

Chapter Two - Arrival in Malta

Arriving in the City: READYING 19, KY 232

You stand on the street by yourselves.

Relsyn says "Are we bringing these bags to the market then? And after that setting up shop in the Underplow Inn? I'll help. I would also like to chat with the Order of St. Macedone here." He picks up his share of the bags and starts toward...

"Airith, Which way is the market?" Relsyn frowns and furrows his brow, his face clearly showing his discomfort at being outside his area of familiarity, a town, alas, a large city, in which he has never been.

"The Underplow Inn is West of here in the Farmer's Market. On our way there we should be able to find someone interested in this stuff." Airith finishes packing his belongings and getting Smoke ready. He grabs a bag of wool and positions it over his shoulder, "We should probably get going. Most of the vendors close up shop in the evening. So, if we want to get a good price for this we need to get there before then."

"I was thinking that I should deliver these letters as soon as possible. If you want Relsyn I could take you to the Order after we sell this and get a room at the Underplow. I am not sure what the rest of you want to do. You could check out the order with Relsyn, if he doesn't mind. I would rather deliver these on my own. It draws less suspicion from people."

The group walks a few blocks North through the Warehouse District to the Farmer's Market. You round a corner to see an open area with more hustle and bustle than you could ever imagine. There are shops all over the place selling fresh produce and goods, others are trying to sell livestock and feed, if you want to buy something it is probably here. The noise from this place could be heard a few blocks away but now that you are here it seems much louder. Airith turns to the group, "Keep your valuables close. Some people are here to shop, others are here to make some money the easy way."

Airith leads everyone through the hustle and bustle to a clothing shop more on the edge of the market. You enter the small building and see many different styles and types of clothing. There is a large woman behind a counter keeping an eye on people, apparently the owner, and two other women. One is looking through some pants and shirts, looks like a farmer's wife. The other is younger and looking at some of the dresses in the back.

"What can I do for you?" The large woman asks. She is wearing enough cloth to cover a good size ogre, and her face is pretty enough to be one, too. However, the workmanship on the stitching and embroidery is remarkably perfect, and the jacket she is currently stitching is fantastic in its colors and style.

In the shop, the smells of the market outdoors mingle with the smell of lavender and other materials used in the fabric dyes. There are common pants and shirts, outfits of all kinds, including examples of different kinds of uniforms like maids, stewards, footmen, and the like. There are hats, gloves, socks and hose, and bags of all sizes and shapes. No matter the value of clothes, everything in here has the workmanship of a master.

"I have some wool we picked up on a farm as payment, but can not do much with it ourselves. Can you, perhaps, give some coin for this?" Airith asks.

Inwe adds, "This linnen as well" as she places her bag on the counter.

After a few seconds looking in the bags, she nods..."Hmmm, unusual wool, nice. Clean too. Did this farm have llama's on it? Fine wool it is. A crown for the wool, and three for the woven material. Will that do?"

Inwe picks up the remaining bags of goods (keeping out two yards of the linen) and calls Cildar from his curious sniffing nearby. She just looks around, waiting to follow the lead and suggestion of the others. After days of travel in more comfortable wilderness, returning to the bustle of the city leaves her feeling once again a bit like a badger in tundra.

"Make it 6 Crowns and we'll throw in this pair of pants and cloak." Airith pulls them out of his pack and sets them on the table.

Tianna Spellman says, "five crown for the lot, and I'm doing you a favor - the rough spun is not worth that much. OK quality, but I won't use it - I'll sell it to someone else as is."

"Five will be fine." Airith takes the 5 Crowns and gives one Crown and one Duke to the others. "Call it even from the cave."

"Do you want to sell the bags of nuts too, or should we just head over to the Underplow and snack on them?"

"Shall we leave." The group heads to the door and stands outside in next to a vendor's stand. "The inn is a few more blocks to the North, if we want to sell the nuts just pick a vendor and haggle away." While the group is deciding what to do next, Airith is looking at the items at the stand. He really doesn't see much and is just trying to appear busy while he is keeping an eye out for a thief that may be thinking the group is easy prey.

Inwe: 'Let's keep the nuts. They're good to eat and we wouldn't get much for them anyway.' She returns to watching some of the many people in the street, trying to get a feel for the attitudes of people in this city. 'So what do we do first in this city? Wasn't there supposed to be a place where we could learn more about this staff and its history and perhaps get an idea of where to find and retrieve it?'

Everyone makes their way through the market, yells and screams of bargaining can still be heard as you walk a few blocks away. On your way down the street you see many races and classes of people purchasing all kinds of things. Airith explains that the farmer's market has far better prices than many other areas in town. Cooks and servants of the upper class are sent here to pick up whatever might be needed since many shops in the nicer areas raise their prices.

"I think I may have misspoke earlier, Underplow must be east of here. I must admit I haven't been there in a while." The group heads east for a few blocks more. On what appears to be a main road through Malta stands a large three story building with a red sign reading 'Underplow Inn' in gold lettering and a picture of a silver plow underneath. "I told you I could find it."

In The Underplow Inn

You walk in and see a rather well kept establishment with a large great room for dining, entertaining and drinking. The bar runs almost the entire length of one side and with two doors on either side to what you guess might be the kitchen. Across the bar on the far wall is a stage for entertainers, which is empty. Right now there are a couple of empty tables and chairs but by the number of people in here now, you might have a hard time getting a table in a hour or two. The wait staff is tending tables and it looks like there are two bartenders preparing for the evening rush.

"I don't see Underplow, might be back in the kitchen. Why don't we grab a table and see about some early dinner. I'm sure Underplow will be out here before to long."

As everyone is making their way to an empty table a voice is heard from the far end of the bar. "Pipehill, is that you?" You all look up to see a tall stocky Halfling with short but messy hair heading your way. You might guess his age to be between 40 and 50.

"Yea, it's me all right. The years have not been kind. You look older and more worn out than the last time I saw you." Airith and Underplow reach each other halfway from where they both had started and Underplow replies in Halfling, to which they both laugh and shake hands. The two converse in Halfling for a while and then motion you to a door near the stairs.

"Underplow will let us use the private dining room for tonight's dinner. I hope nobody minds but I also got us a few rooms upstairs at a reasonable rate." You enter the private dining area to see an oval table with chairs and some modest decorations. Underplow motions to take a seat pulling a chair out for the lady, "Please have a seat, I'll be back in a bit with drinks and appetizers." Underplow shuts the door on his way out.

