An Invitation to Tea

By Vaidenon of Hustan, Warden of the Inkhorn Fellowship

the trade in pleasure on Hârn: the Halean temple, the Courtesans' Guild, the common brothel and the street, the Lia-Kavair's third, the law and custom of every realm, the pox and the cradle, and what Terra remembers of its own

> "Half of Cherafir frowns at my door, Warden, and the other half knocks on it. A good many do both on the same evening."
>
> — Nerelyne of Harasain, mistress of the House of the Five Lanterns, Cherafir, to the author

Version 1.0 · November 2026 · 4hmlb.com/library/an-invitation-to-tea.html · send word to vaidenon@4hmlb.com

A pupil of mine, a sensible young man of Tashal with a good hand and no money, asked me last spring why the Halean priestess who sold his mother her tea had looked at him and laughed. I explained that in western Hârn an invitation to tea is an invitation to something else, and that his mother had been buying a tea that keeps women from conceiving. He went the colour of a Laranian banner, and I went home and began this article. It is about the trade in pleasure on Hârn: who sells it, who buys it, who takes a share, what the law of each realm says, what it costs a body, and what Lesli of Bifel's Terra made of the same trade. I have written it plainly, because the trade is plain enough; and carefully, because the people in it are people.

A Word on Words

Courtesan means a member of the Courtesans' Guild, and nothing else. The guild will tell you so, at length.

Prostitute means anyone who sells the act outside the guild: in a brothel, an inn or the street.

Pleasure slave means a person owned for pleasure, which is lawful only where slavery is.

Priestess of Halea means a priestess. Some of her rites are carnal; she is not for hire, though she may be for bargain.

Prostitute and **courtesan** are different callings in law and in the guild rolls: the courtesan is guilded, the prostitute, the pimp and the brothel keeper are not. A brothel is not a guild house, however fine its sign.

Most people in every branch of the trade are women, but every branch has its men, and its young. I have not hidden either.

Credits

Writer: Vaidenon of Hustan

Set down by Lesli of Bifel and his homunculus, Claudin

With thanks to the correspondents named in the text, to Columbia Games, whose books are the ground of all that follows, and to the historians of Terra. See Sources and Additions.

Version 1.0, November 2026. The current edition is kept at 4hmlb.com/library/an-invitation-to-tea.html.

Four Houses of Pleasure

On Hârn the thing is done under four roofs, and each would be offended to be confused with the others. The **temple of Halea** treats pleasure as worship, and owns or finances brothels, gambling houses and inns where the law allows. The **Courtesans' Guild** sells luxury, of which the bed is one part, under a butterfly badge that only it may hang. The **common trade** fills the brothels, the inns and the dark end of the street, and in most towns it pays the Lia-Kavair for the privilege of being left alone. And in Tharda and Rethem, **pleasure slaves** are bought, sold and hired, by temples and by slavers of the Mercantylers' Guild alike.

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Who may do what depends on the realm, and on who is watching. Most realms' law names prostitution among the crimes of obscenity, and in the same breath most realms' towns have a brothel within sight of the court. The guild is protected everywhere by the Mangai's charter, and disapproved of almost everywhere by somebody. The pattern is the Terran one, Lesli tells me: the trade is condemned in the pulpit and licensed at the gate.

The Golden Temptress

Halea is the goddess of wealth and pleasure, the Maker of Bargains. Her church holds that truth is found in the senses and the feelings rather than in reason, and that pleasure is the only path to fulfilment because it is the only one whose truth can be trusted. She asks no particular morality of her faithful, only fealty, flattery, and a bargain honestly kept. Those who are not Haleans tend to think her shallow, and her church a gilded counting-house. Those who have bargained with a Halean priestess tend not to make that mistake twice.

The church's founder was a slave. Merodyne the Pale, the concubine of a Karejian merchant in the fourth century, ran her master's estates within a year of being bought, tripled his fortune within three, and offered to buy her freedom. He refused. Within a month he was ruined and charged with fraud and smuggling, and Merodyne produced a deed of manumission that he had not signed. Her house in Livelis became the Temple of the Pale, and her feasts became the church's rites. I have heard Haleans tell the story as a parable of the goddess's rewards, and Laranians tell it as a parable of everything else.

> *Every faith on Hârn bargains with its god, Warden. The Laranian bargains his sword for heaven and the Peonian her comfort for it. We are only the church that says so out loud, and keeps the accounts.*
>
> — Telsa Thornil, Aramia of the Temple of Halea, Cherafir

The temple and the trade

The church's mission is to teach pleasure "directly and by example", and to use pleasures of every kind to tempt, reward and instruct. Its priestesses are all women, by a decree of the year 384; its guards, the Solithar, are handsome young men, and many of them are the priestesses' consorts. A Halean temple keeps chambers for private worship, for which the faithful pay the Bargainer's tithe; a large enough tithe brings a priestess to assist. The monthly lay mass on Shesneala Day, the 7th, ends in an orgy, and is well attended. Some priestesses live in wealthy households as chaplains, under a contract of at least a year and a monthly donation to the temple for her absence.

The temple's treasurer, the Ralithina, keeps more than the collection plate. Where the law allows it, she oversees the hire and sale of pleasure slaves of both sexes, and the gambling parlours, brothels and inns that the temple owns or finances. On Hârn this is most true in Tharda, where the Halean temples earn great sums from the sale and hire of pleasure slaves, among them the children of poor families sold by their own parents. In Melderyn, the temple at Harden keeps a brothel that serves the caravans; it has few worshippers, pays no tax, and turns a handsome profit for the church.

