

# Session Notes: Adventure 13A02 part 2:

## The Troglodyte Perfumery

### Eighthday, 9th Week of Spring, year 43 of the Thirteenth Age

As the heroes slowly make their way back to Bladeby in Rona's cart with their confiscated contraband, Soril investigates the magical items found in the smugglers' cave. He is puzzled by the symbols on the "just add water" packets. Yria points out that they are similar to those on healing and elemental resistance potions supplied to paladins for use in combat, so that's probably what they are.

When Soril places the shapeless hat on his head, he feels an urge to take it off and pull something out of it. He does so and comes up with a nice juicy apple. Soril concludes that it is a Hat of Conjururation that can be used to create a common non-magical item once per day, as long as it will fit through the brim.



He is more cautious with the black candle, which feels cold to the touch. Kavan examines it and recalls reading about an "uncandle" that absorbs light and freezes anything that touches its unflame. They are made from tallow runoff collected from the graves of wizards and are needed to read certain occult tomes. Soril says that he can keep it.

Back in Bladeby, Selena and Torben take charge of the contraband, promising to return the items to their respective owners. Yrion asks if an "adventurers' share" is appropriate, and Selena agrees that the party are entitled to 10 imps each. She encourages the party to pursue their lead to Horizon as the Golden Order has promised to pay more if the weapons can be recovered. She recommends looking up **Odilla Ma** at the Horizon Adventurers' Guild, partly out of politeness and partly because she will have local knowledge that could prove useful. Yrion asks Selena to send a couple of adventurers to see what Valser does when he discovers that his smuggling operation has been dismantled, and also to return the cart to Rona in Gooseport.

Enquiries at the docks reveal that a fisherwoman, **Terayna**, is leaving for Horizon at dawn tomorrow to sell some shark fins as magical ingredients, and will take the party for 1 imp each. J'zakko, sadly, is still too unwell to travel and is complaining bitterly about Torben's smelly poultices. Despite this, everyone gets a good night's sleep.

### **Ninthday, 9th Week of Spring, year 43 of the Thirteenth Age**

The journey south is uneventful, if somewhat unpleasant due to the proximity of several decomposing sharks. The sun is setting as Terayna's boat, *The Bullywug*, eases into the 150' wide canal that leads from Pocket Bay to Horizon, 2 miles inland. The skyline is dominated by the city's gleaming silver wall and the constructions of the Upper City, complete neighbourhoods with elegant tree-lined plazas and white marble buildings that hang impossibly in the air, connected to each other by long silver bridges and to the ground by portals. They slowly rotate around the Archmage's Court at the very centre of the city, a white tower surrounded by ancillary buildings connected by walkways. A few carpets, ifrit and imps can be seen flying to and fro at the behest of their magical masters. The city is surrounded by floating arcane structures of copper and stone covered in deeply incised runes. Occasionally one flares brightly and shoots a bolt of magical energy to the horizon.

Terayna drops the party off at a jetty that serves the Outer City, a sprawling mass of streets located outside the city walls. Soril, who knows the area, leads them to Highhouse, an inn located on the Imperial Highway close to the circular, beholder eye-bedecked gate that leads into the city. Kavan comments on its modest appearance, but Soril explains that appearances are deceiving. From inside, Highhouse towers above the adjacent buildings - It sleeps hundreds, with floors accessed via a small chamber hidden behind sliding double doors. Inside the chamber, it merely appears that the doors shut for a while and then open again, but when they open, you're on the floor you want.

The party obtains rooms without difficulty, despite the upcoming Shortest Night celebrations. Yrion and Soril decide to kick back in the bar, while Yria, Kavan and Gwindor enter the city to try to find the Adventurer's Guild. Strikefast is left in the care of Yrion, much to its disgust.

