

[21:07] Estienne Lionnellais looks upwards, twirling his umbrella in one hand as he shrugs. "I can only assume the Skywatchers weren't consulted when they were picking the date..."

[21:08] Maeva Faepoix offers a gentle bow of her head— a formality over anything else. "Yes, it seems as though the heavens won't give us a break from anything. However, it's quite welcome over that constant, dreadful snowfall."

[21:08] Zelig Orheure nods her agreement through a breathy laugh. "Must not have been. Or they were especially bad Skywatchers, but I try not to assume incompetence."

[21:10] Estienne Lionnellais: "At least the rain seems warm enough not to freeze for a while." Not that a freeze is a terribly big problem for Symmonet, but that's besides the point. "Do you think the gates are open yet?" He raises his head, hand shielding his eyes from the downpour as he tries to see over the crowd.

[21:12] Zelig Orheure: "They are. I went inside actually, looking for faces I recognized in passing. Not that I've been introduced for very many, thus far. Am I a hermit? Hm. Regardless..."

[21:13] Maeva Faepoix slides a gaze over to Sym, murmuring under her breath "Your new haircut may be better at forecasts than the skywatchers. How much wax did you have to slick into it to keep it from invoking a phurble?"

[21:14] Estienne Lionnellais squints, leaning back towards Maeva. "You will learn how much wax I took from that container over my dead body." The answer is a lot. A looooot. "I knew this cut was a mistake...."

[21:18] Zelig Orheure looks between the pair on the steps, twirling her parasol in her hands. Water droplets spiral off, wee! "The cut must be recent?"

[21:19] Estienne Lionnellais sighs, eye rolling. "Last week, to be exact." Never again. /Never again./ "Perhaps getting out of the rain will at least help me maintain a measure of my dignity tonight."

[21:20] Zelig Orheure: "Until the humidity of the ballroom settles in."

[21:20] Zelig Orheure smiles at Estienne Lionnellais.

[21:20] Maeva Faepoix "Oh, shush, no matter what your haircut, you'll always be my /wonderful/ Symmonet," she laughs to herself. "Whether that's a compliment or not is for you to figure out." She then turns toward the other woman, still unacquainted with her. "We should likely get out of the rain. We can speak of Symmonet's fashion and stylings in the comfort and warmth of the estate."

[21:31] Elias Spencer notices the red-headed House Knight walk in and claps him on the shoulder as he passes. "Finish grabbing whichever flower, and grab a drink with me, Sym?"

[21:32] Estienne Lionnellais blinks as Eli passes him so quickly before he has time to properly respond. "A drink it is, old friend."

[21:33] Nephelia Durendaire snuck through the door quietly, almost hiding behind the group as she looked around. She reached up to adjust the orange flower woven in her hair again, then took the opportunity to slip past the crowd and into the dining hall again.

[21:36] Maeva Faepoix "Can I help you?" She raises an eyebrow, her hands on a cocked hips.

[21:36] Zelig Orheure slides her corsage on, and nods to Sym. Surely she'll bother to give these poor people her name at some point.

[21:36] Nephelia Durendaire looked up to Arismont, blinked, and then nodded, "Oh, yes; that would be lovely, thank you."

[21:37] Elias Spencer nearly passes by the unamused woman without realizing just who he'd almost ignored, and stops short, turning just in time to greet her. "If you like, but I somehow doubt you're in the mood for such a thing. Where's Liam..?"

[21:38] Estienne Lionnellais: "Good evening. If this brochure is correct, I believe I'm looking for the....green rose?"

[21:40] Maeva Faepoix's mood immediately sours at the mention of her husband, a frown leveled at her brother-in-law. "He's home, and I'm starting to think that he married his ledgers and not me." She tilts her head at him, daring him to ask more.

[21:40] Nephelia Durendaire beamed at the man as she took the menu, "My thanks," She said as she began to look it over quietly. She thrummed briefly in thought, "Would you fetch me a glass of the blanc de blancs?" She asked, turning back to him.

[21:41] Zelig Orheure interjects smoothly. "Oh by the gods, I am so rude! My name is Zelig Orheure. I've been hired to work alongside Finia in the infirmary."

[21:41] Zelig Orheure grins madly at Maeva Faepoix.

[21:41] Zelig Orheure: "And you all look lovely, the three of you. But you, your dress!"

[21:43] Nephelia Durendaire beamed at Arismont as he returned, taking the offered wine and dipping her head briefly to the man in gratitude. "Lovely. Thank you."

[21:43] Estienne Lionnellais approaches the group, quickly fixing his corsage behind his ear. "That line was a bottleneck more than a proper line, Fury's Teeth..." He blinks as he properly raises his head, looking between Maeva and Eli. He has no idea what he missed but that look on her face is not a pleased one.

[21:44] Elias Spencer raises his eyebrows and hides his smile at her open ire, just making a hum of acknowledgement at her answer. "I see." Without missing a beat, he turns to the newcomer with a polite smile. "Well met, Miss Orheure. Excuse me." And promptly turns on his heel to join the queue for drinks.

[21:44] Zelig Orheure winces.

[21:47] Estienne Lionnellais: "Pardon me. I don't think I caught your name. The crowd was a bit more chaotic than expected." He chuckles, giving the new face a polite nod.

[21:48] Maeva Faepoix: She turns away from the man who looks far too much like his brother, which does nothing to aid her current poor mood toward her husband and his absence. "Maeva de Faepoix," she responds to the other woman, having heard the introduction but not replying until she had properly threatened her family. "Yes, I know Finea. She studied under my Uncle Matthew for years. She was fine enough at her studies, from what I remember." That frown quirks back into a smile as she eyes Sym again. "Much smarter than her cousin."

[21:49] Zelig Orheure fiddles with the end of her necklace, the chain jingling. "Zelig Orheure. I'm working in the infirmary alongside Finia."

[21:50] Elias Spencer looks only mildly uncomfortable at having to look so far up, but chatter from the last event had accustomed him otherwise. "Something with bourbon, if you wouldn't mind?"

[21:50] Estienne Lionnellais squints at Maeva, nose wrinkling. "What's that supposed to—" He pauses at the mention of Finia's name and a look of understanding comes over him. "....She's far more learned than I am, I'll give her that." He sighs, dragging his hand down his face. First his hair and now this, he is having a great time. "But yes, I heard you were coming. It's a pleasure to meet you, Miss Zelig."

[21:50] Zelig Orheure: "She seemed adept. Finia, that is. Though I must have left a poor impression."

[21:52] Elias Spencer considers this for a moment before holding up two fingers. "Just neat."

[21:54] Maeva Faepois Her frighteningly blue gaze drifts back to the medic garbed in red, eyebrows raising in an unimpressed mien. "Self-doubt truly isn't a good way to introduce yourself, dear. But do tell me why you think Finea would think poorly of you."

[21:55] Zelig Orheure smiles. "No. That feels like a trap," she announces, and turns to Sym instead. "Forgive me. I missed your name, if you gave it. In one ear and out the other."

[21:55] Estienne Lionnellais crosses his arms in front of him, staying quiet for now to let her talk. He is also deathly curious.

[21:55] Elias Spencer raises a brow at the measurement and takes his drink with a nod, too eager to get away from the sudden cluster of people.

