

Chapter 015 – The End of the Beginning

12 Calistril 4708
Korvosa, Varisia

Scene #1 – The Old Fishery – Gaedren's Playground: Confrontation

Hutton drops the body to the floor, spits blood on it, and kicks it into the river below.

“Good Riddance.” Reddi stated to no one in particular. Though her voice was calm, a few tears were falling down her face. She made no effort to hide them or wipe them away...

As the party watched Gaedren's body disappear below the water, whatever emotions each member of the party were feeling at that moment were mixed with satisfaction. Their shared goal – only put into motion a few hours ago – was to end Gaedren's “reign” once and for all. and that they did...

Brack stared at Hutton in quiet disbelief, watching as the lifeless body of Gaedren bob for a brief moment before sinking down into the riverbed. The dwarf opens his mouth to speak, though no words find their way to his lips. Instead, roiling emotions flash briefly across his features before he puts on his signature grimace.

As he does so, he flashes a glare at Hutton and gives a loud **harumph**, though whether it was directed at Crowcreek or Lamm is not entirely clear.

Not registering Brack's reaction and panting with the exertion, Hutton grasps the wound in his side and grimaces. Taking a step back, he leans heavily against the wall by the door where Redii was fast at work before sinking to the floor.

"It's finished," he wheezes. **"I've done what needed doing, damn the *cough* consequences."**

Mazour froze as the sound of popping and cracking bone rang through the air. The limp and ragged body of Gaedren dropped to the floor like discarded meat. The thump met the clanking of armor as Mazour dropped to his knees in realization. He watched as Hutton kicked the body into the river with a splash. The smell of stale brackish water met the rot and decay of the building. His eyes blurred as he felt the wetness of blood trickle down his side. Tears rolled down his cheeks as he forced himself to breathe.

"It's done? It's... finished now? After all this time..." He stopped for a moment to take it in. To make sure this was real and not another dream where he would wake up to see the ravages of those peddled powders along the streets and alleys.

Scene #2 – The Old Fishery – Gaedren's Playground: Aftermath

Coming back together, the remaining party members tried to figure out what to do next. Above them, there were still the children upstairs waiting for the party to return victorious as well as the (hopefully) still unconscious body of Hookshanks. On the lower level, there was the locked room in the corner as well as the piles of “junk” on the far end of the room.

Redii, taking the initiative, started towards the locked door and pulled out her lockpicks, “I've got this... Go see if there's anything useful in his junk pile...”...

Brack looks to Mazour and Redii next, hearing her direction and watching her spring into action. Saying not a word, he takes point in moving towards the pile of junk in his usual approach, grasping pylon by pylon across the rickety underpier.

He grits his teeth and closes his eyes and remains still while the others search the room.

Redii felt rather numb as she worked the lock. Before watching Gaedren die, she thought she would feel more triumphant after his death - and she certainly did to a degree. But she also felt more hollow than expected; the joy of watching him die buried beneath memories of her time under Gaedren's "care" and what had happened immediately afterwards. As she tried to process the complex emotions swirling inside her, she felt a snap from one of her lockpicks. *Shit. Wasn't paying attention...*

"Hey. Big guy. I know you're looking pretty rough, but could you possibly help me break down this door? Don't think I'm going to be able to break in..." she lifted up her broken lock pick to emphasize her point.

Reddi's words to Hutton snapped him back. *This is real? This is REAL!* He stood up slowly, walking to the water Hutton kicked the body into. **"May the lady greet you into the afterlife Gaedren Lamm. And... Grind you under heel as she sends you along your way."** With a particularly rude gesture, he spun on his heel to move toward Reddi.

Producing a set of lockpicks from the folds of his robes, he handed them to her. **"Here. Try these."**

"Oh, thanks. It'd take me a while to fix mine..." Pausing to give Mazour an appraising look, Redii added, **"I'm surprised a Pharasman Cleric has need for these. No offense. Also, I busted the lock with my last attempt, so no tool is going to work at this point."**

"Well, you know sometimes it's faster to get into a tomb with one of these than running back for a key," Mazour shrugged before continuing, **"And sometimes they lock the wine store."**

With that, he turned to search for the rest of the room they were in.

