## intro

Welcome to Duskwall, and to the first episode of The Magpies podcast. I’m Rhi, your Game Master.

This is an actual play podcast using the Blades in the Dark roleplay system designed by John Harper. In Blades, the player characters are scoundrels and criminals in a corrupt, haunted, industrial fantasy city trying to claw their way to the top of the heap and securing enough wealth and power to one day retire into luxury. It’s a game of high risk for high rewards and leaping before you look.

A couple of things about today’s episode:

First, while this is the first episode, it isn’t the first game session. We played a couple games prior to this to give everyone time to learn a little bit about the rules, the world, and their characters. So, there are some references to things that happened in those first sessions, but nothing that should be too confusing and nothing that’s really plot critical.

Second, apologies for some of the audio issues. The roommates of one of our players decided to start having a very loud party a couple hours into recording. I edited around it as much as I could, but a bit still makes it in from time to time. Sorry about that.

Now then, let’s get started, shall we?

## [00:01:22]

Welcome to Duskwall.

It’s a city of many names. The Skovlanders who founded it called it Doskvol. The Akorosian cartographers who mapped the place called it North Hook. These days, most people call it Duskwall, or simply The Dusk.

It’s the jewel of the empire, a crowded, crushed city surrounded by barriers of lightning, home to the docks where the great leviathan hunters set sail to seek the demons whose blood fuels the empire. This is the year 847 of the Imperium, 847 years since the cataclysm that ended the world, that turned the sea to black ink and rearranged the continents, that shattered the sun and broke the gates of death, 847 years since the Immortal Emperor – may he reign a thousand lifetimes – ascended to the throne.

The people of this world are the descendants of those who survived its ending, and they are a people willing to do anything to continue to survive. And it is in this city and in this year that we find ourselves here, on a dark afternoon street in Duskwall’s Nightmarket district, outside a tavern favored by one of the city’s countless newly fledged gangs, another band of hopefuls looking to claw their way to wealth and power.

Will they be among the lucky few to succeed, or will they join the ghosts and the broken haunting the city streets? Only one way to find out.

##

RHI: It is late afternoon in Nightmarket in Duskwall, and we are starting off in the inside of the Hound’s Paw Tavern. You guys tell me, what’s the place look like, how crowded do you think it is now?

MADGE: I think it’s more crowded than it usually is, purely because we hang out there and people have sort of caught on to the fact that we might be a bigger deal than people thought.

RHI: Okay. Yeah, that’s true. You guys are starting to build up a little bit of a reputation. And, it is located near the dog racing tracks in Nightmarket, and I think you guys had said that it’s like decorated with the little jerseys that racing dogs wear, and they probably have like… I’m picturing framed sketches of the dogs that have the little ink paw prints on them as like an autograph.

KIM: Aww.

MADGE: (gasp) Oh my gosh.

JOSIE: Aww. It’s the world’s most adorable sports bar.

RHI: Yeah, yeah, it’s a very cute sports bar. So, it’s a little more crowded than usual. There’s a couple of wait staff delivering drinks. Your friend Rigney is at the bar. He is the owner of the tavern and a frequent source of information and jobs for you guys. He’s tall, very dark skin, dark eyes, really, really long black hair that is done in a bunch of these tidy little braids that hang down to his waist, and he usually has these brightly colored ribbons wrapped around and interwoven with his braids. You guys have only ever seen him wear pinstripe pants and vest and a button-up shirt with the sleeves rolled up. They’re different versions of that outfit, but it’s always that same theme.

JOSIE: And bartenders are legally required to have their sleeves rolled up.

RHI: Yes, yes. And he always has a silk handkerchief in his pocket that matches the colors of whatever ribbons he’s got in his hair. And, so, he’s at the bar you know making drinks for people, chatting with a couple of other people who are at the bar, and the door swings open. Phin is leading the group in. what does Phin look like?

MADGE: She is an Akoros girl of around 25. She has a very stocky build, a round face. She has olive skin, her eyes are very, they match her face, they’re very round, they’re deep set, they’re gray. She has black hair that she’s cropped very close to her head, so like sort of like a page boy haircut. She wears a rough looking tunic. It’s probably got some holes in it. It’s definitely been through a few fights. There are some dark marks on there that might be dried blood but no one has asked.

(laughter)

And then she wears really, really sturdy work boots like the kind that you would see down at the docks. And then she also wears suspenders, and a long coat.

RHI: cool. So, Phin comes in and starts walking towards your usual table. After Phin, Minx comes in.

JOSIE: Minx is a pretty tall Akoros woman, probably around mid-twenties. She’s obviously dressed fancier and trying to project more of a noble air, but her clothes are not, like, mismatched, but most people versed in the subject can tell that they’re not nearly as high quality as an actual noble might wear. They’re definitely the clothes of someone being pretentious, essentially.

RHI: she bought them off the rack rather than having them tailor made for her.

JOSIE: Right, exactly. She totally bought these.

(laughter)

RHI: she GOT them off the rack.

MINNA: There we go.

JOSIE: But it is somewhat imposing in that a lot of the flowing or puffy parts are kind of pulled in, either just by being sewn in or having some sort of strap around it, and her left arm is clearly outfitted for dueling purposes, and she kinda has the one arm guard like the leather pauldron on her left shoulder. And she is much more, probably more smiley than anyone else in the bar at this point. Definitely walks haughtily.

