

“And pray tell my Young Kendermaid,” Lord Gunthar looked down at Astrid and pulled rather condescendingly on his mustaches. “What could you have possibly known about our advantage at the closing of the war; you weren't even born yet...”

“Can I tell you, 'Tings'?” Astrid mouthed around a piece of bread before stopping to make sure her Papa had not inhaled his by mistake like he did last time. “I vil not have Lies,” Astrid continued. “As an acolyte of the Chantry of Chislev and Gilean it is imperative to be truthful and avoid being disingenuous in all things, even when dealing with thine Enemies...”

Damaris tapped her spoon on her goblet attempting to call attention to her daughter Astrid speaking to Gunthar in this informal way; to no avail Astrid was having none of it do to being a Kender.

“My Daughter,” Damaris irritably chided her- obviously attempting to put off the refined airs of Kender Royalty. “Remember this is a Lord you be speaking to! I am an Empress, and we insist that you represent the Damaris Trapsringer legacy with an air of grace and...” Astrid blew a Raspberry at her mother and irritably resumed sipping her soup. Damaris shot her Daughter an apprehensive warning look to indicate she wasn't pleased with her undignified manners. Actually, she just didn't want her Daughter hogging all the attention!

“Children have no couth; my apologies Lord Gunthar, I hope the old wizards recurrent snoring does not disturb your meal...” Damaris glanced irritably down the table at Fizban sitting next to Kalin; two brittle old humans on their last legs, one senile, one apparently going that way. “Kalin can you please take some of that cake or something and stuff it in that noisy maw of his...” One of the Kender snickered and passed the Corn plate chuckling 'which end?' A few more seconds of obscene carefully timed innuendoes and the table erupted into a fifth grade lunch table yet again.

“Some things,” Lord Gunthar sighed. “At best should not be done or discussed at the table by Gentlemen.”

“Good things, us. We are Kenderkin” Pez smirked. Astrid burped, and then for good measure one of the Kenders down at the end of the table let out a squirrel fart; the table erupted into laughter again for a good minute; only the Kender were participating.

Astrid took her spoon and noisily sipped her soup as Tasslehoff did the same; with all the Kender's noisily sipping their soup at the table much to the annoyance of Lord Gunthar & Lady Damaris who thought it wasn't in their interest in 'Sipping Soup like Such, unless her Grace decides to Sip Her Soup First; in such a way that would warrant sipping the Soup like that!'

“I vil not have Lies,” Astrid repeated. “There is no honor among thieves, there should be no lies among allies, yah?”

“Lies; Well that would be from a perspective of confidentiality wouldn't it!? I don't recall ever having you as part of my War Council, Young Lady! Trapspringer's Daughter or Not, you're not even old enough to understand everything the Whitestone Council knows; now please, child!”

“Child?! Bah! Silly Human, I am older than your Youngest Son of 23! I am 20 as Kenderkin, 40 by human reckoning. You humans are babies! You should not tell lies about your age, or use it as excuse to say we Kenderkin cannot understand your silly human ways!” The other Kender at the table burst into laughter while the human Knights all remained silent; most likely as it was the truth or the fact Astrid had just called Lord Gunthar a 'Baby' to his face.

Gunthar sputtered indignantly.

“How dare you?! Young lady might I remind you I AM a Knight, who swore an Oath to NOT lie! Whatever do you insinuate you little rapscaillon?! Eat your soup, children should not speak at the table except when spoken to...” Gunthar waved his hand at first and took a drink of wine as he laughed to his peers. “The imaginations of Kender...”

“Fizban he told us yah? I's sees A Dragonlance! Yes, It be a genuine Dragonlance! It WAS the only 'Authentic' Dragonlance you had! The Dragonarmie need not know this, quite clever but we in Ergoth find that hilarious! So In this, I vil tell you 'Tings'...” Astrid daintly wiped her mouth with a napkin before picking up another Cob of buttered corn and roughly tossing the other eaten Cob onto a plate.

(Ergothian Kender can put away some Corn on The Cob! Astrid and Tas had demolished two apiece between them before Gunthar and the rest of the table had touched their Trenchers.)