"I told Under that we could use a quiet place to discuss some business and a few rooms. There are three rooms upstairs for us, one double with two beds and two singles. Wrinkle I hope you don't mind but I offered your services as partial payment. You won't have to play every night, just when your available and not doing anything else. You can feel free to leave things in your room. Under doesn't take kindly to thievery and all his employees know it."

Wrinkle smiles at the thought of being able to play for a crowd again.
What can I play that does not include singing?
He nods to Airith and says / mouths "no problem"

There is a knock on the door and then a moment later Underplow enters with water, hot tea, bread and cheese. "There you are. Super will be out a little later and your rooms are being prepared as we speak. Just up the stairs to the first two doors on your right and the one door on your left." And Underplow leaves again.

Airith helps himself to some bread and cheese and pours a nice cup of hot tea. "Any ideas of what our first move should be?"

Relsyn helps himself to some of the food brought in by halfling proprietor.
Between bites, He says, "I would like to go inquire of some of St Macedone's order here in Malta, though it is unlikely they know much more about the staff than those we spoke with in Antioch, they may know something about the families in question."

"This is exceptional cheese. Please pass some more."

Airith smiles and says to Relsyn
"The cheese is great! A halfling specialty - cat-milk cheese. It takes a lot of cats to generate this much cheese, but it's awesome!"
A few seconds later, after Relsyn turns green, Airith laughs uproariously"

Airith throws a hunk of bread to Smoke, who is laying down in the corner. "Yes Relsyn, I remeber you wanted to visit the Order. I was more referring to if anyone had any ideas of how we wanted to approach this. Are we going to gather information about the staff first or are we going to look at the families? I can ask around in some of the seedier areas of town but I fear that might draw some unwanted attention our way."

Airith takes a sip of tea. "Inwe or Wrinkle is there anything either of you want to do? It might be best if Relsyn visits the Order by himself. You can say you are researching the staff for your doctorate or something. I want to get rid of these letters and I don't think it will take more than one person."

Inwe hands the remains of food on her plate to Cildar, sitting next to her chair. She takes a swallow of ale from her mug, thinking. 'Is there a library in town or anyplace that might of records

of this staff and its journey? I would like to try researching that way. And perhaps find out more of these aristocratic families we'll be dealing with.'

Wrinkle says (musically) "I think I want to find the Bard's guild. Perhaps they have some inside information about the families we want to investigate. And, of course, if I am to play here I need their consent or bad things might happen."

Airith sips some more of his tea. He eyes Inwe's ale but doesn't want the smell on his breath when he delivers the letters. Smoke has finished his bread and is still resting in the corner. His ear twitches now and again but he doesn't raise his head to investigate.

"Well Wrinkle, the Bard's guild is in the Inner Plaza, which isn't too far out of the way for me. And Relsyn the Order is in the Royal District, which is on the way." Airith lowers his voice a touch, "I think at this point let's see what we can find out without asking too many people about the staff or families. That way we won't have to worry about the families, or others, sticking their noses in our business."

Inwe: "You're right Airith, let's keep quiet here. we do not want to draw attention to ourselves... Do we. No"

She tosses Cildar another piece of bread.

Relsyn: "Agreed"

Wrinkle nods.

Wrinkle whisays (Says by Whistles) "I think I will go to the guild after dinner. I need permission, I assume, to play here or anywhere in the city. I would not like to draw attention to myself that way. Airith, point me to the square and I will go later tonight. Most bards in the cities I play are up now, get ready to perform until early morn, and sleep late in the morning."

WRINKLE GOES OUT

READYING 19 - evening

Following Airith's directions, Wrinkle easily makes his way to the Inner Plaza, where a very narrow building is squeezed between two larger ones. A brightly colored cloth flag identifies the door as belonging to the guild (as the symbol is common in Antioch, Malta, and many small towns as well) He approaches the door just as a very tall and lanky man exits.

"Eveninggg too ewe" he whisays. "Iss syss where Eye cann reegistrr to plaay heere? Iiim nnew too da sity"

The man halts, looks way down at Wrinkle, and nods. "Sancho can take care of you. He is above until much later." He strolls off with an occasional glance backward.

Wrinkle opens the door to find it leads immediately to a stairs up. Climbing the stairs to the second level, it is obvious the landing and surrounding rooms are borrowed from the buildings on either side. It is very nice, in fact, on the landing - a marble floor about ten feet wide and thirty feet long stretches out before you. Nice leather chairs are set in groupings all along its length, and a serve yourself bar is off to the left. But, immediately in front of Wrinkle is a man sitting at a solid desk, wide enough to make a barrier to go around.

"Name's Sancho - secretary here. I Don't know you so you had better introduce yourself sir" he says sternly, but politely.

"Wrinkle Weybright - musician and lorekeeper. Home was Underwood, then Antioch, and I am temporarily in Malta. I seek permission to play here. The Underplow Inn has agreed to let me play, and no one appears to play there now."

"Underplow let me think. Small but clean. Ugh - halfling owned! You may play there, but we want your pledge to this guild. A tenth of your takings for the first month, fifth each month following, and you may use our lounge as you like. Pay weekly on Moon-day. No visitors here, though, unless you want to be a full guild member (which you cannot be)."

"Fine" whisays Wrinkle.

Sancho pulls out a large book, opens it to a page towards the back, and enters in "Weybright, Wrinkle - Underplow Inn - Temporary" He points to the signature line and hands the quill over to Wrinkle, who signs appropriately. Once satisfied, Sancho relaxes a bit and says "not many here tonight as its a good drinking night by the docks - earn a bit more there. Not you - mind you. Have a drink and sit a few. Meet a few of those around." He gestures around the desk and then returns to his other record keeping.

In fact, nobody catches Wrinkle's eye tonight, so he gets a drink and reads the information found on a slate used as a "what is up" log. He notes there are several ships expected in the near future - with sailors looking for entertainment. The farmers side of the city has been good this winter, but is falling off now that planting approaches.

"Private entertainers needed at Farling estate for a party in a few days. Resume required of group" Several entries are found to warn of thieves in some taverns - not Underplow.

After a small nightcap, Wrinkle returns to the Underplow as most people are finishing dinner. Why not now? He puts his cloak in his room and pulls on a light-weight colorful cape he uses to draw attention to himself and look better. Ocarina in pocket and Lute in hand, he moves down again to the stage.

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For the next few hours, Wrinkle plays the lute, mostly in drinking songs that a group of men seem to know and like. He lets them do the singing, while his hat gains a few coins from patrons who come and go.

