**Oghma’s Faithful**

**by Alexis Álvarez and Microsoft Copilot**

**Chapter 4: The Gnome Depot**

It was difficult to secure a covered wagon at this time of night to transport the hostage for questioning without being seen by the gatekeepers at the Silverymoon’s Eastgate. Leaving the city now, they took a few minutes to make their way towards Whispering Pines and soon found their way back to Jadin’s house. The elf was outside roasting some meat, and invited the heroes inside, though he wasn’t really partaking in the conversation.

Inside, they placed the hostage in the middle of the room. Surrounded by Custodian Esmer, Eldrin, Sultry, Copper, and Kestrel, the half-orc grinned a bloody smile, and spat out red saliva onto the floor. “Mystran scummmm. Do with me what you will. It matters not.”

As they settled into the safehouse, Eldrin looked at the half-orc, his expression resolute. “We need answers. Who are you working for? What is your connection to Azuremantle? And what do you know about the smuggling operation?”

The half-orc did not answer.

**Eldrin**’s eyes narrowed as he observed the half-orc’s defiance. He knew they needed answers and couldn’t afford to waste time. He turned to **Custodian Esmer**, seeking her wisdom.

“Custodian, perhaps a spell of **Zone of Truth** would encourage our friend here to be more forthcoming,” Eldrin suggested.

“I’d hoped to save this scroll and allow this man a chance at redemption,” **Custodian Esmer** nodded, understanding the gravity of the situation. She began to chant the incantation, creating a shimmering aura around the room that compelled truthfulness.

As the spell took effect, **Kestrel** stepped closer to the half-orc, her voice firm but measured. “You may think your silence will protect you, but we are determined to uncover the truth. Answer our questions, and perhaps we’ll show you some leniency.”

**Copper** and **Sultry** stood by, ready to react to any sudden moves from the half-orc. They knew the spell would make it harder for him to lie, but they remained vigilant.

**Eldrin** repeated his questions, his voice steady and commanding. “Who are you working for? What is your connection to Azuremantle? And what do you know about the smuggling operation?”

The half-orc shifted uncomfortably within the aura of the Zone of Truth. Eldrin and his companions watched closely, hoping the spell would break through the thug’s defiance and reveal the information they desperately needed.

Within a few minutes, they confirmed that the half-orc thug was taking orders from Jorus Azuremantle directly—or at least he believed he was, as he was wholly incognizant of any doppeganger business afoot. Jorus was apparently not only stealing treasure from the museum, but setting up a drug smuggling ring specializing in meimer, a highly addictive chemical with psychoactive, hallucinogenic properties. “It’s good stuff,” the compromised, addicted orc admitted. “Nothing like it in this world,” he sighed with futility.

**Eldrin** felt a mix of anger and resolve as he listened to the half-orc’s confession. The revelation about Azuremantle’s involvement in both theft and drug smuggling added a new layer of complexity to their mission. He knew they had to act quickly to stop this operation and protect the people of Silverymoon.

“We have what we need for now,” Eldrin said, his voice steady but filled with determination. “This confirms Azuremantle’s role in these crimes, and it seems he has managed to mask his true nature from even his closest associates.”

“Or, there really is a doppelganger, and it’s keeping its secret to itself for now,” warned Kestrel.

**Copper** nodded in agreement, her eyes reflecting the gravity of their mission. “In either case, we need to dismantle this smuggling ring and recover the stolen artifacts. The people of Silverymoon are in danger as long as this operation continues.”

**Sultry** added, “We should inform the High Lady Alustriel Silverhand about what we’ve discovered. She’ll need to take action to secure the city and protect its citizens.”

**Kestrel** agreed, her expression resolute. “I can reach out to my contacts and gather more information about Azuremantle’s operations. We’ll need all the help we can get.”

Copper suggested, “Eldrin, don’t we still have 5 of the 6 *sending* scrolls that the Custodian gave us this morning? Let’s use one of those to contact the High Lady.”

The Custodian had no such spells prepared, and was glad to take one of the scrolls back in order to communicate with the High Lady. She cast the spell.

As the Custodian prepared to cast the spell, Eldrin quickly formulated a concise message to convey their urgent findings to the High Lady. He spoke the words clearly, ensuring the gravity of their situation was understood.

 “High Lady, Azuremantle involved in theft, drug smuggling. Evidence points to a larger conspiracy. Request immediate assistance and guidance. Lives and Silverymoon’s safety at risk.”

The Custodian cast the spell, sending the message to the High Lady. The group awaited her response, ready to take the next steps in their mission.

A moment later, she received a telepathic reply. “Understood. Corroborating information coming our way now from other operatives. Doppelganger presence also confirmed. Details forthcoming as we find more.”

The Custodian shared the High Lady’s response with the group. Eldrin felt a sense of urgency mixed with determination. “This confirms the depth of the conspiracy,” he said, his voice steady. “We need to act swiftly and decisively.”

**Copper** nodded, her eyes sharp with focus. “We should continue our investigation and gather any additional evidence we can find. The more information we have, the better equipped we’ll be to confront Azuremantle and his allies.”

**Sultry** agreed, her resolve unwavering. “We should also stay vigilant for any signs of doppelganger activity. They could be lurking anywhere, waiting for an opportunity to strike.”

**Kestrel** looked at the half-orc, who was still restrained. “What should we do with him? He might have more information that could be useful.”

**Custodian Esmer** considered their options. “We’ll keep him secured for now and question him further if necessary. Our priority is to stop the smuggling ring and protect Silverymoon.”

“A bit more information is coming from the High Lady,” the Custodian added. “Azuremantle is on 24-hour watch now, and is currently in his home.”

