

## **A Collection of Observations from Midnight Madness at Gulf Wars**

As an introvert, people-engaging is sometimes a difficult task for me but people-watching is always an interesting way to pass the time. A market night with perfect ambiance from lit lanterns and torches, stars shining brightly above was certainly a treat. It wasn't a foggy night, but it wouldn't have been out of place to have soft grey wisps swirling around and reflecting the warm light of open doors. I saw plenty of people I recognized from the War and people from the Barony running errands or looking for deals among the merchants' tents. A few of the merchants were even people I'd spoken to before, and to see them busy and hopefully profiting as their shops sold wares that wouldn't need to be packed before returning home was satisfying.

Carrying the lantern, I didn't want to enter most of the tents, so I took the time to step away from my shopping friends and observe. Among the shoppers swirling through the market I noticed a few people who stood out. For starters, I saw a gaggle of children with their adults, likely aged 5-17. The youngest ones in the front were swooshing in their cloaks in excitement while the oldest one lagged behind with the typical teenage 'can't believe I'm being seen with you' look. It's a look I remember well as expressing, despite fondness for my own younger siblings.

Recurring sightings of people can be fun to watch as well. Two young people shared the load carrying a stack of ratan on their shoulders headed East. They were quiet and serious, making their way through the crowd with careful steps to avoid running into anyone. Later, the same two were headed West and shared the joys of being new at adulthood. Watching them go I overheard; "I love being a grown-up! You can buy as much rock candy as you want and no one can stop you. It's like 'yeah, mom. I DID spend twenty bucks on rock candy, but it's MY twenty bucks!'"

At market, even the clothing can be fun to observe. I noticed a Lady with a neutral colored dress, the dagged train of which followed behind her and gave the impression of a slug. I noticed the long pointed end of a hood and contemplated why anyone would use the fabric for that and naturally came to the conclusion it was for stashing secrets and snacks inside. The number of belts and their colors can still be confusing to me, but I love knowing that somewhere out there a knight has purchased a new piece of pottery because 'my lady would love this glazing.'

Even with the plethora of stumbling drunk people, and the one man who was upright surely by using the same tactic horses do while sleeping, Midnight Madness was an unexpected delight of Gulf Wars. I had anticipated enjoying the battles and classes offered, but now I know that I'll be attending Midnight Madness every year I have the pleasure of going to Gulf Wars, even if I don't spend a penny (though we all know I'll always spend too much money on books).

--Lady Aelenor