

You loved your last book...but what
are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, Love**reading** will help you find new
books to keep you inspired and entertained.

Opening Extract from...

Stranger of Tempest

Written by Tom Lloyd

Published by Gollancz

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.
Please print off and read at your leisure.

STRANGER^{OF}
TEMPEST

TOM LLOYD

GOLLANCZ
LONDON

Copyright © Tom Lloyd-Williams 2016
All rights reserved

The right of Tom Lloyd-Williams to be identified as the author
of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with
the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published in Great Britain in 2016
by Gollancz
An imprint of the Orion Publishing Group
Carmelite House, 50 Victoria Embankment,
London EC4Y 0DZ
An Hachette UK Company

A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 1 473 21317 3

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Typeset by Born Group
Printed in Great Britain by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY



www.tomlloyd.co.uk
www.orionbooks.co.uk
www.gollancz.co.uk

For Euan Richard Lloyd-Williams

Soldiers of Anatin's Mercenary Deck

	SUN	STARS	BLOOD	SNOW	TEMPEST
PRINCE	ANATIN				
17	Foren				
16	Sonnersyn				
KNIGHT	PAYL	OLUT	REFT	SAFIR	TESHEN
14	Karra	Dortrinās	Silm	Layir	Finc
13		Arut	Brellis	Aspegrim	
DIVINER		ESTAL	HIMBEL		LLAITH
11	Haphori	Rubesh	Crast		Flinth
10					
STRANGER	VARAIN		ULAX		
8	Darm		Toam	Sandath	
7	Brols				
MADMAN	CRAIS	KAS		BURNEL	
5	Fael	Hald		Shoal	
4				Ismont	
JESTER		ASHIS	DEERN	TYN	BRAQUE
2			Hule		Tunnest
1					

Interlude 1

(now)

For a damsel in distress, she was rather more spattered with someone else's blood than Lynx had expected. And naked. Very naked.

'Well?' she demanded.

Lynx could only gape a while longer. Finally his words spilled out in an abashed mumble. 'Um – come to rescue you, miss.'

'You'll have to wait,' she snapped at the knot of mercenaries crowding the doorway. 'I'm busy.'

'Guh.'

Lynx tried to say more, but something in his head had stopped working the moment she'd opened the door, and his tongue seemed to fill his mouth. A beguiling scent of vanilla and night jasmine fogged his mind. Beside him the hard-bitten veteran, Varain, sounded like he was choking, while the silent giant, Reft, was as wordless as ever.

It fell to Safir to remember how to use words and even the former nobleman hesitated before he offered a deep bow.

'We are at your command, my lady.'

That prompted a small smile. 'Glad at least one of you's seen a woman before.'

Safir inclined his head and gave a polite cough. 'Ah, my lady?'

'Yes?'

'Your, ahem, friend,' he said, pointing behind her. 'He's found a knife.'

Once Lynx managed to drag his gaze off the woman, he saw a half-dressed man with pale hair and chiselled features staggering woozily in the room behind. Blood dribbled from his broken nose down a once-fine white doublet and his silk stockings were ripped and sagging. As the man tried to yank his britches back up from his ankles he only managed to rip them further as he snagged one foot.

An emerald silk shift lay on the floor nearby. From the smell of brandy, Lynx guessed the man had staggered in and ripped it off her when she answered the door. A broken nose certainly seemed a fair start.

Eventually the man managed to haul his britches over his knees and waddle forward, brandishing a gold-hilted dagger in their direction. His long, oiled hair was now plastered over one side of his face, his lips swollen and bleeding as he tried to work his mouth well enough to call for help.

‘Oh please.’

The woman sighed and stalked back into the room, ignoring the blade Safir offered. Instead she swept up a candlestick from a side table and lashed out with a ferocious backhand swipe. She caught the nobleman’s wrist and Lynx heard something snap under the impact. As the blade tumbled from the man’s grip she followed the blow up with a knee to his stomach. That threw him back against the ornate bedpost and drove the wind from any further attempt to cry out.

‘Lady Toil,’ Anatin called from behind Lynx. ‘We’re on something of a schedule here. Could we hurry this up?’

Lynx glanced back at their commander. The grey-haired man didn’t seem in the least surprised that their fifteen-year-old kidnap victim was in fact a muscular veteran of about thirty, the glisten of sweat on her skin only highlighting her wide assortment of scars. Nor that she was beating seven shades of shit out of an armed nobleman.

