

# Errands and Editors

by Charles Matthias

*March 18, 706 CR*

Matthias leaned forward in his chair holding out the manuscripts in front of him on the table, peering down his muzzle at them. He tried to keep his nibbling to a minimum, not wanting any of the wood splitters to fall into the parchment and possibly tear it. This was a very special document, with the carefully scripted letters and intricate artistry along the borders of each page reminiscent of his own prayer book that he kept in the desk in his little hole in the wall. It was not necessary in most of the manuscripts, but for the prize-winning stories, such decorations were mandatory, and almost as important to the story as the words were themselves.

Phil was shaking his head as he read his own, Dr. Channing on the opposite side of the table was using a monocle to better peer at the words and make sense of them. Charles suspected he used it also to get better detail from the engravings. Perhaps he should try that sometime, after all, he was making his own head spin by squinting at the details. Thankfully this only happened a few times a year, so that he didn't have to wear out his eyes so much. It was then that he noticed that Phil was quite incensed about something or other.

"What's wrong?" Charles asked, taking the opportunity to focus on an object far from his eyes. The feeling was quite relieving.

Phil shook his head, the lapine ears flopping back and forth as he did so. He opened and closed his paws in agitation. "No matter how many times I tell Longman what he does wrong, he always goes right back and does it again. Have you read this story yet? Not a single bit of character development in it."

Dr. Channing chuckled to himself, "Phil, not everybody can handle them as effortlessly as you seem to be able."

"Yes, but Longman doesn't even try."

Matthias nodded, "I have to agree, he does not try at all. I wonder why he even got in the guild at times."

Phil pushed the stack of parchments he had been trying to read aside. He pulled another out of the dwindling stack and set it before him. "I think it was because I thought he had promise. His writing style has improved, it's less choppy now than it was before, and his pictures are quite exquisite, but nothing else. He has style, but no substance. Well anyway, how many are still in the reconsider pile?"

Dr. Channing quickly flipped through a rather meager pile to his left. "We have five stories to reconsider so far."

"And about ten more to read through," Matthias finished for him. He leaned back in his chair a bit, pulling his chewing stick out and taking a few bites. He did enjoy reading the stories, but sometime it was so hard to choose between them. The Equinox-Easter festival was only two days away now, and he wanted to make sure that everything was set properly. It was also going to be the first time that he had been invited to eat at the Duke's table. That was going to be Saturday night, and he was already nervous. He knew that he was not the most popular person among the upper class. His penchant for saying what he thought tended to get him into a bit of trouble with the more refined. The fact that he was a rat did not help either; but then again it could have been worse. At least they were transformed as well.

However, he was going to have to at least talk to somebody up in his staff today, there was something very important that he wanted to do, a very pressing problem that had to be fixed. Of course, this needed to be finished before he went off on any other errands. Being the Headmaster of the Writer's Guild did have its share of responsibilities. Occasionally they would get in the way of what he most wanted to do, but each was required to make a sacrifice and this was his. Without performing this valuable service, he would not have any way to support himself, let alone others. It was a good thing that other lands were willing to pay high prices for collections of the stories that came out of Metamor Keep. He was sure that it had something to do with the collection of some of the best composers of the literature that there ever was in the land being congregated here. Then again, it might have something to do with the mystique of finding things from the land of the infidels or demons as many outsiders so affectionately called them.

Looking back at the parchment, he examined every word, every script, and every illustration. He was not as meticulous as he would have to be when they reconsidered the works later. Those that they deemed worthy of public performance would be examined again, and again. Every letter would be inspected to make sure that it was worthy of being looked upon. A single spelling mistake was enough to get the story, no matter how good, thrown out of the contest. These stories would be logged in the library, and only the best could possibly be archived under Fox Cutter's care. However, Matthias did not like to let even the tiniest error slip by him the first time. It may take him longer, but then the reconsideration went quicker.

Suddenly, he saw something that shocked him. As he tried to turn the pages, he found that the parchment beneath it was stuck solidly to the first page. He sighed, Nahum had probably forgotten to let the ink dry once again.

He was a dandy author, but these little slip-ups always cost him the recognition that he deserved in the end. He gingerly took his hand and slowly peeled the parchment apart. It came undone with a sickening slowness that he thought any second now the paper would tear itself in half, and then the manuscript would be irrevocably destroyed.