“The other Dragonlances; they be of varying quality...” Astrid chided, “Always room to improve, in this I tell you 'Tings', The expedition sent back a report that the Silver River and Forges beneath Dragon Mountain have suddenly become imbued with light and heat again! This is exciting! It means the ancient forges were only sleeping...”

“Which probably explains why Fizban's so tired now after The Knights sent Pez and The Boys to pick him up.” Tas looked over at Fizban snoring like a bear in hibernation. “That's what he meant by 'using his breath to get the forge fires started again...” Tas shrugged. “Ok, so he IS Paladine! If anybody could breathe life into something besides himself...” Tas gave up waking Fizban. Fizban at this point was sawing logs with how loud he was snoring and no amount of steaming food or squealing Kender were going to entice him to snap out of hibernation...

“That Old Befuddled Wizard is Senile!” Gunthar scoffed. “He didn't use his breath to relight a forge...” Gunthar paused and looked at his Knights who looked at each other unsure. “Did he?! Why is he here anyway?! Where did you find him this time?”

“Fiz BAHN!” Astrid said indignantly. “That's not a name, but he is silly old Wizard! He cannot be Paladine; as Paladine would not tell lies or silly little fibs! He is telling fibs and playing Possum! Wake Up Fizz Bahn! Don't make me pour a glass of water...” Astrid reached for a glass of water on the table next to Fizban but the glass stuck fast to the table and wouldn't move! Astrid narrowed her eyes and attempted to throw a breadcrumb at Fizban to get him to stir; to no avail the breadcrumb floated harmlessly away as soon as it neared him. The Kenders thought this quite neat so they sat for a few moments throwing and watching things magically drift away from Fizban; as they threw everything including rolled up napkins, pickles on forks, and finally Pez got brave and slobbered a bit of Ale at him only to have it magically 'slosh' back into his face with a surprised giggle. Astrid snuck up and poked him with her finger; only to find the 'spell' only seemed to repel objects dropped or thrown at him. She apologized for throwing things at him and kissed him on the cheek; pausing only to notice that her hand wobbled uncontrollably 'away' from Fizban's pocket no matter how hard she tried or how subtly she reached for it. Apparently Fizban's ward was useful against being bullied or robbed while he slept. There just wasn't a ward to silence his snoring.

“Grey fella can cast spell wards while he's sleepin...” Pez whistled. “I told ya

there was something off about this feller, dunno if he's all that wash about being Paladine..." Pez looked at Fizban snoring. "If this fella is Paladine, then I'm Habba's nephew..." Pez chewed his gold bit and studied him. "I don't reckon the Bretten would tell us either way if he was a Lich or a 'Darkun' (Pez colloquial term for anything Evil.) "He can barely cast a fireball or remember his name..."

"Sure he can, He just forgets" Tas shrugged. "He's Paladine. He knows it ALL, That is, when he remembers who he is. He always forgets his hat. He sometimes forgets his name. He's pretty good at getting lost himself..."

"We found him stumbling round outside in the snow round Foghaven weeks ago without a lick of sense in his head and he'd made up a big bunch of snowballs and was on the lookout for Draconians!* I had to tie him to the back of Pyrite and he cussed and hollered at us all the way back to camp! Said he was waiting for the forge to heat up! You said bring him here once you spied him with the Seers Crystal, so me and the boys went and rounded him up." Pez frowned. "He used all his energy trying to fit with me and the boys, we still don't know as to why he was all the way out there. Dragon didn't even want to land to pick him up! O'l fart was crazy! Him setting off fireballs at us before we landed! We land and he said he wasn't leaving until the forge warmed up and he got to speak to Lord Gunthar or Tanis Half Elven himself; but now we got him back here and he's... fallin asleep."

"That perplexes me as well," Gunthar mused. "Where did you say you found him again?! Foghaven Vale?! Paying his respects to a long Dead Solamnic Legend, ok maybe that explains it."

"Huma's Tomb, Silver Dragon Mountain, Silvara..." Tasslehoff took a look at his Topknot and uttered a silent prayer before tucking the tail into the back of his shirt. For some reason Tas didn't want to talk about it either.