Her long hair was tinted a deep red and had been carefully styled prior to her current exertions, her fingernails painted a similar bright shade to her raw, bloodied knuckles. Even naked she stood tall and moved with lithe purpose, quite unconcerned by the mercenaries watching like lust-struck little boys. Lynx realised he'd been holding his breath as he watched her and exhaled noisily.

'Lady Toil?' The woman laughed. 'I like the sound of that.'

She punched the nobleman on his already-broken nose and he flopped back on the bed, whimpering.

'You,' Toil ordered, pointing at Lynx. 'Clothes in that drawer, boots in the cupboard.'

Lynx blinked dumbly at her for a moment. It took a swat around the head from Anatin before he sheathed his sword and ducked his head, muttering, 'Clothes, right.'

'Good boy.'

'So who in the coldest black is he then?' Lynx added as he pulled open the drawer and tossed aside a silk dress to unearth something rather more practical.

A pair of short-swords lay under a plain tunic and trousers so he pulled them out and threw them over a chair. He shook his head as though he could dislodge the image of Toil that had been burned into his mind, stoking his anger to distract the lurching sensation from deep in his belly.

'This ray of sunshine?' Toil asked, holding the man's lolling head up. 'Can't you guess?'

'All I know's we've been lied to all the way here,' Lynx said. 'Those were proper soldiers downstairs, this ain't the house of some minor noble who didn't like being told no.'

Toil let the man drop back and hauled on her linen drawers and shirt. 'You're mercs,' she commented. 'You do what you're told and you get paid for it.'

'Lynx,' Anatin added in a warning tone, 'you of all folk got no right to start getting pissy now.'

Lynx gave the commander a level look. ‘I signed up for a rescue, not an assassination. Right now I’m guessing this job’s a whole lot more dangerous than we thought. You even told your Knights what the real mission is?’

Toil took a step towards him. Despite the fact she was unarmed and distractingly beautiful, she carried a threatening air that made him tense.

‘You were told enough,’ she said firmly. ‘Get me out of the house, escort me out of the city.’ Without warning a dazzling smile broke like the sun through clouds. ‘Now be a sweetheart and fetch my pack and boots. We’ll be running soon.’

‘She’s right, Lynx,’ Safir added, stepping in to the room so Lynx’s unit commander, Teshen, could look inside. Both the dark-skinned Safir and pale Teshen were Knights of the company and neither seemed disquieted by what they saw. ‘I can put the pieces together, but now’s not the time. We ride clear of the city, then we can fling blame about like angry monkeys.’

Lynx paused as he pulled the boots and pack from the cupboard she’d indicated. He looked over at the battered man on the bed while Toil continued to dress. Olive-skinned and blue-eyed, the man was clearly an Asann merchant prince and now he looked around the room, Lynx realised this wasn’t some nobleman’s city residence at all. More likely the elegant home of a merchant’s mistress, albeit a rich one.

What’d be the worst trouble we could be in right now?

Lynx sagged. ‘He’s Princip of the Assayed Council, isn’t he?’

‘Not for much longer,’ Toil said darkly, lacing up her boots. Once that was done she stood and belted her short-swords on. ‘Anatin, you ready?’

The commander nodded towards Teshen and jerked his thumb at the corridor behind him. ‘Get ready to move, assume there are more guards.’

‘There won’t be,’ Toil interjected. ‘He always comes with just a handful, but there will be patrols on the street.’

‘So we go quietly,’ Anatin replied. ‘Teshen, check the street.’

‘Quietly? Sure, I guess,’ Toil said with a small smile. ‘Now come here, you gutless little fuck.’

She grabbed the Princip of the Assayed – ruler of the entire city-state of Grasiel – by his bloodied tunic and hauled him upright. The man whimpered and snivelled, barely supporting his own weight, but Toil was a powerful woman and held him easily.

‘Yeah, we could do quiet I suppose.’

Toil gave the mercenaries a savage grin and lurched abruptly right. Lynx watched open-mouthed as she took a brief run-up to the diamond-pattern window that covered much of the western wall. With a grunt of effort she hurled the Princip at the large central panel. The glass seemed to explode out into the night air and he pitched through – finally finding his voice as he flailed at the darkness. He dropped, the echo of his shrieks cut off by a sickening crunch from the paved street beyond.