When he finally managed to get the two separated, he saw what he had feared. The ink had indeed not been left to sit long enough to dry, and so much of it was now hanging off the back of the first sheet. The second sheet was covered in splotches, and much of the lettering was indistinct. Charles sighed, it was so terrible to see a very good work up until that point get so destroyed so easily. He picked up Nahum's story and gingerly tossed it in the growing reject pile behind him. It was always a painful task to reject a story, especially one that had been so good, up until that one simple mistake. Those were things that just could not be afforded, whether he liked it or not.

"What was wrong with that one?" Dr. Channing asked suddenly, seeing Matthias's distraught expression and sudden obsessive chewing. Matthias could not get the stick out of his mouth though, he needed to go on, but he so wished that he could have redone the page for Nahum himself. Surely, it would have been a winner otherwise. However, it was not to be.

Finally satisfying his urge, Charles shook his head, his whiskers twitching as he spoke. "Nahum's story. It was very good, but he forgot to let the ink dry and so the pages became fused together. There was nothing else I could do."

Channing nodded, "Ah yes, Nahum does seem to poke his foot with his own sword does he not?"

"Yes he does. Very frustrating, because I knew that story deserved to go into the reconsider pile. If only, ah well. He'll probably be fuming for weeks that he lost because of some stupid oversight."

"There's another person you think would learn his lesson," Phil piped in before lowering his head again to return to the story.

"Truly," Matthias nodded. He then took another story off the diminishing stack, and pulled it open to the front page. He could see the monograph of a draconian figure in the background of the first letter, very striking, but it was also overdone. However, he could be wrong. He skimmed the first page, finding his desire to read sapped. He had really wanted that story to be able to win. He had yet read a story quite so good among the contest entries. To be sure, there were better works, but none of them he'd read so far today fit that description.

Glancing at the marble hourglass that appeared too heavy for his hands he saw that the sands were trickling down to their last grain. It was nearly noon; they had been at this mendacious task all morning. He leaned back in his chair, his tail curling around the legs for better support. He rubbed his eyes with his paws to clear them of their weariness. Everything seemed dreary in the stuffy old halls of the Writer's Guild. The sputtering candles along the table were dripping with wax, while the brass lanterns gave off half-hearted illumination. The place seemed to be dripping along at such a slow pace, that nothing ever felt like it could be accomplished. The candles and torches were miserable, the usual jumpy and skippy flames were laconic, almost there as if they had to be

and would rather be elsewhere dancing about.

He finally realized that he needed to be out of the Guild Hall before it was too late for his mind. He needed to walk, to move about, and to get some life back into his body. He needed a break.

Charles leaned forward again, and gingerly tapped the yellowed glass on the timepiece as if in reminder to the others. "I think we've spent a bit too long in here. I think I'm going to get some lunch and get a few things accomplished before finishing this up. You two are welcome to take breaks as well of course."

The Reverend nodded, "I think I'll finish up this story before I attend to my own affairs."

"Same with me, I just want to get this over with," Phil added, scooting about on his rear, one ear dangled over the side of his face.

"Well, I'll be back after I get something to eat." Matthias slipped off the high chair, his bare feet settling on the smooth wood comfortably. His toeclaws nicked at it reflexively, trying to gain purchase to keep his balance. The wood floors were varnished as best they could to prevent the inevitable nicks and scars from so many who could no longer wear shoes or boots. Those with hooves were even worse, most of them asking to be shod. He understood the experience was not always pleasant for the parties involved.

Stepping out the hallway in the back, he saw his office with the slice of cheese emblazoned across the top. Charles quickly stepped inside, and reached into his desk for a few things. Grabbing a few coins, enough to get something to eat along the way, and a few papers which he stuffed into his tunic, he quickly cleaned everything he needed out. He locked the door behind him, and left the Writer's Guild into the bright and warm day.

The sun was high in the sky already, and though there were a few clouds drifting lazily along in the light breeze, it was pretty clear. The shadows faced northwards as they always did at this time, barely standing up against the nearing sun. The sweet fragrance of the flowers nearby that lined many of the walkways of the Keep was brought to his nose, which twitched in delight. It was a beautiful day out. The birds of the air were singing, strutting their might, and proclaiming themselves to would-be mates. Crickets jumped through the grasses, finally coming out from their hiding throughout the winter. Everything seemed alive.

