

Ivaldi Book 1 Chapter 1

The City of Light

Ivaldin Calendar: 1st Day, 6th Moren, Second Tand, Year ____ of the City

Today, at last, I came to Ivaldi.

So brief a sentence to describe so important an event in my life! Only a few words, but each so rich in significance.

“Today” — though it must be near midnight if not after, and I am exhausted, for the day began early and has been a full one. But I am still awake, for today, of all days, I must write down *everything*.

“At last” signifies something long-awaited. Twenty years and more I have spent on the sea, docking in every well-known port, and many lesser, but never this one. Ivaldi is one of the great trading centers of the world; I certainly could have arrived here earlier. But, strangely enough, I never set foot in this city until today. At last.

“I.” And who am I? True Seaborn, merchant sailor and ship’s officer of no particular fleet, once for hire by any discerning captain. But I am through with the sea, and have vowed never again to set foot on a ship unless as a mere passenger.

Why Ivaldi? Even before I left home, I had heard much about the city. Its reputation for exotic beauty is unsurpassed, except perhaps by the Forbidden City of the Golden Land (of which there are no reliable first-hand reports). At first I wanted very much to go to Ivaldi. But I put two years and ten ports behind me before the opportunity arose, and by then some superstition had made me vow never to enter the fabled city of Ivaldi until I was prepared to do it justice. By “justice” I meant that I would stay there, truly long enough to savor its delights - perhaps forever.

I have heard that the Ivaldin love art, music, and beauty in all things. I hope, therefore, to make my living by what I had always loved most: music.

I came by ship, of course, as second mate of the *Herring Gull*, a merchant trader out of Denska. We were within reach of the port last night, but arrived at the mouth of the River Vandí just as dusk was falling. Captain Greves decided to anchor north of the river mouth for the night, since docking would be hazardous in the rapidly failing light.

We had dropped anchor scarcely a few minutes when a small dinghy pulled alongside with orders from the harbormaster: we were to be third to dock in the morning. We secured the ship for the night, and the captain ordered grog for us all.

The city is only a few miles from the shore, built along the southern bank of the river. As darkness fell, countless lamps were lit, so that a halo of gold glowed in the sky and reflected on the river. I gazed long at the lights of Ivaldi, wondering what adventures I would have in this legendary place that I hoped to call home. Though I have seen and done much already (so much more than I could ever have imagined when I left the wretched island of my birth), everything I have heard about Ivaldi promises still greater wonders and delights. I might have come before, but I have saved it until now, the best for last — and, I hope, for always.

I dined with Captain Greves and the other officers, and drank a good deal of his excellent wine as we made toasts to each other and gave thanks for an easy crossing. When the revels ended, far into the night, Greves tipsily settled accounts with me, with a generous bonus. “As fine a hand at the guitar as at the helm, Seaborn. I’m sorry to see you go.”

In spite of the wine, I slept only lightly. After so long at sea, I was unprepared for the battalions of mosquitoes which swarmed from shore at the whiff of well-salted sailor blood. I swathed myself from head to toe in a sheet, but still they droned menacingly about my ears, and even managed to bite me through the cloth. Finally I left my bunk for the deck, where a slight southern breeze discouraged the hungry hordes. But here I found other distractions from an honest night’s sleep. From my perch atop a hatch, I had a clear view of that tantalizing city glow. Late as it was, the lights seemed but little diminished. Surely some of Ivaldi slept, but it was obvious that much of the city was bright as day — what could these people be doing all night?

I woke before dawn, and returned to my bunk to pack my meager belongings. We had just completed the passage from Halibai, and after so many days in tropical sea-gear, it felt strange to don a shirt, long trousers, and especially boots. My feet cringed from the tough leather, especially where it rubbed on mosquito bites scratched raw.

Hearing the anchor chain rattle, I rushed on deck. The sky was absolutely clear, the newly-risen sun already warm. We raised sail to enter the harbor of Ivaldi.

