

Gideon's tale

[parent_page_gamesrpg](#) **Note:** The http://z4.invisionfree.com/First_Light game is still going. I stopped playing it last year as I no longer had the time to keep track of what were too many threads with too many characters. Since then, Mike has take over the character of Gideon and he has become an NPC.

Cast

- <http://www.curufea.com/Gideon.html> Gideon - my character.

The Box

GideonsBox

Gideon's Prelude

Posted by: Curufea Sep 29 2004, 08:45 AM«

The mansion of Lord Wensley of Ismir is both vast and presumptuous. Quite typical of the tastes of 'new money' having recently purchased his way into the nobility of the merchant princes of the city states. Verence Haldane has developed quite an eye for styles in his wanderings amongst the higher social circles of society. Of average height, a light olive complexion and average looks - the only reason he stands out from the crowd is his rather unfashionable short haircut. The dark strands forming a widows peek and lending him a somewhat diabolical look. The clothes he wears are not the current fashion, velvets having gone out of season fairly recently. But then, there are not too many of the up-and-up in the crowd tonight at Wensley's 'coming out' ball. The invitations went to all and sundry, as the newcomers to the ranks are almost desperate to make acquaintances amongst the society in which they want to belong. Wensley is so new, he has not even detailed a servant to announce the entrance of guests, which suits Verence very well: he has no particular wish to be known in this, or any other gathering. The ball is not a Masque, so he has no further means of hiding his identity. It does inhibit his appraisal of the furnishings, however, with nothing to obfuscate his face. Too much staring at the candelabra, the exit points, hiding spaces and the jewels of the guests and some might wonder. The trick is to grab a drink, nurse it and peer over the rim. Observation is key.

Posted by: Curufea Sep 30 2004, 08:29 AM«

Verence notes that Count Aral is here, though not with the Countess. He wonders idly if they have yet noticed the disappearance of the silver tea set. Without which the Haldane mansion could not have afforded this years servant wages. Lady Elsbeth, Verence's mother has not yet inquired as to the various means by which the estate acquired this money. But then, he has been doing the accounts as much as possible without her help for this reason. Accosting one of the servants, Verence makes delicate enquiries into the location of the water closet, before wandering upstairs. His half empty

glass forgotten on the sideboard. As he thought, the upper floors are virtually empty. Wensley obviously too rushed to have hired the Butler with sufficient time to properly organise, or with enough surplus help, to run the mansion correctly.

Posted by: Curufea Sep 30 2004, 02:50 PM«

The red carpeting of the grand staircase from the ballroom to the first floor muffles whatever footsteps Verence might make. But that is hardly necessary considering the noise of the guests downstairs. There are a few wandering the first floor as well. Either searching for relief themselves or seeking private assignations. As one of the newer buildings in the area, the walls have been fitted with gas lighting, giving the rooms a warm caste, without the flickering of multitudes of candles. The upper landing leads to the main hallway and the guest bedrooms. Mostly vacant, the faint sounds of couples warning those who pass by as to which are not. This is the simple life, a life Verence is happy with. Liberating items from the very rich in order to maintain his family's holdings. There is just himself and his mother now. The bon vivant Conner having only briefly been in their lives - seducing Elsbeth and departing when she became pregnant. Verence will never forgive him for abandoning them. But this stuff about Shadows and Logrus that she went on about the last time he visited - sheer folly! Yes, he knew he was different to others: faster, stronger, quicker of wit. But Verence was sure that everyone felt that way about themselves. The world and everything in it - the great city states of Ismir being nothing more than a shadow called Serendeth. A far off reflection of something called The Courts". It all seemed surreal, he must keep his mind on the job at hand." But then there was The Box. It kept turning up, whichever noble household he burgled - there it was. He'd even destroyed it on a number of occasions. What if it were something more real than Serendeth? Verence leaves the area of the guest bedrooms and makes his way towards the back staircase. Perhaps there is something up ahead. Forget the wasteful questions on the nature of reality, there is treasure to be had.

Posted by: theseus Sep 30 2004, 05:14 PM«

As Verence walks to the back stairs, another guest, a pretty blonde young woman, walks from a side passage into the main hallway. As she sees Verence, she looks startled. She giggles. She appears to have overindulged in the good wine that Lord Wensley has offered to his guests.