Wrinkle plays for a while until there is only one customer left, and he is so drunk he can not hear anything. Underplow hoists him up and out the door, where the man sobers up just enough to stumble down the road. Having seen Relsyn come back already, and shortly after him Inwe and Airith, Wrinkle heads for the stairs himself.

"Nice job tonight, Wrinkle. Many patrons stayed later than usual, and spent more coin in the process. We like that, don't we?" Underwood gives a friendly jab in Wrinkle's side. Underplow packs up as Wrinkle heads to bed. I'm in the guild, access to other performers, good first day he thinks as he drifts off.

READYING 20 ...

RELSYN'S EXCURSION

READYING 19 evening ...

Considering that Wrinkle is not staying put for the evening, Relsyn considers his options.

"I too will seek the order tonight. The church has a whole section of this city set out for itself right?"

"Airith, can you give me directions? Or do you want to go with?"

Getting directions from Airith, Relsyn groans as he stands. "Too many days in the wagon, & way too much exercise."

Calling Jewel to him from his place in the rafters, Relsyn steps into the evening air of the city of Malta and, stopping strangers for directions several times, makes his way to the Church of St Macedone in Malta.

Stepping carefully across the ancient flagstones set in the slightly unkempt lawn, Relsyn steps into a small entry alcove of the Church of St Macedone in Malta. It is dominated by two large oaken--well worn--doors and overhead a small lamp in which burn everlit candles.

Pausing a moment to cleanse his mind of any conceit against the brothers of his order, who serve here in Malta, a disdained post, Relsyn pauses a moment and gives the large door a gentle shove. The door does not open. He pushes harder and the door gives not a inch.

Relsyn notices a small hand lettered sign on a wall of the alcove. On it written in four languages is "This library opens promptly a sunrise and closes promptly at sunset."

Relsyn notices that the sun has not yet quite set, and bangs the haft of his dagger soundly 4 times against the door.

After several repeats of this, the door swings inward, opened by a young acolyte of about 12, a boy, thinks Relsyn who steps inside before the surprised boy can object. Relsyn enters a small chapel.

"I'm sorry sir, the library is closed."

[Diplomacy +9] "Acolyte, I am Relsyn Saffire, a member of your very order, see the symbol I bear. I have come on a very long trip from Antioch and before that from Arras, my bones are weary and my eyes blurred with fatigue. I wish to speak with the master librarian."

"There is a Lorekeeper here, sir." replies the boy.

"Mores the better then my friend, perhaps he knows my mentor, Garret Bynerges. I only wish a few words."

"All are at dinner, sir." the boy again replies.

"Again, Mores the better, a bit of bread or a hunk of bacon would do me well too. Off you go."

The boy starts away, then turns, "What did you say your name was?"

"Relsyn Saffire, of Antioch."

Relsyn looks around the small but well appointed chapel. Several tapestries hang on its grey stone walls and the clear translucent glass in the tall thin windows still shows glimpses of light. Off to his left, where the acolyte went, is a single wooden door. To his right is a set of double doors that Relsyn assumes goes to the library facilities. Directly ahead a stone altar dedicated to St Macedone stands adorned with Macedones symbol--The book and the shield, and his motto--"The Truth is the shield of the faithful."

Relsyn steps to altar, still smoking a slight sweet incense, and begins to pray. Relsyn enters the lounge and pokes around a bit. careful not to disturb anything that might be valuable.

He thinks to himself, "Three families may have the staff: Greyson family, Cuthbert Family, or the Youngstrom family. We'll need to start to get some information and background on each of them. Good luck with the Cuthberts."

Poking around, Relsyn finds two tables sitting between three very comfortable red-leather chairs and foot rests. A bookshelf on the wall opposite the door is covered with crystal fobs, gold symbols of Macedone, pottery, and glassware. Conspicuously missing are the books. The pair of side tables have mother of pearl inlay and gold leaf patterns around the edges and down the legs. The table tops have a more solid gold inlay with the Book-and-Shield symbol of St. Macedone. Simple oil lamps burn on each of the tables, shedding meager light. As Relsyn is finding the drawer in the table to his right, the door begins to open.

Holy Father Wynter enters the room, followed by the boy. The boy places a plate of roast beef and gravy on bread and a cup of tea next to Relsyn on the table.

"Eat, student. Or should I say 'Father?' I am not informed of graduations and promotions and the like in Antioch. It appears our cook has found a meal fit for one who has traveled so far. Leave now." He sharply addresses the last part to the boy standing in the corner trying not to be noticed.

"So, on what occasion do I have the pleasure of meeting you tonight?"

[Diplomacy +9] "Always a pleasure to meet a Lorekeeper, Monsignor Wynter."

Relsyn bows slightly and kisses the old mans proffered ring.

"It is Father Saffire, Sir. I graduated seminary two summers past and am now pursuing my doctor of letters at the Free University. Perhaps you know my mentor, Garret Bynerges, He too is a Lorekeeper. It is most gracious of you to offer this generous hospitality at so late an hour, even if the traveler is one of your own. Please don't mind if eat, this roast beef looks heaven-sent."

As he eats, Relsyn makes a few comments, politely.

"I am the same Relsyn that worked on the new Library in Arras, I'm pleased that you have chosen to remember so small a detail."

"I have journeyed here with some friends in a caravan. While I am here, I thought it wise to check what sources you may have that differ from those in Antioch. My doctoral dissertation is on St. Salix's Third Campaign. It is known that Salix visited Malta at some time prior to the Second Crusade, and I am hoping that here I may find some unique and obscure bit of knowledge with which to make my dissertation stand out. Do you have a staff researcher here with whom I may inquire?"

"Hospitality? Oh of course. We rarely have visitors here and are a bit forgetful of our manners. As for remembering the library in Arras, the Archbishop sent a memo not long ago about it and it crossed my desk again recently. A trifle.

But yes, the third campaign. Hmmm. Garrett Bynerges, now there is a name I know! We were trained at the same time, he and I. Do I have stories to tell about him. Of course, he was always the favored one of us, always doing the right thing and not enjoying life like I had. Always a bit too fond of books for my taste. I prefer the lore and knowledge gained by experience and, how shall I say, subtler means. Let us also say, we were not friends.