The church also sells what the trade needs. Every Halean temple keeps a jug of Baby-Can-Wait in a sunny corner, with a crowd of pretty cups around it, each belonging to a priestess or a regular. Dryad Sweat, the perfume of courtesans and priestesses, is a temple monopoly in most places. Halea's Brandy is brewed for the rites and given to wealthy patrons. And the churches sell the Courtesans' Guild its contraceptive potions and its stronger aphrodisiacs.

Where the goddess is welcome

The Order of the Silken Voice, Halea's only clerical order, keeps a house in every city of Hârn but Azadmere, and its primate sits in Shiran, the City of Sins, where the provincial magistrate diverts a tenth or more of the province's taxes to the temple. Elsewhere the church is a merchants' faith: wealthy, growing in Tashal and Cherafir, frowned upon in Kanday, beaten in the streets of Golotha, and liked less in Thay than in any other city, for the Thayans have not forgiven the priestesses who feasted while Aleath starved in 570.

The Banquet of Delight, from the 1st to the 7th of Halane, is the church's great festival. In Coranan it is

seven days of commerce and debauchery that greet the returning caravans; in Tharda's parades the riders throw sweets, coins, cheap jewellery and brothel tokens to the crowd. At Aleath it is a quieter affair, and Laranian fanatics have been known to break up the processions. In Tashal, the temple stages its own shows at the amphitheatre on the 7th, 17th and 27th of Larane, with courtesans among the players of its Eleri Plays, and draws better crowds than the Laranian morality plays on the 5th, 15th and 25th.

The Butterfly

The Courtesans' Guild is a Lythian guild, rooted in Azeryan, with few houses on Hârn, because few Hârnic towns hold enough wealthy men to keep one. A house has a fine name, a cook, harpers to teach its courtesans, a bath at the door and robes for the guests, whose arms and armour are taken from them and kept safe. A visit is not to be hurried. The courtesans dance, sing, play, talk and run an honest game of chance, and the bed comes, if it comes, at the end of a long evening. A man who wanted a fumble and a game of dice will be shown the door.

The guild has no monopoly on pleasure, and does not claim one. Its monopoly is on its badge, a green field with a butterfly, which promises cleanliness, discretion, honesty and safety. Powerful men meet in a guild house because nobody there will repeat what they say. A brothel that hangs a butterfly will hear from the local Mangai, and then from a litigant before the magistrate. A courtesan who steals from a guest or tells a secret is cast out of the guild and handed to the law. Where the guild is frowned upon, the butterfly is carved small into the door frame, and the right sort of man knows to look for it.

How a courtesan is made

Most courtesans come to the guild as teenagers from the poor of the towns; the Hârndex says the guild buys many of them through brokers from their impoverished fathers, and the guild says, with some truth, that it is a better fate than they would otherwise have had. Recruiting is selective, for a house needs few at a time. Others are the children of courtesans, raised outside the house by kin, who choose their mothers' trade. A new member, girl or boy, trains for a month or two, learning manners, speech, gait and grooming, and letters; either side may end it there. Then the recruit signs as a **bonded courtesan**, usually for seven years and longer in the finest houses, for room, board and a third of what he or she earns. When the contract ends a courtesan may stay, move to another house, or retire; with enough saved, he or she pays the guild a fee and becomes a **free courtesan**, keeping two thirds. A free courtesan may seek a **franchise** to keep a house, which brings a seat on the local Mangai and a vote in the guild; Grallax of Coranan holds one as surely as any mistress does. Most retire rich before thirty: some marry a former client, some tutor the children of the wealthy in the graces, some enter the church of Halea (which takes only women), and many invest in the luxury trade.

The men of the trade are fewer, and their lot is the same. Most houses keep at least one male courtesan, who sings, plays and talks alongside the women, and like them is expected to serve guests of either sex; a couple sharing a courtesan, or a high-born Thardan lady come alone, often needs one. Pinel of Dyr is the only slaver in Shiran who sells male pleasure slaves, but the market is real and lucrative; a lady of Coranan keeps a stable of them, and the Halean temples sell and hire slaves of both sexes. Molazel's brothel in Coranan keeps a few men among its women, the Wolves' Den one young man among four women, and I am told that in the ports there are men who sell themselves to sailors as women do. Women buy as well as men, though rarely, and most often in the Republic.

Merele of Hetha, who keeps the Crimson Palace, is the guild's best advertisement. A poor tenant farmer's daughter of Perawol, she was sold to the House of the Seven Joys, bought out her contract by twenty-one, and borrowed to open her own house, which paid off its loan in two years and has since outshone the house that trained her. She bought three women from the far east of Lythia at prices few believe, and made them bonded courtesans within months, as the Thardic houses often do. Rethem's houses keep their slaves as slaves.

A courtesan chooses her clients and what she will do, within reason; a wise mistress pairs a guest with

someone who shares his tastes. A man who breaks the house's rules or strikes a courtesan is put out, and his name goes round the other houses; most go quietly, because the courtesans know whom to whisper to. In Tharda, high-born women may visit a house, alone or with their husbands, and some come dressed as men; the courtesans are happy to play along.

> *The council frowns on my house by day, Warden, and sups in it by night. Men who disapprove tip handsomely. I think it is the disapproval they are paying for.*
>
> — Mereme of Tamas, mistress of the Palace of the Floating Moon, Aleath

The guild's quarrels

The office of guildmistress for all Hârn has stood empty for two years, since the death of the mistress of Coranan's House of Five Pleasures. It has always gone to a Thardan; the franchise-holders of the east want one of their own this time. I note that Grallax, the young master of the House of Five Pleasures, inherited it from his mother two years ago, and is bored with it. The Innkeepers' Guild dislikes the courtesans, who sell wine and company without a master innkeeper, and has tried and failed to make them hire one. The perfumers, clothiers, jewellers, glassworkers and harpers love them, for they are excellent customers. The Lia-Kavair seldom tries to squeeze a courtesan, since her friends are better armed than its own. Seldom is not never: in Tashal, Myrele of Obelon pays the Lia-Kavair a tenth of her takings, and calls it good sense.