Posted by: theseus Oct 2 2004, 12:51 AM«

GÇ£Oh, dear me,GÇ¥ she says. GÇ£I seem to have become completely turned around. I was sure the servant said there was a powder room on this floor somewhere... She walks up to Verence, with a slight swaying in her steps. She holds her hand up daintily to be kissed, which unfortunately would have been more impressive if she hadn't almost fallen over while doing so. GÇ£Allow me to introduce myself. Lady Anna Walters. And you would be?GÇ¥

Posted by: Curufea Oct 5 2004, 11:06 AM«

Lord Verence, madam. At your service. says Verence. As a kindness he takes her hand more to steady than to kiss." Allow me the honour of escorting you to the convenience rooms, I am assured they are around here somewhere as I was after them myself and had made enquiries earlier. Offering the Lady his arm politely, he successfully masks his irritation at the delay. For though he has no set schedule that he must escape by, he can almost smell the treasure awaiting him upstairs in the master suites.

Posted by: theseus Oct 5 2004, 12:14 PM«

Lady Anna takes Verence's arm and clings to it tightly. "Ah, you are most gallant," she says sweetly. "Thank you." She leans on Verence for support, as she seems to have trouble walking on her own. Verence hears footsteps, and senses someone else about to come into the hallway. A moment later, a balding servant walks past. He hesitates, raising his eyebrows at this seeming couple. Anna blushes prettily. The servant seems to give a disparaging snort, before starting to move on.

Posted by: Curufea Oct 6 2004, 02:50 PM«

Damnably servants, thinks Verence, but my story will not be the only gossip circulating amongst the scullery maids. Let them have their vicarious fun. A minor corridor before the stairs up to the next level leads the pair towards the world's greatest invention of the period - indoor plumbing. Although the peoples of Serendeth had not yet advanced enough in chemistry and biology to realise that lead should not be used for pipes. The door to the lady's powder room was not marked, merely another overly decorated wooden portal, but without the lock that the guest rooms had. Perhaps the inner rooms had locks on them, but Verence was not inclined to investigate and find out. The mens' rooms were located in the opposite direction, it would have been unseemly to have ablution chambers of the opposite sexes near each other. Lady, says Verence. "I bid you good evening, and perhaps I will see you later in the main hall. I must excuse myself now, however."

Posted by: theseus Oct 6 2004, 04:57 PM«

Anna smiles coyly, like she is amused about something. "Seems like you found your way again quite quickly," she says. "No doubt we will be meeting again shortly." She gives Verence a kiss on the cheek before turning, almost stumbling, into the powder room.

Posted by: Curufea Oct 8 2004, 10:31 AM«

A quick glance up and down this corridor shows Verence no further wanderers. He walks towards the back stairs near the main hallway between the guest quarters, irritated that the carpeting and ambient party noises also allow casual party goers and servants to move around virtually undetected. A soft rhythmic creaking nearby alerts him in time to flatten himself against the adjacent wall beneath one of the light fixtures. The heat of the gas flame only slightly uncomfortable as the servant in the livery of Wensley leaves the staircase and continues down the hall. A quick look around the corner and a dash around. Feet kept to the edges of the stairs to minimise the creaking of the floorboards. Weight held up with hands on the railing. The hallway above was not as brightly lit, Verence is pleased to see. The lights along the adjoining corridors being turned down to mere pilot flames. This level contained the master bedrooms, and most likely a sitting room as well. The walls were predominantly wood and not nearly as garishly wallpapered or festooned with paintings. A quick survey of the ceiling showed promising fixtures and moldings that might come in handy for emergencies....

Posted by: Curufea Oct 11 2004, 11:41 AM«

The master bedroom would likely be directly at the back, Verence calculated as he proceeded along