The harbor is a huge, natural stone semi-circle, nearly one and one-half miles in diameter, with plenty of depth for the largest of ships, and high cliffs to protect them from the weather. It must have been formed long ago by a volcano which erupted here, at the south bank of the River Vandi just where it

meets the sea. Call it a stroke of fortune or the blessing of the Goddess, this volcano has made Ivaldi one of the greatest trading ports in the world. The docks are carved out of the soft black stone of the cliff face. From the docks the cliff stretches up another fifty feet at least; passengers can climb steps to the top to walk or catch a wagon to the city. Goods are hauled up on ropes. But more often goods and passengers are transhipped to smaller vessels to continue the journey upriver, to the city and beyond. We anchored at one of many berths and waited (only minutes) for the customs officials to come aboard and inspect our cargo.

Having said my farewells to Greves and the crew, I hurried down the stone stairs from the high ships' docks to the low barge dock at the western edge of the harbor. Barges were lined up along the bank, each waiting its turn to fill with passengers. The small boats bobbed in the swift current, and I did not see how a single ferryman would be able to row upriver to the City. But as our boat was filling to its twelve-passenger capacity, a boy came along the dock leading a yoked pair of snow-white oxen. The ferryman tossed him a rope which was tied to a ring at the bow of the boat, and the boy hooked it to their harness. Thus our boat became a barge.

The oxen leaned into the harness and broke into a shuffling trot. At the western rim of the harbor, the dock vanished abruptly into sheer cliff wall. A road ran along under the cliff, cut deep into the rock in several broad steps, each step wide enough for the team to move along comfortably. When I had admired this feat of engineering, I turned my attention to my immediate surroundings.

Some of my fellow passengers were brown-skinned, black-haired Ivaldin, as were the oxboy and the boatman. The rest were foreigners: a pale, dour Northern Islander; two of the mysterious Golden People; two whose origins I could not determine; and myself. Though my own people would have gathered to stare and point at such a collection as we were in the ferry, the ferryman seemed more or less indifferent to us all. His nonchalance is typical of inhabitants of the great trading cities, who every day see more breeds of foreigners than they can count.

We passed at ox pace along the cliff face towards the city. The northern bank of the river was nearly flat, and I could see some distance over the broad plain beyond, but there was no sign of habitation on that side. I asked the boatman why no one lived there. He appeared surprised, either that I did not know, or that I should care. Or perhaps it was my phrasing, since I am not yet fluent in Ivaldin. He answered politely enough, at any rate.

“There is no bridge over the river, and ferrying across is too difficult. The founders came from the south, so they built on the south bank. But we also believe that if you die in blessed Ivaldi, on the south bank, you may leave the

cycle of birth, death, and rebirth forever. Whereas if you die on the north bank you will be reborn as a donkey.”

The Northern Islander gave a snort of contempt, but the boatman ignored him. I did not have the vocabulary to formulate the multitude of questions I wanted to ask, so I merely thanked him, and we finished the journey in silence.

Nearer the city, the cliff face was not so high, but was fantastically carved into numerous small rooms and balconies. These showed exquisite stonework in figured columns, pierced stone screens, and huge bas reliefs depicting scenes from myth or history that I could not identify. I asked the boatman who lived there, and he told me that the river apartments are only occupied in the hot season, when their wealthy owners come to catch the cool breeze that blows over the ocean late at night, a precursor to the monsoon winds to follow.

Further on, the cliff was cut into long, deep steps and criss-crossing ramps. Here we stopped, since this was the city proper, where large animals are not allowed. I paid my fare and watched the oxboy untie his team. He led them back down the cliff road, while the ferryman expertly steered his little craft with a single oar as it whirled away with the current back to the harbor.

The dock was filled to overflowing with a crowd which washed to and fro like a tide, loading and unloading, yelling, cursing, and bargaining in a babel of tongues. I must have looked lost — and I was. None of the trading cities I had formerly visited came close to the seething activity of Ivaldi, in the morning of the first trade day of the week.

“Guide, sir?” chirped a voice. I looked all around me before I found her, about at waist level, a young Ivaldin girl dressed in a tunic and trousers of faded red cotton. “Guide?” she repeated.