The Custodian nodded, and provided more context. “The Gnome Depot was certainly the ferrying point for their smuggling operations, and now that it’s been communicated to our enemies that we know of this location, it will likely change by tomorrow. Consequently, we need to mobilize our resources and strike tonight. I need to confront Azuremantle—or his impostor—in his mansion before he relocates. With him in custody, we’ll likely get the rest of the information on his operation’s whereabouts.”

“So where does that leave us?” Sultry asked.

The Custodian answered, “An entourage of people approaching his house will raise suspicions, and possibly blow the cover of the 24-hour tail assigned to him. I will need to go in—perhaps Kestrel can assist me with her stealthy ways—while the rest of you return to the Gnome Depot and if nothing else, reconnoiter. We need to know what is happening there tonight, as it might be the last time that this site has any useful evidence.”

**Eldrin** nodded thoughtfully at the Custodian’s plan. “That makes sense. Kestrel, your stealth skills will be crucial for this mission. We’ll need you to help the Custodian get in and out without raising any alarms.”

**Kestrel** gave a determined nod. “I’ll make sure we get the information we need from Azuremantle without compromising our position.”

**Copper** added, “We’ll head back to the Gnome Depot and keep a low profile. If there’s anything else to uncover, we’ll find it.”

**Sultry** agreed, her resolve unwavering. “We’ll stay vigilant and gather any additional evidence we can find. Let’s hope this isn’t the last opportunity we have to uncover the truth.”

**Custodian Esmer** looked at the group with a mix of determination and gratitude. “Stay safe, everyone. We’ll regroup once we have more information.”

With their plan set, **Sultry**, **Copper**, and **Eldrin** prepared to head back to the Gnome Depot while **Kestrel** and **Custodian Esmer** set out for Azuremantle’s mansion. Each group understood the importance of their mission and the need to act swiftly and decisively.

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Late Evening

Eldrin, Sultry, and Copper arrived again at the Gnome Depot, and it looked like a cleanup crew of mostly non-gnomes was removing merchandise, crates, and even shelving from the building and loading it onto a wagon.



**Eldrin**, **Sultry**, and **Copper** observed the activity at the Gnome Depot from a safe distance. The sight of the cleanup crew swiftly clearing out the building confirmed their suspicions that the operation was being moved.

**Eldrin** whispered to his companions, “We need to stay hidden and gather as much information as we can. If we can find out where they’re relocating, we can follow and gather more evidence.”

**Copper** nodded, her eyes scanning the scene for any clues. “I’ll use my **Invisibility** spell to get closer and see if I can overhear any conversations or find out where they’re taking everything.”

**Sultry** kept a watchful eye on the surroundings, ready to provide backup if necessary. “Be careful, Copper. We’ll be here to support you if things get dicey.”

Copper cast **Invisibility** and began to move stealthily towards the cleanup crew, her senses heightened for any signs of valuable information. Eldrin and Sultry remained in their concealed position, observing the activity and staying alert for any potential threats.

Getting closer, the rogue-diviner heard the humanoids discussing the wagon, which was loading up the last of the “goodies” for shipment. It sounded like they didn’t know where it was headed, but then a man dressed in all-black velvet and gold-embroidered regalia showed up with a wide-brimmed hat and a moustache equally radiant—that is, one radiating about as far from his nose as the hat’s width—to distinguish himself from the working-class sots loading the wagon.

Piecing together the actions and dialogue that she’d just overheard, Copper understood not only how lucky their timing had been to get here minutes before it was too late, but just how time-sensitive the next few moments would be in determining whether it would become too late for them to pursue the wagon or otherwise track it. Was there magic that could serve as a tracking device? Copper certainly didn’t have any.

Copper’s heart raced as she considered their options. They couldn’t afford to lose track of the wagon. She quickly made her way back to Eldrin and Sultry, still invisible, to relay what she had learned.

Whispering softly, she said, “There’s a man in charge, dressed in all-black velvet with gold embroidery. They’re loading the last of the goods onto the wagon. We need to act fast or we’ll lose them.”

Eldrin furrowed his brow, thinking quickly. “We need to find a way to track that wagon. I don’t have any spells that could help with tracking, but perhaps we can place a physical marker on the wagon or follow it discreetly.”

Sultry glanced around, her eyes sharp. “I can try to sneak closer and place something on the wagon that will help us follow it. We need to be careful not to get caught.”

“Barbarian and sneak don’t usually work well together,” Eldrin responded to Sultry.

Copper nodded, still invisible. “I’ll stay close and keep an eye on the man in charge. If anything changes, I’ll let you know immediately.”

With their plan in place, Copper moved stealthily towards the wagon, searching for a way to discreetly mark it for tracking. Eldrin and Sultry remained vigilant, ready to adapt their plan if necessary.

“One more load, baby!” one of the loaders cheered.

“That’s what *she* said,” another jested, and others chuckled.

Copper listened as they discussed how to properly cook and serve hobgoblin meat, and could tell that she had about a minute to glean as much as she could, return to the others 200’ away, and relay the information she’d gleaned, which at this point was just the identifier plate, which read M772, with the M being made to look like a jagged crown.

But having that alone would mean tracking it down via city records, and delaying further. No, it was either confront these guys now, or pursue them to their destination.

Copper knew she couldn’t confront the group of thugs alone, given the danger and their numbers. She quickly made her way back to Eldrin and Sultry to relay what she had discovered.

“There’s a man in charge, dressed in all-black velvet with gold embroidery,” she whispered urgently. “They’re loading the last of the goods onto the wagon. We need to act fast.”

Eldrin nodded, his mind racing with options. “We have two choices: confront them now or follow the wagon to its destination. If we confront them, we risk a fight and alerting more of their allies. But if we follow them, we might be able to gather more information without them knowing.”

Sultry considered the situation. “If we pursue the wagon, we need to be careful not to lose it or get too close. We can try to track it discreetly and see where it’s headed.”

Copper agreed. “Let’s follow the wagon. We can always confront them later if we need to.”

