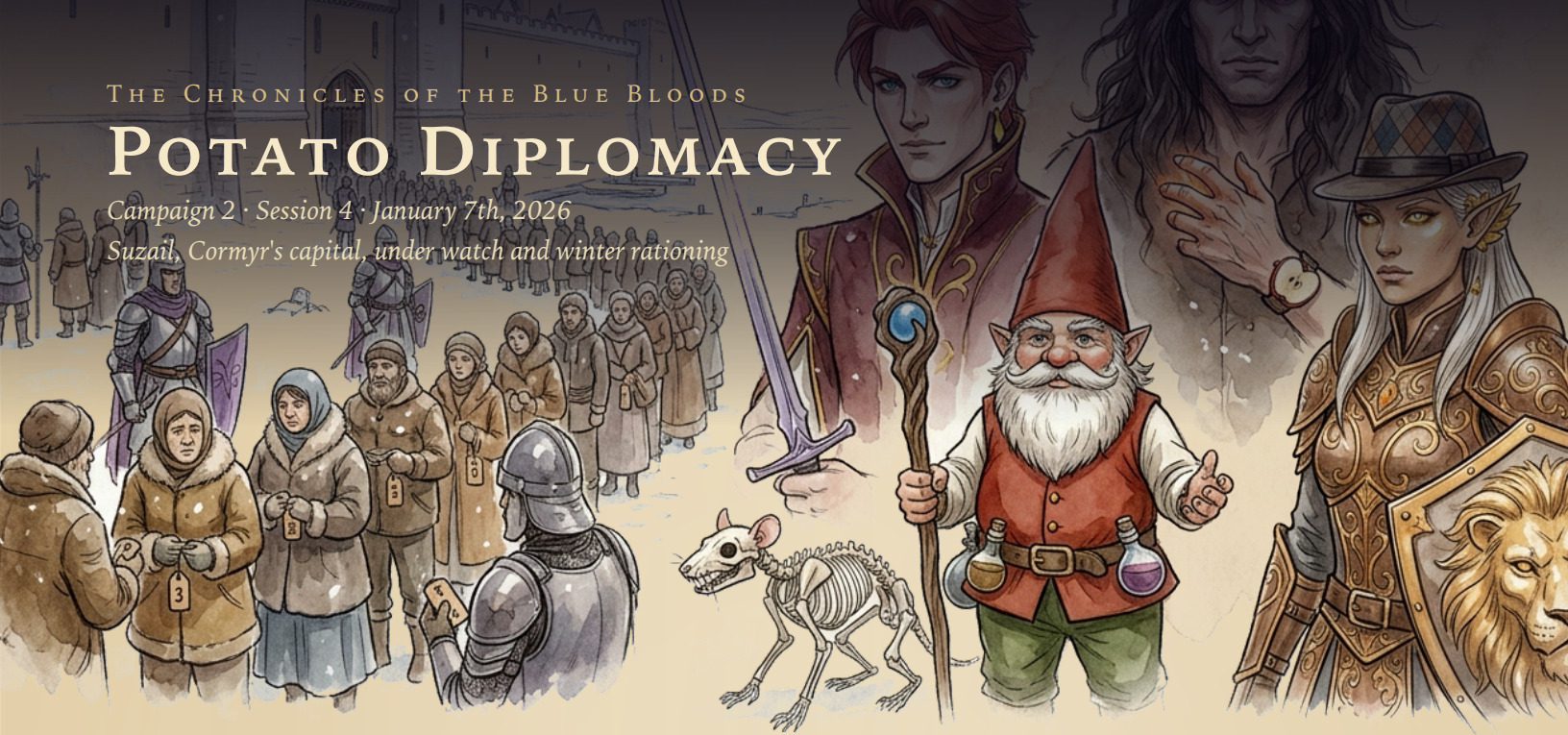


POTATO DIPLOMACY

Campaign 2 · Session 4 · January 7th, 2026

Suzail, Cormyr's capital, under watch and winter rationing



Suzail is not panicked. It is contained, numbered, rationed, and watched.

Suzail announced itself long before its walls did. The grass beside the road had gone grey with ashen mud, and small wooden markers lined the verge, not milestones but warnings: quarantine zone, ration point, no fires after dusk. Refugees lined the road in quiet clusters, families wrapped in blankets over thin broth, children dragging sticks through snow. Then the city itself: white stone walls under royal purple banners, a harbor frozen in uneven sheets with ships locked in place like insects in amber, and griffins watching from the battlements. The realm had learned from **Westgate**, and the lesson was control. Suzail was not panicked. It was contained, numbered, rationed, and watched.

Numbered was literal. At the gate's choke point, everyone in the queue had a number inked on their hand. The well-dressed held low hundreds. Everyone else waited somewhere around 10,543. Patience here is rationed more carefully than food, and the queue, it became clear, was purchasable.

THE HUNTER

In a crowd moving only toward the castle, exactly one man was leaving: a mounted **hunter**, armed and immune to questions. Lodging, he allowed, could be had at the **Brass House**. And, eyeing their freely flashed coin: "I'd keep two hands on that gold if I were you, sir."

"Where are you hunting?" "Whatever I'm asked to hunt." "By whom?" "My employers."

THE PARTY, LEARNING NOTHING FROM THE HUNTER

OVER THE WALLS

The party needed entry, lodging, and a path toward the **Weeping Mercy**, and the gate ahead was all ink, paper, rank, and suspicion. The solution was agricultural theater. Flagging down a guard, they announced themselves as the Brass House's potato delivery. The guard declined a free sample ("I'm off the potato right now. Very starchy") and summoned a clerk, a small precise man whose tongue had gone black from years of licking his quill.