I responded carefully and politely, “I beg your pardon, I’m new to the city. I don’t understand what you mean by guide.” She seemed to find my courtesy amusing, but if I was mangling her language, she did not correct me.

She spoke in a rush: “If you’re new to Ivaldi, you certainly need me. You’ll never find anything without help. I’m a professional guide. I can show you where to stay, where to eat, what to do, how to meet people for business and for pleasure, what sights to see. Ivaldi, City of Lights and Delights, awaits you, and I am at your service to show you the best of it.” She finished with a bow and a flourish. I had to laugh.

“Is that your whole pitch, or can I hear more?” I asked, half in my own language — but she understood.

“I’m supposed to show you my badge,” she replied gravely, pushing up her sleeve. This was a brass band engraved with the city seal and a number, meant

to fit on an adult wrist. She wore it above her elbow. “See, government trained and licensed. All for only twenty pins a day,” she said grandly.

“Ten,” I said automatically, and the game was on. I was proud to bargain her down to fifteen; probably the proper rate *is* ten. And so I acquired Carilla as my guide to Ivaldi.

The first thing she did was yell, surprisingly loudly, for a rickshaw. This consisted of a strong wicker basket-like seat attached to two large wheels at the bottom, and a long pole with a crossbar in front. It was pulled by two men, and could comfortably seat two. With me, Carilla, and my kit bag aboard, the vehicle was fairly light, and we went along at a fast trot, once we had cleared the steep slope up from the riverside. I felt uneasy, being hauled about by men no meaner than myself. I was accustomed to going places by my own effort, afoot or afloat. But in the streets of Ivaldi I saw many people pulled (and sometimes carried) by other people, and for the moment I did not want to question the customs of the country.

Having quizzed me about my financial resources (I owned to somewhat less than I had) and intended length of stay (as long as possible), Carilla took me to a plain and pleasant inn, belonging to her aunt Mora in one of the city’s central quarters. Mora, a plump, cheerful woman with a complicated hairstyle, looked me up and down, exclaiming, “Carilla, my girl, you get a bonus for this one!” The precocious child grinned at us both and thrust out her palm.

“You’re full of promises, auntie. How about some cold cash for once?”

“No cash till the goods are delivered, child,” chortled Mora. “I’ll pay you when I discover what he’s worth.” I could feel my face reddening under my tan, though this was obviously an old joke between them.

I was put in a room overlooking a busy plaza. When I had unpacked my bag, Carilla said, “You’ll want to bathe now. I’ll take you to the public baths. After a journey, you really need to be properly scrubbed. And I’ll have one, too.” My override sea-smell was a bit overwhelming in the small room, but the idea of *being* scrubbed was strange.

“Public baths? I’d much rather do my bathing privately. Isn’t there a bath here at the inn?” I asked. Carilla chuckled.

“Oh, a shy foreigner,” she said slyly. “Auntie has a bath, but it’s too small for serious bathing. Just try the public bath once. If you don’t like it, you don’t have to do it again. But everyone does. You’ll see. Bathing is wonderful!”

In other parts of the world, bathing is a necessity, performed more or less regularly so as not to offend one’s neighbors — and standards of offensibility vary considerably. In Ivaldi, as Carilla explained to me, bathing is a daily

ritual, a sacred duty, a social event, and everyman's luxury. The Ivaldin believe that bathing purifies the soul as well as the body; therefore public bathing is like public worship.

"You can bathe at home alone, if you want to and have the facilities. Some of the Great Clans do, but that's only one of *their* peculiarities. But bathing alone is like singing alone: not nearly as much fun as doing it with others." Thus she overcame my shyness about undressing in front of all those people — including women and herself — in the huge entrance hall of the bath house, where we handed over our possessions to a man at a counter, taking in return a token on a chain which Carilla wore around her neck. We paid ten pins — five each for a "full" bath, which Carilla insisted I needed, even though it would take an hour out of my first day in Ivaldi.

"You cannot enjoy Ivaldi without first bathing. Anyway, nothing out there is going to disappear in an hour."

