see the invisible rogue.

**Sultry** at the entrance, noticed the change in the atmosphere inside the shop and prepared to provide cover and assist her companions as they emerged.

With Eldrin’s spell cast and Copper now invisible, the trio coordinated their actions to make their escape. Their quick thinking and teamwork were crucial in these critical moments.

The gnomish woman reloaded her crossbow in the darkness as her husband and son probably did worse things deeper in the shop.

Eldrin used a few spare seconds to follow Copper out, and warned Sultry, “Careful, Copper’s invisible now.”

Round 4

**Eldrin** took a deep breath, realizing they needed to move quickly and decisively. He decided to use his **Spiritual Weapon** spell, summoning a floating, magical weapon to attack their assailants and provide a distraction. The shimmering longsword appeared and struck at the gnomish woman, aiming to keep her occupied.

*1d100 = 82, concealment not bypassed.*

**Copper**, now safely outside and still invisible, stayed close to Eldrin, ready to support him if needed. She remained silent to maintain her invisibility and observed their surroundings, ensuring there were no additional threats.

**Sultry** noticed the commotion inside the shop and prepared herself for any potential threats emerging from the shop. She readied her weapon, staying alert and ready to defend her companions.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**  *hold person* | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Human woman, Will** | **3** | **Wis (+3)** | 0 | 6 | 1 | 7 |

*Fail.*

The rock gnomes—all three—emerged from the obscuring mist as their human associate remained held.

Round 5

**Eldrin** glanced back at the shop and saw the gnomes emerging from the mist. He knew they needed to act quickly to avoid further conflict. He called out to his companions, “Let’s move! We need to get away from here and find a safe place to regroup.”

**Copper**, still invisible, stayed close to Eldrin, ready to follow his lead. She kept her short sword at the ready, just in case, but focused on staying undetected.

**Sultry** nodded, her eyes on the gnomes. She prepared to cover their retreat, making sure Eldrin and Copper could get away safely. “I’ll keep an eye on them. Let’s go,” she urged.

With their plan in motion, Eldrin, Copper, and Sultry began to run away from The Fence at top speed, and within minutes, they were fortunate enough to have escaped the rock gnomes’ pursuit.

Round 33 (end of by-round resolution)

Eldrin gathered his wits as Sultry asked, “What happened in there? I saw the human lady standing outside and thought it was suspicious, and then she went in all hastily. What did you find?”

Eldrin caught his breath and looked at Sultry, his eyes serious. “We found evidence that The Fence is a waystation for stolen goods from the Spellguard and the Arcane Sanctuary. The items we saw matched the descriptions in the logs I copied earlier. We also uncovered a hidden compartment with scrolls and documents that might be crucial to our investigation.”

He glanced at Copper, who was now visible again. “Copper did an excellent job finding the hidden compartment and gathering the documents. We need to analyze them and figure out our next move. The gnomes were definitely suspicious of us, and we barely managed to escape without a full confrontation.”

Copper nodded, still a bit shaken but determined. “We should find a safe place to lay low and examine the documents. We can’t afford to be caught off guard again.”

Sultry agreed. “Let’s move quickly. We need to stay one step ahead of them and find out what’s really going on with the stolen Tome and the corruption in the Spellguard.”

The trio decided to find a discreet location where they could safely analyze the documents and plan their next steps. Their determination and camaraderie would be vital as they continued their quest to uncover the truth and bring justice to those responsible for the theft and corruption.

Eldrin, Copper, and Sultry found a quiet alleyway to catch their breath and regroup. Eldrin carefully pulled out the scrolls and documents they had retrieved from The Fence, spreading them out on a makeshift table. “Let’s see what we’ve got here,” he said, his eyes scanning the pages for any clues.

Copper, still feeling the effects of the crossbow bolt, leaned in to examine the documents. “We need to find out who else is involved in this operation and how deep the corruption goes,” she said, her voice determined.

Sultry kept watch at the entrance of the alley, her senses alert for any signs of pursuit. “Let’s make this quick. We don’t want to stay in one place for too long,” she urged.

They found a patio adjacent to a tavern, and ordered a few human ales to settle the stomach after that fiasco in the shop. Sultry kept a watch out as Copper and Eldrin took 15 minutes or so to sift through the materials they’d confiscated, after which Eldrin wrote down a few notes in his journal, and said to the women, “This is the smoking gun, ladies. There is damning evidence in these documents tying Jorus Azuremantle to all this malfeasance. The loss to the City has been immeasurable, but with these documents, we may be able to locate some of the stolen goods before they disappear into circulation.”

“How much stuff are we talking about?” the outdoorsy barbarian inquired.

“Dozens of small items, and a handful of larger ones, but they’re invaluable artifacts, including the Tome of Clear Thought, which this document traces to an address in the Arcane District that is registered as the domicile of the daughter of Jorus Azuremantle.

“We must communicate with the Custodian,” Copper announced. “Do you still have the six *sending* scrolls she gave you?”