RHI: Behind Minx is Blaire.

KIM: Blaire is a very small Tycheros child basically, she’s 19. She’s very short, she’s like 5’1”. She has medium toned skin and really messy, unkempt, dark brown hair. Her Tycherosi features are basically just horns and very pale, pupil-less eyes, pointed ears, stuff like that. She likes to just smear this really messy face paint like all over her eyes, just ‘cause. And her clothes, she has a dark gray, black motif going on with most of her clothes with a couple dashes of bright blue accents like an actual magpie would. And she keeps her spirit mask strapped to her back for easy access, and she has this really tattered black cape that kind of resembles feathers.

RHI: Cool. And then, bringing up the rear is Myra.

MINNA: So, Myra is somewhere in her early 20s, maybe 23 to 25. She doesn’t know her exact age. She is pretty spare figure, very austere clothing, dark sort of patchwork skirt and like a vest and shirt, all very practical. Curly dark hair pulled severely back. Large dark eyes, and she is probably one of the quieter of the group at times.

RHI: All four of you head over to your usual table which despite the larger than usual crowd remains open. Rigney kind of waves a hand at you as you come in, and you know that he’ll brig over your drinks in a bit, but he’s clearly pretty busy right now. So, the four of you sit down…

MINNA: “So where’d you come across that one?”

KIM: “What?”

MINNA: “Your limp. That’s new.”

KIM: “Oh! I just twisted my ankle.”

MADGE: “Oh.”

KIM: “What about you?”

MINNA: “A… bit of a gunshot.”

MADGE: “A bit? We did a…”

KIM: “Okay…?”

MADGE: “Okay. So, something you have to know is that we pulled off pretty much the biggest heist in our entire career, which is very short I’ll admit. It also went very bad.”

MINNA: “I wouldn’t say it went terribly. We did accomplish some of our goals.”

MADGE: “How much money did we get, though?”

JOSIE: “Not nearly enough.”

MINNA: “Maybe we didn’t get coin, but think about the gain in reputation. That’s important as well.”

JOSIE: “Which was our end goal with doing two in one night.”

MINNA: “Exactly.”

MADGE: “I mean, yeah. I was also sort of in it to stick it to the Billhooks, and a lot of good that did us.”

JOSIE: “And it was thoroughly exciting.”

MINNA: “That is very true. To catch you up, we made it look like we attacked two different gangs’ headquarters in one night.”

KIM: “Sheez.”

MINNA: “So, Billhooks and Grinders. We made a deal with Ulf Ironborn. It didn’t go as well as any of us had hoped, so that’s off for the future, but…”

KIM: “Well, you tried.”

JOSIE: “Also, there was a rather distressing amount of fire, but we did get it done.”

KIM: “Man, you guys did some really exciting stuff without me. It’s way more exciting than what I did.”

MADGE: “What did you do?”

KIM: “Uh, you know, the usual. Um, I met up with Dowler, and you I did some ghosty stuff, and you know twisted my ankle, and I made a friend. And he gave me this really weird stuff that I don’t know what it is, but I’m gonna look into it.” So, she’ll reach into her pocket and show the rest of the table.

RHI: Yeah, so it’s this really small, it’s organic, it looks like it’s some sort of wooden thing. It’s kind of rounded and smooth on the bottom, has sort of a knobbly kind of cap type thing on top. None of you have ever seen this before.

JOSIE: “Huh…”

MADGE: I poke it.

JOSIE: “What is this, some sort of seed?”

KIM: “I really don’t know. I mean, I imagine I’d have to like, I don’t know, maybe dissect one to really get an idea of what it really is, but I don’t have a lot of them. I don’t want to do that.”

MADGE: “Maybe we should burn it.”

KIM: “No! What would that accomplish? That would just put it into ash.”

JOSIE: “It might be best to plant it, dear.”

RHI: There’s a handful of places in this city where you can actually grow trees. You guys do not have access to any of them.

JOSIE: “Well, it had to come from somewhere, didn’t it?”

MINNA: “We don’t have the kind of money it takes to grow a seed.”

KIM: “And we don’t even know if this is really a seed. It could be, I don’t know…”

MINNA: “Perhaps there’s some old books you could find.”

KIM: “Yeah, I’m mostly just hitting the books right now until I can get a better idea. Oh, and I did find some really cool mushrooms. I got one. It glows.”

JOSIE: “Mm, delightful.”

RHI: “Ah, the glowing ones make a wonderful tea,” Rigney says as he comes over with a tray and hands out your regular drinks.

KIM: “Really? I need to know the recipe.”

JOSIE: “Does the tea glow?”

RHI: “It does.”

KIM: “Oh my gosh.”

MADGE: “What kind of amazing are we talking about, though?”

RHI: “The kind where you should plan on clearing your next 8 to 12 hours because you won’t be getting anything done other than staring into the distance.”

KIM: “That sounds awesome.”

JOSIE: “That does sound like a delightful evening of tea.”

RHI: “Well, it looks like all four of you are back together again. That’s good to see. There’s a, well there’s a lot of people here who are interested in you,” and he kinda glances around, and you do notice that there’s like a few clusters of people who seem to be sort of stealing glances at you and like talking to themselves. None of it seems to be hostile, they’re just kinda like, “Oh man, is that them?”

JOSIE: If I ever catch anyone looking at us, I wink at them.

MADGE: I wave at one of them.