Hmm, was there a third campaign? You know better. But Salix! There was a man of action. Yes. And perhaps some subtlety of his own? Yes, you must find something about Salix's intelligence gathering ability. We may have some documents and references which may apply to that. We have lots of books. I've even read a few - ha! Well, tomorrow, you will be given a card for free access to anything we have in our library. Of the six fathers we have living in our company, most are of my inclination - live it rather than read it. The librarian, Foscil, will be able to direct you to the documents you desire. He likes it in there.

"Intelligence!" Exclaims Relsyn.

"I had not considered that facet at all. Indeed, I have encountered very little material on that aspect of any of the campaigns of the Second Crusade. Though I did once encounter a vague reference to Salix's Spymaster."

"One thing further, Monsignor, I came across a veiled reference to Salix's use of a staff of the Elioim during this crusade, but know little about it. Have you heard of this weapon? All the rest of the records indicate Durandal was his weapon. Perhaps this staff is some other sort of item?"

Monsignor Wynter: "Yes, the intrigue of Salix is very interesting. Foscil likes to tease me with these facts from the past. Of course, the existence of the staff is questionable, at best. I am a man for today. You know, following the rounds of who is top of the game among the families. Persuasion and influence... deep secrets. That is my kind of lore!"

"The staff used by Salix? Yes I have heard of it, but know little of how Salix used it. Of course, it is said to be a trophy today, but none know which staff is it. Probably none of them. None of them appear to be anything special, I hear."

"Well, speak to Foscil. He can pull up the documents he teases me with, as well as, perhaps, your vague reference to a staff used by Salix. I think, if it really existed, it would have been mentioned more."

"Well, have you a place to rest? we have a few meager cells available, but our cook is notable (as you have tasted) I see you have practically licked your plate clean. What do you say?"

"No thank you, sir, I have a room at the Underplow Inn, along with my traveling companions." He stands.

"Many thanks for the good food and a chance to speak with you. I am doubly blessed. I will return in the morning to speak with Foscil."

Relsyn kisses the High Priests ring again, then departs, making his way through the darkness to the Underplow Inn.

READYING 20

Relsyn awakes after sunrise to find Airith's bunk empty.

"I wouldn't have figured the little guy to be an early riser." He thinks.

After washing up and getting dressed, he spends about an hour doing morning devotions, (Spells memorized--as before) then wanders down to the dining room.

"One big breakfast for me please," He asks the halfling proprietor.

Relsyn wolfs down his breakfast while paging through a worn old book on the sayings of St. Dismas. He is only superficially aware of the patrons around him.

Finishing his breakfast, Relsyn signs the tab to his room, puts the small book in his pack and drains the big mug of water that he asked for.

He makes his way to St. Macedone's temple, stopping only once for directions, in hopes of meeting with Foscil the Librarian.

Relsyn enters St. Macedone's temple easily, as the door is open already. After a brief prayer at the altar, he makes for the opposite door as last night, the one marked 'Library.' Inside is a page, the boy met last night, in fact, who smiles at him.

"I bet you are here to see Father Focil, right?" Relsyn nods.

He disappears into the dark cavernous room behind him, and shortly returns.

"Father Focil says just head back to meet him. He is cataloging shelf sixteen right now. I think he was expecting you." he points towards the back.

Relsyn moves down the narrow isle, around a round bookshelf, off to the left a little, towards the area where the light is shining on the ceiling. Indeed, Focil is there in the usual Librarian position: on his knees, books all around him and a bookshelf half full, squinting at the title of a dusty book.

Focil is a clear-faced man, almost boyish looking. He wears the simple cloak of the order, although it is almost brand new. "Be right with you, Father" he says as he glances toward Relsyn. A few seconds later, he jots some notes on his paper, re-shelves the book, and stands up stiffly.

"Now what can I do for you. I hope it is help with some research, as Wynter suggested. The honorable Wynter has no interest in research as I know it and teases me sometimes. Well, what about it? How can I help?" He eagerly points his hand toward a chair as he says all this quickly.

Relsyn sits in a hard backed chair across a small table from Focil. He absently fingers a book he has picked up.

"Father Focil, I'm glad that all here are not so adverse to study as is Monsignor Wynter. I am Relsyn Saffire, a brother Priest from Antioch and as far as Arras. Indeed, I am interested in research. Specifically I am looking for information on the history of the Staff of the Elioim. I believe that at least three families claim to have it today, but I am primarily interested in its history. I am particularly interested if St. Salix ever used or encountered it." He pauses, "Further, I am probably in town for a while, and I need research facilities to continue work on my dissertation which deals with St Salix's Third Campaign. Monsignor Wynter indicated that I might explore the intelligence gathering aspect of that campaign."

Relsyn rubs the beard stubble with both hands.

"In return for this aid, I would be delighted to serve as a staff researcher for any project on which you are working. A caveat though, I do not know how soon my group will leave Malta. I understand we will be here for a while, but the halfling is flighty." He grins.

Focil sits in an accompanying chair. He gestures energetically as he speaks. His fine reddish hair falls in front of his eyes often, and he often whips his head over his right shoulder to clear his face. "Father Relsyn, this library has a wealth of information in it, and it probably is as well shelved as any in Antioch. Unfortunately, the ways of the world have seeped into this order here, as you mentioned about Monsignor Wynter. Few have come here to study since his predecessor, Monsignor Shylock's, tenure. Monsignor Wynter studied under him, and learned his ways."

"I arrived six years ago, to find the library in disorder, and no research going on at all. Monsignor Wynter follows the Game, and is a key player if I am correct. This library has no status for him."

"I have been given the task of restoring the library. For myself, I started at the topic of my research interest... ancient orders of Eli - prior to the destruction of Eire. Did you know that there were high men here before the fall? There are orders of Eli which were here when the remnants arrived, but they did not know it. The Barbarians in the deep southern lands, that is here...."

"I suppose there will be time to talk. For your research, and your help here, you can catalog the section next to the ones I am working on - shelves nineteen to twenty-two. I have come across

references to an order of Eli, the Markume', who had a presence in this region. Do you know of the story of the staff's creation? [Relsyn nods] That was in this area, we think. The Markume' lived here, mostly inland a little, and had temples and holy places where they worshiped..."

"Oh, I did it again. Sorry. It has been a while since anyone listened to me." He gives a shy smile. "Please, I would welcome your help. I know of some references to the staff you mentioned in my research. I suspect if there is any mention of Salix using such an item, it would be in the sections on Salix, the second crusade, and Saint Angus... perhaps over in the books on artifacts, ... maybe... ancient races and lost races" He points to several shelves as he mentions each topic., the latter in other section of the library.