There was a moment where no one even breathed. Then Toil leaned out of the window and gave a grunt of approval.

‘See, all quiet now,’ she said as she headed for the door.

It was late into the night and a quiet neighbourhood. Lynx was in the corridor and already running by the time he heard the first screams.

Chapter 1

(two weeks earlier)

Lynx opened his eyes and immediately regretted it. Dark stone walls swam before his eyes, outlined by a faint scrap of light that crept in through bars set into the door. His breath caught in his throat as panic set in and his heart began to judder in his chest. It was a cell.

The cloying stink of shit and rank old sweat hit him like a punch. Memories blossomed from the dark stars unfolding before his eyes as pain shot through his head. Voices of men long dead, cries in the night and the bite of pitted iron shackles on his skin.

He closed his eyes again, as though willing himself away from that place, but instead another voice came – a deep rolling accent of the far south-east that cut through the fear. A man he'd once known. A man who'd once saved him from fear.

Lynx fought the panic down and opened his eyes again, finally able to notice the sensation of a vice clamped around his head. For a while that was all he could feel and slowly he realised that this was no ordinary hangover. The throb seemed to be most obvious down one side and he tried to touch his fingers to his head. That prompted a whole new set of hurts as he discovered his wrists were bound so tight his hands were numb, his shoulders bruised and aching.

'Aye, they fucked you up good.'

Lynx turned his head and found a new set of regrets. The view hadn't improved, but now his neck had joined in the clamour.

His vision blurred as muscles fluttered in spasm and the mother of all hangovers kicked him in the head. For a moment all he could see was the memory of bottles on a table, and a small wheeze escaped his cracked and swollen lips. He focused on the pain, embraced it as a friend compared to his memories.

A small man with long hair sat on a stone ledge, biting filthy nails as he eyed Lynx.

‘So who’d you kill?’

Lynx felt a lurch at the question and his cramping stomach obliged, heaving up what little remained inside while every other pain in his body clamoured for attention. A bright white flash lanced across his eyes, obscuring everything until his stomach finally settled.

Kill? Night’s whispers, what did I do?

The small man’s face curled into a cruel smile as he lifted his feet away from the spattering of puke. ‘Must’ve been one hell of a night,’ he commented.

‘Don’t remember,’ Lynx croaked.

He paused and looked again at the man. There was something not quite right about him. Gap-toothed, check. Grimy, stinking clothes, check. Silver ring on his finger engraved with three diamond shapes – black, grey and white – hmm.

‘That’s . . .’ Lynx said, almost panting for breath at the effort of speaking, ‘that’s my ring.’

‘Nope, it’s mine.’

‘Give it back. Now.’

‘Found this a while back,’ the man said, ‘and it don’t have your name on it. More importantly, you’re trussed like a hog and I could stamp your face in right now if I wanted. You’re in no condition to give orders.’

‘Why’m I tied up?’

The man snickered. ‘Cos they had to drag you in, what with it taking half the guards to beat you senseless. Anyway,

I reckon you killed someone last night so you won't need a ring where you're going.'

Lynx spent a dozen breaths trying to order his thoughts. Even thinking hurt and left him panting for breath.

'That's my ring,' he said eventually.

The man hopped forward and bent low over Lynx, teeth bared in anger now. 'And I said it's fucking mine now, get it, fat boy? You don't like it, mister tied-up-and-puking, tough shit.'

Lynx blinked then very slowly closed his eyes. His head rang like a temple bell. Cuts and bruises on top of the hang-over that was really getting its teeth into him. Inwardly he shrugged.

With what strength he had left, Lynx grabbed the man's shirt and hauled him down. Their heads cracked together and stars burst before his eyes as the other man howled. With a jerk that made the world swim and his stomach heave, Lynx hauled his broad body up and the other's down so his greater bulk pinned the man. It wasn't easy with hands and feet bound, but he had a good enough grip that the squirming wretch couldn't move. Lynx was on the tall side, barrel-chested and with arms as thick as the other man's legs. It was true he had something of a paunch on him too, but he was strong enough that few were so stupid as to comment on it.

'What are you in for?' he growled.

'Bathtad!' squeaked the man, blood squirting from his nose.

'Answer me or I'll do it again.'

'Okay, okay! Theft, it'th theft!'