the wall. Listening at the nearest door on the lefthand wall, he hears nothing. The handle will not turn, however. But Verence expected most doors on this level to be locked, or at least lockable. A quick check of the opposite door - also locked. Nothing for it then, but to pick it. The one thing Verence has learned in his years of burglary - always prepare your exits and boltholes beforehand. A lack of preparation can be a deadly chance. Lockpicking is an art more of feeling than sight. And the few seconds to accustom your eyes to light levels, or to recognise those in shadows can be lifesavers. Verence retreated to the stairs, turning up the lights in the side corridors near the main hallway leading to the master bedroom. Those coming up the stairs should not adjust their vision so soon. The gas lamps immediately surrounding the door he wished to open, and those surrounding the door opposite he dimmed. The lights further up the hallway, he brightened. The purpose of all this - to only show his silhouette and no details, if he were interrupted. No sound yet of the creaking of wood, no weight being put on the stairs leading up. All to his good - so far. Now the two picks. Verence extracts them from the seam of his sleeve. One pick to move the teeth, the other to hold them. Both to twist. Deftly he inserts. Twist. Wiggle. Click, and he's in.

Posted by: Curufea Oct 11 2004, 05:10 PM«

The room was large and obviously a bedroom of some sort based on the curtained four poster in one corner, the dressing table beside the wall and the woman in her night clothes seated in front of it. Frell. Bow. Now. She's only seen me through the mirror, perhaps she hasn't got the wit to realise... Lady Wensley's screams are high and loud, and Verence thought about the better part of discretion. Staying bowed to help conceal his identity and hoping the woman doesn't have time to do anything foolish he reaches backwards and grabs the handle of the door. Quickly he opens and exits. Verence, not wanting to be followed out by the distraught lady of the house and identified, holds the handle of the door, jamming and bending the lockpick inside. Twisting it up, he wraps it around the handle, hoping she won't be strong enough to force the lock. Unfortunately the wooden door and walls are not as sound insulating as he would like, and while muffled, her yells must be audible clear to the stairs. But if he could nip down quickly before anyone comes that close... And there it was. The creaking on those damnable wooden stairs. Frell! Frell on a platter! Frell on a platter fried.... The room opposite? No, that would be similar to this bedroom, no way out. The master bedroom? Possibly... Verence runs down the hallway to the end door. It's larger than those on the side, obviously more important. Locked of course. And no time - no pick available. Grasping the handle, Verence twists. Hard. He feels the breaking of the lock more than he hears it. Now is not the time to be subtle. They probably won't notice the odd angle of the handle. Not quite yet, anyway. Barging through he enters the master bedroom and glances around for something to block the door with.

Posted by: theseus Oct 12 2004, 12:07 PM«

The room itself is elegantly arranged, a four poster bed, with blue drapes from all four corners. There is a landscape painting one wall depicting an exotic coastline. There is a large window, that lets out onto the verandah, with a view of the lantern lit street outside. Sounds of the main party can be heard wafting from the front of the house. Along the closest wall there is a chest of heavy drawers, with a mirror standing upon it. Oddly, there is no sound from outside in the corridor.

Posted by: Curufea Oct 18 2004, 03:34 PM«

It was odd, thought Verence, that it was quiet outside. The paranoid streak in him whispered that it was perhaps too quiet. Carefully he opened the door and peaked out. The corridor outside was still dark at the end. The door to Lady Wensley's suite still appeared shut. There was no noise coming

from the room and only the dim, muffled sounds of the downstairs party could be heard. Odd. Closing the door, Verence surveyed the room again. Wandering over to the window and peering down in the hopes that it could be a possible escape route. Whilst it was dark outside, the verandah was directly above the main entrance, which was very well lit. He could spot the occasional doorman idly standing beside the entrance. The painting, however - he felt there may be something valuable there. Taking it off its hook, revealed nothing but wood panelling. Wood panelling and a faint line, however. Carefully tracing around the edges he found its rectangular shape, suitable for a safe. There must be something nearby to open this panel, something innocuous. Pushing and prodding various things around the room, Verence failed to hear a distant clicking. He did manage to tilt the light fixture however, which unlocked the panel. The hinged wood fell forward revealing a cast iron safe door behind. A combination lock, but to one of his skill and senses it should prove not much of a challenge. Quickly he set to the task, but in his concentration on the lock, he did not hear the stealthy footsteps outside.

