

Swordsong
By David Richmond and Drew Fracher

sword at her side, flask in hand. She stops in the glow of a small fire around which three men huddle. She has a drink from the flask.)

1st Man
Nights are cold for this time of year.

MAUPIN
Colder than regret.

2nd Man
You.. lookin to hire some sword work done?

MAUPIN
I do my own.

2nd Man
You mebbe.. lookin to hire out?

MAUPIN
No one could afford me.

3RD MAN
You're that good?

MAUPIN
There's one better than me. But he's dead.

2ND MAN
He won't be lonely long, braggart.

MAUPIN
I never brag. There's my credential. *(Her sword hilt.)*

2ND MAN

Make it worth my while to cut you up.

MAUPIN

This thing's half full of Courvoiser- what will you put against it?

2nd MAN

A yard of Flemish lace.

MAUPIN

Cut from the Count de Guise' sleeves at the Opera.

3RD MAN

How'd you know?

MAUPIN

Watched him do it.

2ND MAN

Where were you?

MAUPIN

Down in front..now: You fight as well as you steal?

2ND MAN

Find out.

(They draw, and begin to circle. This is a full brawl- Maupin wins, just. We begin to wonder if she wants to. this is an engagement of brutal intensity, and Maupin is obviously courting disaster, but her skills and reflexes save her in spite of herself. She exits the area, flask in hand, and sinks down, alone.)

MAUPIN

Not one good enough to kill Maupin. Men. They lie, and they die. And they...cannot kill.. Maupin...