'So there you sit, half my size and thinking I'm in for murder – but you still take my ring?' Lynx's hands closed around the man's neck, not too tight, but enough to make it clear that even bound he could still throttle the man. 'You really that bloody stupid?'

'No! No, take it!'

Lynx felt hands fumbling under him and eased to one side enough to let the man pull the ring from his hand. In his haste he dropped it between them so Lynx shoved him off the bench and into the puke on the floor. Slumped on his side, it took him a while to find the ring, but at last he did and he jammed it on his left hand as best he could.

‘Shit,’ the small man moaned, ‘bathtad!’ With one sleeve pressed to his nose the man picked himself up and crawled on to the other bed. ‘Didn’t need to do that.’

‘Pretty sure I did,’ Lynx muttered, submitting to the cries of his body and relaxing back down on to the bed with one eye on the other man. His vision lurched and went from black to purple and pink as everything hurt at once, but as he lay still it slowly receded. ‘You didn’t figure I could move enough to get it back.’

‘They hang you,’ the man huffed, ‘guards get ya stuff anyway.’

Lynx winced. ‘Shut up.’

Shattered gods, did I really kill someone last night?

Praying his expression wasn’t obvious in the gloom of the cell, Lynx stared up at the ceiling and willed the straight lines above to remain still. He couldn’t remember anything from the previous night and the more he tried the more his head hurt. The ache was a cloud in his mind that obscured and confounded every effort.

Gods – what town is this, even? Where am I?

Before any clarity could come the cell door was yanked open. Lynx looked up, scowling at the shaft of daylight that cut across the room beyond. He screwed up his eyes and managed to focus on the figure at the door – a grey-haired man who frowned at each of the occupants, one hand on the butt of a club stuffed into his belt.

‘Time to go,’ he said in a gruff voice.

‘Me, sir?’ the smaller man piped up hopefully, scrabbling upright.

‘No.’ The guard paused and gave the thief an appraising look. ‘What happened to you?’

A scowl. ‘I fell.’

The guard snorted and raised an eyebrow at Lynx. ‘He fell, eh? That’s why there’s blood on *your* face, eh?’

‘Fell on my forehead,’ Lynx muttered with a wince. ‘Tried to rob me.’

‘Bloody disgrace – you put a thief in gaol and the bugger just tries to steal stuff.’

Lynx decided not to comment. The man was probably joking, but he wasn’t inviting others to the party and anyway, Lynx wasn’t much of a laugh when hungover and hurting.

‘Can you get up, madman?’ the guard continued after a pause. ‘After last night I ain’t keen on cutting your bonds.’

Lynx grunted. His feet were bound too. Whatever had gone on the previous night, he’d been enough trouble to make them truss him up like a turkey. ‘Not sure I’ll manage the walk to the magistrate.’

‘Your lucky day then, you ain’t off to see her. You’re getting out.’

‘I am?’

‘There’s a fine to pay, then we’ll be glad to see the back of you.’

‘I didn’t hurt anyone?’

From his right the smaller man snorted angrily, but Lynx ignored him and the guard shut him up with a glare.

‘Only a man’s pride. You were too drunk to do much more’n get a beating.’

‘That’s a mercy then,’ Lynx said with relief. He glanced down at himself. He still had his jerkin, boots and trousers, but his sword-belt and jacket were conspicuous by their absence. ‘A fine, though. Don’t know what money I’ve got left.’

‘Enough,’ the guard said curtly. ‘We’re not all thieves round here. You can come and pick up your possessions now.’

Lynx nodded. ‘Definitely won’t get any trouble from me in that case,’ he said, lifting his hands in a suitably pathetic manner.

‘He gets off with just a fine?’ the smaller man yelled furiously. ‘He’s mad, you said it yourself! Probably a murderer too! Just broke my damn nose!’

‘Shut up,’ the guard and Lynx said in unison.

The men exchanged looks and Lynx tried to remember what apologetic looked like. He was well aware he was still bound and in gaol. He wasn’t sure if the guard was annoyed or amused, but either way the man didn’t comment.

‘Your nose ain’t broken,’ the guard said at last, ‘‘cos you’d be squealing like a pig if it were. And none of us give a damn anyway – certainly not enough to trouble the magistrate over some thieving scrote who deserved it. Frankly, compared to the chair he fell on while trying to punch old man Greyn, your nose ain’t worth anything.’