RHI: Yeah, and people, when they realize that you’ve seen them, kind of get a little flustered and look away, kind of embarrassed that they got caught. “There’s actually a couple here who might be interested in contracting you for some work if you’re interested.”

KIM: “Work could be good. I didn’t get any coin last time I went out.”

RHI: “Mm, that’s a shame.”

KIM: “Well, I got some other stuff, but coin, you know.”

MINNA: “We could use a job.”

KIM: “Coin is good.”

RHI: “Alright, well, give me a moment, I’ll send ‘em on over.” So, he walks over to the bar and you see him talk to a pair of women who are seated there, speaks to them briefly, one of them nods and they both walk over to the table. The woman who reaches you first, she is an Aruvian woman, so she’s got warm, medium brown skin, very short black hair, dark eyes. The other woman, pale skin, long brown hair that’s done into a braid, blue eyes. Both of them are dressed in, kind of close to how Myra is dressed, decent clothes, a little worn, more practical than fashionable. As they come over the Aruvian woman begins signing in Imperial Sign Language, and the other woman starts translating. “Hello, you’re the Magpies, correct?”

MADGE: “Mm-hmm.”

RHI: “May we sit?”

JOSIE: “Of course.”

MADGE: “Yeah, no one else is coming.”

RHI: So, they pull over a couple chairs and sit down. Do you think any of you would have reason to have learned Imperial Sign Language?

JOSIE: I feel like Minx may have some experience in it just because she’s kind of a conversationalist type and would want to communicate with as many as possible. Like, it’s probably spotty, but…

RHI: So you’re not fluent.

JOSIE: Mm-hmm.

RHI: They both sit down and the Aruvian woman begins signing again and her companion is translating. “My name is Lani Sethiri and this is my partner and translator Roxanne Elpis. We are journalists with the North Hook Mirror.” And you guys know the Mirror. It’s one of the smaller papers in Duskwall, has a reputation for being a little more independent than a lot of the other papers which are basically run by the nobility. That’s not to say that it’s entirely free of corruption or outside influence, but it’s better than most.

Lani continues, “We’re working on a story, a big story, and we’ve run into a bit of a road block in trying to get information. We’ve tried all the legitimate channels we can, and well we’re hoping that you might be able to gain things a little less legitimately.”

PLAYER: “Mm…”

JOSIE: “Well that is our trade, but I suppose that would depend on what information you’re seeking.”

RHI: “A few days ago, a couple of my contacts in the Gondoliers were attacked and died of their injuries later that night. They were questioned by the Blue Coats before they passed away, and according to a source that I have there’s a report of what they said, but the Blue Coats aren’t pressing charges, they’re not doing any further investigation, and they won’t release the report to us. I have a suspicion about who’s behind the attack, but I need that report to confirm it so that we can keep digging into it more.”

JOSIE: “Oh, well that makes it somewhat more simple, an exchange of material for material. What material shall be coming our way?”

RHI: “Well, we can’t afford to pay you much. Journalists aren’t exactly the wealthiest in the city. We can pay you only 2 coin, but you can also, you know, if you’re getting into the Blue Coats station you might be able to liberate a few things out of evidence lock-up or wherever they stash all of their bribes, that could fill that out a little bit better. I understand that we’re sort of asking you to do this out of the goodness of your hearts, but we do need help.”

MINNA: “The question that interests me is: Who is it you suspect?”

RHI: The two of them sort of pause and exchange a look, and then they both kind of shift so that their hands are a little more blocked by their bodies so that anybody looking at you would have a harder time seeing, Lani says, “We believe it’s the work of a secret society called the Circle of Flame.”

MINNA: “Hmm…”

JOSIE: Do any of us know that?

RHI: None of you have heard of this group. You know like, secret societies in Duskwall are a thing, you know that there are some out there, there’s all kinds of cults and such things, but you haven’t ever heard of one called the Circle of Flame.”

MINNA: “And what is this Circle of Flame?”

RHI: “We don’t know much. We have reason to believe that their membership is fairly limited but very well connected, quite wealthy, powerful. From what we’ve managed to turn up it seems to be a society of antiquarians which mostly means that they’re doing work with the occult and other such unseemly things.”

KIM: “Cool.”

RHI: Roxanne doesn’t translate that, but she shoots you a look.

(laughter)

KIM: “I mean, not that I would do any of that stuff, but like—Sorry, it just sounds really interesting to me. I’ll shut up now.”

RHI: She translates that out slowly. Both of them are giving you a like, “Okayyy,” mildly suspicious kind of look, but Lani continues with, “I have heard about them first through the Gondoliers. Some of my contacts there had said that they had been the victim of thefts and intimidation from hired muscle connected to this Circle of Flame.”

MADGE: “We’ll take it.”

JOSIE: “Well, hold, hold a moment.”

KIM: “You don’t want us to go after spooky stuff?”

JOSIE: “No, I do want us all to have a good time, Blaire…”

KIM: (giggles)

JOSIE: “…but as payment for a task with, what it seems like, deeper running implications, 2 coin to split amongst ourselves is, and I understand you’re a journalist, there isn’t much to give, but that’s not a share we would normally go in on for a job. I understand if you cannot provide more, but since you were asking essentially a half favor for us to apply our trade, does it not make sense that you apply yours to our benefit at some point?”

RHI: Roxanne translates that out and they sign back and forth a little bit.

JOSIE: What are they saying?