The group decided to discreetly follow the wagon and gather more information about its destination. They stayed hidden, keeping a safe distance as the wagon began to move. Copper, Eldrin, and Sultry were determined to uncover the truth and bring an end to the smuggling operation.

Walking at a brisk pace for humanoids, they followed the clippity-cloppity sounds of the horse-drawn wagon as the human in the wide-brimmed hat and pointy moustache led it along the main arteries of Silverymoon.

The River Rauvin divided the municipal area that was Silverymoon into northern and southern portions. The party followed the wagon southward to the Northbank, whereupon the wagon turned a sharp right along the waterfront road overlooking a boardwalk. It was out of sight as soon as it turned the corner, and some of them felt an impulse to speed up in order to not lose sight of it.

Realizing the urgency of the situation, Eldrin, Sultry, and Copper felt the impulse to speed up and not lose sight of the wagon. They knew that if they lost track of it now, they might miss a crucial opportunity to uncover the smuggling operation’s destination.

**Eldrin** whispered, “Let’s pick up the pace. We can’t afford to lose them now.”

**Sultry** nodded, her eyes focused ahead. “Agreed. We need to stay close but not too close to arouse suspicion.”

**Copper** remained invisible, ready to scout ahead if necessary. “I’ll keep an eye on the man in charge and see if I can gather any more information.”

The group quickened their pace, moving swiftly yet cautiously along the waterfront road. They stayed alert, keeping a safe distance while ensuring they didn’t lose sight of the wagon.

They rounded the corner, and fortunately acquired their target wagon, though there was more traffic along the riverfront causeway than along the less central route they’d taken to get this far south.

To their south, the River Rauvin ran westward to the Sword Coast. They could only see the river under the lit lampposts that were placed along it maybe 30’ from them, and there were dozens of pedestrians walking along the boardwalk from wharf to fishery to restaurant to other venue.

IC: The group maintained their brisk pace, navigating through the increased traffic along the riverfront causeway. They stayed alert, ensuring they didn’t lose sight of the wagon as it made its way along the Northbank of the River Rauvin. The lit lampposts cast long shadows, and the sound of the clippity-cloppity wagon mingled with the chatter of pedestrians.

As they followed the wagon, **Eldrin**, **Sultry**, and **Copper** remained vigilant, taking note of any distinguishing features or potential stops along the way. Their determination to uncover the truth and stop the smuggling operation fueled their every step.

The wagon continued westward, entering a quieter section of the riverbank. Though the Market Docks were still open for business, most of the loading and unloading of vessels was over for the day, and a single, small schooner was docked with its sails retracted.

The wagoner steered the horses towards the dock that would be packed by morning, and stopped as the loaders got out from inside the wagon and promptly proceeded to carry the first load of crates along the pier towards the schooner.

As Eldrin, Sultry, and Copper continued to walk along Northbank Boulevard, they kept a careful eye on the wagon and the activity around it. They knew that stopping now could draw unwanted attention, so they had to stay on the move while figuring out their next steps.

Eldrin whispered to his companions, “We need to find a way to get closer without being seen. Copper, you’re still invisible. Can you get closer and see if you can gather any more information about what’s in the crates or where they’re planning to take them?”

Copper nodded, still invisible and determined to uncover the truth. “The spell is about to expire in about a minute, but I’ll do my best in the meantime. Stay ready to support if anything goes wrong.”

Sultry kept a watchful eye on their surroundings, making sure they remained inconspicuous among the pedestrians. “We’ll stay on the move and keep an eye on you. Just signal if you need us.”

Copper moved stealthily towards the dock, taking advantage of her invisibility to get closer to the schooner and the loaders. She listened carefully for any conversations that might reveal more about the smuggling operation and the destination of the crates.

Eldrin and Sultry continued to walk along the boulevard, blending in with the clusters of people while keeping a close watch on Copper’s movements.

This time, there wasn’t much banter to overhear, and Copper only witnessed the loaders saying things like, “Here... got it? Here you go. Use the carabiner. Don’t let it slip,” and other loading-related logistical jargon.

There were five loaders in all, each now walking in single file towards the boat as the human wagoner smoked his pipe near the wagon.

Copper watched the scene unfold, realizing that there wasn’t much useful information to gather from the loaders’ conversations. She remained vigilant, noting the efficiency and haste with which they worked. The man in the wide-brimmed hat and pointy mustache continued to oversee the operation, smoking his pipe and maintaining a watchful eye.

Copper knew they needed to act quickly to uncover more details. She carefully made her way back to Eldrin and Sultry, who had walked about 100’ to the west by now, and whispered what she had observed. “The loaders are focused on getting the crates onto the schooner. The man in charge is keeping an eye on things, but I didn’t hear anything useful about their destination.”

Eldrin considered their options. “We need to find a way to get closer to the schooner without drawing attention. If we can sneak aboard or find a vantage point, we might be able to gather more information.”

Sultry glanced around, her eyes sharp. “We could use the crowd as cover to get closer. Once we’re near the schooner, we can decide our next move. Copper, stay invisible and keep an eye on the man in charge. Eldrin and I will move closer to the schooner.”

Copper’s invisibility spell expired, and she snapped back into view.

The group continued to move with purpose, using the crowd to their advantage as they made their way towards the schooner. They knew that time was of the essence, and every step brought them closer to uncovering the truth behind the smuggling operation.

Having likely spotted the invisible rogue’s spell expiring, and now seeing them all approaching, the man with the wide-brimmed hat took yet another puff of his pipe, and made a face akin to Eldrin’s when he’d been using a *sending* spell. “He’s communicating with someone,” the gnome could tell by the human’s body language and expression.

“Ho, there, mates! Please stay back. This is a high-security area,” warned the pipe-smoking man.

