

Princes of the Apocalypse

As told by Groin, LLC.

episode 3: shallow graves / knight's quest

When the four adventurers were satisfied that they had learned everything they could in the tunnels, including Grund's demonstration of the cage trap in the hallway with the strange tiled ceiling, they left through the secret door at the wagon yard. Upon exiting the tunnel, they instantly heard screams. As they left the wagon yard through the same hole in the fence they had entered through, people could be seen running across side streets in the direction of the sink hole. Grund instantly broke into a dead run, worried for his fellow townspeople, with the party in tow.

They were met with a scene of chaos. A building had collapsed, "Thelorn's Safe Journeys", the town's high-end wagon maker, and people were running in every direction carrying buckets of water or calling for help. Something in the wreckage sparked a fire, perhaps a broken oil lamp, and in the orange glow Harburk could be seen nearby standing on a barrel, shouting commands over the crowd.

Ganon saw a few people frantically digging through the former building, and ran to assist. He and a tearful man lifted a heavy timber and heaved it into the street, and as the man went back to pull another board away whimpering could be heard. A few more men came, as well as Crotch, and within moments a woman and child, dirty and bruised, were in the arms of the man Ganon had helped, while the man thanked the gods "this building was my living, but these two were my life."

Perry and Diamachus walked up to Crotch, having been discussing something as the scene calmed down. "Look where that building is... was... the sinkhole is way over there, and we went in the tunnels over there" he pointed towards Waelvur's "so, we're..."

"Right above the Bulette's escape path." The Dwarf said, flatly. "Larrakh did this."

Harburk was busily doling orders out to able bodied villagers when Ganon approached him. "We've been underground. We should talk."

Harburk found his Second, and gave the young man a short list of responsibilities to delegate before addressing Ganon with a curt "swinging sword, ten minutes."

Ten minutes later, the four adventures were in Harburk's make-shift office. As Harburk and Ganon shook hands, they both felt a familiar "click". Harburk's eyes grew wide, and a smile crossed his face. "By the GODS man, a word!" He pulled Ganon into a storage room across the hall. "I wasn't wearing my signet earlier, was I? The woman won't let me wear it half the time. She says I can't let the Alliance put a ring on *my* finger until I put one on *hers*! Hah! Well... if I had known I still wouldn't have appreciated your interrupting the trial, but I would have been a little more open to letting you *help*! Ah well, it's what we get for keeping secrets, no?"

They returned to his office, and proceeded to discuss everything the heroes found below town.

“So it seems this Larrakh character is real after all. Hmm. I guess I can’t just kill the whole bloody lot of them *now*, can I?” Harburk said, stroking his chin. “I’ve got more prisoners than I can handle right now, I’ve got a sinkhole in the middle of the street, a building that just went down, and now we’ve got evil wizards running around under our feet. What’s next, a natural disaster?”

“Well, there’s nothing natural about the disasters that you’re facing now.” Crotch said, and leaned in. “Did we mention that we happen to be a particularly *well-funded* adventuring party?”

“Yes, and we were thinking that your town looks like it could use some help.” Ganon said, “Like possibly a proper jail?”

“So many town elders being mixed up in all this probably means some real estate will become available soon... and there *is* a network of tunnels under the town you know.” Diamachus added.

Crotch continued, “We happen to know where the real entrance is...”

Harburk smiled “and Waelvur won’t be making his shitty wagons any time soon, I suppose.” His face grew more serious, then “but if anyone needs help now, it’s Thelorn. Waelvur was trying to use the secret society to disrupt Thelorn’s business, since the quality of his goods couldn’t compete. It looks like they finally managed to bring his place down.”

Ganon stood tall, and in his “paladin” voice, declared “We shall send for funds to rebuild his establishment. This town now has an ally in Groin. We have done much for Phandalin, and the frontier town is now beginning to resemble a place of order and society. You, too, shall feel the benefit of our attention.”

Obviously impressed, Harburk stood and smoothed down his shirt, before extending a hand to all four adventurers, in turn. “Gentlemen, I must confess; I was less than pleased with your arrival in town. I sent you into the tunnels to get rid of you. I thought if I let you had your little adventure you would move on, as is the way of men of your profession. I am glad I misjudged your character.”

Ganon and Perry returned to Mother Yalantha’s to rest for the night. Diamachus and Crotch went out to blow off a little steam. As they were approaching The Swinging Sword, Crotch began to wonder when his Miribarian friends would show up.

“They said they would be here in Red Larch before us, but I haven’t seen them. Maybe I’ll ask around.”

While Diamachus threw all of his charisma at Jaylessa Irkell, the establishment’s proprietor (earning a flirtatious conversation, a few free drinks, and little else but hope), Crotch began asking around if anyone had heard about the Delegation due to come through town. As it turned out, almost everyone had. The town had been preparing for their arrival for some time now, and the Delegation was expected to have arrived a few days prior. Rooms had been booked, the town elders had all been prepared to shower the visitors with the finest of gifts and entertainment (the band’s show had been booked to coincide with a welcome celebration), but the events of the past two days had distracted everyone from focusing on their failure to arrive. As Crotch began to ask around, statements about the missing Delegation began to spark fires of conversation as the topic spread amongst the bar’s patrons. Crotch managed to find two different people who had seen the ambassadors safe in Beliard. One, a female half-orc, had even gotten into a fist-fight with a few of the guards and lost her job guarding a caravan because of it. “I didn’t know they were important political people, they were a bunch of jerks...”

But if you see them, let me know. The truth is; I was going to ask them if they wanted to hire another sword. I managed to trounce about five of them before they threw me out of that joint, maybe they'll remember what my fists can do." The other, a priest of Lathandar, had conversed with them on much friendlier terms. "They told me that they were going to take a southern route to get here. I knew I would get here faster than them, but it's been... I'm not sure... I do feel that they should have been here by now, though."

Crotch began to worry for his new friends, but when a shepherd came in from his campsite at the watering hole his story caused Crotch's worry to blossom into a real fear. Larmon, the shepherd, took his sheep for a week-long graze along the southern edge of the Sember Hills every few months. "I know it's getting dangerous out there, it's just the best grass." He had seen, on his return to Red Larch, a number of freshly dug graves on a hillside about a half-day's walk from town. "They weren't there when I passed that spot on the way out, but on the way back, there they are. And not a soul walks those hills but me, I never see *anyone* out there."