### **Evening Activities**

Getting to the Adventurer's Guild proves to be quite an undertaking. After passing through the city gate with its swivelling eyes and surly imperial guards, Kavan collars a pair of students who give them a complicated set of instructions for using the city's portals, including reversing direction through one and walking backwards through another. The heroes find themselves in a college backstreet, a plaza on the edge of a floating neighbourhood, a busy market street, a college square with several portals (the one place where the instructions prove inaccurate - a student barely stops them from landing in the otyugh pits), and finally a quiet alley near the Archmage's Court. The Adventurers' Guild is just around the corner, an elegant, luxurious version of the Bladeby building, built of solid grey stone, lit by glow globes and warmed by small fire sprites.

The door is answered by a willowy grey-haired elf in rogue's attire. He introduces himself as **Quineiros** and after scrutinising their Guild pins, leads them through to the parlour where Odilla Ma, a motherly wizard in her late 50s, is waiting. She seems pleased to see them - she says that the Guild is short-handed as most of its members are out on errands for the Archmage. Kavan explains that they are tracking stolen goods and are looking for the fence. Odilla has heard of Sharr's perfumery - it's right on the edge of town and is run by a family of troglodytes. She hasn't heard anything bad about them, though some of their neighbours are not happy about their presence.

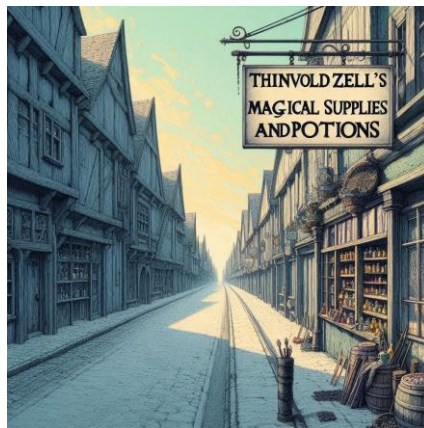
The heroes have a pleasant meal. Odilla regales them with gossip and news about Horizon's internal politics, the main item of which is that the Crusader has set up a bastion in the city for

some reason. She advises them to steer clear - the Crusader's troops are a rough lot. The topic of the Archmage's recent artifact collecting frenzy comes up, but Odilla has nothing to offer other than speculation that he is planning a major magical working. Quineiros tells the story of a job that he once did for the Archmage involving the theft of a golden corkscrew that opens other things than bottles from one of the high families in Axis. It's getting late, so the heroes politely make their excuses and leave, getting detailed instructions for using the portals.

Back in Highhouse, Soril writes a letter at the bar, then charms his way into a group of farmers. They have heard of the "crazy troglodytes" that run Sharr's perfumery. Soril gently remarks that troglodytes are not generally known for their pleasant smell, but they are stoutly vouched for by one of the farmers, who says that their husband swears by their perfumes. Soril also learns that the troglodytes bought their property about 10 years ago from someone called **Canderel** who has retired upcountry. They paid over the odds for it, apparently. One of the farmers remarks that they may not be there for much longer – **Thinvold Zell**, a local alchemist, has offered a reward for troglodyte scent glands.

Yrion has a bath and gets his clothes laundered, then saunters into the bar and joins a card game. He also learns about the troglodytes, but opinion is much more negative. Their perfumes smell bad and the locals believe that they forced Canderel out.

#### **Tenthday, 9th Week of Spring, year 43 of the Thirteenth Age**



After breakfast, Soril leads the party to Fen Street, a long straight road heading out into the countryside. It's a rough neighbourhood full of drinking dens for the local farmers. The residents are mostly servants and workers who cannot afford to live within the Horizon city walls. The party soon sees Thinvold Zell's shop, a neat two-storey building with a sign hanging outside. A poster in the window reads "Wanted – troglodyte scent glands. 10 imp reward."

A few minutes later, the party is passing a fenced paddock when they hear a cry of "Cooee! Soril!" A short humanoid fashioned of twigs and branches wearing a hat, jacket and trousers made of green leaves, is reclining on the fence. Soril groans – it's **Greff**, a fey rascal who is an emissary of the Elf Queen. He tells the other party members to go on ahead.



