

Prologue - Gathering in Antioch

Note:

- - the Current monarch is HRH Matilda Cuthbert
- - The current Patriarch is Clement XVII
- - The current year 232 Kings Year

Relsyn

Coldeven 8--

While in the library late one night in St. Macedone's Library in Arras, concentrating on the tome before you, the heavy wooden door at the back of the room opened quietly, but bumped the book cart with a soft thump that distracts you.

Since none but you are ever here this late, and the door was locked, you are suspicious and a bit spooked. It is very dark except for the yellow glow around the candle you are using to read by.

A minute passes nervously.
You call out a wary "hay ho" and slide into the darkness a bit.

From behind you, a soft tug on your hair and a quiet "hello" stands the hair on your neck on end. Suddenly, you recognize a low soft chuckle as coming from Garret.

Relieved, you ask "why have you made the trip here from Antioch, especially in your frail condition?"

Garret: "The order has urgent need of someone who knows a bit about investigation and is young enough to travel a bit in search of knowledge. I immediately thought of my friend and favorite student... you"

Garret: "I also thought a bit of adventure might do you some good to clear your mind of the worries at home. Perhaps make a name for yourself, even? Can you spare some time - perhaps quite a bit of it - for an adventure?"

Garret: "If you agree, you need to meet with a small group back in Antioch. I would like a companion for my trip home, too." he says with a smile.

Relsyn Saffire rubs his eyes to mitigate some of the sleepiness and fatigue, then rubs his hand over the fluffy hair on his chin.

"Investigation? I don't really have much experience in that sort of thing, save for the type that occurs in books? And the thing with father has been going on long enough that I'll live with it."

Sighing and closing the book, Institutes of Salixian Thought, Relsyn says, "This book has an interesting analysis of Salix's third campaign." Then he sits in quiet thought.

Finally, Relsyn considers the old librarian, "You obviously think I'm the right guy for this to have walked all the way here, when you could have sent a bird, or a spell. Please tell me you didn't come all this way alone?"

Sitting down slowly into an accompanying chair, Garret rests his forehead his hands and says softly:

"You are right that this is important. This comes from way above the likes of me or you. I suspect even to the archbishop of Antioch! I was asked to find a trusted person for this quest as I know many souls. This person was to be unknown to the Queen, and I was not to use any delivery of this message that could be intercepted.

I know many fine scholars, and many hearty and hale adventurer types. But most are known to the Knights of Malta or the Ears of the Queen. Several I do not trust.

You, Relsyn, I trust. You are able to do the job. But are you willing?"

Garret looks up at Relsyn and chuckles...

"You know, in my younger days I did some adventuring as well. Many of the old books you like so well were found on such adventures. I thought you might appreciate the chance to be first to rediscover some long lost tome.

And you know me well. I traveled here with a merchant caravan who thought I was going to visit a son. Not too bright, but nice people to travel with. We arrived just before sunset."

Relsyn smiles slightly at the thought of his old mentor regaling the merchants with tales of a son who doesn't exist, interspersed with true tales of obscure knowledge hidden within even more obscure books and scrolls.

"And I trust you, and St. Macedone's will as well. I will accompany you to Antioch and find out what the Archbishop desires of me. Perhaps this will be the one big adventure of my life. I can regale my grandchildren with tales of high adventure and amazing sights. So be it."

He stands and shakes the stiffness out of his legs.

"Can it wait until I finish cataloging shelf four?"

Gerret: "I think we have a few days before we need to leave.

I was to give you this if you accepted the task before you"

Garret reaches into his pocket and hands an envelope to Relsyn. A quick glance shows it is written on fine paper and is sealed with wax and a signet ring. It is addressed to "the one who joins us"

Relsyn opens the letter and reads:

From Archbishop Irwin, servant of His Holiness Clement XVII, Pontiff of Eli, Lord of the Endless Flame whose glory and honor we strive to keep in this dark world of evil, and whose flame is the light of all created things.

To: Specially chosen friend of the church.

Thank you for accepting this quest. Understandably, you are confused what this mission entails. You will be informed more by myself at the appointed time: KY 232, Coldeven 25 for dinner in the private room of The Mitre Inn.

Make personal arrangements to accommodate the following:

Time to complete: Unknown

.....Payment: 40GP / month for expenses, 2 months in advance

.....upon return of the party

.....500GP each

.....division of the remainder of the unused "persuasion"

.....money plus the spoils, among the living. (coin, treasure, books...)

.....The church reserves the right to take and / or compensate

.....for any holy items found.

.....Additional significant information on M. Cuthbert's

.....doings earn the standard reward of 50GP each

.....Additional unforeseen services will be paid at a reasonable rate.

.....A small pension will be offered to remaining close kin in the event of death.

Please be prompt - we will be awaiting your arrival.

"Now, to that room I have waiting. a bed , a bed, a small insignificant book for a bed"
With a friendly pat on Relsyn's back and a yawn, Garret goes for the door.
"I will see you tomorrow. Lunchtime here?"

Over the next two days Relsyn busies himself with the cataloging of Shelf four. As he does this He plays over the contents of the note and what it portends in his mind. Often he finds he has distracted himself and has to go back and check the work he has done in the previous few minutes.

"Oh Jewel," he sighs late that evening, holding them rumpled letter in his hand, as he lays back on the small cot in his cell, "What have I gotten myself into? This portends trouble for the both of us."

Coldeven 10

In the morning, Relsyn seeks out Garret. "We can leave tomorrow morning, after morning prayers, if you wish. I have little gear to gather. I have also spoken to the cook and requested provisions." He pauses, "Are you sure I will be up to this?" He looks questioningly at his old mentor.

Garret nods enthusiastically. "Oh, I think you are ready. I understand that this is an adventure. I used to love going on adventures, and I started earlier than you!"

He checks a few books on the shelves, removing them carefully, browsing through the pages thoughtfully, and then re-shelving them.

"Tomorrow then. I am honestly not sure what adventure this will bring. It may be dull and boring. But it may have some interesting libraries to uncover. Like I said a few days ago, many great tomes were found on such adventures. I see a few here from my prime that bring back memories." He again pauses briefly.

"Macedone himself, bless his name, would have us seek knowledge. It is not always in books that insight and knowledge are found."

"Tomorrow, we travel to Antioch. I believe there is a barge or two heading that way. I shall book passage for us! I look forward to hearing about your insight of St. Salix's thrid crusade. I know very little of that. And, of course, there are many new topics to discuss and so little time to do so."