The Common Trade

Every Hârnic town has at least one inn where prostitutes work, because drink makes men bold and the women draw custom. The innkeepers' guild is at pains to say that barmaids do not, as a rule, and a guest who assumes otherwise may be put in the street; in some Thardic and Rethemi taverns, where the staff are slaves, such requests are welcome. By an old custom that has not quite died out, a guest who leaves his door ajar is asking for company. At the Blue Bell in Geda the new innkeeper tells his guests to leave their doors open for the heat of the fire, and the one woman who still works his rooms takes it the old way.

The brothels themselves run from decent to dreadful. In Coranan, Molazel of Paserak, a former temple guard, keeps a house where the women are well treated and fairly clean, houses the old and the sick among them in his tenement next door, and will not see a child mistreated. Kalinde of Aewas, across the city, gives soldiers and river folk "a little bit of Corsilea" for their pennies. In Shiran, Erebene of Wesin keeps her house free of the Lia-Kavair with retired legionaries at the door. In Cherafir's Alienage, Masyne of Siven keeps twelve women upstairs in conditions best called grim. And in the warrens beneath Golotha there is a house of abducted slaves that I will not describe, of which few of its women survive a year.

The cheapest arithmetic I found was at the Wolves' Den in Cherafir, where Girondis of Plaemen sells ale at the front and four women and a young man in alcoves at the back. A customer buys tokens at the bar: a farthing for a pint, two for an hour. Three of his five are there as surety for their families' debts to a usurer who lends to the desperate. Girondis keeps six pennies in every ten they earn, and by the time a debt is paid he is ready to replace the worker. The other two are poor folk feeding their families. The tokens, I am told, are used as gambling chips all over the Darebor quarter.

How does a person come to it? Poverty, mostly, as everywhere. The runaway serf who reaches a town, says HârnWorld, finds work as a scavenger, a beggar or a prostitute, for "there are always openings in these fields." Debt, as at the Wolves' Den. A cruel family, a seducer, a bad bargain. In Ivinia, the clanless are left the work no freeclan will own, prostitution among it, and a clanless woman may be killed with little fear of the law. Most leave the trade by marriage, by age, or by the churchyard.

> *The tea works when it is drunk every day, Warden. Nobody on this street can afford to drink it every day. That is why I have eleven of them under my roof, and none of them mine.*
>
> — Jorene of Hulda, who keeps the children of the brothels of the Alienage, Cherafir

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Bought and Sold

Where slavery is lawful, in Tharda, Rethem and Orbaal, a pleasure slave fetches 300 to 600 pence, a trained one the higher price; slavers belong to the Mercantylers' Guild. Shiran is famous for them, as for its perfumes. Pinel of Dyr, an alderman there, deals in pleasure slaves whom his wife, a courtesan, trains; he is the only slaver in the city to sell men. The magistrate of the province is among his customers. The marshal of the province is building a collection from every tribal nation on Hârn. The old Corani emperor Laketta is said to have kept a thousand, and to have died of them.

The temples of Halea in the Republic sell and hire pleasure slaves openly. The Crimson Palace keeps none, and frees those it buys into bonded status, as many Thardic houses do; Rethem's houses have no such custom. In Coranan, at a certain inn behind the arena, visitors have been known to vanish and turn up as slaves in Golotha, which is why the locals call it Golotha's Inn. In Shiran, the Lia-Kavair's master takes a debtor's wife or daughter as surety, and returns her, when the debt is paid, rarely the same.

The Thieves' Third

Outside the guild, the trade belongs to the Lia-Kavair in most towns, along with gambling and drugs. The Lia-Kavair is not one guild but a family of gangs, and how it runs the trade depends on the gang. In Tashal, the guildmaster Halime of Falesh lets three franchises work under him, and one of them, held by Perla of Rabeta of the Busted Nut, controls all the prostitution and gambling in the city. Her "angels" work the inns and taverns and pay her a third of their takings for protection, and they bring her what they hear. A dozen of her best live and work in a house of Halime's, well cared for, never allowed to leave, and several of them kept docile with his drugs. Anyone who tries to set up on Perla's ground gets a visit, and a promise that the next visit will bring friends.

In Golotha, the Lia-Kavair's guildhall is a brothel, the most open and prosperous on Hârn, with a dozen women on its flirting balcony and its master's wife managing them; spies are paid through its rooms. In Cherafir, where the watch is less tolerant, the guild keeps to the Alienage. There Lavro of Dulkai, a guildsman, is a merciless pimp; Foralyn of Hubern's women collect what will help with burglary and blackmail, and so Foralyn is left alone; and the Wolves' Den, which pays no one, lets the guildmaster keep goods in its storeroom with no questions asked. In Coranan, the Apple inn, which has resident prostitutes, has a secret door into the Lia-Kavair's guildhall.

The guild's bargain with the towns is always the same: it keeps crime within bounds and the authorities look the other way. It prefers victims without powerful friends. It lends at ruinous rates, more than half again a month, through mercantylers who front for it. It does not rescue a member who is caught. And it pays the church of Naveh about a tenth of its income, which the Navehans accept with contempt.