The commotion down toward the mall of the Keep where the tents and podiums were being erected for the festivities was full of delighted cheers and strains as hardier individuals than he struggled to get the last of the structures erected before Friday. It was always a weeklong project to get it set up, but it took only a day to tear it down. He hated seeing it go, because then the real work would begin for so many, and the Keep would on many days seem an empty shell. The summer months were always the worst, as many of the Keepers would be out in the far fields tilling the crops and breaking their backs from dawn to dusk six to seven days a week. The hunters would be more active as well, as most of the game would retreat up into the Metamor Mountains just to the northwest. A good fourth of the inhabitants were on a strict meat diet, so a good supply was an absolute necessity. Cows were a precious commodity

too, as not only did they provide milk but they also were slaughtered in vast quantities in the event of a lean month of hunting. While he would have a little every now and then, his tastes ran more to bread and cheese, which were quite common enough and easy to get.

Charles walked down the steps toward the side of the outer buildings proper. He knew where he wanted to go, but he did have a little ways to walk, and he would be passing right by the bakery anyway. As he walked through the open pathways and alleys he could smell many scents. Over to his left was the candlestick maker's wax shop. It had been some time since he had seen Vernon or his apprentices about; but then again his work usually consumed most of his time. He would have to drop by to see how he was doing one of these days; he'd probably buy a few candles while he was at it, his own stock was getting a bit low. He should know better than to do all his writing late at night.

It was not too much longer before he happened upon Gregor's bakery. He saw one black-and-white tabby idly sweeping the entranceway free from dust. His tail twitching back and forth at the slightest movement. Charles did not recognize him immediately, he had not thought that Gregor was taking on tutors, especially not ones that might want to pounce on him as well.

The cat gave him a quick look, and a sudden tensing of the muscles, and then went back to sweeping the walk with his broom woven from coarse straw. It must have been one of the kids from one of the outlying farms. They too had been affected by Nasoj's sorcery, but he did not have much of an occasion to get to know them. They were also more susceptible to attacks from the Lutins. The kid probably apprenticed himself to Gregor to get away from that danger; he'd probably lost a relative to attack.

He nodded to the kid, who shyly looked away, and then stepped into the shop. The fresh scent of baked bread and rising muffins and all other sorts of delectable pastries filled him. He could have stood in that doorway for hours and would never have found another fragrance that made him quite so content. Gregor was standing behind the counter, carefully placing a slightly steaming loaf of dark bread upon a cloth sheet. His ears twitched back and forth as the bread fell from his hands and rolled over. Charles stood in the doorway watching the capybera straighten the bread and then put his mittens down. Windows were open on either side of the room, carrying the pleasing odour to all nearby. To those who did not already know of his shop, the scent was certainly the best advertisement that Gregor could ever get.

"Ah, Charles, what can I do for you today?" Gregor perked up as he noticed the gangly rat walking up to the counter. The counter was set low, as Gregor was not that much taller than Matthias was. However, the ceiling was high enough for even some of the tallest of the Keepers to enter.

Charles hooked a thumb over his back, "I didn't know you took on an apprentice."

"Oh, that's Brennar. He's been at it only a week, but he has helped me keep the place clean. I wouldn't recommend any of his bread to you though." Gregor explained, looking out the open doorway at the cat who could most certainly hear them.

“Why did you take on a cat though?” Charles asked in a low voice.

“Well, he interested me. First time I’ve ever seen a carnivore interested in making bread.”

“That is true isn’t it. He can’t even eat it.”

“No, he can’t. I don’t think you could eat the bread he’s made so far. Hard as rocks. He’ll get better in time, I’m sure of it.”

“Well, speaking of bread, I was hoping I could get some before I go speak with the Steward.” Matthias looked about the counter till he saw a selection of nicely tanned small loaves no bigger than his cupped palms. He pointed to them, “How much for one of these?”

Gregor looked down and then with a very sadistic grin in his eyes replied, “One silver.”

Matthias gave him that knowing look of his, “Oh come on, you know as well as I do that one little loaf is not worth one silver.”

“Today for you it is,” Gregor replied succinctly, that gleam still in his eye.

Matthias leaned over conspiratorially, “Gregor, I’m a repeat customer, you know you’ll always have my business. That loaf is worth a few coppers at the most.”

“Are you saying my bread is not valuable?” Gregor looked offended. Matthias was sure it was all an act. Gregor was determined to weasel the money out of him somehow. Why he was doing it though, Matthias was not too sure.