The next morning, while Crotch and Diamachus slept off their grog, Perry found the town's clothier. The Halfling walked in to see a Turami woman in fine silks behind the counter. As he approached, she arched an eyebrow "Diss-abee a cheap suit 'den"

The Halfling smirked at her joke, but his face darkened as he placed a coin on the counter. "I need fist wraps"

"Oh, yes I see. And wotsa fist wrap exaclee?" she grinned, amused by the serious little Monk.

"It's a strip of fabric, about this wide" he held up his hands to show about two inches "that I wrap around my fists to protect them when I fight."

"Uh-HUH. An 'ow long you wont 'dem?"

The Halfling shrugged, "a few feet? Maybe a yard each? And I want them red."

"Well of course you do." The woman stood up, grabbed her fabric shears, and turned to the rolls of textiles hanging behind her. She pulled a short length of red fabric down from its spool, cut two strips and dropped them on the counter. She rested on her elbows again. "Will dat be all, 'den?"

"Yes, thank you very much." Perry said, carefully wrapping the cloth around his hands. "Perfect." He looked up at her, without a trace of humor on his face. "With these on my hands I shall take the life of the evil Larrakh. I swear this to you."

"Well I guess I'm glad I'm not 'dis rock character 'den."

As the Halfling left, he heard the woman yell to a room in the back "Helvur, you wanna see 'dis wee man come in talkin' 'bout he gon kill a rock! Din'eye tells you 'dis town gon crazy!"

Ganon broke his fast at the swinging sword. He picked a seat at the empty bar and waited for an opportunity to speak with Jaylessa. After a modest meal of eggs, salted pork, and Red Larch's famous crumble cake, he finally saw his opening as the woman finished scolding one of her employees, Ghileeda. Harburk had introduced the maiden to Ganon the night before, as she served them in his office. He had even inferred that her father was in the alliance. He also had mentioned her mother's clothing shop, where Perry had headed...

"May I have a word, in private?" he asked Jaylessa.

The woman looked up and down the length of the empty bar. "More private than this?"

Seeing a complete lack of response, she continued with a roll of her eyes "sure, this way."

She led him to the same storage room in which Ganon had met the constable the previous night. "Look, Harburk told me you guys were OK, and you look..." She eyed him up and down "like... a fucking paladin... so... can we make this quick? I have a lot on my plate what with this becoming town hall all of a sudden."

Ganon had noted more traffic over the last twenty minutes, the early morning had been quiet. Men were coming and going, but none were patrons. They all had business with Harburk.

Ganon abided, and ran through a quick list of questions he thought someone in her position might help answer. As always when confronted with someone more intelligent than the common villager or soldier, the full bearing of a paladin had little effect. She shot down most of his queries with either a slightly more polite "don't know" or a slightly less polite "don't care". The few things the tavern owner had an opinion on, she commented on honestly, to the paladin's satisfaction. He, respectful of her schedule, then pledged his aid to her and the town as quickly as he could. Jaylessa wondered if he made the pledge as quickly as his honor allowed, or as slowly as he thought he could get away with. As Ganon left the supply room to again find his seat, he found Perry sitting next to his empty seat waiting to order ale.

When Diamachus and Crotch had slept off the first half of their hangover and crawled down to Mother Yalantha's sitting room, they found the jovial old Gnome was waiting with two hot cups of steaming liquid. "I thought you boys might need this, it's the recipe my husband used to use after a night of merrymaking." Crotch downed his in one quick motion, only pausing a second to make a face at Mother Yalantha that said something between "that was good" and "I think my face is melting off". Whatever was in the tea she served, besides an abundance of spices and liquor, had been alive at one point.

"We have to find Ganon and the others. I'm worried about Bruldentharr." He said, tapping Diamachus' arm and making for the door.

Diamachus was tepidly sniffing his cup and poking at it "You still want to go check out those graves you heard about? I think something in this cup just smiled at me..."

"Yea, I want to get out there before something *else* digs those graves up. Finish your drink." He stepped outside, leaving Diamachus to struggle with his tea and run to catch up. By the time they finally found Ganon and Perry at the Swinging Sword, Kazzius and Skelator were sitting at the bar with them.

Kazzius looked haggard and dirty after spending two nights alone in the woods meditating and appealing to his patron for illumination. As had become custom, nobody in the party asked the former hermit about his time spent alone, and he did not offer any explanations. Skelator was eager to reunite with the group and share some good news. "I've set up a show for us. It's at a Zhent-run wayside hub called 'The Bargewright Inn'. They said we can play whenever we make it down, it's about a day and a half south of here, right across the river from Womford."

Crotch explained the story he had heard about the fresh graves in the hills. Ganon remarked that Larmon Greenboot had stopped in at the Swinging Sword earlier in the morning to tell the same story a few more times, he really was getting some mileage out of it. Skelator was less than pleased to hear that Ganon had pledged the party's financial assistance to the town. "I'm going to have to write a letter

to Halia Thornton, she'll have to arrange for all of this..." He headed out for Gaelkur's Barber shop, where he knew he could get a message to Halia quicker than any courier service.

Diamachus decided to stop at the All Faith's shrine to see if he could pick up a few extra healing potions and write a quick letter to Tinder. Sister Gharaele was happy to part with three of her potions for a discounted "friend" price, and handed the Halfling a scrap of parchment and a quill. When he was done writing a brief message, devoid of any information that could fall into the wrong hands, he handed it back to the Priestess. She held the sheet flat between both hands, and started rubbing them together, softly blowing on the note while she did. When the scrap of paper had been completely rolled into a little ball in her palms, she held it up and Diamachus saw that it had taken on the shape of an acorn.

"Wow, that's pretty neat." He said as she turned towards the window making little chittering noises. Within a few moments, a squirrel hopped down from a branch to land on her windowsill. She handed the acorn to the squirrel and patted it on the head before it leapt back up the tree and out of sight. She turned back to Diamachus and smiled. "The message should arrive in about a day."

Ganon, while crossing town on his way to see about new armor, was pulled aside by the man he had helped during last night's catastrophe. It was Thorsk Thelorn, owner of "Thelorn's Safe Journeys", the building that had collapsed. The burly man looked uncharacteristically bashful.

"Harburk told me about your offer to help the town. He said the first thing he's going to do is rebuild the shop. I don't know how to thank you guys, and I know this isn't close to enough, but... I've arranged some mounts. I've got horses for you and the half-elf, I've got ponies for the little folk (if they'll excuse my presumption), and I noticed a Dragon-born in your pack. I have a wagon here that hasn't had its bench seats installed yet. I was thinking if I leave it out, and he stands up with the reins..."