[21:55] Ambreliah Shadowrose stepped close to Nephelia and gave a little wave with her free. "Blessed evening and welcome! I believe they say in Hingan... ah, Kann... Konneechawa?" She cleared her throat. "Forgive me!" she giggled, covering her mouth with her fan. "Welcome! I hope you are enjoying yourself! I think I recall you last time and didn't get to say hello, though forgive me if I misremember, there are are, well, too many to try and remember individually. I am Lady Ambreliah Shadowrose, your hostess for the evening." Ambre gave a deep bow.

[21:56] Estienne Lionnellais: "Symmonet, is my name. Of the same Lionnellais name. I wouldn't worry too much about her. If she doesn't like you, you'll have no doubt about it."

[21:57] Elias Spencer taps Symmonet on the shoulder again as he passes. "Join me upstairs? Let the ladies chat as they like."

[21:57] Maeva Faepois Surprise flickers across her face for a mere moment before her shoulders pull up in a shrug. "I'm not sure how asking for further explanation is a trap, but suit yourself."

[21:57] Estienne Lionnellais: "Sounds like a plan." He grins to Maeva and Zelig, giving them a polite nod. "Pardon me."

[21:58] Nephelia Durendaire had mostly been quietly watching the crowd, sipping her glass of wine quietly. Though her attention shifted as she caught another's gaze nearby. She seemed almost surprised for a moment, and then offered Ambreliah a waggle of her fingers in greeting and a kind, gentle smile. She chuckled politely at the attempted greeting, but didn't look at all like she could say one way or the other. "Oh, thank you, My Lady; yes, I am. I was here last moon, as you said, though I fear I am most oft tucked away." she dipped into a polite curtsy at the introduction, "'Tis an honour to meet you, Lady Ambreliah; I am Lady Nephelia de Durendaire, of Ishgard."

[21:58] Zelig Orheure: "Pardoned, for this time."

[21:59] Zelig Orheure clicks her tongue and settles against the bar beside Maeva. "And the surly gentleman is...?" She asks. "Besides your favorite person in the world, if your stare was aught to go by. Forgive me, that's not my business."

[22:01] Ambreliah Shadowrose's mouth fell open. "Well, if I had known I was hosting a member of the illustrious Durendaire family.... I am honored, really. I am... /was/ of Ishgard, till family troubles sent me away, and now I am here in the City of Jewels. I should hope our accommodations are enough for you."

[22:02] Maeva Faepoix "The one that's graying too soon?" She relaxes as the two men walk away. "Ser Elias de Spencer. He's my husband's elder brother, and I've known him far longer than I wish to admit." She shifts her weight on her hip. "Why?" The word is flat. "Are you interested?"

[22:03] Zelig Orheure: "Hardly. He failed to introduce himself to me and seemed rude."

[22:04] Elias Spencer warily eyes the drink he'd been given and takes a tentative sip, begrudgingly content with the quality of the whiskey. "Not.. nearly as bad as I thought it'd be." Attention shifts back to his friend. "What brings you to this thing, Sym?"

[22:05] Nephelia Durendaire smiled, the expression as bright as sunshine; what better way to endear oneself to an Ishgardian than stoking familial pride. She dipped her head, "Truly, 'tis naught to worry about. The starlight ball was lovely, and I trust this will be much the same. And perhaps I shall be afforded more time to peruse the gallery, as well." she replied. There was a moment's pause, considering Ambreliah's words, "Family troubles in Ishgard?" she asked.

[22:05] Maeva Faepoix: "He's terrible," she agrees quickly. "I was going to warn you off him if that was your game." Does she believe this? No. But the attitude he'd shown earlier, and the sins his blood had transgressed upon her earlier that day, didn't earn him a single kind word from her.

[22:06] Maeva Faepoix: She cranes her neck down towards the small voice. "Yes, I much need a drink."

[22:06] Valerie Fauvinaux: *Elias receives a familiar sting in the back of his mind, signaling the arrival of a certain beloathed viscountess.*

[22:06] Zelig Orheure takes a glass off the tray with a quick 'thank you'. She dips her head appreciatively.

[22:07] Estienne Lionnellais: "Honestly?" He pauses, seeming to think about it, elbows resting on his knees as he leans forward. "Partially because Maeva was coming. And, well..." He shrugs. "Vida insisted I go on her behalf and tell her all about it. She was a bit too busy to make it tonight, you see." His eye lands on the purple corsage on Eli's head. What did they say purple was on the brochure again...? "What about you?"

[22:07] Maeva Faepoix tilts her head "Surprise me."

[22:07] Ambreliah Shadowrose beamed at the praise for the Starlight Ball. "Of course! If I am free, I can tell you of the man who rendered beauty itself on the canvases upstairs, if you'd like, time permitting of course." She only offered Nephelia a smile with regard to family trouble. "Long since past. My sister Chrysanthe and I have reestablished ourselves and all is well."

[22:08] Maeva Faepoix takes it, with a small nod— more a habit than actual thanks. "of course."

[22:09] Valerie Fauvinaux offers a small nod and semblance of a curtsy in return. "I had presumed," she replies with a thin smile. "Viscountess Valérie de Fauvinaux. Please to make your acquaintance."

[22:10] Zelig Orheure sighs into her glass as she takes a sip, hand cupping under her chin. She's chosen a red. Red everything. "I was going to say, perhaps I misjudged. But even Symmonet introduced himself before fleeing."

[22:10] Zelig Orheure: "He had much less time to do so, and still did. Polite."

[22:12] Elias Spencer flinches at the sudden stinging sensation at the back of his head, and wordlessly thinks of a wall. It takes him a moment longer to parse what he'd been asked, and he shrugs. "The same as any event like this I go to? Networking, to some degree, but I've found that it pacifies Ma so she stops trying to set me up with another arranged engagement. Once was enough.."

[22:13] Nephelia Durendaire nodded thoughtfully, her gentle smile settled easily on her freckled features. "Oh, that would be lovely; though perhaps at a time when you're not hosting a party of so many." She said, glancing around, "You've a number of guests to see to, tonight." She turned back to Ambreliah and canted her head, though, as talk shifted back to her family, "Oh... I see. Well, I'll not pry, my Lady. But full glad am I to hear and see 'tis now well. You've a most lovely home, and you've my gratitude for inviting me to it."

[22:14] Valerie Fauvinaux does her best to hide a slight wincing as she brings a grin to her lips. "Oh, my dear, I'm sure you'll find I'm quite in my element in these things. It's been some time since I've been to a ball like this. I commend you for committing to the theme, at least." She brings up a hand, inspecting the fit of her glove for a moment. "I find theme parties can often be quite tacky, but you seem to be pulling it off so far."

[22:14] Maeva Faepoix She lets out a sigh into her glass of white wine before taking a sip. Her voice echoes in the glass as she doesn't lower it before speaking. "He is truly not /that/ egregious a being, just his head is elsewhere most of the time. I can't say why he didn't deem it necessary to introduce himself," her tone edges into a grumble. "He didn't even acknowledge me until I asked him what he wanted. Maybe he's decided his blood's too rich for us—arse." she spits the last word before taking another sip of the drink she was probably going to finish much too quickly...again.