Posted by: Curufea Oct 25 2004, 04:14 PM«

The lock's final tumbler settles into place and Verence opens the safe door. Taking forth a velvet pouch from his vest pocket, he scoops the jewellery he finds within the dark recesses into it. There is something square at the end of the safe. Square and vaguely familiar. More cubic than square, actually. Something tickles the back of Verence's mind, and he looks towards the master's bed. There is a long piece of cloth there that disturbs him for some reason. A long, rope-like piece of cloth with a tassel at the end. Almost exactly like a bellpull. Verence's eyes grow wide as he realises why her ladyship stopped trying to open the door - she summoned servants. Frell. He looks to the door, his hand still deep within the safe. The door he had failed to block with something weighty and large. The door that is now opening. The door that the crossbow is coming around.

Posted by: Curufea Nov 2 2004, 07:15 AM«

The servant fires, and faster than he can make a coherent thought about his actions, Verence knocks the bolt aside. The shock of the action causes the servant to stare open mouthed. Verence himself, dumbfounded, looks down at his hand. The box is there. He took it from the safe and used it to knock aside the crossbow bolt. There is a gouge in the metal and wood down one side of the box, wrecking the acid etched patterning. The bolt itself hardly quivers in its resting place halfway through the wooden floor, right near Verence's boot. Verence comes to himself first and dashes across the room. In one corner is the dumb waiter for the taking of the lord's private meals. Not pausing to open the sliding door first, and hoping the wood is not too thick, he jumps into it, feet first. The wood splinters and he hits the back of the shaft. Verence curls himself up tight around the rope inside, which is fortunate because as luck would have it, the platform is at the bottom. In the confined space it takes some shifting and wiggling to get his body vertical enough to descend without hitting the sides. Hand over hand he climbs down to the bottom, hoping he won't be trapped and unable to get out below. The now forgotten box resting inside his pouch of stolen goods.

Posted by: theseus Nov 10 2004, 09:48 AM«

A silhouette of a man can be seen moving against the light from the same portal Verence used to enter the dumbwaiter shaft. It is probably the servant hoping for another opportunity to fire a crossbow bolt towards Verence's heart.

Posted by: Curufea Nov 15 2004, 09:33 AM«

Verence feels frantically around. The vision of the silhouetted servant driving him urgently on. While the shaft is dark and difficult for the man above to spot him, it is a confined space, and virtually any shot will likely hit. He lets go of the rope, dropping the last floor and a half and landing on the dumbwaiter platform below, cracking it. With his awkward landing, Verence bends at the knees to cushion his fall, cracking his right kneecap against the wall of the shaft. He grits his teeth in pain and is thankful for small mercies. The sound of his knee against the wall was hollow. Crouching in the corner of the shaft, he bangs against what he now knows is the door. As it splinters, there is a ratcheting noise from far above and a sharp twang." Verence has time to bang again, breaking open the door fully before he cries out at the sharp, searing pain. His foot has been impaled to the floor. He can feel it, but he can't see it. It's too dark in this shaft, and the door he opened was at the bottom of the shaft. In the cellar.

Posted by: theseus Nov 17 2004, 01:42 PM«

Lantern light becomes visible, along with the creaking of the cellar door. This is followed by the loud and pompous voice of Lord WensleyGÇÖs most important guest, the wine connoisseur, Count Aral. The good news is that Verence will soon be able see clearly the predicament he is in. The bad news is that his facial features will also be seen.

Posted by: Curufea Nov 23 2004, 09:06 AM«

There is a faint ratcheting noise from far above. The servant may be reloading, but won't fire again down the shaft. Verence had not cried out when hit. However, the man will come down and investigate the bottom of the dumbwaiter quite soon. Verence estimates he may have five minutes or so, unless the servant starts disturbing all the guests in the main hall. In the near-dark gloom, he reaches out his hand, feeling for the feathered shaft. A winched crossbow, a hefty poundage, it penetrated deep into the hardwood beneath his foot. Gritting his teeth, Verence carefully eases the bolt from the dumbwaiter floor and crawls out of the shaft and behind one of the racks of bottles. Count Aral's noises mask his incidental sounds. But the talk of wines has given him an idea. Verence takes off his jacket, wrapping it around his pouch of goods, before undoing his shirt and tie. He pinches and rubs his cheeks - the pasty face and sweatiness will soon come of their own accord to his disguise. He feels for the shelving and grabs two bottles from the rack. Uncorking them by easing the corks out careful not to cause a pop, Verence empties their contents onto the stone floor. Aral is uncomfortably close. Taking one of the corks, Verence throws it hard against the wall further away, hoping the distraction of the odd sound will delay him somewhat. Now, he thinks, what was that ditty? Dum, dum, dah daaah dumm... Humming to himself, Verence places the empty bottles on the floor, in the puddle of wine. A third bottle he grabs, opens, drinks and spills on his shirt. Picking up his jacket, he bursts into song: A wandering minstrel I, I fear no fool or lordling... Lurching, Verence bumps into a rack, clinking the bottles inside, attracting Aral's attention. He drops the bottle, it crashes onto the ground. Verence reaches down, grabs the bolt still in his foot, and yanks. Arrrgh! Pale, sweaty, with red cheeks and stinking of wine, he puts the shaft under the jacket he holds, that hides his loot.