RHI: Minx, you’re able to pick up that they’re talking about trading favors, not sure what we could do, talk to the Gondoliers, basically they’re trying to figure out, like, I’m not sure what we could do for them, but we’ll figure out something. And then Roxanne turns to you and says, “That’s agreeable. We can, if you should have some need of assistance from us we’ll do our best to deliver. We do have access to a fair amount of information archives if you ever need that sort of thing.”

MADGE: “You said that they were threatening people? Getting them to cough up money?”

RHI: “They didn’t seem interested in money. They were more interested in what the Gondoliers knew. There’s a lot of secrets lost to the canals of this city, and the Gondoliers have been sailing them for as long as the city has stood. From what I had been told prior to this attack, it seems like the hired muscle that was coming around to threaten them and question them was interested in those sort of things, asking about artifacts or rituals or spirits that they have seen.”

MADGE: Phin’s gonna lean back in her chair and cross her arms over her chest. “I’m never a fan of people coming around and throwing their weight around when they have no right to. That’s why I’m in. I’ll even give up my share of the coin if that’s the big worry.”

JOSIE: “Well, now that the scales have been balanced somewhat it seems like a task we can undertake.”

MINNA: “Could be a useful connection in the future.”

RHI: “So we, we have a deal?”

JOSIE: “Indeed.”

MADGE: Phin spits in her hand and holds it out.

(laughter)

JOSIE: “Phin!”

RHI: Lani just kinda looks at you, shrugs, spits in her hand and shakes.

JOSIE: “Well, alright then. I suppose no offense taken.”

RHI: The two women start to move back from the table as if getting ready to leave.

JOSIE: I’m going to sign at Lani, and not say it out loud… Essentially Minx is gonna flirt, she’s gonna extend an invitation, because if there’s one thing Minx knows how to do in every language it’s flirt.

RHI: So, you do that, and Roxanne shoots you the dirtiest look.

MADGE: Whoa…

JOSIE: (laughs) Oh shit.

RHI: Lani seems amused. Roxanne is instantly like, you fuck off.

JOSIE: Oh shit. How did I not pick up on that? Damn.

(laughter)

RHI: Well, they were not giving any indication. They’ve been very professional, but…

JOSIE: Uh-huh.

KIM: “Minx, what the fuck did you tell them?”

JOSIE: “I think as I just discovered, some things are best left unsaid.”

(laughter)

RHI: Lani just shakes her head and signs something to the effect of like, flattered but taken. “You can find us at the Mirror’s offices on Ink Row once you’ve finished. All that we need is that report. Anything else you happen to recover while you’re obtaining it is all yours. Thank you.”

MADGE: “Of course.”

JOSIE: “A pleasure.”

KIM: “You’re welcome.”

RHI: They stand up and head out, and Roxanne like shoots a glare over her shoulder at Minx, and then loops her arm through Lani’s.

JOSIE: I sign back a very meek “sorry!” (laughs)

KIM: “Daaamn.”

MINNA: “I think it’s probably information gathering time, right?”

RHI: The Blue Coat station in Nightmarket, which is actually not super far from where you guys are, it’s just kind of within the bounds of your hunting grounds, and that’s where the report is, but you guys have to figure out how to get your hands on it.

MINNA: I feel like Myra might be helpful going to one of her people. She does have a friend who’s a Blue Coat archivist who might be able to tell us a little about the station.

RHI: Where do you wanna, are you gonna meet with him in his little office as usual or are you guys gonna meet somewhere else?

MINNA: I think it’s fine just going to his office. People are used to me showing up there.

RHI: I assume you’re gonna roll Consort on this one.

MINNA: Yes.

RHI: Okay. So your highest is a 4, so that’s Standard. He’s in his tiny little office, and as you’re coming in what looks like a page, a young teen with just a huge arm load of books and papers comes out and nearly runs into you. “Oh, sorry ma’am,” and skitters off down the hall. Jeren is inside flipping through some books, quickly scribbling down notes. When you come in he glances up. “Oh, Myra, hi. What can I do for you?”

MINNA: “I’m actually after a little bit of information. I’m sure you’re very startled at that.”

RHI: (sighs) “You know, you could come see me when you don’t need things.” He’s smiling as he says it, but you can also tell, like, it’s sincere. (laughs)

MINNA: (groans)

RHI: “We’re updating all of the patrol routes in the city, and now some magistrate in Brightstone is protesting where the routes are being routed to, so we’re scrambling to try to reorganize them, and it’s—Anyway, sorry. What are you looking for?”

MINNA: “I just had some questions about the layout of the station down in Nightmarket. Don’t worry, we’re not gonna like attack it, we just… quick in and out, don’t worry.”

RHI: “I’d rather not know even that. I mean, it’s a standard layout. I have only been there a couple times and just, you know, to pick up reports and things.”

MINNA: “So you wouldn’t know the route there, to one of the doors?”

RHI: “Well, I mean, I don’t… Usually when I pick up reports from some place I just go to the front desk and tell them that I’m there to pick up a report, and I show them my badge, and then they send someone off and come back with a big satchel of papers, and then I leave.”

MINNA: “Could you make a guess at where it would be? Do you think the layout would be similar to here?”

RHI: “Well they don’t have a dedicated archivist there, so reports are probably with the chief, and then, you know, they would eventually get funneled up to me or one of the other archivists. You’re not gonna do anything that’s gonna get me in trouble, are ya?”