[22:15] Ambreliah Shadowrose: "if I have time at the end of the night, I should be glad to walk you through the art gallery." She gave a short bow, fan snapped shut as part of the posture. "Don't be afraid to break away from the wallflowering, yes? I had some fine teas and authentic Hingan treats for the tables for the occasion."

[22:17] Valerie Fauvinaux offers a nod. "Of course, my dear. I'm not one to be shy in procuring what I need."

[22:17] Elias Spencer: **fortified wall imagined**

[22:18] Zelig Orheure gracelessly fiddles with the neckline of her dress, pulling it up. "I think this is... Folding up?" She murmurs to herself. Clothing inconvenience is a surefire way to tell an hour or so has passed. "Perhaps he was just... Hm. I like to give the benefit of the doubt, I truly do. Perhaps absent-minded, if he's simply the sort. Or distracted. I think I grabbed the wrong corsage..."

[22:18] Nephelia Durendaire nodded to Ambreliah, "Of course, my lady. 'Tis a generous offer." she replied, "Pray let me not keep you." the talk of wallflowering elicited a sheepish smile, and a nod, "Perhaps. Though I mind not to enjoy the festivities so; pray worry not for me, Lady Ambreliah."

[22:20] Ambreliah Shadowrose: "It has been an honor and a pleasure, Lady Nephelia. Please, consider me a friend. Ambre will do fine. Enjoy your evening and may the Fury shield your back and guide your path."

[22:22] Estienne Lionnellais winces, the understanding written clear across his face. Some part of him is quite glad that most of the pressure to marry fell on Victor and not him. "Well, if you're looking for a network, at least, this is a good place to do it." He twists around at the waist to see the crowd down below, squinting in his hunt for familiarity from the second floor. "Provided you can find who

you're trying to network with, that is." He turns around again to look at Eli, frowning. "I wish I knew someone to introduce you to that you'd like."

[22:22] Maeva Faepoix Her eyes drift to the short, busty hyur passing by, but a flicker of recognition. Then, the question from the woman at her side stops that thought from going any further. "Blue means you're looking for a lover, correct? Is that not what you're intending, or...?" She takes another sip, more going down the hatch—Fury help us all.

[22:23] Elias Spencer makes a dismissive gesture at the help approaching, attention predominantly on the one to whom he's speaking.

[22:24] **Valerie Fauvinaux**: "The blanc de blancs," she replies without hesitation. "From the champagne selection."

[22:25] **Valerie Fauvinaux** takes it without fanfare, only offering a small nod in some semblance of thanks as she turns and heads away from the bar.

[22:26] Zelig Orheure waves a hand dismissively. Her wine sloshes. "Not with any dedication," she says. "If one falls into my lap, then I wouldn't complain a lick! But alas." She shrugs. Takes a sip. "In truth, I wasn't paying attention. I was distracted. The entryway was utterly overlaid with people!"

[22:27] Elias Spencer shrugs, opening his mouth to reply but stopping short at the approach of someone *not* dressed like help. His drink is set on the table as he stands and half-bows a greeting. "Good evening, My Lady? Is there something you're seeking?"

[22:28] Ambreliah Shadowrose "Forgive me if I am intruding good sers," Ambreliah started, looking to Estienne and Elias, "but as Hostess, it is my duty to... well, intrude! And ensure one's evening is pleasant at the least, Magnificent at the most." She said with a confident smirk. "I hope your evening is within that range of satisfaction?"

[22:28] Ambreliah Shadowrose is as authentically Hingan as a Lominsan Tuna Roll.

[22:31] Elias Spencer looks mildly surprised at the introduction, and carefully crafts a smile to hide anything further. "Well met, Lady.." He takes a guess. "Crysanthé?" What are name plates. "I am Ser Elias de Spencer, and this is Ser Estienne de Lionnellais. You host a lovely event."

[22:32] **Valerie Fauvinaux** approaches the Ladies Maeva and Zelig with barely a nod, heels clacking against the marble floor and wine as white as her dress in hand. "Lady Maeva. I hadn't expected to see one so blissfully wed as yourself to attend what is essentially a matchmaking event. I hope that doesn't mean your husband is doing anything but well."

[22:32] Maeva Faepoix: "Yes, the turnout is much higher than the last event." She shrugs, finishing her glass of wine—wow, girl, please don't do this again. "Perchance you will find your lover, just don't marry an auditor. They will love their damn books more than you." There's hurt behind the words, subtle but there.

[22:34] Zelig Orheure looks sympathetic. Her eyebrows knit together, and she looks like she's sooo ready to offer her condolences. But she's cut off. Her eyes widen. Her cheeks flush. Oh by the gods. "Well, there is some measure of platonic networking, or else they wouldn't carry the yellow roses."

[22:34] Estienne Lionnellais is too Ishgardian to realize how unauthentic the lady looks right now. Rip. "Of course, my lady." He joins Elias in standing to bow to her, formal and warm all at once. "Thank you for the gracious invitation into your beautiful home."

[22:35] Ambreliah Shadowrose cleared her throat. "Forgive me!" She hid her mouth and nose with her fan. Luckily her blush makeup would hide most of the /real/ blush she was experiencing as she felt

her cheeks grow warm. "I shall never recover from that blunder!" she laughed. "Forgetting to give my own name! Lady Ambreliah de Rosenoire." she gave the Elezen a deep bow, her fan no longer hiding her face. "Well met, Sers Spencer and Lionnellais." She glowed with optimism, despite just using her family name on accident.

[22:36] **Valerie Fauvinaux** simply offers a sly grin and something of a diabolical side-eye to Zelig at her reply. "And yet, my dear, you wear the blue. Curious..."

[22:37] Zelig Orheure: "Yes. My own husband and wives died in a tragic fire."

[22:37] **Maeva Faepois** "Lady Valerie," she turns her attention slowly, almost colorless eyes glinting with sharp amusement. "My husband is doing well enough. I'm simply here to watch you all flounder, pathetically clawing at whatever scraps you can gather."

[22:37] Zelig Orheure: "All seven. So now I must replace them all. Quite dismaying."

[22:38] **Valerie Fauvinaux**: "You're mocking," Valérie states with a sharp turn of her head, hand brought to chest in her own mockery of shock. "Our dear friend has *seven* spouses to replace and you're *mocking*?"

[22:38] Zelig Orheure huffs. "Eight, if you count a husband as a true spouse."

[22:41] **Valerie Fauvinaux** swivels slightly around Maeva as she chuckles towards Zelig. "These days? Not likely." After a moment, she offers a small nod of her head in greeting. "And I don't believe we've been introduced. Viscountess Valérie de Fauvinaux, my dear."

[22:41] **Elias Spencer** takes the correction with grace, nodding in subtle apology. "My mistake, Lady Ambreliah. I'm sure that you've enough on your mind and introduced yourself to plenty of others that it simply slipped. But how fortunate that we get to greet you individually. But please, just 'Ser Elias' is fine."

[22:42] Ambreliah Shadowrose opened her mouth to reply, but her linkpearl buzzed. "Ahhh.... what monumentally poor timing... forgive me! I will return shortly to pester you!" She bowed.

[22:43] **Estienne Lionnellais**: "And Ser Estienne is alright by me as well." He gives her another nod, his back straight as he rests his arms at his sides. Anything else he might have said is replaced with a quick call of goodbye as she moves away. Important business, being a hostess is.