“No, I’m just not saying its worth one silver.” Matthias had to admit that he was not the best haggler in the world. Some had a gift for it, so tenacious were they that they could get some of Gregor’s finest breads at a few coppers apiece. Others were so loose with their money that they did not care what price Gregor or any of the other tradesmen set for their produce.

Gregor leaned over as well, resting one elbow on the counter, “You still owe me from giving you that slab of bread with that tiger friend of yours a few days back.”

Matthias was about to reply, when it became obvious to him that he really needed to be going, and that he didn’t have the time to argue with Gregor. He was right, and that was that. He’d never paid him back, now was as good a time as any. He fished the silver from his pocket, it was a good thing he took one, and handed it to Gregor, “Fine, one silver.”

“Thank you.” Gregor took it into his own paw, and dumped it into the pocket in the front of his apron. He gingerly reached into the basket and handed Matthias the loaf of bread. “Now, why are you going to see that crocodile?”

“I’m going to see the Steward because I need to ask him a favor,” Matthias did not like having to deal with either Thalberg or the Prime Minister, as both were rather set in their ways and did not easily cede to the requests of others unless they were the Duke himself. He had been told that Thalberg had looked quite lizardly even before Nasoj’s spell. Now that he was a crocodile only seemed to make sense. Of course, when it came to matters of running the central household, he reigned supreme, only Thomas could change any orders that Thalberg gave when it came to the staff or the services provided. Thalberg also

sent out the invitations for the dinner on Saturday evening. He had forgotten one invitation, and Charles was going to remind him of that.

"Care to tell?"

"No, I really ought to be on my way." Matthias began walking to the door again, feeling the steady beat of his chew stick against his thigh.

"Well, I hope the croc isn't in one of his moods," Gregor offered.

Matthias nodded, "So do I." He then after the mutual farewells walked back out the door. The cat Brennar was now sweeping off the lowest step, and his ears were held high as his tail continued to dance rhythmically behind him. Matthias stopped and gave him a quick appraisal. Nearly a foot-and-a-half taller than he, he was well muscled and callused in most of the right places. He had definitely worked on a farm for many years.

Matthias would have turned without another word but Brennar suddenly turned about on him and looked down at the rat, "May I help you?"

"No, I was just on my way."

"Ah." Brennar turned back to continue his meticulous sweeping, straws falling from the broom being added to the pile in the road.

Matthias did not feel right just brushing him off like that, it wouldn't seem right somehow. Instead he gave a quick glance back into the bakery to see that Gregor had disappeared back into his kitchen, and then turned back to give the tabby a small smile. "You've apprenticed to yourself to the best baker I've ever met. He is a true master."

"Yes he is," the cat nodded fondly. "He says that I need lots of work though before my bread even becomes acceptable. I don't see what's wrong with it, you can eat it."

Charles chuckled slightly, his teeth clicking together, "I wouldn't worry too much about that, Brennar. The best things in life take lots of work and dedication. I think you'll make a fine baker in time, just listen to Gregor when he tells you what to do."

"I will. Thanks for the advice, Charles."

"You know me?"

"Well, yes, Gregor is always grumbling about how you swindle him out of his money everyday with charity cases." the tabby winked at him, sweeping an idle leaf that had fallen in with the breeze.

"It was a pleasure meeting you, Brennar, I best be going." Charles twitched his whiskers in mirth, and his tail curled from his pleasant laughter. It was indeed a pleasant day. As he continued to walk along the alleys, he came to the castle proper and after the guards opened the gate, he began climbing a series of stairs that were not wholly unfamiliar to him. He ate the bread as he went, taking small bites out, and nibbling bits off here and there. It was really very good; not Gregor's best, but certainly better than anything he could have made.

He walked out along the promenade between the first building and the inner towers. Thalberg was, as was proper, near the center of the very castle. The promenade stood over the air beneath it by reinforced concrete and by some magic that had been applied to keep it standing in even the strongest of gales.

The balustrades were smoothly carved in a bulbous shape, and past the railing was a nice view of the western portion of the Keep. Beneath him was an even more exquisite garden that was tended daily and trimmed at least twice, once in the morning and once before sunset. It was not the most lavish of places, he'd seen far grander palaces than Duke Thomas's meager offering, but it was certainly a beautiful structure to behold. One could not leave the Keep without realizing the grace that permeated the entire lands. It was handled with great care and diligence, something that could not be said of many other lands.

