8th Moon

It's late. I'm watching Vivian's baby tonight, and she's finally fallen asleep. She's been out for a few minutes now, so hopefully it'll stick for at least some of the night. Alana's also asleep, or if she isn't, she's left the house quietly enough to escape my notice. I'm not going to check. She's a grown woman, it's her business what she does and when she does it. Just because she's under my roof again doesn't mean that I'll go nosing about where she doesn't want me, even if a part of me wants to. I have to remind myself that at her age, it's my job to be a safe harbor, and not a guard dog.

I've already cooked dinner, cleaned the house, restocked my herb bag for tomorrow, and prayed. I should be in bed, but I have little desire to dream right now. So instead I will write.

The adventuring was a more optimistic pursuit than I had thought it would be. A list of good deeds that needed doing, and a group of mostly well intentioned ruffians with a mind to do them. Some have rough edges, some are overly naive, but so far no one seems out right cruel or dangerous. The innkeepers are strange, some of them, but none seem truly distrustworthy yet. Time will, of course, tell, but a good group to start.

Our first mission was to stop children from fighting in the park. This one left my soul feeling heavy and barren. Oh, those poor children. Hounded by gang members, without stable homes or money, cynics with their milk teeth still falling out. What can we do for them? What can we offer them? A beautiful vision of the future? What they need is food and a roof and someone to take care of them without fail. We can't give them that. I tried my best, we all did. I gave them gold and offered them odd jobs, and the grandfather offered them jobs too. I think he runs a children's home, and with hope he will have spots for some of them. We tried to convince them to go to the bard school, and Alana scared off some of the gang members.

But what can we do? We cannot fix the root cause of their problems, and I cannot deny that they are finding solutions. I cannot argue that their experience, short but harsh, teaches them not to trust adults. If they must turn to thievery or gangs or drug dealing to fend off starvation, who am I to tell them to stop, and not offer them three meals a day in return? I know we must try, but god. It isn't their fault or ours, but it isn't going to be anyone's responsibility but the ones who choose to try.

In truth, I'm bad with children. I'm too used to babies and toddlers, and I always get riddled with my own anxieties. If I couldn't keep my own daughter from the bloody path, how could I keep anyone else's? I reason that I was young myself then, and I pray that the years have granted me wisdom and stability I did not have when Alana was small. Still, it doesn't diminish my own self doubt. Ah, I know in the end that that sort of thinking's of no use. I must try despite my insecurities. If you wait till you are a perfected creature to reach out a helping hand, you will never do any good in this world.

Then the party went to the sewers to find some lost guards. I did not go. To be frank, I thought there was no great cause to look for them, though I know that was cruel nihilism on my part. All lives are worth pursuing, even if that life is most likely to be lost for good. Their families must reach closure, and their killers, if they were killed and killed with intent, should be stopped.

There I heard it was dark, dank, murky watered, filled with many gang members and swamp creatures and other things that slash and bite. Most of the party came back ill, for which I am greatly worried. I will have to get everyone waterproof boots, and make up some remedies and balms in the meantime. I do not know exactly what went on down there, only that most of the party died, and the missing guards were not found.

Then we went to the fairies wreaking havoc in the market. While I was there, I do not have much to say on this matter. There were different fairies going at each other, and eventually, some were lured out either through the promise of fennel or through candy. I bargained for some mangoes for lunch. Then a high fey arrived. I did not wish curses upon myself, so I did not speak to it much. From what we could glean, there is much upset in the boundaries here, and so where fey may or may not go is in question.

Then my party went back down to the sewers. I also did not attend this mission, for I did not want to get sick. Mothers and newborns are far too susceptible to such things. From what I heard, this time they found many things of note. They found a morganti hole in the wall, which is terrible indeed. They also found the bodies of the guards, who had been killed morganti, I believe with a weapon. This pains me. Morganti is the most heinous end that can befall a person. Ripped from reincarnation, from friend, from family, from the gods above and below. Is it even Death who governs the destructed soul? No. I cannot abide it.

Anyway, my ramblings aside. There were also two figures carrying a chest which the party discovered. They were not able to apprehend nor kill them, but I think it is good they did not get away unseen.

For our final mission of the day, we were sent to a house on the border of the city which was said to be plagued by disturbances. There were suspicions of a haunting, and as it was at a boundary place, we decided to go. I was much intrigued by this, and so I set forth towards it. We encountered children along the way, playing with fairies and practicing stabbing us and running away. Oh, what do we teach our poor little ones in this awful place?

Then we arrived. On the threshold of that ailing house, haunted perhaps, by ghosts or sins or the weight of many years, I lit a candle. It seemed apt, perhaps it would bring comfort to what spirits may lie there, or perhaps it would illuminate what our own sight couldn’t see.

I brought my lighted candle in and walked about the ruined house. There was a coldness on the far wall, a coldness reminiscent of the chill brought on by unseen spirits. There was an echo on another wall, a word I swore I heard but had no source. After a moment of thought, I knelt at the cold spot, placed my candle on the ground, and clasped my hands in prayer.

It was while I knelt that I saw, in the flickering light of the candle flame, I saw a shadow that was not my own. It followed my own shadow, it bent and swayed as I did, but with the imprecision of mimicry, not a true reflection of myself. I lifted my hand, it lifted it's, I swung my fingers back and forth, I tilted my wrist, and it did just as I did. So I waved my hand back and forth, and then without warning, I grabbed its hand.

Then she appeared. A transparent woman in a white cloak with her hood drawn low over her face. Her hand still clasped in mine, she raised a finger to her lips and went "shhhh." Then we were ambushed by unspeaking people in black. I have no more description than that, for the lady in white wrapped me in her cloak. In that swaddling cloth she shushed me again, and then after a moment, whispered to me to find the way out.

So I led her by the hand, as silently as my feet could tread, towards the door through which I came. I did not raise my head to view the violence that surrounded me, I was too busy trying to walk as if I too were immaterial. No one came to blows with me, perhaps because I walked so silently, or perhaps because the lady accompanied me. At one point she asked if we were outside yet and I told her no, and she told me to tell her when we had crossed the threshold.

Then we did. I kicked open the door and out into daylight we came. I told her, and she raised her hood. She had on a white mask, and then she smiled at me, or maybe nodded, I cannot remember in specific. With that acknowledgement, she vanished.

After this I tried to venture back into the house. I had wanted to go back in and get Alana, but I am not a skilled fighter, and I was driven out and killed before I could even find her in there. I wish I had done better to protect her. I think I did well in the grand scheme of things, I can only imagine the lady in white is a good omen. But I think I cannot truly say I succeeded since I failed my daughter so fully.

Still. The lady must be some sort of good tiding, and the day cannot be said to be an overall failure.

I pray that Syenon's soul is trying to grow out from under the shadow of its own history, and I pray that this time it will succeed. I pray for less suffering pooling between the cobblestones, less blood in the well water. I pray for healthy children born into a scarred but healing Syenon. I pray for mothers with bountiful cupboards, full pockets, and warm houses. I pray for the safety and the heart of my daughter. I pray, and pray, and pray, but eventually, I will have to go to bed.

I think I will make a big pot of miso soup tomorrow, and a few loaves of bread. If any children from the park come by I'll want to have food ready, and it'll be good to take some to Elisabeth. I'm sure those twins are giving her hell. Oh, that's a good odd job for the children, delivering postpartum meals. Maybe I could even have them do house cleaning for new parents.

Damn it. There I go again. I should be going to bed. I suppose I will put down my pen and try.