[22:43] **Maeva Faepois** Her lips thin, obviously caught in the middle of flirting. She stares off into the distance, wishing her drink were full again and that her husband were here—she truly missed him after consecutive late nights at work.

[22:44] Zelig Orheure nods tersely. She has, tragically, decided she doesn't like this woman one little bit. She's not flirting, she is FIGHTING. "Zelig Orheure. We've not had the occasion."

[22:45] Zelig Orheure: "I truly should go say hello to the others at some point. It wouldn't do to ignore them."

[22:46] **Elias Spencer** lets his crafted smile fall as the woman hustles off, bending briefly to grab his drink and take a long, slow draught. "Would that the hyur would learn titles.. But I'm not sure what more I expected of U'Dah.." He mutters under his breath to the other knight before he sighs, folding his arms.

[22:48] **Nephelia Durendaire** turned to Danqing, sapphire eyes widening briefly as her attention was caught. The large pointed ears implied Elezen of *some* sort, but short as she was, she was

probably youthful at least. "Oh, good evening, Madam. Indeed, I oft spend such events tucked away, but I mind not watching the festivities."

[22:50] **Valerie Fauvinaux** lets out a slight sigh, having certainly picked up on the change in atmosphere at her arrival. "Indeed, I do plan to mingle but the two of you did seem so ripe for conversation." She turns to Maeva, with a slight alteration to her demeanor. A softening, perhaps. Ever so slight. "Beyond the jests, my lady. Is aught amiss? How is your dear husband, in earnest?"

[22:50] Zelig Orheure smiles tersely, dipping her head in turn. "Good evening. Zelig Orheure. I hope the evening has treated you with kindness."

[22:54] **Estienne Lionnellais** lowers his voice to a whisper. "I'm told their titles are quite a lot different from ours." He shakes his head, flopping back down onto the couch and falling slightly into the plushness of the cushion. "But it would be nice if we didn't have to clarify or guess. Or explain ours, either." He shrugs with a sigh. "It does get exhausting after a while."

[22:54] **Nephelia Durendaire** smiled to **Danqing**. "My family has received an invitation to this and the last, and 'twould be rude to decline so graciously offered invitation. Full glad am I just to enjoy the party."

[22:56] **Maeva Faepois** She makes a low, annoyed sound in her throat. "He's fine—he'll just need to make a hell of an excuse for me not to lock him out tonight." She gives a passive wave to Zelig as she says her goodbyes and tries to take a sip from her empty glass, sad it's still empty. "I'd give that rose back and get something less committal. Love isn't worth it." She doesn't mean it...not really

[22:56] Zelig Orheure smiles politely, draining the last of her glass. "Oh, I'm so glad you're having a good time. I hate to abandon you, I have someone to meet, very quickly. Forgive me, forgive me."

[22:57] Zelig Orheure: "Goodnight, to all of you."

[22:57] Zelig Orheure does a quick little curtsy, and scurries off.

[22:59] Zelig Orheure leans against the railing. "Forgive my intruding! I wanted to put forth the effort to actually speak with all of you. Have you found the wine pleasing?"

[22:59] **Valerie Fauvinaux** covers her mouth as she giggles softly. "Oh, my dear, when have I ever required commitment?" She shakes her head with another quiet laugh. "I suppose it is some stroke of luck that Lord Liam is apt to lose himself in his books than his cups as many husbands do. But still, I can understand your frustration." Her thoughts wander to nostalgic visions as she takes a sip from her glass. "My solution was to share in my lover's late-night activities..."

[22:59] **Valerie Fauvinaux**: "But I understand that fencing is a far more interesting hobby than auditing."

[22:59] **Nephelia Durendaire** blinked, then laughed softly, hiding her smile politely behind her wrist. Her accent and frankly all of her save her dress was painfully ishgardian- and then her dress was 'eastern' in a way that only an Ishgardian could replicate an eastern dress (which is to say questionably based on something from a book). "My house, Madam?" she asked, "I am Lady Nephelia de Durendaire."

[23:04] **Elias Spencer** nods in quiet agreement as he takes another sip, idly watching the other attendees. Attention piques as **Finia's** assistant approaches, and he half-bows another greeting. "I've not tried it myself, but have heard it is meant to be of excellent quality." He raises his glass, dark amber liquor very clearly not wine. "Have you enjoyed it yourself, Miss..." He pauses, and sets his glass down before bowing properly. "Forgive me, I was terribly rude earlier in my haste. I am Ser Elias de Spencer, Miss Orheure. You have my apologies for being so brusque earlier."

[23:04] Nephelia Durendaire dipped her head to the pair, before sipping the last bit of her glass of wine. She shifted between the pair as the names were offered, though the look of trepidation that briefly flashed across her face implied well that she knew she would *utterly fail* to pronounce those names. "Well met, Madam Li... Dan... qing?" it was not even remotely close, but she was absolutely trying. And then, "And you, Master Yona... mine?" oh the poor girl was doing her best.

[23:06] Zelig Orheure smiles very warmly given she was JUST telling Maeva how rude she thought Elias was. She waves a hand, and then settles it to fiddle with the end of her necklace. "It's forgiven. It was a tense moment for us all, I think. That horrible kerfuffle with the entryway had my nerves on end."

[23:06] Maeva Faepois: "I would much rather him lose himself in my bosom," she murmurs into her empty cup—oop, there's the alcohol. "Late-night activities," she chuckles at that, then lets out a sigh.

[23:07] Estienne Lionnellois: "Hello again, miss Zelig. I can't say I've tried the wine here myself. I know from experience that the brand they use isn't quite to my liking." Does Sym just dislike red wine? Perhaps. When the topic of the entryway comes up, he makes a face. "I wasn't expecting there to be quite so many people here. I'm not sure how we all managed to fit in the entry...."

[23:09] Zelig Orheure nods. She looks into the middle distance for a moment, remembering the ordeal of getting in. "Sardines," she says simply. Blink. Blink. "In the can, I mean? All packed together, and—Of course you know what I mean."

[23:10] Valerie Fauvinaux nearly spits out her current sip of the blanc-des-blancs and follows with a snorted laugh that she immediately covers her mouth from. "My *lady*," she chides, though the grin reaching her ears certainly indicates that she is in on the joke. "In that case, shall I offer a prayer to the Lover for his safe return?"

[23:12] Nephelia Durendaire normally would argue significantly more about using shortened names, but... she was blushing bright red at the realization of *how* badly she likely pronounced those. "Of course, Master Mirai. Madam Qi. Pray forgive me, I've little experience pronouncing words from the east beyond Dalmasca." she then nodded back to Danqing, "It has been lovely, if rather busy. I fear I've been afforded little and less time beyond Ishgard, ere the holidays settle. Familial and social obligations have kept me rather confined within the Holy See."

[23:15] Maeva Faepois: She lets out a scoff, playful in response to her chide. "A safe return is the only thing he'll have, then. My hands will find his neck as soon as it's within reach." She tilts the empty glass back and forth, watching the bit she can't seem to drain roll around its base. "In return, I'll offer a prayer you find at least someone with two hands to spend the night with—if that is your aim" she pauses, then snorts out another laugh, "Of course it is."