Charles had finished the bread by the time he had arrived at the Steward's offices. He could detect the pleasing scent of fish that permeated his room almost unquenchably. Knocking on the door, he heard the raspy voice from behind it, talking between bites, "Come in!"

Charles sighed, that was usually a good sign. If Thalberg were in what Gregor had aptly termed 'one of his moods' then he would have been much gruffer and probably would have asked him a series of inane questions that would only infuriate him before letting him in; even then the crocodile would probably have rejected his request out right before even listening to his reasons. Charles had a carefully crafted speech to give, but now, it seemed like that he would not need it. Perhaps Thalberg would relent.

Thalberg was sitting at his desk picking bones out of his yellowed teeth. He had a lot of them. His face was quite distended forward, and his muzzle came to a sharp snout a good eight inches past his eyes. His scales were a dull green, except on his underbelly which were a pale yellow. Not that Charles could see many of them as the Steward was draped in thick red robes to ward off the still cool air. There was an empty plate, aside from the skeleton of the fish, on his desk before him. He stared at Matthias with his yellow-green eyes, and squinted. His thick tail could be just seen around the corner of his desk resting on the floor.

"I wasn't expecting to see you till Saturday evening," Thalberg pointed out. It was obvious that he did not want to be disturbed by the Headmaster of the Writer's Guild.

"That's what I came to talk to you about, sir." Matthias began, remembering to give him a title of respect.

"Oh?"

"Well, I was wondering why the Lady Kimberly did not receive an invitation."

"She's not significant enough."

"She is to me." Matthias tried to keep his temper down. The blasé disregard for his feelings that Thalberg was purposefully displaying hurt. It was clear that the crocodile had no regard for him, or at least if he did, he was not going to show it.

"Ah yes, I heard that you two were seeing an awful lot of each other."

"Then you know that she means a lot to me. I want her to come to this dinner. It will make her feel like a person again."

Thalberg leaned forward, resting his massive arms on the table. The Steward outweighed Matthias by at least three hundred pounds, and could probably make an easy meal out of him if he so wished. Of course, none were so inclined,



for which he was thankful. "As much as I'm sure it is important to you, the request is impossible to fill. There is no room left at the tables anyway. You were lucky to get an invitation yourself."

Matthias spotted an opening and went for it. "If there was room enough, could you send her an invitation as well?"

Thalberg seemed to consider it a moment, scratching his great chin for a moment. He then picked another bone out of his mouth and dropped it to the plate below. "If there is room enough, then I guess I would make this exception. However, I can assure you, there is not room."

Matthias pointed to himself, "I'm only four feet tall, and I don't take up much space. Lady Kimberly is even smaller, though not that much. I'm sure you could fit the both of us where I am now seated."

Thalberg leaned back in his chair, the tail poking out further from behind his desk. "You might be right about that. I'm in a good mood today, so I'll tell you what. I'll get her a place, but I can't guarantee you how cramped it will be."

"That's fine," Matthias nodded, almost jumping for joy that Thalberg had given in so easily. Sometimes, he did that, and nobody knew what his reasons were.

Thalberg idly plucked another bone from his teeth, "Well, I do have matters to attend to, writing up this invitation and having the tables changed among them. If you'll excuse me." Thalberg pointed to the door with one clawed hand, and Matthias quickly got up and left.

Once outside, the door closed behind him, Charles could no longer restrain his excitement. He jumped up, giving out a little cheer. He landed on his feet feeling the soft red carpet beneath them. Ah, it was indeed a good day! He pulled out his chew stick, and began gnawing contentedly away as he walked back out toward the promenade. Of course now he was going to have to spend the rest of the afternoon working in the Writer's Guild. Those stories took some time to judge. He just wished Nahum had been more careful. That would have been a story he would have been proud to read before the Keepers.

An even better story would have been Zhypar Habakkuk's, if he'd ever finish it. He sighed; perhaps he should have fought the kangaroo in the ring, just for show so that he'd be obligated to finish it. He shook that thought from his mind quickly, he was not going to fight others, and he knew what happened when he did that. The memory of his times in the Southlands with the Sondeckis was not something he liked to think about. What had happened with them was a sad tale, one that would be told someday, but not by him.

When he returned to the Writer's Guild, he found the candles and lanterns refreshed, and both Phil and Dr. Channing working away, with a bit of their own lunches still sitting on the tables next to them. Boy, they really did want to get this over with. He didn't blame them, it was a rough job, and only they three were going to allow themselves to do it. Matthias nodded to the two of them as he returned to his seat and pulled another story off the pile. It was going to be a long afternoon.