“Yes,” Eldrin said producing one of the arcane scrolls. “If I recall, you have a better track record with using magic devices than I do. You want to do the honors?” he asked the diviner.

She took the scroll, unfurled it, and began to read from it, holding it correctly, casting *sending [expired in 10 minutes].*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Copper, Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability**  **& Mod.** | **Misc.**  **Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Use Magic Device** | 3 | **Cha (+1)** | 0 | 4 | 15 | 19 |

*Success.*

She could now send up to 25-word messages to Dr. Esmer, the Custodian of Arcane Archives at the Arcane Sanctuary, and the Custodian could reply with as many words. Their channel of communication would last all of 10 minutes.

**Copper** focused on the scroll and began to send her message to Dr. Esmer, the Custodian of Arcane Archives. “Dr. Esmer, this is Copper. We found documents linking Jorus Azuremantle to stolen artifacts. Tome of Clear Thought traced to his daughter’s address. Immediate action needed.” She paused, waiting for a response from Dr. Esmer, ready to convey any further information or instructions to her companions.

Only a few seconds of thought silence transpired, after which Copper heard the Custodian’s reply in her mind. “Copper, thank you for contacting me. I’m still in the Sanctuary, but note this address: 41 Whispering Pines.” The message stopped, and the woman began a new thread. “It’s a mile east of the city walls. Exit via the Eastgate, and be discreet.” She sent the rest of her confirmation and directions in a few more bursts of words, “Take the main road until you reach Persimmon, then turn left, and make another left at Whispering Pines. The location is secluded by vegetation. Just make sure you’re not tailed. This is a safehouse, but we will turn it into a base of operations once I arrive. In the meantime, get out of Silverymoon, and head to the safehouse.”

**Copper** relayed the message to Eldrin and Sultry. “Dr. Esmer provided the address: 41 Whispering Pines, a mile east of the city walls. She advised us to exit via the Eastgate, take the main road until we reach Persimmon, then turn left and another left at Whispering Pines. The location is secluded by vegetation, and we need to ensure we’re not tailed. This will be our safehouse and base of operations once she arrives.”

Eldrin nodded, absorbing the information. “Let’s move quickly and stay vigilant. We need to get out of Silverymoon without drawing attention.”

Sultry agreed. “I’ll keep an eye out for any potential followers. Let’s make our way to the Eastgate.”

The trio gathered their belongings and discreetly made their way through the streets of Silverymoon, careful to avoid drawing any unnecessary attention. Their goal was to reach the safehouse at Whispering Pines and regroup with Dr. Esmer, ready to continue their investigation into the stolen Tome and the corruption within the Spellguard.

~\*~

Afternoon

They headed east along the desolate road, being only a quarter mile outside the walls and already hearing the chirping of birds more clearly than any sound of the bustling city behind them. And as they were warned, a sole hooded figure walked along the road, perhaps 500’ behind them.

Eldrin glanced back and noticed the hooded figure trailing behind them. He quickly conveyed his observation to Copper and Sultry. “We have a tail. Let’s keep moving at our current pace for now, but stay alert.”

They continued at their pace along the unpaved road.

Copper nodded, her senses heightened. “If they get too close, we might need to change our strategy. But for now, let’s act as if we’re just travelers on the road.”

Sultry kept her eyes on the surroundings, ready to react if the situation escalated. “I’ll keep watch from the rear. Just signal me if we need to change our pace or confront them.”

The trio continued at their current speed, maintaining a steady pace while keeping a close eye on the hooded figure. Their goal was to reach Whispering Pines without drawing attention, but they were prepared to adapt if necessary.

They spotted Persimmon Rd. marked by a wooden post. The road turned only left, and if they turned on it, they would disambiguate for the one following them where they were headed, giving away the location.

Eldrin noticed the wooden post marking Persimmon Rd. and quickly understood the dilemma. He turned to his companions and whispered, “We need to be careful. If we take this turn, the tail will know exactly where we’re headed. Let’s keep moving straight for a bit and then circle back to Persimmon Rd. We’ll lose them in the process.”

Copper nodded in agreement. “Good idea. We can double back once we know the coast is clear.”

Sultry kept an eye on the tail, ensuring they didn’t get too close. “I’ll signal if they try to speed up. Let’s make this quick.”

The trio continued straight along the main road for a while, watching their tail closely. As they picked up speed, so did their pursuant, until it was clear that there would be no casual means of dispelling this fool.

**Eldrin** realized the situation was becoming more urgent. “We can’t shake them off casually. We need to confront them and find out their intentions.”

**Copper** nodded, her hand gripping her short sword. “Agreed. Let’s find a suitable spot up ahead where we can face them without attracting too much attention.”

**Sultry** kept a vigilant watch on their tail. “I’ll keep an eye on them. Let’s move to a more secluded area and deal with this head-on.”

The trio continued along the road until they found a small clearing off to the side, partially hidden by trees and vegetation. They were now about 2 miles from the city walls, and moved into the clearing, waiting for their pursuer to catch up, ready to confront them and uncover their motives.