> *I keep my angels off the street and out of trouble, Warden, and the city keeps its eyes off me. Everyone in Tashal pays a third of something to someone. I am only the one who is honest about it.*
>
> — Perla of Rabeta, of the Busted Nut, Tashal

The Law, Realm by Realm

Most Hârnic law knows three crimes touching the bed. **Obscenity** is a forbidden sexual act, "such as prostitution", and is punished by the pillory, prison, or death by stoning. **Rape and adultery** are one crime in the books, the assault of a maiden or relations with a married woman, punished by flogging, restitution, castration or stoning. And **breach of guild privilege**, which protects the butterfly, costs a counterfeiter his property. In practice, the first is enforced when a town is in the mood, the second when a husband or a father has a powerful friend, and the third whenever the Mangai is paying.

The temples have their own views. The Laranian and Peonian churches dislike the guild, holding that it threatens marriage and inheritance, the bones of an ordered society; where they rule, houses are discreet. Laranians warn their knights against the Whore of Heaven, lest they be caught in her embrace when the

battle comes. Peonians try to restrain pleasures of the flesh outside marriage, their clergy are celibate, and their orders were split by sex long ago to keep them so. A Peonian I trust told me that Haleans are confused rather than wicked. The Agrikans call Halea the Whore of Heaven and the Ilvirans the Prostitute of Heaven; the Morgathians think her selfish and greedy, the Save-K'norians selfish and shallow, and the Navehans expect her faithful to be the first to perish. The Haleans, in return, pity everyone.

Realm	The law	The custom
The Thardic Republic	Lawful, and at home. Slavery is legal; Halean temples sell and hire pleasure slaves. Only Naveh is proscribed.	The guild's heartland. Halea is the strongest church, and public money finds its way to her temples. High-born women may visit a house, alone or with their husbands.
Rethem	Slavery is legal. Obscenity, prostitution among it, draws the pillory and a fine; rape and adultery, flogging and restitution. Nobles guilty of such crimes are usually fined.	Haleans are beaten in Golotha's streets, and their seat on the city council stands empty. The Lia-Kavair runs openly. The countryside thinks Halea a bringer of weakness.
Kanday	The guild is officially frowned on but protected by the Mangai's charter. Halea's Tresses is proscribed.	Laranian fanatics harass the Banquet of Delight at Aleath. Aleath's Lia-Kavair is among the weakest on Hârn and was raided as lately as 717. Halean merchants find northern Kanday hard going.
Kaldor	Halea is tolerated, not encouraged; at Kiban punitive taxes and unfriendly laws. Halea's Tresses is proscribed.	Tashal's Halean congregation grows; its Laranian high priest plans a moral crusade against it. The Lia-Kavair holds the franchise of the common trade.
Melderyn	Halea is popular only among merchants. Thay enforces its morality statutes when it pleases. The drug alanal is proscribed.	The temple at Harden keeps a brothel for the caravans, tax-free. Thay likes Halea less than any city on Hârn. Cherafir's common trade lives in the Alienage.
Chybisa	The worship of Agrik, Morgath and Naveh is death; Halea is lawful. Halea's Tresses is proscribed.	Respectable women still cover their heads. Burzyn's Haleans worship in the House of the Silken Veil. The heir has Sardura's Sting.
Orbaal	The books say nothing of the trade.	Thralls are owned, and Ivinian custom holds. Among the Jarin, a wife has her husband's rights, and either may end a marriage by consent.
Azadmere	No Halean temple; the Silken Voice has a house in every city of Hârn but this one.	The Khuzdul marry once and for life, and think infidelity a grave wrong; what men do in private is private.
Ivinia and Menglana	The clanless do the work no freeclan will own: beggary, scavenging and prostitution. Killing one of them costs little.	In Menglana the Hirdmaand runs the trade with gambling, abduction and wrecking. Halea is a foreigners' faith.

Of the tribal nations the books say little on this matter, and I have not invented it. The Kubora and the barbarian peoples keep their own customs of marriage, and visiting men would do well to learn them before they learn anything else.

Marriage, Bastards and the Bed of Another

Marriage on Hârn is property before it is love, and adultery is chiefly a wrong against a husband. A wife's infidelity puts a stranger's child in line for her husband's land; a husband's puts one in a cottage. The law treats them accordingly. In Rethem, a noble guilty of adultery is usually fined; a commoner may be flogged or put in the pillory. In Tharda, a clanhead may

arrange his kin's marriages and compel their divorces. The Jarin of Orbaal keep an older custom, under which a wife has the same rights as her husband and either may end a marriage with the other's consent. The Khuzdul marry once, for life, and think infidelity a grave wrong; what two unmarried men do in private is no one's business.

Bastards are common and their fortunes vary. Kaldor's king, who never married, has three bastard sons, all high in his government; illegitimacy bars the eldest from the throne unless the king acknowledges him while he lives. The king's consort, Lady Erila, is the kingdom's Lord Privy Seal. A baroness of Kaldor is famous for her infidelities, and some say her son is not her husband's. Chybisa's first breach with Melderyn began when a king's bastard took the crown. A Thardic legar is said to sell judgements for favours and to pay off outraged husbands from the district's funds. And the common folk blame an unexplained baby, or a deformed one, on the satyrs, the goatish sons of the Syverhyn whom Halea cursed.

The Pox and the Cradle

Two things follow the trade on Hârn as everywhere, and the physicians have no cure for either.