He chuckles deeply, "I pray we do not send the barge-men swimming for shore with our talk" and he waves you. "I shall return shortly" he says and he leaves the library.

Coldeven 11

Waking earlier than usual, Relsyn packs the few things that belong to him, dons the Clerical Vestments he wears only rarely, then sits on his cot and ponders the upcoming journey, mentally checking off the things he will need.

He gathers his things neatly in the corner, then heads down to morning prayers, expecting to meet Garret there.

Coming down the road, Garret is in his finest traveling clothes: The heavy indigo blue robe cinched tightly around his waist to keep out the cold Fireseek [February] air. The hood of his cloak is up over his thin hair and comes around his face. He enters the room lowering his hood and smiling from ear to ear, obviously eager to go.

Together, Relsyn and Garret perform their daily prayers in the modest chapel in the church.

As they stand and gather their gear, Garret begins " I have booked a ride on a barge leaving this morning. We should be able to make it to Antioch in a week or so, in modest comfort. Shall we begin?" He walks down the road to the docks and clip-clops over the wood docks.

Garret walks up to a barge with the name "seaweed" elaborately carved into the gunwale on front and back of the craft. The boat is about four paces wide and perhaps ten paces long, tapering sharply to a point in the stem and stern sections. A small cabin with three cramped rooms is neatly fitted with the implements of sleeping and cooking for the crew of seven. By the smell of it, it is now loaded with smoked meat and cheeses.

The Captain, Ezekiel Jacobs, extends a hand to Garret and heartily welcomes him aboard. "We'come bick, rit when ye said yed be. thirs mut be the youngun ye ment'nd. Wec'ome!" and says as he extends his hand to help Relsyn. "Zeke they call me. do da same." He shows Garret and Relsyn to the cabin they will share, and then quickly goes about putting the barge out into the stream with the polemen casting off and deftly pushing the craft where it needs to go.

Relsyn, Garret, and Zeke spend the next few days discussing the deep matters of the church, ancient documents each have been analyzing, and the matters of steering a barge down river. "Goin' upriver is herder, be needin ropes and horses for da tuggen if it be hevvy"

Coldeven 24

At sunrise on the thirteenth day, Seaweed glides into the docks in Antioch.

Stretching his stiff legs, Relsyn steps off the good Barge, Seaweed, onto a dock that looks like it hasn't been repaired or upgraded since that last war.

"Well here we are" He thinks, "onward and Forward!" He smiles to himself, "you've read too much Salixian philosophy over the last few weeks, your starting to think like they do."

Relsyn extends his hand to help Garret over the tall step off the barge. "Thank You Lad," acknowledges the old priest, " These old legs are a bit stiff!"

"If thats the worst of this adventure, we'll have a lot to thankful for." He turns to Ezekiel and gives him a little salute, mimicking the soldiers salute. "To you Captain and your gallant crew: May St. Xantas' speed, St. Keoughtoms Health and St. Macedone's Knowlege be yours." He bows slightly at the waist.

"Far thy well, boy." Replies Ezekiel returning the salute and tipping his oversized red hat. Several of the barge hands smile and wave.

The pair walks away from the docks toward more familiar sections of the Holy City, passing booths selling fish and fowl and various forms as well as other trinkets and goods.

"You could have given them a proper benediction," kids Garret.

"It wasn't a true blessing and Ezekiel Jacobs is wise enough to know it, even if all his crew isn't." Smiles Relsyn in response.

Inspite of his familiarity with this city, or perhaps beacuse of it Relsyn Saffire, holds Antioch in high esteem. He loves visiting here, the libraries, the history, even the well manicured lawns and parks. Many shrines accent the city center area, which centers around the many temples. Many priests and the servants of many saints walk these streets, and the air is heavy with incense, which almost succedes in masking some of the more unpleasant odors of the large city. As they approach the open square surrounding the Holy Seat and The Great Church to ELI Himself, the incense wins and overcomes the less pleasant smells, which here, at the heart of the Great Church would be wholly out of place.

"Heres the Mitre Inn," says Relsyn pointing.

The Mitre Inn is a very nice establishment run by Kedardojar Astoacan. It is a good quality establishment located in the heart of Antioch, near the center of the city but just out of the highly trafficked tourist area. The three story edifice is of a fine light sandstone, with marble sills and stoops. The doors and shutters are painted a dazzling blue.

The oval sign hanging over the door announces "The Mitre Inn and Tavern" in tight lettering, and is part of the welcoming front entrance. The doorway is lit by sconces on either side of the door. A lettered menu next to the door has the following items on it:

Week's Menu COLDEVEN 22-28, KY232
Main Courses 1GP Fried Fish Surprise, Smoked Boar Parcels, Roasted Goat Goulash
Puddings 2 SP Banana Crumble, Mixed Fruit Pudding, Almond Pudding
Drinks Mead, Grog, Special Ale: Wilbur's Bitter, Special Beer: Plum Mead

Just after afternoon prayers, a man dressed in bright yellow and red cloak and hose is seen stiffly walking down the street and turning into the Mitre Inn with upturned nose. He gives a terse nod and smile to the innkeeper at the bar and sets up a stool in the corner of the dining hall. Pulling the deep amber lute from its place on his back, he gives it a quick tune, and sighs.

The group of four people at one of the tables are deep in conversation and have not even noticed the bard. Another man leans back on two of the four chair legs at a table toward the back of the room, his grey haired dog resting its head on its paws under the table. When the bard says "Matteuw Burshel at your service, esteemed guests of the Mitre Inn" they all look in his direction. He begins to sing a haunting song about a long lost love, and settles in for an evening of entertaining.

The sound of pots and pans clinking together and plates being washed emanates from the kitchen as the dinner hours approach. The room is spotless, with 23 tables in the main taproom, each a rich mahogany polished to a deep shine. A raised bar and server area projects into the room a few paces, and allows Mr. Astoacan to have a clear view of his customers.

Out the window, two men can be seen walking slowly across the road. One walks with obvious stiffness and age, while the other is young and obviously very respectful of the elder. By the looks of them, they have just arrived in Antioch. The younger points at the sign and the older nods.

"Here's the Mitre Inn," says Relsyn pointing, "We're a day early. Shall we have a bit of beer and a bite before I head to the rectory and you head home? I imagine you wife will want to see you."