Greff asks Soril what he's doing – “no more naughty dealings with the wild botherers, I hope?” Soril gives him an edited version of the Strikefast story (Bladetip Forest, Swirl, gnomes disguised as goblins) but refuses to say what his current mission is. Greff reluctantly accepts this, but warns Soril that “her majesty will be *very disappointed*” if he is up to anything that is contrary to her interests. He rolls off the fence and disappears.

### S'harr's Perfumery



The perfumery is at the far end of Fen Street shortly before the road peters out into a lane leading to nearby farms. It is a compound surrounded by a six-foot-tall wooden fence. The south side has a shop that opens onto the street and there are five other buildings – a two-storey house, a low workshop, a stable, an outhouse and a squat circular tower in one corner. A heady and enticing mixture of scents billows out onto the street from the shop's front door.

The heroes decide to ask the neighbours before venturing in. Gwindor talks to an old lady who is sweeping her front doorstep. She doesn't mind the locals – in Canderel's time the place was a tannery, so in general the smell has improved. Yrion encounters an unfriendly old man who assumes that he and his band of adventurers are here to clear the “smelly vermin” out. If they want Thinvold Zell's reward, he advises they get on with it because he's heard that “**Dorven's** lot” are planning to try soon.

The party decide that Kavan should enter the shop posing as a customer, while the others hang around nearby in case things kick off. A bell over the door rings as he enters a small neat room,

lined with shelves of different coloured bottles and dominated by a large counter. Seated on a stool behind it is a reptilian creature with a dragon-shaped head covered in pale brown scales, a turquoise crest, and vertically-slitted emerald eyes. It is wearing brown leather robes fastened at the neck with a pearl broach and decorated with overlapping buttons. It smells pleasantly of petrichor – the scent of rain on hot dry earth. “Hello,” it says in a fair approximation of Common given its jaw structure. “I am S’harr. Welcome to the Troglodyte Perfumery. How can I serve you?”



Kavan tries a couple of the perfumes, one of which reminds him of mangoes, one of his favourite foods. S’harr proves to be an eager and talkative salesperson – when Kavan asks why a group of troglodytes have come to a largely human settlement, she explains that she and her family had a disagreement with other members of her clan about which icon they should be following. She rings a bell that summons three other troglodytes – her mate **Essna**, who is researching a perfume for dwarves, her sister **Vess**, who is obviously pregnant, and Vess’ mate **Aksar**. Kavan buys a bottle of the mango perfume for one imp.

Outside, the party decides that the troglodytes are probably genuine in their attempt to be merchants. Soril has cast a charm spell on a garrulous woman drawing water from the nearby well, and she reveals that her husband overheard Dorven’s gang plotting in the Black Dragon Inn to assault the perfumery tonight. The party decide to head over there for lunch.

### At the Black Dragon

The inn is a few hundred yards down the road. It is a dingy place with half a dozen circular tables and a long bar, but well-liked judging by the crowd of sweaty farm labourers and local shopkeepers who are having lunch. Five armed and tough-looking people are lounging around a table at the far end of the room; from the wide berth given by the locals and the obsequious attentions of the bar staff, this is evidently Dorven’s gang. The party take their seats at a nearby table, evicting a local who gives them a dirty look, and Kavan and Yria go up to order lunch and drinks. The barkeep tries to tell Yria to take her pet outside, but Yria simply says “no” and Mittens hisses.

The party are settling in for an afternoon of eating and eavesdropping when the gang’s leader, an attractive but sour-faced human, swaggers over to their table, looks down on them and asks what they’re doing. Yria replies that they are just having lunch, while Yrion tries some cheesy chat-up lines, which Dorven (for it is she) ignores. She warns them that the troglodyte reward is hers and they are not to interfere. Yria disdainfully tells her that they will do what they want and could she go away as she is spoiling her lunch? “Right – outside!” says Dorven, but the party



refuse to be moved. Dorven's gang draw their weapons – the barkeep begs them to take their quarrel outside rather than wrecking the pub, but nobody listens. The two sides square off against each other as the other patrons scramble for the exit.