The bed-sicknesses

The worst of them is Sardura's Sting, named for the handmaiden who punishes those who break faith with Halea; in the east it is the Shiran sickness, and in the Republic the eastern canker, for every people blames its neighbours. It brings a sore, a rash, then years of quiet, and then, in some, madness and death. Hârnic physicians know its course, but not its cause or a cure. Chybisa's crown prince, a famous womanizer, has its first sores and covers them with herbal paste, and knows what may come. The alchemists claim that their Elmithra cures the bed-sicknesses outright; it is costly, and they would say so. A Halean priestess can bless an apple that guards against pregnancy and the bed-sicknesses for ten days or a month, and five such apples eaten in a day will end a pregnancy; she can also pray a sickness out of a body. And a Halean who breaks a bargain with the goddess may find that a priestess has prayed one in: Sadura's Rash, which begins where it will hurt most and grows worse each day until the victim recovers or dies.

The guild's houses are known for their cleanliness, and the courtesans buy cures and potions from the apothecaries as they buy contraceptives. In the common trade, the Peonian sisters treat whoever comes to them, and ask no questions. Of the other sicknesses of Hârn, and of cold, hunger and the rest, I have written in Bad Air and Good Broth.

> *We do not ask a woman what she does when she comes to us with a fever, Warden. We ask her where it hurts.*
>
> — Fryda of Gevrael, Pelnala of the Balm of Joy, Cherafir

The cradle

Baby-Can-Wait, a cup a day, cuts a woman's chance of conceiving to perhaps one month in fifty, at three pence a dose; but many physicians will not prescribe it, saying that years of it make a woman barren, and they may be right. The same rasakile brewed strong ends a pregnancy of four months or less; later, it brings a stillbirth and often barrenness. Tania's Tea of perigwar is only a stimulant, served by courtesans to their guests. The apothecaries sell courtesans their abortifacients along with their cures. And Heir-in-a-Bottle, for those who want the opposite, gives twins or more as often as one in three.

The children come regardless. Courtesans' children are raised outside the house, by kin, and some return to it as grown women. The children of the common trade are raised by women like Jorene of Hulda, or by no one. Near Coranan, an innkeeper who keeps three slave prostitutes has been pregnant by many men, and every child was stillborn. A fair number of desperate mothers in Shiran have offered themselves to a Savoryan mage there in the hope that he would take their child as a pupil. I set these down so that no game master forgets that the trade has a cradle at the end of it as often as a purse.

Lesli's Terran Notes

I asked Lesli of Bifel how his Terra managed the same trade in its own middle ages, and his answer rose on

my page in the homunculus's neat, impatient hand. I give it in my own words, and the sources he named are listed at the end. He commends to every reader the talk Medieval Sex According To Eleanor Janega, in which a historian of that age explains, frankly and with some laughter, that its people were not the prudes they are taken for; and the channel that keeps it, History Hit, which has a great deal more on the age.

- **A necessary evil.** Terra's theologians followed Saint Augustine, who held that if prostitutes were taken out of the world, lust would overturn everything. Towns across Europe licensed brothels, fenced them into districts, or owned them outright, and taxed them. It is the Laranian frown and the Mangai's licence in one sentence.
- **The bishop's geese.** In Southwark, across the river from London, the brothels stood on land of the Bishop of Winchester, and the women were called Winchester geese. His ordinances, three dozen of them with a fine for each, governed the stewholders. One forbade them to keep any woman with the "burning" sickness; others, at Southwark and at Sandwich, limited what the keepers might charge for ale and lend at interest, exactly the trap of the Wolves' Den.
- **Striped hoods.** In 1351 London ordered its common women to stop dressing like noble ladies, forbade them fur and fine linings, and put them in striped hoods. Other Terran towns chose other colours. A good many of London's women, Lesli says, simply ignored it.
- **No good town without a good house.** In southern France and Italy, from the middle of the fourteenth century, towns ran their brothels themselves. Florence set up an Office of Decency in 1403 to license the women, collect their fees and hear their complaints, which gave a registered prostitute better access to a court than many respectable women had. Some of the fees kept a convent for those who left the trade. In France, the women of a town brothel protested when a man was put over them in place of a woman keeper.
- **The young.** I asked Lesli whether his Terra had spared its children this trade. He said, without any pleasure in it, that it had not: that in many of its towns and centuries girls and boys were sold or drawn into it by poverty, by debt and by their own families, much as the books say of Hârn, and that its courts, its charities and its brothel-keepers' own ledgers record it. He asked me not to look away from it, and I have not.
- **Marrying them out.** Preachers in France urged young men to marry prostitutes, and townsmen to give to their dowries. The Peonian sisters would approve.
- **The double standard.** Terra's church condemned adultery by husband and wife alike, but its law courts and its families did not; a wife's adultery was by far the worse crime there, as on Hârn. In England adultery became a matter for the church courts, punished by penance, such as standing before the parish in a white sheet. Long before, an English king's law made the adulterer pay the husband his blood-price and buy him another wife.
- **Eve's herbs.** Women of that age knew rue, pennyroyal, savin and other herbs that bring on the courses and end a pregnancy, and the knowledge passed among herbalists, physicians and midwives, though how well the herbs worked is argued. Rasakile, Lesli says, would have been very welcome.
- **The great pox.** Syphilis, the great pox of Terra, first broke out in Europe in 1495 at Naples, among an invading army, and spread across the continent within a few years. Every nation named it after its neighbours. Lesli finds it no surprise that Kaldorans call Sardura's Sting the Shiran sickness.
- **The foundlings.** Florence opened a hospital for abandoned children in 1445. Its first foundling was a girl, left ten days after it opened. Babies were laid in a basin by the door, later in a turning wheel, so that no one saw who left them.
- **The single women's churchyard.** Southwark had a burial ground for its prostitutes, unconsecrated, which a chronicler of 1598 called the "single woman's churchyard." Whether it is quite as old as its legend the historians argue; it has a shrine at its gate today.

I asked Lesli whether his Terra had found a better way. He answered that it had tried every way at least twice, and that the women had been there every time.

