

Dragon Age: Legacy Jan 2022 to Aug 2024

ii Once Upon a Codex

Dramatized events and characters' personal stories that occurred in the past, before the current timeline.

The Sun Will Come Out...

Posted on 21 Jan 2022 @ 4:48pm by [Mage Kalian Winter](#) & [Warrior Katya Charbonnet \(Sharbon-ay\)](#)

2,046 words; about a 10 minute read

Mission: [Once Upon a Codex](#)

Location: Jader

Timeline: Timeline: 9:30 Dragon, mid-Blight in Ferelden (about 3.5 years in the past)

Jader, 9:30 Dragon:

In the town of Jader, it started with Orlesian Gray Wardens claiming to hear the Arch Demon's song and attempting to cross the overland border on the Imperial Highway into Ferelden. They were turned back by Ferelden soldiers on the standing orders of Teyrn Loghain Mac Tir, advisor to King Cailan.

Rumors circulated. A darkspawn force had defeated Cailan's army, the King of Ferelden was dead, Loghain had claimed the throne, and a civil war was brewing. Loghain denied the existence of a new Blight, and the border remained closed to help of any kind from Orlais.

Displaced merchants, farmers, and laborers from southwestern Ferelden began to arrive at the border, a handful at a time, begging to be allowed entry, most with family or other connections in Orlais. More refugees crossed over, and as the closest Orlesian city to the border, most of them funneled through Jader. Those that arrive healthy with marketable skills and business contacts dispersed via ships. Those who were not so lucky, the destitute, the sick, the old and young, went to the workhouse. The influx of refugees became a steady stream, and soon the workhouse was full to overflowing and surrounded by tents.

Meanwhile, Gray Wardens gathered in Jader, ready to defend the rest of Thedas from the darkspawn horde as soon as the border opened. Veteran Gray Wardens stood guard at the border, identifying anyone infected with the darkspawn taint and killing them on the spot to prevent the spread. Even so, with Jader's resources stretched thin, and so many extra people crammed into Jader, disease was rampant, food stores low, and the tolerance of Jader citizens for outsiders was thin indeed.

Kalian carried the elderly healer's heavy bag and matched his pace to her frustratingly slow gate. Maleta insisted on walking with no other assistance than her staff, waving off his offer of a hand or arm to steady her. He didn't mind. That ordinary wood cane of hers attracted the suspicious attention of the Chantry sisters and especially the templars standing guard outside the workhouse, and kept their scrutiny away from him.

As they walked along the waterfront from Maleta's home, Kalian took deep breaths of the breeze flowing in from the bay, appreciating the fresh air that would last until they reached the refugee camp, or until the wind shifted. The two of them crossed over the walking bridge and walked past the alienage to the workhouse, now surrounded by a tent camp. A horse-drawn wagon approached the workhouse just ahead of them, full of more refugees.

A tall blonde woman in armor was shouting directions. "Please, any orphans or children separated from their parents, get them on the wagon and we will take them to the orphanage where Miss Caroline can take care of them. They will be fed and given a place to sleep. She approached the wagon headed to the workhouse. "You, in the wagon. Any children without parents? If so, let me take them to the orphanage. They will be taken good care of there?" Katya said. She arranged to get the few children they had off their wagon and on to the wagon containing other children. "Easy little ones. We are going to take good care of you. My name is Katya and I'm taking you to the lady who raised me, Miss Caroline. She is very nice and will help you."

The man in the wagon's driver seat regarded Katya with grim impassivity. He knew the human orphans would be turned over to Miss Caroline's orphanage, but his responsibility was simply to see that the people loaded onto the wagon at the border were delivered to the workhouse. He stopped the wagon at the workhouse, then got down and began helping his passengers out. Many of them were exhausted and weak.

Unfortunately her words didn't do much. Most of them had lost their parents to the darkspawn or other factors. A few might have been separated from their parents but a very few. Most were in shock. It was the harsh reality and she would do what she could. Miss Caroline would be a big help but she would need Katya's help with all the new kids and she knew many of the current kids could help as well. They were good kids caught in a bad situation. Their lives turned upside down because of this blight.

She looked over at Kalian, "You, if you are not doing anything, these kids can use all the help they can get! I need to get them to the orphanage so Miss Caroline can take care of them."

Kalian stared open-mouthed at the pretty blonde warrior, longer than strictly necessary for her words to sink in. "I'm assisting Maleta, the healer," he said, gesturing to the old woman. He began helping people out of the wagon. Most of them looked awful. Sure enough, there were three children huddled together in a corner, two humans and an elf, who sniffled and clung to one another, reluctant to leave the wagon.

"Easy you three. You will be safe." She said to the children. She looked over Kalian, "If you really think she needs help then fine. Healers are one of the many things needed right now. However I need all the help I can get with the kids. They are scared, terrified even."

"Those kids," said a young woman who swayed on her feet with exhaustion. "They were traveling with an old man. He was sick, we could all see it. Sores on his skin, gray hair falling out in clumps. But he made sure these three made it to the border. Then a Gray Warden killed him, said he had the taint. Warden said the kids were clean, though."

"Thank the maker. Poor man. I can only hope his soul is in a better place now. Easy now dear lady. Rest and get some food. I will take care of the kids. Miss Caroline will welcome them into the orphanage and take good care of them. I promise you that! No one could take better care of them!" Katya said.

Kalian wanted to help with the children, but he was reluctant to leave his current responsibility. Maleta gripped Kalian's arm that held her bag. "None of these people is wounded or injured, my boy. What they need is food and rest. I'll look in on my other patients at the workhouse, while you help that pretty young woman with the children." She took her heavy bag from Kalian.

Two Chantry sisters emerged from the workhouse to greet the newcomers. "Thank you, Maleta," said Kalian. The old woman was skilled with herbs and potions, and helping her with her patients afforded Kalian the opportunity to use healing magic without getting caught.

The newly arrived refugees were led inside the workhouse by the Chantry sisters, one who took Maleta's bag, but the three children were still huddled in the wagon. The wagon driver was beginning to look impatient.

"I'm Kalian. Did you say your name is Katya? Good to meet you, serah." He gave her his best, charming smile, then climbed into the wagon. Using a gentle, calming voice, he spoke to the children. "Hello there, my name is Kalian, and Katya and I are here to help. We want to take you to a warm safe place, where you can rest and eat a good meal."

"Thank you Kalian! These poor kids need a lot of love and comforting! We can help and Miss Caroline will help and the other kids already at the orphanage can help! So many orphans! I feel for them. I grew up in the orphanage. Miss Caroline was my mother and father! They will be in good hands."

Kalian had expected Katya to climb into the wagon with him and help reassure the three frightened children. He turned to look at her, eyes narrowed. Katya stood there, repeating for the *fourth time* the same message – that she was *taking the kids to Miss Caroline at the orphanage where they would get help*. Her loud declarations about why she was here and what would happen to the children in her care were starting to sound suspicious to his ears. *Very suspicious.*

"Katya, why don't you tell the children what the orphanage was serving for supper yesterday, and what is being served today?" said Kalian soothingly, for the kid's sakes.

"Oh yeah! Guess I have been repeating myself here. Ok kids. Let's get going and on the way I will tell you about dinner last night and what Miss Caroline has planned for tonight's dinner." She climbed aboard the wagon. "C'mon Kalian. let's get going."

The youngest of the three children, a girl no older than five with two long, dark braids, smiled at Katya, and in a very small voice said, "I'm so very hungry." She moved toward Katya, and held out her arms. The oldest child, a boy with similar features who appeared to be about ten, nodded emphatically and followed his sister.

Katya held out her arms and embraced the two. "I know! You both must be so very hungry! Soon, I promise! Miss Caroline is waiting and has a big dinner waiting for all of you! That and warm beds! What's your names kids?"

"She's Lydia, and I'm Edmund," said the boy.

Lydia wrapped her arms around Katya's neck, and held on tight. "Will Poppi find us there, when he's well?"

"Who's Poppi?" asked Kalian. Maybe these children *did* have a parental guardian.

"Our grandfather," said Edmund. "We were on the road forever, he made us keep going, even though he was sick. Then, the soldiers... the Gray Warden said Poppi had the darkspawn taint." Tears ran down the boy's face, but he wiped them away. "I made sure Lydia didn't watch."

"You're a good brother Edmund! Lydia, Poppi is with the maker now. Edmund will take care of you and so will Miss Caroline. I will come by when I can and check on you too! Edmund, never be ashamed of crying. Sometimes you just have to let it out!" Katya said.

Watching Katya with the two human children, witnessing her compassion, reassured Kalian that Katya was who she said she was.

The last child, an elven girl of about eight summers with short pale hair shrank into a corner of the wagon and hissed, "It could be a trick. Separating us from the others."

"Da'len," said Kalian gently, something his mother had called him. "My name is Kalian, and I promise, I won't let anything bad happen to you. I'll go with you to Miss Caroline's orphanage. If you don't like it there, I can take you to Hahren Liriel, in the alienage, and she will arrange for an elven family to help you. What's your name?"

The elf girl stared at Kalian for a long moment before seeming to come to a decision. She answered, "Briava." Then she got out of the wagon and though she waved off his help, she walked alongside

Kalian to Katya's wagon and climbed in.

Kalian got in the back of the wagon with the children, curious to see Miss Caroline's orphanage for himself.

After he was aboard she got the wagon moving. "Well last night Miss Caroline served her beef stew! Oh that was always one of my favorites when I lived there. She puts all sorts of vegetables in it and puts here special spice. It tastes so wonderful! Now tonight she has a pork roast cooking with mashed potatoes and some vegetables. Her pork roast is always good to eat! it tastes so good! I think it's the onions she cooks it with! Trust me kids you will love it!"

The kids were all still in shock. More than likely their parents were dead. A few might have been separated, but for the most part these kids have had their lives changed in a very terrible way. There was nothing she could do to change that but at least Miss Caroline would take care of them but still, after going through what these kids have gone through, it would not be something they would ever forget.

Not the Hard-Knock Life

Posted on 03 Apr 2022 @ 1:08pm by [Mage Kalian Winter & Warrior Katya Charbonnet \(Shar-bon-ay\)](#)

2,623 words; about a 13 minute read

Mission: [Once Upon a Codex](#)

Location: Jader

Timeline: 9:30 Dragon, mid-Blight in Ferelden (about 3.5 years in the past)

OOC: Continued from post "The Sun Will Come Out..."

The late-morning sun shown brightly as Katya's wagon pulled away, and Kalian pointed to the workhouse. "The adults you traveled with will be staying there." Or near there, Kalian didn't say. A tent city was forming around the workhouse. Low-town was near workhouse, and as the wagon crossed the bridge, Kalian said, "The guardhouse is ahead on the right, and more homes on the left."

Past the guardhouse, the unmistakable market district was on the right. Jader citizens went about their business, though many of them sent resentful glances toward the wagon, a reminder of even more unwelcome refugees in their midst. On their left, Kalian gestured to the Raven's Roost Tavern. "That is where I usually work, and beyond are craft workshops." As the wagon continued on the road, the chantry's spire came into view ahead, along with the great houses of high-town. The wagon followed the road to the right into high-town and came to a stop in front of a mansion.

The house was huge! There were several children playing out in the spacious yard. Many of them, human and Elven and a couple of dwarfs even playing and laughing and having a good time. As they

pulled up , They were greeted by a human woman. She was around 5'10", long black hair, down to the middle of her back! She was on the high side of 40 but a strikingly attractive woman. She had a smile that reached up to her green eyes.

Kalian was surprised to see elven children here, though he knew Hahren Liriel's resources in the alienage were stretched to capacity.

Katya jumped off the wagon and ran toward the woman who likewise ran toward Katya. They embraced. Kalian could see there was genuine affection between these two. "Mo..Miss Caroline." She said as they embraced. Miss Caroline's smile seem to fade slightly, as if she was expecting Katya to say something else, maybe call her something other than 'Miss Caroline' but it seemed to fade quickly. "Oh Katya! My dearest! You always come back! It is always such a joy to see you! I see you have more children in need of a home." She walked over to the wagon. "Hello Children. I'm Miss Caroline. I run the orphanage here. I and all the people here will take good care of you! My cook is making dinner and it will be ready soon! I know you've lost your parents and families. I and all the people here will be here to help you!"

The children watched, wide-eyed and wary – especially the elf girl - as Katya and Caroline embraced. Kalian observed the children's reaction, and thought that Katya's obvious affection for the woman in charge said more about this place to the children than all of Katya's assurances. Kalian got out of the wagon, and began helping the children climb out.

Katya said, "Miss Caroline, this is my new friend, Kalian. He has been a big help with the children."

"Forgive my manners Kalian. However the children need to be reassured that it will be alright. Thank you for your help. Katya has a talent for recruiting the right people to help."

"A pleasure to meet you, serah," said Kalian, with a broad smile and deep bow. He gestured to the two dark-haired human children. "This is Lydia, and her big brother Edmund." Then Kalian gestured to the pale-haired elven girl, who seemed to take a protective position near Lydia whilst still holding back. "And this is Briava."

Caroline smiled. "Hello Lydia, Edmond and Bravia. Welcome to your new home. " She turned around and called to two of the girls playing in the yard. "Mary, Talaria, could you please come here a moment." The girls hurried over. Mary was a freckled faced redhead, human while Talaria was a blonde elf. They were about 10 years old or the elven equivalent in Talaria's case. They looked at Katya and shouted "Katya!" And hugged the blonde warrior. Katya laughed. "Boy you'd think it's been months since I've been here instead of last night!" She exclaimed as she hugged the two children. "Now you two Miss Caroline called you over for a reason Please attend here."

Both girls turned to Miss Caroline. "Now girls I want you to meet Edmund, his sister Lydia and Bravia. Please make them feel at home." Miss Caroline said.

"Hello Bravia." Talaria said. "It's ok. This is a good place. You'll like it here." She stretched out her

hand to the elven girl.

Meanwhile Mary was talking to Edmund and Lydia. "Hi. I'm Mary. Welcome home!" She said with a bright smile.

Although she still regarded the human adults with well-practiced suspicion and did not smile, Bravia noticeably relaxed and took Talaria's hand.

In contrast, Lydia and Edmund beamed at Mary. Lydia hugged the older girl and Edmund said, "I'm hungry."

As Kalian watched Talaria and Mary lead the new arrivals into the huge house, he reflected on the resilience of children and their ability to live in the moment. These three, and probably every child here, had been through terrible trauma. "Miss Caroline, I, uh, often assist Maleta, the old healer. If any of the children is sick or hurt I can take a look, and if I can't help I could come back with Maleta. Or, well, is there anything else I can do to help?"

"Thank you Kalian. Usually there is someone with the sniffles or worse. Fortunately, right now the worst is scrapes and bruises. " She looked over at the children. "You know Mary reminds me of another little girl I knew!" She looked over at Katya who blushed. "Always willing to help this one. I thank the maker everyday for my dearest Katya! My little Warrior!"

"She is, indeed, magnificent and dedicated," agreed Kalian with a wide smile. Also beautiful. He wasn't sure why exactly... but he had the feeling he wasn't her type. "Someone I'd be proud to call friend."

Katya's blush deepened.

She looked at Kalian, "Well She's not little anymore. She has become one of the finest women I've seen and you could do worse for a friend Kalian. Come I'm sure we could use a man's help. We have something that needs putting together."

Katya's eyes widened. "OH my! Is it here? All the supplies and materials we need?"

"Indeed it is dear!" Miss Caroline said.

"C'mon Kalian. The kids will be fine. Mary and Talaria will see to it! I have a special project I could use your help on. The kids are going to love it!" Katya said.

"Well now I'm both dying of curiosity, and at your service," said Kalian. "What are we putting together?"

She looked around to make sure none of the children were listening. "It's a surprise for the kids. It's a puppet show. The theater and finishing the puppets. It's something I've wanted to do for a while

now but took time to get all the materials. Now we get to put everything together! oh I am so excited! They are going to love it!" Katya said as they headed unto the house.

"That does sound like fun for the children," said Kalian. "I'm not a carpenter, but sure. I'm game to help you build a puppet theater and help make some puppets. Please, show me what you've done so far. Children are so creative... won't they want to make more puppets themselves for the puppet shows they create?"

"Putting it together isn't hard. We are going to make the first puppets but then we are going to encouraged to make their own. Of course there will be plenty of help. For the first ones, I wanted to make them, with your help of course. I want to put on a show to give them an idea. Maybe fire up their imagination!" Katya said.

"Lead the way to your construction project," said Kalian with a flourish and a bow to indicate he would follow. "Do you have a story in mind to tell? I'm partial to the one about how Garahel ended the fourth Blight. Especially, you know... in these times."

"Umm that seems a little heavy for kids Kalian.. I'm thinking of a story Miss Caroline told all of us. About a group of kids who save their village from bandits when all of the grown ups were sick."

Kalian regarded Katya with raised eyebrows, then considered. With the trauma these children had experienced, especially the blight refugees, he thought a story about the Grey Warden hero who ended the last blight would be reassuring. A story where children save the adults was not as reassuring in his opinion, and yet an example of children with the agency to save their own lives and the people they cared about... "Yes, that *would* be uplifting for the children. Let's get started."

That night all the children had gathered around for this special treat! Including the new arrivals. This could help them a lot. Maybe they could settle in a little better. At least that was Katya's hope. "You ready Kalian?" Katya asked. They had spent the afternoon putting everything together. For Katya it was a labor of love. They had rehearsed the story some. This was not a professional performance by any means but it would do for the children.

Everything was prepared, for the most part. Many details for the theatre remained to be completed, like adding a crank-able roll of scenery background, and more puppets, but that would be an ongoing project for the children's creativity. Kalian cleared his throat and raised his voice to speak the introduction. "Once upon a time, there was a peaceful farming village. Families worked hard to grow their crops and raise farm animals. They cared for each other. The children learned their school lessons and did their chores, but there was always time to play." He opened the puppet theatre curtain to the first scene.

The scene was of children playing. Katya said, "There was a group of children laughing and just

playing. Having a good time. These are the children of the village. Good friends one and all. There was Maria, her younger brother Rudolpho, Eliza and Cecelia, the twins, Emma, Thomas and Earving. These particular children were the closet of friends and almost always played together. Every afternoon after their chores and school was playtime. They loved to run around in the empty field near the village. Usually they were playing pretend. Maria, the leader of the band would usually have some sort of game. Although sometimes the others had ideas and they would do that! These children were simply the best of friends."

Kalian just barely managed to control three of the puppets, while Katya had the other four. So many puppets at once was a bit of a challenge, but fortunately this was just the introduction. Continuing the story, he said, "But a sickness spread through the village. The children recovered quickly, and nobody died, but the adults were very slow to get well. Maria and her resourceful friends helped keep the livestock fed and watered, and took care of the babies and younger children. But then, whilst the adults were still sick and very weak," Kalian paused for dramatic effect, then added, "bandits came to the village."

Katya said, "The adults were unable to put up much of a resistance, most were just too sick. The bandits quickly took over the village! However, the village was not without its defenders. The children began meeting in secret. They knew that they had to be the ones to defend their home! They weren't sure what to do at first. They were just kids! but Maria spoke up saying they could do it! They just had to figure out how! After all, this was their home and no bandits were going to take it away from them! Not to mention they had to protect their families! So the children began to plan!"

Kalian continued, "The bandits took the big community wagon, and began loading everyone's precious belongings plus important winter supplies onto it. Maria and the other children knew that just because they were not big and strong like the bandits, they were clever and smart, plus the children knew things about their village and the people and animals that lived there that the bandits didn't know. For example, the strongest mule in town, the one that could pull the wagon, was very stubborn and would refuse to work, but would happily cooperate if it was offered carrots. And the old woman who lived next door to the blacksmith was once an Antivan Crow, and still made rat poison in her cellar."

"The children knew every nook and cranny in the village. They knew how to slip in and out of building un-noticed. Maria spoke with the other kids and told the plan. They were going to make the bandits believe the village is haunted. They knew all the quirks of the village and the buildings. They knew they had to pull it off. Fortunately the bandits believed in ghosts so Maria knew they would be fooled.

Rudolpho and Cecelia both knew how to do wonderful spooky voices and Earving, Emma and Thomas knew how to make the houses and other buildings make all sorts of noises. As for Maria, she knew exactly how to make her voice all echo-y. Tonight their plan would be put into action. Before the night is over, the bandits would be so scared they would run for the hills and never return."

"While the bandits loaded up the wagon, the clever children snuck around the town, in and out of buildings unseen, and made their preparations. That night, as darkness fell and the bandits began drinking the wine and spirits they'd stolen, the children got into position," said Kalian. It had been his idea to have the children poison the bandit's drinks, but Katya had rolled her eyes at him and scolded, *No, Kalian, that's too dark for children*. He didn't mind, she was right, of course.

"And so round midnight the children went to work. Emma and Thomas and Earving set up in the place where the bandits were staying and started making the house creak and groan Rudolpho, Cecilia and Maria made the spooky voices, like ghost. "Intruders! Leave or be cursed forever! Leave now!" The house was creaking and groaning and make all sorts of weird noises. The bandits, being cowardly and superstitious became more and more afraid, reached a point where they were too terrified to stay. They fled out into the night, without their loot convinced the village was haunted, never to return again. The children were hailed as heroes. Slowly the sickness passes and the village returned to normal and everybody was much happier! the end!"

After a moment's silence, Miss Caroline began clapping, and the children followed her example.

Kalian walked out from behind the puppet theatre and took a bow, and then in a loud voice he said, "This puppet theatre is for all of you children to play with and create your own stories, and it was all Katya's creation and gift to all of you! Thank you, Katya!" Kalian turned toward Katya, and bent on one knee, clapping his hands together to join in the applause.

All the children applauded.

"Aww! Thank you all! It was my pleasure! You guys are my family and I wanted to do something special for you! I encourage you to come up with your own stories to tell. I will see about coming up with some more of my own!" Katya said.

Hungry Like a Wolf

Posted on 09 Aug 2022 @ 8:53am by [Mage Kalian Winter](#) & [Warrior Katya Charbonnet \(Shar-bon-ay\)](#)

1,838 words; about a 9 minute read

Mission: [Once Upon a Codex](#)

Location: the forest outside Jader

Timeline: 9:30 Dragon, mid-Blight in Ferelden (about 3.5 years in the past)

OOC: A few days after post "Not the Hard-Knock Life"

With the influx of Fereldens displaced by the Blight, meat was in short supply in Jader. Kalian's sister and father struggled to source good food to serve their customers, whilst keeping their prices

reasonable. His new friend Katya had mentioned similar supply problems at the orphanage, and she had suggested they hunt together.

Kalian waited at the northwest edge of Jader on the Imperial Highway, past the fully-occupied Grey Warden compound, ready to hunt with his bow and a full quiver of arrows. All was cold and gray in the pre-dawn light. He had suggested meeting here instead of the Raven, to avoid his family's disapproval. Hunting wild animals was dangerous. Alone, he could utilize his magic to defend himself. With a partner, he might have to reveal his apostasy.

Katya walked up to Kalian. She was ready to hunt. The kids needed food and with the blight and everything food wasn't nearly as plentiful as it used to be. However both she and Kalian would see what they could catch for all their loved ones. "Morning Kalian. Ready to hunt?"

"I am indeed," said Kalian with a grin. He started walking down a footpath that led away from the road toward the forest. Even though he had the distinct impression Katya wasn't interested in him as more than a friend, she was very attractive and he could not resist adding an experimental flirtatious comment. "Rising early to spend the day with a beautiful and dangerous woman... I'm a lucky man."

"I appreciate the flattery my friend, truly I do. However I should let you know I only date other women. However were I interested in men, then I might go for you. That said I am glad we are friends."

"Ah." Kalian nodded to himself, then grinned. "Good to know. Me personally, sometimes I'm attracted to men, but usually women. Regardless, I admire you and consider myself lucky to spend the day in your company. Friendship without complication, I think I'll like that."

"Thanks Kalian! You're a good guy. I think we will be good friends!"

The main footpath led to Caldera Springs Lake, a popular place for ordinary folk to go swimming in the summer. An estate that belonged to a local noble family occupied a section of the lake at the far end and featured a natural hot-spring pool. It was not uncommon for teens to sneak onto the estate grounds to use the heated pool when the family was away in Val Royeaux. But Kalian veered away from the lake and into the deep forest along a deer trail. "Where did you learn to hunt, Katya?"

"Oh gosh, well it was a man named Hugo Beringer. A local huntsman. He took a shine to a persistent teenager who wanted to learn how to hunt. I basically kept pestering him until he gave me a try. It went about as well as you can expect for a first hunt. Still he saw potential in me and took me under his wing. Pretty soon I was a half decent hunter. I kept practicing until I was an excellent hunter. I like to go out when I can, especially in times like this when supplies like meat are scarce to make sure all the kids at the orphanage have enough to eat!"

"Hunting is a useful skill, especially now. My father taught me the basics of handling a bow when I was a kid. Before-" Kalian hesitated, recalling the chevalier who had murdered his mother, crippled

his father, and triggered the manifestation of Kalian's magic. "Well, back when my dad could walk and draw a bow himself. My grandmother taught me the rest, but as you say, getting better takes practice."

"Hugo Beringer... the name sounds familiar. Is he still around?" asked Kalian.

"Oh yes! He and I still get together now and then and hunt! He's getting old but that old man has still got it! He's pretty well known in these parts! He is a master hunter!" Katya said with a smile. "He can be cantankerous at times, but he's really a lovable old guy when you get to know him!"

Kalian recalled where he'd heard the name. A warning from his grandmother that Hugo Beringer was indeed an expert huntsman – skilled enough to identify the difference between a deer killed with an arrow and a deer killed with magic then stuck with an arrow for appearances. "I remember now. He has quite the reputation, but I haven't met Monsieur Beringer personally. You were lucky to have such an excellent teacher."

"I most certainly am!" Katya said with a smile.

The two friends stopped chatting as they made their way deeper into the forest, to avoid alerting game to their presence. Passing a shallow stream, they noticed deer tracks in the mud, and the torn tender new leaves of shrubs, indicating deer had been grazing.

Kalian gestured to the torn leaves, the tracks, then ahead to where he thought the deer were headed. He hoped it was a herd of bucks. If he'd been alone, he would have shifted to wolf so he could detect if it was a herd of does and their young, and whether other predators were in the area. Instead he quietly adjusted his quiver of arrows for easy reach and nocked an arrow but didn't draw his longbow. Then he looked to Katya to check she was ready.

Katya nodded as she had an arrow ready. She saw the tracks and suspected their prey was near. With luck, they could get enough meat for the orphanage!

Checking the direction of the light breeze, Kalian crept forward slowly. They were at least downwind, so even though he was limited to human senses, the deer would not smell them. But if he or Katya made a sound, the deer would be warned.

The olive-green light of the dense forest brightened slightly ahead. They were approaching a clearing. Kalian caught Katya's gaze to confirm she'd noticed also, then proceeded with utmost caution. Finally, the two humans still mostly concealed by forest undergrowth, they could see six young bucks grazing, and a seventh buck sporting a magnificent rack of antlers with his head up, alert, attention directed away from Kalian and Katya. Kalian drew his bow.

Katya did the same. One shot did not always take down the deer. She would be ready. However if Kalian got the buck in the leg then that would slow him down for Kalian to take the killing shot and she could go after another deer. There were a lot of mouths to feed at the orphanage and the more

meat the better!

Kalian indicated his target with the tip of his arrow, a buck to their left at the edge of the clearing. It was best if they both shot their prey at the same time, since one arrow would send the whole small herd running, and they might not get another chance with spooked deer. The difficult part would be tracking an injured deer, if one of their shots wasn't lethal. Kalian waited for Katya's signal that she'd chosen her target.

She nodded to him and cocked her head at the sizable buck. She knocked her arrow and waited for him to take his shot.

The muscles of Kalian's back and arms pulled against the tension in the bow, and he did not hesitate any longer. Taking careful aim, his thumb just brushing the anchor point along his jawline, Kalian relaxed his fingers on the bowstring, and loosed an arrow. Crimson erupted from the buck's neck where the arrow lodged deep. The creature shuddered, turned and staggered a few steps, then collapsed.

Katya smiled. Andraste has surely smiled on them. She quickly let loose on another deer she had her eye on. That deer dropped almost as quickly as the other one the rest of the herd scattered. Now there would be food. Still there were a lot of kids at the orphanage and the staff and Kalian was going to have his cut. It was only fair after all as he did half the work. Still this was a good start. Usually it took several days of hunting to get enough of the orphanage for a while but she was dedicated and would do whatever it took.

"A successful hunt," said Kalian, and clapped Katya on the shoulder. He jogged to the deer he'd dropped and pulled a dagger from his belt to cut its jugular to make certain it was dead. With a silent prayer to Andraste and to Andruil, he started to gut the animal. The clearing was now empty, the rest of the deer long gone and unlikely to return to this particular clearing anytime soon, but two bucks was almost more than he and Katya could carry back to town. When he was done dressing his buck, Kalian looked to Katya to see how she was getting along.

Katya had almost finished herself. This was good. She took a moment to thank Andraste for the gift. These creature's gave it's life so that others may live. It would go a ways for the children. She was properly grateful for the gift. "We have been blessed this day my friend. A good hunt!"

Kalian regarded the two field-dressed deer. He was confident that he and Katya could carry their kills for a short distance, but it would be a long walk back to Jader. The guts were already attracting flies, and the blood would bring larger predators. "The downside of such a successful hunt is, now we have to get the game home. Probably best to make a couple of travois, unless you have a better idea?"

"I'm all for that Kalian! Let's do that and get these back to where they can be properly butchered and we can get the meat to those that need it."

Together, Kalian and Katya managed to find four sturdy tree branches, fashioned them into two drag-sleds, and lashed a deer carcass onto each. Then began the walk back to town pulling a travois with the spoils of their hunt, subjectively much longer than their hike into the forest had been. As they got close to Jader's outskirts, Kalian said, "Let's avoid walking past the Grey Warden compound, in case they try to 'conscript' one of the deer." He veered slightly, closer to the river. "My family will be very pleased with this deer. Fresh venison to serve customers, plus we'll be able to take good hearty stew to the alienage and the refugee camp."

"Yes and this will help the orphanage as well! A good venison stew can go a long way! Times are difficult. We two are blessed as we are able to find food but we need to help those less fortunate than us." Katya said

"We are indeed blessed," said Kalian firmly. "And I count myself blessed to be your friend."

Lost

Posted on 17 Sep 2022 @ 6:41 am by [Rogue Nazri Arisant](#)

Edited on on 17 Sep 2022 @ 6:46am

703 words; about a 4 minute read

Mission: [Once Upon a Codex](#)

Location: Unknown

Timeline: 12 Years Ago

Nazri had followed the instructions he'd been given. It wasn't that he had much choice in the matter. The teenager had seen firsthand, what the consequences were for failure. He should have been back to the conclave days ago. But, he was lost. Hopelessly totally lost.

To his shame, he had cried, more than once. He was frustrated with himself and fearful of what might happen. He'd had little luck hunting the past few days and there was a gnawing in his stomach. That had been another reason for the tears.

But that had been earlier, he'd given up on crying, it wasn't doing him any good. It had been an entire day since he'd shed a tear. In the late afternoon, when the sun sat low in the sky, he spotted a thicket of blackberries. He ate his fill, not caring that they were a little sour. Half an hour later, he found a stream and slaked his thirst.

Just as the sun was starting to set, he heard voices. Lots of voices. As he approached the trailhead, he paused to sniff the air. There was a distinctive odor, that he had never smelled before. He had stumbled upon a village. A **human** village. No, not a village, it was bigger than just a village, it was

bigger than that. Much bigger than that.

He was torn about what to do. Skirt the town and try to find familiar territory on the other side, retreat the way he came, or enter the town. He knew that humans used money. Shiny coins that they valued and traded with each other, and he had none of those things. They weren't necessary where he came from. But, he was big and was pretty sure he could work for food or barter for services.

Finally, after much contemplation, his resolve boosted by seeing a group of kids around his age playing, he walked out of the woods and into the city.

The kids are playing some kind of game that involved a stick and a ball. At first, they don't see him. Although he hasn't seen humans before, he knows what they are, and had, secretly, learned a little of their language, but he was too far away to distinguish much of their chatter.

At last, when they drew closer, he was spotted, he hadn't been trying to hide in the first place. It was pretty clear they had not seen a Qunari before either. Two of the younger ones pointed at him, screamed, and ran away. The older ones though didn't seem to be afraid. Just disgusted. They pointed and laughed.

"Why are you laughing at me," he spoke tentatively, haltingly, hoping he was using the right words.

Then Rami, the self-appointed leader of the group replied in a mocking tone. "Oh, it can speak. Didn't think your kind had a brain. What do you use those horns on the top of your head for?"

Another, younger girl who was edging back to the now gathering crowd added. "Rami, he's too freaking stupid to know he's ugly."

That brought general giggles from the group as they started to surround him. Not the wisest thing, since he was armed and they were not, but Nazri kept his hands well away from his weapons. He didn't want to cause any problems. Then the circle tightened and his hands did move towards his sword. This was just another example of his poor choices and he was beginning to wonder if coming into town would be a fatal decision.

Just before things started to get really bad, Nazri saw an older teen approaching. He must have been sixteen or seventeen as far as Nazri could tell.'

"LEAVE HIM ALONE YOU WORTHLESS BAND OF SCUM.!" He shouted. A moment later the group scattered.

The new arrival smiled at the Qunari, and Nazri liked the smile. The other teen extended his hand, it was an unfamiliar gesture but appeared to be a friendly one, "Never mind those assholes, they're just idiots. My name is Kyle."