"You are welcome at any time, if you leave with your friends, come back when you are done! Hey. We could become friends! Oh, you can not trust anyone who comes in here, by the way. Especially Wynter. Be helpful and give him due honor. I find trivia sends him away when he is a bother" He laughs.

CONTINUING

AIRITH'S EXCURSION

READYING 19 - evening ...

Airith, dressed in traveling garb, could not make it into the 'private' or gated-like community of the city. Since he already knew this, he found one he had stashed somewhere from a previous endeavor and walked to the gate of the mentioned palace grounds.

Since personal letters are not unknown, and Airith was so charming to the post at the gate (she was stern though), He was allowed to step into the grounds and wait in the gate house for one of the three girls named on the letters (as he had insisted you delivering them personally). Both Shanda and Jamee came down to meet him, and thanked him for the letters. Asked where the letters originated, Airith mentioned traveling with Zane from Antioch over the last fortnight, arriving yesterday. As the gatekeeper was standing close, little more could be said.

The girls ask if Airith is willing to pick up a message for Zane tomorrow?

1:00pm it will be ready at this gate.

"I would be happy to deliver a message to Zane. I'll be here at 1 then. Would you please see that this letter gets to your father." Airith hands them the letter for their father. "I am sure his is busy and I can't wait here until he returns. Enjoy your letters and I will see you tomorrow." The girls each say bye and run back to the house with the letters.

Man, now I have to wear this stuff again tomorrow.

Airith quickly leaves the palace area, feeling a little out of place and finds his way back to the Underplow. He doesn't see any of the others so he changes his clothes and heads back out to the street with Smoke following instead of staying behind in the room. He makes his way down to the Lower Dock District to see if anyone was looking for him at the Black Dragon Pub.

Airith enters and looks around. It looks much like it did before he left. The usual drunks sitting at the bar and a couple of dock workers eating at a table. Airith walks over to an empty spot at the bar, hops up on a stool and nods at the barkeep. The bar keep walks over.

"Airith, haven't seen you in a while."

"Yea, a job came up I couldn't refuse. I'm really here because I was wondering if anyone came in looking for me while I was gone." Airith slides a silver across the bar towards the barkeep.

The barkeep takes the silver and pockets it. "A few days ago that group of dock workers I think you know came in asking for ya. They were asking questions about where you were. I told them I hadn't seen ya and I didn't know where ya went to."

"Lets keep them in the dark O.K. I'm still working and I don't need them screwing things up."

"We'll do." The barkeep replies.

Airith heads back to the Underplow and orders up an ale. He drinks it slowly waiting for the rest of the group to return. After his second ale he heads up to the double room and gets a good night sleep.

Airith lies in bed thinking about which house probably has the staff.

Probably Cuthbert, and when they find us lifting the staff.

How can we even get close enough?

How are we going to find the gem?

I wonder what the others are doing?

He sits up and rubs his eyes.

I thought the ale would have helped me fall asleep by now.

Instead of trying to fall asleep all night Airith puts his stuff on and heads downstairs. Smoke follows even though he was sleeping fine back in the room. Airith enters the downstairs and sees Wrinkle playing on the stage. He is playing a song for a table of rather loud gentlemen who are singing in a rather off key. Airith heads outdoors and looks around the street. Not much happening at this time of night. An elderly gentleman is carrying a bag of something over his shoulder as he heads out of sight. A cat hisses at Smoke then takes off around the corner of the inn.

Let's go see if Porter has heard of any jobs for me lately.

Airith carefully makes his way past the Upper Dock District to the Lower Docks. He would rather go hang out at the Black Dragon but Porter prefers to lay low at the Anchor Bar. Airith enters and sees the place hasn't changed. The mood is dark and gloomy, there is enough light to make out figures but not enough to see anything clearly. One reason the bar is never busy is due to the smell of fish coming in through the windows and doors. There is no stage or entertainer here just tables with an assortment of different chairs, two fire pits evenly spaced in the middle of the room and a bar. Airith slowly and carefully walks in looking for Porter.

From the shape of his shadow, Airith finds Porter sitting in the corner, toward the back. Porter is not a tall man, but he makes up for his lack of height by the sheer size of his barrel chest and tree sized arms. Scars cover his exposed arms, some minor, some must have taken a while to heal. Nothing on his is clean, and from knowing his past, Airith suspects some of the stains are recent blood. Porter's greasy hair is tangled all around his face, except for a small opening he occasionally make for his current entertainment, a 'conversation' with one of the Anchor's wenches.

After a few minutes, Porter and the woman rise and head for the stairs, but stop when he notices Airith sitting inconspicuously at a table. Sending the woman away, he gets another ale and joins Airith.

"What d'ya say, fish-food? You got a few thugs out looking for you, even came in here looking for you. You in trouble and need my kind of help? ...Good."

"Porter, have you heard about any new jobs for me? Preferably on the other side of town. I'm in need of a good one about now. Last one fell flat and I'm out a bit"

"Well, an assassination I can't do myself? Burning a ship when it arrives? 'Delaying' a payroll shipment? ... not interested in those, I see. I heard of a recovery needed from the Queens Keep, but I don't imagine anyone will risk that though. Perhaps working the pockets at some party that's going on over the other side of town. Not your style either, is it? Okay. Let me think ...not the other meat grinding ones ... Hey, there is a small job to recover a ring over there. Some dead granny's wedding ring needing to come back to a family, and soon. Try that one?"

"Yes, try that job - quick gold. Find the servant that buys the ale at the Hopson Brewery, over by the Horse Gate [closest to Underplow Inn] He stops in tomorrow morning again. Wears a black butlers outfit with blue and gold trim. Mention to him you need help moving a horse and he should reply lift up it's tail."

He finishes his drink "Bottoms up, and upstairs waiting for me." He goes to the stairs.

Airith tosses a sliver over to Porter. "Thanks Porter, you could use it for the tip upstairs."
"Not bloody likely." Is all Airith hears as Porter makes his way upstairs and out of sight.

Airith heads out the door and makes his way back to the Underplow, taking the time to go over his conversation with Porter.

Hopson Brewery, must be a rich family. Make the best stuff in town.

I wonder if the group of thugs he was referring to were the Stiletos. If they keep poking their nose in my business I might have to cut one of their noses off. They're probably looking to score a few coins off me for the job... I best be in my messenger attire tomorrow morning to meet this butler. I don't want to be late to pick up those letters from the girls for Zane.