For the Game Master

A Card for the Table

A common prostitute: 1d a visit, 3d a night. A courtesan: 12d, 24d or 36d a visit; a renowned lady 120d an evening; the Crimson Palace 360d.

The butterfly on a door means a guild house: arms surrendered at the bath, discretion assured, no dice.

An invitation to tea, in the west, is an invitation.

In most towns, the Lia-Kavair takes a third of the common trade. It seldom troubles the guild.

Lawful everywhere in practice; obscenity at law. Pleasure slaves only where slaves are lawful.

Sardura's Sting has no cure on Hârn, whatever the alchemists say.

Callings at the Table

Courtesan is a guilded calling: HârnWorld lists it among the guilds, with a variable income. A courtesan is a bonded courtesan, a free courtesan, or a free courtesan holding a franchise; the guild has no apprentices, journeymen or masters.

Prostitute is an unguilded calling, listed with the beggars and ratters, also with a variable income. Ivinia names the calling **prostitute or pimp**, and so does the Fellowship.

Pimp and **brothel keeper** are unguilded too. A keeper may hold some other guild's franchise (an innkeeper who keeps a brothel upstairs is still an innkeeper), but no brothel is a guild house and no brothel keeper is a member of the Courtesans' Guild.

A guild member who sells pleasure outside the guild's rules, or a brothel that hangs the butterfly, is in breach of guild privilege.

The guild's houses on Hârn

Town	House and keeper	What the books say
Shiran	The Crimson Palace (Merele of Hetha)	Hârn's most famous house. Nine bonded and two free courtesans; no pleasure slaves; a neutral ground for powerful folk.
Shiran	The House of the Seven Joys (Lerieme of Tamel)	Once the finest on Hârn, now perhaps the second. Guildsmen, legion officers and, it is said, one senior Laranian priest.
Coranan	The Palace of the Yellow Moon (Ewenien of Aeb)	The city's best, and still taking the best courtesans from its rivals.
Coranan	The House of Five Pleasures (Grallax)	A pleasing of the five senses in turn. Its late mistress, his mother, was guildmistress of all Hârn (Inkhorn reading).
Coranan	The House of the Eternal Moment (Serelyn of Abir)	One of the worst houses on Hârn: sour wine and cut corners, kept alive by the patronage dispensed there.
Golotha	Golotha's only house (Wyrene of Charo)	Nobles, master guildsmen and their guests only; no weapons; spirits, opiates and a brilliant cook.
Aleath	The Palace of the Floating Moon (Mereme of Tamas)	Frowned on by the government, rich with the upper classes; three guards admit no one uninvited.
Tashal	The Floating World of Three Heavens (Myrele of Obelon)	Frowned on by the Laranians; her courtesans play in the Halean temple's Eleri Plays.
Cherafir	The House of the Five Lanterns (Nerelyne of Harasain)	Very discreet. Six bonded courtesans and a dozen in training.
Thay	The Rainbow Moon (Elyne of Merbel)	The only house in Thay, prosperous though officially discouraged.
Burzyn	The House of the Silken Veil	Chybisa's Haleans worship inside it; its courtesans buy the dresses too daring for a lord's wife.

Prices

From the Fellowship's Hârnic Hire List and Price List, which give each price's source.

What	Price	Source
A common prostitute, a visit	1d	The price lists; Inns of Hârn has 1–3d
A common prostitute, a night	3d	Inkhorn

 Unofficial fan work; Hârn belongs to its publishers

What	Price	Source
The Wolves' Den, Cherafir, an hour	2 farthings in tokens	Cherafir
A pleasure slave, hired for a night	6d	Inkhorn
A courtesan, modest house, a visit	12d	the guild's own lowest rate
A courtesan, fine house, a visit	24d	Inkhorn, inside the guild's 20–50d
A courtesan, exclusive house, a visit	36d	Inkhorn
A renowned lady, an evening	120d	Inkhorn; the guild says above 100d
The Crimson Palace, an evening	360d	Inkhorn; the book says at least 300–400d
The Bargainer's tithe (private worship)	12d, and more for a priestess	Inkhorn
A pleasure slave, bought	300d; trained 600d	the Hârndex
Baby-Can-Wait, a dose	3d	Potions
Dryad Sweat, an ounce	240d	Potions
A bonded courtesan's freedom	rarely less than £5 (1,200d)	Shiran

Who takes what

Who	What they keep or pay	Source
A bonded courtesan	keeps a third of her earnings, with room and board	the guild
A free courtesan	keeps two thirds, and pays for her room and board	the guild
The guildmistress	fees and a small share of every house's revenue	the guild
An angel of Perla of Rabeta, Tashal	pays a third of her takings for protection	Tashal
Myrele of Obelon's house, Tashal	pays the same Perla a tenth	Tashal
A debtor in the Wolves' Den, Cherafir	the keeper takes six pennies in ten for room and board, until the debt is worked off	Cherafir
The Lia-Kavair to the Navehans	about a tenth of its income	Lia-Kavair

Rules for the table (Inkhorn)

- **The bed-sicknesses.** Use the Fellowship's ruling for Sardura's Sting: Contagion Index 6, Healing Rate 4, a roll each month. Test once for each encounter with a common prostitute or an infected partner. A guild house's cleanliness makes the test one step easier (CI 7). Elmithra and Halea's Apple work as the books say.
- **The burning.** A lesser bed-sickness: CI 4 per encounter, HR 5, a roll each week, a penalty of 10 while it lasts. A woman who suffers it untreated for a season may be left barren (a roll at END×3).
- **The cradle.** A fertile woman working the common trade without the tea conceives on about one month in five; with Baby-Can-Wait every day, one in fifty. Then run the pregnancy and the birth as your table runs childbed.
- **Intelligence.** A prostitute who knows a client may be persuaded, bribed or frightened into telling what she heard; a courtesan almost never, for the guild will cast her out. Treat a courtesan's discretion as a Will test at a bonus of 20.
- **The law.** Arrests for obscenity happen when a lord, a priest or a rival wants them to. Roll only when someone has a reason: a Laranian crusade in Tashal, a new magistrate, a guild complaint.