"I am Nazri," he replied quickly, a little more sure than before.

"You look a little hungry, why don't you come with me?"

A Veil of Green

Posted on 18 Sep 2022 @ 10:06am by [Mage Kalian Winter](#) & [Mage Kithris Sabrae](#)

2,779 words; about a 14 minute read

Mission: [Once Upon a Codex](#)

Location: Forest Southwest of Jader

Timeline: 9:29 Dragon in Spring, one year before the Blight

OOC: 5 years in the past, Kalian (age 20) and Kithris (age 18) meet

It was early spring in the deep forest southwest of Jader. Frost in the morning, sun in the afternoon, and rain at night. Kalian had spent the morning planting peas and parsnips in his grandmother Mirren's vegetable garden, and she'd sent him out with a large basket to spend the afternoon collecting tender new shoots from elf root and nettle. Kalian made his way through a maple grove alive with birds – he identified chickadees, sparrows, and wrens - choosing mates and setting up their nests.

This was so different from the bustling sights and smells of Jader. Isolated in the forest Mirren had made her home, he was free to use his magic... at least, now that Mirren was satisfied he could control it. His time was split between his life in the forest, and the life he had begun to reclaim in Jader with his father, sister, and her new husband Ben.

Kalian found a patch of nettles, and began to pick the fresh new shoots, pinching them off the plant carefully, the way Mirren had taught him so he wouldn't get stung.

Kithris had spent the entire morning with the Keeper in meditation. For Kit, this was the one thing that she always had a hard time doing. It always took her a bit of time to clear her mind and free her thoughts. So when the Keeper tapped her on her shoulders and brought her out of her meditation, Kit looked up and could see that most of the morning had passed.

"Kithris Sabrae, you have made me proud today." The Keeper smiled as she started to walk towards her aravel.

Kit, still a bit surprised that she had meditated for that long, gave the Keeper a smile and followed. "Keeper. It didn't seem like that long. I could hear everything, even you. Though it was like being there yet not."

After reaching her aravel the keeper reaches in to bring out what looks like a longbow. She turns to face Kithris and hands it to her. "This is for you. Since you can now focus properly, this staff will help direct your magic. I had this crafted specifically for you. Since you love hunting, this "bow" will focus your magic."

Kit took the "bow", looked it over and could see there were finely etched runes all along the bow. Holding it up like a bow she could feel her magic connect with the bow. She reached up to make like she was going to pull back on the string, though no string was there. An emerald green string of magic appeared.

"Go now, attune to it." The keeper smiled.

Kit grinned. "Thank you Keeper." Kit lowered the "bow" and gave the keeper a hug before she turned and headed out into the forest.

Kit followed a small animal trail from where the clan had set up and made her way into the forest. She spent the next hour or so attuning to her new "bow" trying out many small spells. Each time using it like a regular bow. She even found a way to use the magical string to fire regular arrows. As a short time passed she came across a deer trail and decided to bring it back for the clan.

Kit followed the tracks, as she did she came across small glade where the tracks went. Stopping on the edge she peered across the glade she spotted what looked to be a young man picking Nettles. She had seen and dealt humans before. Most were selfish, arrogant, fool hardy and cruel. They could be very cruel. Yet there was something different about this one. So instead of scaring him away she watched him. How gentle he was in pulling the Nettles. Taking great care not only so he didn't get stung but it was like he was pruning.

After a short time she decided to see why exactly this human was out on the forest. Especially this far from Jadar. Finding a spot to hide Kit positioned herself so she had a clean shot if needs be. Then called out. "Human. You are quite away away from the city. Why is it that you are? Surely it isn't just to pick Nettles. You could have found some closer to the edge of the forest.?"

Kalian was not paying close attention to his surroundings. Though he was careful, the nettle's juice on his fingers and the green scent of its mild poison elicited a buzzing sensation that always reminded him of drawing electricity from the fade. While he worked, Kalian had been thinking about an attractive dark-haired woman who'd been staying at the Raven the last time he was home. She'd invited Kalian to her room and he'd made the mistake of mentioning his planned rendezvous to Ben, his brother-in-law. Tessa, Ben, and his father sent him back to Mirren, right away.

He startled at the sudden interruption and he brushed the back of his hands along the nettle's

stem. "Andraste's flaming knickers!" he swore at the sudden sharp stings and looked up to see a very pretty Dalish elf holding a bow with an arrow knocked. *Maker's breath!* What had she asked him? "Uh, I'm staying with my grandmother. She lives... nearby." Kalian wasn't about to divulge the precise location of his grandmother's home. He was confident Mirren would have no trouble defending herself against one elf. But a whole clan... maybe not. He took some elfroot leaves from his basket, crushed them between his hands and began rubbing elfroot juice on the tiny raised blisters.

Kithris gave a wry smile at the fact that she had scared the shem, no, human. This one was different. She could sense something about him that seemed to speak to her. She watched as her room some elfroot out and started to run it across the back of his hand that had brushed against the nettles stem. "They sting, do they not." Her grin changed slightly as she watched him. She took a few steps closer and lowered her bow a little. "Your grandmother? Lives near by. We were unaware of someone living out here." There was a pause as Kit looked Kalian up and down again. She lowered her bow, though kept the arrow knocked. Tilting her head slightly, "You do not seem to be threatening. Yet I got the feeling that you are dangerous." She let the magic flow through her to create a green glow briefly around her eyes. "So not get any ideas, I can defend myself." Her tone though was not threatening. She moved to a nearby tree and leaned against it. "So your grandmother has you out picking nettles huh." This said with the attitude of someone who understood boring work.

He saw the glow of her eyes and knew that she was a mage, like him. With a playful grin, Kalian held out his arms, palms forward in a peaceful gesture, and kindled subtle sparks of electricity between his fingers to reveal his own arcane nature. "My grandmother has lived in these woods for many years, with few visitors and always careful to avoid any who would threaten or call her apostate and hunt her."

He looked her up and down. She was lovely, but not just that. This elven woman was confident and bold. "I swear I am no threat to you. My name is Kalian. May I know yours?"

Kit watched as Kalian kindled some subtle sparks between his fingers. His playful grin was highlighted by the sparks. She lowered her bow and stepped forward. "Kalian, (small bow of her head) I am Kithris." She made her way to stand a few feet away. "Your grandmother has nothing to worry about from myself or my clan. (pause, sly grin) So you are no threat?" She looks him up and down openly admiring him. "Are you sure?"

"My grandmother is mainly concerned about apostate-hunting Templars," said Kalian seriously. Then he canted his head, curious. He'd heard that Dalish elves didn't like humans, but this gorgeous elven woman seemed to like what she saw in him. He licked his lips and returned her sly grin. "I'm sure that I would never harm you or do anything else without your enthusiastic consent."

He picked up his basket, with elfroot and only about half the nettle leaves Mirren wanted. "I think I've collected enough herbs for my grandmother. The day is getting hot, and I know of a pleasant stream-fed pool nearby. Perfect for cooling off." Kalian gestured to the southwest and shrugged.

Though his proposal contained the obvious ulterior motive, he wanted to learn more about Kithris. "Also a nice spot to fill our water skins with cool water and just talk."

Kithris listened as Kalian talked about his grandmother worrying more about Templars than anything else. She understood this quite well though the Templars usually stayed away from the Dalish clans. What caught her attention though was his tone when he talked about a pleasant stream fed pool just a little ways off. "Fill our water skins hmmm. (took a few steps in the direction Kalian had suggested) I think my water skin could use some fresh water." Her tone was playful as she turned her look at Kalian. A flash of green magic crackled from her eyes.

When Kithris turned away, Kalian's gaze drifted lower, admiring her backside until she turned to face him. He joined Kithris and walked alongside her, close but not so close as to invade her space or appear aggressive. As they walked he indicated the way. Holding aside a branch so she wouldn't need to duck he said, "I've heard that Dalish clans are nomadic. How long have you been in the area? Has your clan been here before? My grandmother has lived in this region of the forest a long time, maybe she knows some of your people."

Kit made her way along the path that Kalian had motioned to. She felt him walking beside her and purposely kept her eyes forward yet let her hand brush his as they walked and he asked some questions. "Yes we are nomadic. As for how long have we been in this area, it has been about 2 weeks. This is why I am out scouting. We have been here before, though it has been quite some time. I was around two at the time. As for your grandmother possibly knowing someone from my clan, (pause), it is possible." She glances at Kalian, her eyes flashing green. "So, do you spend a lot of time at your grandmothers?"

"My family sent me to live with her when I was twelve, eight years ago. My grandmother, Mirren, has been teaching me how to control my magic, and use it well. It gets lonely in the forest, and these last two years, I've been spending more time with my father and sister in Jader. But I visit Mirren regularly, to continue my lessons." The forest certainly didn't feel lonely just then. "With someone as interesting and lovely as you in the forest to spend time with, I could be enticed to stay with my grandmother the entire season."

Kithris listened as Kalian talked about his past. **He had such a sweet voice**, she thought. Being sent to his grandmothers to learn how to control his magic. It was obvious that his parents had not wanted him to go to the tower. This she could relate to. When the veiled question came up on whether or not she would be in the area for a while, she grinned. Her tone a mocking suspicious, "Interesting and lovely you say." Her hand and eyes quickly flashed green. "We will be in the area for some time. Hunting and doing some repairs on our wagons."

They had arrived at the pool. In the shade of a willow tree, a stream spilled into the pool from several feet above, creating a waterfall at the far rocky end. Closer to them, soft turf grew in the warm sun, down to the water's edge. It was the perfect place for swimming in cool, fresh water, followed by warming up in the sun. Kalian gave Kithris a warm, speculative smile. "Do you want to go for a swim?"

When they arrived at the pool Kit felt quite at home. The area was beautiful. The willow tree overhung the crystal clear pool. She closed her eyes to listen. The waterfall splashing on the rocks at the far end of the pool. The slight breeze rustling the willow tree leaves. Feeling the warm sun in her face, without pause she answered Kalian's question. "A swim sounds like fun." Turning to face Kalian, Kit grinned, eyes quickly flashed green, as she stripped down and walked to the edge of the pool and dove in.

Kalian temporarily lost the ability to speak, or move, or do anything but watch wide-eyed as the beautiful young elf stripped off her clothing, walked naked to the pool's edge, and dove in. He blinked, then swiftly doffed his own kit, and dove in after her. The water was refreshingly cold and crystal-clear. He stole another good look before he surfaced a few feet away from her, treading water. "This is one of my favorite spots in the forest," said Kalian, and took a couple of sidestrokes around her, maintaining the distance between them. He didn't want her to feel pressured or threatened. If she wanted to get close, that would be her call. And yet, he was swimming naked with a beautiful woman, how could he resist a little flirting? "If you get cold, I can warm you up if you want."

Kit watched as Kalian dove in. She had missed him stripping down. She was a little miffed though knew if she wanted to look she could just duck under the water. She looked around as Kalian commented about this being one of his favorite spots. His comment about him warming her up if she got cold, was not missed. Her attention turned to look at the man swimming naked with her. She gave him a grin as she took a few strokes around him as she spoke. "I bet you could." Her tone light, musically flirty. As she made her way to be treading water very close to Kalian. As she got close her eyes flashed a bright green. "I am getting a bit chilly."

His breath caught at the tone of her voice and her closeness. She did not seem to be afraid or feel threatened by him. If anything, Kithris seemed to encourage his tentative advance. Kalian reached out and took her hand gently, then drew her with him as he took a few side strokes into shallower water where his feet just touched the sandy pool floor. Pulling her slowly toward him, ready to release her at the slightest hesitation on her part, he wrapped his arms around her waist and pressed her slim, shapely body against his. "You are so beautiful," he whispered, holding her bright green gaze. "May I kiss you?"

Kit watched Kalian's reaction to her. She could tell that he wanted her though was a gentleman and if she decided that she didn't want to her would wouldn't pressure her. This made up her mind and she let herself be pulled close to him and led to the shallower end of the pond. Feeling his body next to hers, how warm he was, how strong yet soft his touch was, brought an excitement to her. As he whispered, holding her gaze in his, she gave a small nod, as she leaned in, tilting her head slightly.

When their lips touched, the butterflies in her stomach flew throughout her body. Fire seemed to burn through her veins. Gentle, slowly, her passion growing as their kiss gets stronger.

Never in his young life had Kalian wanted a woman more than he wanted Kithris, and never had he

been so certain that he needed to make very, very sure she gave her enthusiastic consent every step of the way.

He explored her mouth with his tongue as he caressed her back, the buoyancy of the water making it easy to support her with one hand, her firm and yet enticingly soft body pressed against his. Kalian's hand strayed to cup her breast, thumb circling the tip. "If you're still cold," he murmured, "Please allow me to carry you over to the bank... where the grass is soft and the sun is warm."

Found (Part One)

Posted on 19 Sep 2022 @ 7:17am by [Rogue Nazri Arisant](#)

1,228 words; about a 6 minute read

Mission: [Once Upon a Codex](#)

Location: Unknown

Timeline: 12 Years Ago

Previously in Lost The new arrival smiled at the Qunari, and Nazri liked the smile. The other teen extended his hand, it was an unfamiliar gesture but appeared to be a friendly one, "Never mind those assholes, they're just idiots. My name is Kyle."

"I am Nazri," he replied quickly, a little more sure than before.

"You look a little hungry, why don't you come with me?"

Now the continuation

The grip lasted a bit longer than the qunari thought it should, but he couldn't know for sure, and besides, he liked the feel of the other's warm calloused hand, but then his hand was free and he didn't think anything more about it.

"I'm starving," Nazri said as he turned and followed the older teen. They walked for a good twenty minutes down twisted, narrow streets, and even narrow and more twisted alleys. If Kyle were trying to get him more lost and confused than he already was, then he was doing a great job, but Nazri instinctively knew he wasn't trying to confuse him, but rather to confuse any potential tails.

They passed a market square filled with tents and carts, then turned onto a street that was slightly wider than the others they had traversed. Kyle put a hand on his upper arm and steered him to a cul-de-sac. Nazari's mouth started to water as he smelled the wonderful aroma of freshly baked bread, and some other odor that he had never smelled before and couldn't identify, but smelled, *clean*

They were approaching a building and a heavy oak door. On one side of the door was a bakery. It took him a few minutes to identify the business on the other side, it was a laundry. But Kyle wasn't going to either one of those, he went up to the door and opened it. He opened and walked up a flight of stairs to a short hallway with five doors off of it.

Each door had a letter embossed on it. Kyle walked up to a door labeled B, opened it, and stepped inside. It occurred to the qunari that he might be better off staying out in the hallway, but that would have been rude, and besides, he was pretty sure he could take care of himself if Kyle were planning an ambush.

The older boy locked the door behind him, then moved across the room to a wooden box sitting on the floor in a corner. It was about three feet high, two feet wide, and two feet deep.

"What is that?" Naari asked.

"It's an icebox," Kyle said, "You put ice in that top drawer there and it keeps what's inside nice and cool. I have some leftover duck in there and some bottled ale"

"Ale in bottles?" Nazri asked as Kyle pulled out a platter and sat it on a shelf.

Kyle nodded, "Yes, some of the breweries here bottle it. It's actually pretty good. Would you like some?"

Nazri nodded a bit reluctantly and the human teen reached in and took out two bottles.

As he was doing so, Nazri took his warbow off, unstrung it, and laid it against the wall.

"I'm going to run a quick errand and get some bread from downstairs. Do you want me to get you anything?"

"Just the bread is fine."

"Just try not to steal anything while I'm gone."

The qunari had been reaching for the plate, but he froze when he heard Kyle's words "I. AM. NOT. A THIEF! You're just like your friends out there." He shifted his position reaching for his bow when Kyle put a hand on his shoulder.

"I know that," he said in a low voice, "I wouldn't leave you here otherwise. Those are not my friends out there, but you're right. That was kind of a dick move. I was just making a joke. I'm sorry. Please stay."

The hand was comforting, platonic and right then, Nazri needed that. His anger didn't dissipate altogether but most of it ebbed away. "Fine, I'll stay, maybe I was a little sensitive. I just don't

understand human humor."

"That was humorous, it was just stupid. Again I apologize. I'll be back in less than an hour."

Nazri wasn't sure where Kyle was going, and he was curious, but he wasn't going to ask him. If Kyle was going to betray him or do something bad to him, he would have already done so. Otherwise, it wasn't really any of his business. While Kyle was gone, he ate the entire duck, with his hands. He was so famished, that he didn't even pause, he had it polished off in less than five minutes. Afterward, he licked his fingers and wiped them on his shirt. Then he drank down the bottle of ale and gave a contented burp. He wasn't full, by any means, but he felt a lot better, almost sated.

Having no sense of privacy or personal ownership, he explored the small apartment. There was the living area he had entered, a bedroom, and a small kitchen. In the bedroom, he found another device he had never seen before. It was mounted to the wall, shiny, and oval. He approached it cautiously, thinking it might be a portal to some other world. As he drew closer he gathered the courage to look into it and to his surprise, he saw himself. He was still staring at the image when he heard the door open.

He tore his eyes away when he heard Kyle enter the bedroom.

"Do you know what you're looking at?" he asked.

"Me," Nazri replied.

"No, I mean yes. You are looking at you, but do you know what you're looking at yourself through?"

Nazri shook his head.

"It's called a looking glass, a mirror. They don't have those where you come from?"

Again the qunari shook his head, "No we don't. That would be...too individualistic. We don't believe in that."

"You've never seen yourself before?"

"Once, sort of, a reflection in the ocean, but it wasn't as clear as this. I guess I can see why I freak people out."

Now it was Kyle's turn to shake his head. People get freaked out because they live in fear of those who are different than they are. You look good."

"I do?"

"Yeah, you do. You want some bread it's fresh."

"Sure," Nazri said, as he was led out of the bedroom. There on the shelf was a loaf of rye bread that was still warm and two new bottles of ale that were cold

In the kitchen was a table with two chairs. where the two teens sat. Nazri mirrored Kyle's actions trying to mimic what he assumed were proper human table manners. This apparently included actually chewing one's food and doing so with one's mouth closed.

After they had eaten Kyle said, "You look tired, you can sleep in my bed if you want."

"With you?" Nazri asked his tone both innocent and inquisitive.

Kyle chuckled. "Hell no. In the first place, you're too young. In the second place, you're not my type. I'll sleep on the floor."

Nazri wondered what his age had to do with sleeping, but he let it go for the moment. Maybe it was because he was so tired.

TBC.

Found Part Two

Posted on 22 Sep 2022 @ 9:45pm by [Rogue Nazri Arisant](#)

821 words; about a 4 minute read

Mission: [Once Upon a Codex](#)

Location: Rivaind Dairsmuid

Timeline: 12 Years Ago

Previously in Part One

After they had eaten Kyle said, "You look tired, you can sleep in my bed if you want."

"With you?" Nazri asked his tone both innocent and inquisitive.

Kyle chuckled. "Hell no. In the first place, you're too young. In the second place, you're not my type. I'll sleep on the floor."

Nazri wondered what his age had to do with sleeping, but he let it go for the moment. Maybe it was because he was so tired.

And now the continuation

Rain pelted down on the young qunari and wind whipped through his hair. It was uncomfortable, but, he was used to feeling that way. It didn't really bother him anymore. But the wind wasn't just uncomfortable, it was life-threatening. He wasn't sure how he had gotten there, but he was there, on a narrow twisting trail. To his right was the sheer face of a cliff. To his left was a chasm, that he couldn't see the bottom of. The wind threatened to push him into the canyon and his sudden death. His heart pounded against his chest

Then he heard an unearthly howl and not just one but a least a dozen. His heart began beating even faster. He didn't know what kind of creatures those howls were coming from, but he knew instinctively that they were dangerous and a threat to his life.

He began running.

He ran and he ran until his lungs burned and his legs ached. Still, he ran on. The howls turned to deep-throated barks and were getting closer and closer. The walls on his right still towered above him and now the chasm was even deeper, but he was no closer to the top.

He rounded another bend, he was no longer running, he couldn't manage that. He was just speed-walking. He chanced a look back and saw something out of a nightmare. A dog that was almost as tall as he was. with brown mottled fur and bared teeth and fetid breath. He was tired of running. He turned to face the charging beast and reached back for an arrow, but his quiver was empty. Then the creature leaped slamming into his chest and latching onto his arm. He and the creature both were pushed off the thin ledge. Gravity took over and they

He awoke less than a minute later. His head and torso were on the floor, his legs were entangled in the sheets and trapped against the bed. His chest was covered by a sheen of sweat, his breathing, and heartbeat rapid and irregular. Kyle was there an instant later a concerned face bending over him.

He leaned closer so their faces were just inches apart. "It's okay Nazri, it was just a nightmare. It's going to be okay. Look at me. You're safe."

The qunari let out a shuddering breath, but his heart began slowing. His green eyes looked into the human's blue ones. Nazri gripped Kyle's shoulder and a feeling passed through him that he couldn't identify, but that felt good.

Kyle helped him untangle his legs and get back into the bed. "Just hang tight, I'll be right back." Nazri didn't want him to leave but he didn't protest, that wouldn't be manly. So, he just watched his retreating form. By the time Kyle returned with a tall amber bottle in his left hand and two small glasses in his right, Nazri's breathing had returned to near normal.

Kyle sat the two glasses on the floor between them and poured green liquid into them. He handed Nazri one of the glasses and drank down the contents of the other. Nazri mirrored his actions and

then started coughing, his throat on fire

"What the hell is that?" he asked.

"You don't want to know, but I figured you needed it. What were you dreaming about?"

"I was running, being chased by some, I don't know what they were but they looked like dogs, really big dogs It seemed so real.

"Whatever it was, whatever it meant, you're safe now. As long as you're with me your safe."

Nazri nodded briefly. "Thank you, but I think I should try to go back where I belong. I'll be in trouble if I don't. Can you tell me where we are, and how to get to Qunandar?"

"You're in Dairsmuid, and I can find directions for you. But are you really sure that you want to go back? Maybe that's what you were dreaming about/ Those things you were running from in the dream is what you're trying to get back to you."

There was a pause, then Nazri spoke. "I'm not sure at all. Maybe somebody is trying to tell me something, but I still have to return. It's my duty. I don't have a choice."

"You always have a choice. If you ever change your mind, you're welcome back here anytime."

Never To Return

Posted on 24 Sep 2022 @ 12:10pm by [Rogue Nazri Arisant](#)

647 words; about a 3 minute read

Mission: [Once Upon a Codex](#)

Location: Rivian

Timeline: Ten Years Ago

The wind out of the northeast was powerful and biting. To make matters worse for the young qunari running along a narrow, winding trail, it drove tiny pellets of sleet before it. Which wouldn't have been quite so bad, if he hadn't lost his cloak when the chase first started, five miles back. There was loose shale under his feet, which made running treacherous. One misstep and there would be no second chances. He would plunge to his death. This was a nightmare come to life This time the enemy wasn't some firey hounds from his imagination, this time the enemy was real. This time the enemy was his own people.

They were perhaps a hundred yards away, he couldn't be exactly sure, because he didn't dare chance a glance behind him because it would be too dangerous and with the wind and driving

frozen rain it wouldn't have done any good anyway. There would be no waking up this time, no legs entangled in sheets, no smiling boy looking down at him afterward reassuring him and making him feel awkward at the same time.

He drove those thoughts as far from him as he could, they wouldn't help him survive, they wouldn't buy him his freedom, and they wouldn't help him escape.

He heard a panicked scream behind him and instinctively what had happened. One of his pursuers would never pursue anyone ever again. He should have been thrilled, instead, he was sickened. He'd paused when he heard the voice and was about to put one foot in the other and start running, but then he caught something out of his peripheral vision, he noticed an indentation in the wall, something that wouldn't be noticed by anyone not looking specifically at it would more than likely miss.

It was an entrance to a cave. Nazri didn't like tight, confined spaces, he hadn't since he was a young child, nor did he care for the unknown. But the known was baring down on him and he didn't have any choice. It took more than a little effort he had to squeeze himself inside. Within seconds, he heard but didn't see a score of people run past the entrance. He had two choices, exit the cave and run back in the direction he came, or continue delving deeper inside.

He felt a rivulet of sweat trickle down his back and it sure as hell wasn't from the heat. It was pitch black inside. He shouldn't have been able to see, but he was. Not well, maybe thirty or forty feet, and that was a lot better than any of his pursuers. It would have to do. He blew out through his nose and started moving forward.

Swallowing down the bile that was rising in his throat, he pushed through his fear and moved down a side passage. His legs almost refused to function when he heard multiple voices and footsteps enter the cave. He couldn't run, there were too many stalactites and stalagmites for that, and there was too much of a chance that he might trip or fall through an opening in the floor. Sometimes the ceiling was so low that he had to crawl. But what was good for the goose, was good for the gander. And the gander was blind.

It took him five days to find his way out. Five long, excruciating days. He was out of food on his third day and water on the fourth. By the time he made it out, he was barely able to stand, much less walk. But his determination hadn't waned. He wasn't sure where he was, but he knew where he was going. Dairsmuid. It was a big community there had to be someone who help him harness his magical ability. Could train him.

Besides, he had to see Kyle, assuming Kyle was still around.

TBC

Reunion

Posted on 02 Nov 2022 @ 6:16pm by [Rogue Nazri Arisant](#) & [Warrior Kylandro \(Kyle\) de Arzo](#)
Edited on on 29 Dec 2022 @ 3:57pm

3,393 words; about a 17 minute read

Mission: [Once Upon a Codex](#)

Location: Rivain Dairsmuid

Timeline: Ten Years Ago

It had been two years since Nazri had been in Dairsmuid. He'd changed. Quite a bit, since he'd left. He'd never been small compared to humans. At fourteen, he'd stood halfway between 5'8 and 5'9" and weighed 160 pounds. Now he was just a shade under 6'0" 185. He'd been raw and inexperienced back then, a decent hunter, and could hit the broadside of a cathedral with a bow. Now he was the best tracker in his class and could hit a bull's eye from fifty yards away eight times out of ten. He was only slightly less accurate with moving targets.

That had made him more valuable to his people. Then, when puberty started to hit him hard, he'd developed a talent for magic. It was still raw, chaotic but it was there, and he hadn't been able to hide it. He'd been contemplating leaving, for a while. He just wasn't a good qunari, or at least a compliant one, which was really the same thing. There were still some things he had questions about, and in some ways he was naive, but he knew he had to explore the world. He'd thought he had plenty of time.

He may have been naive, but he wasn't a total fool and he knew the consequences if he stayed. That is why he'd left in the middle of the night, only taking what he felt belonged to him, but taking all of that.

He knew only one place he could go, where he might be safe and one person he could trust. Kyle. He didn't even know the other teen's last name, how old he was, or if he'd even still be in Dairsmuid still, but he had to try. He was sure that Kyle would give him shelter, perhaps some guidance.

He was a little wiser about the things of the world and had come to realize that his comments about sleeping in the same bed with Kyle could have been an innuendo. That wasn't the case. At least consciously it hadn't been. And Kyle had told him both that he was too young and that he wasn't the other boy's type. He didn't know whether it had just been the age thing, or if he really wasn't Kyle's type either because Kyle didn't like boys that way, or he didn't like Nazri that way. Adding to that confusion, was Nazri's own uncertainty about such things and his *total* lack of experience with either gender.

He'd been running those things through his mind and a thousand more when he'd left his home. Those thoughts had been swept aside during his time in the cavern. Now that he was out, his only real thought was survival.

By the time he'd reached the outskirts of the city, he had a full skin of water and a full stomach. The questions and doubts had come roaring back but entered Dairsmuid anyway.

Kyle pressed his hand to his side, where his coin purse was hidden beneath his tunic, tied so the coins inside didn't click together and alert pickpockets or thieves. The pouch was heavier since he'd left his rooms that morning, this gig for the seer was turning out to be a reliable source of coin.

As he was heading home, a young qunari man crossed the street ahead and caught his eye. Qunari were not a rare sight in Dairsmuid, but there was something familiar about this one. He was taller, filled out... but Kyle was sure it was him. Kyle diverted from his path to follow, speeding up his pace to catch up. "Nazri? Is that you?"

The qunari wasn't the only one who had changed, the human teen also had. Just not as much.

Kyle's hair was still strawberry blond, but it was a little longer and lighter. He'd had a trace of freckles when they'd last seen each other, now, there were none that he could tell.

He wasn't sure whether he should hug his former friend or shake his hand. What would be the proper approach? He couldn't decide, so he did neither. He stood there a little awkwardly, "Yeah, Kyle it is. It's good to see you. It really is."

"What are you up to?"

The qunari's awkward hesitation wasn't lost on Kyle. He grasped Nazri's arm and pulled him into a brief but firm embrace. "It is good to see you, Nazri. At the moment I'm headed to the market to buy dinner, then home. If you don't have a place to stay yet, you're welcome to stay with me. Are you planning to be in Dairsmuid for a longer visit this time?"

The embrace was returned, but it did nothing to relieve Nazri's confusion. "I don't have a place yet, so I'd love to stay with you, at least till I get situated, I've got coin I'll pay for your dinner tonight if you let me come with you to the market. I'm starving."

"I'm never going back where I came from and have no plans to leave here."

Kyle gave a short nod of acceptance. "Sounds like you've got an interesting story to tell. Come then. We'll fetch the makings of dinner at the market, then head back to my place to enjoy a meal and trade stories." He shrugged as he began leading the way. "Though as my guest you are welcome to rest up first, or tell me to mind my own business. If you're not planning to go back, there's no hurry."

Once in the market, Kyle headed straight for his favorite butcher. The woman had just killed a goat, and she had live chickens to sell. "What kind of meat do you fancy for dinner?" he asked Nazri.

Nazri's eyes cut between the chickens and the goat. unsure at first what his first choice should be. "Goat," he said after a pause. "I am a bit tired, it's been a long day, but I think I have time for a tale or two before I rest. And, I won't tell you to mind your business, if you don't tell me that."

"Fair enough. I prefer honesty, myself. But the other side of that coin is that if I go poking my nose into things you're not ready to talk about, you tell me." Kyle gripped Nazri's shoulder briefly, then made a swift bargain for two generous portions of freshly butchered goat loin.

Kyle led Nazri on a circuit of the market, making purchases for their meal whilst keeping up a tour guide's running commentary about the various vendors - a combination of endorsements, warnings, and gossip. The people in the market reflected the diverse population of Dairsmuid. Mostly humans, but also elves and dwarves. There were even a few qunari trading in the market, likely Vashoth, who watched Nazri and Kyle without expression and made no effort to confront or speak to them.

Nazri cringed when he saw the other qunari. He tried his best not to show it, to stay as inconspicuous as possible. Anyone standing more than fifteen or twenty feet away probably didn't notice, but Kyle had a chance to, Nazri hadn't camouflaged it that well. "If you have everything you need, could we just go back to your place now?" he asked.

Kyle had noticed how Nazri seemed to be trying to conceal himself, and finally got the hint that his qunari friend didn't feel safe. "Sorry, guess I got caught up with playing tour guide. Let's go to my place." He canted his head to regard Nazri and realized the qunari was taller than him now. "Shall we take the direct route or a more circuitous, *scenic* route?"

"*Scenic* might be better... I'd rather not be noticed by certain people. It might be bad for my health. Yours too maybe.

"Understood." Kyle took in their surroundings, trying to see the market as a newcomer on the run might. "Follow me."

He ducked into a stall with formal clothing for sale and greeted the owner with a jovial smile before heading out the back. In a similar way, they weaved through stalls, cutting through the businesses of vendors he knew until they reached the mouth of an alley. From there Kyle led them down one after another side street until he was sure they had not been followed.

Kyle slowed to a walk down a main street to avoid calling attention to Nazri and himself among the diverse range of pedestrian traffic. As the crowd flies, they had not traveled far from the market. From the signs outside the old but well-maintained buildings on the street, they were in the Crafts District. Kyle paused beside a storefront, the sign above the front door read, *Loreta Madraso, Seer*. "This is it. I have an apartment upstairs, around the back." He turned down the narrow pathway.

The qunari followed the human as they weaved through the marketplace. If he had not been in the precarious situation he found himself in, this might have seemed like a game. But, this wasn't hide and seek, it was serious and perhaps dangerous. He didn't see anyone following them, so perhaps he was just being paranoid. But, he was glad that Kyle seemed as competent and resourceful as he remembered.

"This looks like it's a step up from that place you used to have at the end of that alley."

Kyle's shoulder lifted and fell in a casual shrug, but it pleased him that Nazri noticed the step up in his living situation. "It's in a better neighborhood. I do a bit of part-time work for Seer Madraso." He climbed a steep staircase to a single door on the second floor, produced a key, and unlocked it.

"Make yourself at home," said Kyle. Like his previous apartment, there was a living area, bedroom, and kitchen with an icebox, and it appeared to take up about a quarter of the building's second floor. Some of the furnishings were familiar, transferred from his old place. It was sparse but comfortable, and although nothing quite matched, there was a common aesthetic that showed Kyle's taste. He locked the door behind them, then took the fixings they bought at the market to the kitchen and began making preparations.

"Yeah," Nazri replied as he slid the quiver off his back and laid it in the corner. After a moment of watching the human start fixing their lunch, he drew in and released a breath. He took off his swordbelt and placed it beside the quiver. He did the same with his bow.

"This isn't like last time," he said as he moved to stand beside Kyle at the counter, careful not to get within his personal space. "You probably gathered this isn't like last time. I was lost then and needed to find my way home. Now, I don't want to be bound. If my people find me, they'll put me in a cage. Or worse."