[23:17] Elias Spencer stoops again to retrieve his drink, frowning at the comparison as he rises. "No, but it is poor excuse, either way. Though why the entrance is so small, I still haven't figured out." He takes another sip of the too-full glass and crafts a smile for the approaching hostess. "Lady Ambreliah, you've returned."

[23:18] Ambreliah Shadowrose: "Oh! Yes. The Charity." she shook her head. "No administration surcharge. The donation is passed through in full." She smiled. "Only that way can our guests be assured that the consulate does not deal in fraudulent work, in a city rife with such corruption."

[23:19] Valerie Fauvinaux smirks. There's a slight chuckle at the mention of limbs. "**At least* two? The lady is *generous* this eve." She does well to hide the grimace behind her grin as the memory of Maeva's husband's face flashes through her mind.

[23:19] Ambreliah Shadowrose: "And you, Kerani. Have you had the pleasure of serving our fine sers?"

[23:20] *Valerie Fauvinaux: *A flash of Liam's bloodied face reflects across the tether for barely a moment.**

[23:20] Ambreliah Shadowrose: "Yes, forgive me." She put on a stage smile. Fake, but the attempt was at least authentic. "The administrative needs here never end."

[23:20] *Elias Spencer: Wall. He's still thinking about a wall.*

[23:22] Nephelia Durendaire chuckled, then nodded, "No, no, 'tis not like that at all. We'd our own celebration, and full glad am I to spend the days with my family." She replied, "But indeed, there were a number of events I'd to attend to, and while I should have most liked to travel, 'twas a rare reprieve over the winter moons." she moved to set her empty glass down for a servant to fetch later. "And yes, 'tis always pleasant to see the lands beyond the Holy See, and meet most lovely people."
(2/2)

[23:23] Elias Spencer makes another silent-but-dismissive gesture to the help's offer, still content with his drink.

[23:24] Maeva Faepoix: She shrugs. "Maybe luck will shine on you with such favor. I'll hope for at least two, and if you find more... see if they're willing to spare one." She sets her glass on the ledge behind her and lets out a sigh—she just wants to go home.

[23:25] Zelig Orheure once again take a red off the tray with quiet thanks, and brings it to her lips. Once again, she does NOT mention the donations. Wow, her hearing is so selective! "I appreciate your diligence. You must be exhausted."

[23:26] Valerie Fauvinaux smiles softly to the Lady Faepoix, a rather uncharacteristically genuine gesture. "I shall be sure to send it your way. On ice, preferably. Wouldn't want it to go rancid before it arrives." She grows quiet though, taking stock of Maeva's posture and expression. No mental trickery here, she's being good. "If you're ready to leave, My Lady, I'm sure I can have my boys take you. I had a carriage waiting, but I'm sure there'll be time enough yet for them to come back for me."

[23:27] Elias Spencer nods in understanding of the hostess's plight. "I'm sure. It must be exhausting to run a charity while trying to juggle social needs. Are you resting well enough, Lady Ambreliah?"

[23:30] Zelig Orheure lifts her glass to her mouth, taking a long pull of it as she turns her head to look over the railing with a frown.

[23:30] Ambreliah Shadowrose fiddles awkwardly with her hairpins. Clearly she is unused to wearing such foreign finery. "Hardly. Any proper proprietress sacrifices rest for results. The Charity is simply recognition that so much wealth is gathered in one place, it is simply an opportunity for the fortunate to impart with those less so." She stepped closer. "Hello! I am Lady Ambreliah Shadowrose. I bid you welcome to my home" She offered to the elezen woman leaning against the railing.

[23:30] Maeva Faepoix: "No, I..." She reaches up to her ear, tapping at the linkpearl. "I'm ready to go, Noe." Her hand falls to her skirts. "The offer is appreciated, but I have my own escort." Her skirt lifts in a half-hearted curtsy. "Enjoy your night—may you find what you're looking for."

[23:30] Nephelia Durendaire glanced aside for a moment, and then looked back at the pair before her, "... Pray forgive me, Madam Qi and Master Yonamine. It has been lovely meeting you both, but I fear I must step away. Do enjoy the rest of your evening."

[23:31] Estienne Lionnellais's eye turns to Zelig, confusion written across his face. "Is something down there?" He turns towards the railing, also looking over it like that will tell him what she's seeing.

[23:31] **Valerie Fauvinaux** nods softly, her gaze dashing back and up towards the balcony. "Perhaps I might try to make amends with that absolute treat we shared our corner with earlier. I get the feeling she didn't like me very much. Shame."

[23:32] Zelig Orheure looks to Symmonet, and then back over the railing, and then to Ambreliah. She must be the leader of the establishment, so it'd be a risk to say what she's thinking, so she just eyeballs the floor tiling, and then looks back to Sym. Then the floor. Literally everyone is standing on that floor, she could be looking at anything.

[23:33] Maeva Faepoix: "Best of luck, she seems to do well enough in this circle." A nod of the head, and she shuffles on her way out of the building.

[23:33] Nephelia Durendaire dipped her head, and then turned to step away.

[23:34] Estienne Lionnellais: Seeing nothing, he shakes his head. "At least the crowd seems to be thinning out a bit. Maybe we won't be made into sardines on the way out."

[23:34] Zelig Orheure crooks her finger sharply, lips pressing together.

[23:34] Elias Spencer offers an apologetic smile to their hostess, turning to engage more fully. "My apologies, Lady Zelig is a little shy, but an excellent healer under the tutelage of one of our Ishgardian viscounts."

[23:35] Zelig Orheure startles. "Oh! Oh, heavens. Was I spoken to? Forgive me. The night is wearing me out."

[23:36] Estienne Lionnellais raises an eyebrow, looking down to follow her finger to that very nice floor that he rather likes the color of, before he hears the conversation behind him and immediately straightens up. Oops. Did he distract her from a question from the lady?

[23:38] **Valerie Fauvinaux**: **As Valerie approaches, Elias can tell that there aren't as many probing thoughts as before. It's a bit spotty, like the shaking in one's thighs from holding a stance too long in training, but it's clear there is a valiant attempt to constrain her mind.**

[23:38] Ambreliah Shadowrose "Perhaps a failing in my accommodations. I should hope all feel welcome and at home to enjoy the splendors of the evening. If there is anything remiss, one need only say so." She smiled at Elias and was sure to briefly flash that smile to Zelig. "My original question still stands: Are you enjoying your evening, Ser?"

[23:39] **Valerie Fauvinaux** simply approaches quietly, offering a knowing nod of acknowledgement to Sers Symmonet and Elias.

[23:40] Elias Spencer keeps his crafted smile in place, even as the Viscountess approaches. "Well enough, My Lady." The ache at the back of his head is pointedly ignored. "I do have one question: where did you find that bartender of yours? I've not seen a sc-.. an Au Ra quite so tall."

[23:40] Estienne Lionnellais sees Valerie approaching and his back goes straight, a frown forming on his face. Mind your manners. Mind your manners. He nods quietly back to her, very much not making eye contact.

[23:42] Zelig Orheure takes a long sip of her wine the second she sees Valerie approach. Sips that wine like she needs it, and plants her feet with a click-click of her heels on the floor- oh no she died.