Airith enters the Underplow to see Wrinkle playing for only one table.

I would like to listen a bit but I better get some sleep. Too bad about Wrinkle. I thought he would have had more patrons to entertain.

Smoke heads over to his riding blanket and stretches before getting comfortable on it. Airith takes off his things and lays down, he falls asleep thinking of his busy day tomorrow.

READYING 20

Airith awakes to yet another wet tongue across his cheek. He sits up to see Relsyn sleeping in the other bed. Across the hall faint snores can be heard. *Must be Wrinkle.* Glad there are at least a few walls between me and him.

Airith looks out the window to see that the sun is just about to rise. *Looks like I have time for breakfast* He quickly puts on his messenger clothing and quietly heads downstairs with Smoke following. The morning staff is busy cleaning and preparing for the day. Underplow is restocking the bar and one of his employees is mopping the floor. The kitchen staff can be heard in the back.

"Morning Under, how about some breakfast."

"Sure, sure, I tell them to bring something out for you."

"Smoke too, if you don't mind."

Airith takes a seat at a table. Underplow heads back to the kitchen through the doors and orders can be heard barking about the dough not being right and the stew needs more potatoes. A minute or so later a young lady comes out with a look of relief for being able to leave the kitchen. She places some bread and cheese down on the table with a small pot of tea. She then places a bowl of scraps down on the floor for Smoke who begins eating it right away.

"Here you go."

"Thank you very much."

Airith eats quietly and a little faster than normal. *Don't want to miss this butler.*

He finishes his tea and says "Smoke you stay here this time. You can go with the others if they don't mind but I'm afraid that most messengers don't keep a dog with them. I'll be back sometime this afternoon. And please stay out of trouble."

Airith gives Smoke a playful head scratch and then heads out the door. He sees Smoke head over to the corner of the stage and lay down before exiting. *Guess I better get over to the Hopson, don't want to miss him.*

Airith makes his way to the Hopson with no problems. He enters through the doors and has a look around. Not as nice as the one I worked at.

"Can I help you sir?"

"No thanks, I just came to look at your selections."

"O.K. then, just holler if you need some help with anything, anything at all."
I hope I don't have to wait too long for this guy. Oh, they have Dragon Blood Ale.

Airith spends about a half hour perusing their selections. There are many different types of alcohol with varying prices. Airith is about to head out when a distinguished looking man in black with blue and gold trim enters. He waves at the man at the counter and begins looking at the selection. Airith makes his way over to him. Airith waits until there is no one in ear shot.
"Excuse me sir, I am having trouble moving my horse."

Scene Change - gold district...

Walker Ackland exited the front gate to his master's estate. He was the only staff member allowed to do that, and he was proud of it. Today he was on a mission for his lord, and a very secret one.

Pushing a two wheeled beer cart, he crossed the series of six bridges of the northern district. As he approached the river bank again, the road swung around the mysterious cluster of strange shell-like houses. Walker picked up his pace and shuddered, as he does every time he passes this area, hoping the dead do not come out to get him. Finally heading toward the gate, he relaxes and enjoys the fine weather this morning.

He entered Hopson Brewery, as he does every Earth-Day, and went right to the sales area. *These massive timber pillars and trusses are so.. big. I bet they impress those poor wretches, but not me.* Huge copper kettles hiss and steam in the background. Men stir vats of bubbling mash up on huge frames over stone fireplaces large enough to be home to a family. A few people in proper 'house livery' are being waited upon at the counter, so Walker relaxes a bit and waits.

"Excuse me sir, I am having trouble moving my horse." Ah the call sign. Looking left and right, he does not see anyone. Then he looks down.

"I suppose you would, little boy." Looking closer " Oh, I mean sir. Try lifting it's tail, if you can reach that high." He can hardly contain a snicker, but sobers up quickly.

"Name is Mr. Ackland. I can see how you expect to be overlooked. I suppose you have had a job like my lord requires." Airith nods and begins to sputter in his outrage over this derogatory treatment.

"Whoa now. Let me finish my business here and we can meet somewhere more suitable."

Mr. Ackland speaks to a person behind the counter and a few seconds later two teenagers haul out a large barrel and set it into the cart just outside the door. After exchanging some coin, Mr. Ackland goes to the door, making sure Airith is following. He pushes his cart toward a tavern (a very nice tavern) and goes in.

Airith follows him in, and notices several other people wearing the couriers livery he is wearing, as well as matches for Mr. Ackland as well. They order juice, and when it arrives, Mr. Ackland pays for both of them.

"I suppose you want some details about our job?" He quiets down and explains more about the job...

They talk quietly for ten minutes, or so, and Airith leaves, pocketing a pouch inside his coin purse. Airith shakes Ackland's hand, "see you tomorrow." Ackland takes his cart and heads back to his master's estate.

Airith seeing that the morning has almost past hastily makes his way towards Zane's family estate. The streets are busy, more so than usual.

Must be this big party everyone keeps talking about. If it is big enough I might have a pretty easy time getting this ring without anyone seeing me.

Airith approaches the guard post to see the same guard watching the estate. "You again, I suppose you're here to pick up letters. All right just wait here." Airith patiently waits for the girls to give him the letters. He would try and talk with the guard but doesn't want to push his luck.

The guard returns, empty handed. "I've been told to bring you inside, please follow me." The guard is actually pleasant this time and leads Airith into the grounds.

Airith follows her past a few smaller houses and to the side door of the main house. The house itself is quite unimposing for its large size. This is partly because of the light colors used to outline and corner the house. It appears that every corner has been rounded, and there are trees growing out of what must be courtyards in the house. The grounds are beginning to bloom with the earliest flowers of the Spring. Evergreens grow around the ponds, and even the bare trees have a sense of style and class.

Upon entering the pantry door, the guard makes a quick introduction to Lyja, the head butler of the house. Then, she makes a hasty retreat back to her post at the gate.

"Well, sir, I am to take you to the master. He requests you make a delivery for him." Airith is led to a parlor in the main part of the house, where three girls are seated, along with Lord Runyon. Shanda and Jamee he has met yesterday, Mendy is the oldest and seated next to her father informally.

"Well, friend, my daughters and I received letters from my son yesterday, and I must say I am a bit surprised. [pause - looking at Airith] You delivered these, and are expecting letters to return to him. For myself, I would like to hear about him more before I write my response to him. My daughters have their letters written, as you can see on the table there."

"I believe you traveled with him? Tell me how you found him. Speak."