Hooks

- **The empty chair.** The Courtesans' Guild must choose a guildmistress, and the east wants its turn. Nerelyne of the Five Lanterns would like to know how Myrele of Tashal and Mereme of Aleath will vote, and why Grallax of Coranan, whose vote is his mother's, has not answered his letters.
- **The tenth.** Myrele of Obelon has stopped paying Perla of Rabeta. Perla means to visit, with friends. Myrele's friends include a baron or two, and they would rather not be named.
- **The crusade.** Tashal's Laranian high priest is preparing a moral crusade against the Halean temple. The Eleri Plays open in Larane, with courtesans in the cast. Someone will be hurt.
- **The token.** A Wolves' Den token turns up in a dead man's purse in the Old Quarter of Cherafir, far from Darebor. Girondis does not know him. One of his debtors might.

- **The tea.** A lord and his lady have no heir, and the lady's woman has been dosing her with rasakile. Herblore has the rest; the Fellowship adds that the woman is being paid by the lord's brother.
- **The prince's physician.** Chybisa's heir is desperate for a cure, and his last mistress was found dead after bearing his child. The party is offered a great deal to fetch a bottle of Elmithra, or a Halean priestess, to Onden, quietly. See the Kingdom of Chybisa.
- **Golotha's Inn.** A companion of the party goes upstairs at an inn behind the Coranan arena and does not come down. The innkeeper has never seen him. See Inns of Hârn for the house.
- **The Crimson Palace.** Two senators who cannot be seen together will meet at Merele's house on the 7th. The party has been hired by a third to learn what they agree, and Merele's courtesans do not gossip. See the Shiran city book.

Glossary

The words of this article and of the trade, with how they are said in the International Phonetic Alphabet, in the British vowels the Fellowship uses in every glossary.

angel /ˈeɪndʒəl/ In Tashal, one of the women of Perla of Rabeta, who work the inns and taverns and pay her a third.

Aramia /ɑˈrɑːmiə/ The Queen Mistress of a Halean temple: its high priestess.

Baby-Can-Wait /ˈbeɪbi kən ˈweɪt/ A tea of rasakile and rose that keeps a woman from conceiving, sold in every Halean temple.

Banquet of Delight /ˈbæŋkwɪt əv dɪˈlaɪt/ The seven-day Halean festival, the 1st to the 7th of Halane.

Bargainer's tithe /ˈbɑːgɪnəz taɪð/ The donation for private worship in a Halean temple, alone or with a priestess.

bonded courtesan /ˈbɒndɪd ˈkɔːtɪzæn/ A courtesan under contract to a house, usually for seven years, keeping a third of what she earns.

brothel /ˈbrɒθəl/ A common house of prostitution, outside the guild.

burning, the /ˈbɜːnɪŋ/ A lesser bed-sickness: a burning at water and a discharge, seldom deadly, but it can leave a woman barren.

clanless /ˈklænləs/ In Ivinia, a person of no freeclan, left the work no clan will own.

Corsilea /ˌkɔːrsɪˈliːə/ The Halean heaven, of seven levels, whose topmost is the Crimson Chamber.

courtesan /ˈkɔːtɪzæn/ A member of the Courtesans' Guild, trained in hospitality, music and the erotic arts.

Crimson Palace /ˈkrɪmzən ˈpæləs/ Merele of Hetha's house in Shiran, the most famous on Hârn.

Dryad Sweat /ˈdraɪæd swet/ A costly perfume of perigwar that makes its wearer seem more beautiful; a Halean monopoly.

Eleri Plays /eˈleri pleɪz/ Halean dramas of the faith, played by priestesses in public at the festival.

Elmithra /elˈmɪθrə/ A potion against sickness, said to cure the bed-sicknesses outright.

franchise /ˈfræntʃaɪz/ The guild's leave to keep a house and employ bonded courtesans.

free courtesan /friː ˈkɔːtɪzæn/ A courtesan who has bought out her contract and keeps two thirds of what she earns.

guildmistress /ˈgɪldmɪstrəs/ The single head of the Courtesans' Guild on Hârn; vacant these two years.

Halea /hɑˈliːə/ The goddess of wealth and pleasure, the Maker of Bargains.

Halea's Apple /hɑˈliːəz ˈæpəl/ An apple blessed by a priestess against pregnancy and the bed-sicknesses for a time.

Halea's Brandy /hɑˈliːəz ˈbrændi/ A pink aphrodisiac of the temple rituals, in a bottle of suggestive shape.

Halea's Tresses /hɑˈliːəz ˈtresɪz/ A green narcotic, deeply addictive; proscribed in Kaldor, Chybisa and Kanday.

Hirdmaand /ˈhɪərdmɑːnd/ In Menglana, the brotherhood that runs both trade and vice.

Kilina /kɪˈliːnə/ The Halean Mistress of Discipline: the temple's guards, inquisitor and spies.

Lia-Kavair /ˈliːə kɑˈvaɪr/ The "thieves' guild", independent gangs that run the common trade in most towns.

Mangai /ˈmæŋgaɪ/ The union of guilds, whose charter protects the Courtesans' Guild and its badge.