Posted by: theseus Nov 28 2004, 02:42 AM«

Count Aral and Lord Wensley stop talking when VerenceGÇÖs singing is heard. The next moment they come into view. Count Aral a portly gentleman with graying hair and green eyes, Lord Wensley is a vibrant man in his late twenties, black hair and blue eyes. They take several moments to get over the shock of seeing Verence in his apparently drunken condition. GÇ£How on earth did someone manage to get in here?GÇ¥ Lord Wensley asks. GÇ£The door was locked.GÇ¥ GÇ£I hate to say it,GÇ¥ Count

Aral says, "But the rogue probably managed to bribe one of your servants to let him in. I'll really need to talk to your wife when she finally does decide to show up for this party of yours, hmm? It is nearly impossible to find good help these days." Lord Wensley approaches Verence, barely containing his anger. "It is most ungentlemanly of you to take advantage of my hospitality in this way. I wish you to leave immediately." "I would suggest through the servant's back entrance," Count Aral adds. "You don't want to disturb your guests with this spectacle?" Lord Wensley looks at Verence threateningly.

Posted by: Curufea Dec 3 2004, 03:31 PM«

"You've hurt my foot!", Verence slurs pointing at the shards of glass in the pool at his feet. "Frelling tralks!. He lurches to one side, jostling heavily the shelving there, setting the bottles clinking."

Posted by: theseus Dec 4 2004, 06:10 PM«

Lord Wensley considers his options quickly. "Count, please go back upstairs and fetch help from Doctor Soames and one of my servants. This gentleman needs his foot tended to, and then to be escorted home." Count Aral, who doesn't want to be anywhere close to Verence, looks at Wensley, concerned. "Are you sure it's wise to be alone with him down here? He appears to be violent." Wensley looks a little grim. "My days as a merchant taught me how to handle people. I'll be fine. Count Aral nods curtly, and hurries back to the stairs.

Posted by: Curufea Dec 9 2004, 09:29 AM«

Verence stumbles forward, waving at the two. "Aral, Aral - me mate! Where y'off too? He gestures towards the shelf with his left hand. "Com.. Come hava drink w'me..."

Posted by: theseus Dec 10 2004, 06:04 AM«

Count Aral stops in mid stride, turning around abruptly, looking at Verence in surprise. "How did you know my name? I know you from somewhere don't I?" At the top of his very substantial voice he shouts "Guards! An intruder in the wine cellar! Get him!"

Posted by: Curufea Dec 10 2004, 06:11 AM«

Verence stands up straight, shrugging off his feigned drunkenness - red rage flooding his face. "You backstabber! You double cross me as well?"

Posted by: theseus Dec 10 2004, 06:17 AM«

Lord Wensley looks at Count Aral in surprise, who is completely dumbfounded at the accusation. Sounds of many footsteps are coming down the stairs in a hurry. The count starts backing away from Verence. "What are you talking about young man?" he asks nervously.

Posted by: Curufea Dec 10 2004, 09:20 AM«

Here!, Verence blusters while scrabbling around inside his jacket and grabbing some jewelry." Here! Take your damned jewels!. He throws them towards Count Aral." I'll never work with you again!." Backing up, Verence ties his jacket around his waist in preparation for what he knows is going to be a frantic climb.

Posted by: theseus Dec 11 2004, 04:12 AM«

Four male servants of sufficient bulk to look threatening enter the wine cellar. Lord Wensley steps aside for them. GÇ£DonGÇÖt damage the wine bottles,GÇ¥ he instructs them. He glares at Verence in disgust. Hurt him if you need to."

