Chapter I: The Lighthouse at the End of the Road

OG Script

Wherein drinks are free, suspicions are plentiful, and a rogue mistakes stealth for interpretive dance.

The storm struck the Sword Coast with the fury of a drunk god. Rain hammered the stones, turning the cliffs into slick deathtraps and the road into a muddy memory. Thunder rolled like distant drums of war. Yet even in this tempest, a light burned steady—a crooked, sea-lashed lighthouse turned tavern, its warped wooden door swinging with every gust.

It was the kind of place one stumbled upon at the edge of maps and the bottom of bottles.

Inside, it was no warmer. A hearth sputtered defiantly against the damp, casting amber shadows over scarred tables and seaworn faces. The barkeep, a man with salt-whitened hair and a gaze like a rusted harpoon, grumbled at every wet footprint.

“Hell of a night to be sober,” he muttered, pouring spirits that smelled like regret.

The door creaked, and in walked trouble.

Garrick “Rigg” Dalhart entered with soaked boots, wild hair, and a wrench strapped to his back that looked better suited to knocking down walls than fixing them. His eyes swept the room with the practiced greed of a man who once charged interest on bandages.

“Evenin’,” he said, grabbing five mugs from the counter in one confident motion. “Put it on Sir Gwen’s tab.” The barkeep grunted but didn’t argue. Rigg nodded to himself—still got it.

He turned and handed the ales out to the scattered adventurers who had, by some strange alchemy of fate and misfortune, gathered here tonight.

“To new opportunities,” Rigg offered, raising his mug. “And to not dying in a ditch.”

The dwarf took his ale with a grunt. Lagerick Giffenhall wore his chainmail like a second skin and drank like a man who no longer prayed. He sniffed the brew, shrugged, and downed half in

one pull.

“Could use more hops. And less rain.” He set the mug down and leaned back with the contentment of a man who had made peace with every poor decision he’d ever made. “So... we all just waiting for fate to trip over us, or what?”

From the shadows, a voice purred.

“Some of us don’t wait.” The tabaxi stepped into the firelight—slim, black-furred, with gold-threaded sleeves and eyes like twin moons at play. “High Jinks,” she said, with the kind of smile you could lose a war to. “Warlock. Cosmic patron. Occasional bookstore arsonist.”

Rigg blinked. “Arsonist?”

“Allegedly,” she grinned, and sipped.

At the next table, a pale-skinned Githyanki leaned forward, yellow eyes glinting beneath a brow of stoic disdain. He hadn’t introduced himself—not properly. But his armor bore planar runes, and his fingers never strayed far from the haft of a weapon that hummed with faint, unsettling energy.

“Stranded?” Leydrick asked, trying not to sound nosy.

“Geographically inconvenienced,” the Githyanki replied. “Temporarily.”

“Well, cheers to inconvenient geography,” Rigg said, raising his mug again.

High Jinks purred, “I believe that’s called ‘Fay-Run.’”

And then there was the wizard. Valen Pyre stood near the window, his crimson coat hanging damp and dramatic, a wide-brimmed hat shadowing half his face. He hadn’t spoken all night, merely watched—eyes half-lidded, hands occasionally flicking to the warmth of his arcane focus as though testing a thought.

“So, you do talk,” Rigg prodded.

Valen said nothing, but a nearby candle burst into flame.

They weren’t alone in the tavern. The corner booth held a knight in armor too gold to be subtle, flanked by guards more interested in free drinks than duty.

Sir Gwen stood and addressed the room. “I seek hunters—skilled ones. A beast stalks the Sword Mountains. One eye. Many victims. Five hundred gold for the name, more if you bring its head.”

“A beholder,” High Jinks said immediately.

Gwen blinked. “Possibly. You’ll find out if you live.”

“Tempting,” murmured Valen.

The dwarf nodded. “Tempting and suicidal. Classic.”