"That is perfect." Ganon said with a smile, clapping the man on the shoulder "it leaves room for his tail!"

Thorsk's hesitant expression immediately brightened "That's what I was thinking! It's basically a chariot with extra storage space."

The next morning saw the group heading east, into the grassy plains bordering the south edge of the Sumer Hills. "I take my sheep out here about twice a season. I know the Hills are a dangerous place nowadays; it's just the best grass around. I'll tell you: I think it's all the weird weather that had been making the grass so nice this year. Think about it, the earthquakes loosen the soil, the wildfires enrich it, and the floods wash it all down here to the lowlands. I just hope nobody else catches on!"

"There, in the clouds!" interrupted Perry, pointing towards the sky. They all looked up to see a giant vulture passing overhead, high among the clouds. The vulture continued on a straight course, heading north into the hills. The group kept a collective eye on the bird as it disappeared into the distance over the hills.

About an hour later, Larmon was remarking on how quickly one travels on horseback. "It'd take me half a day to get out here on foot. Hey, listen; once we get to the site, I've got to turn and get back to my sheep. I didn't want to say anything, but Thorsk pulled me aside before we left and told me he expects my horse back in town today. There's also the kid I promised a, uh, *ahem*, copper coin for watching the flock..."

Without a word, Diamachus steered his pony alongside Larmon's horse and slipped the man three copper pieces, receiving a nod and a "much appreciated" in return. As Larmon slipped the coins into a hidden pocket, he looked around. "Do you guys hear that?"

"Boom-clap! Boom-Boom-clap! Boom-clap! Boom-Boom-clap!"

They could. It was what sounded like the beating of a drum, accompanied by clapping. They looked around, turning in their saddles until the source of the beating came into view, circling over their heads. There were three sets of wings, and the group instinctively reached for their weapons. These creatures were not nearly as big as a giant vulture, their wingspan was only about 10ft, but as they circled lower and lower, the adventurers could discern that these were not mounted creatures. They were humanoids with wings on their backs and the heads of birds. The sound was them banging on the small buckler shields on their forearms and clapping their hands. As this became apparent, the bird-men began loudly screeching along with the rhythm they were pounding out.

"What the heck is going on?" Larmon wondered aloud.

The birdmen landed about 30 feet up the trail, striking what could have been considered heroic and intimidating poses were it not for their comical appearance. The tall one in the middle had the face and feather coloration of an eagle, but couldn't hold the pose without preening and picking at his feathers. The one on the right had the dark feathers and sharp face of a raven, and kept switching poses in ways suggestive of (but, according to Perry, *not* accurately portraying) a martial unarmed fighting style of some kind. The one on the left had the face and white feathers of an owl, and as he held his pose it seemed he couldn't keep his head from spinning completely around, first in one direction, then the other. As they assumed this position, their percussion ceased while they all cawed loudly "Birds of WAAAAAAAAAAR!!"

They were met with unimpressed and unentertained looks from the heroes. "You have got to be kidding me, what *is* this?" laughed Crotch. They could hear the birdmen arguing amongst themselves. It sounded like they were arguing about their title; one of them thought it would lead to the impression that they were merely birds. "We are Aarakocra!" "Aarakocra of War sounds STUPID!" "I told you, we need a theme song, to explain all of that in a verse!"

"Excuse me" said Crotch "we are musicians, we could help you write a song..."

"Would you shut up a minute, we're in the middle of something" the eagle-headed birdman said testily, before turning back to the other two. "Hang on guys, I just got a great idea that might solve everything; these guys here look like musicians, maybe they could help us write a song?"

The other two Aarakocra turned to look at the party, taking cautious steps towards them. The owl-headed one leaned in for a close look at Perry. "Are you EVIL?"

"No." Perry replied, flatly.

"Do you know anyone who *is* evil?"

"Hey, I think we should be the ones asking questions, here." Ganon said, reaching for his sword.

"Don't interrupt, I'm *interrogating* him! Now, are you trying to take control of the *Air*?"

"No." Perry again replied, flatly.

"Do you *know* anyone who is trying to take control of the air?"

"No." Perry rolled his eyes. "Let's just go..."

"Wait." Kazzius interjected, suddenly interested. "What do you mean take *control* of the air?"

"Hold!" The Aarakocra that resembled a raven stepped between them, and turned his head to point a big black eye directly at the warlock, eyeing him up and down. He then stepped back and relaxed his posture. "He's ok, it's safe." He motioned for them to continue.

"Who are you guys and what are you doing here." Ganon's voice betrayed his lost patience.

"WE are the BIRDS of WAAAR! AAA-aaaAAAAAAHHHH!" They replied as one, returning to their "heroic" poses. "We have come to root out the EVIL!!!" The Eagle-headed one continued. "Our God, Syranita, commanded us to lead our people here to fight the corrupting evil!"

"They seek to control the AIR!" the Owl shouted.

"Yea," the raven went on, "but we couldn't get any of them to come with us..."

The Eagle-headed one stopped plucking his chest feathers to angrily interject "Ah, they're a bunch of IDIOTS, screw'em. That just means when we destroy the evil by ourselves, our goddess will come down and make sweet, sweet love to us..."

"What makes you think she's going to have sex with us, she's a GODDESS!?" the other two erupted, talking over each other "Again with banging Syranita, she doesn't even have a physical BODY!!"

"Well then, I'll bang her avatar..."

"She's going to stop visiting our dreams if you don't cut it out!"

"If she was going to stop visiting our dreams, she would've done it after I..."

"Guys, *enough!*" Ganon could control himself no longer.

The birdmen all stopped talking and turned to look at him with their big bird eyes.

"We are not evil. We are not here to take control of the air. We are leaving now." He turned from them and mounted his horse.

"OK, gods, you don't have to be a prick about it." "Yea, fine, you're not the bad guys, we get it." "I thought Human Holy Warriors were supposed to be nice..." the three Aarakocra said loudly as they started flapping their wings. All of the heroes turned to resume their trek, with the exception of Kazzius.

"When we find the Evil that seeks to control the Air, we will let you know, and aid you in your fight!" he called to the rising figures.

"Why are you telling them that? Just let them go!" Ganon said angrily "They are of *absolutely* no use to us, and they gave me a headache!" He gripped the reins of his horse and made to ride off.

"Because we're both after the same bad guys... I think it's time I told you all what I've learned from my patron over the past few nights."

The party collectively stopped and turned to look at Kazzius. The half-elf had never before discussed the source of his power. They had speculated amongst themselves, of course, but none of them knew anything more than Kazzius' standard explanation; a dark powerful force, more ancient than the gods.