Airith looks at the three girls and then back to their father.

I didn't think I was here to talk about Zane. I was just supposed to pick up some letters.

"Well sir, I met up with Zane while I was looking for a caravan to Malta from Antioch. He is still driving wagons for Caldwells and doing quite well. Since we were on the road for a good period of time I started chatting with Zane and the rest of the crew. Zane told me he was from Malta originally and had family here. Seeing as we had become friends I offered to deliver letters for him to you."

I hope that's enough. I don't know if Zane wants his family knowing everything.

Lord Runyon and Airith speak for ten minutes or so, with Airith giving no particular information that is not already known. Zane is healthy, happy to live freely, and not particularly eager to come home.

"Well, I guess Zane will continue his foolish independence phase a while longer, and has no interest in making a real life for himself. Foolish boy. I suppose you can not convince him to return?" When Airith shakes his head negative Lord Runyon goes to a small table and begins to write a short letter.

The three girls rise and hand Airith their letters, a bit shyly, and step back. Shanda and Jamee leave the room, but Mendy stays. She asks "does Zane have a girlfriend? I hope he does."

Lord Runyon grunts huffily at the desk in response.

"No, I don't believe he does." Airith replies.

Mendy continues to ask questions like "How about his room - is it nice?... where does he live? Has he picked up any bad habits of the mobs on the other side of the city? ...Does he miss us?" To which Airith answers with mostly "I have told you all I know"

Lord Runyon finishes his letter: "I have prepared this letter.. He has been cut off, as you mentioned, and I must say I am surprised he is actually doing well. Mention to him his mother wishes him well."

Airith turns to leave and Mendy joins him out of the room and out the door.

As they approach the gate, she stops. "Really, is he doing well?"

"Lady, he is happy. I believe he said you and your sisters were not like the pompous aristocracy, so you can believe that is worth more than status or riches."

Mendy is quiet for a second. "You are right - we can play with the rest of them. But, to us it is a game to keep us occupied, and our parents (who believe in the Game) bearable. Tell Zane we love him and if he needs anything, just let his sisters know."

Unexpectedly, Mendy places a kiss on Airith's cheek, blushes, and scurries back into the house. Airith shakes off the shock, smiles and turns.

Right into the guard.

"I won't mention it if you don't" she says as Airith heads back to the road. Airith hears her laughing from the guardhouse as he leaves.

CONTINUING

INWE'S EXCURSION

As her companions go their separate ways, Inwe wanders the streets near the Underplow Inn, looking for the next nearest tavern. She does her best to try to go unnoticed, but the badger walking beside her draws a few wary glances. Soon, she discovers what she seeks: a door to a warm, light-filled room, filled with townspeople and some travelers populating the scattered tables and a bar.

After ordering a pint of whatever's on tap, she finds an empty seat somewhat to the side from which she can observe and listen to most of what is going on. A few people dance in a space cleared of tables while a minstrel, dressed colorfully, plays and sings. Not the best musician. Wrinkle's probably doing better. But that is not what she's here for anyway. What interests her are the bits of conversation she can catch. She listens for whatever she can pick up about the families of the upper-crust that they will be dealing with in some way.

Inwe spends little time in the tavern, listening to music and watching people dancing in squares to the jaunty music. The table behind her is having a serious discussion which she listens to for a while.

man: "I'll miss you, please don't go on the ship - you know we want you here."

woman: "But it will only be a few weeks, and I will be back"

man: sadly "Sure, but then you're off to your training again - probably not see us again for a long time.

The boy will ask about you too."

woman: "I promise, as soon as I return, I will see you. And besides, I will visit you. It is not that far away..."

man: "are you sure - your boyfriend can come with you any feast-day"

loudly at the bar...

"another one, NOW. [sobs as another ale is delivered] Why did she leave ... [more sobbing] and for what - that villinous tomcat! [hicup] my fluffy - gone. her whiskers..."

from across the room...

"Ya, thats what I heard too, a huge party! merhaps we can see the inside of the place if they need some extra servers or cooks! wouldn't ... e great..."

Off to the side...

"three goats and a cow. maybe ya can throw in a chicken or two? ... Great, how about tomorrow..."

A few tables over...

"He is marrying the cousin of my second uncle on my mother's side! Imagine, a family like THAT marrying my family... Youngstrom ..." the conversation is shushed down by the others.

The mention of the name Youngstrom caught Inwe's full attention. Though continuing to half listen to the other conversation around the room, she focused more on that table. Her concentration led Cildar to tilt his ears in that direction. She took note of the speaker and looked for a chance to approach him when he was more alone.

When his companions left the table, she picked up her empty pint and walked over to him. [Diplomacy] Beginning with flattery and asking his name, she then offers to buy him a drink, then calls to the bartender, "Another two pints over here please." After luring him to a table off to the side and some more conversation, she asks him, "Did I really hear you talking about a Youngstrom marrying into your family?" using a tone in her voice that could convey either admiration or disdain, depending on his existing frame of mind.

The older man Inwe has focused her attention on obviously like bragging about his new vicarious status he believes he gained through some young relative's engagement. Obviously, the other men at the table think he is all puffed up about nothing and are trying to keep him quiet. When all attempts to change the subject fail, everyone leaves the table and heads for the door.

In an 'unfortunate' coincidence, Inwe happened to trip and fall right into the shoulder of the very man she was hoping to speak to. After a brief apology, she whispers...

"Did I really hear you talking about a Youngstrom marrying into your family?"

"Well... yes actually." He looks to his companions, who obviously will have no more of him tonight, and back to the mysterious elf before him. As they go to a quieter corner of the room, he says "My niece is marrying the heir to the family in fact! That makes me part of the family, too."

"Really? How great to be so blessed. You must be able to do all sorts of noble things now..."

"Well, actually, I only call her my niece. My mother's sister's second husband has a niece, oh what a pretty thing, and she is the lucky one. I am like an Eli-Father to her [Godfather] at the family meetings, you know."

"Interesting - you must adore her..."

"Oh certainly! Believe it or not, I actually do. Her parents are a mean pair, and she not much appreciated. I have tried to befriend her and mentor her. When she told me she was seeing a boy, I never imagined it was young master Youngstrom. Good for her! That family is not much fond of her, but she is kind and really does love him. At least they are allowing the wedding to go on. "

"how noble of them."