*Round 1: Dorven's bad day*



The fight starts badly for the thugs. **Seleyna**, a hooded human, darts towards the bar and throws a dagger at Yrion but misses. The elf **Fliss** draws a cudgel and attacks Yria, but trips over her own chair and falls to the ground. Yria shouts “Die, evil one!” and uses Fliss’ face as a springboard to perform an overhead strike with Strikefast on Dorven, knocking her out with one blow. Kavan yells a war chant and points his morning star at the dwarf **Emeld**, sending out a stream of crescent moons that lacerate him in several places. As a result, Emeld’s attack on Yrion goes wide. Gwindor completes Triss’ humiliation by pinning her to the ground with his spear - the big, burly **Truff** goes to stab him but is distracted when a spectral hand cast by Soril slaps him on the head.

*Round 2: Emeld's bad day*

Seleyna draws a cudgel and moves to attack Kavan, but he dodges. Soril invokes a spray of colours that catches Emeld and Truff. Yria, refusing to let her brother be menaced, finishes the job by catching Emeld a clout that knocks him cold, and sends Mittens to menace Fliss who is struggling to her feet, ripping the sleeve of her tunic. Gwindor tries to retrieve his spear but it is stuck firmly into the floorboards. Truff swings at Gwindor again but misses, unlike Yrion who grabs a beer mug and smashes it over Seleyna’s head.

*Round 3: Fliss' bad day*

Seleyna tries to hit Kavan again but her cudgel bounces off his thick armour; Soril sends a chair sliding under her that trips her up and she goes crashing to the floor. Yria gives Fliss an uppercut with Strikefast that sends her backwards over the table to land in an unconscious heap on the other side. Truff is the only thug left standing – Kavan swings at him and misses, but Gwindor sticks a knife in his side and hisses “surrender!” Truff drops his weapon and raises his hands. Yrion sighs. “This happens every time I try to date a woman. I’m so tired of being a virgin.”

*Aftermath*

Truff and Seleyna are told to go - they want to take the unconscious gang members with them, but Yria tells them to scram. The party attempts to tidy up the room and Soril casts a mending spell on a chair that got broken in the fight, though there’s not a lot that they can do about the smashed bottles and mugs. They tie up Dorven but leave Emeld and Fliss, promising to come back later. “Please don’t” mutters the barkeep.

Dragging their prisoner with them, the heroes head for Thinvold Zell’s shop. Soril and Gwindor ensure that there is a good crowd of locals looking on as Yria, Yrion and Kavan bang through the door. Kavan tears down the poster while Yria pushes the terrified Zell against a wall. “Don’t even *think* about doing anything like that again, or you’ll have us to answer to” she hisses.

The next part of the call is the perfumery. S'harr looks up alarmed as the party enter pulling the trussed-up Dorven with them, and an unpleasant odour starts to fill the room, but Kavan quickly explains that he is part of a group of adventurers who have dealt with the lowlifes that were threatening the troglodytes and have brought their leader as proof. When asked what she wants to do with Dorven, S'harr anxiously replies that she doesn't want any trouble, so the heroes untie Dorven's bonds and throw her bodily into the street. Gwindor leans down and whispers "this is what happens if you threaten troglodytes", implying that it was S'harr who put them up to it. Dorven goes limping off down the street.

S'harr is suitably grateful, but gets nervous again when shown the Master Ebroc letter that damningly mentions her perfumery. She finally confesses that there is a secret fane of ettercaps below the compound and Valser delivered the weapons to them. She begs the party not to tell the authorities. The heroes agree on condition that she shows them the way. S'harr advises them to be respectful and to have a secret to tell.

### **The Fane**

The heroes say that they are ready to go, so S'harr takes them across to the squat tower, unlocks the door and opens a trapdoor with steps leading down. Below is a large cavern lined with shelves of bottles, barrels and containers for the exotic components used to make the perfumes. The fane entrance is an inconspicuous crack at the cavern's far end which opens into a dark steep shaft necessitating a scramble down smooth rocks. Before the party goes in, S'harr squirts them with a strange acrid-smelling perfume. "This will mark you as acolytes, and tell them that I sent you," she advises.