They waited longer than it would have taken the person to walk 500’, and just as they were growing suspicious, the cloaked and masked figure snuck up behind them, brandishing a wand and bearing a sheathed blade at her side. None of them had ever seen her before, but she had coyly tailed them from afar such that she’d not been spotted. Her feminine form was barely discernible under her black clothing, and she spoke before anyone got too rash.

“Greetings, outlanders. You can call me the Kestrel for now. You’ve been in my sights for a few days now, since you placed that inquiry for an audience with Eltro. May I cast *detect evil* now that we’re in proximity to one another?” she asked.

The heroes looked at one another, nodding, and she cast the spell, waiting a few seconds before nodding herself and saying, “I appreciate that we are not in the company of evil,” and she removed her mask and hood, revealing a half-elven woman’s face. “Know that I am not in the employ of Eltro, but acting under the orders of the High Lady Alustriel Silverhand herself.”

The woman looked to be telling the truth, and bore little motive to lie at this point. She continued, “I have watched your progress over the last day, and though I’ve not seen the documents you have reviewed, I can confirm that Azuremantle and his people are orchestrating a heist of unfathomable proportions, and there are likely more nefarious operations afoot than theft.”

**Eldrin** stepped forward, his curiosity piqued by the Kestrel’s revelations. “Thank you for revealing your identity and intentions, Kestrel. We’ve uncovered significant evidence linking Jorus Azuremantle to the theft of valuable artifacts, including the Tome of Clear Thought. If there are more nefarious operations, we need to know the extent of them. What other plans do you suspect Azuremantle and his people are involved in?”

**Copper** added, “We have documents that might shed more light on their operations. If you truly are working for the High Lady, we could use your help in deciphering their full intentions and bringing them to justice.”

**Sultry** kept a watchful eye on their surroundings, her instincts still on high alert. “And how do we know we can trust you, Kestrel? Proving your loyalty to our cause will go a long way in gaining our trust.”

The trio listened intently, eager to learn more from the Kestrel and to assess whether she could be a valuable ally in their mission to expose the truth and stop Azuremantle’s schemes.

Kestrel spoke, “Well, if you have any alignment-detecting spells, feel free to cast them, and I’d also be willing to sit in a *zone of truth* spell-affected area and have a long chat with you all about our deepest desires and intentions. I’m real like that, but for the sake of time, if and when I can show my virtues, know that I will. To start off with, my name is Amara, but it’s better if you refer to me by my handle, Kestrel, which will not compromise my loved ones if someone is listening in on us.”

They agreed.

“Where were you headed from here?” she then asked.

**Eldrin** nodded, appreciating Kestrel’s transparency. “We were heading to a safehouse at Whispering Pines, just outside the city walls. Dr. Esmer instructed us to meet her there so we can regroup and analyze the documents we recovered. Given your connection to the High Lady Alustriel Silverhand, your insights and assistance would be invaluable.”

**Copper** added, “We need to uncover the full extent of Jorus Azuremantle’s operations and bring those responsible to justice. If you have any additional information or resources that can help us, we’d greatly appreciate it.”

**Sultry** remained vigilant, her eyes scanning the surroundings. “Let’s move quickly and make our way to the safehouse. The sooner we get there, the sooner we can formulate a plan of action.”

With their destination set and Kestrel’s allegiance confirmed, the group prepared to continue their journey to Whispering Pines. Their combined skills and determination would be crucial in unraveling the mystery and stopping Azuremantle’s schemes.

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They retraced their steps along the road until they reached Persimmon, and soon after turning onto that road, they found Whispering Pines. That path meandered along a ravine, and soon led to the secluded cabin that the Custodian had referenced.

A man was there to receive them: an elf named Jadin who had lived here for ages now. His golden locks reminded Copper of the sun elves of Neverwinter, and his kind greeting and welcome put them at ease. They spent a few minutes settling into the main room of the house, putting down some of their wares as Jadin let them know, “We’re expecting the Custodian later, and a few others who are intent on uncovering all that’s transpiring at the hands of Azuremantle.”

**Eldrin** nodded in appreciation to Jadin. “Thank you for your hospitality, Jadin. We’ve gathered some important documents and evidence that could help us uncover the full extent of Azuremantle’s schemes. Your assistance and any additional information you have would be invaluable.”

**Copper** took a moment to appreciate the serene surroundings of Whispering Pines, feeling a sense of calm despite the urgency of their mission. “It’s good to know we have allies in this fight. We’re determined to bring Azuremantle to justice and recover the stolen artifacts.”

**Sultry** remained vigilant, her instincts still on high alert. “We’ll need to stay sharp and work together. The Custodian and others joining us will strengthen our efforts.”

**Kestrel** added, “I’m here to help in any way I can. With the support of the High Lady Alustriel Silverhand, we’ll ensure that Azuremantle’s plans are thwarted.”