"Foghaven Vale and Dragon Mountain! You were there during the War; we also went back a season or two ago sure as the Dragon flies and camped about a half day West of the hot springs; the expeditionary force and occupying garrison stationed there needed resupply. If the Dragonarmy get wind that those Forges are now operable after being warmed up; they will immediately start eyeing Southern Ergoth & Sancrist as the culprit!" Vallo Leafdew spoke up and adjusted her spectacles as the steam from the cup of tea she drank kept fogging them up... "Ack, Tas! Hand me a... Thank You... Excuse me." The Elderly Kendermaid took a napkin Tas handed her and wiped them off, indicating just like steam from the cup;

the forges were doing the same thing by becoming active again. “The forges used for the DragonLances DO work, you just had to wait a little while for them to, 'warm up' so to speak. You've got a few genuine DragonLances or two but that's probably not enough. It's certainly not enough to hold off this Legion of Takhisis Knights we keep hearing about. I'd opt for manufacturing some Hoopaks fitted for human hands; but you humans aren't too keen on Kender weapons are you?!”

“Giant Slingshots wouldn't look too intimidating to a Legion of Takhisis, would it?!” Kalin Burrfoot raised Vallo's 'Tiny' (to him being a Human) Hoopak and twirled it with one hand while absently holding his wine goblet with the other. Vallo irritably jerked it away from him; pausing only to smoothe the feathers along the top staff before leaning it back against the table. Vallo had 'retired' her Hoopak but she wasn't going to let either one of her “Boys” misplace or break it. She took the end of the hoopak and swatted at him playfully for merely touching it.

“Got to keep up appearances and sometimes a bluff is the best strategy,” Kalin added. “Cat's out of the bag by now Gunthar, you can stop pretending...” (Dm's note* subtle reference to 'Kalin Burrfoot' & the fact while officially he wasn't allowed to become a Knight; instead he became 'One of the Lord's Men' operating undercover during the War of The Lance. 'Pretending' was just part of his job.)

“What are you insinuating?!” Gunthar narrowed his eyes and set his goblet down while staring at Kalin. “Your tongue got you lashed once for insubordination...” Gunthar's face turned red reminding him of the punishment that went along stripping him of his potential Knighthood. “I suggest you watch your tone...” Gunthar fumed. “That, is not something we discuss openly. At least not in front of 'uninitiated' KENDER!?! They couldn't keep a secret to...” He cleared his throat and tried not to look at Vallo Leafdew's Insinuating glare; HER having been his 'Kender' operative at this table longer than half the humans in his current Knighthood garrison had been alive! To imply the demihumans were ignorant of that was an insult.

“What's the Kender Insinuating?” Gunthar's aide interrupted him. “Are they saying we lacked the skill to make quality Dragonlances?”

“Nonsense, this Kendermaid is babbling and knows not of what she speaks shes just repeating things she overheard. Kender do that. Why do we care?” Another Knight irritably glared at Astrid.

“The rest of the Dragonlances,” Astrid resumed munching on her cob of corn “are FAKE...” Astrid blurted out the last sentence while subtly eating with her mouth full pretending she hadn't just blurted out the most coveted secret of the entire WAR!

“Blasphemy! You're an initiate of Chislev, that's enough Young Lady.” The Knight looked flustered. “Lord Gunthar, this Kender is being very rude to us! We are guests! I will overlook it being a Kender for this insinuation that WE are incompetent! We have 20 Lances in all; some mounted and some are not; they are ALL REAL! Granted our newest efforts cannot match the lost skill Kharas used to forge ages ago, but give us a chance! This new development with the forge in Southern Ergoth! It's incredible!”

(DM's note; there were 20 surviving DragonLances found in the Stone Dragon in Southern Ergoth. In the short Story 'The Story That Tasslehoff Promised never to tell.' It was suggested that Silvara only 'partially' broke her Oath by revealing to the Whitestone forces the location of the surviving DragonLances; but not actually revealing HOW to make more. This of course was considered to be the 'bluff' of a hope and a prayer if you believe enough in it its not a lie. It's a sort of allegory to everything to come to DragonLance before or since; the mere premise of having faith; although you ain't got a snowballs chance in hell; pardon the Fizban pun of knowing whether something works or not; whether it be Gnomes or Humans, Kender, or Wizards sometimes we just have enough faith, stupidity, or the actual Balls to push a button and be prepared to ride it out once the gnomish contraption has ascended skyward or into a brick wall! Life works the same way sometimes.)