Posted by: Curufea Jan 4 2005, 08:00 PM«

The servants hold their arms out, spreading out to encircle Verence. Backing up slowly he bumps into a shelf. You're right about one thing, Aral, old chap, Verence remarks, bracing against the shelf." ngh, he pushes hard against the wood, it creaks, the bottles clank, the servants become alarmed, Wensley gains a look of disbelief." His wines, ngh, are his weakness. Rock, rock, tilt. Wensley yells, You, You! Grab the shelf! Quick you fools, before it topples the others!" Yes, do that, Verence remarks glancing at some of the labels on another nearby shelf, picking up a select few." And you might want to catch this, rather vintage Carlisle '03. I understand it is a very good year. Verence lobs the bottle towards Wensley.

Posted by: theseus Jan 12 2005, 12:42 PM«

As WensleyGÇÖs servants bustle to save the stacks of wine, and Wensley moves to intercept the valuable bottle before it meets the floor, a moment of opportunity presents itself to Verence. A narrow path opens between the bustling men, leading to the stairs.

Posted by: Curufea Jan 18 2005, 11:38 AM«

Swinging out and around the servants desperately attempting to stop the collapse of the teetering shelves, Verence kicks some of the lower bottles out onto the floor in hope that unsure footing will help his escape. Wensley is almost apoplectic as Verence dodges by him. So intent is he on keeping his prized wine bottle safe in his hands, he turns away from him, never feeling the swift hands that dart into his waistcoat pocket. Count Aral, still somewhat stunned in the doorway out of the cellar, has the wind knocked out of him as he is roughly shoved aside by the fleeing man. The door is slammed, and locked. Verence breaks the key in the lock in time to stand up, glance down the long hallway to the ballroom and see some armed servants making their way across the floor. He opens the front door, disappearing into the darkness of the surrounding trees.

Posted by: theseus Jan 19 2005, 06:13 AM«

As Verence leaves the front door, a servant with a crossbow bolt appears behind him. However, the beautiful Lady Anna comes from a nearby corridor, accidentally slips, knocking his shooting arm out of the way. The shot goes wide, and a familiar looking crossbow bolt hits the side of the door. She then faints onto the ground, forcing the servant to pay attention to her, instead of chasing after Verence.

Posted by: Curufea Feb 1 2005, 10:33 AM«

The lit path in front of the mansion leads to the main gates, the stables and parking area for guests' perambulators. However the lawns surrounding the building are lightly wooded giving rise to enough shadows from the gaslamps to enable Verence shelter. The damp grass of the manicured lawns does not rise high enough to wet his trouser legs as he runs to the surrounding fence. By the light of a distant lamp, and crouched in the near-dark of a tree trunk, Verence checks his ill-got gains. A number of earrings, possibly with valuable gems in them, but difficult to tell in this light. And a pearl necklace. Not bad, if a bit ostentatious for his tastes in jewelry. And that yotz of a box again. Well, it feels like wood, but appears to be inscribed with metal. Verence holds it up to the light, wondering where the bolt had struck it. The box appears to be completely undamaged, though he was sure there had been a deep gouge in one side. Just about here... Verence runs his fingers over the surface, checking for damage. Oddly, the moves seem familiar to him. He moves his thumb so, and presses this bit here... The box opens. His mind is filled with the contents of the box. The box contains <http://www.curufea.com/message.html>

Posted by: theseus Feb 2 2005, 12:24 PM«

It is uncertain how much time passes as the information in the box is absorbed. Well, there you are, Lord Verence! Lady Anna suddenly says, having approached silently. She is no longer in a dress, and is instead wearing sensible black trousers and coat." I was wondering if I could find you. I appreciated your distraction back there. They were so busy trying to stop you from escaping that I was able to help myself to some of Wensley's most valuable jewels. She laughs prettily. You created quite a stir walking in on Lady Wensley and her secret paramour like that.