The group settled into the safehouse, their minds focused on the task at hand. As they waited for the Custodian and other allies to arrive, they began to review the documents and plan their next steps in uncovering the truth and stopping Azuremantle’s nefarious operations.

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Sunset

Custodian Esmer had finished her shift uneventfully to avoid raising suspicions on such an auspicious day, and had taken the roundabout way here along the northern road and across some hilly trails that she knew. Upon her arrival, she met the faces she hadn’t known before, including two humans from the temple of Mystra—Jarvis and Merlin—who were pledged to the cause.

Eldrin, Copper, and Sultry listened as the others spoke, being more familiar with local affairs. The convergent belief was that Taern Hornblade and Eltro Miresk were both in danger, and that the source of the threat was a doppelganger who had assumed the guise of Azuremantle, likely killing the true Jorus. It was not a unanimous suspicion, but the likelihood was low that someone so vested in Silverymoon’s governance and wellbeing would sacrifice that for nefarious gains at this point in their career.

As the group gathered and discussed the possibility of a doppelganger assuming Azuremantle’s identity, several theories and possibilities emerged:

1. **True Jorus Azuremantle’s Fate**: If the real Jorus has been killed, his body might be hidden somewhere. Alternatively, he could be imprisoned or held captive by those controlling the doppelganger.
2. **Doppelganger’s Motives**: The doppelganger might be working for a larger, more sinister organization. Their goal could be to destabilize the city’s governance, steal valuable artifacts, or gain control over the Spellguard.
3. **Complicit Allies**: There might be individuals within the city’s governance or the Spellguard who are complicit with the doppelganger’s plans, either knowingly or unknowingly.
4. **Misinformation Campaign**: The doppelganger could be spreading misinformation to discredit trustworthy individuals like Taern Hornblade and Eltro Miresk, creating distrust and confusion within the city’s ranks.
5. **Disguised Threats**: Other doppelgangers could be present in Silverymoon, assuming the identities of key figures to further their nefarious goals.
6. **Arcane Influence**: The doppelganger might be using powerful magic or artifacts to manipulate events and people, ensuring their plans go undetected.

The group discussed these possibilities, each contributing their insights and ideas. Custodian Esmer emphasized the importance of staying vigilant and working together to uncover the truth. “We need to gather as much information as we can and devise a plan to expose the doppelganger and any accomplices. Our priority is to ensure the safety of Taern Hornblade and Eltro Miresk while uncovering the full extent of this threat.”

Eldrin had kept relatively quiet until now, and began to add context as to his findings, “These documents,” he produced them and shared them with the others, “provide a trail to all the local outlets through which the stolen goods were—or will be—ferried out of the city. We three went to one of these, a curio shop called The Fence, and the shopkeepers nearly killed us for these documents,” he motioned to them.

They all took a few minutes to review the documents, and as new eyes reviewed all the evidence, the Custodian pieced together more fragments of the puzzle. “By the gods, the curio shop is just the first waypoint! The artifacts are all being conveyed to and via the Gnome Depot!”

A map of a gnome depot

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

**Eldrin** leaned in, looking at the map of the Gnome Depot. “This place seems to be more than just a storage facility. We need to investigate it thoroughly and find out how deep this operation goes.”

**Copper** nodded, studying the map carefully. “The Gnome Depot appears to have several key areas. We should plan our approach and be prepared for any possible traps or guards. It looks like there’s a workshop, dining hall, private rooms, and sleeping quarters. We need to be strategic about our movements.”

**Sultry** agreed. “We’ll need to split up to cover more ground, but we should stay within shouting distance of each other in case things go south. Our priority is to find the stolen artifacts and any evidence linking them to Azuremantle.”

**Custodian Esmer** added, “We should also be on the lookout for any other doppelgangers or suspicious individuals. If Azuremantle is indeed a doppelganger, there could be more infiltrating the city.”

**Kestrel** looked determined. “I can use my skills to scout ahead and gather intel. Let’s devise a plan to infiltrate the Gnome Depot and uncover the truth.”

The group huddled together, formulating a detailed plan to investigate the Gnome Depot. They discussed entry points, potential threats, and their objectives. With their plan set, they prepared to move out, determined to uncover the full extent of Azuremantle’s operations and put an end to the corruption threatening Silverymoon.

“There’s one door to the north, and windows along all the walls of the first floor,” Sultry pointed out.

“It may not be necessary to breach the shop; it is, after all, a public place of business,” Jarvis pointed out as Merlin remained silent.

“True, our method ingress shouldn’t prove to be a challenge, though we may need a quick exit plan,” Kestrel posed.

“Once there,” the Custodian said, “As the person most likely to be recognized by anyone there, I will do the speaking, and will rely on you all to be extra vigilant for anyone in the periphery preparing a surprise for us. If this evidence is true, we are walking into the den of wolves.”

“Should we rest and prepare spells?” Copper asked.

“I wish we had the luxury of time,” Custodian Ember lamented. “But alas, the lives of our fellow arcanists are at stake, not to mention the further loss of invaluable artifacts from the public collection.”