The table on the far side of the room was full of assorted junk of middling to no value. Random cups, items of clothing and costume jewelry overflowed the table and spilled haphazardly onto the floor below. Whether Gaedren found any of it valuable or not was a whole other matter.

Kicking at the pile of junk, Brack sees nothing of note and rejoins the others at the locked room. Speaking for the first time since Gaedren's demise, the dwarf mumbles a brusque observation, **"Hmm.. an old fetterlock. Don't see these too much nowadays."** He pauses and looks to Redii, **"Yeh 'ave to be more careful on t'spring or else yeh will snap yeh picks."**

He motions to the new set of picks offered by Mazour, **"Not sure if 'utton 'ere's got the most delicate of fingers, but I can 'elp show whoever 'ow to get past t'shackle and spring. Got to apply just t'right amount of pressure..."**

Rising, she dusted her hands as she took a few steps back from the door. **"Not really my style, but looks like we're going to do this the old fashion way. I don't think that a**hole will mind at this point."** Suddenly charging forward, Redii leaped a few feet away from the door and struck it hard with a flying sidekick. The door surprisingly fell apart with ease to reveal what appeared to be bot Gaedren's bedroom and study.

A wooden bed with a lumpy mattress stood against the east wall, while a round table heaped with dirty plates, bread crusts, stained goblets, fruit rinds, and scuttling cockroaches sat nearby. At the foot of the bed in this foul-smelling room sat a large strongbox; a slightly rusted lock secures it and a moldy ledger with pages rippled from moisture sits atop its lid. A sagging dresser filled with moth-eaten clothes

well past their glory days are in one corner. What appears to be a wooden hatbox surrounded by a small cloud of flies sits atop this dresser. A decrepit home for a decrepit man if there ever was one...

"Ah gross!" Redii exclaimed as she instantly covered her nose from the smell.

As the door is kicked in, he raises a kerchief over his mouth and nose. **"That is a smell that is going... to linger."** Peeking his head in behind Reddi, he felt filthy from just the sight of it. Pulling on a pair of gloves, he walks in and picks up the ledger, spins on his heel, and marches right back out of the room. As he leaves, he ever so gently brushes against Reddi's arm while muttering another short prayer to Pharama.

Once outside the shitty little room that housed the remains of a twisted life, he stops and looks back into the room. **"Something seems... wrong. As much as him living in filth and abject poverty doesn't surprise me in the least, shouldn't he have... more? If all of the horror he inflicted was for money, why is he living like this?"**

Rolling away from the door and onto his hands and knees, Hutton gags at the stench wafting out of the room beside him. Zellara's spread does an unexpected curtain call and rapidly exits stage left into the river. He groans and wipes his mouth with a sleeve before regaining his feet.

"You think he hid money somewhere?" he weakly asks Mazour before reaching into a pocket and withdrawing a handkerchief to hold over his nose and mouth before entering the room.

He takes a quick glance around before setting his pack on the floor, pulling out a crowbar, and setting to work with a boot on top of the chest, a rag over his face, and one huge hand trying to break the rusty lock.

With a loud crack, the lock broke in two and fell limply to the floor while simultaneously opening the top of the lid. While everything in Gaedren's lair so far seemed either disgusting or not remotely exceptional, the treasures in his strongbox were an entirely different matter; each of them handled with care and individually wrapped in a cloth tied shut with twine. Pulling the lock box out of the room to examine it with slightly fresher air, the group found *quite* a stash; this was definitely where Gaedren hid the good stuff. The stash included: a narrow teak cigar case inlaid with tiny bits of jade (25 gp), a 2-pound gold ingot bearing the Cheliox coat of arms (worth 100 gp), a miniature gold crown (worth 150 gp), a fist-sized scrimshaw carving of a kraken with garnets for eyes (worth 150 gp), a silver ring bearing the inscription "For Emmah—the light in my nights" (worth 100 gp), a highly realistic and highly scandalous ivory figurine of two entwined succubi (worth 250 gp), a masterwork dagger with a strange blade shaped almost like a key bearing the inscription: "For an inspiration of a father" (worth 400 gp), an abalone-shell holy symbol of Shelyn (worth 300 gp), (5) Potions of Healing and (8) pinches of Dust of Dryness.