At the foot of the shaft, a 10' wide passageway winds down into the dark. It is covered in cobwebs. Small spiders scuttle. After a couple of turns, a faint glow can be seen up ahead where the passageway opens into a large chamber. A faint breeze is blowing from it, carrying an acrid scent and a susurrus of echoing whispers. The party advances cautiously with Yria and Kavan in the lead.



They enter a large cavern approximately 100' long and 40' wide with irregular walls full of shadowy openings. The vaulted roof is supported on six pillars and is lit by embedded greenish yellow crystals that cast a faint sickly light, leaving areas of inky blackness. The entire room is covered in huge spiders' webs with strands as thick as cables. At the far end a set of steps lead up to a round dais where a mutated humanoid figure is standing. A shadowy alcove beyond it houses a large black hooded figure which the heroes sincerely hope is a statue.

As the party moves forward, two figures carrying spears materialise out of the spider webs on either side of the entrance. They are vaguely elven in shape but with long spindly limbs and fingers and spider-like legs growing out of their backs. They have six black shiny eyes and their mouths hinge sideways like mandibles. They are covered in cobwebs and big fat spiders crawl over them like lice. “Halt!”, they whisper sibilantly. “Who seeks audience with She Who Spins in Darkness? Name yourselves!”



Yrion does the introductions and explains that S’harr let them enter. The ettercap bends its face unnervingly close to Yrion’s, its black nostril holes twitching, then announces that they may approach the Keeper. As the party moves towards the dais, two other ettercaps dressed in robes emerge out of the darkness, flanking them.

The leader of the strange sect is draped in ancient webbing from head to toe. Unearthly green light ripples out from its black eyes which matches the glowing gem eyes on the headpiece of the staff it bears. Although the party can see only its eyes through the vestments, it seems quite upset that they have interrupted the ritual. It silently raises its staff toward them. “You may trade. A secret for a secret,” announces one of the acolytes and cocks its head expectantly.

### *Trading Secrets*

Soril steps forward. After some awkwardness he realises that he has to whisper his secret into an acolyte’s ear, so he tells them about the Archmage collecting magical artefacts, mentioning the stolen golden corkscrew from Quineiros’ tale. The acolyte steps on to the dais, and whispers in the ear of the Keeper, who turns to commune with the statue. After a moment the Keeper whispers in the ear of the acolyte, who turns to the party and announces that it is a good secret. He approaches Soril and whispers in his ear: “The Emperor plans to make the Priestess his Empress, combining their powers!”

This is not the secret that the party was hoping for, so Yrion mentions the weapons that were stolen from his order and asks what the ettercaps were planning to do with them. Immediately the chorus of whispers rises in volume and the cavern seems to darken. “That is a secret of our Sacred Lady!” hisses the acolyte. “It is not to be spoken!” Yrion keeps his nerve, promising that the party will keep the secrets of the ettercaps, including the existence of the fane, in return for information about the weapons. After a tense moment, the Keeper summons an acolyte and whispers in its ear. The acolyte tells Yrion that the weapons are not here – they have been sent to other fanes for a great and sacred purpose, a strike against their great enemy. In this they are being supported by another icon - “one well-known to you”.



Yrion asks for more information, saying that perhaps they can help if they have a common enemy. The Keeper confers again, and the acolyte announces that the enemy is “she who would destroy our faith”. If they wish to know more, they should seek Master Ebroc, in Axis.

The heroes decide that they have pushed their luck far enough, so they make respectful obeisances and retreat. They are allowed to leave with a warning that if they break their promises, “She Who Spins in Darkness will find you and destroy you”.

#### *Aftermath*

Relieved to be out of there, the party climbs back to the surface. They reassure the anxious S'harr that all is well and return to Highhouse. After the Shortest Night celebration, they decide to walk back to Bladeby for a debrief. Soril deduces that “she who would destroy our faith” is most likely to be the Priestess; Kavan has contacts with her acolytes and says that he will follow them up.

Selena says that the Golden Order will be pleased to know whose hands the weapons are now in, though disappointed that none of them were retrieved, and awards the heroes 45 imps each for the information. The party rests and trains up for their next mission.