The first room of the bath house was the scrub room, where we sat on low wooden stools while attendants poured cool water on us and washed us with fragrant soap, then scrubbed us with stiff, scratchy sponges. The young man working on me scraped me nearly raw, except in the places I insisted on washing myself, and he wore out two sponges in the process of cleaning away the months of salt and grime crusted in my pores. I had 'washed' every morning with a bucket of seawater aboard ship, but, as I now discovered, this was far from adequate by Ivaldin standards. Carilla was shocked by the gray puddles on the floor around me, and my skin became several shades lighter.

We next moved into the hot room, where I scalded my fresh pink skin in a deep tub of steaming water. I could stand this only for a few minutes before plunging into an ice-cold tub nearby. I then reluctantly complied with Carilla's orders to alternate between the hot and cold tubs. After several rounds of this, I was so limp I couldn't move, and could scarcely keep my eyes open to appreciate the unabashed display of female nakedness around me. But Carilla herded me briskly into the massage room.

Here I was oiled, pressed, and kneaded for a blissful eternity. I was even drifting off to sleep when a shocking series of hard-fisted thumps thundered on my back, the grand finale of the massage. Carilla, also dreamy-eyed and relaxed, led me into the second scrub room, where we were washed again with a lemony soap, dried in huge fluffy towels, and our hair was combed out. In the hairdressing room, my beard was neatly trimmed. I refused the barber's offer to give it "a more interesting shape." (He himself sported long moustaches which curled fiercely at the ends.)

The last room had a counter where we handed in our token and were given back our clothing. My dirty clothes had been neatly bundled, and the clean

ones I had brought along were pressed and waiting for me. Someone had evidently despaired of my old boots. They were cleaned and polished to a shine they had not known in years, but even so were battered and stained, and smelled of too many years on ships. The boot-polisher had dusted their insides with a scented powder, and left a note under the cuff: “Carilla, get this man some new shoes.” She laughed at that, and said we would attend to it immediately.

The last cool-water wash had cleared away my languor, and I stepped out to meet Ivaldi with fresh eagerness. Carilla was still an urchin in much-mended clothing, but she seemed to shine from the scrubbing, and my paler skin positively glowed. She admitted that she could rarely afford a full bath. Most of the poorer classes did without massages and attendants for daily bathing, though nearly everyone who could manage it had a full bath on the ritually important first day of the month.

I strode out eagerly from the cool shade of the bath-house into the daylight of Ivaldi. I was eager to explore, and preferred to walk rather than ride in a rickshaw; fearing that my twinges of moral discomfort would distract me from the wonders of the city. I didn’t feel capable of explaining all that to Carilla in my stumbling Ivaldin, but she didn’t object to walking. A few steps from the bath-house, we turned into a narrow street which she told me was called the Street of Dark Little Shops. It should have been called the Street of Overwhelming Scent. A thousand flowers assaulted my nostrils, making me nearly dizzy. All the dark little shops were perfumers.

Carilla led me into one particular shop, to my eye no different than the others, and familiarly greeted the proprietor, a round little man in a brilliant white robe embroidered with flowers.

“Most Ivaldin carry their own perfume to put on when they leave the baths,” Carilla explained to me. “Since you haven’t any, I have brought you to Gajanan, the best perfumer in the City.”

“Ivaldin perfumes are reknowned throughout the world,” I said sagely. “I have heard of them in my travels.”

Gajanan’s eyes gleamed. “Most foreigners do not understand the importance of perfume,” he said. “But we Ivaldin know that smell is just as important as sight in creating an impression. One must choose carefully one’s personal perfume.” He waved a pudgy hand at rows of flasks and phials stacked to the ceiling on little shelves.

“But how does a smell create an impression?” I asked.

“Smell triggers memory,” said Gajanan. “For instance, where did you spend your childhood?”

“In boats, mostly. Fishing.”

“Ah,” he nodded. “Then the scent of the sea, or of rope nets, would remind you of your childhood.”

“Most of all, the scent of fish.”