“Silly boys,” Astrid kept chiding. “Like silly Gnomez!” (Astrid's pronunciation of Gnomes is know M' emphasis on Z) “You build a BIG part thinking it's going to make the task easier; cannot understand why it cannot get through the door. You think if the enemy sees it, It vil make him think twice about what big boy has tucked away in his POCKET! Always silly boys, so silly boys...”

“There are still a significant amount of forces around Neraka just in case the Dark Queen decides to take a bite out of this new settlement you've established in Ergoth; your bluff during the war will only hold them off for so long. We suspect the Queen found out about Silvara; they've sent spies into Sancrist and Southern Ergoth before! The Kendermaid; despite her jest, speaks the truth. I think she's implying -Putting something down your trousers to make the enemy think you

have More than you actually do will only work for so long.” Kalin reached over and took a Cob of Corn off the plate; instead of using a knife to shave the corn onto a plate like the 'civilized' Knights around the table would do- he decided to do like the Kender and take a few munches off the cob despite the corn sticking to his mustache.

All the Kender were smart enough to get the obvious metaphor the Ergothian female Kender had used; from hearing tales from the upper class in the Inn's that were on the salacious end of tavern talk. Astrid was not above flirting with Humans and Kender males alike; although under auspices of the university she served as well as the dictums of the Chantry of Chislev; sexual promiscuity and temptation were viewed as distractions and things the Queen of Darkness easily used to manipulate Men & Women alike. Ergothian clerics were clear among their people as were the other races in Solamnia, debauchery and temptation were often tools of Takhisis. A chaste life was essential among most positions of civil or spiritual authority in Ansalon. All Kender however, are quite fond of dirty jokes, anecdotes, or outright embellishment concerning observations or insults about human Anatomy. If there is a fart joke or salacious story in the DragonLance world to be told for humor; it's most likely a Kender telling it.

(DM's Note: Ergothian 'Kender' while most tend to be slightly more religious after the Cataclysm; skirt this rule of Chastity as they aren't subject to human mandates on the Island of Ergoth made by a human Emperor-

“Silly Emperor, say Kenders and Humans should behave alike; (Astrid's voice drops to a conservative whisper) he insists the chantry has say how they Love?! What nonsense! Nonsense! A missionary position?! Is that silly human Bishop talking about... (Astrid's voice drops even lower as she blushes) Rootings? * Silly Human, make no talk of Rootings in front of Kenderkin! Their silly parts do not fit! Acht! Filthy Duckweasel! You says it naughty boy, nots me! (Astrid bursts into giggles) “Mama, she tells me what courting Kenders get up to; and I says “Nein Mama! I vil not be married with Kenderlings until I have completed my life quest and she say “Astrid you are not a Gnome; you can still 'Play' with the Kender boys. Acht! Do not marry One, make him find you 'Interesting' things to see and do and collect 'More than One', just in case he decides to go off fishing and 'tings get boring'...”) Dm's Note: The concept of Kender settling down and getting married is termed as 'Rooting'- DL15 The Mists Of Krynn' pg. 116. sourcebook- it has an obscene connotation- only if you live in Australia)

Astrid finished the last bit off the cob of corn and Tas saw her smirk at her 'Mama' who seemed to be 'teasing' her husband Uncle Trapsringer and the other MEN at the table by being somewhat suggestive with her own plate.

Vallo nudged Tasslehoff's Father who blushed as an obvious indication of 'idle hands causing mishaps' -when a lady got bored; it was also the reason why Kalin never become a full Solamnic Knight. Tasslehoff's mother understood the joke as did Kalin; Vallo didn't care Kalin wasn't HER Kender husband or even Tasslehoff's biological father. She often reminded him every other day he missed the chance to become a Solamnic Knight because of his inability to think with the big head instead of the little one. Not her fault; as she always tried to keep him out of trouble but she could do little more than 'act' like a mother when it came to Human Kalin or Kender Tas. Both of them probably needed a good ass chewing from someone besides their biological mothers from time to time.