"I'll stay the night if that's okay, but I don't think it's a good idea if I stick around long-term. I'd be putting you in danger. Maybe not right away, but eventually they're going to come looking for me."

Kyle had just finished preparing the goat meat for roasting. He washed his hands and turned to face Nazri. "You are welcome to stay the night, or longer. You needn't worry about me, I can take care of myself." Kyle looked into the qunari's eyes. The boy he'd briefly known two years ago was still there, behind the man Nazri was becoming. A man Kyle would like to know better. "Who is a danger to you? Who is looking for you?"

Nazri was tempted to take a seat on the small couch near Kyle's kitchenette, but remained standing and held the other's gaze instead. "Well, if that's how you feel, then I'll stay as long as you'll have me."

"It's my people that are hunting me. I don't know how much you know about the qunari, but they're..." he paused searching for the right word, afraid of magic and those who wield it. And they found out, I can do this."

Then, he took half a step back into a small alcove and disappeared from sight. A moment later, Kyle heard a voice call out from his bedroom.

"Just a parlor trick I know, but I'm learning how to do more."

Kyle followed the sound of Nazri's voice, to find him standing next to the bed. Kyle folded his arms and chuckled. "You don't need parlor tricks to access my bedroom." Then he recalled the rumors he'd heard about what qunari did to mages and paused, forehead creased. "That was magic, right? Now I understand why your people might hunt you."

Nazri's eyes grew wide and his heart began beating a little faster with Kyle's words about accessing his bedroom. Was it polite, though teasing conversation, or was the other teen flirting with him? He had to admit to some physical attraction, but he wasn't sure how he should respond. So, he decided to focus on something he could answer.

"It is magic. Shadow magic. I can do a few other things too, but I'm really just learning and it's frustrating because I have no one to show me how. And you're right, I don't want to be in a cage or bound and gagged. Which is what they'd do to me, or worse.

"You saw the sign out front of the building... A seer is a mage who practices certain traditional magic. Come with me to visit Seer Madraso tomorrow. She might be able to help. Or at least... offer some advice."

"Thanks, that would be very helpful."

He paused unsure if he wanted to ask the question but curiosity won the battle over politeness and fear. "What exactly did you mean about accessing your bedroom?"

Kyle ran a hand through his hair and scratched the back of his neck, considering how best to approach what could be an awkward situation. He settled on straightforward honesty. "You're an attractive man, Nazri. And the prospect of sharing physical intimacy with you in my bed is... intriguing." Kyle allowed his lustful gaze to rove admiringly over Nazri's form. Then abruptly he dialed it back with a shrug and gave Nazri a just-friends grin. "But that is *completely* up to you. You can sleep on the sofa if you prefer, and my offer of help stands regardless."

The qunari's heart started beating faster. His assumptions had been right all along. Kyle was *interested* in him. He hadn't been sure, but now he was. Kyle had openly declared it.

"I don't want to sleep on the couch," he replied after a beat. "I want to, at least I think I want to sleep in your bed. But, I've never been with a man before or a woman. Not even a kiss. I'm not sure what to do. I mean, I'm not completely naive. I have some idea, but no real experience."

Moving close to Nazri, Kyle's tone made it sound like the most tragic thing in the world when he

repeated, "Not even a kiss?" Kyle ran his hand lightly up Nazri's arm, and gently gripped his shoulder. "Would you like to kiss me?"

The qunari gave an almost imperceptible nod. Then a slightly bolder one. His cheeks blossomed a burnt umber. After another breath he said, "Maybe you should kiss me? Show me how it's done?"

Kyle's smile was warm as he moved even closer to Nazri, one hand was still on his shoulder, the other hand caressed his jaw. He pressed his lips tentatively to Nazri's, and encountering no resistance or hesitation from the other man, he probed gently with his tongue seeking access to a deeper kiss.

The qunari had never felt another's lips against his, though he had imagined it more times than he could count. His imagination had been vivid, but it was nothing like the real thing. Still, it felt a little awkward to him, not because of anything Kyle was doing or not doing—as far as Nazri could tell, he was doing everything right. It was his own inexperience that made it awkward. At first.

Then, he let instinct take over and simply got lost in the moment. That was a very good thing because just as he'd done that, he felt the other boy's tongue press against his. He groaned lightly as he opened his mouth wider, his tongue entangling itself with Kyle's.

Keeping his thoughts focused on just the kiss, Kyle took his time, teaching by example the balance of give and take, kissing both for the pleasure of their joined lips and tongues, but also a preview of what kissing could lead to. Finally, he broke off the kiss, ending with a chaste, closed-mouth brush of lips on lips and pressing his forehead against Nazri's. "You, my friend, are a fast learner." Kyle pulled back a bit, to regard Nazri's face. "And now you have been kissed. What do you think?"

"I think you're a good teacher and you have so many more things you can teach me. Things I don't even know, I don't know."

Then he held up his hands in mock surrender, "But, maybe we can save those lessons for a while. Part of me wants to just jump right in, and another part wants to, I don't know, take some time. My body is sending my mind, mixed messages. Does that even make sense?"

"It makes perfect sense." Kyle rested one hand on his hip and stroked his chin thoughtfully. "In fact, that leads me to what should have been my first lesson. Communication, boundaries, and consent. Your body belongs to you. You and you alone decide what your boundaries are, and what you do and don't do with your body. Physical contact should always be with your full and enthusiastic consent. Same with the other person, that's where communication starts."

Nazri shook his head up and down. "Those sound like good rules. But I admit, that will take some getting used to. Not that anyone has ever touched me, or tried to force themselves on me, among my people there's no, or at least very little privacy or individualism."

"Are you, em, seeing anyone?"

Both of Kyle's eyebrows shot up. Some cultures expected exclusivity as a prerequisite for physical intimacy, but he was pretty sure the Qun was not one of them. But, no, he reasoned with a chuckle, it was probably just innocent curiosity. "I see a few different people from time to time. At the moment there is no *one* person." He started to return to the kitchen to finish preparing their meal but paused and looked back. "I'm not planning to invite anyone else here while you are my guest. And if you want *lessons* with someone other than me, I won't be offended."

Nazri followed him into the kitchen. Surprisingly enough he wasn't blushing, or at least he wasn't blushing much. His question had been mostly curious, he'd been wondering if this was just some casual for Kyle, in which case he would be fine with that, or if the older teen was looking for something more.

"I'm good with you giving me lessons for now. I'm not exactly looking for love, but I need to be able to trust the person I'm with. You're the only person here that I know enough to trust."

His blush lent an enticing cast to Nazri's handsome qunari features, and Kyle's breath hitched. Matching the other young man's tone, Kyle said, "I will endeavor to be deserving of your trust, Nazri." Then pushing away the serious mood, Kyle grinned. "Plenty of time for that when you're ready. For now, I'll put you to work helping me prepare our evening meal."

The qunari grinned back. Part of the reason for the smile was just matching the other's facial expression, somewhat unconsciously, the other part was his realizing that for the first time since leaving his homeland, he was truly relaxed.

"Just tell me what you'd like me to do. I've more experience hunting than cooking, but I think I can manage not to ruin the food."

A New Start

Posted on 29 Dec 2022 @ 3:59pm by [Rogue Nazri Arisant](#) & [Warrior Kylandro \(Kyle\) de Arzo](#)

2,428 words; about a 12 minute read

Mission: [Once Upon a Codex](#)

Location: Rivain, Dairsmuid

Timeline: Ten Years Ago, after post 'Reunion'

Kyle awoke with the dawn, as was his usual custom. He'd had a fitful and deep night's sleep despite the distracting presence of the handsome man stretched out next to him on the bed, gently snoring. Kyle's shared slumber with Nazri had been completely chaste, unlike Kyle's dreams in which they had passionately claimed each other in ways that were everything except chaste. He took a moment to admire this lovely and compelling man whom fate had brought back into his life, Nazri's

chiseled features relaxed and endearingly vulnerable.

As the details of his dreams faded, Kyle was left with a single lingering thought. *He could fall in love with this man.*

Kyle slipped from the bed, chuckling quietly at himself. The future ahead was wide open and they had plenty of time to figure out... whatever this might turn out to be. He stepped into the washroom to begin preparing for the new day. Breakfast, then introducing Nazri to Seer Madraso.

The qunari's dreams had been less sensuous and settled than his bedmate's. They hadn't risen to the level of nightmare. They were too vague for that. But he'd been running. It wasn't clear in the dream if he were the prey, the predator, or if he was just running, but it had been vaguely discomfoting.

He awoke to an empty bed, which was not a big surprise, he hadn't ever shared a bed. Still, it was disappointing. Being in the same bed with Kyle, even though nothing had really happened, had been comforting.

He lay there under the covers until he heard Kyle back from his trip to the washroom, then he rolled out of bed. "Mornin'" he greeted, "I can't thank you enough for all you've done for me."

"Can you show me more, em, *things* tonight?"

Kyle had just pulled on his trousers and now turned to Nazri with his shirt in one hand. His sultry gaze roved over Nazri, considering all the delicious ramifications of that question. He canted his head and smiled warmly. "If that's what you want, I will show you *all the things*, but it is completely up to you to set the pace." Kyle moved closer to Nazri. "If you'd like, we can review the things from yesterday evening."

Nazri reached over and took the shirt out of Kyle's hand and tossed it on the floor, then he leaned closer so there was hardly any space between them at all. "I'm good with reviewing," he said before moving his lips to Kyle's.

Kyle returned the kiss eagerly, pulling Nazri into his arms as he explored the man's mouth with his tongue. With one hand he reached up the qunari's back to tangle in the hair at the base of his neck, while with the other he grasped Nazri's muscular backside.

Though Nazri wouldn't have admitted it to Kyle, the kisses they'd shared the night before had been good and left him wanting for more, but they had been far from perfect. That hadn't been Kyle's fault, it had been his own inexperience. Not that he was by any means an expert on his second go around, but it was far less awkward not that he had at least the basic concept of what was happening and what to do.

The current kiss was wonderful and he wished it would go on forever, though he knew it couldn't.

Perhaps it was the kiss, or maybe it was the way that Kyle was grabbing him, but he felt the blood rushing to where nature intended it to in such situations, and he felt himself hardening. He kept his eyes open looking into the other man's face, uncertain of what to do next.

Pressed together as they were, Kyle was fully aware of Nazri's natural response. Kyle's own erotic dreams and the anticipation of needing to keep himself in check and allow Nazri to dictate how far they went had prompted the older teen to give himself release in the washroom, and yet that tension was building again. Kyle pulled back slightly from the kiss to look into Nazri's eyes. "Would you like me to show you what is next now, or do you want to save that for tonight?"

The qunari was torn. He hadn't had the release that Kyle had, though to be fair, he hadn't had the kind of dreams that the other teen had. Part of him wanted to explore, to experience, everything all at once. It was pretty clear that's what his body wanted. He pulled himself away from the human. Not much just enough to provide a few inches of separation.

"I want to take our time when you show me when we do it. Whatever it is, that is. Do we have that kind of time now?"

Kyle ran his fingertips along the edge of Nazri's smalls and weighed the young man's words. Both desire and hesitation were there, and for any of this to feel right for Kyle, he needed Nazri's full and enthusiastic consent. "What I have in mind won't take much time, I think. And it's like kissing, not something done once, but something to be experimented with and practiced." Kyle licked his lips in anticipation. "But we can wait until you're ready."

"There's no question in my mind, if we have the time, I want to try it now. I don't want to wait."

"Well then," said Kyle, and pressed his lips to Nazri's for a brief kiss as he slipped his fingers beneath Nazri's smalls and pushed them down, exposing the qunari's delicious length. "I want you to relax and enjoy while I show you another way that lips, tongue, and mouth can give pleasure." Kyle sank to his knees.

And then Kyles' mouth, tongue, and lips were far too occupied to say anything else.

The qunari were not a very private people, so while he lacked in practical experience, and was immensely shy when it came to carnal things, was not entirely naive about some things. Buy he had never, in his entire life, imagined that something like Kyle was doing to him at that moment, happening, or for that matter, even being a possibility.

And it was exquisite, glorious, and the best experience he had ever had in his entire life up until that point. His length was lengthened by the first touch of the tongue. He also knew why Kyle had said it wouldn't take that long, because, within the space of five minutes, he was having to fight not to go over the edge.

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In the small kitchen, Kyle hummed to himself and smiled at the thought of his morning appetizer. He was almost finished toasting thick bread slices over the open flame of his stove, taking care not to singe them. The eggs were soft-boiled and ready to eat, and tea brewed in the pot. All that remained was for Nazri to finish in the washroom and join him.

Nazri was sated after the sensuous and carnal experience he had just had. Yet, at the same time, his mind was filled with anticipation and curiosity about what more might be in store. Kyle had been an excellent teacher so far and there was much more that he had to learn. He had almost asked his new *friend* about penetration but wasn't sure if he were ready for that quite yet, so he'd decided not to broach the subject.

He came out of the washroom, almost fully clothed. He was wearing black pants and a gray tunic. The only thing missing from his wardrobe were boots, he was barefoot. "That smells delicious," he said as he walked up behind Kyle and wrapped his arms around him from behind. "What are we having?"

Kyle turned his head to plant a kiss on Nazri's jaw. "Simple fare. Toasted bread, soft-boiled eggs, and tea." He indicated the bowl of eggs and teapot on the table, along with two place settings. "Will you pour the tea? Be careful, the eggs are still hot." He transferred the last slice of bread, toasted to a nice crispy brown, to a serving plate with the others.

"I'd rather just stand here just like we are now, but that would start things up again and we'd miss breakfast and you've gone to such much work. So, I guess I could accommodate you."

He stepped back and took hold of the handle of the kettle and poured tea into two earthen mugs. They were chipped in a few places and didn't match, but he didn't mind. "I like simple fare."

"So what is this seer we're going to visit like?"

"What Loreta Madraso is like..." Thinking about the seer helped Kyle put the distracting thought of skipping breakfast to play with Nazri out of his mind. He set the plate of toasted bread on the small table and sat down across from Nazri. "She's a mage, but skilled in a tradition of magic that is honored in Rivain, but looked down upon by much of southern Thedas, mainly because they sometimes work with spirits."

Kyle put a slice of toast on his plate and picked up an egg, carefully cracked it with his knife to split in two, then with a spoon scooped out the gooey yellow yolk and solid-cooked white onto the bread. "She's old, and you might say a bit cantankerous." Kyle smiled fondly, thinking of her. "She pays fair and lets me rent this apartment for under the market rate. I run errands for her, gather herbs she wants, things like that."

"I've never put much stock in spirits," Nazri spoke up as he mirrored Kyle's actions with the egg and toast. Sex wasn't the only area he was learning from the other boy.

Then he shook his head, "I don't think I said that right. What I meant was I don't take much stock in people's superstitions about them. Something tells me you shouldn't fear something just because you don't understand it."

"I'm not saying you shouldn't be careful, even suspicious sometimes, but not just, I don't know blind prejudice? Maybe I feel that way because that's how some people look at folks like me."

Kyle reached out and patted Nazri's hand in the way of a friend. "I couldn't agree more. Here in Dairsmuid, most people are relatively open-minded, and content to let other people live their lives. If the Southern Chantry ever exerts control here, that could change." Kyle was quiet for a moment considering that possibility and shuddered.

"Close to the border as Dairsmuid is, a number of qunari reside here. So you won't stand out as much here as you might further south," said Kyle thoughtfully. He finished his first slice of toast and egg and added a second helping of both to his plate. "Do you think you're still being hunted?"

"Well, I don't think someone's going to be breaking down your door," Nazari said as he boldly helped himself to seconds as well, "but they will probably hunt me for the rest of my life, or they catch me."

"I'm far more worried about you than about my door. Do you really think the people hunting you won't give up eventually?" Kyle washed his last bite down with his cooling tea, then poured himself another cup. He held the teapot over Nazri's cup with one eyebrow raised questioningly.

Tue qunari gave a wan smile when Kyle voiced his concern. "My people have a long memory, especially for those who willingly or not oppose the status quo. So, despite the fact that I've run away, and that I'm not that well known and certainly not famous, I think I'll always be an *enemy of the people*. and a threat."

"Still, I don't think they'll probably give up on actively hunting me if I can evade them long enough, but there will probably always be a price on my head."

"What about you, do you have any enemies?"

"Nobody's trying to kill or kidnap me," said Kyle with a pensive frown. "Your name... In the Qun, people are called by their function, right? Is your name – Nazri – like that, or is it a name you chose for yourself?"

"I'm glad to hear that no one is hunting you like they are hunting me, though I'm not quite sure you really answered my question. There is more than one type of enemy."

"To answer your question, though it is one I picked for myself. One more reason I left, I am too much of an individual."

"The notion that who anybody is can be decided by someone else, and that a person can't evolve and change..." Kyle shuddered. "Of course, you had to leave. As for my enemies, it's true there are some in the city who wish me ill. I joined a street gang when I was a kid. Truth is, I might not have survived otherwise. But the gang demanded absolute loyalty and I didn't like some of their methods, especially when a new leader took over. So I left, not long before you were here last time. Eventually, I met the seer and she gave me real, paying work. But sometimes, a gang member or the leader will corner me and try to persuade or intimidate me into working for them again."

Nazri listened as the other teen spoke. "So, what do you do when that happens?"

Kyle's countenance darkened, and he looked away. "Depends what gang member is asking. Sometimes they send an underling as a reminder the gang still considers me an asset. Then I can refuse straight out. If the leader or one of her lieutenants asks me, I need to be, uh... *careful* about how I decline." Unsubtly changing the subject, Kyle asked, "Have you had any formal arcane training? We could ask Loreta for advice about finding you a teacher."

The change in conversation wasn't lost on Nazri, but the subject was obviously a touchy point for Kyle, so he didn't pursue it out of respect. "No former training, it's all self-taught. I really wasn't in a position to ask for help. Until now."

"Until now." Kyle took Nazri's hand and kissed his palm. "Come on, let's go downstairs, and I'll introduce you to Loreta."

"I've never had someone kiss my hand before," Nazri said. "but I kind of like it." He glanced into Kyle's looking glass, adjusted his hair and followed him out of the room.

Vocational Pursuits

Posted on 01 Feb 2023 @ 5:42am by [Rogue Nazri Arisant](#) & [Warrior Kylandro \(Kyle\) de Arzo](#)

1,502 words; about a 8 minute read

Mission: [Once Upon a Codex](#)

Location: Rivain, Dairsmuid

Timeline: Ten Years Ago, after post 'A New Start'

Kyle locked the door to his apartment behind them. "Loreta, that is, *Seer Madraso* – don't call her by her first name until she invites you to – her rooms take up the rest of the second floor. There *is* a hidden door between, but it doesn't open. And, well, I tried it when I first moved in, and Loreta *knew*. I seriously thought she would kick me out, but she didn't." Kyle shook his head and led the way down the stairs and around the building to the front shop entrance.

It had rained overnight, and the earthy, fresh scent of petrichor overlaid the usual background stink of the city. The 'closed' sign that had been in the window when they'd gotten there the evening before was turned around to 'open.' Kyle gestured to the shop's door handle, indicating for Nazri to enter first. "Ready?"

Nazri wasn't really sure he was. He was a little intimidated by the whole thing, especially after Kyle's warning.

"I guess," he said, moving half a foot closer to his new friend, "Will she know about...us? Will that bother her?"

About us. Kyle liked the sound of that. "She probably knows," He squeezed Nazri's hand, then loosened his grip to let Nazri decide whether to continue holding hands and winked. "Won't bother her a bit... as long as we don't make a lot of noise at night and keep her awake."

Nazri wasn't sure what the significance of holding hands was, but he knew it had to mean something or Kyle wouldn't be doing it. Later he'd ask about it, for now, he just entwined his fingers with that of his friend. "I will endeavor to remember not to moan too loudly.

Kyle chuckled. "Then I shall endeavor to help you forget." He opened the door himself.

A bell on the door rang as it opened. The two teens were greeted by a myriad of herbal top notes, jumbled together so that it was difficult to identify individual plants. Underneath was the scent of oils, raw alcohol, vinegar used to draw out and concentrate medicinal properties into tinctures, creams, salves, and potions. The walls were lined with shelves containing these products, along with books and supplies customers might use to create their own medicines. To one side was a round table covered in a cloth embroidered with star constellation, and surrounded by five comfortable chairs.

A short, elderly human woman emerged from a door behind the counter. She wore a flowing green and purple tunic over baggy trousers and leaned on a mage's staff that doubled as a walking stick. Her single braid of waist-length white hair fell over her shoulder. "There you are, Kyle. I have a job for you." The way she spoke, without preamble or greeting, gave the impression she was expecting them. "Well, then. Show some manners and introduce me."

"Seer Madraso, this is my friend Nazri. He'll be staying with me for a while."

Nazri didn't quite know what to do in this situation, so he gave a low bow out of respect. "I am honored to meet you, ma'am."

"Heh. Damn right it's an honor." The old woman ambled past him to the table and paused at the chair with the most padding. With the end of her staff, she pointed first to a chair across from it, then at Nazri. "Sit here, friend Nazri. Kyle, be a good boy and make us a pot of tea."

She likes him! Kyle gave Nazri an encouraging smile, then hurried to the back to make tea.

Nazri was fairly sure that the woman being short with him, was just part of an act, especially from the smile Kyle was giving him, but he wasn't certain about that. He sat down as instructed but he was still a little apprehensive. He hoped it didn't show.

Loreta regarded Nazri with piercing brown eyes that held wisdom, curiosity, and no small amount of amusement. "Tell me about yourself, Nazri, Kylandro's young qunari friend. What brings you to Dairsmuid? What is it that you seek in life?"

Meanwhile, in the backroom, Kyle found that the full kettle was already heating, and Loreta's teapot was prepped with leaves. Of course, Loreta was expecting them. He set three cups on the tray along with a pot of honey and waited for the kettle to boil.

"My people as I am sure you are aware, are unified. No, that's not the right word. They are uniform. There is very little individuality. Everyone is supposed to fit into a specific role."

"That is not what I want. I want to be me. And I have certain talents. I can manipulate shadows, though I am not that good at it yet. My people want to lock me up for it. I rather object to that."

"Besides I have fond memories of Kyle and, uh," he blushed an interesting shade of ochre, "and now fonder memories still."

Loreta's gruff exterior slipped away completely. "You can manipulate shadows, hmm? Now, that *is* interesting. No wonder the Qun wants you." She leaned back in her chair, then turned her head and called out to Kyle, "You'll find cookies in the pantry."

Kyle had poured the tea and was just about to bring the tea tray through. He stopped at the pantry and added a paper bag from the bakery across the street to the tray. He soon set the tray on the table between Nazri and Loreta and sat next to Nazri without comment.

Loreta opened the bag and took a rough disk coated in confectioner's sugar from the bag, then handed the bag to Nazri, fixing him with her gaze. "Are you looking for work, a teacher, both, or something else?"

Nazri deliberately kept his eyes away from Kyle though he knew his efforts may have been fruitless in that regard. "I definitely need a teacher, that much I know. I'm a pretty good hunter and could probably make a living that way. You know supplying merchants with meat and such. But I wouldn't mind having something more steady."

"And, I could work with Kyle."

Loreta grunted though anything she might have communicated by the sound was obscured while

she consumed the messy confection. "I can teach you some techniques to enhance your control, although it must be good already to have gone undetected by the Qun as long as you have. The seer's art I practice is generally taught only to women, and it seems your arcane talents lay elsewhere. I will make some discreet inquiries into an appropriate teacher."

"Until then, I have a task that needs doing, that I was reluctant to ask of Kyle alone. But together, the two of you may be able to accomplish it." She turned her gaze finally to Kyle. "Even with two of you, it will be dangerous."

Nazri stood to his full height. "What is it you have in mind? I'm pretty capable and I know Kyle is too. Whatever it is, we can handle it. Especially if you can find the kind of teacher that I need."

"If Kyle says yes of course"

Kyle leaned back in his chair and regarded Loreta warily. Besides ordinary errands, she often asked him to gather herbs and other potion ingredients. Especially plants that grew in areas that were difficult to access, or harvesting was dangerous because of the other creatures that roamed those places. "Before we agree, you'd better tell us what you want."

"I've been asked to prepare a potion that requires a difficult-to-obtain ingredient. A wyvern heart." A frown added additional creases to Loreta's lined face. "Where there is one there are likely to be more, and a wyvern was sighted in the wetlands to the east of town. They are extremely dangerous."

Turning to Nazri, Kyle said, "I think we can handle killing a wyvern if we're careful. What do you think?"

In truth, the qunari didn't know a lot about wyverns. He'd heard about them of course but didn't know much detail. Still, if Kyle was confident. So was he.

"Sure, let's do it. You said they're not loners usually. Do you just need one heart?"

"Young man," Loreta paused to make sure both Kyle and Nazri were giving her their full attention. "Do not underestimate these creatures. Killing one of these beasts will be dangerous enough." She was quiet for a moment, chewing a confection thoughtfully, then added, "If by chance you do kill a second beast, it is possible one of my colleagues would buy the heart, but one is enough for my purposes."

"We'll be careful." Kyle stood up, then went around the table and gave Loreta an impertinent kiss on the cheek. She grumbled but did not pull away. To Nazri, he said, "Let's go."

Nazri nodded and stood to his feet. "Of course, Kyle, let's go. You think we have time for another lesson?"

Here There Be Wyverns

Posted on 12 Apr 2023 @ 7:57am by [Warrior Kylandro \(Kyle\) de Arzo](#) & [Rogue Nazri Arisant](#)

1,674 words; about a 8 minute read

Mission: [Once Upon a Codex](#)

Location: Rivain, Dairsmuid

Timeline: Ten Years Ago

The human and qunari left the seer's home and were headed toward Kyle's place when Nazri took hold of his friend's elbow. 'I'd love to rush back to your place. You owe me my next lesson you know, but do we need to pick up some supplies first? What exactly do we need to go after these things?'

Kyle paused and considered Nazri's question. "Right. Perhaps we should head over to the market first, especially if you need more arrows or other equipment. The most dangerous thing about Wyverns is their venom. A while back I spent an afternoon observing two adult specimens. I was hunting for herbs in a female wyvern's territory, being careful to stay downwind and avoid her. Along comes a male, and I hid. Truthfully, I'm not sure if they were fighting or mating, but when the male bugged off, and the female went to sleep in the sun, I gathered up a bunch of fresh venom and sold it for good coin." Kyle grinned at Nazri. "We can pick up a supply of vials in the market. And while we're there I can stock up on oil for," Kyle unobtrusively palmed Nazri's backside, "your next lesson."

Nazri grinned hugely at Kyle's comment. "Scented ones I hope, applied slowly and liberally."

"Sounds like you have some experience with scented oils," said Kyle with a raised eyebrow. Perhaps Nazri was not so innocent as he'd presented himself. Which was all for the better, Kyle wouldn't need to hold back quite so much. And yet, he was enjoying their student and teacher game. "Your next lesson will start with show and tell, I think."

"I'm up for that," Nazri replied, without further comment. He was indeed as innocent as he portrayed, at least experientially. But he'd injured his leg a year or so before and scented oils had been used to treat it. The massage had evoked, a *reaction* from him, and his imagination had drawn conclusions.

"Are wyverns immune to their own poison, or immune to it? How deadly is it for humans, or my people?"

"It didn't look like either of those two wyverns I saw going at it were bothered by the venom of the other. I'm not sure how deadly it is to humans or qunari, but I suppose it might depend on how much venom a person is exposed to. We can buy venom antidote in the market, just in case. It's made from the venom, I know that much. I'd ask Loreta for antidote, but she doesn't deal in poisons."

His expression turned more serious. "We could get a different type of oil. Flammable. Or would burning them defeat the purpose?"

"Good idea. I'd imagine that killing the wyvern by burning it won't damage the heart or the venom sacks." Kyle gave Nazri another suggestive pat. "And if we purchase scented personal oil *and* flammable oil from the same vendor, we might get a discount."

"A discount might be nice," Nazri said with a sly grin, "all I ask though is we don't confuse the two."

"Not to worry." Kyle returned Nazri's grin. "We'll store the flammable oil with our weapons, and the scented oil on the bedside table."

The pair were just entering the market when the qunari continued, "How long will it take us to get there?"

Kyle paused to consider, his demeanor more serious. "About an hour to reach the wetlands. Then we had better scout the area thoroughly and identify the wyvern we plan to kill. Make sure there aren't any surprises, like another wyvern lurking nearby." He looked up at the sky to judge the time. They'd had a leisurely morning, and with a trip to the market to collect supplies, and another 'lesson'... "We can set out this afternoon, camp overnight, and start scouting in the morning."

The grin returned to Kyle's face as he led Nazri to a stall with a variety of scented oils on offer. "Do you have a particular favorite?"

"I don't," he replied shyly, "I've never really done this before. I just don't want anything, too feminine or fruity. Other than that it's up to you. Any suggestions?"

"Hmm, I recommend you smell different bottles until you find one that appeals to you." Kyle picked up a bottle himself, read the label, opened the lid, and inhaled deeply. "This one is a mix of ginger, nutmeg, and cinnamon. You'd smell like a gingerbread man." Leaning closer to Nazri with a glint in his eyes, he whispered, "Guess which part I'd want to eat first."

Nazri chuckled, "I can imagine two places, I guess you'll just have to surprise me." He wasn't sure if he wanted to smell like a gingerbread man or not, so he picked up another bottle. It had a more earthy, musky odor to it and he quickly set it back down. He sniffed two others; one was a mix of tropical fruits and coconut, and the other that smelled like cinnamon and honey.

He held up the fruit-infused one to his companion. "This one, or the one you picked up. You choose."

Setting down the bottle that smelled like gingerbread, Kyle leaned over and sniffed the bottle Nazri held. "I like this fruity one." Then raising his voice to catch the proprietor's attention he said, "How much for this one, and three bottles of lamp oil?"

The question initiated a friendly and rapid back-and-forth of haggling. A few minutes later coin exchanged hands, and Kyle held three large bottles and a smaller, decorative bottle that he packed carefully into his bag. "What else do you want from the market, Nazri?"

"A new string for my bow," the other commented, "and some arrows with different fletching on them. Not too romantic, I know, but I intend for both of us to come back in one piece."

"Oh, and maybe a bottle of nice wine to celebrate all kinds of things."

"I like the way you think." Kyle took Nazri's hand and led him toward a stall that sold ranged weapons. "I don't know much about bow strings and arrows beyond trying not to get shot, but this vendor has a good reputation. If you don't like her wares, there's another Bowyer on the other side of the market."

Unlike his lover, Nazri knew all about bows and arrows, they were, after all, his weapon of choice and he was quite good with them. The vendor was an attractive, youngish woman with ebony skin and hair short enough that it could have belonged on a man, but her buxom figure did away with any notion of masculinity.

"Can, I help you?" she asked with an accent that was difficult to pin down.

Nazri went on to discuss what he was looking for and after a brief search and a negotiation that lasted a good ten minutes, they arrived at a price.

"Well," he said as they were walking away, "How about that wine?"

"Hmm, there's more than one wine vendor in the market," Kyle considered their options, then led Nazri around a corner and between stalls, stopping at one to buy fresh bread, and another to purchase cheese. They came upon a stall at the edge of the market, less organized than most, where the middle-aged proprietor, Antivan by his accent, was in the midst of making a sale to a woman in a gown and wearing an Orlesian mask.

When their transaction was complete and the vintner promised to deliver the bargained-for case of wine, Kyle said, "Miguel, I'd like you to meet my dear *friend* Nazri." The emphasis Kyle put on the word *friend* implied something more. "We're looking for a wine suitable for a celebration. A private celebration."

"And you're expecting a discounted price," Miguel rolled his eyes. "A pleasure to meet you, Nazri. What are you celebrating?"

Nazri's eyes cut between his *friend* Kyle and the wine seller, "The consummation of a successful hunt," he said with a coy smile.

Kyle found himself unable to do anything but nod and grin.

"Oh-ho! I see. A wine for young lovers." Miguel winked at Kyle and turned to pull two bottles from the crate behind him. "I've just the thing. A red Nouveau! Light, fresh, and fruity."

As Kyle paid Miguel, the Antivan proprietor leaned in and stage-whispered, "This one looks like a keeper, my young friend."

"I think so too." Kyle carefully packed the wine bottles with the bottles of oil in his pack, then took Nazri's hand, and said, "Anything else you want from the market?"

"Oh, there is a whole list of things I want, but I'm afraid we might be arrested for doing them in the market. Besides, I think it's better that our only audience is each other."

"It feels good, by the way, holding hands with you. I'd never get away with this back home."

Of all the things Nazri has told him about his home, not being able to hold hands with someone he liked truly demonstrated its oppressive nature. "Well, here in Dairsmuid, few people will notice, and fewer still would be critical of such a sweet public display of affection."

Kyle looked up at the sky and judged the angle of the sun. "The day is half over. I propose we go back to my place and prepare for our hunting trip. Loreta didn't say she needed the wyvern heart urgently." He pulled Nazri a little closer and lowered his voice. "If you like, we could set off in the morning, and get an early start."

Nazri looked over at Kyle, a coy grin on his face. "I think getting an early start sounds like the easiest decision in the history of decisions. Of course, I don't know how much sleep we'll be getting."

Regarding Nazri with half-lidded dark eyes, Kyle turned toward home, pulling Nazri by his still-clutched hand. "All the more reason for us to get to bed early."