Gajanan laughed. “Smelling like a fish would certainly create an impression, but hardly a desirable one! A perfume must be evocative, but also romantic. Smell this one.” His hand darted to a shelf and pulled out a bottle; he opened it and waved the stopper under my nose. “It is Khus, the scent of the plains in the monsoon.”

Indeed it did smell of fresh, wet grass, a refreshing scent, with just a hint of the dark, fertile earth below. How he got that into a bottle I could not imagine.

“You see?” said Gajanan. “It is a favorite of the Vandáli. But it would not be appropriate for you. For an adventurer, a traveller from the sea, and... what do you do for a living?”

“I am a musician.”

Carilla and Gajanan both looked at me in some surprise. Carilla began to say something, but Gajanan interrupted smoothly, “How interesting. One of those wandering musicians we sometimes hear of. Well, then, we definitely must create an attractive and appropriate perfume.”

He rummaged among the shelves, took down several bottles, and poured minute quantities from each into a small phial. He did this without the aid of any of the tiny metal funnels that hung from hooks behind him, even when pouring from decanters the size of melons. A thin, careful stream flowed from bottle to phial, and never a drop went astray. When the mixture was finished, he dabbed a little onto my wrist.

“You must wear it here particularly, since a musician uses his hands and your pulse will be flowingly strongly. But also on the neck, under your beard, where the ladies will like to smell it.” He gave me a sly grin. I sniffed at my wrist. By some wonder of Gajanan’s art, the scent did seem exactly right for me. It was fresh, like a breeze on the ocean, but something intriguing lurked flatteringly in the background.

“What did you put in it?” I asked.

“Ah, if I gave away my secrets, what would be left of my livelihood? Bring back the vial before it is quite empty, and I will know how to make it again for you. That will be twenty pins.” He ushered us out of the shop with a bow and a smile. He had not asked if Carilla wanted any scent, but I noticed that she,

too, was perfumed, with a light, flowery something appropriate for a lively young girl.

I left the Street of Dark Little Shops with a new appreciation for scent - especially the scent of food that was beginning to waft through the air as the lunch hour approached. I realized I was very hungry. Carilla either read my mind or was hungry herself, for she suggested that we stop for a meal.

We went to a little restaurant owned by another relative of hers, where she said that the food would be good and the price reasonable. I insisted that it be even lower than “reasonable,” since the perfume had cost a good deal more than I had wanted to spend. So we shared a simple dish of spicy vegetables. The exact ingredients were hard to tell, since they had been boiled together to a mushy anonymity and brightly colored with a yellow spice, but the flavor was very good. We ate with our fingers, with the aid of round, flat bread fresh off the griddle. Along with the meal we drank a thin yogurt, and hot, spiced *soma* afterwards.

4th Day, 6th Moren, First Bara Garam

I am sitting in a sidewalk cafe on the plaza. I came here early to meet Carilla for the day’s outings, but wanted this time of relative quiet to observe the small quotidian scenes which form the rich background of Ivaldin life.

In my immediate area: My logbook rests on a wooden table smoothed by years of use. The wood was once a tawny gold color, but is now mottled with the stains of many meals — droplets of spice-hued oil, dark rings from countless *soma* cups. *Soma* is the Ivaldin national drink, the waiter informed me (he was not the first in my five days here to do so). He brought a long-necked brass jug with a long, thin spout, and from it filled a mug with the spicy, red-brown brew. Informative (or talkative) as all his fellow-citizens seem to be, and seeing that I was new to the city, he then sat down with his own morning *soma* to tell me more about the national beverage.

As with everything else in this city, *soma* is a symbol, its making and serving part of the everyday ritual of Ivaldin life. The basic ingredient is a brown powder, ground from the nuts of a tree which grows in the southern hills. The Vandáli, the farmers of the south from whom the Ivaldin are supposed to have sprung, have been drinking *soma* since the dawn of civilization. But it was the Ivaldin who raised a simple beverage to an art form. The waiter, Teres, opened the lid of the *soma* jug and lifted out a deep, narrow mesh basket which fit neatly into the long neck. This was filled with a damp aromatic mess which, he explained, was *soma* powder mixed with spices. Hot water is poured slowly through it, and the liquid which gathers in the base of the jug is the drink.