[23:42] Ambreliah Shadowrose shook her head. "The same place I find all my stewards this evening: through a job posting from a local Stewards guild. I am perpetually shocked by his sheer mass, but he has ever dealt a gentle a hand."

- [23:44] Zelig Orheure Zelig Orheure takes a long sip of her wine the second she sees Valerie approach. Sips that wine like she needs it, and plants her feet with a click-click of her heels on the floor. "Welcome back," she says. "Did you have fun?"
- [23:45] Valerie Fauvinaux lets out a soft chuckle. "With Lady Maeva? Always. A light of hope in any drab occasion, she is. Not that tonight is drab in the slightest." She lifts her glass towards Zelig with a nod. "I must admit though, my dear, I fear we may have gotten off on the wrong foot."
- [23:45] Elias Spencer does his best to avoid raising a doubtful eyebrow at her assessment of 'gentle', pointedly not looking at the heavy-handed pour of his own drink he'd been working through. "I.. see. It must be a unique challenge to outfit him."
- [23:48] Zelig Orheure waves a hand, shaking her head amicably. She gathers her hair over one shoulder, eyebrows bouncing once. "It's the nature of the night. Overcrowded and fraught. Think nothing of it. I know nobility is trained in their manners, and so I doubt you'd be intentionally rude."
- [23:48] Zelig Orheure stares.
- [23:49] Ambreliah Shadowrose raised her brow and gave a knowing nod, looking at the floor as if seeing through it towards the subject in question. "Yes, well... a tall man requires a lot of fabric, as you can imagine. I imagine they nearly ran out." she said with a chuckle, hiding her mouth behind her fan. "What of you? What does Ser Elias do with his talents and time?"
- [23:50] Valerie Fauvinaux lets out a chuckle with even the hint of a snort. "Oh, darling, I absolutely would be. Just never to her. *That* was a simple missed cue in the dance. Speaking of which..." She glances back down to the dance floor. "I'd hoped to make amends over a dance, but since it seems there is little for which amends need be made, it seems I'm left only to offer one in earnest."
- [23:52] Elias Spencer briefly follows her gaze towards his feet, unsure of what the woman was staring at until the realization clicks that the scalekin was in that direction. Ah. "I am a Temple Knight, My Lady. There is unfortunately very little free time not spent in some earnest capacity for my House and home."
- [23:52] Zelig Orheure tilts her head, looking down to the floor with a faint grimace. She lets out a long and lowwww sigh. "Alas, I don't think it's an option for me. I'm very weary, and it's very late."
- [23:56] Valerie Fauvinaux lets out a soft 'tut' at the refusal, certainly a bit disappointed. But alas, the night is young. "Another time, then." Her lip quirks up into an awfully inviting smirk. "I'm afraid I'm not wont to take 'no' for an answer." Say what you will about the woman, she's certainly not shy.
- [23:57] Ambreliah Shadowrose's eyes widened. "I am honored to be in the presence of a temple knight." Did she begin waving her fan faster? It was hard to say. "And I feel equally honored, then, to give you a night of respite from your extensive duties. My family had numerous dealings with the temple knights." She looked over her shoulder for her sister, and seemed somewhat relieved not to find her. "We were certainly quite glad to have them on our side, most especially as the the Dragonsong War took its final battle on the Steps of Faith. Did you have the honor of wearing our fair country's colors to battle that day?"
- [23:59] Zelig Orheure furrows her brows sharply. Oh, she didn't like that one. "...I see. I'll have to be more verbose about it next time then," she says flatly. She turns to Symmonet and Elias. "It was nice to speak with you both. I hope to see you both again very soon."
- [0:00] Estienne Lionnellais: "I'll be seeing you quite soon, I'm sure." He looks between her and Valerie, a frown crossing his face. "We can speak more later."

[0:01] Elias Spencer's smile turns briefly brittle at the hyur, attention grabbed by the exiting of Zelig and removing the sharpness of his response. "Fury guide you, Miss Orheure."

[0:03] Zelig Orheure nods to the group. "I would like that," she says to Symmonet, and "Fury guide you," to Elias, and simply "Goodnight, then," to Valerie before she makes her departure.

[0:03] Zelig Orheure waves.

[0:03] Valerie Fauvinaux | Yet another fumble, it would seem. Valérie's brows raise in a similar gesture of dissatisfaction. Whether at her own newfound lack of performance or simply the outcome is unclear. "...Indeed, my lady." Her tone is freshly flat, devoid of its usual sultry gusto.

[0:05] Elias Spencer turns back to their hostess, carefully crafted smile back in place. "I have only worn the blue and silver of my homeland, My Lady. And as life-long participant to the Dragonsong War, I am quite proud that they have been the only colors outside of my House's that I've donned."

[0:06] Valerie Fauvinaux looks to the others, and seeing them occupied by the hostess turns to exit the upstairs gathering. By the pace of her steps, it seems the icy woman's frustration is getting to her.

[0:09] Elias Spencer: **a flicker of dragon wings and fires spit from maws across ramparts and shields raised high**

[0:10] Valerie Fauvinaux: **a wave of heat, purely emotional moreso than coming from memory. Backwash from her fumble, surely.**

[0:10] Valerie Fauvinaux winces, fingers gripping tight against the railing. This headache certainly doesn't take away from the growing tension in her.

[0:10] Ambreliah Shadowrose "Formidable indeed. You do have much to be proud of." She touched her chin as a thought occurred to her visibly, but whatever it was, she didn't voice it. "And what of you, Ser Estienne? Do you don the blue and silver as well? Are you brothers in arms?"

[0:12] Ambreliah Shadowrose blinked as she caught a dark garbed viera in her peripheral. "Lord Aurum!" She said quietly. "Yes, there is little so captivating in all the world." she said with a sing-song lilt in her tone.

[0:12] Elias Spencer: **brief flicker of curiosity at the odd heat before the wall is thought of again**

[0:12] Valerie Fauvinaux shoots Ser Elias a glare from across the balcony. A visual 'don't you *dare* say a word.'

[0:14] Elias Spencer keeps his eyes on the diminutive hostess to prevent himself from meeting the glare he could feel needling at him.

[0:14] Estienne Lionnellais: He pauses at the question, blinking slowly before he replaces the smile on his face, head bowing with respect as he's addressed. "I was, my lady. I served as both a temple knight and a member of the Knights Dragoon. In fact, Ser Elias and I served together." His voice is rather quiet as he speaks, though his smile turns warmer as he speaks of Elias. "I regret to inform you that I missed the final battle, however." At that statement, however, the smile falls ever so slightly.

[0:19] Ambreliah Shadowrose shook her head. "I am sure there is more than enough glory and victories in the tome of your knightly tenure, Ser Estienne." She did find that one white eye to be rather striking. She wasn't sure if it made her uncomfortable or fascinated. "Perhaps in due time, I should like to hear such grand stories and legends! From both of you! May I extend an offer to both of you to do so in the comfort of my home on a more comfortable evening? No formality intended."

[0:23] Elias Spencer glances at the redhead, stepping in to explain before the man has to do so himself. "Ser Estienne was injured in battle, and spent a time recovering from it." Short, concise, and speaks of none of the details of the man's blinded eye or scars too ragged to be from a manmade blade. "And I am unsure that stories pertaining to the battlefield are appropriate for delicate ears, My Lady. Though if there's something else that might suffice..?" He looks to Sym in polite but quiet inquiry, though the subtle look on his face asks a different question.