MINNA: “Nobody will know it had anything to do with you.”

RHI: “(sighs) “I sure hope that’s true.” There’s a, “Uh, uh, excuse me, miss? Excuse me,” and the page is trying to squeeze around you with an arm full of papers again. “Oh, yeah, just bring those over here. Is there anything else that you need, Myra?” He takes the papers and sets them down.

MINNA: “Nothing in particular. Thank you so much. We’ll arrange lunch sometime soon, right?”

RHI: “Uh… Once I get out of this, yes.”

MINNA: “How about this. I will bring you lunch, to your desk.”

RHI: “That would be wonderful. What time is it? Did I eat lunch today?”

MINNA: “Please go eat, Jeren.”

RHI: “Yeah, I’ll have someone get me dinner.” (sighs) “Good luck out there.”

MINNA: “Thank you.”

RHI: Alright, so, you head back out and you hear him calling the page back in, like, “get me a sandwich.” So, who’s investigating gathering next?

JOSIE: Well, I was just gonna survey the place.

RHI: You stroll the handful of blocks over to the Blue Coat station. Yeah, go ahead and, you said you were gonna Survey?

JOSIE: Yes, although what I would like to do is use my Rook’s Gambit ability to perhaps use Sway instead. I’m chatting people up to get information.

RHI: Okay, so that is a 4. So, asking around about sort of… tell me again what kind of information you’re trying to get, like patrols in the area, when people are on and off shift?

JOSIE: Yeah, exactly. I essentially wanna get a grip on what kind of resistance we’ll be facing.

RHI: Usually the way the patrols are set up they’re kind of staggered out, so you’ve usually got one or two squadrons leaving every couple hours. Like, leaving and coming back.

JOSIE: So the patrols could be ranging pretty far out?

RHI: yes, yeah. They’re sending out patrols to cover pretty much the whole district.

JOSIE: So, can I get the sense of an idea, like, what point in those two hours it would be best to execute on? Like, the most people are gone and they’re the most far out?

RHI: Probably in the middle. Nobody’s going to be coming back super soon, so if you wait until, you know, an hour after patrols have gone out then you’ll have about an hour before a whole bunch more people show up.

So, Phin and Blaire head off to… So, the way that Nightmarket is, and a lot of places in Duskwall actually are set up, is there’s kind of like the upper streets, the surface level streets, and then there’s a lot of subterranean streets running along the canals. So you guys head down to the lower streets, basically the closest public dock to you guys which is where the Gondoliers will hang out, you know, looking for fares.

MADGE: I definitely wanna pick the toughest looking Gondolier and sort of head over, lean against whatever like mooring post is there, and look up at them. “I hear you’ve been having some trouble around here lately.”

RHI: What skill are you rolling, or what action?

MADGE: I’m probably gonna be using Sway.

RHI: Blaire, are you gonna be doing anything, or are you just kinda hanging out?

KIM: I’m gonna see how this goes. I’ll probably, I’ll chime in if this goes badly.

MADGE: (giggles)

RHI: Well!

MADGE: (laughs)

KIM: Which… it did.

RHI: Yeah, you’ll be chiming in. So, the Gondolier you have selected, she is about six and a half feet tall.

MINNA: Oh no.

KIM: Oh shit.

JOSIE: Oh hey girl.

MADGE: (laughing)

RHI: She has some prison tattoos on her forearm.

KIM & MADGE: Oh no.

RHI: A really nasty looking scar down one side of her face, and she just looks over at you raises an eyebrow, and, “No trouble that we haven’t been able to handle. Thanks.”

KIM: “Listen, I’m just gonna cut right to the chase.”

RHI: She looks over, and then has to look down a considerable amount.

(laughter)

KIM: “We heard that a couple of your guys may have, uh, gotten into a little mix up a couple days ago. Do you know anything about that?”

RHI: “Why do you wanna know?”

KIM: “Well…”

RHI: “I mean, you two are obviously not here to try more of the same, because…”

MADGE: “Yeah, that’s not our thing.”

RHI: She looks at the two of you, and then looks at the three other Gondoliers that are standing there. They’re not getting involved in the conversation, but they’re watching.

MADGE: “Well, what I wanna know is what they looked like and what kind of information they were trying to get.”

RHI: “I don’t know. I wasn’t there.”

MADGE: “Do you know someone who was?”

RHI: “Yeah, the two guys who are dead.”

KIM: “Did you know them?”

RHI: “Yeah, I mean, we hung out at the docks around the same time every now and then. One of them was a guy who went by Slip, and the other was Solberg. I don’t remember his first name. El? Edwin? Alwin? Something ended in –win.”

KIM: “Okay.”

RHI: “Yeah, they were good at their jobs. Didn’t really ever have any run-ins with customers or any of these thugs that’ve been shaking people down.”

MADGE: “Well, if we have anything to say about it, people aren’t going to be shaking your people up anymore.”

RHI: “Oh, they haven’t bothered me.”

MADGE: “Well… You’re a mountain.”

KIM: “We obviously weren’t talking about you. I mean look at you, you’re ripped.”

MADGE: “You are physically impressive.”

RHI: (laughs) That actually, when Myra says that it actually finally gets her to like crack a smile.

JOSIE: Blaire is adorable.

KIM: (laughs) “I mean, we were talking about just Gondoliers as a whole. You know, the royal you.”