“Letting the little head think for the big one got O'l Whistlebitches in trouble and kept him out of the Knighthood! You missed out on riding into battle on a Dragon because you couldn't keep YOUR Lance holstered with a Lady.” Kalin looked at her sheepishly and kept his head down; regardless of whether the incident had occurred decades ago, it didn't help Kalin with Vallo bringing it up. At least that was the official cover story that had been passed around.

(Dm's note To be clear the Incident was with a married human woman; Vallo Leafdew is a Kendermaid of some considerable age to Kalin; but it didn't stop whisperings of a select few speculating Kalin was disgraced from the Knighthood for attempting a relationship with a Kender; which is ludicrous even if it were possible; humans and Kender ARE NOT romantically compatible; Kalin was a Toddler when he was found by Vallo Leafdew's family in Xak Tsaroth; he was 20 before he met her again in Sancrist as a Kender Scout; by then she was even older. Vallo Leafdew is as possibly as old as Tanis and Laurana. Vallo considers Kalin Burrfoot and Tasslehoff to both be her 'Sons.' although she admits Tasslehoff is her actual son. Kalin raised Tas until he was four; he caught back up with Vallo and together they traveled to Haven to live among the Plainsmen as well as other places until Tas turned 18 and eventually left on his wanderlust and headed to Solace.)

“Mom!” Tasslehoff protested around a mouthful of bread and narrowed his eyes. “You're embarrassing Dad again; Dad, how is the Soup? Pass the pepper to Pez; no I'm fine I don't want Pepper on my chocolate muffin; although I will try

some pickle jam on a piece of this scone...”

The Kender's trencher plate was neatly arranged with a diverse assortment of weird eccentric offerings (trust me Kender would go nuts with a veggie & cheese plate at an office party buffet). Tas took a bite and immediately spit it out as another bug had flown onto his bread and gotten stuck on the jam; the Kenders who are hesitant to consciously hurt any living creature if they can help it had created a 'refugee plate' to let the bugs crawl away to. After that the gravy covered beetle rescued from the fondue was easy pickings for the dogs, cats, birds or the gully dwarf who ate it. Give everything a fighting chance. What happens after is beyond your control.

“O'l wizards got no brains,” Pez shook his head. “How's he gonna help you make a Dragonlance if he can't remember where he took a squat last, or if he cant? stays awake for more than a minute! The old feller is missin some beans and marbles outta his bags. He still thinks I'm a Dwarf! He ran from us because he thought the Dwarves was mad he messed with they forge. We chased him all up and down Foghaven for three hours; old beezer put up a fight until he figured out we was the good guys. Had to get Pyrite to tell him to stop trying to kill us with a fireball. Old fool claimed he was the only person that had permission to be there. He goes in there and blows into this silvery pool and the forge starts up! The Knights said they'd set up a garrison at the Tomb; told me to bring HIM back here to his lordships estate; until we can fetch a Theros Ironfeld! All was good until we told him we were riding back on a Dragon; he throws another fit and says he hates heights; I give him a few sips of 'courage'; he stowed half the dram on the way up and the rest off the side of poor Pyrite's left flank on the way down! We land and he is now acting like ya see here; he's either drunk off that dram or he's playing possum and pullin our legs! He claims the Queen of Darkness is raring to go again; but I ain't never seen no actual Dark Queen!”

“She's real Pez,” Tas nodded. “She sometimes works malevolent magic nothing like when you stub your toe; which wouldn't be very intimidating if all she did was go around and stomp on people's feet; no she summons earthquakes and fires and can make Dragons do her bidding. She probably did make us get lost that one time... We ran around Foghaven Vale for several days until Fizban remembered the teleportation spell he'd used in the first place kept sending us back to the Tomb! It wasn't the Queen of Darkness; the old fart forgot he'd used a spell to get there..” As if on cue Fizban's snoring at the table stopped and he sat upright and he bellowed out.

“Foghaven?! Again? Blast it! Burrhead! Dig out that map, we're lost again!”

“Not lost! You are right here! Silly Human!” Astrid rolled her eyes. “Fizban how can you be a wizard when you forget so much?! Cousin Tas, does he not remember visiting the Silver Dragon Mountain?! He was just there last week!? How can he forget so quickly?! He tells Lies and Fibs cousin Tas! I may be a Kender but 'Fizz-Bahn' better stop with the lies, or we shall have to smack his heinie for telling untruths..”