Merodyne the Pale /meˈrəʊdiːneɪ/ A concubine slave and courtesan of Karejia, founder of the modern Halean church.

obscenity /əbˈsenɪti/ In most realms' law, a forbidden sexual act such as prostitution: the pillory, prison, even stoning.

perigwar /peˈrɪgwɑːr/ A plant of the hills whose flowers make Tania's Tea and Dryad Sweat.

pleasure slave /ˈpleʒə sleɪv/ A slave kept or hired for pleasure, lawful only in Tharda, Rethem and Orbaal.

Ralithina /ˌrælɪˈθiːnə/ The Halean Mistress of Silk and Gold, who keeps the treasury and the temple's brothels.

rasakile /rɑˈsɑːkɪleɪ/ A woodland herb: in a weak tea it prevents conception; in a strong one it ends a pregnancy.

Sadura's Rash /sɑˈduːrəz ræʃ/ A Halean curse that rots the privy parts of one who breaks a bargain.

Sardura's Sting /sɑːrˈduːrəz stɪŋ/ The great bed-sickness: a sore, a rash, quiet years, and in some, madness and death. Easterners call it the Shiran sickness; Thardans, the eastern canker.

Shenasene /ʃeˈnɑːseneɪ/ A Halean priestess; some serve a wealthy household by contract.

Shesneala /ʃesˈniːələ/ Halea's holy day, the 7th of each month, when the lay mass is held.

Silken Voice, Order of the /ˈsɪlkən vɔɪs/ The only clerical order of Halea, seated on Hârn at Shiran.

Solithar /sɒˈlɪθɑːr/ The Halean temple guards: well paid, handsome, and often the priestesses' consorts.

Syverhyn /siːˈverhiːn/ Women cursed by Halea in legend; their goatish sons are blamed for unexplained babies.

Tania /ˈtɑːniə/ Halea's handmaiden of brief ecstasy, prayed to for luck in love.

Tania's Tea /ˈtɑːniəz tiː/ A mild stimulant of perigwar flowers, served by courtesans.

Sources and Additions

This section is set down plainly. It lists what in this account comes from published works and what the Inkhorn Fellowship adds; the Fellowship's additions are marked (Inkhorn), or given as the Fellowship's reading, in the text.

Published sources (Columbia Games)

- *Courtesans* (#4806): the guild, its houses, ranks, prices, protections, regional variations, religious attitudes and relations with other guilds. *Guilds* (#4800) and the *Hârndex*: the guild, the Crimson Palace, the Lia-Kavair, slave prices.
- *HârnMaster Religion* (#4401): Halea, her church, its offices, rites, festivals, invocations (Cure Disease, Halea's Apple, Sadura's Rash) and the other churches' views of her; Peoni's celibate orders.
- *Lia-Kavair* (#4815): the gangs, their bargain with the towns, usury and the Navehan tithe. *Innkeepers* (#4812): prostitution in inns, barmaids, the Lia-Kavair at the tavern. *Inns of Hârn* (#5091): prices, the open door, Golotha's Inn.
- *HârnWorld* (Law, the price lists, the runaway serf) and *Law* (#4035): obscenity, rape and adultery, breach of guild privilege.
- *Potions* (#4852): Baby-Can-Wait, Dryad Sweat, Halea's Brandy, Halea's Tresses, Elmithra, Heir-in-a-Bottle. *Herblore*: rasakile, perigwar, elprequir, and the hooks of Tania's Flower and the childless lord.
- *Republic of Tharda*, *Shiran*, *Coranan*; *Kingdom of Rethem*, *Golotha*; *Kingdom of Kanday*, *Aleath*; *Kingdom of Kaldor*, *Tashal*; *Kingdom of Melderyn*, *Cherafir*, *Thay*; *Kingdom of Chybisa*; *Orbaal*; *Kingdom of Azadmere*; *Ivinia*; *Menglana*; *Lythia*.

Terran sources

- Eleanor Janega, Medieval Sex According To Eleanor Janega, History Hit, and the History Hit channel.
- Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1996), and her work as reported in JSTOR Daily, "Regulating Sex Work in Medieval Europe."
- Kate Lister, "The Bishop's Profitable Sex Workers," Wellcome Collection: the Southwark ordinances and the Winchester geese.

- The London proclamation on the dress of common women, 1351, in H. T. Riley, *Memorials of London and London Life* (1868), British History Online.
- Leah Lydia Otis, *Prostitution in Medieval Society* (Chicago, 1985); Jacques Rossiaud, *Medieval Prostitution* (1988); John K. Brackett, "The Florentine Onestà and the Control of Prostitution, 1403–1680" (1993).
- Sara McDougall, "The Opposite of the Double Standard" (2014), on adultery in France; the history of adultery in English law.
- John M. Riddle, *Eve's Herbs: A History of Contraception and Abortion in the West* (Harvard, 1997).
- The appearance of syphilis at Naples in 1495, as told in E. Tognotti and others; the Ospedale degli Innocenti, Florence, opened 1445 (Philip Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence*, 1990); Cross Bones, Southwark, and John Stow's *Survey of London* (1598).

The Fellowship's additions

- Every quotation from a correspondent, and the correspondents' words.
- The prices marked Inkhorn, the rules for the table, the burning, the figures for conception, the courtesan's discretion, and the hooks except where a book is named.
- The reading that Grallax's mother was the late guildmistress, and the vote of the empty chair.
- The names Sardura's Sting, the Shiran sickness and the eastern canker for the great bed-sickness the books call by a Terran name, and the burning for the lesser.

Written over a tenday in which I drank a great deal of tea, of the ordinary sort, and accepted no invitations. The inkhorn ran dry on the last line, which Lesli tells me is the only honest way to end an article on this subject.

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