The interruption seemed to make the guard’s mind up and he drew a knife. Lynx tensed instinctively as the man approached him then lowered his eyes, feeling foolish.

‘Sorry, old habits.’

‘Soldier?’

Lynx nodded.

The guard paused. ‘What side?’

‘Not one I care to defend these days.’

The guard nodded and cut through the rope around Lynx’s hands. When the heavysset mercenary only groaned with pleasure and rubbed his wrists, he did the same for his feet and stepped back. Lynx sat up as best he could and propped himself against the wall.

‘Thanks.’

That seemed to surprise the guard. He gave Lynx a suspicious look, then shrugged and backed away to allow him to rise and

leave the cell. Lynx did so without haste. The nice man was letting him leave and Lynx had no intention of startling him, even if his protesting body suddenly became capable of it. He shuffled out and stood where the guard directed, trying not to fall over, while the man locked the door again.

That done, Lynx was ushered down the corridor and up a short flight of stone steps, emerging into a square guard-room where three armed men glared at him. Thin strips of light slanted down through the narrow windows on the far wall and Lynx faltered as he blinked away the bright trails in his vision.

‘Over there,’ the guard ordered, pointing to a pair of iron-bound doors on the left. A lock-room, Lynx guessed, with a messy desk placed at one side of it. He dutifully shuffled over as a portly old guard with impressive whiskers took station there. With a self-important huff the guard sat and opened a ledger, eyeing Lynx with disdain.

‘Name?’

‘Lynx?’

The guard paused. ‘Real name.’

‘Lynx.’

The guard placed a hand flat down on the ledger page. ‘Listen, son, you’re getting off with a fine. Now’s not the time for playing silly buggers.’

‘I realise that,’ he said, adding ‘sir’ a little later than intended. ‘Name I was born with got left behind years back, along with the damn fool who was proud of it. I’ve been just Lynx for more’n five years now. Suits me better’n anything from a place I don’t care for any more.’

‘And where’s that?’

‘So Han.’ He knew it was coming, but still he felt the hairs on the back of his neck rise as the men around him tensed.

‘You’re one of them, eh?’

Lynx shook his head. ‘Not since before the war ended – place can rot for all I care. I’ve left all that behind, is why I’ve gone by Lynx ever since.’

‘Why Lynx?’ asked the guard who’d escorted him up, appearing at the older one’s side. Of all the men in the room, his was the only demeanour not affected by the place of Lynx’s birth, which presumably meant he was an easterner. So Han’s brutal campaign of conquest had gobbled up a fair chunk of the Greater Lakes, but had imploded before it could reach across the continent.

Lynx shrugged as best he could without provoking his hangover.

‘They don’t live in packs; prefer their own company and rely just on themselves, but they’re not the biggest or toughest out there. I ain’t trying to persuade the world I’m as dangerous as a mountain lion. That’ll just get a man in more trouble than his drinking is likely to land him in.’

His attempt at a self-deprecating smile got little change from his audience so he quickly continued. ‘Also, my eyes are a funny colour; folks used to say like a cat’s when I was young.’ Lynx turned to look at the man properly, blinking as he afforded him a look at his yellow-flecked brown eyes.

The older guard grunted, clearly unwilling to give too much of a damn about Lynx, even if he didn’t like his name.

‘Fine, Lynx it is, once of So Han. We’ve got a note of your marks already – if any bounty hunter comes looking for the man you once were, the description’s clear enough.’

Lynx nodded. The scars on his back were extensive, one of the many joys of his homeland’s army discipline, and he also had cat’s claws tattooed on his forearm, legacy of another night’s excess. Most obvious though was the complex character on his right cheek – a stylised script from somewhere to the south that translated to ‘honour or death’. He preferred the

sentiment to the tattoo, but it was far better than the prison designation it had suborned.

‘No one’s looking for me,’ he said. ‘I’ve done nothing but bodyguard work for years and made no enemies.’

‘Well I suggest you keep on doing that – away from Janagrai too.’

Lynx winced as he suddenly remembered why he’d come to this town in the first place. ‘Got something I need to do here first. Think my last employer’s family are here.’

‘Don’t tell me you’re dumb enough to go and start making demands for payment now?’