"There is a presence that has come to our world. It is the power of the elements, perverted to their most destructive form. It is a force that seeks to tear down everything – morals, social structures, governments, the souls of men, and the laws of nature – and reduce our world to a state tainted with conflict and madness, where the very composition of our world is the means of its destruction. It is a force that acts through the twisted minds of men and monster alike." The hermit's speech was quick and halting, he usually didn't speak this much.

"What *is* it?" Larmon asked, feeling a little out of his depth and rethinking the benefits of the recent weather anomalies.

"It is the Evil Elemental Eye, and it is here among us." Kazzius concluded.

Within the next few minutes, they could see the hill Larmon had told them about. Silhouetted against the blue sky, four small stone mounds could be seen at its peak. "There they are" Larmon said.

The group dismounted and climbed the hill, taking in their surroundings. To the west, the town of Red Larch could be seen, with tiny wisps of smoke trailing up from the many chimneys. A few miles to the north, they could see a slender old tower circled by large birds. "That must be Feathergale Spire." Ganon said. Crotch appeared at his side, taking in the view.

Behind them, Diamachus was removing stones from the first grave, revealing the body of a man in white robes with blue feathers at the shoulder. He was wearing white clothes and had the blade of a dagger broken off in his chest. "It's one of the guys on the Vultures." After uncovering the second grave, his expression became grim, and he leaned back on his heels. "Crotch, it's... a Dwarf."

Crotch immediately ran over and fell to his knees when he saw the face of Beldrin. "NO!! Beldrin! What happened?!" He leaned forward, cradled his friend's head and began to cry. "Beldrin... no..."

Diamachus tried not to disturb Crotch as he quietly uncovered the two remaining bodies, one a human female wearing the uniform of a Miribarian Guard Captain, the other wearing the same cloak and remnants of the same stony armor as the men they had fought underneath Red Larch. In the man's hands was placed the handle of a dagger, the inch of blade that remained matched the piece in the white-robed man's chest perfectly. All of them had been killed by blades or crushing blows.

"So we've got *these* guys fighting *those* guys, and the Miribarians are... what, in the middle? I don't really get it." Diamachus said.

"We'll figure it out when we get *there*." Crotch said sternly, pointing a finger at the tower in the distance.

"You guys will. I'm going home." Larmon said. They bade him a safe journey and thanked him for serving as guide.

As they approached the gulley that surrounded the spire, they realized that they had two options for approach; they could walk the perimeter of the gulley and approach from the trail that led to the spire's drawbridge, or they could enter the gulley at its southern end and try to approach from the ground. This seemed like a more stealthy option, and was appealing until the loud cry of a giant vulture pierced

the air. The bird flew right overhead, unseen as it had come from behind a high ridge to the west. As the bird passed right overhead, they could see the silhouette of its rider turning around in his saddle to get a good look at the party before ascending to the top of the tower.

“So much for sneaking in. We might as well knock on the front door. We can just say the Wyndwyrds told us about the place and that we’re looking for a gig.” Skelator suggested.

As the band agreed, Perry muttered to himself: “I could *still* sneak in if I wanted...” He slipped his hand into a hidden pocket and pulled out the Miribarian Guard Captain’s badge he had discreetly pocketed.

As they neared the end of the trail leading to the spire, and the abrupt cliff that marked its termination, the drawbridge began to lower. A small window in the door opened up and revealed the face of an attractive young woman framed by long dark hair. “Only one of you approach, please” she said.

As usual, they let their manager do the talking. “Greetings, we are a band of travelling minstrels who have come seeking those with a refined ear and a heavy purse. We heard from a group known as the Wyndwyrds that you might be- -”

“You guys are a *BAND*?? You’ve got to be joking, this is perfect!” The woman’s face brightened, and then disappeared as she turned away from the window. The adventurers could hear the portcullis immediately being raised, and a moment later, the doors swung open.

“Please, do come in. My name is Savra Belabrante, welcome to Feathergale Spire. This is so *very* fortunate! Tonight is our 10 year anniversary celebration, we have-”

“Happy anniversary” Perry said.

“Oh, yes, thank you... As I was saying, we have a feast planned and no entertainment! Let me bring you up to see Thurl, I’m sure he will let you guys play. If you’ll just follow me into this room, we can store your weapons and gear.”

She led them to a storage room where longswords, spears, shields, and armor hung from hooks in ready-to-go sets, obviously for quick outfitting. They stored their gear, each taking one weapon with them with Savra’s blessing. She led them up a spiral staircase at the tower’s center that led all the way to the roof. As they ascended, the group got a quick look at each floor. Most of the rooms they could see from the stairwell had open doors and windows, allowing the wind to blow through the tower in a constant breeze. The rooms appeared to be dorms, with beds and desks kept neat and orderly.

“This isn’t a Dwarven structure...” Crotch said, looking at the masonry and architecture. “I’m pretty sure this is one of the places on my map, I thought this would be a ruin of Besilmer, but it’s not. Dwarves would never put a spiral staircase in the center of a tower...”

When they reached the pinnacle, they found that the stairway opened into a round stone gazebo that continued upward in a needle-like minaret. There was a lawn on the surrounding rooftop, with stone walkways that followed the four cardinal directions to the roof’s edge, each ending in a pointed stone crenellation. There were highly ornate spyglasses on tripods at the end of each walkway, and as they followed Savra down the walkway leading east, a man in full plate could be seen leaning over the spyglass, looking down into the valley below. He turned to them, and they saw the same face that had looked down upon them from the back of a Hippogriff only four days prior. The man smoothed back his shoulder length black hair and bowed low.

"Welcome to Feathergale Spire, retreat of the Feathergale Society. I am Thurl Merroska, the lord commander."

He rose and surveyed the group. As a noble-born, his eyes naturally rested on the group's only Human Male. Ganon stepped forward and extended an empty hand "Well met, good sir."

They shook hands and Thurl took a step back. "Tell me, what brings you to Feathergale Spire?"

Disregarding convention, Skelator stepped forward and spoke for the group. "We, sir, are a band of adventuring minstrels. We heard from the Wyndwyrd that you might be interested in employing some musicians..."

"Ah, then you were truly blown in by the wind on this day for a reason! Today happens to be the day we celebrate our tenth anniversary!"

"Happy anniversary" Perry said.

"... thank you... Ah... In any case, I'm sure Savra here had already told you of tonight's event? Why don't you play me a song, and we will see if we can make good use of your services?" Thurl crossed his arms and stroked his chin as the band quickly prepared to perform, looking appraisingly at their equipment. "Is that a bagpipe?" he asked the Dwarf, "What a peculiar way to harness the air..."