He walks to the posted menu, standing behind a short fat man wearing a blue tunic and his thin wife, who are examining the menu as well, and pauses a moment to read it, turning back toward Garret he says, "the smoked boar sounds good, I remember the Almond Pudding to be heavenly. Hungry?"

Garret: "No. I had better get home. You know my wife, always worried. In your old age, Relsyn, don't ever forget your wife the most precious gift Eli has sent to you."

"My home is just over the hill, and I believe the rectory is just there..." Garret points down the small street. "I await news of your return. Here in Antioch, or in Eli's halls of light."

He puts his hands on Relsyn's head and gives the proper benediction and blessing for travelers. With a smile to Relsyn, he turns and walks up the street, disappearing out of sight over the crest of the cobbled hill.

Relsyn once again picks up his pack and wanders off in the direction of the rectory of St. Macedone. A chubby priest with thick eyebrows meets him at the door. "Ah Relsyn, Returned from Arras?" asks the man.

"Yes, Spinser, back for a day or two, perhaps more. Is there an empty cell for me?"

"Of course, I'll show you."

[Coldeven 25, KY232](#)

Relsyn sleeps that night in the rectory and spends the next day secluded in his cell preparing for the unknown journey ahead. Late in the afternoon he packs his things, calls to Jewel and sets off for the Mitre Inn.

He steps inside, walks to the bar and signals for the barkeeps attention.

"Yes, what can I do for you?" the barman asks.

"Where is your Private Room?" Relsyn asks. Following the mans gesture, he walks that way, deftly dodging the pretty young waitress who flits by him with a tray full of Boar and Fish.

"A pity no Almond Pudding" thinks Relsyn as he enters the private room.

...

Archbishop Irwin sits at the table with absolute calm. The door opens as Irwin sips his tea. He looks up to see the arrival of the first of the unknown candidates. A young cleric sticks his head in the door and glances around. Irwin looks at him blankly for a few seconds, then smiles. "Enter and welcome. The others should be here shortly." He gestures to a chair by the table.

Irwin is a tall man, with salt and pepper hair, and a strongly chiseled face. His robes are gray, with spun-gold cloth trim, gold cording, and four scarlet velvet bars on each arm. He is obviously a man of power, sitting comfortably in his chair. He makes no move to start the conversation, but rather sits watching the others while drinking his tea. He pushes a bowl of almond pudding toward the others, and reclines a little.

"Greetings Holiness," Relsyn inclines his head, "It is a very great pleasure to make your acquaintance." His eyes meet with the man who is possibly the second most powerful Churchman in all the lands, second only to His Holiness, Clement XVII. He sits when the Archbishop indicates he may.

Trying to hide his nervousness as best he can, Relsyn helps himself several of the sweetmeats of a large plate, as well as a cup of tea and an extra large helping of Almond pudding.

As he does this he looks around the room and tries to size up those he sees.

Inwe

Coldeven 5--

Inwe crouched low in the shrubs, watching a fawn nurse from his mother.

"Nothing is more pure than new life, and the natural order of life" he mentors always said.

Nodding at the thought, she stood and walked back toward the village without disturbing the deer.

When she returned, the wise one Elvólad Amanodel was watching for her from his chair under the sassafras tree. He was tall among elves, and also most wise. His white hair was spider web fine, and the wrinkles sprouting from the corners of his eyes betrayed his long life. He had traveled much in his youth, but now preferred to sit quietly among his friends. He beckoned her over.

"I have received a message from the human lands," he said while apparently pondering the message more than the one before him.

When prompted again, Elvólad focused on you and told you the tale:

"The human lands often argue over the smallest items. I have seen wars between cities over the price of grain. I have witnessed a single man rise over his peers and dominate them for greed. It is not natural for one to be over another without the good of all before all.

For the last little while, especially since the end of the Great Snake War, Human Kings have fought with the Pontiff and the church of Eli for control of the people. While we do not intervene in their affairs, the message I received makes me pause.

Something that may change the balance of nature and man, something hidden for some time, is being sought. We know not if the church or King would have restraint with this item of power, but we have cast our lot with the church.

I tell you this because I have chosen you to be a representative of our people in this quest. I trust your sense of balance and order, and I believe that you can judge if either party is worthy of this item, or none.

If I tell you more, I will thus influence your decision.

I ask that you travel to Antioch with a trading party, and meet your party at the Mitre Inn on KY 232, Coldeven 25 at dinnertime."

"I have been with you a mere twenty years. Though I have learned much, there is much yet before me. Are you sure I am the best you can send? I do not fully share the trust you have in me to make the right choice. But I am willing. If you really choose me, I will follow your words and represent our people and our world as best I can. I trust your judgement."

Elvólad nods thoughtfully and stares at a nearby tree for a few minutes.

He nods again, more certainly this time, and looks straight at Inwe.

"Yes, you are the one. We have a need, as do you. Perhaps this trip in the human lands will help you in your need. Ahh, don't protest. I know you well enough for this..."

I am old, to be sure. There is more you need to know, and perhaps I may yet be around to show you when you return. But, for the next while of your training, I can not be a good mentor. Life must teach you."

Elvólad appears to nod off into meditation. As Inwe leaves, he says in parting "Honor your people and be true to yourself. Fare thee well child."

Slowly walking away from Elvolad with Cildar at her side, Inwe shakes her head, bewildered by the task set before her and the trust given her. She pauses, looks up, watches the wind move the leaves in the canopy overhead.

"This world must survive." she thinks. "If I am here to work for that preservation, so be it." She returns to her shelter to gather what she will take on her journey and wish farewell to all those who have become her family. After a last meal, she sets out by the light of moon and stars.

For a time she wanders along the river, taking time to listen for the sharp cracks of pieces of ice breaking from the bank and being tossed among the rocks. "There is beauty in every detail," she recalls, studying some rabbit tracks along her path. Each night while sitting by her fire, she looks upward to watch the sparks fly up to meet their starry counterparts in the sky. And she thinks. About this journey, about what Elvolad had said to her, about the balance he had spoken of.

"I must find this balance in myself. Then perhaps I can trust my choice."

After a week of wandering the woods, she sets off toward Antioch to meet up with whose to whom she has been sent.

[Coldeven 24, KY232](#)

Inwe walks over the bridge into the region of Antioch. The guards there barely glance her way, and then continue their conversation "... price of almonds way too high. Wife won't make an almond pie if I stuck a dagger in her back to force her too..." they laugh as Inwe continues beyond hearing.