[0:24] *Elias Spencer: "I'd very much like to avoid that, if we can.." the thought is not aimed at her, by any means*

[0:28] Ambreliah Shadowrose smirked at Aurum as he remarked on hiding from him. "Hardly! My intention to find you for a dance was placated by guest after guest, forgive me!" But she turned to Elias's points on Estienne. "No, no, I wouldn't dare ask you to share such uncomfortable topics. Merely the ones that tell how you earned the glory waiting for you in Halone's great halls. In lieu of such epic tales, other topics are more than welcome over tea or... dinner."

[0:30] *Elias Spencer: "Fuck."*

[0:32] *Valerie Fauvinaux: "Almost a chuckling in the back of his mind."*

[0:32] Valerie Fauvinaux now stands, leaning with elbows on the railing with a grin at Elias and the others.

[0:34] Ambreliah Shadowrose: "...or tea." she added with a wave of her hand and a smile affixed to her face.

[0:35] Nephelia Durendaire turned to Kerani, offering a kind smile and a shake of her head, "I needn't any wine, thank you. But I'd most certainly be happy to make a donation, on behalf of my family." she offered, extending a hand to take the clipboard once offered.

[0:35] Valerie Fauvinaux shakes her head before returning her attention to the conversation across the bannister. "I'm quite fine with mine."

[0:36] Estienne Lionnellais: He looks visibly relieved as Eli cuts her off from any more questions about the final battle, his shoulders falling slightly. When she offers dinner in exchange for tales, he quickly shakes his head. "Your offer is generous and appreciated. But I'm not entirely sure that the tales we have are ones that you'll be particularly interested in hearing." Think, Sym, think. What would turn away a noblewoman from wanting to hear about wartime stories? ...The answer is very little, if they're determined enough. "Lest you enjoy hearing about everyone who couldn't be saved, that is. In which case, the details may spoil your appetite for supper and breakfast the next morning."

[0:37] Valerie Fauvinaux: "Perhaps next time. I already make my yearly contributions directly."

[0:37] Ambreliah Shadowrose held up two fingers to reaffirm his assertion for two dances. "Travel safe, Lord Aurum!"

[0:38] Nephelia Durendaire nodded, her smile bright as she listened, "Wonderful; then we should be most pleased to lend our aid." And then she stared at the clipboard. She had... no idea how much was reasonable. Blink blink. None of these seemed particularly excessive...? she just picked one that looked fine and wrote that down, added a zero, and then handed it back with a smile after signing it with her house's name and a signature of promise to give the steward for the money.

[0:38] Elias Spencer's brows raise in polite surprise at the blatant offer, expression carefully warming at the invitation as it's doubled-down by the leporine man before he leaves. "You're too kind, Lady Ambreliah. It is more than flattering that you think so much of a pair of knights that you'd open your home in such a manner." He glances at his friend, inwardly sighing at the blatant attempt.

[0:39] *Valerie Fauvinaux: *A pang of...something. A bit of a flare in the gut.**

[0:40] Nephelia Durendaire turned, and then decided to make her presence someone else's problem at the most inopportune opportune moment.

[0:42] Nephelia Durendaire paused as she stepped into the sitting area, canting her head between Elias, Ambreliah, and Symmonet, "Ser Elias; I pray I am not interrupting aught?"

[0:42] Nephelia Durendaire is here to cause problems accidentally on purpose.

[0:43] Ambreliah Shadowrose nodded to Elias. "It is hard not to think anything but highly of men who put their lives on the line for their countrymen. There is no greater love than that a man lay down his life for his friend." Yet gave Estienne a forlorn sigh. "Stories of loss, tragedy, heartache... I am not perturbed at all, my good Ser. These things form the fabric of humanity as much as the great and good." She fiddled at her hairpins. "...at least I won't be wearing something so..." She pulled it free. "...ridiculous." She looked at the hairpin with disdain. "My hair is so flat. Murdered my natural waves." she muttered to herself, then pulled the other one free and snapped her fan shut.

[0:47] *Valerie Fauvinaux* leans ever-further on the railing, sipping from what's left of her glass of champagne. Without realizing, she finds herself staring at Elias from across the second floor.

[0:48] Elias Spencer glances at their hostess, quietly unsure of the further drop in formalities. At the approach of another, however. "Lady Nephelia," there is a note of surprise at the interjection. "Nothing pressing, I think. Are you well? Is aught amiss?" Despite the polite concern, there is a subtle drop to his shoulders.

[0:48] *Elias Spencer: *friend shaped nutkin..**

[0:50] *Valerie Fauvinaux: *A thought of the color blue, then a flash from a woman's perspective, presumably Valérie's, looking up at Elias on top of her. Shirtless. At *least*. If he looks her way, her eyes are wide and she's blushing.**

[0:53] Nephelia Durendaire blinked, then shook her head quickly, "No, no, Ser Elias. Pray forgive me. I simply wished to say hello ere I departed." She brought her hands up to wave the concern away, smiling apologetically, "I am well, truly." She then smiled to Ambreliah and dipped her head, "Lady Ambreliah," she greeted, and then to Symmonet, "And well met, Good Sir; though I fear I've not caught your name."

[0:55] Estienne Lionnellais: It didn't work. Of course it didn't work. Somehow, he saw that coming. He shoots another look at Eli, deciding that it's time to break out the bigger playing cards. He opens his mouth, about to say something more to Ambreliah, when he hears the voice to his left that calls for Eli. ...Shit. Someone who knows him. "Oh, me. I'm...Ser Estienne. A pleasure." He turns back to Ambreliah, the wheels in his head turning. "Please excuse my manners, my lady, but we're here on behalf of our own lady." He gestures to Eli. "She'll be quite cross with us if we dawdle, as we leave for home early in the morning."

[0:58] Nephelia Durendaire beamed at Estienne, dipping her head, "Well met, Ser Estienne. I am Lady Nephelia de Durendaire." she didn't bother adding 'of Ishgard' to someone who so clearly was from her homeland- and knew Elias. Still, she settled back into the awkward posture of someone who had tried to come greet someone they knew after standing alone at a party for much of the night- and found out they were in the middle of interrupting and was now running through the mental social checklist about how to fix whatever she'd caused.

[1:01] Ambreliah Shadowrose did take notice of Elias's glance in Ambre's quickly deteriorating formality. "Yes, forgive me, the evening does grow late, and wakefulness does wane. I'll keep in touch via missive then, Ser Elias? I did promise Lady Nephelia a walk through the art gallery as well."

[1:04] Elias Spencer flinches as the thought overlays with present company, and he quickly glances away from the young lady as he sorts it out, silently thankful for the brief change in subject. Sym gets a briefly curious look before recognition clicks, and he slowly nods in affirmation. "A trip this far south does still take time, Lady Ambreliah. Perhaps it's more convenient for you if we simply continue our attendance of your soirees? They've been such a delight to attend, it would be a shame to keep others from also enjoying the results of your efforts, and correspondence would certainly be far easier." The carefully crafted smile is back as he nods.