Wyvern Hunters with Heart

Posted on 28 Jun 2023 @ 10:46am by [Warrior Kylandro \(Kyle\) de Arzo](#) & [Rogue Nazri Arisant](#)

1,516 words; about a 8 minute read

Mission: [Once Upon a Codex](#)

Location: Rivain, Dairsmuid

Timeline: Ten Years Ago

Kyle woke slowly from a perfectly contented and dreamless sleep, entwined in the arms of the most amazing young man he had ever known. The previous afternoon and evening was a delicious haze of pleasure and experimentation. Though initially shy and self-conscious of his inexperience, Nazri was a quick learner and enthusiastic lover, observant of the most subtle details of touch and response. With only a little encouragement, Nazri had taken the dominant position to their mutual carnal delight. Kyle pressed his lips to a love bite on Nazri's neck and stretched luxuriantly.

Sometimes Nazri's dreams were a reproduction of what had happened earlier in his life, be that a minute or more than a year. Sometimes that was a blessing, in some cases a curse. That morning it was a blessing. He'd been reliving everything, or at least the vast majority of what had transpired between them in the previous few hours.

He hadn't noticed the nibble at first. It had seemed part of the dream until Kyle gave him a hickey. He sat bolt upright in bed. It took him a few seconds to orient himself.

"Still teaching me new things, I love that Kyle. Do we have to get out of bed now?"

Kyle chuckled softly as he sat up also and nuzzled Nazri's neck. "We don't *have* to do anything. What do you *want* to do?"

"Nothing, well not nothing exactly, but let's just say spend the day in bed. But we do have an obligation to fulfill. So, maybe just the morning? And, I'd kind of like to see what it's like to have you inside me."

Hearing those words from Nazri's lips elicited an immediate hard response from Kyle's body, and he pulled Nazri into an embrace and kissed him with slow, deliberate passion, then drew back to look into his lover's eyes. "If you're sure. We can spend *all morning* doing whatever you want."

"I'm sure," came the almost immediate response. "Just you know, slowly.."

The sun had reached its zenith when Kyle and Nazri exited the city gates. They'd stopped in the market to buy more bread and cheese to add to their supplies. Kyle's shield was clipped over his rucksack, and his sword sheathed and hung from his belt. They walked along the main road for the first part of the journey in comfortable silence. Kyle simply enjoyed his lover's company, the firm touch of their linked hands, and the warm sun on his head. Gesturing with his free hand to Nazri's bow, he said, "What other creatures have you hunted?"

"Well, mostly elk, deer, those kinds of things. For food. About the most dangerous things I've hunted were wolves, and a mountain lion."

"When it comes to hunting game, you have much more experience than I do," admitted Kyle. He

patted the sword at his side. "My weapon is more suited to close range. Though if you want rabbit for breakfast, I'm good at setting traps."

"I did kill a bear once, but I really wasn't hunting it. My Commander, I think he may have been suspicious of me. I was thirteen at the time and had started to manifest some magical abilities. I was trying to keep that secret. I think he sent me out there to test me."

"The most dangerous creature I ever killed was a human," said Kyle, his demeanor thoughtful and serious, but not quite remorseful. "Your Commander was suspicious? That must have been dangerous for you, and not just because you faced a bear. I've heard the treatment of mages under the Qun is horrific, far worse even than the Chantry in Orlais, or Ferelden."

"They treat anyone who doesn't conform, or fit in badly. Just being different was enough to be deemed unfit and worthy of punishment."

"They wouldn't have cared that we fucked around. They'd just consider it a release. Nothing more. Nothing Less."

"But holding hands, connecting to someone emotionally, and I am connecting to you that way, that would be criminal."

"But, I digress. You're right. The worst punishment, the worst treatment is reserved for those who cast magic. I never asked to be that way, but it's just how I was born."

"Now, I'm just hoping to be able to control it."

"You will," said Kyle confidently, then he sighed. "I can think of nothing adequately consoling to offer for what you've been through. I can say only that away from the qun, your future is probably brighter. My own future certainly feels bright, with you in it."

Kyle's last remark brought a smile to Nazri's face, "Thank you for that," he said, "I've never had anyone say that to me before. I feel the same about you. I think I'm starting to fa... really care about you."

Kyle squeezed Nazri's hand, pulling him closer, and planted a kiss on his mouth. The kind of kiss that was both casual and affectionate, a brief between-passion interlude.

"Up ahead is a trail we can follow to a ridge." Kyle gestured just ahead. "It's a bit out of our way, but if we climb it we can get a good view of the entire valley before we begin scouting."

Nazri gave a brief nod of his head, then disengaged his hand from the other man's. He pulled the bow from his shoulder. "Lead the way," he suggested, "I'll cover your back in case there is anything up there."

Kyle headed up the narrow trail a few paces in front of Nazri. He'd done this before but knew that the valley changed, and Nazri hadn't seen the view of the whole valley before. The trail sloped up sharply, and Kyle was soon scrambling up rocks, then climbing the side of a boulder to reach the top. He made the final mantel-shelf move, checked that it was safe on the ridge, then knelt on the edge to help Nazri if needed.

Nazri had watched Kyle climb up the face of the ridge. Half of his attention was on his lover, the other half watching for any danger. Only when he was almost at the top, did he lower his bow, then put it back on his back and start the ascent himself. He almost slipped once, but was able to scramble his way back up. Once he'd reached the top he reached out his hand for Kyle's. It wasn't so much that he actually needed the help at that time, it was more he just wanted to feel the other's hand in his.

Once they were safely standing on top of the hill, he asked. "What now?"

Kyle did *not* stand on top of the hill, but pulled Nazri down into a crouch next to him. "A wyvern might not be able to catch your scent up here on the hill, but if there are any people around, your outline against the sky will be visible for miles." Perhaps, thought Kyle, that awareness was the difference between someone who had killed a person and someone who had only killed beasts.

"Like I said, from here we can see the whole valley, and map it out in our heads. Between us, *you* are the skilled hunter, Nazri. What would you do next?"

"I'd start looking for places, or types of places it was known to inhabit. Do they build nests? Do they live in caves? Then when I found one of those places I'd look for signs of them."

Kyle raised an eyebrow at Nazri's general hunting lesson. "Well, I don't know what the typical habitat for wyverns is, but at least a couple of them live in the wet, swampy area surrounded by this ridge. They look like wingless dragons to me, about the size of a large horse, so we can probably see one from here."

"At least they can't fly," Nazri muttered half under his breath. "And we have a good idea of where they are." He eyed the path that led down into the valley "Okay, let's keep low at least until we move below the ridgeline. Let's try to stay downwind."

It took Kyle a few moments to catch the movement of the wyvern Nazri had spotted, then he followed Nazri down the path. About halfway down the ridge, they passed a flat area recessed from the path and backed by an overhanging rock wall. The remains of a campfire were at least a weak old. "Hunters use this campsite, though it's been a while since I stayed in the area overnight."

"A nice place to retreat to, if we have to," came the reply, "and I wouldn't mind spending another night under the stars with you, but I'd rather get this over and done with. I think we're getting close."

"The sooner we finish the hunt, the sooner we can collect our reward and proceed to a night of

celebration." Kyle grinned. "As you wish."

"I like the way you think. I guess whoever spots it first gets to choose the fun?"

5. Summer Nights in Jader

Adventurer's lives between the events of "Hall of the Phantom Shadow" and "Bann Voyage"

Repercussions part 1

Posted on 14 Jul 2023 @ 7:51pm by [Warrior Martin Josceran](#) & [Rogue Nazri Arisant](#)

Edited on on 14 Jul 2023 @ 7:52pm

3,229 words; about a 16 minute read

Mission: [Summer Nights in Jader](#)

Location: Green Griffin Inn

Timeline: Bloomingtide 9th

After what had happened at the mansion, Nazri was just glad to be alive, and in one piece. He also needed a drink, maybe several of them. Normally, he'd go to the Raven's Roost. After all, that was where he lived, and if he drank a little too much, all he had to do was walk up the stairs and fall onto his bed. But, it had been a long time since he'd drunk so much that he passed out. So, he didn't think that was going to happen.

There was no denying that the Raven's Roost was a great place, but, he was looking for something new and different. The Green Griffin was close to the waterfront and a bar that sailors frequented. It wasn't as nice as the Roost. He could tell that the minute he walked in. To call it a dive bar would be generous. He checked his purse as he moved further into the interior, a haze of smoke hovering above his head. He also checked his sword. Not that he expected too much trouble in the middle of the afternoon, but one can never be too careful.

He sat down at the end of the L-shaped bar and ordered himself a mead.

It had taken a long time but at last, the prey was within his grasp. Imran did his best to hold back his excitement as he navigated through the chairs and tables of the Green Griffin. He hadn't known where the Saarebas was going to be headed so he hadn't been able to prepare, but he was

comfortable with some improvisation. More than that, he relished it; it made the pleasure of the hunt all the sweeter.

He ordered a mead, not because he enjoyed the watered-down swill but because his prey had ordered the same. Once he had his tankard in hand, it was a simple business to open a small vial and pour a few drops into the mead. Four... five... Imran considered, eyed the bulk of his prey, and added a few more drops. It wouldn't kill, but it would sure as hell make the Saarebas when it wore off. His trap ready, the altered mead in hand, Imran approached the prey's table, adding a slight wobble to his gait to make himself look even more harmless.

"Hey," he slurred, putting his tankard on the table next to the Qunari's identical one, "fancy a - hic - game of dice ?"

Nazri had been lost in thought and distracted, something that rarely happened, and he didn't notice the stranger until he was right beside him.

With a start, his hand reached for his stiletto but eased it back upon closer inspection.

"You're drunk," he observed, "sorry I don't take money from drunks."

"D-drunk ?" Imran pretended to be drunkenly offended. "M'not. C'mon. Are you scared of losin'?" He lifted his hand and flashed a pair of dice. At the same time, while his prey's gaze was naturally drawn to the dice, he appropriated the prey's tankard as if it was his, leaving the identical, poisoned drink on the table.

The qunari should have known better. He was suspicious by nature, but he was distracted by Imran's act and by his sleight of hand and missed the switch of his drink.

"I'm not afraid of a challenge," Nazri asserted. "You mind if I check your dice?"

"S-suspicious sort, eh ?" Imran chortled, warming up to his impersonation of a somewhat tipsy gambler. He might even say he was having fun. "Sure thing, g-got nuthin' to hide." He tossed the dice on the table and they rolled and stopped in front of the prey. They were perfectly ordinary wooden dice, with dots burnt onto each face. "I'll even let ya pick the rules. Orlesian toss or Fereldan thirteen ?"

Nazri took a sip of his drink, after all, that's what he'd come in here for, not to be accosted by a drunk, who couldn't hold his liquor.

He made no comment to the other's accusations about him being the suspicious type, after all, it was true. Instead, he examined the dice carefully and was convinced that they were just as the gambler said they were.

"Let's do Orlesian toss then since I get to choose."

"Fine by me," Imran considered a loud burp but decided against it; overdoing it would be suspicious and he needed to stick around until the poison started to work. Grabbing the chair in front of the prey he sat down. "First roll's yours."

He watched the Saarebas unobtrusively as he picked up the dice. With the dosage he'd spiked the drink with, it shouldn't take more than a few minutes before the effects started to show.

Nazri held the dice in his hand, shook them, and tossed the dice on the floor. A two and a four came up. "There you go," he said, "beat that."

Imran took the dice and made a show of blowing on them for luck. As if luck could ever replace true skills. "Here goes." The dice rolled loudly on the table, nearly falling off the edge, and stopped on a 6 and 5. "Hah !" Imran grinned.

Nazri gave the man a confused look, "Point to you," he said. "I think." He took another sip of his drink, but when he tried to sit back down it took him two times to get it on the counter. The first time he missed the edge and it almost fell to the floor.

Imran smiled, and it wasn't because of his score at dice. All was going as planned. "Your turn", he said, pretending not to notice the Qunari's clumsiness, and he tossed the dice back to him.

Nazri was big, not as much as some of his species, but larger than a lot of humans, but he was pretty agile for his size. Normally, he would have easily caught them, but this wasn't a normal situation, though he didn't fully realize it. He caught one of them, but the other fell to the floor.

He stooped to pick it up and almost fell off of the stool. "What the fuck?" he asked blinking his eyes.

Imran scooped up the fallen die and set it back on the table. His prey was almost ripe for the taking. "Are you alright ?" he asked, feigning concern.

The qunari shook his head back and forth. "No, I'm not, I don't know what's wrong with me."

He tried to stand and even made it to his feet before the room started to spin. "You bastard," he spat out in a moment of clarity, "you did this to me. You put something in my drink."

Then he slumped forward leaning against the bar.

Fortunately, the tavern was noisy enough that no one heard - and even if they had, nobody would have cared about the crazy ramblings of a drunkard who couldn't hold his mead. Imran feigned solicitude.

"Had a bit too much to drink? Lemme help ya." He maintained the pretense, even though nobody seemed to be paying them the slightest bit of attention. The prey was in no condition to dispute

Imran's version of events anyway. He slipped the Qunari's arm over his shoulder and guided him out of the tavern.

The fresh air outside was like a slap to the face after the smoky, noisy, and overcrowded tap room. Imran adjusted his hold on the prey, groaning slightly under his weight. Small he may be for a Qunari but he was still bigger than most humans. Fortunately, Imran was no lightweight himself, and the prey was just about conscious enough to stay on his feet.

The tide was low, which meant most ships that were going to leave already had, and those that were to arrive would come in with the rising tide. The docks were left more quiet than usual; the few sailors and passers-by that were still around cut Imran and his prey a wide berth. Prejudice was a wonderful thing, Imran thought when you knew how to use it to your advantage.

The way Imran supported the prey's weight meant that their heads were close together. The prey would be barely able to move, but what Imran said should be able to come across the fog in its brain. Imran tilted his head slightly to whisper in the silvery ear near his mouth :

"Nehraa Qun, tal-vashoth. Nehraa aqun ebra kata Qamek."

OOO Translation: "For the Qun, Apostate. Your service to the Qun demands Qamek."

The words and the fresh air sobered Nazri and brought him to greater awareness, which only made things worse because he knew just enough to know what was going on but was still too out of it to react, or at least to react offensively. There was one thing he could do though and he forced himself to do so. Rather than resist, he slumped against the smaller man. stopped his legs from moving and let his full weight fall on the bounty hunter.

"Oof," Imran grunted as the prey suddenly got much heavier. Growing limp as almost as efficient as struggling back, Imran found himself essentially dragging the equivalent of a two-hundred-pound sack of potatoes. Fortunately, they were not going far - the abandoned warehouse Aristen had secured for the job was close enough that Imran would still manage to drag the tal-vashoth there, with or without his cooperation.

Martin's patrol had been uneventful so far. As usual, his routes included the Alienage and the docks, which were the least popular amongst the Guard so no one was fighting him for them. He hadn't picked them out of some sense of sacrifice. He liked his job and the belief that he could make a positive difference, and by now he'd made friends in those districts. Well, friends and enemies, when he'd made it clear he wasn't taking bribes.

The sun was setting now, casting pink and gold highlights on the sea. Although the docks smelt of rotten fish and other unmentionables and saw more than its fair share of brawls, Martin actually really enjoyed this little stroll along the promenade. Even so, he remained vigilant. His uniform

made him a target, no matter how well he knew some of the people.

He was just about to double back, having seen nothing of note, when the sight of a familiar pair of horns at the corner of a building stopped him in his tracks. He squinted. Despite the distance, he recognized Nazri, except he looked dead drunk and more than a little unsteady on his feet. Martin picked up his pace to try and catch up, just as Nazri and whoever was helping him turned into a side alley.

"Hey!" he called, now running.

The human who was supporting most of Nazri's weight paused, then turned awkwardly. Martin didn't recognize him, and his dark skin suggested he hailed from Antiva or more likely Rivain. A drinking buddy of Nazri's, clearly.

"Yes, Serah?" the man enquired politely, with a slight lilting accent. Nazri's head was lolling over his shoulder, not just drunk but completely passed out.

"My name's Martin, I'm a friend of Nazri's. What happened?"

The man hesitated. He was tall and bulky, looking more like a soldier than a sailor, his skin dark, with amber eyes that darted left and right before settling back on Martin. A feeling of unease crept down Martin's back, though he couldn't pinpoint the exact reason for it.

"He's had a little too much to drink," the man said. "I was helping him back home. I think he just needs to sleep it off, tomorrow he'll be as good as new." Again his eyes darted left and right.

Nazri was small for a qunari, but there was a reason for that, at least when it came to his weight. It was his metabolism. It was higher than normal for one of his race. Which might have wound up saving his life or at least his freedom. He was coming around. His brain was still not firing on all cylinders and he was having an almost impossible task of getting the signal to his limbs to move. But he was more responsive than he was letting on.

His eyes were only open a slit, partially because he couldn't get them to open much more and partially because he was playing opossum, but he noticed another qunari, a lot larger than himself creeping up on his new friend.

He tried to elbow Imran as hard as he could, though he wasn't sure if he even hit him. At the same time, he yelled, "Martin, look out behind you."

What actually came out of Nazri's mouth was a garbled croak more than a real shout, but the alarm on his face and the way his eyes focused behind him made Martin spin, only just barely in time to dodge a small axe aimed at his head. He leaped back, Nazri and the human on his left, his attacker on his right, in an attempt to keep them all in his field of vision. The newcomer was a Qunari - not a small one like Nazri, this one was a hulking mountain of muscles.

Against such a foe Martin's sword felt woefully inadequate but he unsheathed it anyway. The Qunari had two axes, one in each hand, and he twirled them like someone who knew how to use them. He also had a two-hander on his back that he hadn't bothered to unsheathe, presumably under the assumption that he wouldn't need it.

Please do underestimate me, Martin thought. It was his only advantage and not much of one at that.

The larger qunari was angry. He thought things were going to be easy and he was going to drag this heretic back to face justice and see him wearing the chains he deserved. Of course, he was going to have some fun with him on the trip home. Torture was something he found stimulating. He would have eliminated the human bounty hunter. He didn't like loose ends or unnecessary expenses.

Now he needed him, at least for the moment. So dealing with the incompetent fool would have to wait.

He was confident he could take out the puny human guardsman, perhaps too confident. He stepped forward and swung both axes at the man's head.

Martin ducked, only just in time. His smaller size actually came at an advantage because the Qunari had to try and hit him at an awkward angle, but he was under no illusion that this made up for their massive difference in size and strength. At least his longer blade did make up for their difference in reach.

"You do know you're under arrest, right?" he called, mostly to distract his opponent, and then without waiting for an answer he went onto the offensive, a set of moves he'd practiced until he could do them in his sleep. One step forward, spin to the left, feint, step right again, and thrust into the opponent's side.

The qunari had faced many opponents in his time, and though some of the battles had been bloody, he was, up until that time, undefeated. He was sure this time would be no different. "You do know you're dead," he replied to Martin telling him he was under arrest.

The warrior's maneuver worked, at least partially. The qunari was fooled by the feint but was as able to twist his body just enough, so the blow just grazed him. It drew blood, a good deal of it, and it hurt like hell, but it was not a mortal blow.

Martin had not hoped to deal a fatal blow so easily. With an opponent this big, he was going to have to weaken him before he could hope to end the fight. Right now he was playing for time, waiting until the blood loss and pain made the Qunari sloppy. He held his ground, circling around his foe without trying to attack, leaving the initiative to his enemy. Now that blood had been shed, every second that passed was in his favor.

"Walk away now," the big qunari threatened without advancing, "Arisant is a wanted man, a fugitive from justice. I even have a warrant. He's not worth it, he's not worth you losing your life and you're on the wrong side."

A warrant. Martin would have laughed in the Qunari's face if he hadn't been focusing on his defense. A man with a true warrant would have shown up at the guardhouse and asked for their cooperation, and might even have gotten it, depending on what the crime was. "Not sure what side is right or wrong, but I'm pretty sure I don't want to be on the side of someone who thinks abduction and murder are acceptable. There are laws for a reason."

On his left, he heard a grunt of pain but he couldn't tell who it came from. Nazri? Worry churned in his stomach. His friend was vulnerable. He had assumed they wouldn't touch him since he was already out of it but clearly, he'd been wrong, and now time no longer played in his favor. Making a split-second decision, he deliberately left an opening in his defense. See if the Qunari took the bait.

The qunari was big. He was tough. He had two large axes. Normally he was competent, at times, even cautious, but he was facing a mere human, a squishy little thing that had just made a fatal error. So, he stepped in and swung both axes at Martin's head.

Yes ! In his eagerness to finish the fight the Qunari had overextended himself and compromised his balance. Now Martin thanked the maker for all the excruciatingly boring footwork drills he'd done over the years. The steps were as practiced as if it were a dance, dodge left, allow the qunari to stumble through empty air, and strike at his now vulnerable side.

Despite his size, the Qunari was fast. He saw the trap as it sprang and twisted desperately out of the way, while he allowed his axes to continue their trajectory in a circle that ended with Martin's right arm.

Both weapons met flesh. Martin's sword sank into the Qunari's stomach moments before one of the hand axes bit through his leather pauldron, and his sword was wrenched from his grasp as his enemy's momentum carried him to the ground. He fell face first on the cobblestones, only driving the sword deeper into his belly, and lay there, gasping and coughing blood.

As shock waned, the pain started to burn and Martin stared stupidly at his shoulder, and the axe still embedded there. Blood seeped through the leather, the stain growing larger until it reached the edge of the pauldron, and blood started dripping on the ground. Martin felt sick and light-headed with the pain, and he swallowed hard as he pulled at the axe. Fortunately, it came away easily. The wound underneath did not look too bad, although it may require stitches. The pauldron had taken most of the damage.

"Like I said," Martin said to the Qunari, still catching his breath. "You're under arrest."

Nazri. The thought made him turn around in sudden alarm. Where was Nazri, and the human who'd been dragging him away?

Repercussions part 2

Posted on 15 Jul 2023 @ 10:02am by [Rogue Nazri Arisant](#) & [Mage Kalian Winter](#)

2,977 words; about a 15 minute read

Mission: [Summer Nights in Jader](#)

Location: Green Griffin Inn

Timeline: Bloomingtide 9th

The prey's elbow did not quite hit Imran, but the attempt was sudden and unexpected enough that Imran lost his balance and slipped under the Qunari's weight, hitting his own elbow painfully on the cobbled-stoned ground. He grunted in pain and irritation and pushed and kicked at the prey to emerge from under him.

Nazri was moving slowly like he was underwater. The kick connected on his right side. He heard a crack, which could have been a rib, but he was not feeling any pain at the moment, though he was aware enough to figure he would later. As his opponent got to his feet, the qunari, who was still laying there, kicked at the man's left knee, at least he thought it was the left, trying to bring him back down to the ground.

Imran had definitely not expected his prey to have that much fight left in him. The Qunari's foot connected with his knee, making him yelp in pain and frustration - it was not supposed to be *this* hard, dammit! He hopped back on one foot and unsheathed his dagger. The Qun wanted this one back alive, but no one had said anything about *intact*. He hobbled around the prone body so he could come near his horned head without being in reach of his legs, determined to bash his skull in with the heavy pommel of his dagger.

Nazri, through a haze, saw Imran get back on his feet and move toward him. He had something in his hand, the qunari's eyes couldn't focus enough for him to know what it was, but, even in his drug-addled mind, he knew it could not be good. He reached out a hand hoping to grab his opponent's hand, though he would have settled for any other part and hoped he connected.

Imran easily dodged the prey's blind sweep of the hand. Maker, what a pain that tal-vashoth had turned out to be! He knelt behind his head, grabbed one of his horns, and raised his dagger to knock him out once and for good.

For the first time since he'd realized, albeit belatedly, that something was wrong, Nazri smiled, well tried to smile. Only the right side of his face responded to the signal his brain was trying to send, his right lip curling up.

If the bounty hunter wanted his horn, he'd give it to him, or at least try. He reared his head back attempting to headbutt the man with his horns.

Imran had not seen that one coming, the way his victim flailed blindly he hadn't thought he had that much strength left. And he wasn't used to horns being used as a weapon. As it stood he was unlucky, both that Nazri was stronger than he looked, and that he had been leaning so close to him. The horn pierced his throat with the wet sound of flesh being punctured. Imran's eyes widened but no sound came out of his impaled throat other than a gurgle. Only a trickle of blood came out but the moment Nazri's horn stopped plugging the wound, Imran would bleed out in seconds.

For the moment, Nazri was unaware of the damage that he'd caused. He just felt the other man let go of him. He pitched forward onto the grass and just lay there his breathing still irregular.

The moment the horn was wrenched from Imran's throat a geyser of blood followed, some of it splattering on Nazri's head. Imran lifted a hand and opened his mouth, but no sound came out and his eyes glazed over as he fell onto the pavement, unseeing.

"Nazri!" Martin turned around just then and his eyes widened when he saw Nazri's head covered in blood, a lot of blood. He stumbled in his direction as quickly as he could and knelt by his side, frantically looking for a sign his friend was still alive.

The qunari experimentally opened his eyes and a figure swam into and out of focus. "Kyle?" he asked, "is that you? I thought you'd left me. I thought you found someone else."

Oh, thank the Maker. Martin sat back on his heels, breathing a deep sigh of relief. And then he wondered - who was Kyle? Well, never mind that for now. Nazri needed help, urgently. Except he would be difficult to carry at the best of times, and Martin was not at his best. He glanced back at their opponents. The human was dead, whoever he'd been, his throat torn out in a way that turned Martin's stomach. The Qunari was alive but not going anywhere, and he was not a priority now.

"Nazri. It's me, Martin. Can you hear me?" As he spoke, Martin ran his good hand on Nazri's head, looking for any potential wounds under all that blood.

There was a pause of about thirty very long seconds, that at least gave Martin the time to discover that none of the blood belonged to Nazri, or if it did, it was a minuscule amount.

Finally, the qunari did answer. "Martin? Who? Where am I?" He tried to sit up and made it into a sitting position when things started spinning he was hit with a bout of nausea and then fell back down toward the ground.

Maker help me. Nazri didn't recognize him. Martin could only hope it was a temporary thing due to whatever the Qunari and his acolyte had done to him.

"I am a friend," Martin said in his most soothing voice. "I'm going to help you, alright? But I need you to trust me. Can you do that? I need you to get up. I'll help you but I can't carry you, you're too heavy." Satisfied there were no physical wounds he took Nazri's arm with his good hand to encourage him to sit up.

Nazri didn't recognize the man leaning over him, but the voice was familiar. He looked again, Definitely not his first love though he resembled him. He licked his lips and managed to get into a sitting position with Martin's help. Things were still spinning, but they were spinning slower. "That's better," he was able to get out. But, I'm going to need your help to stand."

"Of course." Martin offered him his left shoulder. "Lean on me. We're not going far. Just follow my lead." Neither Nazri nor himself was in any shape to cross the whole town. The nearest safe place would be Martin's room. Hopefully, his landlord, Raoul, would not object. "Come on," he coaxed. "You can do it."

Nazri, with Martin's help, stood on shaky legs. He looked around as they took a stuttering step together. Glancing around them at the prone human and qunari he asked. Are they dead? Did you kill them?"

"Yes. No. I'll explain later. Come on." Martin started to guide Nazri down the alley, groaning under his weight even as he attempted not to jostle his right shoulder too much. Raoul's house was only a few streets away but that normally short distance felt like it had suddenly tripled. Nazri was sagging more and more over Martin's shoulder and he knew that if his friend passed out, he wouldn't be able to carry him.

"Nazri ?" No response. "Nazri, talk to me. Focus on me. Tell me about your home." Anything to keep him even marginally awake.

"I, I live at the Red Rooster. Or someplace like that," came the reply. "Who are you again?"

Martin would have sighed if he'd had enough breath left. "My name... Nggh... is Martin." After this, he was going to be upping his drills in and out of armor. He *clearly* needed to get back in shape.

They hobbled down the street as best they could. Martin really wished they'd run into some colleagues but at this time of day it was shift change and patrols were minimal. They would notice he hadn't come back, but it would be a while before they came all the way here.

"Come on. One step after the other. One more," he coaxed Nazri further. It felt like forever until he saw Raoul's house at the corner of the street, and another eternity before he was finally standing in front of the door. He knocked awkwardly with his elbow, knowing that if he let go of Nazri he wasn't picking him back up again.

The door creaked open, revealing Raoul, who fortunately often worked from the workshop in his backyard. His eyes widened at the sight that greeted him.

"Martin? What...?!"

"Help... Me..." Martin grunted.

Fortunately, Raoul knew when not to ask questions. Without another word, he hedged his shoulder under Nazri's other arm and helped him inside.

"My room," Raoul declared. "We're not dragging that carcass upstairs."

"Couldn't... Agree... More."

With Raoul's help, manoeuvring the Qunari's immense bulk became, well, not easier but somewhat less impossible, and together they got Nazri to Raoul's bed. Thankfully, said bed was made of strong oak and it creaked only a little bit under Nazri's weight.

"We need to get him help," Martin said. "Kalian maybe, or that potion maker Dominic... Dominic something."

"You. Sit." Raoul pushed him into the welcoming arms of a deep armchair. "Stay here. I'll be right back." He paused before crossing the threshold. "And then you'd better have a bloody good explanation."

The qunari was at least aware enough to know that he was in a bed. Not his bed. At least he didn't think it was his bed. But, it was a bed He had mostly been oblivious to everything that was going around him on the trip to Martin's room.

At least the room had quit spinning he curled onto his side and started to snore.

Martin sank back in the deeply welcoming cushions of the armchair. He ached all over and he was probably going to be smearing blood everywhere but as he looked at Nazri's peaceful sleeping face, he couldn't find it in him to care. His eyelids drooped as exhaustion swiftly followed the excitement of battle.

Raoul closed the door behind him and set off towards the Raven's Roost at a brisk pace. As he walked he grumbled loudly under his breath.

"Good thing the kids are still in school... What was he even thinking... Blood everywhere... And a damn Qunari of all things, my mattress will never be the same... Bloody trouble, lodgers from the Guard. I should kick him out. Raise the rent at the very least. Bloody fool. Will give me grey hair before my time."

The Roost was only a few streets away and Raoul's grumbling was far from over by the time he got there and stepped into the tap room. At this time of day, there were few patrons, and the waitress attended him immediately.

"Beg pardon, miss. I'd like to see Messer Kalian. Could you let him know my lodger has found trouble again?"

Dilana, an elf and long-time employee of the Raven nodded. "Of course, ser-"

"Raoul!" Kalian called out as he emerged from the kitchen. He was acquainted with the carpenter Martin rented a room from, and who also hosted Elinowy from time to time. Raoul had two adopted elven children who attended Chantry school with Kalian's niece Iris. "Is everything all right with Fey and Arran? You look worried."

"Kalian, thank the Maker," Raoul exclaimed, relieved to find the mage home. "The kids are fine, thank you. It's my idiot lodger. I swear I'm going to kick him out. He just showed up with a Qunari, both drenched in blood. I'm not sure how serious it is, the Qunari just passed out. In my bed. On my fine new mattress." He heaved a breath, his worry plain to see despite his grumbling. "Martin asked me to get you."

Kalian's smirk at hearing his friend Martin described as Raoul's *idiot lodger* faded into a grimace at the words *drenched in blood*, and he immediately ducked into his father's room across from the kitchen to grab his staff. The qunari in question must be Nazri. "Let's go," he said on his way out the door, then set off for Raoul's house at a jog.

"Right," Raoul said with more than a little relief. He had to run to catch up to Kalian, being some years older and not in as good a shape as the other man.

By the time they reached his house, he was out of breath and promising himself that he was going to have lighter breakfasts henceforth. Thinking about that was better than worrying about his lodger. Martin hadn't looked badly hurt but it was actually kind of hard to tell with all the blood. And the Qunari sure hadn't looked good. And to think other landlords only had to worry about drunkenness or lightly-clad lady friends. Martin had never indulged in either, but he was making up for it now.

"Thank you so much for coming," Raoul said as he opened the door for Kalian and led him across the living room to his room, where the Qunari currently lay.

Nazri was just starting to stir again. He wasn't fully himself, but at least the room was no longer spinning around him and he was just a little queasy. "Where am I?" he asked, "and why am I here?"

Kalian rushed to Nazri's side, taking note of Martin, who collapsed on an armchair. Both of them were, indeed, covered in blood, although most of it seemed to be on the qunari. Kalian started to go over the man's body, to determine how badly he was hurt. Healing magic needed to be used with care around broken bones, which should be properly set first. "Nazri, what happened?"

While most of the blood was on the qunari, very little of it belonged to him. Nevertheless, it took him a few minutes to respond. "Some bastard of a bounty hunter drugged me and took me to his master. There was a price on my head and he was hoping to collect. Thankfully, Martin showed up and saw to it he didn't have a chance to collect."

"You were drugged by a bounty hunter?" repeated Kalian, aghast. Wasn't Nazri a bounty hunter himself? "Anyone, you know?" Despite his blood-soaked clothing, the qunari didn't appear to have any open wounds.

"If I'd known them, they wouldn't have drugged me," Nazri pointed out, "at least I hope they wouldn't have. It was pretty stupid of me to fall for such a trick in the first place.

"There still is a price on my head, they want me to return home so they can put me in chains."

The apostate turned his attention to Martin. The city guard's right leather pauldron was stained a dark red and had been sliced open, and blood still seeped through the leather. Kalian quickly unbuckled the harness holding the pauldron in place and pulled it off with care to reveal a deep cut, still bleeding. "Looks like a clean cut, I can heal it with magic. Might be best if I clean the wound first. What kind of blade did this?"