Eldrin, Sultry, and Copper halted their advance, noting the pipe-smoking man’s alertness and the implication of his communication. They knew they needed to act quickly but carefully to avoid suspicion.

**Eldrin** raised his hands in a non-threatening manner. “We’re just passing through,” he said calmly. “Didn’t mean to intrude. We’re on our way.”

**Sultry** whispered to Copper, “We need to find another way to gather information without drawing attention. Let’s keep moving and look for an opportunity.”

**Copper** nodded, her mind racing with possibilities. “Maybe we can find a vantage point nearby or blend in with the crowd until we see an opening.”

The human overheard the heroes whispering to one another, and turned southward to confirm that the loaders were walking onto the plank and loading the first round of crates now.

The group continued to move, making a show of casually walking away from the “high-security area.” They scanned their surroundings for a suitable vantage point or a way to blend in while keeping an eye on the schooner and its activities.

“We’re running out of time,” Sultry jumped the gun, not sure of how many loads there would be in all.

Eldrin kept his senses sharp, looking for any signs of further communication from the man in the wide-brimmed hat.

They were now about 200’ away and putting more distance between themselves and the crates. **Eldrin**, **Sultry**, and **Copper** knew they had to act quickly. They couldn’t afford to lose sight of the schooner and miss their chance to uncover vital information. As they walked further away, Eldrin spotted a nearby alley that provided a clearer view of the dock.

“Let’s duck into that alley,” Eldrin whispered, nodding towards the narrow passage. “It’ll give us a vantage point without drawing too much attention.”

“A vantage point to the river; not the boat,” Sultry protested as they ducked in anyway to get out of the human’s line of sight. Once in the alley, they could see neither the loaders nor the wagon nor the boat. This situation would likely require a round of spellcasting to buff, followed by an all-out knockout of the wagoner, or something to that effect, and a neutralization of the loaders. The alternative would be the crates heading westward along the river, making it difficult to track the boat without a clear trail. Perhaps they could learn the intended destination instead.

Eldrin whispered to his companions, “We need to find out where that schooner is headed. Before they finish loading, we should apprehend at least one of them and question them.”

Sultry, always eager for action, grinned and replied, “If we can make one of them talk, we might just get the information we need. Let’s not waste any more time.”

Copper, knowing her spell range limitations, acknowledged, “I can’t Detect Magic from here. But if we create a distraction, it might give us the opportunity to snatch one of them without drawing too much attention.”

Sultry prepared to create a diversion while Eldrin and Copper moved closer to the dock, using the crowd to their advantage. Sultry faked a stumble and fall near the dock, causing a commotion that drew the attention of the loaders and the man in the wide-brimmed hat.

As the loaders returned to the wagon for a second loading trip, their attention was roused by Sultry’s mishap, Eldrin and Copper moved swiftly. The loaders and wagoner were now all looking at the heroes walking southward towards them from the alley, which was now 100’ to their north. Beyond the loaders was a short boardwalk leading to the ramp that they were using to convey crates onto the schooner.

It was then that Eldrin and Copper recognized one of the black-clad loaders as Merlin, the guy they’d met at Whispering Pines that afternoon, who’d fled the scene at the Gnome Depot once the fighting broke out. His supposed friend—Jarvis—was slain at that moment, but it seemed that this rat was a double-agent, as he was now happily working with the enemy. Or was he? Perhaps he was undercover. Eldrin could not discern the man’s motives at the moment.

Eldrin and Copper paused, recognizing Merlin among the loaders. The realization that Merlin might be a double agent added a new layer of complexity to their mission. They couldn’t afford to confront him directly without understanding his motives.

Eldrin whispered urgently to his companions, “That’s Merlin. We need to be careful. He might be undercover, or he could be working against us. Let’s observe a bit more before we make a move.”

Sultry, always eager for action, clenched her fists but nodded in agreement. “Fine, but we can’t wait too long. We need to act soon.”

Copper, still processing the new information, kept her eyes on Merlin. “Let’s find a way to get closer without drawing attention. Maybe we can overhear more of their plans.”

The group continued to blend in with the crowd, maintaining their cover as they moved closer to the dock. They stayed alert, ready to adapt their plan based on any new information they could gather.

Eldrin kept a watchful eye on Merlin, trying to discern his intentions. They needed to find out where the crates were headed and whether Merlin was friend or foe.

“You again?” the mustached wagoner protested as he likely conveyed more information to his master telepathically. “End them!” he then commanded the loaders, who were also street thugs, including Merlin.

The five loaders brandished saps, nightsticks, brass knuckles, and daggers, and charged them from 100’ away, clearing half that distance. At a 50’ distance now, they continued their charge and would be upon the heroes momentarily.

Meanwhile, it appeared to Eldrin that the wagoner was casting one of those summoning spells that would deliver a creature to attack them within 6 seconds. “Beware!” he warned his friends of a possible summoning.

Round 1

Sultry positioned herself in the front of the formation, and with a fierce battle cry, charged forward to meet the attackers head-on. She swung her greatsword with all her might, aiming to strike the nearest thug.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Corrosive Greatsword** | 2d6+5 | 1d6 | 2 charge | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +9 | 8 | 17 |

*Hit. Dmg: 9 + 5 + 4 acid = 18.*

Eldrin knew he needed to stop the wagoner from completing his summoning spell. He quickly cast **Hold Person** on the wagoner, attempting to paralyze him and prevent the summoning.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.***hold person* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Wagoner | Will | 6 | 12 | 18 |

*Success.*

The wagoner shrugged off the spell, and finished his summoning spell.

Copper stayed back and used her **Magic Missile** spell to target multiple thugs, weakening their advance.