RHI: “I see. Well, sorry, I don’t really know much about the attack. I knew the two guys, but I wasn’t there. I haven’t been hit by any of these crew, but if you can get them to stop it’d be nice to, you know, have friends stop turning up with black eyes or broken legs, or dead.”

MADGE: “Yeah, well, I’ve got experience at this sort of thing.”

KIM: “And you said you didn’t really know anyone who you think would have any leads?”

RHI: “Afraid not.”

KIM: “How about this, oh. Ooh, idea, idea. Um, do you happen to know the exact place where they were hit? Maybe we could search there for clues.”

RHI: “I mean, if you want to, it’s been a few days and it’s rained, but you’re welcome to.” She points off down the canal. “It’s the East Queensway dock. You just, well, if you’ve got coin I can just take you there.”

MADGE: “Yeah, I’ve got coin.”

RHI: No, it’s not that expensive (laughs) to get a Gondolier ride, unless you wanna—

MADGE: Phin is committed to this.

RHI: Okay. I mean, if you wanna pay her extra you are welcome to do so.

MADGE: Yes. Also, Phin likes her.

KIM: Give her a tip. Give her a tip because she has big muscles.

MADGE: So… yeah.

(giggles)

RHI: Yeah. You hand her a sack of coin and her hand drops a little bit because it’s a lot heavier than she expected, and she sort of weighs it a little. “Alright…”

MADGE: I finger guns.

RHI: “Get you there as quickly as you can.” And she like holds out a hand to help you guys in, and goes pulling off down the canal. It’s not a long trip, like maybe ten minutes, and she gets you to the dock in question. As the tall, buff Gondolier lady is helping them step onto the dock, they notice painted on the wall, what looks like pitch, very, very dark black, kind of uneven spiral. Phin, you probably don’t know what it is. Blaire, knowing you and the kinds of things you get up to…

KIM: Yes.

RHI: You recognize this as the symbol of one of the forgotten gods. The god in question is the Father of the Abyss. The Gondolier who brought you here helps you guys out. “This is where the attack took place. We’ve been avoiding it for a bit, give the dead their space. If you wanna take a look around and see if there’s anything to find, you’re welcome to. I’m gonna…” and she like points back off down the canal.

KIM: “Yeah, no, totally fair.”

MADGE: “Oh, I think we’re good, yeah.”

KIM: “Thanks for the lift.”

RHI: “Good luck.”

KIM: “Bye~”

RHI: And she heads away down the canal. So yeah. What do you wanna look for? How do you wanna look?

KIM: I would like to Attune with my spirit mask and see if looking at the symbol through the mask can tell me anything more, and also just survey the area.

RHI: Yeah, then go ahead and roll Attune.

KIM: Oh, alright.

RHI: So, 2, so Limited Information. The symbol doesn’t really show up as anything special in your spirit mask. It’s not enchanted or anything, it’s just a symbol. So, the ghost field is many things, and it can show many things. One of those things is memories of a sort. The ghost field remembers older versions of Duskwall. That’s how you’re able to use a ghost key to open a door into the ghost field even if that door doesn’t exist in reality anymore. And when traumatic events happen, the ghost field will remember those, too.

So, you kind of turn and look away from the symbol towards the dock, and you can see two shadowy, blurred figures, moving defensively, throwing their arms up to protect their heads, curling in on themselves in pain, eventually falling to the dock. Basically you’re able to see a very vague echo of the attach, but you don’t see the attackers, you only see the victims.

KIM: “Oh. Yeah, something bad happened here.”

MADGE: “Yeah, they really suck at drawing targets.” I’ll do a Survey, or a Study.

RHI: You find some blood stains.

MADGE: “It looks like some people really got hurt here, huh?”

KIM: “II mean, we did get a little more information than just the attack. We have this symbol.”

MADGE: “Oh, it’s a symbol? Huh.”

KIM: “Oh, this? Yeah. Yeah, this is—“

MADGE: “I thought it was a target.”

KIM: “No. No, no, no. This is the symbol for the Father of the Abyss.”

MADGE: Can I just assume based on the name that it’s bad?

RHI: She can make whatever assumptions she would like.

MADGE: “So, Father of the Abyss… Cool…”

KIM: “It’s a cult.”

MADGE: “Yeah, no. I’m out.”

KIM: “No! No, no, no, this is our lead. We know which cult is going after these guys now.”

MADGE: “Okay, and they work for someone called the Father of the Abyss.”

KIM: “They more, like, worship the Father of the Abyss. It’s like a, it’s a cult. You know, how cult do.”

MADGE: “Okay, and, of the Abyss. You can see why I’m not keen on the whole worshipping a god of destruction and nothingness.”

KIM: “I would imagine it would upset most people, yes.”

RHI: So are you guys gonna keep poking around, or have you seen enough?

MADGE: I think I’ve seen enough. I’m gonna stare down the symbol a little bit longer, and do the little I’m watching you fingers.

KIM: “Why are you watching me? I’m not doing anything. I’m not joining a cult. I’m not a cult person. I, am, solitary, in my practices.”

MADGE: “Oh, sorry, no. No, it’s fine. I was pointing at that.”

KIM: “Oh! Oh, okay, yes. Got it.”

MADGE: “In case it has like some of your weird ghost thing.”

KIM: “No. this is literally just paint.”

MADGE: “Oh.”

KIM: “Yeah, we’re fine.”