Next came the miners, louder than the thunder outside. Ale on their breath, gold in their teeth, and fear in their eyes.

“Westbridge,” one slurred. “We’re headin’ there, up the Long Road. But folk vanish. Screams in the night. Guards won’t come. We’ll pay. Ten gold a day, hundred on arrival. You in?”

Rigg tilted his head. “How many of you are there?”

“Enough to get robbed,” High Jinks replied.

The last figure descended the lighthouse stairs—an elf in Lord’s Alliance colors, rain-slicked and sharp-eyed.

“Enough drinking,” he said, voice low but firm. “A caravan was due by sundown. We saw it shaking. No lights. No response. We need someone to investigate. Fifty gold now. Fifty after.”

The party exchanged glances.

“That,” Rigg said, finishing his mug, “sounds like it might involve stabbing. And gold.”

“Two of my better skills,” said High Jinks.

The Githyanki stood. “I’ll go. I tire of this world’s gravity.”

Valen simply adjusted his coat, a subtle nod.

Laydrick groaned and rose. “Can’t let you lot die without me.”

The elf handed over a pouch of coin. “Then go. And be careful. Something’s wrong.”

They left the lighthouse behind, stepping into wind and mud.

Ahead, the caravan loomed like a question asked too quietly. Guards stood in the rain, unblinking, mouths foaming, torches dead in their hands. The cart rocked violently.

“Subtle approach,” Rigg said, ducking low.

He moved like a shadow, then immediately slipped in a puddle and skidded sideways into a bush.

One of the guards snapped his head toward the sound. “Hey! You! Check the cart!”

“I’m jusht... taking a leak,” Rigg slurred, wobbling, ale mug still in hand.

Somehow, it worked. For now.

Behind him, the others crouched low.

“This,” whispered High Jinks, “is going to be fun.”

Chapter I
The Lighthouse at the End of the Road

The storm had arrived like a drunken god, blundering up the Sword Coast with fists of rain and a voice full of thunder. Wind flung seawater against the red-rock cliffs, scraped loose roof-slates from lonely farmsteads, and turned the High Road into a memory made of mud. Through that howling dark, a single lamp refused to bow: the beacon of a weather-beaten lighthouse whose keeper had long since decided that if he couldn’t stop sailors wrecking, he might at least sell them a drink afterwards.

Inside, the tavern-turned-beacon smelled of damp wool, brine, and a house spirit the barkeep described only as “South-of-Waterdeep Regret.” A peat fire spat and sulked in the hearth, carving amber caverns through drifting pipe smoke. Each new gust shouldered the warped door open and carried in another puddle.

Garrick **Rigg** Dalhart shouldered his way through that door with the air of a man who had recently presented a bad idea with an invoice. Hair plastered flat, boots streaming water, he produced a grin and, more improbably, scooped **five** tankards off the counter in one sweep.

“Sir Gwen’s tab,” he informed the barkeep—a salt-whitened veteran who measured customers in the same way carpenters measure timber. The man raised an eyebrow, decided he didn’t care enough to argue, and sloshed amber into the mugs. Rigg doled them out to the handful of other sodden souls clustered near the hearth.

“To new opportunities,” he declared, lifting his ale. “And to waking up *outside* any local ditches.”

A dwarf in road-stained chainmail lifted one bushy brow. **Lagerick Giffenhall** sniffed the ale, found it barely medicinal, and drained half in a single swallow. “Could use more hops,” he rumbled, wiping foam from his beard. “And less weather.” Settling back, he surveyed the tavern with the air of a man counting exits and debts.

From beyond the firelight a velvet purr answered. “Some of us don’t wait for opportunities.” A lean tabaxi—black-furred, sleeves embroidered with tarnished gold—stepped into view and offered an easy bow. “High Jinks, warlock of… complicated contracts. Former bookseller, occasional arsonist.”

“Arsonist?” Rigg echoed.