*Dmg1: 2 + 1 = 3 magic [force].*

*Dmg2: 3 + 1 = 4 magic [force].*

Two loaders were harmed by the missiles, and converged on Sultry, trying to bring down the burly acid genasi.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Other+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Merlin | Sap | 1d4+1 nonlethal+ 2 charge | 4 | 1 | 2 charge | 7 | 8 | 15 |
| Thug 2 | Dagger | 1d4+1 + 2 charge | 4 | 1 | 2 charge | 7 | 17 | 24 |

*Miss, hit. Dmg: 3 + 1 + 2 = 6 [30/36].*

The other loaders didn’t reach her yet, but would in a moment, whereupon she would be flanked from multiple sides.

A serpent appeared at Eldrin’s and Copper’s feet, and attacked Eldrin.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Dex Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Snake, S | Bite | 1d3+4+ Poison | 2 | 3 | 5 | 14 | 19 |

*Hit. Dmg: 1 + 4 = 5 + Poison.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**Poison | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Fortitude** | **4** | **Con (+3)** | 0 | 7 | 19 | 26 |

*Success. Ability damage negated.*

Round 2

The battle raged on as Sultry, Eldrin, and Copper fought to protect themselves and uncover the smuggling operation.

**Sultry**: Sultry, still at the front of the formation, faced the approaching thugs with determination. She swung her greatsword at the nearest thug, aiming to take him down before he could flank her.

**Eldrin**: Eldrin focused on the serpent at his feet, knowing it needed to be dealt with quickly. He cast **Burning Hands** to engulf the serpent and any nearby thugs in flames.

**Copper**: Copper, realizing the need for crowd control, cast **Sleep** on the remaining thugs, hoping to put some of them to sleep and reduce the immediate threat.

Sultry’s greatsword slashed through the air, striking the nearest thug with a powerful blow. Eldrin’s Burning Hands spell sent flames roaring through the area, targeting the serpent and any nearby enemies. Copper’s Sleep spell created a shimmering aura around the thugs, attempting to lull them into unconsciousness.

Rounds 3 – 6

It quickly became apparent just how capable Sultry’s sword arm was, and the same could be said for her spellcasting companions’ prowess with magic.

The battle was fierce and relentless, showcasing the full extent of the heroes’ prowess. Eldrin called upon the storm, his hands crackling with the energy of ten conjured lightning bolts. He hurled one at the wagoner, the bolt striking with a resounding crack and forcing the mage back, disrupting his focus.

Sultry continued her onslaught, her greatsword slashing through the air with deadly precision. Each swing felled a thug, and one more fell to her might.

Eldrin cast Dispel Magic, focusing on the wagoner. The arcane energy of the spell tore through the wagoner’s defenses, dispelling his mage armor and leaving him vulnerable.

Sultry’s relentless assault continued, another thug meeting his end by her powerful blade. She took significant hits, the wounds slowing her but never breaking her resolve. The acid genasi fought with everything she had, even as the pain began to take its toll.

The serpent, conjured by the wagoner, lunged at Copper, sinking its fangs into her. The venom coursed through her veins, sapping her strength as she incurred Constitution damage along with the bite. Gritting her teeth against the pain, Copper retaliated, slaying the snake with a powerful burst of magic.

Sultry had by now slain yet another thug, her blade moving with lethal grace. The remaining loaders were visibly shaken by her ferocity but pressed on under the wagoner’s command.

Eldrin threw another lightning bolt, this time targeting one of the remaining thugs. The bolt struck true, reducing the threat by one more.

Sultry, though badly hurt, slew a third loader, leaving only Merlin and the wagoner standing. Merlin, conflicted by his dual allegiances, hesitated, and the wagoner, now vulnerable without his mage armor, was at the mercy of the heroes.

Eldrin, Copper, and Sultry stood ready to confront the last two, the adrenaline of the battle still coursing through them. The wagoner, seeing his situation, could be left to talk, revealing crucial information about the smuggling operation and its backers.

The battle had taken its toll on the heroes, but their determination never wavered. They stood over their fallen foes, ready to extract the information they needed to bring justice to Silverymoon and end the smuggling operation once and for all.

Eldrin, Sultry, and Copper quickly adjusted their plan to prioritize confiscating the crates already loaded on the schooner as well as those still in the wagon.

Eldrin whispered urgently, “I’ll stay here and watch the captives. Sultry, Copper, you two head to the boat and neutralize the captain. We need to secure all the crates and prevent the schooner from setting sail.”

Sultry nodded, her determination clear despite her injuries. “Let’s move quickly, Copper. We can’t let them escape with those crates.”

Copper agreed, knowing the urgency of the situation. “We’ll handle the captain. Eldrin, be ready to signal us if anything changes here.”

With their roles defined, Sultry and Copper moved swiftly towards the schooner. They used the cover of the night and their stealth skills to approach the boat quietly. The captain, now out on deck and scanning the area, hadn’t yet noticed them.

Eldrin stayed behind with the wagoner and Merlin, keeping a watchful eye on them. He knew they needed to act fast to secure all the evidence and prevent any further magical tricks from their adversaries.

As Sultry and Copper approached the schooner, they prepared to neutralize the captain and secure the crates already loaded on the boat.

Sultry had no skills when it came to stealth, but fortunately the captain was below deck, and they were able to get aboard with no fuss. By the time he came out, Eldrin smiled at him and Sultry hit him in the head with one of the thug’s saps, knocking him out.

With a bit more time to work with now, Eldrin used one his *cure moderate wounds* scrolls to heal her almost to full health. They had all been scathed, so additional healing would be needed all around.

More importantly, they’d secured both the wagon and the schooner, which together had the entirety of the crates they’d been pursuing. They could use another *sending* scroll—leaving three left in their inventory—to contact the Custodian to let her know that they’d accomplished their objectives. Hopefully she was faring well against the forces of Azuremantle.

With the captain neutralized and the crates secured, the group quickly got to work. Sultry, Eldrin, and Copper moved efficiently, loading the crates back onto the horse-drawn wagon. Despite their injuries, they knew they needed to move fast to avoid any potential reinforcements.