MADGE: “Okay, cool.” And then I flip it off and I start walking away. (laughs)

RHI: Okay. So, the four of you reconvene, meet together at your lair to start planning?

JOSIE: Yeah, probably.

MINNA: Yeah.

RHI: Let’s say you guys gather back up a few hours later in the common room of The Nest. So, why don’t you describe your lair. Tell us about The Nest.

JOSIE: Well, first of all, it’s in that weird, abandoned tower.

KIM: Yeah, it’s an abandoned watch tower.

MADGE: Yeah, an old watch tower.

JOSIE: What’s the name of the district of town again?

RHI: Six Towers.

JOSIE: Six Towers. It like used to be a fancy noble district, but now it’s all dilapidated and run down.

RHI: Mm-hmm.

MINNA: And there’s all sorts of spooky stuff. If I remember correctly, Minx wanted to decorate the whole place nicely. Right?

JOSIE: Right. Her room is just choked with stolen finery and curtains and rugs and shit like that, and is just full to the brim with tacky niceties, and she’s always begging to let people decorate the rest of the common area. They’re probably like, “Yeah, no…”

RHI: What does the common area look like? What do you guys have in there? I know you have furniture that you stole from the Gray Cloaks at least.

KIM: yes, we have that really nice tapestry.

RHI: Right. You have a very pretty tapestry that you stole, from your first score.

MADGE: We probably have a big old table with a map on it.

MINNA: Probably a big bowl of those Magpie pins that we keep leaving everywhere.

MADGE: Yesss.

KIM: Yeah, we had to order those in bulk.

MINNA: Whose idea were those?

JOSIE: Mine.

RHI: Yeah, definitely. That 100% seems like a Minx thing.

JOSIE: Listen, aesthetic is important. Branding is important.

MINNA: Myra would agree that branding is important.

MADGE: I was just in it to punch things.

MINNA: And I just imagine that there has to be some kind of scarf pinned to the ceiling or something to give it that ambience for Minx.

JOSIE: Mm-hmm.

RHI: Minx learned that she can’t do everything all at once, so she’s been slowly sneaking more things into the common area, like one at a time.

JOSIE: Just little pieces of it.

RHI: It hasn’t reached critical mass where the others have noticed yet.

JOSIE: Yeah, just, there’s a slow trickle of kitsch slowly emerging from her overstuffed room to everywhere else.

RHI: So, you guys have some information. What are you guys thinking for a plan?

JOSIE: I feel like just standard second story entry will do us here.

MINNA: So we’re looking at stealth with a second story entry point.

RHI: So you’re gonna try and just go in through an upper window? Alright. Now we figure out the engagement rolls. We’re rolling 2d6 to see how things start. Okay, pretty good, could have been worse. You are in a risky position when the action starts.

We cut to the four of you on the roof, as usual. You’re at your chosen window. You’re about to try to start pulling it open when whoever is opening the window notices the alarm system that’s hooked up to the window.

JOSIE: Who’s best at disabling this sort of thing?

KIM: I have 1 in Tinker.

MINNA: I think everyone else probably has 0.

RHI, JOSIE, MADGE: Yeah.

RHI: The problem is the mechanism is inside.

MINNA: Well, can we see some other way in that looks relatively clear?

RHI: You would have to do something to try and find an alternate entry point.

MINNA: Would you like me to roll a Survey?

RHI: That would be great. This is going to be a Risky, Standard Effect.

MINNA: What would a Devil’s Bargain look like?

RHI: What *would* a Devil’s Bargain for here look like?

MINNA: Proposal.

RHI: Yeah, yeah, I’m open to ideas.

MINNA: It’s the kind of way in that we can only get like part of our crew through.

RHI: Ooh! Ooh, I like that! So, you’re looking around, and you realize there’s a smokestack that tinier members of your party, so Blaire and Myra might be able to fit in, but they would end up covered n soot. However, in order to see this, you have to like stand up and move around a little bit, and your walking around on the roof makes some noise. So, we’re gonna start a clock, Blue Coat Alert, and we are gonna call that… let’s see, that was Risky, yep. I’m gonna say you’re at 1 out of 6 on that. Actually, no, this is just gonna be a 4 clock, because it’s their home turf. They heard some noises, it’s not enough that they’re investigating yet, but you did see a way in.

MINNA: So, Myra knocks Blaire on the shoulder and she kinda nods to it.

KIM: “Huh?”

MINNA: “That smokestack. Do you think we could get through that?”

KIM: “Uh… Yeah, I think I could. What about you?”

MINNA: “I could probably do it.”

KIM: “Alright. Let’s go.”

MINNA: “We’ll let you two in.”

JOSIE: “Very well. I’d rather take the clean route.”

MADGE: “Yeah. I don’t really care about clean, but I mind about fitting.”

KIM: “My face is literally covered in dirt all the time. It’s fine.”

(laughter)

RHI: It’s a tight fit, which on one hand is good because it means you don’t just plummet down, but on the other hand it is kind of slow going, and you have to kind of shimmy down for a while. This is not letting out on the second floor. It might not even be letting out on the first floor. When you finally get to the bottom and sort of roll out, you are in a small room, stone walls and floor, lit by a single electric lamp by the door. You rolled out of the trash chute, essentially. This is the incinerator room.

KIM: “Ah, where I belong.”

MINNA: So this is the place where they burn all of their trash?