About a half hour later, nearing high noon, Inwe enters the city proper. The streets are all paved, and the buildings have been standing a long time. There are grand marble temples, cathedrals, and shrines everywhere.

For the visitors benefit, signs point to most of the major points of interest. The center of town is filled with manicured parks and gardens, and the strong smells of incense exudes from even the stones of the grand church buildings there.

Signs for several inns are to be found at several street intersections, including the Mitre Inn.

The city is bewildering. So much stone, so many buildings and people. Inwe feels quite out of place. Soon however she comes across a park and stops to readjust. Then, wandering a few of the streets that seem to hold most of the inns and stores, she finally sees a sign pointing the way to the Mitre Inn.

Upon arrival, still a day early for her scheduled meeting, she enters through the dark doorway with a glance at the menu. She orders an ale and banana crumble, then sits at a small table in the corner. From here she observes the other customers as they eat and talk. She watches the flickering torches and the running shadows they create. She listens to the bard performing a song for some special occasion two tables over. Then she returns to the park where she had found a group of elves who told her she could stay the night there.

The following morning she wanders more of the city. Then glancing up at the sun, realizes she should get back to the Inn. To the bartender: "Is there a man of the church here to meet a group of people?" After a quick nod to a hallway leading back into the building, he returns to serving his customers.

Inwe follows his nod through the dark hall until she reaches a door left cracked open from which she can hear the clatter of eating and a few voices. She knocks quietly and enters, looks around at those already gathered. "Sorry. I believe I'm a little late."

"Just on time, my dear. Come in and have a seat. Tea?"

As Inwe comes in, a badger follows her through the door, nose in the air and on high alert. The huskie, neck hair straight up, is restrained only by the hand of Airith. After a few seconds, both relax into a tense peace - wary eyes on each other each time the other twitches. Inwe sits at the table, puts a few items on her plate, and begins to eat.

Airith

Fireseek 27--

The Black Dragon Pub is a greasy quiet place just a little bit upscale from the usual bawdy joints by the Upper Docks. The room is dark, but has small brass oil lamps burning on a few tables, and the room is free of the "companion" women and more sinister characters of the busier halls two blocks over. Sitting at your usual table with Smoke licking the beef juice from your fingers, a group of noisy ruffians storm in and fall into a tumble of arms and legs.

As they untangle themselves, they immediately look around and sober up. There are four of them, and not of the nicer sort. They are dressed in the rough cloth of the dock workers and general laborers of the area - dark brown pantaloons, loose whitish shirts, and colorful sashes around their waists. They are kind of out of place here, but none of the other patrons notice their presence after the initial tumble and guffaw.

For Airith, these are not strangers at all. You know them as the "Stiletos," a small party you used to associate with. They are careful, professional, and certainly not prone to tumble and fall unless they planned it that way.

Rodney, Carolina, Taryn, and Malik note you as they walk up to the bar and order the best ale. Malik flips the hand sign "we need to talk" to you as they quietly banter at the counter. With drinks in hand, and an extra for you apparently, they move to the table next to you and talk quietly about the news of their guild.

As the next move is yours, you turn your chair around and are sitting at their table and listen and drink. They are talking about the rash of thefts around the Hill District. Takes the cunning of a fox to do that, you think. Taryn is the first to speak to you as she scratches the dog Smoke's, ears and covers the usual pleasantries. (how's business? doin ok?)

"Heya. We have heard about a job that is... well...ah" she scratches her head.

Malik intervenes with "it's a bit unusual, odd. The strange thing is, the client is..."

They all pause to casually glance around the room. After signaling "clear" Malik continues. "the client is a church. And they want absolute secrecy and anonymity. We are too well known around Malta, and no one is to know who we select for the job, save our contact. We were paid well just to pass this on to you and never speak of it again."

They all smiled. It must have been easy money. And, you believe they are trustworthy to keep their word. No one would use them again if they had no honor.

"This is a search and retrieve mission. It may take some time, but they said the payoff would be good. Believe you me, it will be if our part was a sign. If you accept, all you have to do is tell us, and we tell our contact. He says he will get you some information before you have to leave, for Antioch I think. Whatdaya say?"

"You can tell this contact of yours I am interested and his secrecy and anonymity will remain intact. It doesn't matter who hires me, they are all customers. Make sure he is aware of my usual

terms, plus some spending money to get me to Antioch and what not. I will also need specifics; what we are after, who has it, where it is, how much security, you know... the basics."

Airith thinking to himself: "Work has been slow and I could use a decent payout. Don't get ahead of yourself though, better to be cautious than identified, wanted or dead."

Airith's General Terms -

Won't be an assassin, won't beat someone up, won't divulge any information(expects the same of the employer), won't rob someone outright(need to have a pretty good reason, better be an item, won't steal money), etc.....

Airith smiles, raises his glass and proposes a discreet toast, just loud enough for the five of them to hear, "To the job."

"to the job" They all respond.

After a very short amount of time, the others leave quietly. You are quite sure nobody here even noticed anything more than a few friends joining for a drink. You return to your room and put your affairs in order to be away for a little while.

Coldeven 2

Two days later, a page boy from the temple nearby brings you an envelope and a small bag. A quick glance shows the note is written on fine paper and is sealed with wax and a signet ring. It is addressed to "the one who joins us".

From Archbishop Irwin, servant of His Holiness Clement XVII, Pontiff of Eli, Lord of the Endless Flame whose glory and honor we strive to keep in this dark world of evil, and whose flame is the light of all created things.

To: Specially chosen friend of the church.

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.....Additional significant information on M. Cuthbert's

.....doings earn the standard reward of 50GP each

.....Additional unforeseen services will be paid at a reasonable rate.

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Please be prompt - we will be awaiting your arrival.

In the bag are ten gold coins and a carefully written note on a scrap of paper that says "for your retainer - ten gold boat to Antioch, *Pelican*, leaves tomorrow with passage paid."

The boy, completely unaware of the significance of either the note or bag, had tipped his hat and run out on to the street and around the corner while you were reading.

It is Coldeven 2, giving you twenty-three days for the trip. The boat is leaving soon, should you choose to take it. You would probably have a week to kill in Antioch, before your meeting.

Coldeven 18

Airith scratches Smoke's head as he leans back in his chair, the meal he just finished was tasty and filling. The Mitre Inn has a few less patrons than earlier but this is due to the lateness of the hour. Airith eyes the room one more time as he takes a sip of his pint, but only sees the same thing as a few minutes ago. A drunk man sitting on a chair, his upper body lying over the table, sleeping off the large amount of ale he consumed. Two other men nursing pints of their own. The innkeeper cleaning up from the night's activities. And the help continuing their activities as before.