Eldrin used one of his **Cure Moderate Wounds** scrolls to heal Sultry, almost bringing her back to full health. They took a moment to administer additional healing to themselves, ensuring they were in better shape for whatever came next.

Copper kept a watchful eye on the wagoner and Merlin, ensuring they didn’t try anything while the group worked. “We need to be quick and thorough. Once we have everything on the wagon, we can decide our next steps.”

Sultry, with renewed strength, helped consolidate the crates. “Let’s make sure we don’t leave anything behind. We’ll have to figure out what to do with the bodies afterward.”

Eldrin nodded, already thinking ahead. “We should use one of the sending scrolls to contact the Custodian and update her on our progress. Let’s get the wagon ready to move first.”

The group spent the next two minutes consolidating the crates onto the wagon. With everything secure, they guided the wagon to a safer location, ensuring the wagoner and Merlin were securely tied.

**Eldrin** used one of the **Sending** scrolls to contact Custodian Esmer, relaying their successful capture of the crates and their current location. “Custodian, we’ve secured the wagon and schooner with the crates. Awaiting further instructions.”

Custodian Esmer replied telepathically, “Copy. Allies have joined the cause, and doppelganger is revealed, though he escaped. Azuremantle is feared to be dead by now.”

“Understood,” Eldrin nodded.

The woman sent another message under the same spell’s effect, which would keep them in contact for up to 10 minutes if both desired it. “Merlin was a mole implanted by the church of Cyric, which is trying to infiltrate the Mystran clergy. Get the wagon to the safehouse, unless it has been compromised.”

Eldrin took a deep breath as he processed the Custodian’s messages. The revelation about Merlin and the news about Azuremantle weighed heavily on him, but he knew they had to focus on their mission.

“Copy that, Custodian,” Eldrin replied telepathically. “We’ll head to the safehouse and secure the crates.”

Turning to Sultry and Copper, he relayed the information. “Merlin was a mole for the Church of Cyric. We need to get the wagon to the safehouse. Let’s move quickly and stay alert.”

Sultry, still keeping an eye on their captives, nodded. “Understood. Let’s get moving.”

Copper, determined as ever, added, “I’ll keep an eye on Merlin and the other one. We can’t afford any more surprises.”

The group began guiding the wagon towards the safehouse, ensuring their captives were securely tied and keeping watch for any signs of trouble. They moved swiftly, knowing that time was of the essence.

Eldrin took a moment to use another **Cure Light Wounds** scroll on himself and Copper, ensuring they were all in better shape for the journey ahead.

As they navigated the streets of Silverymoon with Eldrin at the bridle, they stayed vigilant, ready to adapt to any new challenges that might arise.

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Approaching Midnight

It had been the longest day for them in months or years, and they were now at Jadin’s safehouse on Whispering Pines Rd. The silence here was comforting and eerie, particularly for one accustomed to the chatter and cacophony of the city only a bit more than a mile west of these immediate hills that ensconced the secluded cabin.

Jadin had been asleep when they arrived, and he now boiled some tea for the heroes, pouring it into small cups of elven design, offering everyone a chamomile brew.

They brought in Merlin and the wagoner, whose name was Ignace, and whose accent was definitively Thayan as he complained of maltreatment. Leaving the crates outside for the moment, they did not forget their importance to the mission, and knew they’d have to keep a vigilant eye on them overnight.

With three *sending* scrolls left, Eldrin waited until they were all situated before discussing any next steps. Food and water were in order for everyone, and Jadin invited everyone to the fruit bowl waiting for guests.

The weary heroes gathered around the table, appreciating the warmth of the chamomile tea and the peaceful surroundings. Jadin’s safehouse offered a brief respite from the chaos of the city, and the silence was a welcome change.

Sultry, nursing her injuries, sipped her tea and sighed with relief. “It’s been a long day, but we’ve made significant progress. We can’t let our guard down yet, though. We need to figure out our next steps and ensure the crates are secure.”

Copper nodded, taking a piece of fruit from the bowl. “Agreed. We need to decide what to do with Ignace and Merlin. We can’t trust Merlin, given his connection to the Church of Cyric. We should question him and find out what he knows.”

Eldrin, always the strategist, looked thoughtful. “Interrogating Ignace and Merlin is our priority. We need to extract as much information as possible about the smuggling operation and their connections. We can use one of the sending scrolls to update the Custodian once we have more details.”

Jadin joined them at the table, his presence calming. “I’ll keep an eye on the crates overnight. You all need some rest, but we can’t afford to let our guard down completely. We’ll take shifts to ensure nothing happens to the evidence.”

The group agreed on a plan, deciding to take turns keeping watch while the others rested. Eldrin, Sultry, and Copper each took a moment to gather their thoughts, knowing the importance of what lay ahead.

With the crates secured and a plan in place, they turned their attention to Ignace and Merlin, ready to begin the interrogation. They needed answers, and they needed them quickly.

Using their respective powers of intimidation, diplomacy, interrogation, and intuition, the team gleaned from the questioning of Merlin and Ignace that they were both—all the thugs, in fact—affiliated with the Prince of Lies, Cyric, and that there was an operation afoot of which fewer than 10 humanoids were cognizant involving about as many doppelgangers who had already infiltrated the government apparatus; Azuremantle was just the first one they’d uncovered.

Tied up and weary, the Cyric worshippers begged for death now that they’d failed.

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**Eldrin** took a deep breath as he processed the Custodian’s messages. The revelation about Merlin and the news about Azuremantle weighed heavily on him, but he knew they had to focus on their mission. “We need to inform the Custodian immediately. This information is crucial to uncovering the full extent of their operation. We can’t let them continue their plans.”