Kalian waited for a beat for Martin to answer, then shifted his attention from the wound to Martin's face. "Looks like Martin has passed out, which might be for the best." He raised his voice and called out to Martin's landlord. "Raoul? Can you bring me-"

Raoul appeared with a basin, clean clothes, a kettle of hot water, and a bottle of spirits. "Ah. Exactly what I need. Thank you, Raoul." Kalian got busy cleaning Martin's wound. Not looking at Nazri, he asked, "Where is that bounty hunter now?"

"I'm not sure," Nazri replied, "everything is still a little hazy. But he should be easy enough to find. This blood is his and he's not going anywhere. He's dead."

Raoul made a show of putting his hands over his ears. "I didn't hear that," he said as he left the room.

Kalian finished with the water and started to slowly pour spirits over the open wound. Even unconscious, Martin flinched.

"Good to know your attacker isn't still coming after you," said Kalian. He held the wound together, opened his awareness to the fade, and began his healing spell. The muscles and sinews began to knit together, slowly under Kalian's watchful gaze.

When it was finished, he relaxed. "That went well, though Martin's shoulder will be sore, and he should rest it for at least a couple of weeks." Kalian regarded Nazri in Raoul's bed, covered in blood. "It's a good thing we can afford to buy Raoul a new set of bedding," he said, referring to the coin they

made from clearing the mansion. "Are you sure you aren't injured?"

The qunari checked himself over. "Maybe a couple of bruises, but other than my ego, nothing serious. I can pay for the damages to the sheets. Are you sure that Martin is going to be alright?"

"As right as all of Martin ever is. I'll recommend that he take some time away from guard duty. I think he's mentioned that a visit to his family is overdue." Kalian removed the rest of his friend's armor so that Martin would rest more comfortably. "He should be in a bed instead of the chair. I think Martin's room is upstairs."

Kalian opened his mouth to call Raoul, but Martin's landlord chose that moment to walk in. "Give me a hand getting Martin to his own bed? Then if Nazri feels up to it, I'll take him back to the Raven's Roost."

"I think I can make it back alone," Nazri said. He cocked his head as he reconsidered. "I guess it wouldn't hurt to have an escort."

Rings like a bell through the night, part 1

Posted on 15 Dec 2023 @ 8:34am by [Mage Kalian Winter](#) & [Warrior Rhiannon Cadash](#)

2,478 words; about a 12 minute read

Mission: [Summer Nights in Jader](#)

Location: Jader Waterfront

Timeline: Bloomingtide 11th, evening

Kalian made his way through the streets of Jader to the dock area in the early evening, with a bouquet of red roses in one hand, and a box of confections in the other. He was dressed in a new set of clothes, a smart leather coat over a fine white shirt and leather trousers and boots. After the adventure with Rhiannon and their friends solving the mystery of the not-actually-haunted mansion, he was flush with coin for a change, and had splurged.

These last few days he'd been carrying his mage staff - strapped to his back – regularly. Enough people knew – but politely ignored – his status as an apostate, that he was not quite so careful to hide his arcane nature. Kalian still avoided Templars whenever possible. Luckily, any templars he might encounter in the waterfront area were likely there to visit the brothel, and keeping a low profile themselves.

Kalian paused on the dock to admire the *Night's Kiss*. He was not a sailor, but even he could tell it was a handsome ship, with strong lines and graceful curves – not unlike Rhiannon herself.

Nervously, he approached the gang-plank. He'd met Rhiannon's mother before in a professional capacity, as an apostate working for her. Now... he'd be meeting Jessamir again as Rhiannon's romantic partner.

Rhi had been busy since the group had finished their tasks. Though she had seen and talked with and spent some time with Kalian but not very much. An hour here or there. So when she had finally had time, she had let Kalian know. That morning she had finished up her chores and checked on everything that she had needed to check on, then told her mother that her and Kalian were going out for the evening. And for her mother to let her know when Kalian had arrived.

Jessamir had given a nod as she had watched her daughter head below deck to get ready. So when she spotted Kalian coming down the dock. She could see the flowers, the box and what looked like new clothes. She had liked the young man from the first time she had met him. Very polite and respectful though he had a wit about him as well. She could see he had a strength in him as well. Not easily bent or broken. A good fit for her daughter. So when the young man stopped at the gang plank, she motioned for one of the crew. An older dwarf named Harshin, gave a nod. Stepping up to the side he looked over, "Oy, you there. Names Kalian right? Been told to tell ya to come aboard. The mistress Ardoth will be ready shortly."

"Thank you," said Kalian to the crewmember, before heading up the gangplank.

Jessamir sat on a crate near the gang plank. She slowly looked up to where Kalian was at, though didn't look directly at him. "You here my daughter?" She seemed to be squinting and her voice was a bit shaky.

Kalian bowed respectfully to Rhiannon's mother, curious about the slight tremble in her voice. "I'm here because I am lucky enough to spend the evening with your daughter." Jessamir was so similar to Rhiannon, just older. He found himself imagining Rhiannon as an older woman, and hoping he would still be with her to see for himself.

"Rhiannon is a strong, independent woman, and I know she doesn't need to ask your approval to see me. But, uh..." Kalian's brown face took on a pink blush. "I would like to earn your approval."

Jessamir sat quietly as she listened to Kalian. She could hear his commitment to her daughter. Also his boldness. He was correct in thinking that Rhiannon did not need her permission. Though she found it quite interesting that he was seeking it. "You seek my blessing do you." This was a statement, her voice grew stronger as she looked directly at Kalian. "Earning my approval, (pause) you have done this. Protecting her as you did, on your recent adventure." She stood, her mannerisms normal. "It is her that you have to gain approval from." This said with an almost wickedness. "She doesn't give her heart easily. But once she does, it will be fierce, fiery. We dwarfs may be all stoicism when we are with others, when we are alone, with our partners." She gives him a mischievously wicked grin. "Let's just say, you have caught yourself a lioness, Kalian my dear. It is up to you to understand how to proceed." With that Jessamir walks slowly up to Kalian, motions for

him to bend down. She will give him a strong yet warm hug and whisper in his ear. "She is falling for you my son." She then let go.

Kalian grinned and ducked his head at Jessamir's description of her daughter. He was well acquainted with Rhiannon's wild nature when they were alone together, but he could not fathom any polite way to tell Jessamir her daughter was amazing in bed. Kalian dropped to one knee in a smooth motion that was becoming habit and shifted the flowers and confections to one hand so he could return Jessamir's welcoming embrace. "Thank you for your blessing," he whispered back. "I'm falling for her too,"

Rhiannon made her way up the ladder from below. As she steps out onto the deck and spotted her mother and Kalian. Smiling she moved toward her mother and Kalian. "Well, mother, quit trying to run him off now. You told me this morning that you like him. And I quote, "The boy is bold. Chiseled like stone." She chuckled as her crimson eyes sparkled with laughter.

Kalian had just gotten to his feet when Rhiannon emerged from the lower deck like a sea goddess from the ocean. Kalian was rendered momentarily speechless, staring at Rhiannon. If they were talking about him that morning, that was probably a good thing. "Rhiannon, you are beautiful as always."

Rhi gave Kalian a warm smile as she made her way to him.

He knelt before Rhiannon so that he looked slightly up to meet her eyes. Taking one of her hands in his, he turned it palm-up and kissed her wrist, then offered the flowers and confections. "I wasn't sure what kind of flowers you like, and my sister suggested roses. These are Antivan chocolates, enough to share." Kalian tore his eyes away from Rhiannon's crimson gaze to give Jessamir a friendly nod.

Rhi stepped closer as Kalian knelt before her. When he took her hand in his, turned it palm up and gently kissed her wrist, this sent shivers through her entire body. Her cheeks flushed as she looked into Kalian's eyes. It took a moment to realize that he had brought her roses and confections. "These are beautiful. I love roses. And Antivan chocolates, you definitely know how to get to a girl's heart." She noticed Kalian give her mother a friendly nod.

Jessamir gave a small nod in return. Rhi looked to her mother and shook her head. "Alright then. (looks to Kalian) Let us go." She practically pulled Kalian down to the dock. As she walked with him, her tone was casual yet held a lot of curiosity. "So, what did my mother tell you?"

"Well, uh..." Kalian rubbed the back of his neck and glance back toward the ship. "She said I have her blessing to see you. And though she didn't say it in so many words, I get the feeling she wouldn't mind if I spent more time with you. Or even..." He paused to take Rhiannon's hand and waggled his eyebrows mischievously. "If she caught me in your cabin early some morning."

Rhi didn't look up at Kalian till he took her hand in his. A mischievous smile crossed her face as she

felt his warmth and seen his waggle of his eyebrows. "Really now. She said that, did she?." It wasn't a question so much as she will pay for that later. "Well, we will just have to see about that." She gives Kalian's hand a squeeze. With that, "What does your family think. (she gives his hand a couple of light squeezes again) Of this?" Kalian could hear the question, the curiosity, along with a small bit of nervousness.

"My family? Well, you know my niece Iris adores you. She keeps asking when you and she can have a playdate. Tessa and Ben like you, that hasn't changed... Oh. Tessa threatened dire consequence if I forget to invite you to a family dinner this Tuesday - if you're available. And my father Armin, he likes you *a lot*." In fact, both Armin and Tessa had been pushing Kalian to make his relationship with Rhiannon more formal, and had suggestively pointed out that any children he and Rhi had together were unlikely to have magic. Kalian continued walking, still holding Rhiannon's hand, toward the hightown district.

Rhi listened intently as Kalian told her what his family thought of her. A warm smile rose as her eyes seemed to take on a crimson glow of their own. "I can definitely do dinner this Tuesday. I will bring a bottle of wine from my personal stock. (she grins) As for a play date, that sounds like fun. We can make it a girls day." If Kalian looks at Rhi, he can see she is already thinking of things to do.

As the two walked Rhi made it a point to purposely look away from Kalian and grin when ever he would look at her. She noticed that they were heading to the hightown district. "So my darling. Where are we going?"

"It's umm, sort of a surprise. I wanted the evening to be special, and well, Ben helped me make the arrangements." Kalian gave Rhiannon a nervous smile. He wanted to please her, and hoped she'd enjoy the evening. Then he worried he sounded evasive and added, "We're headed to the home of the dowager Lady Randel. She's in Val Royeaux at the moment, but apparently she finds it amusing to allow her guest quarters to be engaged of an evening for a romantic rendezvous, with dinner prepared by her chef, and, uh... overnight accommodation."

Rhi smiled as she listened to Kalian tell her where they were going. She knew that he was a suave and romantic person. She also knew that, from what she could tell, he wanted to please her because he truly cared for her. For Rhi, this made her heart swell. So for Kalian to prepare this for them, Rhi knew that he was special.

Rhi did not say a word. Did not look at Kalian as they walked. She noticed a bench just up ahead, when they got near it she pulled him towards it. Instead of sitting she climbs up to stand on it so she can look him eye to eye. For a dwarf this is not normal behavior. She takes his hands in hers and looks him in his eyes. Hers shining bright crimson red that held a warmth that Kalian has only briefly seen before. Her smile held words back that for a moment made her lips tremble. Her hands gently squeezed his as she spoke. "Kalian, my heart. We have known each other for a short period of time. Yet there is something that I can not explain. I can only say that you have brought feelings out of me that I had only hoped to ever feel. I hope you can see how I feel towards you." She pauses for a moment, "I have a feeling what my mother said to you. (pauses, warm smile) I hope you understand

what my words mean."

Kalian followed Rhiannon to the bench curiously. He recovered from his initial surprise as she climbed up to stand on the bench, appreciating the opportunity to hold her, and look directly into her beautiful crimson eyes. "I've never felt like this about anyone before. I want to be with you, Rhi. I find myself thinking about being with you still, when we're old, and I imagine what it would be like to have children with you." For a moment, the overflow of his emotions shown in Kalian deep brown eyes. But then he kissed her passionately, pressing her body against his, the fact that they were standing on the street in Hightown, forgotten.

Rhi had not been completely sure how Kalian felt about her. Oh she knew that he cared for her, deeply cared. She felt that every time he looked at her. Touched her, held her hand, treated her and her family. Now, as her words set in, she could see that he understood what she had said. It did not scare him. As he spoke words that she had come to believe and had resigned herself to never hear. See in his eyes the deep storm of passion for her that matched hers for him. The tears that were being held back finally broke as Kalian leaned in and kissed her.

Passion was just a word that described a feeling for something or someone, yes the kiss was passionate yet it was so much more. More than that single word could amply describe. For Rhiannon, there was nothing else in this world except the man, this man, Kalian. When they parted, she had to take a few deep breaths as she looked Kalian in his beautiful deep brown eyes. Her tone, low, warm, full of the love she carried for him.

"My Nogazen. My Amoruk rooted Nir unrol cast forth da emberth eron my Kadrel Yoth othok."

The passion and deep emotion of Rhiannon's words bathed Kalian in love and acceptance, even though he didn't understand their precise meaning. Learning to understand and speak Dwarven was a priority for him now. Kalian brushed a loose strand of Rhiannon's hair gently from her beautiful face, and sighed. "Truly, I'm the luckiest man in Thedas. And, I'm a fool for needing to ask, but... what did you just say?"

Rhi gave Kalian a warm smile. "Do not worry love, you will learn dwarf soon enough." There was a bit of devilish fire in her crimson eyes. "For now I will tell you what it means. (Her tone becomes more serious yet still held the passion and love) It means, My love. My heart rooted in stone cast forth the embers of my forge for you." She looks him in his eyes. "Now you must ask my mother what it really means." With that she jumps down and starts to pull him along the way they had been walking. "Alright, you promised me a wonderful night. Not sure how you are going top this so far, but I am looking forward to seeing you try,"

OOC: To be continued...

Rings like a bell through the night, part 2

Posted on 31 Dec 2023 @ 9:29am by [Mage Kalian Winter](#) & [Warrior Rhiannon Cadash](#)

1,030 words; about a 5 minute read

Mission: [Summer Nights in Jader](#)

Location: Jader Waterfront

Timeline: Bloomingtide 11th, evening

OOC: Continued from "Rings like a bell through the night, part 1"

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Rhi gave Kalian a warm smile. "Do not worry love, you will learn dwarf soon enough." There was a bit of devilish fire in her crimson eyes. "For now I will tell you what it means. (Her tone becomes more serious yet still held the passion and love) It means, My love. My heart rooted in stone cast forth the embers of my forge for you." She looks him in his eyes. "Now you must ask my mother what it really means." With that she jumps down and starts to pull him along the way they had been walking. "Alright, you promised me a wonderful night. Not sure how you are going top this so far, but I am looking forward to seeing you try,"

It took Kalian a moment to collect himself as Rhiannon pulled him before he was once again in sync. He wasn't sure why, but the thought of asking Jessamir was scarier than facing a demon. Not that he would ever compare Jessamir with a demon.

Putting all thought of her mother firmly out of his mind, Kalian leveled his full attention on Rhiannon herself. They approached the northwest part of Hightown, where manor houses perched, with balcony views of the harbor and a pleasant sea breeze. Kalian stopped at one such manor house that was indistinguishable from the others except for a red front door. "This is it." He knocked on the door.

A human man in butler attire answered the door. Inside they could see a formal reception area, a stairway leading upstairs, a hallway into the main house, and an open doorway leading to an unoccupied sitting room. "Ah. You must be Kalian Winter and Rhiannon Cadash, our guests for the evening." Without waiting for a response, the butler started to walk up the carpeted stairs to one side. "Follow me."

The butler opened a door at the top of the stairs and gestured grandly for them to enter the suite's main room. In the center was a table set to accommodate dinner for two. Large doors across the room led to an open balcony. To one side was another door that led to a bedroom and bathroom. "Please, make yourselves at home," said the butler as he left, "I will return shortly with the first course of your meal."

Rhi followed the butler and Kalian. The mansion was beautiful. Kalin had done very well. When the doors were open to the suite Rhi stooped for a brief moment. She had never seen such beauty. Feeling Kalian's hand start to pull her she moved to stand next to Kalian. She barely heard the butler

say that he would be back soon with the first course of the meal. Turning to look at Kalian, Rhi smiled her eyes bright with love and excitement. "You my love, have started to impress me." She moved closer looking up at Kalian. "Let's see how the rest of the evening goes." As she stands on her toes.....

Kalian leaned down and kissed her, though this time he managed not to get carried away. "I'm so pleased you like it. Did you know, there's a rumor going around that Lady Randel, the noblewoman who owns this house, started the Randy Dowager Quarterly. I don't know if it's true-"

Just then, the butler reappeared, holding a covered tray. Kalian took a step back from Rhiannon, but kept hold of her hand.

Without comment or expression, the butler placed two bowls of soup on the table, opened a bottle of wine, and poured two glasses, then looked at Kalian, expectantly.

After a moment of confusion, Kalian pulled one of the chairs away from the table and held it for Rhiannon. "My lady, will you be so kind as to join me at table?"

Rhi had not wanted Kalian to stop kissing her but the food would be coming soon. He knew how to get her forge warmed up and he really knew how to stoke her fire. So when he started to talk, it took a few second for her to pay attention. She had about to respond when the butler came in.

Rhi watched as he placed the food on the table poured the wine then stood looking at Kalian. When Kalian moved and pulled out the chair, Rhi gave him a warm smile and made her way over, giving a bit of leg as she did. Once in the chair, "Thank you dear." This said with that bedroom voice. Once the butler was gone, Rhi raised the glass of wine. "To my nogazen. my amoruk. You have given me more than I have ever had. You have brought out feelings in me that I had no idea that I could have ever felt. My forge is yours amoruk."

The way she spoke those dwarven words made Kalian's heart race and his body respond in other distracting ways, but that would have to wait until after their meal. Oh yes, he *definitely* needed to learn dwarven as soon as possible. And yet, she'd just explained that 'my nogazen' meant 'my love' and 'my amoruk' meant 'my heart.' But by the way she said her forge was his, Kalian suspected a dwarven euphemism. He took the other chair and lifted his glass. "Rhiannon, you are *my* love, and *my* heart. It is my great honor to be permitted to... *stoke*... the fires of your forge." Kalian waggled his eyebrows and drank to their toasts.

Rhi raised her glass towards Kalian then drank hers down. Her eyes seemed to glow with the fire of her forge that Kalian stoked. Putting her glass down she smiled, warm, passionate. "Well my amoruk, if you plan on stoking my forge, then let us eat so we will both have the strength for tonight." Her tone held the love and passion of what was to come that night.

"Your desire is my command, my love," said Kalian, his voice thick with emotion. "Dinner first. We have all night for *dessert*."

Thief's Choice

Posted on 22 Dec 2023 @ 2:43pm by [Townfolk The Scholar & Warrior Rhiannon Cadash & Rogue Vasil](#)

Edited on 27 Jan 2024 @ 12:37pm

2,884 words; about a 14 minute read

Mission: [Summer Nights in Jader](#)

Location: Jader Guard Station

Timeline: Bloomingtide 19th

Tags: Sprite, Jhwulfven

"Guardswoman Audrey." The resonant voice of the magistrate carried across the guard station.

Audrey hurried to Magistrate Evrad's office and found him sat behind his desk, his salt and pepper hair and silver beard neatly trimmed, the very personification of fair judgement as usual. What was not so usual was his guest, the dwarven captain of the Night's Kiss, who was perched on the magistrate's desk.

"Audrey, please go and fetch that young thief and bring him to my office," said Evrad.

"Yes Ser." Audrey hurried down the steps to the jail cells, wrinkling her nose at the smell. She missed Martin. After he and his friends exposed Guard Captain Landry and Elder Isouda's plot to assassinate Mother Giselle, Audrey had hoped Martin would take over as Guard Captain, but he'd been called back to his home town, some remote part of Orlais on the border with Navarra. After Landry's corrupted guards were excised, the city guard was left short-handed and many of the new guard recruits were woefully inexperienced.

Jessimir sat quietly as Audrey came in and then left. She had been pleased that Evrad had given the girl more responsibility. She looked back to Evrad, her eyes shining with thoughts and a cleverness that few never underestimate twice. "So this thief. Vasil. Are we in agreement then?"

Evrاد returned Jessimir's smile. "I believe we are. Thank you, captain."

Audrey caught one of those new incompetent guards jeering the prisoner she'd been sent for. "... the magistrate will order your hands cut off, he will. Serve you right, too!" he was saying.

Vasil wiped the blood from one corner of his mouth, the guards had boxed him around some, split his lip, and piled on with some taunting to add to their enjoyment. As for the young thief, he could do little but simply endure it. Smarting off would only make things worse. Although few things could be worse than losing one's hands.

Another guard now showed up, Vasil transferred his gaze to the newcomer, this one was a female.

Audrey shook her head and took the set of keys off the wall. She regarded the young man. Skinny, dirty, defiant, beat up, and maybe even scared, although she guessed that whatever happened to him in this jail was not the worst he'd ever experienced. She unlocked the cell door and handed the keys to the other guard.

"Don't listen to him," Audrey told Vasil. "If that's what happened to thieves in Jader, you'd be seeing a whole lot more beggars on the streets with no hands. Come on, the magistrate and his friend want to speak to you."

Vasil had been kneeling on the prison's stone floor, spattered with blood. He got to his feet without help, determined to show them all he was still defiant. They'd got no confession out of him but he was probably going to be pronounced guilty regardless.

"I don't ever listen to any of you lot," he flashed a saucy grin but obeyed her directions. Like he had a choice in the matter.

Audrey gritted her teeth and took note of the young man's condition and which guards were on duty. She'd be filing her report about their mistreatment of this young man later. She gestured for the thief to walk up the stairs ahead of her. On the ground level Audrey pointed and said, "That office, in the corner on the left."

"Sure," and he left it at that but did as she had instructed. And in they went.

Jessimir sat in the chair, her back to the door. Silver hair of what could be an elaborate braid could be seen just over the back of said chair. On the magistrate's desk sits an extremely polished silver flask with three silver shot glasses. In the reflection you see a female dwarf dressed in red and gold blouse and pants. Her silver hair is up in an elaborate braid. She seems to be sleeping, though you hear her speak. "Thank you guard Audrey. Go please." She waits till Audrey shuts the door. Jessamir shifts slightly and sits up slowly. She looks like she is great pain. "Here, come stand." She points to a spot a few feet to her right. "Need to see." Her voice gruff, old and thick with the dwarf accent.

Audrey was surprised to see that the ship captain had moved, but when Jessamir dismissed her she looked to the magister. He nodded and Audrey stepped out. She had a report to write.

A dwarf woman? Now the distinguished looking fellow behind the desk looked the part of a magistrate but he didn't think the city had any dwarven judges. Besides she didn't look like anyone official. Maybe she was the one whose job it would be to chop off his hands? Dwarves were good

with axes or so he'd heard many times.

With a shrug of bare shoulders he stepped to the spot she indicated and just stood there. The city watch had earlier stripped him down to just his breeches, least they allowed him that much dignity. He was tall, lanky with a thin build but there was a hint of musculature beneath that skin. To the observant, he would not be mistaken for a weakling. His shoulder length hair was scraggly and in need of a good washing. Well, to be frank all of him did. But to a street rat of his sort, a bath was a quick swim in the river or sea. That lean frame of his showed more than one scar of older now healed wounds all probably caused in some violent fashion. It was hard to tell his age for certain, one thing for certain, he had not even started to shave yet.

The look on his face was a mix of resignation but also behind those blue eyes of his, defiance. If any of them expected him to beg for mercy, it was not going to happen. He was far too stubborn for that. He dared to look her right back but said nothing.

Jessimir did not turn to look at Vasil, she seemed to continue to look forward, almost as if she had no idea that he had moved. Her voice gruff, thick dwarven accent, her words broken. "Question have. Know who steal from? How caught?" Her hand on the chair railing shook slightly as she shifted a little.

Who he stole from? Vasil looked confused. But he answered, "No."

As for how he got caught. Well, he almost got away with it but was spotted by passerby then tackled by some do-gooder who should have minded his own business.

"Just my bad luck," he shrugged, the details didn't matter, fact was here he was, a prisoner about to be sentenced.

Jessimir let a slight grin cross her face. *Defiant yet not pushy. Knows his place. Been pushed too much though.* she thought. Looking at the flask she could see Vasil clearly. She could see a few scars here and there. She could also see the more recent bruises and the split lip. Those were more than likely from the guards down in the cells. This brought an anger to her that showed in the tightening of her hands to fists. Shifting again she had a couple of more questions for this young man. Still not looking directly at him, "Why steal? Family?" The gruff dwarven accent was thick.

Why did this woman even care about the why of it? He hadn't expected these questions. No one cared about him anymore since his brother's death.

"I'd spent my last coin. A lad's gotta eat," he answered, "I don't have no family. They're gone....ya know...like....dead."

He wasn't looking for pity. Lots of the poor had it hard. You just did what you needed to do to survive. He hadn't done so badly so far. He'd never had a day of any sort of schooling but he' learned to be a thief and, if he did say so himself, he was a pretty good one too.

"Go ahead, sentence me. Get it over with. I don't grovel to no one," he stated calmly.

The magistrate had leaned back in his comfortable chair to watch the show. If Evrad didn't *know* Jessimir was the complete opposite of a frail old woman with a limited understanding of Orlesian, he was pretty sure *he'd* be taken in by her performance. Now that the young man had asked for his sentencing, the magistrate sat up and spoke. "Let me explain what is happening right now, Vasil. This is a judgement, as you have guessed. You might also think of this as an *interview*."

"Well?" Magistrate Evrad said, looking to Jessimir. "Have you reached a verdict?"

The look on Vasil's youthful features was one of confusion, surprise, when the magistrate turned to the dwarf to pronounce the verdict. What was going on here? Then he listened to what she had to say. Suddenly her speech got a whole lot clearer, better. The woman had been putting him on.

Jessimir listened intently to Vasil's answers to her last two questions. Stealing wasn't his first choice. She heard it in his voice. It was what he knew. He held no issue with being sentenced. He was prepared for whatever might happen. He owned his actions.

When Evrad spoke, she watched Vasil carefully. Sitting up straight in the chair, eyes opened fully, and a respectful smile on her face. She reached out to take the flask in hand and pour the contents into the three shot glasses. Speaking as she did so. "Yes Magistrate Evrad, I have. Now it is up to this young man to decide his own fate." She looks to Vasil, taking one of the shot glasses and offers it to him.

Vasil wasn't about to turn down a free drink. No doubt it was better quality too than the swill he downed in some of the worst dives in the city. He took the glass, nodding, "Thanks."

"I am offering you, shall we say, a limited freedom. You come work for me. You make money, have a place to stay, food and more importantly, you will have your freedom. In return, you pay back what you owe for what you stole. Once this is done, you can stay on and continue to work for myself and my daughter. Or you can leave. Go our separate ways if you like. No strings attached." She looks to Evrad, "Or you can accept what sentence our Magistrate has for you and I walk out this door." She looks to Vasil. "What say you."

This was all nothing like he had been expecting. He was being given a choice in the matter, the woman was offering him a deal? Now Vasil didn't trust people in power. If they had the power to do this sort of thing, they also had the power to change their mind later. Betrayals and backstabbing was as common amongst the rich and powerful as it was among the gutter folk.

And pay back what he owed for all he had stolen? She had to be joking. He had been a thief now for literally years. He stole from a lot of places, a lot of people. He couldn't even begin to recall all such places or even more so, the individuals.

But..... it was a deal. Vasil knew he would be an utter fool to turn down this offer even if it wasn't genuine. He could accept it now and later escape first chance he got if this whole turned out to be something other than she was describing. That brought up an important question she had not dealt with in any detail.

"I see. Ummm, beggin' yer pardon but what sort of work you expectin' of me?"

Even he would be the first to fully admit, his skill sets were almost all that of awell, thief!

Jessimir grinned at the young man's question. She had made deals like this before, many with her crew. She could see his thought process, though it would only be an educated guess as to what he was actually thinking. She set the shot glass down and got down out of the chair. She went from a frail old dwarf woman to one that seemed to be in the prime of her life. "You would like more detail then. I can respect that."

She moved to the corner of the room where there was a small stack of clothes. Picking them up she moved back over to stand a few feet in front of Vasil. "First, put these on before you catch your death." She set the clothes on the desk.

Vasil eyed the clothing, "Umm, thanks. Hopefully it all fits."

Regardless, he'd take it all, better than the rags he had. And the guards had probably tossed his shirt away too. Although Vasil had never exactly been shy when it came to his body or much else, he decided he would wait til he could get a bit more privacy before removing his breeches and donning the new garments.

Turning she moved back to her chair though didn't sit in it. "This is the deal. You come work for me. You get a place to stay, food, and you get paid. I will take a bit out till what you stole from me is paid back. Which shouldn't take too long." She paused for a moment for that to sink in. "Once paid back you can leave my service free and clear. Or you can stay and continue to work for me. As for what you would be doing for me. Security. (paused) You got past what security I have. Which means you are very good at what you do. I would be hiring you to make sure that this never happens again." She looked back to the shot glass. "It is your choice Vasil. And I hope you choose wisely."

Security? Wasn't that like being some sort of guard? He wasn't sure he would want to do that sort of thing. But still the offer was too good to turn down. Especially given what he had walked into this room expecting.

He did not hesitate but replied, "I'll do it, I'll take up yer kind offer. When do I start?"

"Oh...and what do you want me to call ya?"

Jessimir gave a quick nod. "Once you change you start. As for what you can call me. Captain is fine." She will wait till he puts on the clothes.

Here, now? Alright, if that's what she wants. He gave a shrug then got to changing. He turned around so they only saw his butt and dropped the breeches, kicking them aside. Then he calmly proceeded to put all the clothes on, they were a bit baggy on him but loose fitting wasn't always a bad thing. He'd find a belt for his waistline. Once finished, he turned about again and bowed like he was some sort of gentleman at a ball. Not that he had ever been to any fancy ball in his life.

"At yer service, cap'n," he grinned.

Once done she will motion for Vasil to take the shot glass. She will look to the Magistrate and motion to the other shot glass. Raising herd, "By stone. By steel. By the spirits of our ancestors. This deal is done." She will drink the shot down, turn the glass upside down and place it on the table.

Vasil took up his assigned shot glass, raised it on high, declaring, "What she said!" Then drained it in a big gulp making a bit of a face upon swallowing it. Stuff was strong but smooth. One could get used to that.

He turned his glass upside down then too.

Magistrate Evrard held up his glass in salute to Jessimir, then to Vasil. "Not many young men in your position are afforded an opportunity like this. Mind yourself, and see that you don't end up in my jail again." He tipped the contents of the glass back, swallowing savoring Jessimir's excellent choice in liquor, then set the glass upside down next to hers.

Seeing Vasil take the drink, he did better than most usually do. This made her smile. The Magistrate did better, though the two had been friends for a while and she has shared her spirits with him before. The glasses set next to each other, all upside down, Jessamir could see that there was nothing underneath. Giving a nod she looks to the Magistrate, "I am sure the only way this young man will grace your presence again is if he is representing myself or the Night's Kiss. Thank you Magistrate. We will have to do dinner soon." Jessamir gave the man a mischievous grin and a quick wink. Turning to Vasil, "Let us go Vasil. We need to get you settled on board the Kiss and introduce you to the crew. Then get you a place to stay in town as well." With that she will start heading out.

"Yes, captain," Vasil nodded, already thinking about a ship? He'd never been on one before. Should be interesting.

COMPLETE

Kithris and Katya

Posted on 02 Jan 2024 @ 10:24am by [Townfolk The Scholar](#) & [Warrior Katya Charbonnet \(Sharbon-ay\)](#) & [Mage Kithris Sabrae](#)

2,084 words; about a 10 minute read

Mission: [Summer Nights in Jader](#)

Location: Jader

Timeline: Bloomingtide 10th

Miss Catherine's orphanage was a place of comfort and refuge, a safe and nurturing place for children who'd lost or perhaps never known their birth parents to learn and grow, and simply enjoy childhood.

It was also noisy, boisterous, and busy, where two young adults who were attracted to one another found it difficult to talk and get to know each other.

Miss Catherine was standing in the pantry, regarding an impromptu crayon mural on the wall made by two of her more rambunctious charges, when she heard Katya and Kithris preparing to go out. She met them in the kitchen, and saw that her daughter and new friend had both taken extra care with their hair and clothing. "You both look lovely. Are you two going out on a date?"

Katya blushed. "Thank you mother. Yes we are! A nice dinner then maybe the theater or maybe just a walk in the park! Not sure yet. We'll see how we feel after dinner!"

Kithris had been a little worried about how Katya would react to seeing her in more of a dress than in her leathers. So when she came down from getting ready she saw the look in Katya's eyes and a warm blush crossed Kit's face. Yet seeing the warrior woman took Kit's breath away. She made her way to stand near this beautiful woman, she reached out to take her hand. So infatuated with Katya, Kit barely heard Miss Catherine say how lovely they both look. Nor Katya's reply that yes they do or what Katya's suggestions were. Her voice was low, wispy, "Park, theater, dinner,.....yes. Thank you Miss Catherine."

Kithris let out a breath she had not realized she had been holding. "You are beautiful Katya." Warm, wonder, excitement could be heard in her tone. "I say we find a nice quiet place to eat. Then we can let the fates decide from there."

"And you are a vision my dear Kit! Let the fates decide. Why not? I like that idea! So do you have any place in particular you want to go to eat?"

Kit blushed as Katya gave her a complement. It took Kit a moment before she could respond. "There are a few taverns, though someplace that serves a really good fresh fish or venison would be good." She puts her arm in Katya's. "When you are ready vhenan. (heart)"

"I am indeed my dear!" She takes Kit's arm. "Let us away my darling! Mother, I will see you later." she

says as she kisses her mother good night. Let's go beautiful one!" Katya said with a smile. With that they were off!