“Stop it,” Tas bit off a hunk of bread and mumbled he'd swore on his Topknot he'd never tell THAT story again and now these blabber mouths were at the dinner table talking about it. “No maps Fizban, we're at Trapspringer Mansion in North Ergoth! Here try some of this soup! Astrid get him some soup before he goes back to sleep! Fizban! Soup! Eat! Fizban, my Aunt and Uncle Trapspringer have invited Lord Gunthar as their dinner guest, you too! We want to know all about getting that forge to make new DragonLance if you'll tell us!”

“Fizban had Theros Ironfeld bluff by using the true Dragonlance to split the Whitestone; even he didn't know it was the only Lance! We know what happened Tas, we all do. I was on Sancrist when you arrived; you didn't know we were there kid. Fizban is better at bluffing and hiding than you'll ever know. I know it wasn't right for me to stay hidden; you have no idea how hard it was to see our boy after all these years and not be able to say anything. If I did the Aurak would have succeeded in killing your companions as well as Gunthar and we wouldn't be having this conversation. I really wish We'd have seen Flint again; I hope he got some use out of that soapstone I left him.” Kalin stopped talking as Tas gave him a very sad indignant look at the mention of Flint Fireforge's name.

“You didn't say anything about meeting Flint or Laurana!” Tas snapped. “You hiding from me wasn't the problem Dad! Just for once! I used to dream about bringing you to meet Tanis and everybody...” Tas started to get emotional. “I mean, Thank you for the Toy and the extra rations; and the little slip of paper that said 'a burrfoot true and through'; it did make me feel a little bit better when I rode with Flint into battle. I just wish Flint could be here to..”

“WE DID SPEAK to BOTH Flint and Laurana,” Tas mother added. “YOU didn't know we spoke to Flint and we couldn't dare blow our cover in Kalaman or Palanthas at the time. At that point Tas groaned. “I'm sorry Tasslehoff, but you

missed us by an hour. The Dragonriders were getting ready to depart; and that's when I passed the message along and put the things in your pack when you were asleep on the battlements. I even kissed you on the forehead as you slept. We couldn't dare let anyone know who you were! The Auraks, they had spies! Fizban made sure you stayed asleep.”

“Mom!?! Really?!” Yet another revelation dropped in Tas lap by his 'parents'. Tas was getting really annoyed at his parents now! They'd been aware of this whole thing, the whole time...” Tas shook his head irritably. “It's bad enough I passed out asleep on the battlements on watch; somebody could have put a knife in my gullet...” Tas was indignant. “You let someone cast a spell on me?! How many times did you do this?!”

“With Fizban's help,” Vallo answered. “Quite a few times, but it was for your own good. I'm sorry Tas, but that's just the way it was...” Vallo seemed to be unapologetic about the whole thing. “It was the hardest moment of my life right down to the point when I had to leave you the first time; but I always assumed if you were in Fizban's company you couldn't be any worse for wear than if you weren't. Fizban has definitely looked after the Stoa Clan for several generations.”

“Whoops!” or “Uh oh” the phrase that every human on Ansalon dreads from hearing out of a Kender! Kalin looked at Tas and raised his eyebrows and sipped on his soup noisily, The old Knight had a twinkle in his good working eye. And nudged Fizban who was still asleep and didn't move cept to mumble to Kalin 'Oh pipe down and eat your soup Burrhead or Burrfather; where is my Hat? Ohh there it is.. comfy.. zzz.” Fizban resumed snoring; Tas looked at his human Father indignantly as Kalin added, “You've had quite a penchant for breaking Dragon Orbs as I understand it now...”

“Not sure how YOU knew THAT?! Hey is that Lentil Soup? Can I have some of that?” Tas attempted to change the subject by asking the servants for another soup being ladled into bowls.

“Didn't think we knew that did we?” Vallo added. Tas coughed and waved his hands pretending the soup was too HOT but he knew it was a fib and he was as guilty as the cat that had swiped the bird.