“Every cook in Ivaldi has his own secret recipe,” Teres said. “Some are sweet, some spicy, some delicate, some heavy. The fame of a soma recipe can make the fortune of a café like this. I can tell you that our soma is among the best in the city!” (This statement, apparently, is as traditional as the drink itself, and I had already heard it several times in other cafés.)

Soma is also made at home; traditionally, the family recipe is passed down through the generations, as much a part of family heritage as the intricate embroidery on their robes. Soma mixing and drinking is a social ritual performed within the family and among close friends. To actually concoct the spice and soma mixture in sight of an outsider is a demonstration of deep trust and friendship (though it is considered impolite for the outsider to watch closely enough to actually learn the secret).

Another customer entered and Teres went to attend her. I was left to contemplate the workmanship of the soma pot and mug, made of hard-fired clay glazed a deep brown, incised with abstract patterns around the rims; both are functional, beautiful, and apparently unique. The pieces Teres set down on the other table are equally graceful, but quite different in decoration.

This café occupies the bottom floor of a four-story building, with tables and chairs set outdoors, sheltered from the sun by a bright patchwork canopy. The top floors are living quarters for several families, including those of Teres and his brother, who jointly own the café.

My table faces the plaza, an octagon of green grass surrounded by a wide stone sidewalk. There is a fountain in the center of the grass, with a low marble rim convenient for sitting to float toy boats in the water, as several children are doing just now. An Ivaldin cat lies nearby, perhaps keeping an eye on the children. It is as big as the dogs of my country, but sleek and well-fed as few animals are there. I have seen many such cats in Ivaldi, but no dogs at all.

Tall buildings surround the plaza, all of similar design — a hollow square or rectangle built around an atrium which admits light and air through all levels. Each room in any building has a window onto the atrium or to the outside, sometimes both. There are many verandas overlooking the plaza, and many people are sitting on them just now, enjoying the greenery and the fountain as they sip their morning soma. Mora’s house is just opposite, and I can see her chatting to her guests as she serves them. Which is why I chose to have my soma here — she never *stops* chatting, and I needed a little peace to catch up on my log.

The houses are all built of stone, with balcony railings and window frames of carved stone or wood. The windows have wooden shutters which can be

closed against the rain, and those on the lower floors are set with metal bars or stone lattices, as protection against burglars.

Narrow streets lead away from four points of the plaza, connecting to wider streets and other plazas. These, too, are lined with tall buildings as far as I can see. The sheer mass of buildings in Ivaldi overwhelms me - in all the places I have been, I have never seen anything like these rows of stone, towering four and five stories into the sky, obscuring the horizon. Yet the effect is not oppressive, for the buildings are inhabited by Ivaldin, as colorful and noisy as birds, whose manner contrasts with and complements the heavy stonework of their city.

I have neglected to describe the physical appearance of the Ivaldin. Their skin is various shades of brown, ranging from a color very like their ruddy soma to near-black. A few are pale brown; I suppose these are the products of intermarriage with foreign races, since the majority are so dark. Nearly everyone has black hair, straight or faintly wavy, and very thick. Most men wear it shoulder length or shorter. Ivaldin women, and some men, pride themselves on long hair, which they wear dressed in any number of ways, but never loose (at least in public).

As for the climate... Carilla gave me one of her five-minute speeches yesterday about the Ivaldin climate (I paraphrase what I can't remember):

“Ivaldi has four seasons — Bursat, Chhota Garam, Tand, and Bara Garam (rain, little hot, cold, and big hot). The cool season will end soon, and we are approaching the hottest time of year. This will go on for two of our months — I'll explain the calendar to you later. Then the monsoon begins. You may not be accustomed to rain like this. It rains about half the day and most of the night, so heavily you can't see across the street, and often there is thunder and lightning.”