To himself, "I am so bored. I must be, I must have eyed this place three or four times the last five minutes. This week has dragged by at a snail's pace. The voyage here at least had some scenery, and the crew was actually fun to hang around with once they were done with their duties. But here, in Antioch, other than the shops, I am getting so bored. I don't want to draw too much attention to myself, so I hope this will be worth laying low for a week. Hopefully this meeting tomorrow will lead to some excitement and some coin."

Seeing the innkeeper arouse the drunken patron Airith finishes his pint and then makes his way to his room. Smoke follows just behind. Airith lies on the bed staring into the black. "Tomorrow, the excitement begins tomorrow."

Coldeven 25, KY232

Airith wakes later than normal. He sits on the edge of the bed and rubs his eyes. Smoke looks up and then puts his head back down. "Today's the day, guess we better get ready." He heads down stairs to catch a bit of brunch and asks for Kedardojar if a bath could be drawn. Kedardojar nods and then goes about his other business of pouring drinks and serving his patrons.

Airith goes back upstairs, throws Smoke some table scraps and starts to pack up his things. He hears a not at the door and a young woman's voice says, "Your bath is ready sir, at the end of the hall."

"Thank you" and continues the last bit of packing. "Come on Smoke, need to get cleaned up to meet the new employer." Smoke licks his chops as if to savor what he had just consumed and follows Airith to the end of the hall.

Airith enjoys the rather warm water. It has been some time since he has had a warm bath and he looks to enjoy every moment of it he can. After he feels he is clean enough dresses in his gear and tucks away his other belongings. He puts on Smoke's saddle and gear and heads back down stairs.

Knowing he still has some time he orders a pint and finds a table. "Don't know if the employer is here or not, and I don't want to seem too anxious. I'll wait a bit and see if I have any competition."

After a short time Airith sees a man ask for the private room and heads down the hall. "Well Smoke, shall we go." Smoke responds by getting up and they both head to the room. Airith smiles at Kedardojar as he passes and Kedardojar gives him a smile and a nod back. Airith knows what room it is since he asked and took an opportunity earlier in the week to look it over.

Airith enters, a rather short man but tall for a Halfling dressed in dark drab colors. His hair pulled back in a ponytail and looks to be very clean. He cautiously looks around and hears, "Enter and welcome. The other should be here shortly." Airith sees a man in the corner on the floor, the young man that entered ahead of him and another man sipping tea at the head of the table motioning him to take a seat. Airith sees the meal set at the table takes no time sitting and preparing a plate. He hears the crow speak some bizarre language on the young man's shoulder

and they chuckle a bit. Seeing as no one is talking, Airith begins eating the meal and reaches behind him with a bit of meat that Smoke takes and eats. To himself, "Might as well eat while I can."

Wrinkle sits on the floor in the darkest corner of the heavily draped private room of the Mitre Inn. He is a husky dwarf, dressed in black, apparently unarmed and at ease on the floor. It is absolutely silent in here, with only the clink of a porcelain cup on a small plate occasionally interrupting. There are no windows here, and the only portal into here is the velvet-padded door. "Kind of like a cave" he thinks. The table in the center of the room is quite beautiful, flawless in its mahogany color and satin finish. The chairs around the table match its elegance - padded leather seats and arms with brass tacks trimming the upholstery. Various appetizers are laid out on the table, along with cups for tea and water. After all have arrived, he stands up and moves to the remaining chair at the table. His black beard and mustache hide all but his eyes and a scar along his throat. He nods in respect to Irwin.

"Welcome friends, each of you was chosen for this task based on either a talent you have, or by someone who trusts you can help with our assignment. We are in need of a party to search for and recover an item of historical and religious significance.

I am Archbishop Irwin, Archbishop of Antioch, and consul of antiquities and artifacts for the church of Eli. The Church of Eli Museum and Archive, of which I have oversight, houses the documents of the church, going back nearly to the arrival of the Remnant Ships that landed from Eire. We are also charged to find and recover items from antiquity, for the benefit and display for all the church.

It has been nearly ten years or so since our last party went out to rediscover and return the three sapphires found by St Xantas in the bright desert. They were able to find one, and it is now on display in our museum. The ever greedy king, Sullivar Cuthbert, went to great lengths to hinder the quest, and even imprisoned the party for some time before we could negotiate their release. We believe his daughter and reigning sovereign, Matilda, is every bit as greedy and opposed to us.

We have kept this party as secret as possible from the queen in the hopes that this quest is successful and timely for you. You all are unknown to the Queen, and none but myself will know who you are until the assignment is complete. After that, fame is yours, or absolute anonymity, as you wish.

Before I go into details of the artifact we are trying to recover, and your payment, are there any questions?"

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Inwe "What is the importance of these jewels that the king or queen would want them so dearly? and why does the church desire them so?"

Inwe picks up Cildar and holds him, scratching his head while still allowing him a clear view of the dog nearby.

"Well, the other two sapphires are known to be lost. All leads are closed for now, and our researchers are continuing to scan documents for clues to these, and many other, artefacts. As for the Gems themselves, they obviously have historical significance as Saint Xantas himself was the one to carry them. Each has powers of its own, and each one is different. The one in our museum has, at this time, no practical use, is very valuable, and it is very beautiful.

The King was trying to get them, partially to foil our plans, partially because of their value, and probably to discern some personal use for them.

That being said, this assignment is for another item completely, which I will go into detail in a few minutes."

Airith Chimes In, "Is it my understanding then that the churches in other towns will not be assisting us in our quest to find this artifact? And if they are not, can we trust anyone with the details of this particular mission? Are we expected to keep you informed of the progress we make?" Airith questions. "If you are about to explain all this then by all means please accept my apologize and continue on."

Relsyn nods a bit and addresses the Archbishop. "Please continue, Monsignor, I have no questions as yet." He pushes the empty bowl that once held almond pudding aside.

As Relsyn is sliding the plate across the table, Kaydar (the inkeeper) enters and personally clears some of the plates, replaces the sweetmeats and tea, and makes a quiet retreat.

Irwin Continues "The artifact we are looking for is a staff. It has had many names, but in most of the old stories it is called the "Staff of the Elioim" I can tell you a bit about its description, what we know about it, and where it was last seen, but more investigation on your part will certainly be necessary.