The clerk had no record of any potatoes being ordered, which is where the story grew. Bandits had stolen the delivery ledger. The potatoes were special. The party were, in fact, speculative agricultural investors who foresaw a strong winter market for the tops. A Deception of 19 made it plausible; a performative bite of a raw potato, Performance 16, made it juicy ("Wow. That is a juicy potato"). Then someone quietly cast **charm person**, and the ink-tongued clerk became the party's warmest advocate in Cormyr. A cart of problems was now official cargo.



The most official form of potato smuggling is apparently griffin-assisted.

THE AIRLIFT

Official cargo does not wait in line. Guards lashed an ancient griffin to either side of the cart and asked whether the delivery should go through the front door or over the top. There was only ever one answer. The griffins lifted off hard, potatoes raining on the queue below, while **Ferrick**, straddling the back rail at a hundred meters up, discovered that a flying cart cannot be handled like an animal and spent the climb holding on for dear life. **Sir Winnington III** kicked at the empty air the whole way.

Balbi, never one to waste proximity to megafauna, cast speak with animals, tossed both griffins a potato (griffins do not eat potatoes; the gesture was noted), and asked whether the city treated them well.

"Child, I am older than you can imagine. Of course they treat me well."

AN ANCIENT GRIFFIN, TO BALBI, MIDAIR

The landing was less regal. The griffins roared, the crowd on the wide circular street scattered, and the cart came down hard, pelting refugees with potatoes. From above, though, the party had seen what Suzail hides at street level: frozen fields scarred with boot tracks, and camps stretching far beyond the walls.

THE COUNT DEPARTS

Before the cart ever left the ground, **Count Nikaculus's** contract reached its natural end. He completed every term exactly as promised, took an apple for the road, offered a parting compliment ("These are nice horses, by the way"), winked, and galloped off across the frozen fields. He got up to speed, and he was visibly happy, and a pack of stray dogs simply fell in behind him as he

went, which felt correct. **Sir Winnington III** stayed, along with all standing blanket-related obligations.



Faz appears in the potatoes, on business and already lying.

FAZ IN THE POTATOES

Then, in the settled cart, the potatoes rustled. A hand went into the cargo and came out holding a small gnome by the collar. "Hey," said the gnome. "What the fuck. My name is **Faz**." Faz explained that this was his ride, that he had paid the potato establishment good money for smuggled passage into Suzail, and that any further inquiry was "none of your fucking business, but I'm here on business."

Small talk fared no better. Asked where he was from, he said the forest. So was Balbi. Both forests, it emerged, were cursed, which established a certain rapport without producing one useful fact. Then the light shifted, and the party saw the **tiger tattoo** running from his cheek down his neck. An intimidation attempt bounced off him entirely, and, sensing the conversation turning custodial, Faz began screaming "Help! Help! Capture me!" at the surrounding guards.

What followed was an Athletics check of 24 with a gust assist: Faz was thrown a clean thirty feet into the refugee crowd, stuck the landing, turned, yelled "Boo! Fuck you," flipped the party off, and dissolved into the press of bodies. He left behind exactly one thing: a tiny, bright red backpack.

THE BAG

The backpack was searched by sleight of hand, under the noses of the gate guards, and it said everything Faz would not. Inside lay a wickedly sharpened **dagger** whose hilt held a small port or compartment, beside a vial whose label read, helpfully, poison. Beneath those sat a manila **dossier** of charcoal portraits, almost every face struck through with a harsh red X.



The bag says everything Faz would not: poison, port, portraits, and a king-sized target.

Page after page of crossed-out strangers, and then one portrait left untouched: a regal older man, captioned **King Forel**, the King of Cormyr.

Every portrait, crossed out or not, bore a tiny tiger sketched on the neck in a different hand from the artist's. And the front pocket held a mixed stash of **Black Lotus** and **Warmest Regret**, not packed for use but portioned out like currency. The killing business and the drug trade share a ledger.

THE FUMBLE

None of that could pass inspection. So Balbi conjured a pack of dogs that erupted from beneath the caravan, seized the bright red bag, and bolted into the ice fields while the guards shouted after them ("Whose dogs are these? Leash your dog!").

Balbi flew back out in cormorant form, mournful foghorn voice and all, was body-checked at fifty meters by a griffin with strong opinions about air traffic, and found the bag tossed open in the snow. The dagger: gone. The poison: gone. The front pocket: empty. Only the dossier remained. The party holds the paperwork; a stranger in the camps holds everything else.



The Brass House: casual fare, casual dancing, and a suspicious number of trolls.

THE BRASS HOUSE

The **Brass House** proved to be two towers of pale stone, no heraldry, just a motto: casual fare, casual dancing. Inside, braziers, oiled wood, a midday-empty stage, a fireman's pole between floors, and six heavy-breathing trolls nursing an enormous bar tab. Behind the bar, a greying orc introduced himself unprompted: "My name's **Verek**. You didn't ask, but I had a name."

Verek proved equal parts bouncer and impresario. The deal struck: free themed rooms, the grass-grown Green Room, the animal-skin Hairy Room, and the charcoal Black Room (formerly the White Room: "we had an accident"), in exchange for a twenty-minute show at 11 p.m. that must clear ten gold in tips. Acts pitched: Ferrick fire-dancing down the pole, magic, comedy, and a great deal of casual dancing.

The party went to bed as caterers, investors, performers, and the only people in Suzail who know the King is marked.

GOING FORWARD

- **Target:** the King of Cormyr is the only un-crossed face.
- **Threat:** Faz is loose in Suzail.
- **Problem:** the dagger, poison, and drugs are loose in the camps.
- **Mission:** find the smuggler captain; about five days remain.
- **Cover:** the Brass House show, 11 p.m., ten gold in tips.

✦ NEXT SESSION: THE BRASS HOUSE SHOW ✦