She spread her hands, claws catching the fireglow. “Allegedly.”

A chair scraped. A pale-skinned **Githyanki**—armor etched with planar runes—leaned his tall frame forward, yellow eyes assessing the room as one assesses a chessboard. He had offered no name, only the admission that the planet’s gravity was *“sufficiently tedious.”*

Rigg raised his refreshed mug in greeting. “Cheers to inconvenient geography, friend.”

A shadow near the rain-streaked window resolved into the crimson-coated silhouette of **Valen Pyre**. Wide-brimmed hat pulled low, he had spent the evening watching flame gutter along his gloved fingertips, as though warming half-remembered thoughts. Asked a question, he merely inclined his head; a nearby candle surged to a taller, bluer flame.

Thus the room’s temperature—social and literal—had just begun to settle when a knight in armour the colour of fresh coin rose from the corner booth. **Sir Gwen** cleared her throat; steel plates chimed. “Five hundred gold crowns for knowledge of a one-eyed horror in the Sword Mountains,” she announced. “Double that if its corpse accompanies your report.”

“A beholder,” High Jinks said before the knight could finish. Her tail coiled, pleased.

“Possibly,” Sir Gwen conceded. “You will confirm if you *live*.”

Lagerick exhaled through his nose. “Tempting *and* suicidal—my favourite pairing.”

Before debate could bloom, the tavern door thudded again. A cluster of miners, clothes sour with quarry-dust and recent ale, herded themselves inside on a gust of rain. Gold teeth flashed as the spokesman explained their trouble: disappearances along the High Road, fear gnawing at profits. “Escort us to Westbridge—ten gold a day, hundred on arrival,” he pleaded, palms up.

Rigg opened his mouth—barkeep slammed down a fresh keg instead.

And then the lighthouse stairs creaked. An elf in the blue-and-silver of the Lord’s Alliance descended, cloak dripping, spyglass still in hand.

“Enough drinking,” he said, voice steady but tight. “A caravan shook itself to silence not a mile up the road. Four guards posted—no lights, no answer. Fifty gold now, fifty when you tell me why.”

Five pairs of eyes met by the firelight.

“This,” Rigg decided, “sounds like an evening rich in stabbing *and* income.”

High Jinks rolled her shoulders; cosmic motes slid across her pupils. “Two of my better hobbies.”

The Githyanki simply stood. “I will come. For motion.”

Valen flicked rain from his hat brim. Silent assent.

Lagerick groaned to his feet, joints clicking like rusty hinges. “Can’t let you amateurs die unsupervised.”

The elf’s coin purse jingled as it changed hands, and the group stepped back into the tempest.

Wind tried to shove them off the cliff road; rain transformed every lantern into a trembling halo. Yet the caravan’s bulk soon emerged—dark wagon, collapsed canvas, oxen gone. Four figures ringed it, armour unmarked yet drenched, their torches drowned. They swayed but did not shiver, mouths bubbling with pale foam.

“Charming,” High Jinks whispered.

“Subtle?” Rigg suggested, stooping. “Or loud and direct?”

He attempted the former, melting toward the nearest crate—until one treacherous puddle betrayed him. Boots slid; he windmilled; bush and mud enthusiastically embraced.

A guard’s head snapped round. “You there! Check the cart!”

Rigg staggered upright, slurring, mug miraculously in hand. “Jus’ takin’ a leak, mate!”

The blank-eyed guard blinked once, failed to parse, and turned away.

Behind the bush, High Jinks bit her lip to swerve a laugh into a cough. Lagerick muttered a prayer none could hear over the thunder. Valen’s eyes tracked the rocking wagon, reading invisible runes in its sway.

Something *inside* clawed at the wood.

“This,” the warlock breathed, “is going to be fun.”

And with a crack of lightning that illuminated every jittering shadow, Chapter I shutters closed, leaving the night—and whatever waited in that trembling cart—to begin the story proper.

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