It is a staff, as I said. Most documents agree that it is about seven to eight human hand spans [5 feet] , a fist stone across [two inches] , and made of magically hardened oak wood. Several documents and stories say it has a woven basket head, while others say there is no ornamentation on top, but it has a large bole six spans from the ground. We are sure it had a gem, and are also sure it is no longer there.

The oldest of stories about the Elioim Staff originate before the golden age of Rhiann, many thousands of years ago. It is believed to have belonged to a race of people that no longer live today, and have long been unknown, other than the buildings they built. You will undoubtedly see some of these in Malta. The staff is said to have power over weather, earth, and water. One tale says the staff drove away a plague of locusts with a mighty wind. Another mentions lightning coming from the staff and destroying the enemies of the Elioim. Of course, these are probably exaggerations of stories told many times over, and no recent stories are told at all about it having power.

It was last known to exist only 1800 years ago, when the gem was removed form the staff and lost to the annals of time. The staff stood in Malta for a long while after, but too was lost some centuries later. There are a quite a few staffs in Malta today. The great families use them as trophies in their silly Game. We had our eyes on three of these as potential leads for the Elioim Staff. One is generally held by the Youngstrom family. Another by the Cuthbert family. And , the last by the Greyson family.

I mention the family names, but of course, there are several branches to each family tree. The staff could be at any of their houses, and perhaps even among other "worthy" noble families who have earned the right to brand their trophy.

It will be your charge to determine if any of these, or perhaps one of the five other staffs, are the Elioim Staff. We can not ask them directly to examine the staffs, as they have already denied the church access and our relations with the great families is poor at the moment. But, perhaps you may find a way to see them. To get the Elioim Staff, we surely cannot afford their inflated price, but again perhaps you can think of some way to negotiate for the staff - a reasonable price may be paid by the museum. For this you will be paid our finders fee.

It will also be your charge to try to reunite the staff with the gem. We will triple the finders fee if you bring the staff to us with the gem known as Eli's Tear. Oh the joy that would bring to me."

Irwin's eyes actually wet a little with the hope that brings him, but he quickly regains his composure. He continues...

"The finders fee will be five thousand crowns per person for the staff alone or gem alone. 15000 crowns for the staff and gem together. Expenses are to be paid at 40 crowns per month, two months paid in advance. We have a location in Malta where messages can be safely dropped off. I expect a report monthly, and would like updates for significant events like finding information on the gem's whereabouts."

"If you find other treasure, we reserve the right to keep and compensate the party for religious items. The rest is for the party to decide what to do with. All treasure objects will be examined at the end of the assignment by our appraisers for your and our benefit (coin excluded) We expect honesty and integrity while on the churches assignment. Murder and outright theft will be unacceptable."

Irwin relaxes a little, refilling his tea. He takes a piece of pastry off a plate and brings it toward his mouth. He lowers it a little again and asks, "Any questions now?" Then he takes a bite of the pastry.

Airith's eyes widen as he hears the name 'Cuthbert' in Irwin's description. He lets Irwin finish before commenting on the families.

"The last guy to meddle in Cuthbert affairs was tried for treason. No one knows what happened to him afterwards. If we were to be found out, I don't think the Cuthbert family would take any less mercy on us than this last gentleman. Not to mention the Cuthbert family is well known throughout Malta and the land, seeing as they are 'king'(said in a very sarcastic tone) and all. Any investigation would likely get back to them.

The other two families you mentioned may not be nearly as bad, but are still well known. Both are sizable families living in and around Malta and each could take months to check out each household of either side."

Irwin nods "I see you are from the Malta area then. You are right to be cautious. All the families in their silly Game are well known. The competitive nature of the Game, not to mention the outstanding effort and wealth spent to out-play each other shines like a beacon to all who are out to make a quick sovereign or fame."

As Relsyn and Inwe look blankly between Airith and Irwin, he continues...

"The Game, as it is called in the Malta upper eschelons, has to do with the status and pecking order of the elite. The parties they throw and gifts given among themselves, not to the needy or poor mind you, the greatness of their houses, the beauty of their gardens... all this plays into some ranking of who are the top socialites, and ultimately the power of the family."

Irwin addresses everyone again...

"The Game is vanity. The wealth squandered is unbelievable. The danger to 'lesser people' is minimal unless you cross them. The Ancient and Venerable Church is above that kind of pettiness, and thus we occasionally are spurned or attacked. Your status, even though working for the museum, will be seen as 'working class' and thus invisible to them."

"Do not worry about that, but do be cautious not to get noticed too much. As they do not talk to each other much, you likely have time to work without being noticed. I also recommend starting at the back door of the palaces first, if you get my meaning."

Irwin again looks around to see if there are any more questions...

While you are thinking about what I have said, I believe introductions are in order. Don't you?"

Irwin looks at Relsyn. "Garret is your friend, I believe. A very good man. Please, introduce yourself to your companions and me."

Relsyn Saffire - Introduction

"Quite so, Monsignor," responds Relsyn, shifting in his seat to correct his posture, "Though friend is probably not a sufficient word to describe what Father Garret has meant to me, Mentor, Guide, Compass would perhaps do more justice."

He glances briefly at each of the other guests at this strange dinner party and their menagerie-- Elven woman with Badger, Halfling man with his smelly dog, the black clad dwarf.

He thinks, smiling to himself "We wont be conspicuous at all poking around the rich sections of Malta, leading our merry band of animals about."

He drinks a sip of water from a fancy glass, twisted in some odd way, and speaks.

"My name is Relsyn Saffire, I am originally from here in Antioch and have spent most of my days here, save for some months spent in Arras. I was raised by the scholars of St Macedone in a dormitory not to far from here. I have spent the majority of my life being trained by that order of eminent scholars and am honored to be counted among their number. It is a pl.. " He pauses, " Oh this is my familiar, Jewel." He gestures toward the raven who is perched on one of the rooms shelves not to far from Relsyn. "I am pleased to make your acquaintance."

Inwe's Introduction

After finishing the food on her plate, Inwe looks around and begins.

"As I am not from around here, and in fact have never entered this city before, all these great family names mean little to me, except that I have heard mention of them before. The group of druids I have been living with in the forest since I was very small has little to do with this competitive world of men. I have been sent in response to a message sent to my mentor and as part of my teaching. The badger with me is Cildar. Really quite nice unless you threaten him."