While the band tuned up, Skelator slowly moved to a spot closer to Thurl. "Good Sir, I wonder if you recall our meeting just a few days prior..."

Thurl turned to him and smiled. "Well, we don't see a *large* number of Dragonborn walking the Triboar Trail!"

They shared a laugh before Thurl went on to apologize for the actions of the recruit he described as a "*constant pain in my arse!*" showing absolutely no concern for his current whereabouts or health and dismissively waving aside Skelator's attempt to relate their interaction with young Norris Warrick. "The Warricks make fine wines, but *terrible* knights. They do also happen to make fantastic donors, however, and their constant 're-application fees' managed to keep that pest in this tower for far too long."

The band played a few quick songs. As the wind buffeted them from one direction after another, they found themselves struggling to maintain a proper grip on their instruments, and distracted by the flapping and waving of every scrap of fabric not securely fastened to their persons. Thurl watched, amused, and when they finished he smiled.

"We will pay one hundred gold pieces for the night's performance. Oh, and don't worry, you won't be playing up here. Savra! Give these gentlemen two rooms on the balcony level; they shall play at tonight's feast!"

On the way back down the spiral staircase, Savra couldn't hide her excitement. "This is perfect, I was so afraid we would all just be sitting around drinking and staring at each other's ugly mugs-"

"I don't think your mug is ugly" interjected Crotch.

"Well, thank you, but what I mean is that the feast was fit to be an absolute *bore*."

"I don't think you're a bore" interjected Crotch.

She cast him a quick sidelong glance before leaving the stairway on a floor that only occupied half of the tower, the other half empty to allow for the Great Hall's vaulted ceiling to rise 40 feet. They were on a balcony overlooking the Great Hall, and behind them were four doors. Savra opened two of them, and motioned for the men to enter.

"Make yourselves comfortable, the feast will begin in a few hours. You are invited to dine with us before the revelry begins, I'll make sure they set a seat for all of you. If you like, you may explore the tower in the mean-time. The storeroom is on the bottom level, our inventory master will be glad to sell you anything you may need."

"Do you guys sell Hippogriffs?" asked Ganon.

"Don't be silly, it takes *years* to raise and train one of those! It would cost you a fortune, and no respectable trainer would part with one of these things for something like *gold*."

When she took her leave, Ganon went back to the pinnacle. He walked down the east path and approached the spyglass. It looked like it hadn't been redirected since they arrived. "Let's see what Thurl was looking at..." He leaned forward to take a peak. He found that the spyglass was pointed at the entrance of a dark gulley that cut into the east wall of the canyon. The gulley was the source of the river that ran through the center of the valley, and as he studied its path from the ever narrowing gulley he caught a glimpse of two men walking along the river's edge, barely seeing their backs before they disappeared behind a large stone.

The rest of the group went down to the storeroom to try and see for themselves if the Hippogriff trainers couldn't be convinced to part with a mount. Only Skelator remained to take a short rest before the feast. As it turned out, Savra was right. The men in the stables that surrounded the storeroom laughed at the thought of selling what amounted to four years of intense training. "Anybody who can ride a horse can climb on one of these things and fly, but it takes real proficiency and attunement to ride a winged steed into *battle*, and that's what we train for. These Hippogriffs are priceless!"

Over the course of the next few hours, the Feathergale Knights all began to congregate in the Great Hall. The large table was covered in various delicacies and entrees; it was a feast befitting an elite group of nobles. As the adventurers entered the Great Hall, they were greeted with warm smiles and welcomes from the many knights, and were shown to their seats. As everyone in attendance took their seats, the room fell quiet and the band followed suit.

"Gentlemen," said Thurl, seated at the center of the table's long side with his back to the windows, "We welcome our guests, from the Temple of Divine Wind. As a gust of wind blew through the open windows it brought with it five men in white robes, each with blue feathers on their shoulders and white clothes underneath. One had an open-faced helm with wings coming away from the face that resembled a feathered head-dress. The man bowed, holding his hands before him with tips of his thumbs together pointing upwards, the tips of his little fingers together pointing downwards, and the rest interlocked. Seeing this, Thurl quickly continued, "Ah, and we are fortunate today indeed, for on the very day of our celebration the winds have also blown in these fine warriors, who I am sure will soon be friends and allies." He gestured to the adventurers. "If you will all join me know in a prayer..." As the Knights all took their neighbor's hands Skelator leaned back in his chair and crossed his arms over his chest, growling a deep, low "noooo way..."

"We raise our eyes to the sky, and our hearts to the air. We shall rise from our leaden existence to be borne on the wind, lift us to the sky and give us wings. We join together and pledge that we, too, may be lighter than air. We are her legion, We are her breath, We are the wind.

"Now, Let us Feast!"

There was little discussion as the men engorged themselves with course after course of the finest delicacies. When Knights began loosening belts and lighting pipes, small conversations began at various points around the table. Skelator was approached by a few timid Knights who had never met a Dragonborn before, and who had many questions they had always wanted to ask. Skelator was more than happy to oblige, for the inquisitive knights kept refilling his tankard every time it got near empty. Thurl began to speak with Ganon about the band's time in the Sumer Hills. While they spoke, the other members of the group had to persuade Crotch not to directly question Thurl about the graves they had investigated. Crotch decided, instead, that it was time for the music to begin.

The band played, much to the amusement of the revelers, about as good a show as they had played in about a year. Adventure inspires, and the stagnation of their time idle in Phandalin had begun to wear off. By the time they finished their set, they had earned themselves a new fan-base in the Noble class' elite flying mount enthusiasts. Crotch, however, had earned himself an admirer. Savra attached herself to his arm and did not let go, asking question after question. It seemed she had always had a desire to be an adventurer, and their tales of danger and excitement had struck a nerve.

Perry made for the kitchen. He found a few servants preparing dishes, four men in blue-feathered white robes (the dress of the "divine wind" students) huddled around a vat of steaming liquid, and a very unhappy looking girl in her late teens washing dishes. He approached her, his eyebrows raised with hope. She greeted him with a look of impatience.

"Ok, so are you a rich boy or a religious freak?"

"Oh, I assure you that I am neither!"

She looked at his monk robes "I dunno... you kinda look like a religious freak"

"Well, at least you can tell, I'm sure, that I am not one of *them*." He motioned to the four students with his eyes.

She looked him up and down, and then relented with a half smile "Yea, I guess you're only half as weird looking."