As the two left, Kithris could not help but feel a sense of calming yet excitement at the same time. The butterflies danced in her stomach as the two walked arm in arm. If anyone was looking they would see that there was a joy in her step. For the first time, in a long time, Kithris Sabrae felt wanted. "You know, I was a little nervous about today, when I got up this morning. I still am, if just a little. You have a calming effect on me. Let's me be me. Thank you for that."

Katya smiled. "You are welcome. you fulfill a longing in me. It can be difficult to find someone to be in a relationship when you spend most of your time fighting or at the orphanage. It seems few women are looking for that kind of woman. You however seems to accept me as I am and that makes me feel good and happy. I too feel settled. Perhaps for the first time in a very long time!"

Kithris drew closer to Katya as they walked. Her eyes flashed a light green as her face turned red. "Well, I am a sucker for a beautiful woman who not only can take care of herself and has a soft spot for children."

"Well, fortunately for you my dearest, I am that kind of woman! I've always known I was unique. Not a typical girl. Even before I discovered I liked other women. I was never one to shy away from danger, especially when it meant protecting the other kids. From what mother tells me, my father was the same way! Always trying to protect innocent people!"

Listening, Kit knew that she had found someone she could let herself be herself and she would not be judged. "Protecting the innocent has always been something that I have believed in." Kit paused for a moment then looked up at Katya. "So let us find something to eat then we can go get lost in our....." She flashes a brief devilish grin.

"Getting lost sound wonderful!" she looked deep in Kit's eyes! She found compassion and deep caring. Things that were important to her. It is amazing how she and Kit had hit it off. It really felt so right with this lady! "Do you have any preference as to place to eat?"

Kithris gave Katya a warm smile. "Somewhere that has a nice venison or maybe fish. With a good wine." She gave Katya a devilish grin. "Then we can go from there." This with a musical giggle.

Katya smiled. Kit was undoubtedly special. "Well I know a nice place. It has good food and great wine. I think we should start there! It's called the Snobbish Cats Inn! Not too far from here! "

Kithris gave a smile. "The Snobbish Cats Inn. Well that is an interesting name." She kept her arm intertwined with Katya's. "So how do they know that the cats are snobbish? The cats that we have in the camps are definitely not snobbish. Noble they are." Her tone was one of playfulness yet a bit of curiosity.

"Really? well I've known several cats that were quite snobbish! My guess is whoever founded the inn

had cats that were snobbish. Either that or they just liked the name!" Katya said with a chuckle. "With cats, you never know! They can be wonderful companions or think they own the world!"

Kit laughed a little. "Very true, never know with cats." She gives Katya a smile. "I will have to show you our cats someday."

As they walked it didn't take long to make their way to The Snobbish Cats Inn. It looked very nice. The sign out front was of a cat with its back to you with its head turned just enough to make it look like it thought it was better than you. Kit looked up at the sign and smiled. "I like the sign. (she looked to Katya) Let's eat."

Katya smiled and opened the door for Kit. "After you my dear!" she let Kit go first. She followed Kit in. "The place looks nice. I don't know about you but I'm hungry," she growls softly in Kit's ear.

Kit made her way in. Her face quickly turned a crimson red when Katya whispered in her ear. "Yes this place is very nice. Though it does not compare to you my sweet." Kit will take ahold of Katya's hand as she makes her way to a table near the back.

Katya followed Kit back to the table. "Flattery will get you...everywhere my dear!" she said with a wicked smile. "So what to eat and what to drink? I think roast beef, gravy and potatoes would be good. Maybe some mead to drink? what do you think darling?"

Kit grinned when Katya made her comment. As they sat, Kit made sure to sit so that the fire light shown on Katya. She watched as the fire light danced across Katya, making the woman's eyes sparkle, showing the highlights in her hair, and making Katya skin glow. *God's this woman is beautiful*, she thought to herself. She barely heard the woman tell her what she was thinking for dinner. It took Kit a moment to realize that Katya had asked a question. "Mead, yes, mead sounds good."

Katya laughed. "Oh my sweet Kit. You haven't heard half of what I said have you? You are adorable you know that! Oh Kit! You are positively enchanting!"

Kit blushes and laughs, "Well if you were not so beautiful. You me all, how you say (pauses) girly inside. Am I saying it right?" As she reached across the table to take Katya's hand in hers. She shakes her head slightly "Oh that, that sounded bad didn't it."

Katya smiled. "No you are fine. That's just fine darling. I know exactly what you mean. I feel the same way! You make me feel so special. It feels so right with you. You make me feel complete. You are wonderful. It's nice to be in the company of such a lovely lady. I want to spend a lot of time with you. I think we have something special Kit! I want to be with you always!"

Kit blushed. She had only ever felt this way once before. Especially with a human. Usually a very reserved person, Kit was once again thrown out of her comfort spot. Yet it felt right. She knew that this woman meant what she said. "Katya, I want to tell you something. This is something that I have

only ever said to one other." She shifted so that she could be closer to Katya. She takes Katya's hand in hers. Her tone soft, the musical tone light yet held a passion and warmth in it. "Ar lath ma, vhenan."

Katya felt a warmth. She suspected what it meant but wasn't sure. "Kit, I'm not sure what that meant but it sure sounded good when you said it!" she looked deep into Kit's eyes and saw a beauty. A beautiful woman with a beautiful heart. She had never really felt this way about anybody before. Kit had truly enchanted her. It felt so right with her.

Kit laughed a little. "It means, I love you, my heart." She leaned in to give Katya a kiss.

Katya smiled and returned the kiss. "I love you too. You are my heart as well."

After a brief kiss Kit sat back and felt the blush still on her cheeks. "Alright vhenan, let us eat so we can have dessert."

Katya chuckled. "Indeed my love. Let's eat!"

The food came and dinner was eaten. Kit was quite quiet during dinner. She kept looking at Katya and smiling. The food itself was wonderful. The waitress came back by, asked if they wanted dessert, and said that she would be back in a few to take their order. Kit gave a nod and then looked at Katya. "So what sounds good for dessert?"

"Ooh chocolate cake. Absolutely! Gotta have some chocolate!" Katya replied.

Kit grinned. "Chocolate sounds good." She tilted her head slightly as she looked at Katya. Kit's eyes flared green briefly as the magic in her seemed to want to show how she felt. She had almost forgot that her magic had at times tied itself to her emotions. She hoped no one had noticed. Kit didn't want to have an issue with the templars. She closed her eyes briefly, took a few deep breaths to calm herself down, then looked at Katya. "Is this the place that has that death by chocolate cake? I had heard it was really good."

"OH it is and yes they have it here. Let's order it and together see if we can finish it off," Katya said with a wicked smile.

Kit gave Katya a warm smile. "That sounds good." When the waitress came back by Kit ordered the cake and two forks and more wine. When the cake finally came, Kit was impressed. Kit had never seen anything like it. "This must be what decadent means." Kit had had chocolate before, though very rarely. Not one for human cities to often, this has been the longest she had been in one. Though Jader had/had been more accommodating than most. It also helped that Katya was there as well.

Once the waitress left Kit looked to Katya, picked up one of the forks and cut off a small piece. Taking the bite, it was almost too much for Kit to bare. So rich yet the flavor was so good, she let out a low, "Hhhmmmm." As she looked to Katya.

Katya took a bite and was in heaven. This was wonderful. "Ohh, this is wonderful! This is almost heaven!"

6. Bann Voyage

Mother Giselle and Lady Seryl ask our heroes to travel to West Hill Bannorn in Ferelden. Rumors circulated that Bann Franderel of West Hill had acquired a potentially dangerous relic for his collection. The lone messenger Giselle and Seryl previously sent to investigate has not returned.

A Canticle for Jader

Posted on 18 Jan 2024 @ 2:55pm by [Mage Kalian Winter](#) & [Warrior Rhiannon Cadash](#) & [Warrior Katya Charbonnet \(Shar-bon-ay\)](#) & [Warrior Knight-Lieutenant Lady Alexandra Baudelaire-Laurent](#) & [Rogue Elinowy Ursulas](#) & [Rogue Vasil](#) & [Mage Kithris Sabrae](#)

3,551 words; about a 18 minute read

Mission: [Bann Voyage](#)

Location: Jader chantry

Timeline: Bloomingtide 19th

The chantry was always open to the faithful for prayer and contemplation, and services were held daily. But a greater portion of the Andrastrians of Jader gathered on the first day of the week, when Mother Giselle herself presided. The familiar ritual, ornate décor, statues representing the different aspects of Andraste, and the scent of beeswax candles and incense, was comforting to many.

Kalian sat impatiently at the end of a chantry pew, several rows from the front. Armin, his father, sat to Kalian's left in his wheeled chair, and Iris Kalian's four-year-old niece sat in the pew with him on the other side. Iris was paying no more attention to the service than Kalian, her focus riveted on the toy pony in her lap, an ingeniously robust representation made of soft fur and carved wood that Rhiannon had given her. The sermon was nearly over, then there would be singing, and then the service would be done.

Kalian's attention was drawn to the front pew, where Knight Captain Joseph Dunbar sat, apparently enraptured by the sermon being delivered by his long time friend, Mother Giselle. The Knight

Captain was an older man with gray hair who was nonetheless known to work his recruits hard in the practice yard, and was by all accounts very capable with a sword. Other Templars sat with him, including the new one. A pretty blonde Knight Lieutenant, rumored to have come from Kirkwall.

Rhiannon did not follow the teachings of the Maker. She barely followed the Dwarven practice of Paragons and returning to the stone. So this, this was definitely different than anything she had ever experienced. Still she thought, as the sermon was wrapping up, that the singing was good. Her problem throughout the whole thing was that she couldn't stop glancing at Kalian. That night.....oh that night at the baroness's place. Just that thought made this stout dwarf blush.

Yet there was a damper on her mood. No matter how much joy the thoughts of her Kalian brought to her. It was the new Templar that had been brought in. This Knight-Lieutenant Lady Alexandra Baudelaire-Laurent, this woman who could make her life.....well take her life away from her. Anger flared inside the dwarf. Stoked with the bellows of dwarven determination. Rhi's crimson eyes shown with a passion that if anyone looked at her, would know to stay clear of her and who she loves.

Kalian reached for Rhiannon's hand and held it. Ever since the Summerday festival, when Elinowy had nearly died and he had outed himself as an apostate in front of all of Jader including Mother Giselle and Knight Captain Dunbar, Kalian worried that mage hunters would come for him, and how that might impact his extended family and friends. Mother Giselle had granted him dispensation, and Dunbar had honored her wishes. *So far.*

The rows of red robes in the choir section provided some anonymity for sister Elinowy, still her height made her quickly identifiable to any with the knowledge to seek her out. Regardless she considered herself just one of a multitude of voices proclaiming the Chant to the corners of the world. Tucked in line with her sisters it reaffirmed her beliefs, just a voice in a sea of flaming crimson. She stood listening to Mother Giselle's homily, silently praying that the Maker's word might be heard from the voice of the venerated woman. She felt the familiar shudder through her being as Giselle spoke of the Maker's love for his bride. Although she knew the Maker had taken his leave of the world until all should turn back to him, she still fervently believed she could feel his presence in the service.

As Giselle closed her reflections for the morning, the choir began the benediction chant. Elinowy's eyes closed as she felt the thrill in her soul as the words of the Maker flowed forth from her.

"And the stars stood still, the winds did quiet, and all animals of earth and air held their breath. All was silent in prayer and thanks.

Let him take notice and shine upon thee, for thou has done His work this day.

The path of righteousness is full of hardship, but the Maker smiles upon its travelers.

And Andraste came unto them saying, "Though the danger great, the mountain high, have faith. For the Maker listens and smiles upon us."

Let each look after his neighbor, and he will be looked after in return.

For a foundation built of stone, marble, or any precious metal is worthless if faith in the Maker is

absent.

And Eileen spoke unto the masses, "My hearth is yours, my bread is yours, my life is yours. For all who walk in the sight of the Maker are one."

Let all repeat the Chant of Light. Only the Word dispels the darkness upon us."

As the vocal tones of the chant resonated off the great stones of the building, the service came to its close. Elinowy prayed that many would hear and repent to the Maker's love. Her eyes opened as she surveyed the crowd of the faithful. The powerful and wealthy in the front, and the common people gathered behind them. She made out the familiar stance of Kalian by his Father's chair. She smiled toward him. She rejoiced he kept to his promises to attend the Chant each week. She held out hope for his soul.

It wasn't her place to question orders. It wasn't her place to question the will of the Chantry. Yet, Lady Alexandra Baudelaire-Laurent, Knight-Lieutenant of the Templar Order was confused. She had been brought to Jadar for the purpose of hunting apostates and now, the Knight-Captain had told her not to go after a known Apostate, a self-admitted one at that.

It made no sense to her. Shook her to the core. She knew her duties and her vows.

She walked with the Knight-Captain at the end of the service, striding besides him.

"Knight-Captain, you brought me here to hunt Apostates. Yet you allow one whom has freely admitted to his Apostasy to roam free? Forgive my asking, Knight-Captain, but I must know why, aside from the edict of the holy mother, Giselle?"

She turns her head as they walked to face him, whispering so that only he may hear her.

"Transfigurations 1:2: Magic exists to serve man, and never to rule over him. Foul and corrupt are they Who have taken His gift And turned it against His children. They shall be named Maleficar, accursed ones. They shall find no rest in this world Or beyond. This goes against the tenants of our very order."

"Oh. Is *that* why I brought you here." Joseph stopped walking and faced Alexandra. "Knight Lieutenant. I must assume you are lecturing *me* about about the Chant because of Kalian Winter." He turned back toward the pews where a dwarven woman rumored to be the apostate's lover was helping him tuck the small child of his sister into his disabled father's arms. "Since he did not use magic during the service or otherwise give any indication of his mage status, I must assume you've been wasting your time listening to barracks gossip."

"This isn't Kirkwall, Lieutenant. Your vocation is to protect the people of Jader from magic. Any Templar here could apprehend Kalian easily, no hunting required. That one has, so far, used his magic to serve the people of Jader. He saved Sister Elinowy's life and helped save Mother Giselle's

life too." Joseph was quiet a moment, then shifted his gaze from the apostate in question back to Alexandra. "And yet, we *do* watch him. Edict or no, I assure you we will act if necessary."

"As you decree, Knight Captain."

She responds professionally, turning to resume walking with the Knight Captain.

As the Chantry sisters filed out from the Sanctuary, Elinowy stepped out and walked into the main nave of the church. She could see Kalian preparing his father to leave. She looked forward to greeting them and expressing her appreciation of them attending the service for the morning. She enjoyed being around Kalian. She owed him her life, twice over, a debt that was never satisfied by merely watching over his spiritual development. Perhaps it was the bonding while being healed by him, but she felt a strong draw to him. She understood he was currently involved with the dwarf Rhiannon, and she was not seeking a mate, but there was still this feeling she couldn't explain. She was almost near enough to catch his attention without drawing undue notice within the Chantry. But as she started to raise her arm to wave, she heard a familiar voice.

Knight Captain Dunbar called out to the flame-haired Chantry sister. "Sister Elinowy? Please join us, I'd like you to meet our new Knight Lieutenant."

Elinowy looked to the Knight Captain and realized Kalian would have to wait. She shifted her face into a practiced serenity as she turned to approach the templars. "May the blessings of the Maker be upon you Knight Captain." she said with grace. She smiled to the tall blonde woman standing dutifully at his side, raising her hand with a sign of blessing. "May you partake of the maker's affections. Are you new to Jader Knight Lieutenant?" she asked.

"And may the Maker's light bless you, Sister." The Knight Lieutenant responded with her own sign of the blessing of the Chantry. "Jadar thus far has been a most...interesting posting, Sister. I do look forward to exploring it more."

The scarlet clad sister smiled. "The Maker has lead me to remain here for some months now. I know most of the city, but it still continues to be inspirational and heartbreaking. So many need to hear the Chant, so much desperation, but still a strong community. I have found many virtuous and reliable people here."

She looked the blonde woman in the face with the searching gaze that seemed required by those in sacred orders. "Where have you served Knight Lieutenant? I hear a familiar Orlesian dialect," she said with a smile.

"I was stationed for a time in Val Royeaux at the white spire during my training, My Family is from the Dukedom of Drakensommet where I am heir to the Grand Duke. I have served at Therinfal Redoubt and the Starkhaven Circle in Kirkwall under Knight Commander Meredith."

Katya loved to attend these services. Especially when Mother Giselle was there. She had asked Kit to accompany her and she agreed. She didn't care what others thought of her. She had grown up in the orphanage. People had always looked down on her. Now that she was considered one of the elite, it didn't change anything. She loved Kit and Kit loved her. That was all that mattered. She smiled as she listened to Mother Giselle. It was scary to think not that long ago she was the target of an assassination attempt but everything was fine now.

Kit wasn't sure what to expect when she walked in. When Katya asked for her to join her for the sermon, Kit agreed. She had to admit that she had been curious as to the shems did inside their churches. Oh she had heard the chant before, even thought some of it made sense. Yet there was the problem of her being an elf and an apostate. She knew that Katya would protect her with her life. She, Kit would hurt anyone who dared hurt Katya.

Kit shook her head slightly, ridding her mind of those thoughts and focused on Katya. She watched the woman she loved singing along and chanting along with this Mother Giselle. She could see how much this meant to Katya, could see the joy it brought her. To see this brought a warm smile to Kit's face as she shifted to be closer to Katya.

Katya loved it when Kit was close to her. She was so in love. She knew that Kit was her life and she would do anything for her. Woe to the person who tried to hurt her for they would face the wrath of Katya. As it was, she made Katya feel so wonderful. Truly, Katya felt Kit was the missing piece to complete her life.

With Rhiannon's assistance, Kalian helped Armin maneuver his wheeled chair towards the outer chantry doors with Iris on his lap. The chair had been designed and built by a local dwarven craftsman, and Armin needed no help in and around his home at the Raven's Roost. But the cobblestone road from the Raven to the chantry and the chantry stairs were a challenge.

The double doors were propped open for the moment, and members of the congregation lined up to greet Mother Giselle and Lady Seryl as they dispersed. Kalian waved to Katya and Kithris. *They make such a great couple*, he thought. *That reminds me, I need to talk with Rhiannon about how I know Kithris*. He looked for Elinowy, but she was speaking to the Knight Captain and his new lieutenant.

Rhi had helped with Iris and then helped Armin with his chair. Rhi was very impressed with the craftsmanship. She made sure to push the chair where Armin wanted to go while making funny faces with Iris and talking with Kalian. "I have to say, it was interesting. Not quite sure on how it all works but interesting none the less." She gives Iris a little growling snarl then laughed. "We seeing Mother Giselle?"

Iris giggled, then yawned just as Kalian's brother-in-law appeared in the doorway and she called out "Papa!" Ben, a tall burly friendly man, thanked Kalian for looking after his daughter for the morning,

then began helping Armin maneuver his wheeled chair down the chantry steps.

In answer to Rhi's question, Kalian said, "Yes. Now that the local Chantry knows I'm a mage, I think it's reassuring for everyone to see that I'm still just... *me*." He sighed. *Just me and not an abomination*, he thought. *Seriously, how could anyone believe he – or any mage for that matter – would be so stupid as to try and make a deal with a demon?*

Rhi took ahold of Kalian's hand, gave it a squeeze. "A man." This said with love.

Kit held Katya's hand in hers as they left. She felt different, not bad or anything, just different. What Mother Giselle had said made some sense. Still there were things that she wasn't sure about. Though for her it didn't much matter. She was just happy that it made Katya happy. Looking up at the beautiful woman next to her she smiled warmly. "Thank you darling for bringing me. Are we to say hi to Mother Giselle now?"

"Yes darling we are. I want to introduce you to her and I want to say hello to her. " she squeezed Kit's hand lovingly. "I'm pretty sure she'll like you! I know I do." she said with a smile.

Kit gave Katya a smile. "I hope she does."

Rahvin had stood in the back of the chapel during the sermon. An Andrastrian by birth, he was not a religious man. He believed though he didn't practice. When the service was over he stepped out immediately and stood off to the side as the acolytes and Mother Giselle came out, followed by the parishioners. He stood patiently for the line to finish before he would request to see Seryl and Giselle. What mission would they have sent Jaslyn on.

With grace and gentle manipulative skill honed by years of practice, Mother Giselle guided parishioners toward the chantry doors and Lady Seryl ushered them out until only a strategic select few remained. Katya with Kithris, and Kalian with Rhiannon, waited patiently. Giselle called out to the three near the chantry's rear exit, "Knight Captain Dunbar, Knight Lieutenant Alexandra, and Sister Elinowy, please join us."

Elinowy's attention was pulled away from the conversation by the gentle request of Mother Giselle. "Dear friends, let us see what happenings are about." she stated as she stepped back to turn the group toward the elderly sister.

The Knight Captain bowed his head to Sister Elinowy. As the sister turned away, he spoke in a low voice to Alexandra. "You are about to receive your first official assignment, Knight Lieutenant."

Mother Giselle acknowledged the presence of Warden Rahvin with a grave nod and added, "There is a matter of importance Lady Seryl and I must speak to you all about. We are awaiting one more –" She paused as Jessamir Cadash, captain of the Night's Kiss, strode into the chantry trailed by what appeared to a slim member of her crew.

Seryl shut the door behind the newcomers, then she stood next to Mother Giselle.

Rahvin gave Mother Giselle a small bow in return. His attention turned to the dwarf and a young human that just came in. He had seen the dwarf woman before, knew that the other was her daughter. The young male though was new.

"I see." Katya said. Somehow it just felt disappointing. She had hoped for a more social occasion. She wanted to show off Kit but if Lady Seryl and Mother Giselle thought it was important, then she'd listen. It didn't escape her notice that Rhiannon's mother had come in as well. It would seem it involved the Night's Kiss whatever the problem was. "What is the problem and how can we help?"

Kit stayed close to Katya and stayed quite."

Elinowy was intrigued to see her usual compatriots remaining at Mother Giselle's request. The reputation of their company had grown with their recent exploits. She stepped into the gathering circle of friends and elves. The presence of the Warden was ominous and bode gravitas to whatever was to be revealed. Elinowy waited patiently, praying for the Maker's guidance in the unfolding events.

Vasil reminded himself of some pet dog loyally trailing it's master as he followed behind Jessamir...oops...Captain. He was already in a part of the city he would normally never go in. He had always stuck to the docks, the crowded street markets (with it's oh so many tempting targets to relieve of valuables), and yes, the slums of the poor. This was supposedly holy ground (if one believed in that sort of thing, he'd never had any religious upbringing). It made him a bit uncomfortable but he put on his usual self-assured face. He was more than content to let the Captain do the talking, he could not imagine what sort of small talk he could even engage in with all these mostly red robed folk. Least his new garments didn't make him stick out like his former filthy rags.

Rhi spotted her mother as she came in. This was a bit unexpected, though the young man who was with her was definitely unexpected. Rhi looked to Kalian, gave him a smile. "Something is up if my mother is here."

Jessamir strode in through the doors, almost as if she owned the place. She knew enough to show respect. Seeing Mother Giselle and Seryl, she gave a respectful nod. Spotting her daughter and Kalian, she made towards her and stopping close to the two of them. Without hesitation, she gives her daughter a quick hug then gave a hug to Kalian. This one just as quick but she made sure that Kalian felt how much she loved him. She let go and looked to Vasil. "Rhiannon, Kalian, this is Vasil." She sees that the young man had stayed a little behind her. "Vasil, is now in charge of our security. With all that entails." She motions for Vasil to stand next to her. "Remember Vasil. You are now a part of our crew. You have a say in what our crew does."

Vasil stood there as Jessamir approached a young couple and hugged them both. Alright, fair enough. He had no clue. But then she turned and presented him, also giving the couple names to

go with faces. Vasil nodded respectfully.

"Hullo," he replied softly.

Next the Captain explained his duties, he was in charge of security. For that that meant, Vasil still wasn't sure. But that was the deal.

"Yes, ma'am...I mean.. cap'n," he nodded once more.

Kalian returned Jessamir's embrace. Somehow he always felt a bit nervous around Rhiannon's mother, and he appreciated the gesture of acceptance. "A pleasure to meet you, Vasil." He regarded the young man curiously, and wondered at his title. Kalian had once accompanied Rhiannon and Jessamir for *security*, and Kalian wondered if Vasil was also an apostate. Unlike most of Jessamir's crew, Vasil wasn't a dwarf.

"You too...ummm, Kalian," Vasil meeting Kalian's probing gaze.

Rahvin moved stand off to the side of the new Knight-Lieutenant, Knight Captain, Mother Giselle and Seryl. He had seen the rest at one point or another when he would come into Jader. His voice low, though it carried as he spoke. "Mother Giselle. You have asked for my presence for this meeting. How may the Grey Wardens help?"

OOC(Sprite): Continued in post "A Warden for West Hill"

A Warden for West Hill

Posted on 22 Jan 2024 @ 10:32am by [Mage Kalian Winter](#) & [Warrior Rhiannon Cadash](#) & [Warrior Katya Charbonnet \(Shar-bon-ay\)](#) & [Warrior Rahvin Vargar](#) & [Rogue Vasil](#) & [Mage Kithris Sabrae](#)

2,005 words; about a 10 minute read

Mission: [Bann Voyage](#)

Location: Jader chantry

Timeline: Bloomingtide 19th

OOC: Continued from "A Canticle for Jader"

Lady Seryl said, "About two weeks ago, Mother Giselle received a letter from Revered Mother Helena of West Hill Bannorn, in which she mentions a new addition to Bann Franderel's eclectic personal collection. West Hill Bannorn, you may recall, is located on the northwest coast of Ferelden. Warden Jaslyn offered to go there and investigate. She hasn't returned, and the two ravens she sent plus the last raven from Mother Helena suggest Warden Jaslyn ran into trouble."

Mother Giselle said, "I received this letter on Bloomingtide 8th, eleven days ago." She skipped the opening paragraph, and read the rest aloud:

Cloudreach 30, 9:34 Dragon.

My Dear Friend Giselle,

On this day of fasting and reflection in preparation for Summerday tomorrow, I often find myself thinking of Summerdays past, when we were young initiates together. My, but didn't we think ourselves so wicked when we snuck into the kitchen to steal a sausage roll and apple. And nowadays the chantry cook conspire to plan what extra food she will prepare, just for hungry initiates and anyone else who finds the fast too difficult.

I'm writing to you today not just to recall shared girlhood memories, but because of an unusual conversation I had yesterday with the Bann's youngest uncle Ser Brion whom you may recall is a retired Templar. As may be expected, poor Ser Brion's mental faculties have deteriorated, though he is usually quite calm, often singing the Chant to himself. He favors Exultations, and he seems more aware of his surroundings when I sing with him.

Today when I visited his chamber to administer his daily dose of lyrium, he was quite agitated. He chased the serving girl who brings his meals, swinging his cane as though sword-fighting an enemy. Scared the poor girl half to death! The strange thing was, he was speaking, not singing, from Threnodies – the parts about the origins of darkspawn. Poor Ser Brion had to be sedated.

With the Summerday festival in progress, West Hill Fortress is full of people, from the surrounding farms as well as the Bann's guests from Denerim and further afield. This evening I overheard Bann Franderel boasting about a new addition to his famous collection, a Grey Warden artifact he'd bought from a visiting traveler this morning.

Of course, the new collection piece and the change in Ser Brion could be a coincidence. But you did ask me to report anything unusual, even if it seemed a small matter.

Blessings of the Maker be upon you,
Mother Helena
West Hill Bannorn Chantry

Mother Giselle continued, "We received this raven from Jaslyn after she arrived." She read:

Bloomingtide 14, 9:34 Dragon.

Dear Mother Giselle and Lady Seryl,

I arrived at West Hill Fortress yesterday evening and requested an audience with Bann Franderel

and to be shown his famous collection. I await his response. Meanwhile, I've made some progress with gaining the trust of the Bann's elven servants.

Mother Helena has been very welcoming and I have accepted her offer of accommodation in the chantry vicarage. She took me to see Ser Brion, but his condition has worsened and he remains sedated around the clock. I have added a request to stop his sedation so that I may speak with Ser Brion to my petition with the Bann.

Warden Jaslyn

"This is the next, and the last raven from Jaslyn," said Giselle, and read:

Bloomingtide 17, 9:34 Dragon

Dear Mother Giselle and Lady Seryl,

At my brief audience with the Bann he declined my request to be shown his collection, both as a Grey Warden, and in my capacity as your representative. However, I believe I have convinced a servant to allow me into the castle wing where the collection is kept. I will investigate tonight, when the castle is asleep.

When I'm in the castle I can sense something similar to the darkspawn taint. I can't guess what it is, but I feel certain it is dangerous. Some of the Bann's servants have confided they've been having disturbing dreams. I suspect magic may be involved.

Warden Jaslyn

"And finally," said Mother Giselle, "We received this raven from Mother Helena yesterday."

Bloomingtide 18, 9:34 Dragon.

Mother Giselle,

Warden Jaslyn did not return to her quarters last night. When I called at the castle, Bann Franderel himself informed me that Warden Jaslyn left West Hill early this morning.

Jaslyn left her belongings here, shall I send them to Jader?

Mother Helena

When she finished reading, Mother Giselle said, "You may all read for yourselves," and passed the letter to Rahvin, who stood closest to her.

"We are worried for Warden Jaslyn's wellbeing, and concerned the artifact may be more dangerous than we initially suspected." said Lady Seryl. "We'd like you to travel to West Hill Bannorn, help Jaslyn if she needs it, and use your collective best judgement to decide what to do with the artifact."

"I can not speak for my friends but I will go. What do you know of Bann Franderel" He may be the key to this." Katya said.

Kit gave Katya a stern look. "You will not be going alone vhenan." As she took ahold of Katya's hand.

Katya smiled. "I didn't want to speak for you my love but I am happy to have you along."

"The Bann of West Hill Bannorn is a member of the Ferelden Landsmeet, an important governing body in that country. Franderel is also among the wealthiest nobles in Ferelden," replied Lady Seryl. "He hosted a Grand Ball at his estate in Denerim around the time of the Landsmeet that confirmed Alistair Therin to be King of Ferelden. It is rumored that Franderel's spy master discovered a plot to steal from his collection and employed extra traps and guards, but the would-be thieves killed the guards and escaped."

"It was further rumored that after the ball, thieves returned to Bann Franderel's estate and succeeded in stealing an unnamed artifact from his collection," said Mother Giselle.

"Coincidentally, a priceless holy relic was anonymously returned to the Chantry in Denerim - the *Tears of Andraste*. Of course Bann Franderel denied ever being in possession of such an important Chantry relic. The Bann returned to West Hill Bannorn, with his collection, immediately after the Landsmeet."

Kalian knew Warden Jaslyn. She and the nobleman Cainan helped with breaking up the mining operation that was exploiting Ferelden refugees. Since then, Jaslyn stopped by the Raven's Roost for a drink from time to time, but Kalian hadn't seen Cainan since the start of the Summerday festival. The last time he saw Jaslyn was when she drove a wagon out to the old Baudelaire mansion and met him, Rhiannon, Kithris, Katya, Elinowy, Skeld, and Nazri, along with Lilith the apostate, after they cleared out the bandits and animated corpses. Jaslyn drove them all back to Jader. "I'll go as well. If magic is involved, I may be able to help."

Rhi briefly looked at both Katya and Kithris as the two women agreed to go. When Kalian spoke up and said he would go, Rhi gave him the same look Kit gave to Katya. "Well someone will have to keep you out of trouble amoruk."

Kalian glanced nervously in the new Knight Lieutenant's direction, then grinned at Rhiannon. "I will endeavor to *avoid* trouble."

Jessamir looked to her daughter, a small brief smile crossed her face. "Othok told kaad bedwan?" (You told him daughter?)

Rhi gave a nod as her own smile deepened and her crimson eyes lit up. "Yare Tha did mothrumm."
(Yes I did mother.)

Jessamir let out a chuckle and looked to Kalian. "We will talk later my son." Turning to Mother Giselle and Seryl Jessamir shifted slightly. Her demeanor shifting to be more serious. Her eyes scanning the rest in the room. The new Captain-Lieutenant and a Warden. For Jessamir, this all reeked of nothing good. Her attention back to Mother Giselle, "You requested my presence Mother Giselle. Am I to take it that you would like the Night's Kiss to travel to West Hill?"

Kalian looked from daughter to mother and back. *Maker's Breath*, he really needed to work on learning the dwarven language.

"Indeed," Mother Giselle replied to Jessamir. "Captain, we request that you provide transport. You will of course be paid well, and the route you take will be up to you. Routine trade stops along the way, at your discretion, might improve your reception at West Hill Bannorn. Will you be able to leave with the tide tomorrow morning?"

Jessamir regarded Mother Giselle for a moment before she answered. "I had planned on leaving out the middle of next week. I have the essential cargo for the trip already. What I had planned on taking on after this last load today can wait. I will need to track down a few of the crew." She looked to Rhi for a moment. Rhi gave a quick small nod. Jessamir looked back to Mother Giselle. "It is doable." This said with confidence.

Rahvin had stood listening. The letters were not what he had expected. It was not like Jaslyn to up and leave her gear behind. "Mother, if I may. It is not like Warden Jaslyn to leave her gear behind unless there was a good reason for it. It is also not to often that a request from a Warden is not honored. As a Warden, I plan on investigating her disappearance. I will find her."

Mother Giselle bowed her head to Rahvin. "Thank you, Grey Warden."