"As for a question, I do have another: For a staff with such power, would anyone really allow it to be merely shown in a museum?"

Irwin, leaning forward a bit and brushing back the wings of white along his temples, looks toward Inwe.

"Ahha, a fine point. Would anyone allow it to mearily be shown in a museum? Well, the staff is indeed expected to be powerful, once re-assembled. I do not expect anyone of minor abilities will be able to do anything with it but enjoy its beauty. So it should be safe from most common thievery in our museum.

As for those with 'means' to procure the staff - part of why we want it is to keep it secure from those who would abuse it. We fear its power ourselves, for little is known about what its power is. Once known, the item itself may indeed be a collectors item for other museums, but more likely will remain here. Other retrieved items are now in private collections.

As you are elvenkind, I will not take offense at your question as it applies to the Ancient and Venerable Church of the Eternal Flame. We are above using such a noble item for greed or self serving deeds. Materially possessing it, the knowledge of its greatness, and the history of such an item makes me flush with excitement. Allowing all to view it would spread the awe of it."

Indeed, Irwin is flush with ecstatic heat and pleasure. After a second, he shakes it off and continues.

"Inwe, as for not being in Malta or Antioch, this should not be a problem. As Relsyn has said, he has been here for some time and can help the party if time needs to be spent here. I believe that another of your party has spent time in Malta." He glances toward Airith.

"We chose the party carefully to cover the cities we expect you need to visit."

"As for the competitive world of men, " he pauses to chuckle, " the men of Malta are the most competitive I have ever seen. They are absurdly competitive, but dangerous only to those who are a threat. Again, you should be safe as long as you remain below their view."

Airith

"Then I take it that is why I was chosen." Airith says with a grin. "Airith Pipehill from the great city of Malta at your service. I know the city fairly well but I must admit my knowledge is mostly of the shadier side of town if you catch my drift. My four legged familiar and friend here is Smoke. He is generally nice and likes a good scratch on the head." As Airith says this he reaches behind him and scratches the top of Smoke's head.

"I have spent the last couple years or so doing odd jobs for anyone that wants to hire me. Delivering messages, like my ancestors, or retrieving lost or stolen goods. And don't let my stature fool you, I can fight with the best of them and have been known to have a few tricks up my sleeve." He takes a drink from his mug and waits for the dwarf to introduce himself.

Wrinkle

As all eyes shift toward Wrinkle, he squirms in his chair, his mouth moving, but no sound coming out. He is dressed all in black. He wears heavy leather boots over black baggy pants. He is muscular, armored with black chain mail, and decorated with intricate dwarven leatherwork on his belt and shoulders. As with all dwarves, he is stocky, but tough and lean as well. His beard is well groomed, bound into two tails under his chin, and his dark brown hair is pulled back and bound behind his head at the moment. He is scarred from left eye, to lip, and down into his beard. While grown back, it is evident in his beard that a blade had once gone deeper down toward his neck.

Irwin speaks on Wrinkle's behalf. "This is Wrinkle Waybright. He is a fighter who has worked on my behalf before, and I have asked him to join this party. As you can see..." he points to the scar on Wrinkle's face and neck, " Wrinkle has been in battle before."

"When he came to us, he was in poor shape, and unable to talk. He is from a small enclave of dwarves in the mountains north of Sardinia. Wrinkle comes from a long line of fighter-bards, able to trace his lineage back to the time of Saint Salix. His silence is a tragedy, since his knowledge of lore and song long forgotten elsewhere is great. He is able to communicate, but it will take a bit of practice for you to understand him well."

Wrinkle puts his left hand into a pocket and comes out with what appears to be a fist full of clay. It has a tube out one end, and each joint of his fingers covers a small hole. As he puts it to his mouth and blows, the most unusual sweet whispering sound comes out. A common bar tune jauntily follows and everyone smiles at the tune. A second after the tune ends, the sound coming out seems familiar, language-like.

He looks around, and makes the sound like "yooo eyke ahhh uuuune?" and looks around again...

"Yes, that was lovely. Sounds like something I heard while I was walking around town yesterday. You play wonderfully" Inwe replies.

"Now that introductions are done, you need to determine an initial approach for your search. Let me clarify your goals:

The museum would like you to return the staff and the gem.

We believe the staff is in Malta, if anywhere. We do not know where the gem is.

Update me as you can on your progress.

There are documents here in Antioch that could help you, but they have been thoroughly searched by our scholars. The Library in Malta has a document cache that could help your search as well."

Airith says, "Well, since we are already in Antioch, I wouldn't mind looking over what information the museum has. These documents might help us to familiarize us with the items you require. Pictures, drawings, and detailed descriptions would be most helpful." Airith slides his mug away from himself towards the center of the table. "Of course if the rest of you want to get right to Malta we could do that also." Airith turns to Irwin, "I would also like to know how we are to keep in contact with you?"

"If you leave a message at the Bastion Inn for "Guest Frances Mallard" or at the Boars Head Inn and Tavern for "Albert Oneglass," I will get the message. Perhaps Airith is known at some establishment where I can leave a message for him?"

"I for one, would be very interested in the documents pertaining to this matter. Perhaps they can shed some light that can help us identify this artifact." Relsyn's eyes light up at the prospect of poring through documents that haven't been looked upon by mortal eyes in several centuries.

Inwe pipes up, "I agree with Airith. I would like to learn as much as possible here about the item we seek and its history before leaving this city. And it would seem I have a bit of knowledge to catch up on to equal these companions."

Irwin says "I can introduce you to the Cannon of the museum, Hugh Westcott. He will show you the documents and evidence that shows you what we know so far. Please also feel free to stroll through the museum. I must say it is quite spectacular in its depth and breadth of history."

Airith snaps back to the conversation, "The Black Dragon Pub in Malta is as good a place as any. I will admit, it is not the nicest establishment being found in the Dock District and all. It is a bit dismal and the population there is something to be desired. I am not sure that all will feel comfortable staying there." Airith looks at Wrinkle, Relsyn, and Inwe as he says the last bit.

"There are finer establishments in the western districts, much more comfortable. However, they are more expensive and I can't be sure that all messages would stay confidential. The houses like to play their games and information, about anything, may fetch a coin or two for the first person to share it."

"Although, the Underplow Inn and Pub in the Farmer's District might be a good place to get in contact with us. I know the owner, Thilo Underplow, pretty well from my days selling Ale. He runs an honest business and sacks anyone that doesn't value an honest living. It is a rather large place with lots of people coming and going, but it would meet the needs of small and large. And as I recall the beef stew was excellent." Airith smiles at the thought of eating it again.