Matthias rested his head on the table. Like he had thought, the afternoon had worn painfully on. The hourglass had to be flipped four times before they finally finished the grueling task of judging the stories. It had come down to four, and it was on his preference. He had read each one of them over again, hating to have to decide which one would be left out. There was one that he knew would be first place, which would be Tallis's. He was usually very good at this sort of thing. He was not the best writer in the Keep, not even among the contestants, but he had written one fine dandy of a story, it was too good to pass up. The other three, well they were much closer in his estimate.

It had finally been decided on a simple matter of taste. He found very nitpicky reasons to choose one over the others, and finally, there was only one that would not be presented. He would not toss that story on the reject pile; he wanted the author to know that his story had almost made it. He'd save it to put in the library later, Fox Cutter would understand. However, now they were all quite tuckered out. Matthias looked at the others, each one nearly as exhausted as he. He had one thought on his mind, more food. That bread he had for lunch had tasted good but had completely worn off.

"What say we three all go down to share a meal at the Deaf Mule?" Matthias suggested. He half expected Channing to decline, but instead the goose for once nodded.

"That sounds like an excellent idea. I haven't eaten there in ages." The Reverend seemed quite delighted by the idea.

"I'm always happy to eat there." Phil nodded.

"Good." Matthias stood up, stepping down from his chair, the contest finally decided.

The Deaf Mule was boisterous as usual, but a bit more so today, as the excitement was building in each of the patrons. The Equinox-Easter celebration was only two days away. For the Keep, festivals were something that brought everybody together and made each of them remember how to be human and how to have fun amidst all the work. That it was only three days long was disappointing to some. Of course the twelve day long Yule-Winter Solstice celebration was always everybody's favorite. Matthias and Phil quickly moved over to their favorite table, the one near the pool table. Copernicus was playing against Michael, towering over him as he deftly sent the balls into the pockets. Matthias wasn't too sure, but it looked as if Coper was being easy on the mostly human kid.

The usual trio of writers was there, Tallis, Zhypar, and Nahum. They were watching the game, offering encouraging comments to Michael. Charles came up, and looked at them with his haggard expression. "Mind if we join you three?"

Zhypar shrugged his slight shoulders, "Go right ahead, always glad to see you guys. Hey, Reverend, haven't seen you down here in a while, how are you feeling?"

“Tired. You guys sure do write a lot.” Dr. Channing winked at them meaningfully.

“Well, whatever happens, I know I lost.” Tallis sighed, looking back at the game.

“You’re not going to trick us into saying anything there Tallis,” Phil admonished him as he took his seat.

“I’m not, I really mean it. I’ve written much better than that,” Tallis sighed, fingering the mead in his paws. Matthias tried not to reveal the smirk he knew was inside. It was amazing how often an author was so wrong about his or her own work. Artists of any profession for that matter never understood their work the ways others did. He wondered if others thought of his stories different than he. He knew that some liked some of the works that he felt had just been scrubbed off and were not worth his time. However, the polished ones, seldom got the kind of attention he felt they deserved. Oh well, it was the way of the scribe.

“Has Father Hough arrived yet?” Charles suddenly asked Zhypar.

Habakkuk shook his head, “No, but then again you know he usually waits till the day before.”

Charles sighed, “I thought he said he was going to get here tonight, ah well.”

“Father Hough?” Michael asked as Copernicus began to replace the pool balls in the set.

“Follower Priest from the nearest diocese. He comes here during festival times for those of us who are Followers to help us celebrate in the proper way. We hold services every day. You are invited of course.”

Michael nodded, then looked back at the game. Charles wondered what his silence meant, if anything. Still, he was not in the mood to get into a theological debate with anybody at the moment.

However, despite the exhausting effort of the day, he had accomplished what he wanted, and that was to get Kimberly into the dinner on Saturday night. As the barmaid came to take their order, he could think of nothing other than that, Saturday evening was going to be so wonderful for her. That was all that mattered, making sure she would feel important. This would certainly help. Now, he just had to get her something nice to wear. He would see her tomorrow morning; all his other duties had been fulfilled. The Seamstress would fit her with a dress, at his expense. Yes, and she would wear it on Saturday evening.

Equinox-Easter was going to be a wonderful festival, especially Saturday evening.