"What are they doing?" He looked at the four who were leaning over the vat, deeply inhaling the steam. The girl rolled her eyes.

"They're trying to 'be the steam'". She stopped washing dishes to watch them. "You know how much food those four have eaten since they got here?"

"I don't".

“None. They eat air. How freakin’ weird is that?”

Thurl and Ganon resumed their earlier conversation, and Ganon had just brought up the men he saw through the spyglass entering Knifepoint Gulley. Thurl brought his voice low and leaned in, a look in his eyes that seemed uncharacteristically dark.

“Perhaps this is something we should discuss in private.” Thurl turned and began walking towards the stairwell. Ganon made to follow, and was preparing to appraise Thurl’s response with his best truth-detecting scrutiny, when a Knight burst in, the sentry from the spire’s pinnacle.

“The Manticore! It’s on the move!”

At this the Knights rose, as one, and looked to their lord commander, who’s features instantly brightened.

"We should take this opportunity to slay the monster," Thurl said. From his finger he removed a feather-patterned golden ring set with a garnet and held it aloft, saying, "A prize for the one who brings me the beast's head! Friends, will you join us?"

Savra looked to Crotch excitedly “Oh, you MUST come!”

The Spire was a blur of activity as the mounts were harnessed and everyone climbed to the spire’s pinnacle. Ganon and Kazzius decided to stay and investigate the spire in everyone’s absence, feigning sickness and overdrinking. The two Halflings were given one mount to share, a chestnut Hippogriff, and Savra told Crotch he would ride with her. “I wouldn’t have it any other way!” He said with a wink.

“I have just the thing for you!” She said to the Dragonborn, Skelator. “He’s not as fast as the others, and he’s a little hard to handle, but something tells me you two will get along great.” Skelator made the tight chirping noise that signals confusion among Dragonborn, until a Knight landed nearby on the back of a Griffon. He then immediately bared all his teeth in an ear-hole to ear-hole grin.

“My friends, I must warn you” said Thurl, extending his arm east to point to the dark gulley that was the source of the canyon’s river. “do not go near Knifepoint Gulley. The shape of the gulley creates a natural wind tunnel that will blow your mount right out of the sky!”

“OH, he’s right; you’ll be upside down spinning in a dive before you know what happened.” Savra said to the Halflings.

“If you see the Manticore, blow your horn! Do not engage alone, wait for help to arrive!” Thurl raised his sword high “KNIGHTS, Take to the SKY!!”

When the hunters leapt off the pinnacle to begin scouring the valley for the beast, Kazzius and Ganon began snooping around the spire. Ganon, taking advantage of the immediate respect and trust granted to paladins, walked right past two guards on his way into the supply room. He tried to gather any equipment he thought the guys might need in a hurry. Thurl did not give

him the safest feeling, especially with the way his tone had changed when he was asked about the gulley to the east.

In the air above the Sighing Valley the hunt was on. Chrotch, with one arm wrapped tightly around Savra's waist and the other raised with a loaded crossbow, was screaming louder than he had while running from a Green Dragon in the ruins of Thundertree. His screams, this time however, were punctuated with whoops and laughter for he was having the time of his life. His enthusiasm seemed infectious for Savra, an experienced Hippogriff rider, was enjoying herself more than she had in a while. She suddenly realized that for the past year patrolling the area had become a job, and tending to her mounts such a chore, that she couldn't remember the last time she fully appreciated the thrill and beauty of what she and the other Feathergale Knights did on a daily basis. Her thoughts were wrenched back to the matter at hand when Skelator's horn pierced the air with a long steady note. Looking in the direction the sound had come from, they all saw Skelator atop the great golden Griffon dive into the mist that blanketed the valley. Chrotch cast a light spell on the tip of his arrow, hoping that if he got a shot off, the light would make it easier for others to target the creature.

Skelator had glimpsed the Manticore through a break in the fog. The beast was on foot, heading south towards a plateau that rose into the mist. Skelator knew the only way to keep him in sight was to dive beneath the fog, so he wrestled his mount down into a dive that leveled off a mere 15 feet off the ground. He had a view of the Manticore as it neared the base of the plateau when Thurl came into view, circling above the beast while blowing a note with his own horn. As Skelator raced to join him, he saw the Manticore flick its tail in Thurl's direction, and as Thurl's horn abruptly stopped, his Hippogriff flipped on its side and rolled sharply to the ground. Thurl sprang to his feet and drew his sword, standing between the Manticore and his fallen Mount.

As the others began to arrive, circling the plateau where the Manticore had chosen to make a stand, they could hear its great roar of a voice shouting at Thurl; "Defilers! Blasphemers! FOOLS!"

Ganon was poking about the lower floors, so Kazzius investigated the knight's dorms on the higher floors, starting with the rooms neighboring their own. He found them all fitted with the usual trappings of a militant lifestyle, albeit a little pampered. They all had a healthy amount of gold, and Kazzius couldn't help but relieve them off a little. He was admiring one of the tapestries that seemed to adorn every wall of the spire when he noticed that, behind it, the wall was carved in relief. Curious, as they had determined that this was not a Dwarven structure as they had expected and were unsure of the spire's origin, he pulled back the tapestry showing knights mounted on winged steeds engaged in various acts of chivalry, like every other scrap of cloth in the place. He saw, carved into the entire stretch of wall behind it, a panel depicting what appeared to be a group of mercenaries. It was obviously one in a series and Kazzius pulled back tapestry after tapestry, going from room to room as if turning the pages in a book. He had gone through every room on two floors, with only two rooms left on the top level before the pinnacle, before a guard came clamoring up the spire's central stair.

Skelator, his griffon leaping over Thurl's head, let loose a blast of arcane energy which lanced the beast and stopped his tormented shouting. The Manticore leaned back in the tell-tale stance of a cat about to pounce. Thurl tightened his grip on his sword and raised his shield when a glowing arrow streaked over his head. The Manticore proved feline enough to retain a few cat-like behaviors. When it saw the lighted arrow coming toward it, it instantly lost all interest in the fight and did everything it could to catch the small glowing dot. Unfortunately for the Manticore, this meant placing itself directly in the arrows path and "catching" it with its eye socket. The beast howled with rage and agony, spending the next precious moments clawing at its now glowing face. Perry's mount swooped in from above and Diamachus struck the beast with another arrow, which the beast, in its rage, barely noticed. Another blast from Skelator came just as the glowing arrow was finally knocked out of its eye. The beast stood still for a second, the fur on its back now singed and smoking, and glared at Thurl.