[1:05] *Elias Spencer: *W A L L**

[1:05] *Valerie Fauvinaux: *BIG FUCKING WALL**

[1:07] *Elias Spencer: faint feelings of disgust, perturbation, mild horror, and general squickness*

[1:07] *Valerie Fauvinaux: Slight but genuine offense*

[1:08] Nephelia Durendaire furrows her brow as Elias looks away from her. She glances between the trio and even her carefully crafted mask of gentle, regal smiles falters slightly. It was back just as quick, hiding the uncertainty and sudden self-consciousness. She adjusted one of the tall gloves, then took the opportunity to look back at Ambreliah. "Oh, the art gallery? Perhaps another eve would be better...? The hour grows late and I'd not want to keep you overlong. And I've a journey home as well."

[1:10] Ambreliah Shadowrose shrugged one shoulder. "Perhaps. The next ball is our Valentione's Ball. There, I should hope to invoke St. Valentione's sense of companionship." She gave the faintest smile, the slightest side-eye, a barely perceptible smugness with the most subtle suggestion laced into it with a fleeting hope. "'Twould be terrible if you had to attend the Ball as a sole man. Good night, Sers." She turned to Nephelia. "Perhaps another night would work, Nephelia, but I can at least escort you out through the art gallery." And she left the pair of knights without another word.

[1:11] *Estienne Lionnellais glances at Eli as she leaves, his face very clearly saying 'What the fuck'*

[1:12] Nephelia Durendaire glanced at Ambreliah, and then at Elias, and then back at Ambreliah- and then the tall woman who had appeared behind her. Her jaw set as she looked at the ground, then turned to Elias and offered a soft, "May the Fury keep you, Ser Elias. Ser Estienne." and then she turned and went to follow Ambreliah with a mumbled "excuse me" to Valerie. head down, hands folded tensely before her.

[1:14] *Valerie Fauvinaux* glances to Lady Ambreliah with an assessing gaze as she passes, lip quirking up and glancing back as she continues towards the other elezen and elezen accessory. "I take it the scrumptious little morsel is a friend of yours?" She asks of Elias as her gaze turns to follow Nephelia away for a moment. "But if you're not going to take that woman up on her offer...perhaps I may have to swoop in, Spencer." Her voice is quite mirthful, far from her most scornful uttering of his surname.

[1:18] Ambreliah Shadowrose gestured around. "Right. All of these paintings came from a man named Jean-Baptiste Alexandre Étienne de Montmorency. My father's good friend. He painted many extraordinary locales and vantages. When eventually he was pressed for his inspirations, he said he had seen them in dreams. Half of them are recognizable by the common Eorzean eye -- like the Cathedral of the Twelve, or the Black Iron Bridge of the Western Highlands of Coerthas. But then others were strange enough for him to be called a madman. A purple forest outside the Crystal Tower? There is no such place. Over time, his family left him one by one for fear of his madness, his

insistence for isolation, till he died alone for his wild inspirations. My father was given his collection since his family did not want it."

[1:19] Elias Spencer quietly sighs before glancing at Nephelia, but the little noble is gone before he can mention a word of subtle thanks. Frowning, the last of his drink is knocked back before he sets the glass back on the table, and sways only a fraction as he stands to address the Viscountess. "That girl is nineteen summers; you will leave her alone. And if you'd like to take the Lady up on an offer that wasn't extended to you, then be my guest." There is an open note of venomous protection as his mien darkens at the white-clad lady.

[1:23] Valerie Fauvinaux's visage immediately drops, lip striking up in mild disgust as she glances back towards where Nephelia walked once more. "Say no more. Too young, even for me. The other one, though..." Her lip quirks once more, brow cocking. "'Twould not be the same invitation, my dear ser. I am no knight with tales of gallantry, after all."

[1:24] Nephelia Durendaire smiled at Ambreliah and nodded, though the expression didn't quite reach her eyes. She glanced up at the balcony as they descended, then looked back towards the door. "... Of course, Lady Ambreliah. I shall send word ere I do, I assure you. And you've my gratitude again for your hospitality."

[1:25] Ambreliah Shadowrose: "You can call me Ambre, it is no trouble. And you are most welcome. Halone guard your path home, Lady Nephelia."

[1:29] Nephelia Durendaire still seemed somewhat closed off, "'Twould be improper, Lady Ambreliah; and I'll not let it be said a daughter of house Durendaire is without decorum." She retorted gently, "But yes, thank you. May the Fury and the Father watch over you, my Lady." And with that, she turned to depart outside, face once more downcast to the path before her.

[1:39] Elias Spencer relaxes a fraction at the change in reaction, tension leaving his face as she changes her tune. "Keep her, if you like. I've little use for an Ul'dahn that has only a bare grasp on how to act like New Money." Fingers find the ache at the back of his skull and gently knead, trying to work at the tension of maintaining a certain vigilance.

[1:44] Valerie Fauvinaux chuckles. "Oh, she's going *right* in my pocket." It's unclear if the double entendre is intended. She quickly turns her attention to Symmonet. "Did you cut your hair, Ser Symmonet? Or at least do something different with it? It's nice. Dashing."

[1:46] Estienne Lionnellais: He frowns, arms crossed and shoulders tense as he keeps his answer as concise as he can. "Thank you for the compliment, Lady Valerie." It's not a compliment. It's not a fucking compliment. He knows it's not a compliment. His hair is /awful./

[1:46] Valerie Fauvinaux | It's a compliment. There's something about the mess she finds more than a little charming. Perhaps that's why she keeps on giving Elias attention, as well.

[1:53] Elias Spencer frowns to himself as the ache doesn't seem to go away, even as the image of a stone wall is focused upon. "It *is* nice, Sym. But I think the dryness of Thanalan might be messing with you. Would you like help with that later..?" The distraction is grabbed for, the small diversion of attention hopefully a path to focus less on the pain.

[1:55] Estienne Lionnellais: His face brightens and he turns his head towards Elias, eyebrows raised. "Would you? I'd appreciate it. I have no idea how anyone manages with this dry air..." He grumbles to himself, huffing slightly. "The rain on the way in likely didn't help, either."

[1:56] Valerie Fauvinaux: "Be careful with humidity," Valerie chimes in. "My hair is often fine, but I've seen many an attempt to rehydrate hair incite a frizzy mess."

[2:09] Elias Spencer spares only a glance at the viscountess' input, trying to mostly ignore it. "Oil, actually, but carefully. It works better than that wax you've got sticking everything together, but I can't attest how straight it would keep your hair." The attempt at getting the ache to subside is abandoned, and he makes a quiet noise of frustration. "I can show you, if you like?" The intonation suggests that the conversation is one to be had elsewhere, and not at the Ul'Dahn manor.

[2:12] [Valerie Fauvinaux](#) nods in affirmation of Elias' words. "He's the right of it. Some of my merchants have a few such oils they stock. I can get you some, if you require them."

[2:13] Estienne Lionnellais: His excitement is tempered by the noise that comes from Eli's throat and his brow furrows. That...didn't sound good. With a quick nod, the grin returns to his face. "Yeah, that sounds great. We can talk about it on the way back." He gestures towards the door, already starting to head towards the staircase, glancing at Valerie on the way. "I'll figure out what I need and think on it. Thank you, Lady Valerie."