**Sultry** nodded, her determination clear despite her injuries. “Let’s use one of the *sending* scrolls to update her. We can’t afford to waste any time.”

**Copper**, ever vigilant, agreed. “I’ll keep an eye on Merlin and Ignace. We need to decide what to do with them once we get further instructions from the Custodian.”

Eldrin still had a sending connection active to the Custodian, and now sent her a message. “Custodian, we’ve extracted crucial information. The thugs and doppelgangers are affiliated with Cyric. There’s a covert operation with government infiltration. Azuremantle was just the beginning. What’s our next move?”

While they awaited the Custodian’s response, the heroes ensured that Merlin and Ignace remained securely tied. The two Cyric worshippers, broken and begging for death, were a stark reminder of the battle they had fought and the stakes they faced.

Jadin kept watch over the crates, ensuring they remained safe and secure. The group prepared themselves for whatever instructions the Custodian would provide, knowing they had to stay vigilant and ready to act.

Custodian Esmer replied, “I will appear within the toll by teleportation. Will have allies in tow, as the Whispering Pines safehouse is the only one in the vicinity now.”

**Eldrin** and **Sultry** moved to the crates, carefully checking each one for any signs of tampering or damage. They took note of the contents, ensuring everything matched what they had seen earlier.

**Copper** kept a close watch on Ignace and Merlin, ensuring they remained securely tied and couldn’t cause any disruptions. She stayed alert, ready to intervene if necessary.

**Jadin** continued to keep an eye on the surroundings, watching for any potential threats or unexpected visitors. He knew the importance of maintaining their security until the Custodian arrived.

The minutes ticked by as they worked efficiently, knowing that every second counted. As they completed their tasks, they reconvened to discuss their findings and prepare for Custodian Esmer’s arrival.

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Eleven minutes after the last line of *sending* had been exchanged, Custodian Esmer appeared, along with none other than Taern Hornblade and Eltro Miresk. All three were moderately wounded, and out of spells for the day, and Eltro reached in one of the cupboards and produced a small box full of *cure* spell vials.

“Yesss,” the Custodian said as they took a moment to chug down three or four until they were all tiptop. “Ahhh,” much better.

These were among the highest-ranking arcane officials in the city, and each of them had nearly sacrificed their life tonight fighting nearly a dozen powerful doppelgangers. They had taken down nearly the entire cell, but their leader—the one impersonating Azuremantle—escaped. A multi-agency investigation had begun as of this evening, and though these heroes could do no more tonight but rest and prepare for the morrow, other heroes and agents of Silverymoon were even now visiting suspects and potential victims in order to apprehend the doppelganger at large. “If he’s in the city, he’ll be found sooner or later,” she assured them. “We have a team of diviners on the case as we speak.

They all needed their rest, and would return to the Arcane Sanctuary tomorrow to catalog the confiscated artifacts before they were returned to the Spellguard.

The spellcasters then prepared their spells and everyone took a turn watching the crates while the others slept.

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Morning, 28 Flamerule

They had fed and watered the horses before turning the wagon around and heading back to Silverymoon, and by the time they were all back in town, it was evident that law enforcement was on high alert, with just about every volunteer and reserve out on the street performing some sort of service.

“It’s good to see the city come together when something like this happens,” Taern sighed, “Though it’s not great that this had to happen.”

“These are trying times, Taern,” Eltro assured him, “Better days will return to our city... perhaps we may even be able to raise many of those who perished in this plight against our would-be overthrowers.

The morning sun cast a gentle light over Silverymoon as Eldrin, Sultry, Copper, and their allies returned to the city. The streets were bustling with activity as law enforcement and volunteers worked together to ensure the safety of the citizens. It was a sight that filled Eldrin with a sense of hope and pride, despite the gravity of their recent mission.

Once the suspects and crates were delivered to the Arcane Sanctuary, the weight of their responsibilities lifted slightly. Eldrin, Sultry, and Copper had gone beyond the call of duty, risking their lives to thwart the plans of the Church of Cyric. Their bravery did not go unnoticed, and they were each rewarded with medals and a gold stipend, covering the fare that Eldrin had paid to ride the balloon to Silverymoon.

Custodian Esmer, Taern Hornblade, and Eltro Miresk, still showing signs of their recent battle, expressed their gratitude to the heroes. “Your efforts have been invaluable,” the Custodian said, her voice filled with sincerity. “We could not have achieved this without you.”

**Copper**, with a determined glint in her eyes, stepped forward. “I’ve been asked to aid the other diviners in their investigation. I’ll be staying here to help discern more about the fugitive and any lost artifacts.” She turned to Eldrin and Sultry with a warm smile. “I won’t be returning to Secomber with you, but I’ll be with you in spirit.”

Eldrin and Sultry exchanged glances, understanding the importance of Copper’s decision. “We’ll miss you, Copper,” Eldrin said, his voice filled with genuine appreciation. “But we know you’ll make a difference here.”

The Custodian then offered to teleport Eldrin and Sultry back to Secomber, either immediately or after they had taken some time to sightsee and rest in Silverymoon. Eldrin and Sultry both had their reasons for wanting to stay a while longer. The city had a lot to offer, and after such an intense mission, a few days of relaxation and exploration seemed well-deserved.

Most importantly, the **Tome of Clear Thought** had been recovered from the salvaged crates. Eldrin, ever the scholar, was invited to the Spellguard’s library to read the book. The tome, known to permanently increase intelligence, was too valuable to be given away, but Eldrin was granted the honor of studying it for three days.

As Eldrin prepared for his time in the library, he couldn’t help but feel a sense of excitement. The opportunity to enhance his intellect was a rare gift, and he was eager to make the most of it. Sultry, on the other hand, looked forward to exploring the city and its surroundings, taking in the sights and perhaps finding a new adventure.