‘Just returning what’s theirs,’ he said with a shake of the head. ‘We got hit a couple of days back by bandits and Master Simbly took an arrow in the lung. I brought his goods, came to give them to his widow and tell her where I buried the man.’

‘Master Simbly?’ the guard growled. ‘I know him, knew anyway. Where’d this happen?’

‘Out on the lake road from Tambal.’

‘Why would you be taking that route?’

Lynx shrugged. ‘Said he was late and needed to take the shorter road. He’d heard the road was safe this season and I wasn’t the only one with a mage-gun. He took passengers too, woman who said she was from somewhere down towards the ocean channel coast and her retainer. Some sort of militia officer she was, called Kelleby. Once we sent a few icers their way the bandits scarpred, but they’d already got in a lucky shot.’

The guard glanced around his fellows and someone behind Lynx spoke up. ‘I’ve seen the woman; she’s staying at the Witchlight too, waiting for passage onwards.’

Lynx nodded. The name rang a bell. He just had to hope the rest of his kit and Master Simbly’s goods were still stored there, otherwise folk might start getting an unfriendly impression.

‘Hach,’ called the whiskered guard to a younger one loitering nearby, ‘go and find her, check that out. Guess I’ll be giving the bad news to the Widow Sibly.’

‘I’ll do that,’ Lynx said. ‘I was there when he died, that’s on me.’

The guard’s lips tightened as he stood up. ‘If she wants to talk to you, I’ll fetch you, get me? Hach will take you to the Witchlight Inn and take charge o’ the goods so there’s no argument.’

His expression made it clear he didn’t want to hear anything more on the matter. Lynx kept quiet while the guard unlocked the strongroom and fetched out Lynx’s sword-belt, tricorn hat and jacket. Hanging from the sword-belt was a wooden cartridge box, slightly curved to settle comfortably at his hip. Just the sight was enough to make Lynx break out in a sweat.

‘I picked a fight wearing my cartridge case? Deepest black!’

The guard nodded. ‘Aye, we noticed that too,’ he said with a scowl. ‘Didn’t much appreciate it neither, just glad all those burners and sparkers are properly packed given the way you fell on them.’

Lynx winced at the thought. He had two fire-bolts in the pouch, alongside seven spark-bolts. The twenty-four ice-bolts – icers – could themselves have easily killed someone if he’d broken the seal around the magic-charged glass packed into one end, given the power of the mage-made weapons. But burners or sparkers could have set the whole building on fire and killed them all.

‘Guess that was my year’s worth of luck used up,’ Lynx said once he’d checked the cartridges were still packed securely in their individual pouches. The guard didn’t speak as he waited for Lynx to finish, though no doubt he’d done the same. There were some things you didn’t skimp on or rush.

‘Five silver fine, make your mark here.’

Lynx dug his purse out of an inner pocket and hefted it. A little lighter than he remembered but a night of drinking accounted for that. The fine made a considerable dent in what was left but he didn't argue, just wrote his name in a neat copperplate hand that raised eyebrows. That done he ran his hands over the scabbard and falchion within to check for damage, then buckled it to his waist. It took him a little longer to wrestle his grey jacket over his aching shoulders, though, and by the time he'd succeeded he was groaning in discomfort.

The guard looked him up and down. Black boots, once-white shirt, grey trousers and jacket, black tricorn.

'Shades of grey, eh? Some sort of mercenary statement, is it?'

Not the one you're thinking of, friend, Lynx thought as he shook his head, *just a sign to a brother that I'm wearing the ring.*

'Just doesn't show the dust of the road so much.'

'Aye, mebbe a bit deep for your sort, even if you write like a noblewoman. My advice is you move on smartish,' the whiskered guard added as Lynx straightened his hat. 'You've caused enough trouble in these parts.'

Lynx nodded. 'Any suggestions?' he said as he straightened up, determined to walk out with his head held high. 'I'm out of a job now.'

'Aye. I suggest you keep your head down for the rest of the day and leave in the morning, on foot if you have to.' The guard scowled. 'If it gets you gone, tip the landlord at the Witchlight when you reimburse him for the chair. Remind him he'll see the back of you faster if he hears any of his evening trade needs an extra hand.'

Lynx nodded and turned to the door as the bearded young guard, Hach, beckoned him forward and opened it. Sunlight streamed through, a beautiful spring day by the looks of it. Lynx scowled as the throb in his head intensified, screwed up his eyes and followed the man out.