“Ridiculous!” Gunthar scoffed and pulled his mustache again nervously. “A bluff perhaps, but certainly not a lie. We are still 'studying’ the Lances and The

Orb shards to this day. It didn't help that your 'Son' delayed things as it were by breaking an Orb at the most critical time. We still aren't sure the methods to that madness but we have always suspected the Kender was compelled by the old Wizard to do so. To delay us, to what end? Who is lying and bluffing and being disingenuous now?"

"Fizban, clearly has his reasons." Tas shrugged. "I've known him that long now to figure that out. Bluff maybe; lie maybe when it suits him. He loves surprises! It's like having a birthday every other day of the week; just sometimes Fizban's 'presents' are an exercise in saying 'its the thought that counted'. Ok, maybe Fizban isn't the most forthcoming about his motives and tends to let us just so happen to 'find out when it's time.' It's annoying; but how are you going to tell Paladine what to do; especially if he knows how to do something but just forgot?!"

"I vil not have Lies!" Astrid blurted out. The Kendermaid's brutal honesty was her trademark & a shortcoming at the same time; her inquisitive nature did not deter her from knowing something by making an honest inquiry. Even if the subject was taboo; such things are unknown to Kender especially in cases where the personal business of others is involved. If you have a secret don't tell a Kender. They Will inevitably spill the beans. "They be fake! The Dragonlances are fake! You've still yet to discover the means to make one like the Original. If Fizban has found a way to relight the forges; we must discover how to forge them, you can only keep enemies at bay by stuffing something down your pants for so long! No bluffs and no Lies! We show their Dragon Army WE mean business and WE have the biggest Lances! Real ones!"

"We have real DragonLances..." Gunthar fumed. "Good enough." At that moment Fizban suddenly sat up and bellowed again-

"You just wait until that forge is heated up little lady; a touch of Kharas Hammer and some feel good wishes and whatnots; and I'll show YOU how to make a DragonLance! Youngsters think they know everything!" As if to add insult much to the chagrin of Lord Gunthar, Fizban confirmed the final presumption by stating his intentions, and then falling back asleep.

"Guess that confirms it," Burrfoot said. "The Lances the Knights attempted to make are substandard at best and until that Forge is relit and fully operational we deprive ourselves of a vital resource in keeping the Dragon Army out of Northern and Southern Ergoth."

Gunthar bit his tongue; and his soup spoon landed with a plop back into the bowl.

Tasslehoff himself spit his soup out; and Pez even Spit out his gold bridge!

(Actually Pez goblet had a bug in it when he took a big gulp; it was just a harmless beetle so he let it climb back out and placed it on the 'refugee plate' next to Fizban who was still Fast asleep with his head propped up on the table next to his staff and Hat; Tas had sent several bowls of soup down the table hoping the scent would wake him up but he suspected either the dog or Fooge The Gully Dwarf had nabbed his soup; and left nothing but bread crumb scattered like Rye Trencher snowflakes across his sleeping form.) Tas gave up and passed Pez the skewers with steamed Oysters.

“Quite silly of you boys.” Empress Damaris dabbed a piece of bread in her soup and nibbled on it as if slightly bored. “Darling Tasslehoff, how is the Soup?”

“It's Fine,” Tas stammered. “It's excellent soup Aunty Damaris!” Tas kept noticing HER eyes wander to the two younger Kender 'footmen' who attended her to dinner to 'bring her forks n stuff' and then back to Tasslehoff with a smirk. She was flirting with Them as well as Tas! To think that at one time thy had tried to marry him off to the amorous shrew (for a Kender)- of a woman who cared little for anyone's pursuits except her own. Lady Damaris was spoiled and pampered and that wouldn't change even if she hadn't married Trapspringer.

Astrid however was not like her mother; and Tas certainly had to be grateful for that. Maybe in another life it had been Pez instead of Gisella Hornslager who had grabbed him up in Solace that day on a bounty to be taken to Kendermore all those years ago; as it stood he wasn't being abducted and forced to marry anyone as of right now and that was all fine with him. He noticed Vallo and Kalin watching him whenever he spoke to Astrid and whispering among themselves when they thought he wasn't observing them. What was all that about?! Astrid was only Tas cousin by Marriage, but that certainly couldn't be the reason as to why Vallo had written him a letter and requested him to travel to Northern Ergoth just to find Fizban senile and babbling out of his mind about Dragonlances. There had to be more to it.