At the very bottom of the lock box, wrapped up extra carefully in cloth and other protective material was a bejeweled brooch with a broken clasp. Even to an untrained eye, this brooch was obviously the most valuable object in the entire collection. The circular gold brooch depicted a house drake and an imp coiled around each other in an almost yin-yang pattern. The pseudodragon's eye is an amethyst, while the imp's eye is an emerald. Redii, realizing its quality instantly, snatched it and started to mumble to herself in a slightly frantic manner.



"Do you know what we're holding?..." Redii asked the group after popping out of her trance-like state. "And do you know how much this is worth?..." Without waiting for a reply, she added, "This at a minimum is worth at least 1,500gp; and I'm probably underselling it. More than that... I know who this belongs to... Are you ready for this... it's Ileosa's!! That lucky bastard. How the fuck did Gaedren get his hands on this!?"...

"I'm sorry dear, did you say Ileosa? As in... Queen... Ileosa?" He covered his mouth and nose with the kerchief again as he stepped closer. Kneeling next to Reddi he stared over her shoulder at the magnificent brooch. "How the fuck, indeed? And right next to a knife style used by the Key Lock Killer? I'd bet there is quite a bit of blood on that knife."

If the smell bothered him, the dwarf didn't seem to pay any mind. Brack trotted close to others then peered at the contents of the chest. As Redii and Mazour gasped at the brooch and dagger, the dwarf gave a loud snort, "Old up, what this all about, eh?" The puzzled look in the dwarf's eyes spoke to his ignorance regarding the gravity of the findings.

"Gaedren had a brooch belonging to the Queen of Korvosa, Brak," his normally breathy voice was wrapped in a mix of awe and confusion making his words come out even slower and seemingly more deliberate. He paused for a moment and continued dryly, "Not the sort of thing you'd expect to find in the hands of vermin. It should not be here. That on the other hand," he pointed daintily at the dagger with pale spindly fingers, "That is not so much a surprise. The Key-Lock Killer used a knife like that. They killed around 180 people in the span of 7 years before disappearing. It's not surprising that one with his character has a knife like that."

"Let's get moving. We have to get back to the children and get them safe. And there's still our little friend upstairs. We'll have to discuss how to handle that little trinket later, preferably... over drinks." Mazour slips the book into his bag for later inspection.

Redii looked at the knife for a long moment before shrugging and circling back to the brooch. "I have a few ideas on what we can do with that brooch... I'm guessing one of the kids pinched it for him. Not sure how else he would get something like this, but then again, he was a crafty bastard."

"And agreed. Let's do a second sweep and make sure Gaedren didn't squirrel valuables anywhere else before we get the Hells out of here." Moving back to the threshold of Gaedren's room, she took a sniff before gagging; opening the door had not improved the air quality at all. "Maybe we should burn this place to the ground. We'd be doing the city a favor." She then took a deep breath and went inside, disappearing for a few moments before sprinting out and leaning over the river, gagging.

Recovering herself and still breathing heavily, she pointed to the door and said, "I know... why it smells... so bad in there... Zellara... Ugh, I think I'm going to be sick..."

Any brave enough to poke their head inside Gaedren's room once again found a truly horrifying sight. The hatbox was sitting open on top of Gaedren's dresser, surrounded by flies and shockingly revealing the severed head of Zellara Esmeranda! The head was poorly preserved and decorated with unsightly makeup in a crude attempt to give her dead flesh the semblance of life. It's rather obvious - especially to Mazour - based off the amount of decay that the fortune-teller has been dead for weeks. Underneath the ragged stump of her neck sits a smaller unopened wooden box...

"Zellara?" Reddi burst out of the room retching in a most unbecoming fashion. Glancing up at her with a puzzled look. Turning slowly he looks at the open box, gasping in shock. Slowly, gently, reverently reaching in to pull the head out of the box, Mazour placed it carefully on the table. Kneeling down he runs through the Litany of the Dying in Varisian. Praying to hopefully lead Zellara to the next world in peace. Not the horror that produced this twisted trophy.

Tearfully, he looked over the face and terrible makeup. "This makes no sense. We just saw her earlier tonight. This would have taken weeks." Standing slowly, he looks and sees the small wooden box. Tentatively, he reaches in and picks it up.