"False God! False Prophet! FOOLS!"

Thurl sneered and rushed the beast on foot. With one wide arc of his longsword, he sliced through the Manticore's breast and when he brought his sword around for a downward thrust, his enraged scream almost more terrifying than the monster's, it pierced the beast's heart.

Thurl stood over the great beast, dripping with both of their blood and panting with rage for a moment too long. Remembering himself, he stood, slicked back his hair, and turned to the knights now surrounding him.

"Well, gentlemen, it looks like I'll keep my ring?"

This was met with a round of cheers and laughter until he raised his hand for silence.

"But I would not be an honest man if I didn't recognize the efforts of our new friends! If not for them, I would have been left to face the beast alone, on foot. I dare say I may very well owe these men my life!"

This brought a much larger round of cheers, and Savra turned in her saddle. "You guys are incredible!"

"Just wait a bit, lass. You'll soon see what happens when I decide to be incredible!" Chrotch said with a wink that brought red to Savra's cheeks.

"Men, to the spire! Our celebration is now TWO-FOLD!" Thurl said, to more cheers from the gathered knights.

The night soon saw the Feathergale Knights and Groin resume their festivities, this time with even more gusto as everyone recounted their own perspective on the hunt. Perry tried to engage a few of the visitors from the Temple of Divine Wind, tapping into his manipulation of Ki energy to display his abilities and making one of the priests quite awe-stricken as he deftly soared through the air in a feat of acrobatics. Kazzius continued to peek behind tapestries, jotting down notes as the walls revealed more of their tale. Savra pulled Chrotch away from the revelry and asked him if he would accompany her to a more private location. He quickly

agreed, but when she led him to the stables, they found Skelator and Diamachus sitting in the Griffon's stall with their legs dangling over the edge and a pipe passing between them.

"Please don't do that..." she said as Skelator blew a large thick cloud of white smoke in the Griffon's face.

"But he likes it!" Diamachus said as the Griffon sneezed, shook its head, then rubbed its beak against Skelator's shoulder in an obvious display of affection. Savra rolled her eyes and led Chrotch up the stairs and into the solarium. She looked around for any sign of people then, satisfied that they were alone, led him to the seating area.

Upon returning from the hunt, Thurl had remained on the Spire's pinnacle, giving out quick orders to his men as they ferried the mounts down to their stables. He waited for Thurl to conclude his business before approaching him.

"Ah, my friend, I was disappointed to see that you had not joined us in the hunt."

"I had wished to accompany you, sir, but was not feeling well, and did not wish to be a burden on your efforts."

"That is well; it is a strong man who can evaluate his own fitness in times of excitement. You have shown that your desires do not override your reason. Come, let us talk." He motioned for Ganon to follow as he walked towards the south facing promontory.

"Sir Ganon, you tell me that and your men have had an altercation with members of the Sacred Stone Monastery. This is not a surprise, for they deal in dark deeds."

"We have. We fought with them and interrupted their plans to insidiously corrupt a local town's government."

"A noble deed, I'm sure the townspeople were grateful. They are a constant aggressor here in the Sumer Hills, and I wonder if our meeting can prove mutually beneficial. An enemy who works underground is a difficult foe to defeat from the back of a winged steed, you see."

Ganon could see the path of his logic. "Of course. And as we have already identified them as a source of evil..."

"you may be better equipped to deal with this foe, yes. I am prepared to give you the location of their headquarters, and perhaps a contingent of men to serve as an aerial escort. It is good when warriors such as we meet, is it not?"

"It is. Thurl, I feel you are an honest man, so I must ask you something I have been wondering."

"Please do, sir."

"When we arrived and Savra introduced us to you, you were looking through that spyglass" he pointed to the east ledge "and after you left, I decided to have a look myself."

Thurl's eyes narrowed. "yes...?"

"I noticed two men, travelling *into* yonder gulley."

"I *see*."

"My companions have told me that they were warned not to fly near the gulley, for their own safety. I wish to know what lies in there and who those men were."

Thurl crossed his arms over his chest and let out a slow sigh through his nose. He started pacing as he began: "My friend, I must tell you that I thought our friendship would be a mutually productive relationship. Your friends have proven themselves quite formidable in the field and you, sir, are a man who befits noble status, even if your... profession... precludes it. Nonetheless, I was prepared to give you the location of our enemies in the hopes that you would have a better chance against them than my men. If you had managed to harry our foes it would have benefited us greatly, for you see... we are after the same goal..."

Ganon's brow furrowed in confusion as Thurl began to make a gesture with his hand, tracing an invisible rune in the air.

Back at the party, Perry and Kazzius both noticed that two of the Priests left the party and began ascending the stairs. They looked at each other, gave a quick nod, and made to follow. The two priests climbed the stairway straight up to the pinnacle. Perry and Kazzius approached the top of the steps cautiously and saw that the priests were approaching two men locked in discussion on one of the promontories. It was Ganon and Thurl. As the two robed men neared, Thurl made a gesture with his hand. Perry and Kazzius saw Ganon take a step back, leaning forward as if struggling against an invisible force, and as the wind began to howl in their ears they saw their friend tossed off the roof, borne on the wind like a leaf.

Savra had much that she wished to discuss with Chrotch. They talked of Waterdeep, and her desire to protect the city from above. She asked about Groin's exploits, whether this or that verse of their songs was based on actual events. She told of her own desire to adventure, and the weight of responsibility. She did, however, wish to do more than talk. As she pulled him in to place her mouth on his, they both failed to notice the form of a human paladin pass by their window on its way to the canyon floor.

Ganon watched the top of the tower get farther and farther away as he plummeted towards the ground. He watched floor after floor of the spire go past... Was that Diamachus smoking a pipe in the stables? Please someone look out the window right now! "AAH! HELP! HEEEEEE-- "

Suddenly, with a gut wrenching jolt, he was no longer falling downward, but was moving almost parallel to the ground, heading away from the tower. Something was tightly gripping his shoulders. Stunned, he could barely look up to see who had rescued him but he could hear all he needed;

"Boom-clap! Boom-Boom-clap! Boom-clap! Boom-Boom-clap!"

“Oh gods, no! Just drop me!”

“Aah-AAAAHH!! I’m about to! How much armor are you wearing?” The raven-headed bird of war said. “I can usually carry a lot of weight, but you are unusually heavy for a human!”

“I am not! Just get me to the top of the spire!”

“I’m trying!”