"Are there any more questions?" Lady Seryl regarded Alexandra, Elinowy, Katya, Kithris, Rhiannon, Rahvin, Jessamir, and Vasil, each in turn.

Rhi glanced at her mother then looked at the group. "Those of you that are going, I would suggest to come aboard tonight. We have a few extra cabins so it should not be too crowded. Be prepared to work. We do not expect you to be a sailor, though we do expect you to pull your own weight." Thos said with a matter of fact tone that did hold respect.

Kit looked to Rhi and gave a nod. "I will do what I can." She looked to Katya.

"I've worked hard my entire life. This should be no different. I will do what I can to help!" Katya said.

Rahvin gave a nod as well. "My service is yours."

Vasil was silently impressed how everyone seemed eager to help. Interesting.

Jessamir looked to Vasil. She took a small pouch off her belt and handed it to the young man. "When we leave here, take this and get yourself some good traveling clothes. Then go to the blacksmith and get yourself a good weapon. And maybe a good set of tools"

"Yes, cap'n," the young man took the pouch, it had a good weight to it, many coins.

"I already got some tools...you probably ain't meanin' those kind though," he smiled, "Don't know much about sailing, what tools they need. But when I'm done do I then go to the ship?"

Jessamir gave the young man a wry grin when he mentioned tools. "Find yourself some clothes that are water proof. Sturdy as well. A good weapon, your choice. If you so happen to come across a better set of tools..." Jessamir let that hang for a moment before she continued. "I would suggest that you make your way to the ship tonight. This way you can get yourself familiar with it."

Water proof? Good luck with that, Vasil mused but just nodded in agreement. A good weapon....he already owned a nice stabbing dagger but yes, he'd find something else a bit longer range. And he also got a clear answer on the ship. He should go there tonight, get on board.

"Yes cap'n, I'll be doin' just then," he assured her.

OOO: image of the [letter and messages](#)

Warden Talk

Posted on 01 Feb 2024 @ 6:31pm by [Rogue Jaslyn](#) & [Warrior Rahvin Vargar](#)

1,440 words; about a 7 minute read

Mission: [Bann Voyage](#)

Location: Warden Keep outside of Jader

Timeline: Bloomingtide 9th

It had been a few years since the blight, since Ostagar. As soon as Rahvin had had the chance he had made his way to Ostagar. It had been quiet. Nothing but quiet. He could feel it pressing down on him.

Standing on the hill, looking towards Ferelden, Rahvin could still feel that quiet. It was something that he was still trying to learn how to live with. It was getting better though. Since he decided to

stay in Orlais. Though it wasn't his family, they were family. It was one particular Warden that had befriended him. She had become one that he could confide in. So when she found him out here, he wasn't surprised. Without turning he spoke. "So when do you leave?"

"Tomorrow," replied Jaslyn, walking up behind him. "It should be a fairly routine trip. Visit the Bann, gush with flattery over his collection, check out the artifact. Chances are it's an expensive fake and my visit will lend credibility to whatever story the trader gave the Bann. If it *actually is* a Grey Warden Artifact, I can invoke the rights of the Grey Warden Order and bring it back to Jader, and then the Commander can decide what to do with it." She stood next to Rahvin with hands on her hips and looked out at the view. Then she shrugged carelessly. "Either way, sending a confidential messenger eases Mother Giselle and Lady Seryl's concerns, and better yet, this errand will get me out of Jader for a few days."

The last time she'd seen Cainan was when they were partying together the first day of the Summerday Festival. He'd said he had urgent business to take care of and then he'd... disappeared. Jaslyn tried not to look for him in a crowd or a busy tavern, after all it had been only a casual affair, and they owed each other nothing. But it would do her good to get away.

She turned to regard Rahvin's handsome profile. They had formed a deep connection, back when she was a new recruit and he was mourning the loss of Duncan and his other Ferelden Grey Warden brothers and sisters at Ostagar, then ineffectively marooned on this side of the border with her and scores of other Orlesian Grey Wardens. He had continued her training and had been there for her when she mourned the death of Riordan, the warden who'd conscripted her away from the gallows in Val Royeaux and started her training. "Hey. How are things with you?"

Rahvin had not looked to Jaslyn as she spoke. He listened quietly and gave a slight nod when she commented about using Warden rights if she needed to. He finally turned toward her when she asked how things were with him. His face was solemn, his stormy grey/blue eyes were distant. These changed quickly when he looked at her. A smile grew slightly and his eyes focused and the hint of that smile touched his eyes.

"Everyday is a better day than the one before." He let out a small chuckle. He took a step forward so that he was only a few feet from her. "I haven't told you this, but thank you. Thank you for allowing me to lean on you after..." His smile wavered slightly yet stayed. Along with it in his eyes. Clearing his throat, "When you get back, I will show you the move Duncan showed me."

"I'd like that." Head canted, Jaslyn looked up at Rahvin and smiled. "He lives on, you know. In the lives he saved, the skills he passed on, the wisdom he shared." She was thinking of Riordan as well as for Duncan. "We all do."

Hearing Jaslyn say that, brought on a grin which turned to a warm smile. Which shown in his eyes. "Yes we do." His tone held a seriousness and a warmth. He shifted a bit so that he could face her. His smile turned more serious.

Out of the two of them, it was pretty obvious which one was the more serious. "Just remember, while you are gone, try not to be so serious. I know you have a bit of a hard time trying to relax and have a bit of fun. Remember to....." He couldn't keep a straight face as he started to laugh.

Jaslyn raised an eyebrow but managed to maintain a serious expression and raised her hand as though taking an oath. "I shall take upon myself, with all appropriate seriousness, my sacred Warden duty to thoroughly and exhaustively research each and every tavern in West Hill." The elf dissolved into laughter and took Rahvin's arm. "Let's head back to the compound. I've a half-full bottle of Antivan Brandy you can help me finish off."

Rahvin did his best not to laugh as Jaslyn started to take an oath to essentially visit every bar in West Hill. When she took his arm in hers, he cleared his throat a little. "Antivan Brandy you say. Well we definitely can not let that go to waste now can we." He starts to walk with her. As they walk, "Promise me you will be careful." His tone was light though held care as well.

"*In Peace, Vigilance,*" replied Jaslyn, quoting from the Grey Warden motto with no hint of irony. "I promise, I'll be careful. What about you, Rahvin? Will you still be in Jader when I get back?"

Hearing that she will be careful along with the motto, Jaslyn could see that this relieved most of his worry. When she asked if he would still be Jader when she got back, brought a smile to his face. "Other than the possibility of another blight happening anytime soon. I had not planned on going anywhere soon." He looked to her, his eyes showing something that Jaslyn rarely seen. Calmness. Yet there was something else in those eyes. "If I wasn't here when you got back. You wouldn't miss me, would you" This said with curiosity and laughter.

"Of course I'd miss you," she replied firmly, with heartfelt enthusiasm. Though holding his arm, she bumped into Rahvin as they walked for emphasis. She fondly recalled the months they'd spent together during the Blight, waiting for the Ferelden border to be opened so they could cross over and kill darkspawn. Not all of that time was spent in training. "Do you remember the night we suddenly knew the archdemon was dead? Because *the song* just... stopped?" Although it was days before reports emerged from Denerim with details, the Grey Wardens in Jader including Rahvin and Jaslyn had celebrated. She paused to send one last regretful thought to Cainan, then suggested, "Do you want to relive a fond memory?"

Rahvin smiled when she said she would miss him. He let out a bit of a chuckle when Jaslyn bumped into him. When she asked him if he remembered the night that they felt the archdemon had been killed. When the song had stopped. That night was something that he would always remember. Not just for the fact that the blight was over but for the fact that the two of them celebrated in their own way. Oh there had been drinking with their brothers and sisters, yet for them, they found themselves alone, creating their own memories. As they walked, he looked to Jaslyn, gave her a warm and inviting smile, which touched his eyes. "We can relive a fond memory, or we can create another."

Meeting Rahvin's gaze, Jaslyn's large green eyes went wide. They had been lovers during the blight, seeking solace and release in each other when the archdemon's song filled their heads and the

darkspawn horde called. But now it seemed that Rahvin was offering her more than a night's pleasure. She wasn't sure she was ready for what that might entail, and yet... "I'd like that."

Rahvin had not been sure if he should have said what he did. When he seen Jaslyn's eyes go wide he thought he had just screwed everything up. Yet when Jaslyn said that she would like that, a warm smile crossed his face. He reached out to take her hand in his.

Jaslyn melted against Rahvin body, her lips parted, trembling with eagerness for his touch and the press of his mouth to hers.

Pulling her in close, he put one arm around her waist, then his other arm reached up and gently brushed her cheek. "I would like that too" He leaned in and kissed her.

Same Old Streets, New Me

Posted on 25 Feb 2024 @ 8:44am by [Townfolk The Scholar & Warrior Rhiannon Cadash & Rogue Vasil](#)

1,867 words; about a 9 minute read

Mission: [Bann Voyage](#)

Location: Jader, Blue Steel blacksmith shop

Timeline: Bloomingtide 19, after 'A Warden for West Hill'

Vasil had been given money to buy himself some necessities for this upcoming voyage, his first ever. What that would be like, he could only guess but however it turns out, he was committed to it. He bought some clothing the merchant told him would keep dry....mostly dry at least during storms. Actually he'd been soaked plenty of times in his young life, but orders were orders. Much more important, at least to him, was the captain's directions to equip himself with some better weaponry than the old dagger he still held.

He had ideas alright. First off, he decided he would buy a missile weapon. Not a regular bow though, that took a lot of practice and a powerful arm, he neither had the strength for it nor the time to learn. So instead he got himself a crossbow. All you had to do was load and pull a trigger while pointing it at the target. How hard could it be? Well, that and a dozen quarrels or bolts or whatever they called them. But if the enemy were up in your face you needed a blade. He decided he would get himself a sword, a short one not those huge two handed things (clumsy in his opinion).

So it was that he stopped in a swordsmith shop, another place he had never set foot within.

The door lintel bell rang out as Vasil opened the door, and a slim man with coiffed dark hair,

tastefully understated gold jewelry, and exquisitely fashionable blue leather armor appeared in a doorway that must lead to a back room or the forge. He gave the potential customer a brief but thorough visual inspection, taking in the bundle of newly purchased clothing and crossbow. Apparently satisfied with the young man's potential to produce coin, he leaned toward the backroom without taking his eyes off Vasil and called out to whoever was back there, "Customer."

Vasil just nodded and started looking around. He was used to being given careful scrutiny by shop keepers but that was when he was in his rags. Now he looked proper enough. No matter, he wanted to see their blades for sale not make friends.

A practice dummy occupied the center of the mostly open space, clearly intended for patrons wishing to test the wares on offer. Along the two side walls various bladed weapons were on display, each in a metal case with a locked metal-grate lid.

Ahhh, there were the blades! He walked over there to get a closer look, he pretty much knew already what he wanted.

The man sauntered closer to Vasil but didn't offer his hand. He folded his arms across his chest and his fingertips brushed the hilt of the rapier at his side in a way that suggested habit rather than threat. "Welcome to Blue Steel, home of the best blacksmith in Jader, my brother Derek. My name is Hansel. How may we serve you today?"

"Hullo, I'm here to buy me a blade....a short sword that's good for stabbin'," Vasil answered.

The room directly behind the store was the main storage and finishing room for the swords and various other weapons and armor the brothers created and sold. The forge itself was out back. His brother had just left after discussing the custom order they just received from one of the guard. It was a rather simple order, still Derek would put everything he had in making it. He was already started to draw out the helm when he heard his brother call out that they had a customer. Grabbing a towel he wiped his hands as he made his way out front.

Stepping through the door, Derek was about 5' 7" wearing a sleeveless grey shirt, thick grey pants, and heavy boots. This was covered by a long dark leather apron with a thick leather belt. Which hung a small hammer, a set of tongs, and a pair of thick leather gloves. He had short dark hair and piercing blue eyes. As he stepped into the room he moved with a purpose. Derek spotted the young man, noticed that he was carrying a few things. "Brother, can you not see that the young man has his hands full."

Vasil shrugged, "Eh, nothing heavy. Just some clothes is all. Oh.....yeah, and a crossbow with bolts." Come to think of it, it was quite an armful.

Derek made his way over and motioned for Vasil to put his stuff down on the small table off to one side. "Here, put your things down. What can we do for you? A sword or perhaps breastplate." He walked around Vasil, looking at him, sizing him up. "No, something light, maneuverable. Easy to

use." This last part spoken more for himself than for Vasil.

Once his goods were on the table, he turned to the second man, the blacksmith no doubt and nodded.

"Yeah, I be lookin' for a sword or long dagger. Gotta be light and be good for stabbin'!"

As for the second part, "I don't want no armor, only slows a body down." For what Vasil did for a living, speed and agility were key.

Well. The young man knew what he wanted, he said *stabbing* twice. Hansel rested one hand on his hip. "I'm certain we can provide you with a weapon to suit your preferences. When do you need it to be finished?"

"Ummm, like today...now. I leave on a voyage on the morrow. Don't you have any simple ones that stab that you can sell right off?" Vasil frowned.

Derek looked Vasil over, walked around the young man. Pulled out a long string with knots tied along it at measured increments. "Yes, yes. Stand still." He comes up and started to measure Vasil's arm length, across his shoulders. "Make a stance please." If Vasil does Derek will measure the distance between his feet. All the while muttering to himself. "Yes, 4 knots here, 8 and a half here. 24 across." Once he was done he stepped back, looked to Hansel. "I have just finished the gladius. I think it would be perfect for him." This said with a matter of fact tone.

Hansel hid his mild surprise that Derek was ready to sell that gladius sword so soon after completing it. "An elegant and practical blade, to be sure." He regarded Vasil critically. The young man showed no hint of formal sword training, and yet he moved with a lithe grace that spoke of great potential.

Vasil did as requested of course, all this posing stuff seemed a bit of nonsense but then admittedly he was not the expert, this swordmaker should be. Then the two men spoke to each other. Vasil simply waited. He did not know what the word 'gladius' meant but sure hoped it was yet another word for blade, and one that stabbed.

"Yes, brother. I agree the gladius would suit," said Hansel, looking to Derek expectantly "Perhaps Mr. Vasil would like to try it out on our practice dummy?"

"Wish I could, but I do not have a lot of time. I need be someplace very important," Vasil shrugged.

Derek looked to his brother and gave a nod. "I will be right back." Derek headed back to the finishing room. A moment later he came back out cloth in hand holding a rather simple looking short sword. The leaf style double-edged blade looked to be 18 to be inches in length. It had a pointed tip, for thrusting, along with both edges being sharpened for slashing. The hilt had a distinctive guard and a knobbed pommel. For a total length of 24 inches. It looked like a blade for close quarter combat as

well as stealthy needs. The blade itself looked like a darker metal, the hilt did as well. Derek finished wiping the blade down and handed it to Vasil. "I think you will like this."

His dagger did not have sharpened edges, just a deadly point. This weapon had both. Of course that also meant one had to be more careful handling it lest one cut oneself by accident. He took the weapon.

"It is a good one alright. You do fine work. Of course now the question I would ask is how much? I am not a rich man as I'm sure you already guessed by the look of me," Vasil inquired.

Hansel shook his head. "We cannot possibly discuss the price of this blade until you've tried it out - tested the balance and the weight. That's what the practice dummy is there for! Take a couple of swings." He gestured impatiently to the dummy. "I've no doubt the sword is within your means."

"Glad you have no doubts, until I hear the price I cannot be so sure," Vasil smiled but then walked over to the appropriate practice dummy.

This sort of thing never made much sense to him, any clumsy idiot could slash or poke a bag of whatever, nothing like fighting a real person. But to please the fellow, he slashed once, twice. Of course it felt fine, the grip was good, and the blade cut. Then he stabbed with it. Of course again it did what it was designed to do, it penetrated the immobile dummy. There, demonstration time over.....

Vasil turned to the others, "It works. I will take it. Now....what about that price, good sir?" He grinned.

In their sibling business partnership, Hansel usually handled the coin. But at times his brother simply decided a particular blade was *meant* to be wielded by a certain individual. He could tell this was one of those times. Hansel sighed, and quoted the minimal price that would cover their expenses. "Three royals. Includes a scabbard."

Vasil raised one eyebrow, that was actually an unexpectedly low price. He was almost suspicious now of the quality of the weapon but then he was no expert on these sorts of things. In his career though he was always suspicious.

"Well, you drive a hard bargain you do but I am in a hurry and do not wish to haggle. Three royals it is," Vasil then fished into his leather pouch and took out the requisite coins, all provided by his new employer. Plus, he got a scabbard out of the deal. Nice!

Derek watched Vasil as he took a few swings and pokes at the practice dummy. Though the young man didn't push himself, Derek noticed that Vasil had a natural grace about himself. He had been about to let the young man know how much it would cost when his brother spoke up. As different as he and his brother were, they knew each other better than anyone else. He gave a nod to Hansel when his brother gave Vasil the price, and threw in the scabbard as well. When Vasil agreed and fished it out

of the coin pouch, Derek gave a nod. "Now, young man. Take good care of her and she will take good care of you."

Vasil grinned, "It's a girl now is it? Well, I've always had good luck with the girls. Thank you. But I really must depart."

The Night's Kiss Sets Off

Posted on 06 Mar 2024 @ 9:45am by [Mage Kalian Winter](#) & [Warrior Rhiannon Cadash](#) & [Warrior Katya Charbonnet \(Shar-bon-ay\)](#) & [Warrior Rahvin Vargar](#) & [Rogue Elinowy Ursulas](#) & [Rogue Vasil](#) & [Mage Kithris Sabrae](#)

3,500 words; about a 18 minute read

Mission: [Bann Voyage](#)

Location: Jader Docks

Timeline: Bloomingtide 20th

It was a crisp spring morning in Jader, with clear skies and good wind. The crew of the Night's Kiss had been up before dawn preparing to sail with the tide. Barrels and crates were scattered across the ship's deck as supplies and trade goods were loaded from the dock, and gradually stowed below deck under the direction of Captain Jessamir.

Jessamir stood on the deck directing what one would call an organized chaos. "Skondrick, Hezin. Make sure you get those ropes stowed. Satrotha, make sure you log in those three crates over there. Yalgrthalin, you are up for first helm. Knut, forward lookout. Kardor, Sikhaeline you are port and starboard lookouts. Werbunli, you are on Aft. You all get ready. Barirmegrett, crows nest girl. Get yer self up there before we pull out." She looked around and spotted Vasil. "Vasil." She called out for the young man. Once he was close enough she continued, "What I need you to do is go through the ship. I want you to think about ways you would do what you do. Then make sure that it cannot be done."

Vasil had spent the night sleeping for the first time on a ship of all things. And in a hammock.....both of which were much better than in oft sleeping places like slum alleys. Of course the ship wasn't moving at night, he had already heard about how some folk get sea sick from the motion of a ship on the waves. He was soon to find out if he was one of those folk.

Once up he came up onto the main deck and was summoned by his new employer, the captain.

"Yes cap'n," he nodded, "I can do that. So like check for stowaways I guess it's called hiding out. If I find one do I kill 'em?" Vasil's life had always been a hard one, he was used to ruthlessness if

required.

Jessamir liked Vasil. He reminded her of her past and what they would have done to those found aboard back then. She gave him a smile and shook her head slightly. "You find one, bring them to me. If they give you a problem, do what you must."

"Can do," the young man nodded.

Before Vasil heads off, Jessamir turns to look at him. "Oh, and Vasil. Thank you."

"Ummm, right...sure," he wasn't sure what she thanked him for. She'd given him orders and he was supposed to follow orders. Oh well. Time to check the hold.

Rhiannon had spent most of the previous night doing the bulk of the work. Everything from the charts, loading the ship, making sure her friends were settled in, down to taking the first watch for the night. So when she came to bed, it had one of the few times since she and Kalian had been together that she crawled into bed, snuggled up next to him and was out like a light. When morning came she was up early trying to be quiet.

Kalian had slept well, comfortable in the simple pleasure of chaste cuddling with Rhiannon, his *amoruk*. He'd had no idea how much coordinated work was required to operate a sailing ship and prepare it to sail. He'd stood ready and offered to help, but sometimes the best way to help was to stay out of the way and pay close attention. The evening before when he'd gone back to the Raven's Roost to pack a few things, his sister Tessa had been more enthusiastic than he'd expected about Kalian leaving with Rhi on the Night's Kiss. Being 'out' as an apostate in Jader affected his family in unexpected ways.

Jessamir had seen Kalian come up from below deck. It warmed her heart to know that her daughter had found her person. "Kalian, my dear. Let us talk." Her tone was jovial.

At the sound of Jessamir calling him, Kalian nearly lost his footing on that last step from below deck. She didn't *sound* displeased with him. He sent a few furtive glances around to locate Rhiannon, her mother always made him nervous, but he wasn't exactly sure *why* Kalian took a deep breath and headed toward Rhiannon's mother. "Good Morning, Captain Jessamir. How can I be of help?"

Jessamir gave Kalian a once over look and smiled. She turned to again survey the work going on. "My daughter told me last night that she gave you her forge." She let that sink in for a moment. "And you accepted. Is this true?"

"Oh. Uh..." Kalian's dark skin took on a bright pink overtone. He'd understood 'give him her forge' to be similar to when humans say 'give you my heart' – except with unmistakable sexual overtones. And really, the last thing he wanted to do was discuss his and Rhi's sex life with *her mother*. "Yes, ma'am. That is true."

Jessamir gave a nod. She could see that Kalian was a bit unsure where this conversation was heading. This made her grin. "I will put your mind at ease. Well a bit anyway. I am not going to pry into your time behind closed doors with my daughter. (pause) There is another meaning to what she said. You know what a forge is for. Creation. When a dwarven woman says she is giving you her forge, she isn't just giving you herself physically, she is giving you her life. She is asking you to be her Blacksmith and she the Anvil so you both can create a life together. Heart and hearth. You have accepted privately. If you truly want to be with my daughter. When you are alone again, you will ask if she would accept your hammer for on the Anvil of her forge. I am sure she will accept." Jessamir smiles. "Any questions?"

Kalian took in Jessamir's speech with thoughtful deliberation. The dwarven concept of life partners went even deeper than he'd previously thought. "I think I'm beginning to understand. The forge metaphor, hammer and anvil, is about more than sex, more even than the potential for children. It's about pledging to live our lives together always striving to be our best selves for one another." He gave Jessamir a tentative smile, somehow not quite as nervous as before. "I will be the luckiest man on Thedas if you're right and she says yes."

Jessamir listened as Kalian said what he thought she meant. A smile rose warmly across her face as he continued. When he was finished she moved closer and gave him a quick hug. When they parted she looked up at the young man. "Tha would Mer honored Kolun othok ihonlor ruk join our Kazamar. (I would be honored if you were to join our clan.)"

Kalian lowered to one knee so that he could hug Jessamir back properly. "Thank you, Jessamir."

Kit had done what she could do the night before. Spending the night in the cabin, Kit had not realized how small they were. Though her Aravel was small so she was used to small spaces. Though with Katya with her, it was quite cozy. When morning came Kit was up and was getting ready to go and help where she could. "You ready my heart?" She gave Katya a warm smile.

"Always darling! As long as you are by my side, I'll take on the world if need be. It would seem we're off on another adventure. My darling Kit, no matter what the future holds, I know we can face it together. You know my Mother really likes you too. That helps."

Kit gave a smile at hearing that Katya's mother liked her. "I am glad." She gave Katya a hug and a kiss. "Let us go be useful. I'm sure that the Captain has stuff for us to do."

"Indeed my love. Indeed." They sought out the captain. "Ho Captain Jessamir. Good morning. How may we be of assistance?"

Spotting Katya and Kit, she gives both women a smile. "It is good to see young love. Yes, yes, help. Well lets star....." Jessamir stops as she sees Kit looking very green.

Kit had been fine when she had gotten up, gotten ready and came up on deck. It didn't take long though for that small gentle pitch and roll of the ship to work its own devilish magic. Kit took a few steps and as dexterous as she was, this was not for her. Without a word, Kit ran to the side of the ship, leaned over, and it seemed like everything Kit had ever eaten in her entire life ended up on the pier. Kit slid down to the deck. "Nha bren Tel' uanna's doing?" (Is this the Maker's doing?)

"Oh no! Oh Kit! Looks like you're seasick! Oh my poor darling! Umm captain, can anything be done for Kit? Maybe Kalian can help?"

Kalian went to Kithris' side and put one hand on her shoulder. Although he was well aware that Kithris had similar healing talent to himself, she was not openly *out* as an apostate like he was. "I've never tried healing seasickness, so I've no idea if this will help." Out of habit, he glanced around to check if a Templar was nearby, then after a nod of consent from Kithris, slowly opened himself to the fade and poured healing magic into Kithris' body.

Kithris felt the warmth of magic rush through her body as Kalian used his magic to heal her. It didn't take much when she felt the nausea slip away. Standing up, Kit looked to Kalian and smiled. "Thank you Kalian. I feel so much better." She looked to Katya. "I can't believe.....there was so much."

Katya laughs. "Oh Kit! I am sorry you had to go through that but if it's any consolation I went through the same thing on my first voyage. I eventually got used to it. I hope you will too." She took Kit in her arms. "I'm glad you're feeling better." She turned to her old friend. "As always you have my thanks Kalian!"

Kalian bowed to Katya and Kithris. "My pleasure."

Rahvin had not come aboard the night before. He had gone back to the keep, had gathered his travel gear and let the Warden Captain know what he was doing. He knew enough that this might be the last time for awhile that he would be sleeping in a real bed. So when he arrived in the morning, he came aboard, stowed his gear and proceeded to help.

Sister Elinowy awoke before the dawn. The night had passed adequately. The bunk in the officer's quarters were meager, but substantially better than many of the streets she slept on when first arriving in Jadar. As she emerged through the door onto the main deck she could see the light glow of the sun preparing its ascent. The morning air coming off the harbor was crisp which helped clear some of the growing pain in her head. Something was off. Still she had devotions to attend to. Certainly being on a ship would be a different experience for her. But the deck only moved slightly from the forces of tide and gentle waves. She raised her hand in a sign of blessing as she passed the first group of sailors as she made her way up the ladder to the Fore deck. Ahead of her was a panorama of the harbor of Jadar. A beautiful sight in the breaking dawn. She closed her eyes, feeling a brief respite from her aching forehead. She settled her feet into the first position of the opening

form. She raised her hands in welcome to the sun and began to sing... or at least tried to. Her throat was tight and soar.

She steadied herself and looked into the piecing brightness of the sun. Something was very wrong. The world began to spin slightly as she stumbled to the rail of the forecastle. She prayed silently to the Maker that he might make this suffering brief. She did her best to start humming the Chant of the morning. Beads of sweat began to pile up on her forehead, she pulled back her hood allowing her flowing tresses of fiery red hair to play in the breeze. She was not well. Her mind went to the medicinal herbs she could brew for whatever this ailment was. She looked over at the docks finding some comfort in the stability of the town buildings.

Kalian found his dear friend Elinowy leaning over the rail of the forecastle, apparently affected by seasickness. In a soothing voice, he asked, "Elinowy, are you all right?" He had been able to help Kithris, at least temporarily. "I've no idea if it will help, but would you like me to try applying some healing magic?" Elinowy had such unusual reactions to magic.

The pain from her aching head was growing worse. Elinowy could feel her heart beating through her temples. Closing her eyes she prayed the Maker might make this pass. Suddenly she became aware of Kalian's kind voice calling to her. She slowly opened her eyes and looked over to him.

While she was always happy to hear Kalian's voice, the look she shot him was very uncharacteristic, not dissimilar to a trapped animal that was begging to be put down. She breathed deeply and snapped. "I have felt better, Kalian."

Catching herself, she gripped the rail of the ship, looking up at him with bloodshot eyes that were burning out of her skull. "I pray the Maker might make this pass soon, but this is nothing to open yourself to the fade for." She of course immediately wondered if what she was saying was correct, as she did not like the way she felt. But nevertheless, magic had its place, and regardless of how miserable she personally felt, that danger to her friend of opening himself to magical energies was much worse in her opinion. Of course she was in no shape to make arguments however theologically strong they might be.

"Elinowy," Kalian murmured his friend's name softly. "You know I wouldn't use magic on you without your consent." He tried to think of a way to convince Elinowy to accept help. "The Chant says that magic must serve mankind. I can think of no better service than to ease your suffering so that you are well enough to serve the Maker in *your* own way. Please allow me to try to help you."

Elinowy gave Kalian a grim smile. "Some suffering we are meant to endure, especially if this is indeed, just discomfort. Magic is the easy road, some things we just need to persevere especially if they don't kill us." Her eyes closed as she felt the pounding in her temples. She hoped this was just discomfort, because it was uncomfortable. She focused on her breathing and gripped the rail. "If you could get me a cup of hot water from the kitchen or whatever they call it on these things.... it would be greatly appreciated," she said miserably.

Kalian only nodded as Elinowy explained her choice. Magic was *not* the easy road for *him*. His friend's life or long-term health was not in danger, so he acquiesced to her wishes. Knowing Elinowy's skill with medicinal herbs, she probably intended to brew her own treatment. "Of course, I'll be right back."

Rhi emerged from below decks, as she did she quickly ascertained how the crew was working and how her guests were doing. She spotted Kithris being attended to by Katya. She noticed how green the elf looked though it was quickly going away. She glanced in the direction of her mother, her mother gave a slight nod and then continued to get the ship ready to sail. She spotted Rahvin diligently helping. She then saw Elinowy and Kalian seemed to be helping her. She made her way over to them. "Is everything alright?"

"Elinowy is seasick. She asked me to bring her hot water from the galley." Kalian hesitated a moment before heading below decks, in case Rhiannon had another recommendation.

Rhiannon will give Kalian a nod, "A cup of hot water please. Ask the cook for a dash of honey as well." She will turn to Elinowy and smile. She pulls out a small piece of ginger root and hands it to her. "Here, put this between your teeth and bite down. Don't chew, just bite for now. This should help a bit."

Elinowy made a failed attempt at expressing her thanks, mumbling as she accepted the ginger root and proceeded to immediately bite down on it. The strong scent of the ginger flowed through her nostrils causing her sinuses to expand and relax. It didn't stop the throbbing in her head, but it was a wondrous respite from her misery. The coolness of the salty air played on her exposed fiery tresses which similarly felt wonderful. She looked over to the kindly dwarf and did her best to smile with the piece of gingerroot hanging out of her mouth. The root was good. She would add it to her tea when Kalian returned with water.

Kalian hurried below deck to the galley and had barely started asking for hot water when Cook – not their name but clearly the moniker they were accustomed to - cut him off by handing him just what Elinowy needed. Apparently Cook anticipated seasickness among the passengers. Within only a few minutes, Kalian was back with a small iron teapot full of just-boiled water and a cup. "The ship's cook was prepared. I said you have your own healing herbs, but Cook said they have an herbal tea mix for seasickness if you'd like to try it."

The scarlet sister took the root from her mouth and grabbed the mug eagerly in her hands, letting the aroma fill her nostrils. Her trained sense of smell began to determine the ingredients of the tea. Her body meanwhile relished the stabilizing flavor as it flowed past her lips. she closed her eyes, grateful for the beverage. She lingered in the moment of teas flavor and fortifying attributes. reopening her eyes she turned to Kalian. "Thank the Maker, this is perfect. Your kindness is greatly appreciated." she spoke in a soft voice, then took another hearty sip of the concoction. This was not a cure, but was a joyous respite from her suffering. She gave Kalian a smile as she lowered the cup. "I will be alright. Do not worry for me."

Jessamir and Rhiannon started to call out orders as the crew started to move quickly. Most of the orders were called out in dwarven though some were in common. What was interesting was the fact that, even though both Jessamir and Rhi were shouting out orders at the same time, the crew did their jobs. An organized chaos. Then the order came from. Rhi, "Cast Off The Lines!" The dock workers took the ropes off the cleats, as the ship's crew started pulling in the ropes. "Push Of!" The dock workers picked up poles with large flat pads on the ends and pushed the ship away from the dock. "Fenders Up!" The ship's crew brought up the pads. "Unfurl The Sails!" As the crew shifted to unfurl the sails, the wind caught them. The black sails filled and the ship seemed to leap forward as it started to pick up speed. Rhi moved from side to side up on the quarterdeck, once it seemed that she was satisfied, "Trim the sails! Steady as she goes, helmsman! Keep a sharp lookout for reefs and shoals. We sail for adventure and fortune!" Rhi looked to her mother, who gave her a quick nod. She then looked to the crew and then to her companions.

Vasil was on deck, still unsure of exactly what his duties all involved other than to watch for anything involving 'security'? He had checked the hold once even using a lantern for the deepest darkest parts. No unwanted stowaways...unless they had been really good at hiding. He saw his share of bilge rats though but then it was common knowledge all ships had rats, they were impossible to get rid of completely. He was not about to chase around down there trying to stab the things with his dagger.

Anyhow now up on deck, he kept waiting for the dreaded 'sea sickness' to come over him, he had heard all about this queasiness that came over some folk aboard ships. It seemed to affect different folk differently. Fortunately so far - and the key words being SO FAR - he felt just fine. But then there were no storms either to toss the vessel about.

It was fascinating though to watch the countryside go by as he leaned against the deck railing.

Thief of Security

Posted on 10 Apr 2024 @ 1:48pm by [Mage Kalian Winter](#) & [Warrior Rhiannon Cadash](#) & [Rogue Vasil](#)

1,085 words; about a 5 minute read

Mission: [Bann Voyage](#)

Location: The Night's Kiss, Leaving Jader

Timeline: Bloomingtide 20th

Kalian was not exactly sure what Rhiannon's responsibilities were aboard ship whilst the Night's Kiss was underway, or what he was supposed to do besides stay out of the way. Besides, he knew that Rhiannon would find him if she had time to relax.

