

FAZZIO: Say that again. Clearly. *(slowly)* Enunciate every syllable.

FIGHTER: The bard betrayed us and stole the Ultra Die. However-

(FAZZIO slaps FIGHTER.)

FAZZIO: You are the most disappointing, incompetent, undeserving Durna Maestra that I have ever met. You are a disgrace to the entire Durna Maestra race. *(Leans closer, quiet.)* You disgust me.

FIGHTER: *(continuing shakily)* The bard has the Ultra Die. However, we have not come back empty handed.

(FAZZIO raises her hand to slap them again and FIGHTER flinches.)

FAZZIO: Not empty handed? Found something else did you? Something to *pacify me?*

(FAZZIO takes a menacing step toward FIGHTER. FIGHTER cowers. FAZZIO gently lifts their face.)

FAZZIO: But go on. What sugar coating are you trying to apply to your failure?

FIGHTER: I consulted a soothsniffer.

FAZZIO: Ah, some common sense!

FIGHTER: She told us that the Ultra Die will be at a ball.

FAZZIO: Excellent. You had better get it this time. If not, then all those researchers would have died for nothing. You don't want that on your conscience, do you?

FIGHTER: No Fazzio, of course not. May I prepare with my colleague now?

FAZZIO: Your ranger? I suppose. And be sure you don't disappoint me this time, sister.

(CLERIC is in their study, surrounded by books. They have a letter too.)

CLERIC: *(throwing down a book)* It's no help! No help at all! I should have offered to look after those journals, then they might not have disappeared with those scholars! I should have-- arg, I was such a useless assistant! And without their books I have no chance of finding the Seven Dice! Athena, give me strength. *(sighs)* It's no use, I can't focus. May as well read my mail I guess. *(Picks up letter, opens it.)* 'The noblewoman Fazzio cordially invites you to a ball that will take place tonight at seven o'clock sharp. Prepare for an evening of magical proportions the likes of which this world has never seen. This will be a night to *die* for. Formal wear required.' Yeesh, these nobles. You'd seriously think this was a coded message or something. ... O-Or something! Seven o'clock... to die for... magical proportions.... It can't be. She can't have. I'm imagining things. Blessed Athena give me clarity of mind. But it's too specific not to be a secret message. Oh my. Oh Athena. Fazzio has the Seven Dice. *Fazzio has the Seven Dice!* Yes! I don't have the teensiest clue as to how I could get them from her, but it doesn't matter. Alright Cleric, you're going to a ball!

(They probably grab some books are something and then hurry offstage.)

FIGHTER: Alright soothsniffer, time to put your nose to good use.

COLOGNE: *(sniffs)* You dragged mud all over my carpet.

RANGER: Not sure the difference the mud will make. My nose is dying in here.

COLOGNE: It's not the smell that matters, it's the sight. How can I expect to attract more customers when my carpet looks like it was run over by a stampede of rhinos?

FIGHTER: If your skill can be measured by the cleanliness of your carpet my companion and I will happily search out another soothsniffer.

COLOGNE: ... Fine. Take a seat. *(there is a pause as FIGHTER and RANGER look for chairs)* On the carpet.

FIGHTER: *(grabbing COLOGNE by the collar, threatening)* If you value your nose, soothsniffer, you will stop evading and start sniffing.

COLOGNE: Very well, but I refused to be addressed by my occupation. My name is Cologne. Now what is your query?

RANGER: We seek the location of one of the Seven Dice. Barring that, the location of a bard.

(COLOGNE sniffs the air deeply.)

COLOGNE: I smell stone, old stone, and the perfume and sweat of masses of people. I smell the dampness of night, the tangy scent of liquor, the grease that coats instruments. And I smell the ripples of power coalescing.

FIGHTER: *(to RANGER)* Does this give you enough information to track the Die?

RANGER: By the sound of it we can find the Die or the bard at a ball.

FIGHTER: Excellent. Let's go.

COLOGNE: Ah, ah, ah, before you go my fee is five gold pieces.

FIGHTER: I am satisfied with your work, Cologne, so be thankful that you get to keep your nose.

(Lights up on a planning room, graphs and charts everywhere. Downstage right there is a pile of instruments just out of reach of BARD who is tied to a chair. BARD holds a ukulele.)

BARD: *(playing ukulele)* Let me sing to you a song most tragic, of someone whose fingers are gifted with magic. And yet sits here tied to this chair - it's quite uncomfortable, I solemnly swear. Who has the audacity to tie me here? I, who is so witty and full of good cheer! Listen closely, for I thought I could call them a friend, except that my circumstance this view much upends. And where could they be, this most roguish git? And what did they want? Well for me to

ROGUE: Shut it.

*(lights up on ROGUE standing by a table upstage left, back to the audience.)
(BARD gives out a lengthy sigh.)*

ROGUE: I warned you that I'd tie you up if you didn't stop annoying me. You need to learn how to be sneaky if we want to succeed on tomorrow's stealth mission!

BARD: Come ooooo! That's so boring! Stealth missions are so crustacean period. I'm telling you, we could just waltz right in! It's a ball. There is dancing. And crowds. *(suggestive)* You know, I'm super charismatic.

ROGUE: You don't care what we do so long as you can woo people. Tonight is not about wooing, it's about revenge!

BARD: There's a ball! The easiest way into a ball is through the front door. Front doors usually have guards, therefore, you need me to woo them.

ROGUE: It's easier to kill the target by just sneaking into the bedroom before the ball starts. Otherwise we'd create an unnecessary scene.

BARD: Did you just say *(strums ukulele after each word)* in.to.the.bedroom?

ROGUE: *(snatches away ukulele, throws it on instrument pile)* Stop distracting me! I need to work!

BARD: You haven't even told me why we're sneaking into someone's bedroom.