The days that followed were filled with a blend of rest, study, and exploration. Eldrin immersed himself in the Tome of Clear Thought, each page revealing new depths of knowledge. He felt his mind expanding with each passing day, the insights from the tome becoming a permanent part of him.

*Eldrin’s Intelligence 19 + 1 = 20.*

Sultry roamed the streets of Silverymoon, visiting local markets, ancient monuments, and tranquil gardens. The city, with its rich history and vibrant culture, offered her a sense of peace and wonder. She met new people, shared stories, and even found herself involved in a few minor quests that allowed her to help those in need.

As their time in Silverymoon drew to a close, Eldrin and Sultry reflected on their journey. They had faced incredible challenges, uncovered dangerous plots, and emerged stronger for it. Their bond as companions had deepened, and they knew that whatever the future held, they would face it together.

With Copper aiding the diviners, Eldrin and Sultry prepared to return to Secomber, their hearts filled with a sense of accomplishment and gratitude. The Custodian, true to her word, arranged their teleportation, and as the magic enveloped them, they looked forward to the adventures yet to come.

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They’d been teleported to a spot just outside Secomber, and took a leisurely walk towards the city gate, confident in their accomplishments and a bit sore in their muscles.

The familiar sight of Secomber greeted Eldrin and Sultry as they approached the city gate. The town’s quaint charm and serene atmosphere were a stark contrast to the intensity of their recent mission. They walked through the gates, feeling a sense of homecoming and relief.

Eldrin returned to his work as an archivist, but he did so with renewed vigor and a sharper mind, thanks to his study of the Tome of Clear Thought. His colleagues at the library noticed his increased focus and the wealth of knowledge he brought back from Silverymoon. Eldrin found himself more involved in significant projects, including the organization and preservation of historical documents. He also took the opportunity to share his experiences with younger scholars, inspiring them with tales of bravery and the importance of knowledge in the face of danger.

In his free time, Eldrin began working on a personal project—a detailed chronicle of their mission in Silverymoon.

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| ***Oghma’s Faithful: 1372*** |  |  |   |
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| ***Event*** | º | R |  |
| In Secomber, Eldrin, Sultry, and Copper embark on a journey aboard a baloon towards Silverymoon | Highsun | 1 | Flamerule |
| The baloon lands in a field overlooking the Unicorn Run, and they have a nice picnic before reprising the journey | Afternoon | 7 | Flamerule |
| The baloon lands on a mountaintop overlooking both slopes of the Lost Peaks, and encounters 10 goblins | Sunset | 11 | Flamerule |
| The baloon lands on a plateau overlooking the northern slope of the Netherese Mountains | Midnight | 18 | Flamerule |
| The party lands in Silverymoon, and visit a library, the Temple of Oghma, and the Sage & Scroll Tavern | Sunset | 22 | Flamerule |
| The party heads to the arcane district to follow up on a lead on the Tome of Clear Thought | Dawn | 23 | Flamerule |
| Eldrin submits a request for information on the Tome, and is told to return in 2 days’ time | Morning | 24 | Flamerule |
| Eldrin has an audience with Eltro, and is given a quest to investigate Spellguard Headquarters | Highsun | 26 | Flamerule |
| Eldrin reports at 9 tolls at Spellguard HQ under the guise of a visiting scholar with his bodyguard and diviner sidekick; his investigation takes him to a curio shop called The Fence | Morning | 27 | Flamerule |
| They discover that the Fence was a waypoint for stolen artifacts, and clues take them to the Gnome Depot | Afternoon | 27 | Flamerule |
| The Gnome Depot is the main hub for the stolen goods, and the party follows a wagon full of the merchandise to the Northdocks | Evening | 27 | Flamerule |
| The party confiscates all of the stolen goods and bring it and 2 suspects back to the safehouse at Whispering Pines; Custodian Esmer, Taern Hornblade, and Eltro Miresk join them and prepare for the next day’s victory | Midnight | 27 | Flamerule |
| The party returns to Silverymoon and completes the purge of doppelgangers across government sectors | Morning | 28 | Flamerule |

He hoped that documenting their adventures would not only serve as a record for posterity but also provide valuable insights for future generations. His evenings were often spent in quiet reflection, pouring over notes and meticulously crafting the narrative of their journey.

Sultry, on the other hand, found herself drawn to the local community. Her fierce spirit and combat prowess had always set her apart, but now, with a sense of purpose and a desire to protect, she became more involved in Secomber’s defense and well-being. She offered her skills to train the town’s militia, ensuring they were prepared for any potential threats. Her reputation as a warrior grew, and many looked up to her as both a protector and a mentor.

Sultry also took the time to explore the surrounding wilderness, reconnecting with nature and finding solace in its beauty. She organized regular patrols and excursions, leading groups through the forests and hills, teaching them survival skills and the importance of respecting the natural world. These activities not only strengthened the town’s defenses but also fostered a sense of unity and camaraderie among its inhabitants.

Despite their individual endeavors, Eldrin and Sultry remained close, their bond forged through shared experiences and mutual respect. They often met at the local tavern, where they would catch up on their respective activities and discuss the latest news. The tavern, with its warm and inviting atmosphere, became a place of refuge where they could unwind and enjoy each other’s company.

They also made it a point to visit Copper in Silverymoon whenever possible, keeping in touch through letters and occasional magical communication. Their friendship with her remained strong, and they supported her efforts in aiding the diviners and uncovering more about the Church of Cyric’s plans.

Eldrin and Sultry’s return to Secomber brought a renewed sense of hope and strength to the community. Their dedication to protecting the town and sharing their knowledge and skills had a profound impact on its inhabitants. The town thrived, and its people felt safer and more prepared for whatever challenges lay ahead.

As they settled back into their lives, Eldrin and Sultry knew that their journey was far from over. There would always be new adventures, new mysteries to unravel, and new threats to face. But they were ready, confident in their abilities and the strength of their bond.