**Eldrin** nodded in agreement with Custodian Esmer. “We need to move quickly and decisively. Let’s gather our gear and head to the Gnome Depot. Once there, we must stay alert and be prepared for anything.”

**Copper** readied her belongings, ensuring she had all the necessary tools and components for her spells. “I’m ready. Let’s get to the bottom of this and expose the truth.”

**Sultry** checked her weapons and armor, making sure everything was in place. “I’ll take point and keep an eye out for any suspicious activity. Let’s move out.”

**Kestrel** adjusted her cloak, ready to scout ahead and gather intel. “I’ll stay ahead and keep you informed of any potential threats. Let’s be careful and stay focused.”

**Jarvis** and **Merlin** prepared themselves, ready to support the group with their magical abilities. “We’ll stay close and provide any assistance needed. Let’s bring these villains to justice.”

With their plan set and their resolve strengthened, the group set out for the Gnome Depot. Their combined skills and determination would be crucial in uncovering the full extent of Azuremantle’s operations and stopping the corruption threatening Silverymoon.

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Evening

They had left Whispering Pines as dusk had begun to set, each group leaving about five minutes apart, starting with Eldrin, Copper, and Sultry; then Jarvis and Merlin; then Kestrel and the Custodian.

The archivist had the address of the Gnome Depot, and they found their way there with little fanfare. Approaching the building, the three discussed any contingencies before they were within earshot of someone potentially affiliated with the smuggling ops.

**Eldrin** glanced at Copper and Sultry, ensuring they were ready. “Let’s review our contingencies. If things go south, we need to have a clear plan for escape. Copper, you’ll be our eyes and ears inside, using your stealth to gather information without being detected.”

**Copper** nodded. “Understood. I’ll move quietly and report back any suspicious activity. If I encounter trouble, I’ll signal you with a simple phrase like ‘Time to browse.’”

**Sultry** added, “I’ll keep watch at the entrance. If anyone tries to make a run for it, I’ll be ready to intercept them. If I spot any threats, I’ll alert you with the phrase ‘New arrivals.’”

**Eldrin** concluded, “If we need to make a quick exit, we’ll use the phrase ‘Daylight’s burning.’ We’ll regroup at the rendezvous point we discussed earlier. Remember, our priority is to gather information and avoid confrontation if possible.”

The trio finalized their plan and approached the Gnome Depot with cautious determination. Each step brought them closer to uncovering the truth behind Azuremantle’s operations and stopping the corruption threatening Silverymoon.

The Depot specialized in all things related to gnomes’ characteristic interests: gemology, craftsmanship, agriculture, mining, arcana, and other novelties.

The trio stepped into the Gnome Depot, their senses immediately assaulted by the myriad of sights, sounds, and smells that filled the shop. Shelves lined with intricate gnomish craftsmanship, glittering gemstones, and peculiar gadgets captured their attention as they began their cautious exploration.

**Eldrin**’s eyes were drawn to a display of arcane artifacts and magical trinkets. He marveled at the complexity of the enchanted items, each one meticulously crafted with a unique purpose. He took note of a few particularly rare artifacts, wondering if any of them could be connected to the stolen goods they were searching for. Unlike the curio shop, this place only had legitimate merchandise on the sales floor.

**Copper** couldn’t resist the allure of the gemology section. The vibrant colors and dazzling brilliance of the gemstones fascinated her. She examined a selection of finely cut gems, her trained eyes discerning the quality and origin of each one. She discreetly checked for any signs of the stolen artifacts, her instincts sharp and alert. A gem cutting instrument was available at half-price, and she marveled at its design.

**Sultry** found herself drawn to the section dedicated to gnomish agriculture and mining tools. The innovative designs and practical applications of the tools intrigued her. As she inspected a set of cleverly engineered mining equipment, she kept an eye on the shop’s layout, mentally mapping potential escape routes and areas of interest.

The trio continued to explore the various sections of the Gnome Depot, each one filled with items that reflected the ingenuity and creativity of gnomish culture. They remained vigilant, their senses heightened for any clues or suspicious activity that could lead them closer to uncovering Azuremantle’s nefarious operations.

As they moved from one section to another, they subtly communicated their findings, ensuring they stayed coordinated and prepared for any unexpected developments. Their combined curiosity and determination would be their greatest assets as they delved deeper into the mysteries hidden within the Gnome Depot.

At about the time that Sultry was approached by a clerk, Merlin and Jarvis walked into the establishment, avoiding eye contact with their counterparts as they made their way to the weapons and armor aisle.

A gnome half the size of Sultry greeted her. “Good evening, miss. We’ll be closing in half a toll, just to let you know. Is there anything I can help you find?”

**Sultry** smiled politely at the gnome clerk, taking note of the time constraint. “Thank you for letting me know. I’m just browsing for now, but I appreciate the offer. If I have any questions, I’ll be sure to ask.”