“NOOOOOOOOO!” Perry shouted, causing the two priests to turn around, their arms up in a defensive stance. A brief battle ensued in which Perry and Kazzius managed to defeat both of the robed men within seconds. Thurl, having taken a few hits himself, saw the direction the fight was taking and quickly assessed his chances. He gritted his teeth as he looked from Halfling to Half-elf. His hand went to the horn at his belt, but he realized it would take his men far too long to show up in their current state. There was only one thing to do. He turned and made a dead run for the edge of the roof. Perry tossed his spear at the fleeing knight, and as Thurl leapt from the roof he extended flaps of fabric from his armor that stretched from ankle to wrist to catch the wind and give him flight. Perry’s spear passed right through one of the “wings” and left a hole the size of a fist. Thurl cursed as he lost the ability to steer. He had planned to circle the building and rouse his knights in the Great Hall, but now all he could do was control his rate of descent as he flew straight for the plateau they had only recently stood upon fighting the Manticore.

“Shit.” Kazzius said, looking down over the edge of the building. They saw no sign of Ganon.

“Let’s Go!” Perry shouted, pulling the high-priest’s headdress off and pocketing it on his way to the stairs.

“You and your damn trophies, we have to get down there!” Kazzius screamed.

Though he flapped his wings furiously, the bird-man could only manage to climb as high as the rocky base of the stable-level.

“I’ll tell you what. If I grab you with my talons, I bet I can *scale* the wall of this building. I’ve been working on my upper body strength for a while, an-“

“Shut up” Ganon said, pushing past him to climb through an empty stall. The bird-man tried to follow, but hesitated, looking nervously at the ceiling. “How do you *people* do this, with a ground over your head, it’s... it’s not natural...”

Ganon ignored him and ran straight for the stairs, passing the inventory master who was asleep at his desk with a half-tankard of ale in his lap. He burst into the Great Hall to find the only occupants were two drunken knights who had pulled chairs over to the one remaining keg they hadn’t let the servants clear, and two white-robed priests. He immediately drew his sword and pointed it at the two priests.

“You! Talk!” He shouted.

Savra and Chrotch walked in from the stairway, their hair and clothing clearly disheveled. "What's going on up *here*?" Chrotch asked jovially.

"This tower is a hive of VILLIANY, these men are Evil, and Thurl is with them!"

"Don't be ridiculous" Savra laughed.

Ganon turned to her in rage "Thurl threw me off the ROOF!"

"He's right, we *saw*!" said Kazzius, who had just come down the stairs with Perry. "We slew two of them on the roof, but Thurl got away!"

"How did you not die??" Perry asked, but Ganon ignored him and turned to the two priests.

"I want answers, now! WHO ARE YOU??"

In response, the priest nearest to Ganon put his hands together in the same way that seemed typical of these men and blew a stream of air out of his mouth while the other priest simply dissolved into a smoky mist that was carried out the window by a breeze. Ganon seethed with rage as the air streamed out of the priest's mouth and swirled around him, gaining speed until Ganon found himself at the center of a small whirlwind.

"What is this? What are-- NO!!" he felt his feet lifted off the ground by the force of the wind, and as the priest gestured to the window, Ganon felt himself carried by the cyclone.

"No!! NOOOT AGAAAAAAAAIIIIINNNNN"

His friends looked on, horrified as he went one more time over the edge. The priest took advantage of their shock and ran for the window. The others gave chase, but when the priest reached the edge he just kept running, his legs pumping as if he were on an invisible path that stretched out into the canyon.

As Ganon lay on his back at the spire's rocky base, he looked up and could see the priest making his escape. The sight of a man furiously running in mid-air, his cloak flapping in the wind, would have made him chuckle at any other moment. Right this instant it brought his rage to an even higher level, such that when the raven-headed Aarakocra poked his head out of the stable door to look down at him, he found absolutely no humor in the bird-man's "how did you get back down so fast?"

Savra was stunned. "What is going on, this doesn't make any sense!"

Crotch left her and ran for the stairs, panicked and shaking with concern for Ganon. He found him running at full speed up the steps, sword still in hand.

The group spent the next few minutes trying to calm Savra down. First, she had refused to believe anything they said, heading for his room and pounding on his door until they feared she would rouse the knights.

"We told you; he fought us, then ran away. He used the wings you guys have on your armor to glide out of here." Perry pleaded.

"That doesn't make any SENSE!! He wouldn't DO that!!!"

The door to his room opened with a splintery crack, and she saw that it was empty. "No! Thurl!"

Fearing the possibility that he might have to explain the situation to any number of Thurl's devoted knights, Perry decided that she must make to stop screaming, one way or another.

"Listen, whether it makes sense or not, it happened. This place is not what it seems! Those religious men are evil, and Thurl is one of them! Honestly, I think you might be under some kind of *Mind Control* or something!!"

Something in her broke. At his last words, she stared at him, dumbstruck. She went limp, and he backed up a step. Her shoulders slumped down as she climbed the stairs to the pinnacle, and approached the edge.

Perry got a little nervous. "Look, you seem like a good person, there's no need to do something drastic and... permanent..."

"Shut up, I'm not going to jump." She said, sitting to let her legs dangle off the edge.

"I know this probably isn't easy, but-"

"Look in the room next to Thurl's."

"I'm sorry?"

"They cleared it out earlier, told us not to go in there, and wouldn't tell me why. Just check the room and leave me the hell alone."

When Perry arrived at the room next to Thurl's, he noticed Diamachus was going through the Lord Commander's personal effects.

"Magic Scroll, Magic Potion, Sack o' Gold, another Scroll, Oh, and what is this? A letter... Hmm"

Perry left him to his fun and broke open the door of the adjacent room as quietly as he could. Inside, he saw that all of the furniture had been removed, the windows had been planked shut, and there was a huddled form lying in the corner, covered in a blanket. He cautiously approached, and when he tapped it with his javelin, he heard the muffled cry of someone who has been gagged. He threw the blanket off to reveal the broken looking form of Larmon Greenboot, the shepherd who had shown them the way here.

"Oh sir, it's you. Thank Tymora, I thought it was *them* again! They picked me up as soon as we parted ways, I told them everything. I really am sorry, they were so mean. And the ones in white! They're terrifying!"

As the adventurers regrouped in the Great Hall, they saw the servants setting up bedrolls under the great table. Perry kept an eye out for the girl he had interacted with earlier, not wanting Chrotch to have *all* the fun, but he did not see her among the busy commoners. They were all discussing what to do when Savra came down from the pinnacle, her eyes red and her face stern.

“Who wants to steal some hippogriffs and get the hell out of here?”