



I kicked the boatsman away before he could drown us both, and then swam hard for the red light of surface. Durmstrog was consumed by chaos. The burning ship was now a wrecked inferno, beached less than a quarter-league from the foot of Castle Durmstrog, and surrounding it was a bloody battle between the pirates of Lyre and the black-clad pirates of Durmstrog.

I swam for the other side of the river and clambered out, tearing my bag from my shoulders. My waterproof inner bag had kept my most important possessions dry - including the paper on which I now write this - but not my spare set of clothes.

A powerful blow came out of nowhere, and the night took my vision.

I awoke in a dim stone chamber, tied to a chair.

“Good, you’re back.” As my eyesight returned, I spotted the woman leaning against the wall in front of me. “Welcome to Quellshire.”

“I suppose I should say thank you for the ride.”

“Our ruler has been watching you, Envoy, since you first set foot on your ship toward Yorovash,” said the woman. “I’ve been instructed to learn everything there is to know about your Empress.”

“Well, I can tell you she won’t be pleased with your ruler when she hears about this. Who is your ruler, exactly?”

“I am Ussandra, but my ruler’s name does not concern you,” she said. “Tell me what you know of Lady Violath. I presume you met her when you arrived in Erennor.”

“I did not.”

“A shame. I presume she was busy with one of her coastal neighbours. Lady Yrn can be a handful, and Lady Tern is even worse.” Ussandra approached, and knelt down to my level. She had short blonde hair, and piercing green eyes. “When you return to your Empress, tell her that she will find a far greater ally in Castle Quellshire than Castle Erennor.” She flashed me a smile, then walked out, leaving the door wide open.



Act II
Scene 3

Flash Cards

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Jackrabbit

A double-reed instrument

Parallel of "sir"

Acquire or obtain

Negatively charged particle

Ache or pain

Closely related

Egg-laying animal

Goad or provoke

Lease

Out of consideration for someone

Percentages are out of this squared

Perfect, as in a skill

Produce

Rubbish container

Alcohol

Bamboo

Bone

Bottle

Clear weather

Defeat

Dot

Fin

Gold

Memory

Soundless

Strange

That

Useless

Who