So when he saw Jessamir's new *security consultant* - whatever that meant - leaning on the deck rail, Kalian decided to join him. "Hello." Kalian leaned against the rail near the other young man. "You're Vasil, right? I'm Kalian." They'd been introduced before, but names could be hard to remember, especially when meeting several people at once.

Vasil had been staring out over the glistening waves to the closest shore, mind empty at the moment. Until the voice and figure brought him back to the here and now.

"Hullo. Yes, Vasil. And indeed Kalian it is," the young man grinned, the other fellow had saved him the embarrassment of not remembering the fellow's name. He really needed to learn all these folk.

Small talk usually came easily to Kalian when he was working the bar or serving tables at the Raven's Roost, but he found himself at a loss to think of something to say besides an obvious question. "At the meeting in the chantry, Jessamir said you were in charge of security. What does that entail?"

Rhi had been up at the helm, talking with the helmsman and the Navigator. When she spotted Kalian a smile crossed her face. She finished giving her instructions to the two and moved down to join Kalian and Vasil, catching Kalian's question. She looked to Vasil to see what he thought his job entailed.

Vasil blinked, "Hmmm, that is a good question. I have never done anything like this before. But then I've never been on a ship like this before either."

"I have been told I am to check the hold and other places on the ship to look for anyone trying to stowaway on board. That is all I know for sure," he shrugged.

"What is your job on board?" he figured turnaround was fair play as he now asked basically the same question of Kalian.

"Well..." Kalian considered the question. "My usual job is working at the Raven's Roost Tavern in Jader. Just now, officially I'm a passenger. Mother Giselle and Lady Seryl commissioned the Night's Kiss to transport the group of us to West Hill Bannorn. But as I understand it, all able-bodied passengers are expected to help. So far, I've just been staying out of the way, I don't have a ship-board assignment. But perhaps the First Mate has something in mind for me to do?" He looked to Rhiannon, curious what she would say.

"Ahh, I see," Vasil simply nodded.

Rhi gave Kalian a wicked smile, "There are many things that you can do. But for now learn how to run

the ropes for the sails and if needs be for speed, I believe my mother was hoping you could use your magic to make some wind."

Vasil heard the word 'magic', that startled him a little. Magic could be a good thing but it also could be made into sorcery which could be dark and dangerous.

She looked to Vasil, "You have very keen eyesight, along with a very particular set of skills. Until your other skills are needed, doing watch duty will be good."

"Yes, that I can do easily enough. Watch. I shall keep my eyes peeled then," Vasil was quite willing, didn't sound hard at all.

Kalian noted the look Vasil gave him at the mention of magic, and his quick recovery. So Vasil was not, as Kalian thought he might be, a mage like himself. Attempting to reassure him, Kalian said, "My primary skill with magic is healing." And shapeshifting, but that was a secret known only to Rhiannon and Kithris. "I know a couple of ice and fire spells," he added. Potentially dangerous spells had been the most difficult to learn and control.

"Ahhhh, most useful I'm sure," Vasil nodded. Also spells, especially the fire, which could cause injury or worse depending on their strength.

Looking up at the sails, Kalian rubbed his chin in thoughtful contemplation. Given his relationship with Rhiannon, first mate of the *Night's Kiss*, he had been experimenting with manipulating air. "I've been working on a wind spell. I've yet to master it, but I'll do my best," he said to Rhiannon, a little sheepishly. He wondered if Kithris knew any Dalish wind spells. If she was feeling better, perhaps she could give him some pointers. But first, he really needed to talk to Rhiannon about how well he knew Kithris. "And I'll learn how to run the ropes for the sails. I want to stay in our Captain's good graces, so best to be as useful as possible, right?"

"Yes, my hope too, be useful. So I don't get chucked over the side," Vasil grinned, not that he really thought it would ever come to that.

"I'm sure Captain Jessamir wouldn't throw you over the side for that." Kalian looked to Rhiannon for confirmation, thinking about his own potential for a longer term situation on the ship.

Rhi listened to the two men talk for a moment. She had not spent too much time with Vasil though her mother had vouched for him. So for Rhi, that was good enough. Rhi looked to Kalian and Vasil, "By the time we reach our destination. You both will know how to set the sails and steer the ship. As for getting thrown over board, my mother would never do that. She has other....." Rhi stops and smiles. "I will say that we have things to do today. So let's get to it. (she looks to Vasil) Head up to the ship's wheel, watch and learn" She looks to Kalian, "Bavibella is waiting for you by the main mast. She is your trainrumm. (Trainer)"

Vasil thought he was going to learn the rigging, it would be the sort of thing his natural agility and

fearlessness were perfect for. Oh well, orders was orders. He headed toward the helm. But before he took more than a step...

Kalian gave the young man a sincere grin. "I'm glad to know you, Vasil. When we get back to Jader, stop by the Raven's Roost tavern for a beer, on me."

"Why thank ya. And I will take you up on that!" he grinned then continued on his way.

Adrift in the Waking Sea

Posted on 23 May 2024 @ 1:19pm by [Mage Kalian Winter](#) & [Warrior Rhiannon Cadash](#) & [Warrior Katya Charbonnet \(Shar-bon-ay\)](#) & [Warrior Rahvin Vargar](#) & [Rogue Elinowy Ursulas](#) & [Rogue Vasil](#) & [Mage Kithris Sabrae](#)

1,638 words; about a 8 minute read

Mission: [Bann Voyage](#)

Location: The Night's Kiss, enroute from Jader to West Hill

Timeline: Bloomingtide 21st, evening

The passengers and most members of the crew were gathered in the galley of *The Night's Kiss*, finishing the evening meal. Captain Jessamir made certain the ship was well supplied, and Cook set a generous table for every meal.

Kalian raised his tankard over his empty bowl in Cook's direction. "Another delicious meal. Thank you." The lamb stew was spicy compared to what he was accustomed to, but delicious. He drained the last of his beer and leaned over to kiss Rhiannon's cheek. "I believe I'm on kitchen cleanup duty."

Rhi gave Kalian a smile and a nod. "Kitchen cleanup, then I need get some rest, you will be on the quarterdeck with me on last watch."

"I must agree! The meal was delicious. I liked the spiciness of it. How about you Kit darling? did you enjoy it?" Katya said.

Kit had been able to stomach the bland bread that cook had been offering to her and Elinowy. This was the first meal that she had ate a bit of the lamb stew. It was good, still she had not wanted to risk it. So when Katya asked if she had enjoyed it, she smiled.

Vasil was skinny to look at, sure, but he actually had a very good appetite, and had thoroughly enjoyed his bowl of stew. As for the spiciness, that was fine with him. Gave the meal a kick and

besides there was beer to wash it down. He had always thought ship diet was bread and water. Guess not!

Some had suffered from sea sickness so they might feel differently, he did not have that issue.

Elinowy had positioned herself away from her companions, especially Kithris, after the unfortunate incident on the deck. She felt a very odd need to make things right with the elf or at least help her in some way. It was a strange feeling. While she still held a common sense of revulsion to the Dalish, she really wanted to make this small blonde warrior like her, or at least forgive her. The shame was nearly overwhelming to the sister. She had a hard time even looking at Kithris without mouthing sorry at her. Interestingly, the explosive climax of her illness had done a great deal to relieve her symptoms. She slowly munched on a piece of crispy bread. There was a plethora of meat products on the table, but only limited vegetable dishes. She was patient. The Maker or possibly the cook would provide. She didn't share her companion's pleasure for Beer, and what water there was on board was not the cleanest, but tea was a good solution.

Jessamir sat at the head of the table and watched her crew and the passengers. It made her smile seeing everyone getting along.

A crewmember rushed down the ladder, calling out, "Captain! Barirmegrett has spotted a ship! Appears to be drifting."

Jessamir gave Barirmegrett a nod. "Understood. On our way."

Vasil looked up from his meal, curiosity sparked by that announcement. As the crew got up to go take a look, he of course joined them. As nosey as the next fellow.

Kalian recalled Barirmegrett, Jessamir often assigned her to the crows nest. Curious as he was, he stood aside and allowed the crew to scurry up to the deck ahead of him.

Rhi looked to her mother then headed up the ladder. "Barirmegrett, with me."

Katya's curiosity was peaked. A ship adrift? Perhaps there were survivors.

Kit looked to Katya and gave a nod. "Let's go see." There was a bit of that musical tone coming back in her voice.

Up on deck, the other ship could be seen clearly, but was still too far away to discern details without a spyglass. But even at this distance, the sails hung tattered and slack, and the ship had an obvious list to the port side.

Vasil had the fine vision of youth on his side and studied the vessel. The sails were in bad shape, that was evident. And more ominous yet, the ship was listing. That could not be good. No sighting of anyone on deck or in the rigging.

He voiced his opinion, "That ship looks abandoned. Might even slowly be sinking?"

"Interesting. I wonder what happened to her?" Katya said. "Captain do you want to investigate?"

Kit stood with Katya, "I will go with you, if you go."

Jessamir gave Katya a crisp nod, though her crew was already adjusting the ship's heading. "It's the unwritten law of the sea. Requires a mariner to offer help to another mariner in distress. However, we will approach with caution."

Kalian arrived on deck and took in the sight of the derelict ship. "I haven't heard of any recent storms at sea." Living in Jader, a port town, a storm in the Waking Sea would have been common knowledge. "What might have happened to the ship, or the crew?"

Elinowy carefully made her way up to the deck to survey the scene. If there were people in need of assistance, she was ready to provide what care she was able.

"We can only hope the crew is ok, but somehow I have my doubts!" Katya said. "We'd best be prepared for trouble!"

Vasil thought it over for an instant then turned to the captain, "Only way to find out is go on board it and check. I'd go."

Rhi watched as the Night's Kiss started to move towards the drifting ship. Without looking at Kalian, "There could be any number of reasons. From breaking loose from their moorings to the crew going mad and jumping ship." When Vasil comments that he was willing to go over, Rhi glanced at Vasil, "Good. Any other volunteers?"

Rahvin had come up and had made his way to the side of the ship. When Rhiannon asked for volunteers, he spoke up. "I will go." His tone was soft though held a bit of curiosity.

"I'll go as well." Kalian closed his eyes and opened his awareness to the fade. The veil was often thin in a place where many people had died. He felt nothing, and quickly realized that even if this derelict ship's crew had all died in some awful way, the ship probably drifted away from the location. Kalian shaded his eyes with one hand, scanning the other ship's deck. "I don't see any bodies on the deck, but there are places where the wood is darkened. Might be scorch marks."

"Scorch marks?" that tidbit of news puzzled Vasil. Well, now he was all the more curious.

"So, how do we get over there?" Kalian addressed his question to the captain. "Do we pull up

alongside the other ship and tie up to her? Or do we row over in one of those small boats?"

"I'd say we row over," Vasil wasn't shy about giving his opinion.

For the benefit of her passengers, Jessamir patiently explained, "The other ship's tenders are missing, so chances are the crew abandoned ship. If there's salvage to be had it will be easier to transfer if we lay alongside. If we must disengage quickly, it will take much less time to get the volunteers back and cast off than to wait for them to row back in the tender. However, if there is something dangerous on board the other ship, it'll be safer for the rest of the crew if we keep a safe distance."

"Makes sense. Hopefully there is nothing dangerous but if there is, we will be ready!" Katya said.

Rhi moved over to where the captain's gig was just lowered into the water. "Barirmegrett, you're coming with us." She grabbed the rope ladder, set it and threw it over. "Don't forget the grapple ladder and your lucky monkey fist Barirmegrett." Rhi looked to the others. "Those that are coming, the Raven's Claw awaits below." She looks to Kalian, "You are sitting next to me."

"Well, let's get it over with then," Vasil clambered down to take seat next to one of the oars. He was no expert with rowing but.....how hard could it be?

Kalian thought the tender looked like a big rowboat, with three pairs of oars and bench seats. He waited for Vasil to climb down the rope ladder, then followed. The tricky part was regaining his balance when his feet reached the boat. He moved out of the way of the next volunteer, grinning at Rhiannon's directive to sit next to her. *How had he gotten so lucky as to be chosen by a woman like her?* "Gladly, my Lady." He took the seat next to Rhiannon.

Rahvin checked his gear and moved to the side of the ship, and readied to climb down.

Kithris looked to Katya, then to the side of the ship. There was a bit of uncertainty in her eyes as she took a deep breath.

Katya went over to Kit's side. "I'll be by your side my love. Stick with me. I'll protect you darling!"

Vasil sat then grabbed an oar, "You all know we gotta time our rowing? Pull together, otherwise we won't get anywhere. I'm set!"

He put the oar into the water and waited.

Kalian took in the company of volunteers – Rhiannon, Katya, Kithris, Rahvin, Vasil, and Barirmegrett. Elinowy hesitated at the *Night's Kiss* railing. Looking down at them in the gently swaying tender, the Chantry sister's usually creamy complexion had taken on a distinctly green shade. "Don't worry, Elinowy. We'll be back in no time," Kalian reassured his friend as they began to row toward the derelict ship. After all, *what could go wrong?*

OOC: image of the [route from Jader to West Hill Bannorn](#)

Warrior Peeps

Posted on 06 Jun 2024 @ 4:39pm by [Townsfolk The Scholar](#) & [Warrior Katya Charbonnet \(Shar-bon-ay\)](#) & [Warrior Rahvin Vargar](#)

594 words; about a 3 minute read

Mission: [Bann Voyage](#)

Location: The Night's Kiss, Leaving Jader

Timeline: Bloomingtide 20th

The Night's Kiss was underway, her crew working together like a well-oiled machine, or a synchronized dance, under the direction of Captain Jessamir.

Crew member Satrotha finished logging the last-minute cargo, and turned her attention to their passengers. Or as they would soon discover themselves to be – the Night's Kiss temporary crew members. Her attention was drawn to the tall, blonde, human woman. *Warrior*, Satrotha guessed, from the way she held herself, and her armor. The dwarf approached the warrior woman.

"Serah," she said to the warrior woman. "You cannot wear your armor aboard ship. If you fell overboard, you'd sink before we could get to you." The dwarf tipped back her head to meet Katya's gaze. "We may have an armor stand on board, or a spare trunk."

"Ahh, I should know better. Where is my head?" although Katya knew exactly where her head was. Same place as her heart! "I'll go put it up immediately. Thank you! If you have an armor stand that would be wonderful."

"Aye, I'll see what I can find, and be right back," said Satrotha, and headed below deck. In truth, an armor stand was not an unusual request when the Night's Kiss took on passengers of the warrior persuasion.

Katya waited for the crewman to come back. The ship had a good crew that was for sure. When she came back with the armor rack, she thanked her, put it in her cabin, and took off the armor. After that she went back up to see what she could help with.

Rahvin had left his armor below, the only thing he kept with him was his sword. As the ship was underway now, Rahvin had helped with the sails along with a few odds and ends before he was

relieved. He had volunteered to stand watch later during the day so he had a bit of time before then.

As he walked to the port side of the ship he seen the tall blonde warrior coming back up from below. He gave her a warriors nod. "Good fortune."

"Aye! Good fortune to you as well. Rhavin, correct?" Katya said.

He gave a nod. "Aye, Rahvin it is. How fair you and your companion?"

"Well I am well, Kit however is rather seasick. She is being tended to though and should be better. I am used to sea travel although when I first started, I was as bad as Kit. Not a pleasant feeling!"

Rahvin gave a nod. "I am sure she will." He looked over the water. "I have spent my share of time on ships. It does take time to get used to the motion." He turned to look at Katya and smiled. "I want to thank you for coming along."

"You are welcome. I enjoy a good adventure. I enjoy sailing on a good ship. Kit however, well her first voyage and all. She will survive though."

Rahvin gave Katya a nod. "I am sure she will be fine soon enough." Rahvin moved so that he puts his hands on the railing and looked out over the water. "Adventure is usually in the Grey Wardens vocabulary."

"So I have heard. Haven't encountered many grey wardens but I know I like a good adventure." Katya said "And with Kit by my side, I feel I can take on anything."

Rahvin gave Katya a smile. "It is good to have someone by your side. Especially when you know that you can count on them." He looked from Katya to out to the sea.

The Joy of Sea Travel

Posted on 16 Jul 2024 @ 3:12pm by [Townfolk The Scholar & Rogue Elinowy Ursulas & Mage Kithris Sabrae](#)

1,277 words; about a 6 minute read

Mission: [Bann Voyage](#)

Location: The Night's Kiss, Leaving Jader

Timeline: Bloomingtide 20th

Motion sickness was not an uncommon complaint among those new to sea travel, and Cook was prepared, although they'd been surprised when First Mate Rhiannon's lover had delivered the Chantry sister's request for hot water, to prepare an herbal brew of her own.

Now that the Night's Kiss was underway, and the galley secured, Cook ventured above deck and found the two seasick passengers in the stern of the ship, where the crew had no doubt insisted they relocate so as to be downwind from everyone else. Cook carried two iron tea pots by the handles, one in each hand.

"My sympathies to you both," they said, addressing the Sister and the Dalish elf as they set the tea pots on the deck between the two women. "I'm told that seasickness is worse than a dwarven ale hangover. You can call me Cook. This teapot contains more hot water, just boiled, and this one is an herbal brew I made, the recipe passed on to me by the ship's Cook I apprenticed with – longer ago than I'd care to recall." From a pocket of their apron Cook produced two cups and set them next to the teapots. "Tis fortunate you have each other, and can share the hardship of this temporary illness together."

Elinowy cradled the mug of tea Kalian had brought her, albeit, mostly consumed at this point. She was relieved to see the fresh teapots Cook had brought. "The Maker's blessing on you Cook." The sister softly stated, taking the pot he had designated as holding hot water. "Your herbal recipe is a soothing balm amidst this unpleasantness. I think I may have a few ingredients to increase its potency."

Elinowy unsteadily stood upright for a moment, and loosened one of the fabric belts encircling her narrow waist. She then knelt down to the deck and unfurled a string of small sachets folded into the belt. She looked the line of pouches over with a familiar eye, stopping at the occasional one to open it and pour some of the contents into the pot of water. She bent over the teapot determining from aroma if what she was blending smelled right. When satisfied, she let the tea brew. She looked back up at Cook. "Thank you for your kindness."

As the tea brewed the unease of her stomach returned. This journey by sea was decidedly unpleasant. Her eye suddenly looked over at the creature she had been segregated with to the back of the ship. The elf, seemed as equally miserable as she. it was a creature of the Maker, albeit fallen, but still a stroke of compassion came across her as she surveyed the wretch's suffering. Elinowy took the piece of gingerroot she had been sucking on, and broke off the part she had put in her mouth and extended the other piece to the elf, her hand shaking slightly in the process. "Perhaps this might help while the tea brews." she said, hoping the creature would reject the offer and scurry away somewhere else.

Kithris had sat with her back against the rails on the stern. Eyes closed her stomach doing flip flops. When the Cook made their over and introduced themselves, Kit barely opened her eyes and mumbled a thank you. It was then that she noticed the woman who sat near her. The red haired sister.

When the red haired sister offered her the ginger root while the tea brewed, Kit reached out to take the piece. Kit brought it to her nose and took in the smell then, like the sister, she started to chew on it. Ginger root in mouth her stomach started to calm slightly. Kit gave a weak smile, "Thank va nesh Tel' ginger root. Sal appreciate it." (Thank you for the ginger root. I appreciate it.)

The rolling of the ship (while very slight in reality) made it hard for Elinowy to follow the Elf's broken speech. She did appreciate that the creature, a female it appeared, was trying to communicate in a civilized tongue. The chantry sister tried to steady her head and stomach amidst the tossing torrent of the seas. She gave a slight nod to the small blonde elf girl. She recalled traveling in the wagon with the girl in their last adventure, but had never spoken to it. She did her best to give the elf a kind smile. "Do you have a cup? I think the tea is ready if you would like to try some."

Kit sucked on the root, her stomach had not settled completely but it was better. At least till the ship took a heavy roll. (a small 3 degree roll) Her stomach flipped and she felt it wanting to escape. With a hard swallow Kit closed her eyes and let out the breath she had been holding with a pretty nasty burp. She heard the sister say that the tea was ready and if she had a cup. Kit gave a nod and fished her cup out of her pack. Kit took the kettle and poured the tea into her cup. Without a thought she looked to the sister. "Nesh va Nys." (For you sister.) As she offered the cup to Elinowy.

Elinowy lifted up the mag Kalian had given her earlier. "Blessing on you for offering, but that is for you." she said as graciously as she could while the ship began to spin around her. She held the mug forward for the elf girl to fill. "If you don't mind." She could feel herself craving the tea that she hoped would mitigate her suffering, but she felt a growing fever boiling up in her.

Kit gave a nod. It took a few moments for her stomach to settle enough for Kit to take a sip. As the tea slid down her throat and hit her stomach she could feel it start to settle it. Kit took a tentative breath and felt a bit better. She looked to Elinowy and gave a smile. Her voice a little shaky, "This helps." Shifts a little trying to get a little more comfortable. "We haven't really been formally introduced. I am Kithris Sabrae of Clan Sabrae."

A weak smile came to Elinowy's lips. The Elf wanted to chat. She took a deep breath hoping to calm the roiling tumult that was her stomach at the moment. "I am sister Elinowy Ursulas or the Bette Noir Chantry." she made out as she felt an odd moistness to her throat. "I fear that you are getting me..." She cut herself off as she felt the sensation of her tongue rising to the roof of her mouth and a sudden rush of heat washed over her. Her eyes bulged with a sudden redness as she reached out grasping at empty air, hoping to find the rail of the ship. She struggled to push herself up to her feet but found herself listing to the side. And just like that an explosion of bile and stomach fluids erupted from her mouth showering down onto her elfin companion.

Kit had been listening as Elinowy was introducing herself properly, when the Sister shifted, tried to get up and reach the railing, then let loose with another round. Without a second thought, this brought out a round of bile, stomach fluids, and what tea she had already consumed. Though the sister had been luckier than Kit had been, since it landed on the deck. Kit shifted and moved away from Elinowy. With throw up on her, Kit did the only thing that made sense to her and started to take

her clothes off.

Dark Ship Opportunity's Strike

Posted on 19 Aug 2024 @ 7:21pm by [Mage Kalian Winter](#) & [Warrior Rhiannon Cadash](#) & [Warrior Katya Charbonnet \(Shar-bon-ay\)](#) & [Warrior Rahvin Vargar](#) & [Rogue Vasil](#) & [Mage Kithris Sabrae](#)

2,307 words; about a 12 minute read

Mission: [Bann Voyage](#)

Location: Enroute from Jader to West Hill

Timeline: Bloomingtide 21st, evening

Once all seven volunteers were aboard the *Raven's Claw*, they pushed off from the *Night's Kiss*. Clouds gathered overhead, dimming the sun's evening light. Jessamir shouted down at them, "Don't take any risks. I want to be well away from that ship before the sun sets."

Barirmegrett sat in the bow, her keen gaze on the derelict ship as they rowed closer. Rhiannon and Kalian took the fore pair of oars, Katya and Kithris the middle, and Vasil and Rahvin the aft oar set.

As the adventurers brought the *Raven's Claw* closer to the port side of the derelict ship, Barirmegrett pointed to the ship's bow and said, "I can make out her name. *Opportunity's Strike*."

Rhi searched her memory for the name of the ship.

Kalian squinted at the derelict ship's bow. The letters appeared to have been covered with soot... or scorch marks. Now that he knew what it said he could only just make it out. No wonder Barirmegrett was usually assigned to the crow's nest.

The volunteers brought the *Raven's Claw* in close to the port side of the *Opportunity's Strike*, and Barirmegrett expertly tossed the grapple ladder up, securing their path onto the derelict ship. "Who's first?" she asked.

Well, somebody had to do it and wouldn't want to disturb those love birds, thought Vasil.

"I'll go. Just don't be surprised if I suddenly dive off the side of the ship if I run into big trouble up there," he gave a cheeky grin, but the words were not completely in jest.

He stood up then and took a pull on the grapple, yes, it was secure up there...least for now. No time to waste.

"Go ahead. Let us know if it's safe to come up." Katya said.

"I will," Vasil nodded but never paused.

"I'll be right behind you," said Kalian. *Maferath's balls! There was no way he would let the scrawny kid go up on that ship alone. Even if he was ship's head of security.* The moment Vasil shifted his weight off the little boat and onto the rope, Kalian moved to the bow, then followed him up. Kalian hauled himself over the ship's railing and stood next to Vasil, taking it all in.

Vasil just nodded acknowledgement to Kalian, he was fine with having someone right with him.

Then Kalian called out what he saw to the crew in the boat below. "No people I can see." There were tools scattered in one area, in another area playing cards, a pipe, and a lute lay abandoned. "It doesn't look like a battle. Other than the scorch marks, it's more like the crew were in the middle of routine chores."

Vasil figured he didn't need to yell down now as Kalian was filling the others in. He decided to take a closer look at those scorch marks.

Rhi had given a nod to Vasil. She found his willingness to be the first up the ladder. He was quickly gaining her respect. What caught her off guard was when Kalian said that he was going up next. "Be careful." She called out to the two of them.

One of the burnt places was close-by where they were standing. To Vasil, Kalian said, "There's something about the shape of this burn mark..."

"Yeah, not anything like I've ever seen before," Vasil remarked but then it came to him. And it wasn't good. Others now came up.

From his position, Vasil could see that the burned section of deck was in the shape of a person. As distinct as a shadow, but the wood of the deck had definitely been burned.

Katya followed Kalian up. "Alright. What have we got?" she asked.

Kithris made her way up after Katya. She stood near Katya.

Rhi followed behind Katya and Kithris. As she made her way over the railing she noticed that those already on deck were looking at what looked to be some kind of scorch marks. "So what do we have here?"

Vasil pointed, "Look at that carefully, yes burn marks but look at the shape. Like that of a human body was lying on the deck. Burning...hopefully already dead and not burned alive. But something bad happened here."

He now drew out his weapon just in case.

Rahvin had followed Rhi up and had moved towards the quarterdeck.

"Something bad that looks like magic," Kalian agreed with Vasil. He readied his staff and concentrated on his connection to the fade. "I'm not detecting magical activity right now." He looked to Kithris for confirmation.

This gave her something else to focus on as Kithris gave a nod. Bringing her bow/staff around in front of her she closed her eyes and focused. A brief light green light seemed to come from her closed eyes. After a moment she opened them, "There is no current magical activity. That said, it does not mean that this was not caused by magical means."

"I wouldn't know about that, I do not deal in magics," Vasil admitted easily enough. He didn't really trust magic though.

Kalian leaned over the rail to give Barirmegrett, who remained on the *Raven's Claw*, a thumbs-up, then he addressed Rhiannon, "A ship would have something like a business ledger, right? Or maybe a log that might have clues about what happened here? Where do you think we'd find it?"

Rhiannon gave Kalian a smile. "All ships have ledgers or logs, if you prefer. Navigation, business or the quartermaster logs among others. What we want are the Captain's logs, the quartermasters log and the ship's daily logs. These will give us an idea of what might have happened here."

To Vasil, Rahvin, and Katya, Kalian said, "There might be survivors, hiding below deck. Shall we search for them?"

"Possibly. You'd think at least one or the other would have come up to see who was boarding their ship though? It's not like we were silent and sneaking on board. It's going to be dark down there, we need a lantern or a torch," Vasil gave his opinion on the matter.

"Yes we should check to see if there are any survivors. They might be injured. As always proceed with caution. Does anybody have a lantern?" asked Katya.

Rahvin had been listening to the conversation. When Kalian had suggested that there may be survivors on board and Vasil commented that if there had been survivors, someone should have shown themselves by now. He looked to Vasil then to Rhi, "I would agree, if someone was here, you would think that they would have shown themselves by now. Though, there is the possibility that they may be too weak to do so." He looks to Katya, "I can start with the crew's quarters. I could use some help?"

"Of course. I'd be happy to help!" Katya replied!

Rhi looks to Vasil, "Come with me to the Captain's quarters. Going to need your expertise."

"Sure, I'll go with ya," Vasil nodded without hesitation.

She will give Kalian a smile, "You and Kithris, see if there is any magic or magical residue on board." Turning, she started to head to the captain's quarters

Vasil was right behind her.

Kithris looked to Katya and smiled. She seemed to be looking a bit better since she had something to focus on. Looking to Kalian, "Well. Where should we start?"

"Well..." Kalian closed his eyes and concentrated on his awareness of the fade, then glanced around as he slowly rotated where he stood. "I'm not sensing any magic. No fade-based magic, anyway. I've never used blood magic, so I'm not sure I'd recognize it." In a low voice to Kithris, he asked, "How about you?"

Kithris had done the same as Kalian and couldn't find anything as well. "I have never used blood magic either. As for recognizing it, I would say that we should try and look for what would be different in how it feels when we touch the fade. It is worth a try." She looked around for a moment then lit up the end of her bow for light. "Let us look around."

Kalian and Kithris's above-deck search didn't turn up anything new. Kalian said, "Let's check in with Rhiannon and Vasil, then head below deck and see if we can help Katya and Rahvin search."

###

Vasil and Rhiannon found the Captain's quarters in complete disarray. As they searched, Rhiannon discovered a safe-like strong box of the type a ship's captain might use to store coin and valuables, but the lock was broken and the box was empty. Coin that might have been kept in it was scattered among the broken things littering the floor.

"Damn, now I'll never know if I could have picked it," Vasil grinned, he always did enjoy that sort of challenge.

Rhi gave a chuckle. "Well, we will have to get some locks then. To keep you in practice."

Vasil picked up, among other things, a book about half-full of numbers and other writing – the ship's ledger.

"Here ya go, lots ta read. Just don't ask me to do it, I can't read a lick," he declared.

Rhiannon came over and took the ledger. She glanced through it quickly. She grabbed a sheet from the bed and made a make shift sack. She put the ledger in it, then started to look in places where she would keep hidden things. Around the bed is where she starts. As she does she says, "Vasil, where would you put something you wanted to keep hidden?"

"Well, that depends on what it is, how big or small it is, the place I'm in, and such. There is no such thing as a definitive answer to that one. But if I wanted it safe, I'd lock it up or.....put it in a safe! I will check the floor boards, maybe there is a loose one," he answered then got down on his hands and knees to start.

Whilst Vasil makes a careful search, Rhiannon opens the ledger to the last page and finds notes likely written by the Captain or Quartermaster, indicating the extremely lucrative sale of a Grey Warden Relic – one of three - to the Bann of West Hill. The ship's next port was Kirkwall where they expected to sell one of the two remaining pieces of the set.

Tag: Rhiannon

Vasil does indeed discover a cleverly hidden cupboard beneath the floorboards, and inside is a rectangular iron lock box, with the lock intact, about one foot high, one foot wide, and two feet long.

Tag: Vasil

Inside the lockbox is another, smaller, rectangular box wrapped in leather. The box is about 4" x 4" x 12" and made of an unfamiliar metal inlaid with letters fashioned from blue crystal. Rhiannon recognizes the crystal as lyrium, and the letters as elven, but Rhi is not certain of the translation. The interior of the box is thickly padded, and contains one solid lump of lyrium carved into the shape of a griffon, about the size of a child's fist. There are two additional indentations in the padding to either side, suggesting the box once held three such carvings. Letters carved into the figure itself are just visible, but difficult to read without removing it from the padding.

Tag: Vasil, Rhiannon

Kithris and Kalian appeared at the door to the captain's cabin about the time Vasil and Rhi opened the box. Kalian said, "Kithris, can you read the elven writing on the outside of that box?"

Tag: Kithris

###

"Careful my love. No telling what's down there." Katya said to Kit as she departed with Rahvin.

As Katya and Rahvin start down the stairs to the next level down, they find an unlit lantern hanging from a hook. It appears to be half-full of oil, so all they need to do is light it. Both of them can hear sounds coming from further down, deep within the gloom. Katya strikes a match and lights the lantern. "There that ought to help. Now let's see what there is to see."

Rahvin followed down the ladder to the deck below. Katya spotted a lantern and lit it. As they peered around sounds could be heard. Sword in hand, Rahvin whispered to Katya. "Something is down here. Let us check it out." He will start towards where he heard the noise coming from. Moving as quickly as he can.

Katya and Rahvin find themselves in the galley of the ship, where the table is broken, chairs are broken and tossed to the sides, and broken dishes with the remnants of spoiled food litter the floor. At the edges of the flickering light of the lantern, shadows move eerily, as if thrown from glowing embers in the room beyond, and a growling voice whispers, "*In Death, Sacrifice.*"

Tag: Katya, Rahvin

Tag: EVERYONE!

OOC(Sprite): for reference, this is a list of characters in this scene (so far): Katya, Vasil, Barirmegrett (still in the boat), Kalian, Rhiannon, Kithris, Rahvin,

On the outside of the box, written in Elvish, Kithris will be able to read and translate what it says:

"In War, Victory

In Peace, Vigilance

In Death, Sacrifice"

Being a dwarf, Rhiannon is probably the only member of the party who can safely handle a lump of lyrium with her bare hands. (Something they would all know.) The inlaid lyrium is thin and doesn't pose a serious risk.

If any of them do take the one remaining relic out of the box and examine it, the middle phrase (in Elvish) is visible: In Peace, Vigilance.

If Rahvin or Katya have encountered a Rage demon before, they may recognize that growl ;)

Ended here, story incomplete