"You know, I have always been noble. My friends think I am silly, but truly I was born to be one of the elect in the city. Now everyone will know me." He pauses a minute, then sighs. "Actually, this will not change anything. I am still an old dottard who dreams of nobility but was born a pawn in the greater game. Oh - don't tell anyone I said that, pretty lady."

"I was invited, you know, to the wedding! But my buddies think I made that up. Day after tomorrow, they will know better, when I get admitted through those golden gates and they do not. Ha"

"So do you have a companion going with you?"

"You know what, I forgot about that. My wife's been gone some time, and my children think I am looney. How about you? Are you free? Imagine, an old fool showing up with a young beautiful elven girl. That would turn a few heads."

Inwe whispers into his ear "I am one hundred twenty four years old. That would make a few of them jealous, too."

He smiles, "My name is Coleman Fairweather" and extends his hand.
"Inwe Galanodel" she says as she takes his hand - he kisses it politely.

"How about it, Inwe? Are you interested in seeing a royal-style wedding?"

"It would certainly be new and interesting experience. I would be pleased to join you. Where is it to be held, that I may meet you there?"

Coleman says "Wonderful! Oh you can not meet me at the wedding. That would be just too scandalous! I know you are a proper lady, I can just tell. The ladies who meet men at parties are, shall we say, 'calling on them' and they would not be permitted into this wedding."

"No, you must meet me at my house, and my servants can help you prepare for the wedding and give some proper etiquette for a noble wedding. It is surely not the way the elves wed, nor most other peoples either.

Come to the West side on the main road through the floating city. Follow the road to the left and wind down towards the fish smell. The gate on your right just before you cross the bridge is mine. Ring and someone will be right with you. Come around...mid-afternoon day after tomorrow. You may stay as my guest in my house that night, as crossing the city late at night is unwise.

Oh Inwe, thank you! We will show the lords that the Fairweather family still has some class left in it."
Both finish their drinks and make their farewells.

After wrapping up the conversation, Inwe returns to the Inn for the night, telling the others of her evening and plans before they turn in, asking for whatever advice they might offer.

READYING 20

Inwe passes the day in the markets and town around the market. Most shops do not interest her, but a few contain artwork and other craftsmanship of elven design. She was surprised that these items are so prized here.

An older woman with smile wrinkles around her eyes and a lace bonnet on her head passes her in the market several times. Once, Inwe did not notice...The second time she thought *Oh her again*, but by the fourth and fifth times it was fairly obvious that the lady was following Inwe. Whenever Inwe looked toward her, she would duck into a building or appear to be shopping. But, bags the lady was carrying filled up, so was she shopping as well?

At diner time, the lady had disappeared. Inwe passed the evening in a quiet tavern, then returned to the Underplow to meet with her companions.

[Inwe, as she described earlier, arrives at the gate of the Fairweather estate. Upon knocking there, the door opens and the very woman who was following is standing there.]

The day of the wedding, she dresses in her nicest attire, sky-blue tunic, usual green cloak, her hair braided to accent the green strands. She leaves her pack and Cildar at the Inn. Her staff she walks with, and she makes her way to the Coleman's house.

"So do you doubt my intentions or are you merely curious?" Inwe then follows the woman and her instruction, asking more about this wedding and associated customs. Also, "I'm afraid I know not much more about the Youngstrom family than their widely-known name. Can you tell me more of what you know of them?"

Inwe (READYING 21)

"Oh my dear... Was I so obvious? Oh my oh my." She mutters and fusses as she leads Inwe through the grounds and to the main house.

"My dear, oh I was getting an idea of your size for some accessories you may need. My Lord Fairweather requested that I help you be presentable at the wedding tonight. . . .Oh dearie me, doubt your intentions? Why? Are you up to something? My oh my... I don't think so."

As they enter the low roofed building, Inwe feels somewhat at home here. All the materials are natural, and nothing seems to be wrought or hacked. The wood is more - natural - than it was a tree. The craftsmanship may actually be elven. Glass and stone, wood and cloth, plaster and paint all harmonize perfectly. Through the entry and into a set of rooms that appears to be more feminine.

"The lady's room - rest her soul. Sit here please. [gestures to a chair] Shall I draw you a bath?"

She leaves before Inwe agrees, but there is time and the lady seems kind enough. A few seconds later she returns with the sound of water running in the other room.

"Oh my, my dear Inwhy, I know your name but you do not know mine. Just call me Bee. Everyone does. [Inwe speaks] 'Inwhy'... 'Inwe' Oh dear, but I have it now, right Inwe [Inwe nods] Oh the bath should be ready."

She leads into a smaller room with a large stone basin set into the ground, looking like a natural stone pool. Water trickles down from overhead down a wall with inset waterfall, and into the pool. The rest of the room is lined with slate, dark marble, and mosses lit by a skylight above. The water is steaming a little.

"I shall leave you for a few minutes while I collect some things. We can talk when I return." Bee leaves, but still mutters kindly to herself, obviously enjoying waiting on someone again. Inwe disrobes and enters the bath, making herself cleaner than she has been in a long time. Scented soaps, essence of jasmine and Lilly flowers, and plush towels surround a small padded chair in another corner. Ten minutes later, Bee returns while Inwe is still bathing.

"My dear - use more soap, how about some salts? Did you find the oils... I can not smell any more so I do not know" she chuckles a bit. "Here is a dress, it may fit you.

[looks at Inwe's face]

Yours IS beautiful, but it is not proper for the wedding. Oh my no. That must be white! Only the bride may have another color. I guess you did not know. That is okay, dear. Try this on..." She puts the dress on the chair, after it is evident that Inwe is waiting for her to leave, and closes the door on her way out.

The dress fits well, if not a bit loosely. After Inwe enters the dressing room again, Bee goes to work again - 200 strokes with a hairbrush, some paste in her hair that makes it smell of lilac and shine like water - especially stunning with the green streaks. Silk sash, pearl necklace, silver hair-comb, just a touch of makeup ... An hour of fussing and chatter later, Bee is satisfied that Inwe is perfect.

"There my dear - I got it right for you. That is why I was following you - size - color - accessorizing. Lord Fairweather would expect the best, of course. My Dear, you are ... stunning. You should be pleased."

Inwe looks at herself in a full length silvered glass, and appears just as Bee described.

Inwe stares at the image before her, not sure what to think. It is certainly unlike anything she has worn before. She thanks the kind woman for all her help...and more pampering than she would have wanted to imagine. Now Inwe talks with Bee about what she knows of the Youngstrom family while waiting for Coleman.

CONTINUING