"I don't know, it makes no sense. She was definitely alive a couple hours ago!" Redii replied.

Brack gives a polite nod to Mazour for the details shared, though his warmth quickly faded as everyone makes the discovery regarding Zellara's fate. The dwarf takes in the astonishment and shock from the others, his face looking both disturbed and deep in thought.

Glancing at the others, he slowly opens the box.

Inside the wooden box, Mazour found what was likely Zellara's most prized possession: her Harrow Deck. Hand-painted images decorate this harrow deck, and the cards frames are gilded in silver so that they sparkle and flash under lighting. Despite the worn condition of the card backs, the images on the faces are so vibrant they seem to move when viewed out of the corner of the eye. It is clear looking at these cards that they were regularly used and very well cared for. It is also clear by examining them that the seeming uniqueness of these cards also make them rather valuable in a monetary sense as well.



A few moments after the box is opened, a strange sensation washes over each member of the party; an odd, chilly feeling, as if a bucket of water was slowly dumped on top of their heads. Just as soon as the feeling was there, it dissipated from each of them just as quickly. Redii, looking confusedly at the others in an attempt to see if she was the only one who just felt that tingle, suddenly stops at Hutton.

"Your wounds... They're gone..."

He goes to inspect the Harrow Deck, quietly mulling the explanations in his head for how this scene came to be when the chilling sensation washed over his senses. As if woken up by the sudden jolt of cold through his bones, he speaks now with added urgency towards Mazour, **"It's not safe 'ere Priest. Yeh right in that we got to get t'children out and deal with 'ookshanks."** He regards the rest of the crew, **"If we're done 'ere, we should make 'aste. Don't have much to offer for shelter in East Shore unfortunately, but yeh got my 'elp in getting them in t'clear."**

"Agreed. The sooner we leave this place the better." Redii replied before adding, **"And I'm more serious about burning this place down."**

Nodding, Mazour looked over to Brack. The sound of his voice breaking through the shock. Then it registered, focusing on the task at hand. **"Yes, the children need our help. We can deal with the questions after. I can take them to the Temple, and find their homes from there. Hopefully we can find them."**

With the musty book tucked away, he put the Harrow deck into a pouch. With the same delicacy as he removed it, Mazour placed Zellara's head back in the box and closed the lid. Composing himself, he looked to the others. **"Let's go through the rest of this place and get the kids out. I feel like I'm about to get tetanus with every step."**

Hutton looks down at his leg and sticks a finger through the blood-soaked hole in the thigh of his pants.

"Would you look at that... I don't like anything that's going on around here but this part I can appreciate."

He looks to Mazour and asks, **"Think it could've been a ghost we talked to or something? Your order is all about death and the beyond and whatnot, right? I've had my fair share of brushes with the subject and try not to think about it if it can be avoided. This is concerning, though..."**

"But you guys are right. Let's do a quick sweep to make sure we haven't missed anything, get the kids to safety, take Hookshanks to the authorities, and send this place to the bottom of the river."

He withdraws a torch and tinderbox from his pack before heading back to the door. **"Don't leave anything from that chest behind,"** he calls back.

Mazour closed the lid on the Harrow deck and tucked it away in a pouch. After helping Brak pack and stow the box of goods, he turned to Zellara. **"I'm not sure what it was Hutton. But I'm thinking it wasn't evil. Or at the least it was on our side in this matter. It is concerning. I'll look into what I can find out, thankfully my order does in fact deal with these sorts of things. But it means we'll have to go back to her house. Let's focus here though. Let me finish here with Zellara and I will catch you up."**

Mazour then reverently placed Zellara's head back in the box. One by one he ran through the litanies, reciting the prayers over what's left of her remains. When finished he closed the lid on the box. Placing it on the floor, he circled it three times and lit the box on fire.

"May the Lady clutch you to her bosom. Go in peace Zellara." With that he left to follow the others and finish searching the building.

Scene #3 – The Old Fishery – Resurfacing

After collecting everything valuable they could find within Gaedren's lair, the group eventually left the space and traversed the Underpier once again. The mood was rather muted as they carefully moved across the area before reaching the *Kraken's Folly*. No spiders in sight as they moved back up to the top deck, the party came upon quite the scene...