She continued to casually browse the items on display, keeping an eye on her surroundings and the movements of her companions. She made sure to stay within earshot of Eldrin and Copper, ready to act if needed.

**Eldrin** and **Copper** moved through the shop, discreetly observing the layout and any potential hiding spots for the stolen artifacts. They kept their communication subtle, exchanging brief glances and hand signals to coordinate their movements.

Not long after, a quartet of men in leather armor uniforms entered the shop. The goliath, half-orc, human, and dwarf went straight to the counter, and approached the senior gnome whose apron was more heavily decorated than others’. The five males spoke discreetly, and after the gnome nodded, the non-gnomes went downstairs into the basement.

Eldrin and Copper both spotted this, and not 10 seconds later, Custodian Esmer and Kestrel came into the shop under the pretense of picking up some low-level wands.

**Eldrin** and **Copper** exchanged a quick glance, recognizing the suspicious nature of the four men heading downstairs. They discreetly signaled to **Sultry** to be on high alert.

**Sultry** acknowledged the signal and maintained her position near the entrance, ready to intercept any threats and cover their retreat if necessary. She kept a close eye on the shop’s layout and the movements of the other customers.

**Custodian Esmer** and **Kestrel** approached the counter, engaging the senior gnome in conversation about low-level wands. They aimed to gather information and distract the staff while Eldrin, Copper, and Sultry continued their investigation.

Eldrin whispered to Copper, “We need to find out what’s happening in the basement. I’ll create a minor distraction while you investigate. Be careful.”

**Copper** nodded, her senses sharp and focused. She carefully made her way towards the stairs leading to the basement. She was no longer invisible, but used her stealth skills to move unnoticed.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Copper, Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Hide** | 8 | **Dex (+3)** | 0 | 11 | 15 | 26 |
| **Move Silently** | 7 | **Dex (+3)** | 0 | 10 | 16 | 26 |

*See below.*

Eldrin moved towards a display of arcane trinkets, subtly casting **Prestidigitation** to create a small but attention-grabbing effect, diverting the gnome’s focus for a moment.

**Sultry** remained vigilant, her eyes scanning the shop for any signs of trouble. She was ready to spring into action if needed.

With Copper on her way to the basement and the others maintaining their cover, the group continued their investigation, determined to uncover the truth behind the activities at the Gnome Depot.

It appeared that Copper had not been noticed by anyone, and was now in the basement crouching around the corner and listening to the four men discussing the present moment.

“How many are there?” asked the growling half-orc’s voice.

“It’s just this pile; don’t be a baby!” the goliath’s rasping gizzard voiced. “Get a move on. Come on! Let’s go. We take this load, and come back for one more load, and it’s off to Thay, baby!”

“Woohoo! I canz’t waitz,” the human with a Thayyan accent proclaimed.

Copper would be found within seconds if she stayed down there since the men sounded like they were coming back out with crates. She could sneak back up or confront the men alone.

Copper knew she had only seconds to decide. Confronting the men alone would be too risky, so she opted to sneak back up and regroup with Eldrin and Sultry to formulate a plan. She carefully and silently made her way back up the stairs, using her stealth skills to avoid detection.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Copper, Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Hide** | 8 | **Dex (+3)** | 0 | 11 | 16 | 27 |
| **Move Silently** | 7 | **Dex (+3)** | 0 | 10 | 2 | 12 |

*Move silently failed.*

Before reaching the main floor, she botched her step and made quite the noise, alerting the four men around the corner, who were already approaching. “Oy!” the dwarf called out as she could hear their step hastening towards her.

Copper knew she had only seconds to decide. Confronting the men alone would be too risky, so she opted to sneak back up and regroup with Eldrin and Sultry to formulate a plan. She carefully and silently made her way back up the stairs, using her stealth skills to avoid detection.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Copper, Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Hide** | 8 | **Dex (+3)** | 0 | 11 | 16 | 27 |
| **Move Silently** | 7 | **Dex (+3)** | 0 | 10 | 2 | 12 |

*Move silently failed.*

Before reaching the main floor, she botched her step and made quite the noise, alerting the four men around the corner, who were already approaching. “Oy!” the dwarf called out as she could hear their step hastening towards her.

Copper’s heart raced as she realized she had been detected. She quickly assessed her options, knowing that confrontation was inevitable. She drew her short sword, prepared to defend herself if necessary. She needed to buy time for Eldrin and Sultry to react.

As the four men hastened towards her, Copper reached the top of the staircase, and called out, “Eldrin! Sultry! We’ve got company!” Her voice echoed through the basement, alerting her companions to the impending danger.

Eldrin and Sultry heard Copper’s warning and immediately sprang into action. Eldrin moved swiftly towards the basement entrance, ready to support Copper with his spells. Sultry positioned herself strategically, ensuring she could provide cover and intercept any threats.

The four men rounded the corner, their eyes locking onto Copper. The goliath sneered, “Well, well, what do we have here? You picked the wrong place to snoop around, missy.”