Posted by: Curufea Feb 5 2005, 09:47 AM«

I..., Verence starts to say. But he still stares off into the distance, his eyes unfocused. As though he has had a rude shock, or an epiphany." Something within him seems to snap, his back straightens and he turns to Anna, becoming more of his old self, although it now appears to be merely skin deep. Lady, you do yourself disservice. It was I that was helped. I had no wish to be at the pointed end of a well aimed crossbow bolt., he smiles quickly, his charm slightly more shallow than before." Verence looks down. He had ignored the pain of his foot as much as he could in the adrenaline rush of the events following. And now it doesn't pain him as much as it should. His box and the little bundle of jewellery he had taken were both fallen to the darkness of the ground and he stares at them quizzically, as if unsure how they got there. His head jerks up. The paramour, yes, ah.. Although I did not see his identity. She was too outraged, but that must be obvious now I guess... His injured foot moves forward to kick his jacket over the fallen loot.

Posted by: theseus Feb 7 2005, 03:45 AM«

Quite. She didn't want to raise the alarm immediately, of course. If they started searching for you they might have found him too. Or worse, mistake him for the only intruder. Again, Lady Anna laughs. "As a servant, he would have been fired immediately. So he went after you alone until he could cover his tracks" Looking speculative, Lady Anna moves closer to Verence, placing a gentle hand on his shoulder. Her scent is strange and spicy. We should start moving. I think they are still looking for you." I have a snug place not far from here if you want to keep warm tonight. She smiles coyly."

Posted by: Curufea Feb 7 2005, 01:17 PM«

His assurance gathering by the moment, the shock of his epiphany fading to be dwelt upon later, Verence smiles quickly at Anna. He bows briefly at the waist, right arm across his chest. I am in your debt again, lady. Let me just gather my jacket. With his left he gathers the bundle at his feet, scooping it within his jacket, the solid angularity of The Box digging uncomfortably into the arm that carries it. Lead on, madam, he says.“

Posted by: theseus Feb 9 2005, 08:59 AM«

Anna leads Verence through a few nearby cobbled backstreets, lit by gas lamps. The mansions and buildings here are quite elegant, the architects having cared as much for form as function. The sky is obscured by a combination of mist and the smoke of the many wood fires burning in the city. As the duo approach a small arched bridge over a canal, Anna stops for a moment. Walking over the bridge are two strange men wearing black trenchcoats. They walk just over six feet tall. For a moment they step under the light of a gas lamp, and they don't look human at all. They have angular jet black faces, hooked noses, small white bumps or horns on their foreheads, and small red forked tongues. They sniff the air, walking in the general direction of Anna and Verence. What in the six hells are they? Anna asks in a fearful whisper. “Demons?”

Posted by: Curufea Feb 14 2005, 01:11 PM«

Demons, Verence whispers quietly to himself, almost going into shock for the second time this day. His heart skips a beat.“ We must go, NOW. He grabs Anna's hand and drags her, at speed, back from the bridge, past a building and down an alleyway.“

Posted by: theseus Feb 14 2005, 04:51 PM«

The sinister presence of the demons seems to be catching up to the two with alarming speed. Anna takes the lead for a moment, in a quite unladylike manner. She uses her body to press Verence tight against the wall behind some old crates. She is almost as tall as Verence, and her face almost touches his. Verence can't help but notice her almost intoxicating scent.. A cold wind rushes through the alley from the entrance. A moment later one of the demons appears crossing across the alley opening. It pauses, and sniffs in the direction of Verence and Anna with suspicion. Its eyes appear full of hate. The demon turns, deciding to move on, and leave the alley behind. Anna gives out a silent breath of relief.

Posted by: Curufea Feb 25 2005, 10:38 AM«

An awkward moment passes between Anna and Verence before decorum backs Anna away to a socially acceptable invasion of personal space. The confusion of the moment and adrenaline of the chase momentarily lag his wits before several conclusions are made. Several minutes pass as both figures intently listen for the demons. Thank you, Anna, says Verence quietly.“ Shall we try this way?, Verence points off to the side of where the bridge was likely located.“

Posted by: theseus Feb 28 2005, 06:23 PM«

Anna nods, and together they navigate their way through the many streets back to the bridge. A light mist gathers around the bridge and canal. The canal flows quickly and is a little polluted, as the water from all of the city streets ends up here. The bridge is of arched stone, with a railing of higher stone bricks on either side. Anna leads Verence to the left side, and climbs over it. She then drops and swings, disappearing underneath the bridge. A moment later there is a soft thump.