“Then most trade stops, because the storms make the sea dangerous, and the river is so swollen it's hard to navigate, and the roads out of town are knee-deep in mud. We mostly stay indoors during the rains. But the city is lovely then, because the sidewalks are clean and the gardens are green and grow like mad. Then the rains end and the sun comes out, and it's hot again. But you can forgive a lot during the little hot because everything's so fresh. The cool is pleasant, of course, and then the flowers bloom. And then the hot starts again, and that's where we are now.”

She spoke, as usual, in a fluid torrent, so I'm not sure I understood it all, but that was the gist. “Where we are now” in the cycle of seasons is warm, with mornings and nights cool enough to make hot soma in the morning pleasant. The air is dry, and dust is the implacable enemy of shopkeepers and homefolk

— every street and floor is swept every morning, yet by afternoon all is covered with a fine layer of brown grit.

The soma pot and mug are both empty, and here comes Carilla, skipping across the plaza. She is such a clever guide and companion that it sometimes surprises me to realize she is only a child, no older than some playing in the fountain. She is helping me to speak Ivaldin better. Though my grammar is good, I have realized that my accent is shocking. Ivaldin is a musical language, generous with vowels and not over-hard on consonants. When properly spoken, its cadence gives even the most hasty speaker a charming lilt.

It is not easy for me to pronounce Ivaldin correctly. My mother-tongue, nameless and virtually unknown in the wide world, is a coarse vehicle, best suited to uttering pithy sentiments about torn nets or unfavorable weather. Though our sea chanteys have a rhythmic charm, they could never be considered poetry. But the fisherman risks too much in daily battle with the mother-ocean to rhapsodize about her.

Since I wish to make my living as a musician, Rilla undertook to introduce me to the musician clans, though she was doubtful that any would hire me. In Ivaldi, she explained, all trades are organized into guilds, such as the Weavers' Guild and the Rickshaw Pullers' Guild. There are also sub-guilds called jatis; the Jatis of Spinners, Silk-Raisers, and Dyers are all sub-organizations of the Weavers' Guild. Each Guild is made up of Clans — extended families — and Guild membership is thus determined by birth. Marriage usually occurs between members of the same Guild, but always outside the immediate clan. Usually the husband goes to live with his wife's clan, and their children are considered members of that clan.

It is rare for anyone to take up the trade of another Guild. Children are taught only the skills of their own Guild, and have no opportunity to learn others. Some Guild secrets are so jealously guarded that only the Guild Elders know them. Where "cross-guilding" does occur, it is usually between jatis of the same Guild, for instance a silk-raiser becoming a silk dyer. The person must have a powerful sponsor from his own jati who is willing to trade favors with the head of the other jati. As a foreigner, I had no family, no guild, no reputation, and (worse) no money to barter with. No wonder Rilla was doubtful.

We did not bother to meet the classical musicians. They are a haughty breed whose music is so foreign as to either grate on my nerves or put me to sleep, as it did at a public concert I attended the other night, much to the disgust of my neighbors. (Perhaps I was snoring.) The instruments of classical Ivaldin music are bulbous, twenty-stringed monstrosities with droning undertones,

which seem to require twenty fingers and twenty years of training to play properly. No room there for a simple strummer of sea ditties.

Instead, we met with the lower ranks of the Musicians' Guild, the clans who play popular music for parties and celebrations. Their style is more in keeping with mine, though few of the songs themselves are familiar. Even so, none were interested in having a foreigner join them. I thought of striking out on my own, but without the support of the Guild there is no legal way to get engagements to play, and the Guilds can make it very hard for people who do Guild work without paying Guild tithes.

7th Day, 9th Moren, 2 Tand

Since I have not yet found work, Rilla has arranged cheaper accommodations for me, in a small, hot room under the eaves of a building. At least it saves money. Rilla sometimes sleeps here, to avoid beatings when her father is drunk. I have managed to pick up odd jobs of manual labor and earn a few coins, but it is difficult, since every possible occupation in Ivaldi is the territory of some Guild, and all are jealous of their prerogatives.