"As for here in Antioch, this inn seems to be a good place to get a message to us. I don't know how long we will be here though. I don't want to speak for the rest of you but I figured after perusing the museum's literature we would find our way to Malta, if that's our best bet."

Relsyn declares "I agree with Airith," Relsyn nods toward the halfling, "Lets look at the documents that pertain to the staff, then be on our way to Malta. Unless there's somebody else we should talk to before we leave?" Relsyn looks toward the Archbishop.

Irwin shakes his head, "no, there is not anyone else in Antioch you have to see. A brief review of the museum archive would show the texts from which the information I summarized for you came. I really doubt you will gain new knowledge here."

"We have not worked in Malta at all, other than to do some looking of the surface to see if there is enough information there to follow up on. The cleric who contacted Airith is known at the library there, so he had to be very broad in his study to cover any tracks."

"This is how we know the families who may be involved with the staff. There were references to more detailed information about the history of the staff, like what happened after the gem was separated from the staff, but he could not get to it with the line of research he was following." Wrinkle scratches the scar on his lip, obviously in thought. Then he plays again.
"ieeee ssssiink whhheee shshshshooooo!!!!!!d ooooooo tooooooo aaa!!!!taaaa ooon"

Irwin continues

"Well, if there are no other comments..."

He reaches is arm under the table to the bag inconspicuously set there, and pulls out five pouches - four nice black velvet, and one larger red velvet bag. He hands a black bag to each of Inwe, Relsyn, Airith, and Wrinkle. Inside you find 5 Sovereigns and thirty Crowns [80 GP] each.

"This is the first two months stipend, as promised.

I shall be glad to introduce you to Monsignor Westcott, the Cannon and curator of the Museum now, if you wish. Perhaps tomorrow?"

Irwin looks into the red bag, then seriously at each of you.

"To make to party's chances better, we are willing to offer some or all of these items. It will be our understanding that these are on loan from the museum, and must be returned at the completion of the assignment. The values of each item is known and will be subtracted from equally from the finders reward if lost. If you wish to keep the item, then that will come from your share of the prize.

Do we have and understanding?"

As all agree, he puts four item on the table.

First is a bar of black iron, large enough around to be grasped by a large hand, and about two hand spans wide. It has a button on the end of it which can be slid either in or out. "An immovable rod" say Irwin as he demonstrated how to activate it, leaving it about three inches above the table.

Second is a round rod, a little shorter than a human hand span, with a medallion integrated into the middle of the rod. On the medallion is a fine engraving of an oasis in the desert. The trees and water are so fine you pause to see if they are actually moving. (They are not) On the back of hte medallion are etched the words 'sicuro a casa.' "One time per week, your party can incant the words on the back, and all willing life in contact with the incantor will be translated into a safe place with food and water. When dismissed, you will be in exactly the same place as you were when you left.

Third is a ring with no special markings other than the word 'friend.' This will charm any one animal, within range, like the charm animal spell.

Finally, Irwin pulls out another ring with a lizard like animal embossed on it, running around the band. As you look at it, the lizard seems to fade... or does it? "This will help one party member hide at will, and also disguise him or herself."

With the items on the table, he repeats "these are on loan, understand. We want these back." He leans back, stretches slightly, then stands up and refills his tea.

"I am ready to get to work. And if there are no objections, I would carry the friend ring." Inwe looks around at the other travelers.

Airith turns to Inwe, "Yes I would also like to get to it." He reaches for the immovable rod. "I think I would like to borrow thiiiiis." He strains as he tries to move the rod but his attempt is useless. "Ah yes the button." Airith moves the button and sits back down in his chair examining the rod and pressing the button back and forth. "Unless someone else wanted it." He continues to play with the item like a kid with a new toy and waits for the others to pick what is left.

Relsyn partially stands, leans over the table, and looks curiously at the four items revealed by the Archbishop. " I would carry the immovable rod, with the consensus of the party, of course." He pauses, "And I am ready to begin the adventure, and I think we should have a short chat with Monsignor Westcott for starters. If the rest of you do not wish to come, I could meet you somewhere tomorrow after talking with the good Canon."

He stands fully and places the coins given by Archbishop Irwin in his belt pouch.

Wrinkle stands and looks at the rod with the circle part as Relsyn and Airith grab for the same bar. He picks up the rod of safety, along with his coin, and mouths 'ready' and signals for the door with a shrug.

Relsyn shrugs as Airith takes the immovable rod. "As you will." He says with more than a hint of disappointment. "Unfortunately, I have no need for the the remaining item, the ring of hiding. Monsignor, I await your convenience to meet with the Canon." He sits and takes a long drink of water from the fancy glass.

Airith says, "If you would like to borrow the rod I could make do with borrowing the lizard ring." He puts the rod back on the table and picks up the lizard ring. "Probably for the best anyway, less likely to lose this." Places the ring on his finger. "Shouldn't come of that finger for anything."

Airith also takes the small pouch of coin meant for him, opens it and examines it, and then places it among his possessions. "Are we going to meet with the museum people tonight or tomorrow?"

"Are you sure Airith?" Relsyn asks, " I have no desire to create any bad blood in this group, especially given the task and its mentor. While it is true that I see no use for the lizard ring and would find the stationary rod more useful, I will submit to the will of the party. In any case all these objects are for the furtherance of the mission and should be used by all toward that end."

"Don't worry about it Relsyn, the ring should prove useful." Airith jumps down from his chair, "Lets get to it, don't want to be up until the wee hours of the morning." He puts the pouch of coins in a bag on Smoke. "Don't worry boy, it's not to heavy." He gives Smoke a pet on the head.

Relsyn picks up the immovable rod and experiments with it a bit. Eventually he sets it near his shoulder, and Jewel alights on it.

He directs his attention to the Archbishop, "Monsignor, I would prefer to speak to the Canon yet this evening, if it can be arranged."

Inwe stands, puts her bag of coins into her sack. Cildar rises from where he has been lying on the floor to stand by her side, ready to follow her. "I also would like to hear from the canon. And I echo Relsyn in saying tonight if possible."

Irwin finishes his tea and sets the cup and saucer down. "Well then, it is to the Museum we go. I thought you might want to see the documents, so I warned Monsignor Westcott that we may be stopping over. The museum will, of course, be closed. But, he is more than willing to show you around."