Copper stood her ground, ready to face the approaching adversaries. With Eldrin and Sultry by her side, she knew they could handle whatever came their way. The trio prepared for the confrontation, determined to uncover the truth behind Azuremantle’s operations and stop the stolen artifacts from being smuggled out.

Round 1

Custodian Esmer and Kestrel were at the counter, and now turned towards the stairs, and saw the four men nearly reaching Copper. She instantly cast *hold person* on the dwarf, who was in the lead.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *hold person* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Dwarven Thug | Will | 6 | 2 | 8 |

*Fail.*

The dwarf was held in place, and the goliath behind him stumbled to avoid tackling him.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  Trampling | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Goliath Thug | Reflex | 4 | 17 | 21 |

*Success.*

Kestrel used a wand of magic missiles, unleashing two missiles upon the goliath thug.

*Dmg: 6 + 2 = 8 magic [force].*

Merlin and Jarvis each grabbed a short sword from the rack of gnome-intended longswords, and made their way around the aisles to cover the front door.

**Eldrin** quickly assessed the situation and decided to cast **Hold Person** on the goliath thug, aiming to incapacitate one of their most formidable adversaries. “By the will of the divine, be still!”

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *hold person* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Human Thug | Will | 6 | 1 | 7 |

*Fail.*

The human was *held* in place, next to his dwarven friend.

**Copper**, already in a defensive stance, decided to use her **Mirror Image** spell to create multiple illusory duplicates of herself, making it difficult for the thugs to target her accurately. “By the arcane power, multiply!”

**Sultry** moved to flank the goliath thug, using her strength and agility to land a powerful blow with her greatsword.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Corrosive Greatsword** | 2d6+5 | 1d6 | 0 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +7 | 13 | 20 |

*Hit. Dmg: 7 + 5 = 12 + 3 acid = 15.*

The trio’s coordinated actions put the thugs on the defensive, their combined efforts pushing back the aggressive adversaries. Custodian Esmer and Kestrel provided valuable support, while Merlin and Jarvis secured the front door, ensuring no one could escape.

Round 2

The goliath retaliated Sultry’s swing with his own.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Blindsighted Kukri | 1d4+1 | +3 +1 | 1 | 18-20, x2 | Slashing | 2.0 | +9 | 13 | 22 |
| Kukri, 2nd Attack | 1d4+1 | +3 +1 | 1 | 18-20, x2 | Slashing |  | +4 | 9 | 13 |

*Hit, miss. Dmg: 2 + 1 + 3 + 1 = 7 [29/36 hit points].*

The human thug charge-attacked the Custodian, identifying her as a target of his master.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Longsword +1 | 1d8+1 | +3 +3 | 1 | 19-20, x2 | Slashing | 4.0 | +9 | 16 | 25 |

*Hit. Dmg: 4 + 1 + 3 + 3 = 11.*

The Custodian deemed this man too vile for this world, and cast *disintegrate*.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg** | **TH+** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Ranged Touch Attack | Disintegrate | 2 | +9 | 2 | 11 |

*Hit.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *disintegrate* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Human Thug | Fortitude | 4 | 6 | 10 |

*Fail. Dmg: 49.*

The human thug disintegrated before their very eyes.

Kestrel cast *mage armor* upon herself and got out of the way as the dwarf now tried to charge her.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Unarmed Punch | 1d4 | +3 | 2 charge | x2 | Bludgeon | - | +9 | 18 | 27 |

*Hit. Dmg: 4 + 3 = 7.*

Merlin and Jarvis—being the least stalwart guys in the bunch—stayed by the front door, blocking the way.

The half-orc went over to them, and confronted Jarvis.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| MW Dagger | 1d4 | +3 | 1 | 19-20, x2 | Prcg/Slash | 0.5 | +11 | 5 | 16 |

*Hit. Dmg: 2 + 3 = 5.*

**Eldrin** saw the intensity of the battle and decided to cast **Spiritual Weapon** to summon a floating, spectral weapon to assist in the fight. “By the divine, aid us in this battle!”

The weapon attacked the goliath thug, aiming to strike him down.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Spiritual Longsword | 1d8 | 1 | 0 | 19-20, x2 | Slashing | 0.0 | +5 | *1* | 6 |

*Miss.*

**Copper**, having successfully created her illusory duplicates with **Mirror Image**, took advantage of the distraction and cast **Magic Missile** at the goliath thug to weaken him further. “Unerring energy, strike true!” The missiles flew towards the goliath thug.

*Dmg: 3 + 2 = 5 magic [force].*

Sultry, still engaged with the goliath, continued her assault with her greatsword, aiming to bring him down.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Corrosive Greatsword** | 2d6+5 | 1d6 | 0 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +7 | 18 | 25 |

*Hit. Dmg: 6 + 5 + 3 acid = 14.*

The goliath was nearly dead now, and considered ploughing his way through to the door and fleeing.

The combined efforts of Eldrin, Copper, and Sultry focused on the goliath thug, determined to bring him down and turn the tide of the battle. Custodian Esmer and Kestrel continued to provide support, while Merlin and Jarvis held their ground at the front door.