The cramped confines of the Underpier and Gaedren's Liar mixed with their close proximity to the Jeggare River hid the chaos that had been occurring above. The sight of smoke rising on the horizon mixed with the flickering glow of fires was impossible to miss. The frantic clang of alarm bells sung out in harmony with a multifarious cacophony of screams, the clash of steel on steel, shrieks of terror, and even the periodic detonation of arcane power. A wing of Sable Company hippogriff riders swooped overhead, angling toward Castle Korvosa at a breakneck pace. One of the badly wounded hippogriff mounts rained blood down on the street around the PCs before it succumbed to its wounds and crashed headlong into a statue, taking its rider and itself to a messy, bone-crunching demise. The others in the flight did not pause to check on their fallen ally. A large object or explosion appeared to have destroyed a part of the Old Fishery, leaving a gaping hole in the roof side of the already derelict building.

Amid the chaos, the voice of a Korvosan herald cut through the din: **“The king is dead! The king is dead. Long live the queen!”** only to be shouted down by ragged cries of **“Hang the queen!”** or **“The usurper must die!”**

It appeared that the **Curse of the Crimson Throne** had struck again. King Eodred Arabasti II, fifth and longest reigning monarch in Korvosa's history, was dead and departed for the world beyond. And the city's sanity had gone along with him...



Out of Character





Scene #3 – The Old Fishery – Resurfacing

- Let me know what you'd like to do next...
 - o Note: You're still on the top deck of the Kraken's Folly

Health Status

100% hitpoints: **Healthy**
 75% to 99% hitpoints: **Light Wounds**
 50% to 75% hitpoints: **Medium Wounds**
 25% to 50% hitpoints: **Serious Wounds**
 0% to 25% hitpoints: **Critical Wounds**

LET ME KNOW IF ANYTHING BELOW NEEDS TO BE ADJUSTED TO BE UPDATED

Brack	Hutton	Mazour	Redii
			
17/17 hit points Inspiration X2	22/22 hit points Inspiration	15/15 hit points Inspiration X2	17/17 hit points Inspiration
2/2 hit dice; 4/4 Bardic Inspiration; 1/1 Joyful Verse; Spell Slots: 3/3 1 st ,	2/2 hit dice; 1/1 Second Wind; 1/1 Action Surge; Service Tattoo: 1/1 Protect; 1/1 Heal; 1/1 Strike	2/2 hit dice; 4/4 Eyes of the Grave; 1/1 Channel Divinity 2/2 Blessing of Raven Queen; 1/1 Gifts of the Faithful; Spell Slots: 2/2 1 st ,	2/2 hit dice; 2/2 Ki
4/4 Harrow Points	4/4 Harrow Points	4/4 Harrow Points	5/5 Harrow Points
		20 Arrows	5 Sais

Group LootItems	Held By	Location Found
<i>A narrow teak cigar case inlaid with tiny bits of jade (25 gp)</i>	TBD	Gaedren's Lair
<i>A 2-pound gold ingot bearing the Cheliox coat of arms (worth 100 gp)</i>	TBD	Gaedren's Lair
<i>A miniature gold crown (worth 150 gp)</i>	TBD	Gaedren's Lair
<i>A fist-sized scrimshaw carving of a kraken with garnets for eyes (worth 150 gp)</i>	TBD	Gaedren's Lair
<i>A silver ring bearing the inscription "For Emmah—the light in my nights" (worth 100 gp)</i>	TBD	Gaedren's Lair
<i>A highly realistic and highly scandalous ivory figurine of two entwined succubi (worth 250 gp)</i>	TBD	Gaedren's Lair
<i>A masterwork dagger with a strange blade shaped almost like a key bearing the inscription: "For an inspiration of a father" (worth 400 gp)</i>	TBD	Gaedren's Lair
<i>An abalone-shell holy symbol of Shelyn (worth 300 gp)</i>	TBD	Gaedren's Lair
<i>(5) Potions of Healing</i>	TBD	Gaedren's Lair
<i>(8) pinches of Dust of Dryness.</i>	TBD	Gaedren's Lair
<i>Queen Ileosa's bejeweled brooch</i>	TBD	Gaedren's Lair
<i>Zellara's Harrow Deck</i>	TBD	Gaedren's Lair