Posted by: theseus Mar 4 2005, 06:25 AM«

Verence follows suit, and finds himself reunited with Anna in a small alcove underneath the bridge. Anna grins at him, and presses on a stone, opening up a trapdoor leading into the dark depths. Possibly, this is a route to the maintenance tunnels for the plumbing pipes running underneath the city. Anna produces a small but thick wand and taps it, so it emits a circle of light to see by. She walks down the stairs, leading to a small door. This door she opens, revealing a beautifully adorned room. Anna sets the thick wand on a side table, illuminating the room. The walls are adorned with rich tapestries, some showing patterns, while others are of animals and landscapes. A large mirror sits atop a well stocked vanity cabinet. A comfortable looking mattress lies in one corner, covered over with velvet sheets and brown fur. A few select books are stacked in a small bookcase. And finally there is a rack of clothing, including everything from street rags to a purple gown signifying royalty. Anna turns and smiles at Verence. We should be safe here, at least for now. Few people still alive know this room exists. Dogs lose the scent when they get to the bridge, and they usually assume I jumped into the canal." She pulls a face at the thought."

Posted by: Curufea Mar 7 2005, 07:39 AM«

A quick glance over what he presumed to be Anna's collection of costumes, Verence then turns towards her, one eyebrow raised. Why, Anna, whatever must you have been doing to be chased by dogs? Are you in the habit of carrying around delectable pieces of meat?

Posted by: theseus Mar 8 2005, 06:47 AM«

Anna laughs delightfully. Not meat, no. The dogs guarding the palace are also bloodhounds. IGÇÖve made a few excursions there, and the security is tough. I barely made it out on my last attempt." She pauses a moment, regarding Verence carefully. You however, seem to have worse things than dogs chasing you..."

Posted by: Curufea Mar 8 2005, 10:01 AM«

Were they chasing me? We were together at the time, and I did notice how quickly you identified them, Verence pauses to regard Anna." I wonder if you are more than you appear..., his voice fades in contemplation." Ahem, yes, well, anyway - it is now not safe to be in the city. If they were truly tracking me, then I must leave this place and leave no scent. I must also ensure that none of these 'creatures' have tracked my trail home to my mother's estate.

Posted by: theseus Mar 9 2005, 01:01 PM«

A boy faithful to his mother? she asks, both bemused and sad. "I grew up an orphan on the streets. It would have been nice to have familyGÇª" Still, it would be safer to stay here tonight and leave at

morning light. I doubt those creatures wish to move about during the day. It will also be easier to cover our tracks. If they do not know of your mother yet, you could accidentally lead them right to her.

Posted by: Curufea Mar 10 2005, 08:18 AM«

Again, I am in your debt, and value your advice. I have no wish to lead these creatures anywhere, but to their deaths. Verence bows slightly at the waist. I do fear that I will not get much sleep this night, however, with these creatures lurking about. I have my jacket, and if you would be kind enough to lend me a pillow from your bed for later, I will wait by the door for a time. Until my nerves have steadied themselves, says Verence.”

Posted by: theseus Mar 10 2005, 10:28 AM«

Bashful, arenGÇÖt we? she says, smiling coyly, taking off her own jacket and placing it on the rack. Underneath, she is wearing a black and lacy top.” I was hoping you wouldnGÇÖt want to do too much sleeping. I had a different remedy in mind for your nervesGÇª She turns toward the bed, looking back to Verence with a smile, and beckoning him over with her hand

Posted by: Curufea Mar 10 2005, 12:54 PM«

Merely a gentleman, madam. One doesn't want to be forward in the presence of a lady. It just isn't done, says Verence as he attempts to not sound too prim.” As he unbuttons his cufflinks, Verence turns towards Anna. Now, Miss Walters..., he pauses in mid sentence.” Let's continue to explore the meaning behind the word 'assignation'..., says Verence.” And with that, he unbuttons his soiled shirt, his previously skewered foot all but forgotten as a minor pain.

Posted by: theseus Mar 11 2005, 02:26 PM«

The following hours are filled with intoxicating passion and movement. The bed is comfortable and warm. Anna is both delicate and flexible, with a natural grace unlike any girl Verence has known before. When he starts to tire, Anna offers him a special fruit concoction to drink, which restores his strength. Finally feeling complete, the lovers fall into a turbulent sleepGÇª

First Encounters

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