Round 3

The goliath decided to stay put and end Sultry’s life if possible.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Blindsighted Kukri | 1d4+1 | +3 +1 | 1 | 18-20, x2 | Slashing | 2.0 | +9 | 2 | 11 |
| Kukri, 2nd Attack | 1d4+1 | +3 +1 | 1 | 18-20, x2 | Slashing |  | +4 | 15 | 19 |

*Miss, hit. Dmg: 4 + 1 + 3 + 1 = 9 [20/36 hit points].*

The dwarf swung at Kestrel once again.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Unarmed Punch | 1d4 | +3 | 2 charge | x2 | Bludgeon | - | +9 | 4 | 13 |

*Miss.*

The half-orc swung at Jarvis again while Merlin fled through the front door.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| MW Dagger | 1d4 | +3 | 1 | 19-20, x2 | Prcg/Slash | 0.5 | +11 | 15 | 26 |

*Hit. Dmg: 1 + 3 = 4.*

The Mystran congregant, Jarvis, was now dead or dying.

Shaking her head with wishes that things could have been nicer, Custodian Esmer cast her remaining *disintegrate* spell upon the dwarven man threatening Kestrel.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg** | **+ Mod** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Ranged Touch Attack | varies |  | 2 | n.a. | varies | 0.0 | +9 | 2 | 11 |

*Miss.*

Her spell was wasted, and thus she produced her dagger in case things had to get close and personal.

Kestrel cast *burning hands* on the dwarf, which caused him to flee in terror as his locks and beard remained on fire.

**Eldrin** saw the intensity of the battle and decided to cast **Spiritual Weapon** to summon a floating, spectral weapon to assist in the fight. The weapon targeted the goliath thug.“By the divine, aid us in this battle!”

**Copper**, having successfully created her illusory duplicates with **Mirror Image**, took advantage of the distraction and cast **Magic Missile** at the goliath thug to weaken him further. “Unerring energy, strike true!”

**Sultry**, still engaged with the goliath, continued her assault with her greatsword, aiming to bring him down.

Round 4

The goliath fell to his knees, as did the dwarf, while the half-orc dropped his dagger, grimaced, and held his hands up.

Eldrin felt a surge of relief as the immediate threat was neutralized. He took a moment to catch his breath and quickly assessed the situation, his mind racing with the necessary steps to ensure their safety and gather crucial information.

Moving cautiously towards the half-orc, who had surrendered with his hands up, Eldrin kept a watchful eye on the goliath and the dwarf. He called out to his companions, “Sultry, Copper, let’s restrain them and make sure they can’t cause any more trouble.”

With a nod, **Copper** and **Sultry** swiftly moved to secure the incapacitated thugs. Eldrin’s thoughts shifted to gathering the much-needed information about the stolen artifacts and the smuggling operation. He turned his attention to the half-orc and demanded, “Who are you working for? What is your connection to Azuremantle?”

As the half-orc hesitated, Eldrin’s resolve only grew stronger. “We need answers, and we need them now,” he insisted, his voice firm and commanding. The urgency of their mission pressed on his mind, knowing they were on the verge of uncovering the truth. The archivist then noticed that the elder cashier and his staff had all disappeared.

Finally, Eldrin glanced at his companions, his determination unwavering. “Let’s secure these guys and then regroup to figure out our next steps. We need to stop this operation and uncover the full extent of what’s happening.”

**Sultry** and **Copper** worked quickly to ensure the thugs were restrained and unable to cause further harm. **Custodian Esmer** and **Kestrel** provided valuable support, while **Merlin** and **Jarvis** maintained their position by the front door, ensuring no one could escape.

With the immediate threat subdued, the group prepared to regroup and share the information they had gathered. Their mission was far from over, but Eldrin’s determination and focus guided them forward, ready to face whatever challenges lay ahead.

With the immediate threat subdued, Eldrin’s mind raced with the urgency of their next steps. He knew they couldn’t afford to stay at the Gnome Depot and risk attracting the attention of potentially compromised authorities. He turned to his companions, his resolve clear.

“We can’t stay here,” Eldrin said, his voice firm. “We don’t know who we can trust within the city’s ranks. We need to move to a secure location where we can question the half-orc and figure out our next move.”

**Copper** nodded in agreement, her eyes scanning the room. “Agreed. Let’s bind them and take them to Whispering Pines. It’s secluded enough for us to conduct our interrogation without interruption.”

**Sultry** quickly moved to restrain the thugs, using ropes to bind their hands securely. “I’ll make sure they can’t escape or cause any trouble.”

**Custodian Esmer** and **Kestrel** provided cover as the group prepared to leave the Gnome Depot. They ensured that no one outside noticed their swift departure.

Once the surviving thug was secured, the group made their way back to Whispering Pines. Eldrin’s mind was focused on the questions they needed to ask. As they arrived at the safehouse, he directed Copper and Sultry to set up a secure area for the interrogation.