RHI: Mm-hmm.

KIM: Sick.

RHI: So, the two of you are in the basement, and the window that you were gonna let your friends in through is on the second floor.

KIM: (groans) “How… do we get up there?”

JOSIE: I imagine the stairs would be…

RHI: You’re not there. You’re sitting on the roof.

JOSIE: I know. I’m just saying.

(laughter)

MADGE: It’s like a cut from them figuring out what they’re gonna do to like these two chuckleheads sitting on top.

RHI: Sitting up would be too much, so I’m imagining you’re both just kinda like laying on your stomachs, chin rested on your folded arms, looking at each other, looking at the window, looking back at each other.

So yeah, Blaire and Myra, what are you two doing?

MINNA: Is there a way to peek out and see if there’s a clear way?

RHI: Sure. You can go to the door and crack it open, take a look outside.

MINNA: I’m gonna do that.

RHI: Okay. Open the door, glance out. There’s a hallway. It looks like there are stairs at the far end of the hallway. There’s also barred cells on either side of the hall, and you’re guessing based on some faint noise of movement and some shadows shifting in the light that at least some of them are occupied.

JOSIE: Meanwhile, outside, Minx is gonna improvise a little bit. So, okay, I’m just gonna pick like a particularly rowdy gang, and what I’m gonna do is take a cloth, cover it in soot, and then what I wanna do is—Is there like an alley on the side of the building?

RHI: Yeah.

JOSIE: Okay. What I wanna do is hop down there. Is anyone around on the street?

RHI: Nope. Not at this moment.

JOSIE: Sweet. So, what I’m gonna do is, hopefully without them immediately seeing, just sort of smear with the cloth across the front of the building that this gang or whatever, some really lewd insult to the Blue Coats, and ten like sign it with their logo or something.

RHI: In terms of gangs, you could go with the Lamp Blacks which is your rival gang, so you could make it so like the Lamp Blacks are telling the Blue Coats to go fuck themselves.

JOSIE: I’m gonna smear that there, and then I’m going to pull out a pistol.

RHI: Okay.

JOSIE: And then I’m gonna shoot one of the far windows.

RHI: Okay.

JOSIE: Probably on the ground level.

RHI: Yeah…

JOSIE: Just shoot it out, and then get back on the roof.

RHI: Okay. You’re gonna need to roll me something to get back up.

JOSIE: I feel like Finesse, or Prowl, or something.

RHI: This is probably Prowl.

JOSIE: Okay. What’s a Devil’s Bargain here look like?

RHI: Oh, this gets back to Bazso. He hears about this.

JOSIE: Oh…

RHI: Yeah. He’s gonna know that your gang used his gang to pull some shit with the Blue Coats. He’s gonna hear about it.

JOSIE: Oh god.

RHI: That’s the Devil’s Bargain I will give you.

JOSIE: And Nyryx isn’t gonna like me either if I do that. Agh… Fuck it, I’m gonna take the Devil’s Bargain.

RHI: Excellent!

JOSIE: Nice! 6!

RHI: 6, okay, yeah.

(sounds of awe)

RHI: So you smear this graffiti on the front door. I imagine you get like a running start towards wherever you’re gonna jump up to do your climb, and then just shoot and scramble up back onto the roof. Cutting back to the basement, you two are like standing—I’m picturing that you’re doing the like heads stacked on top of each other peering out the door.

(giggles)

You hear a muffled gunshot, then sounds of shouting and footsteps running upstairs.

KIM: “What was that?”

RHI: You also hear voices from the cells. “What the hell’s going on? Is somebody shooting at the station? I hope so.”

MINNA: “Whatever it is I think this gives us an opportunity. Let’s just hide our faces, hope these criminals don’t notice too much, get through here.”

JOSIE: Um, is the alarm going off?

RHI: Actually, yes. Yeah, there would be an alarm going off. So, it’s just like a bell, (ringing noises), ringing.

MINNA: “I just wanna make a run for those stairs, honestly.”

KIM: “Yeah, let’s make a run for it.”

RHI: So, you guys run for the stairs. Roof people, what are you doing?

JOSIE: Since the alarm’s going off, is anyone leaving the building?

RHI: Yeah, you get up there and you see about four Blue Coats, pistols drawn, pour out of the front of the building, shouting to each other. “Do you see anybody? Sweep the alleys! Check—“ You know, like they’re shouting orders to do a sweep.

JOSIE: And there’s an alarm going off already, right?

RHI: Yes.

JOSIE: Alright. So then I think I just pry open the window and we go in.

RHI: Yeah!

(laughter)

RHI: Okay, yep. You pop the window open, the alarm continues to go off, and you two can climb inside. You two are also standing in a hallway. There’s a door on either side of you, to your left and your right. You’re in a short little hallway, and it goes into a T-intersection, so the hallway branches off left and right.

MADGE: “Boulder, Paper, Sheers to see who goes which way?”

JOSIE: “Are you sure we wanna split us more?”

MADGE: “I mean, it’s kind of at the point where it can’t get any worse.”

JOSIE: “I suppose you’re right. Hopefully if we split up we’ll meet the other two faster.”

MADGE: “Yeah.”

JOSIE: “Do we even wanna look in these doors?” They don’t have anything marked on them, right?

RHI: No, they have little signs outside. If you guys are glancing at them quickly you’re gonna see each name plate has the name of two sergeants on it, so it looks like two sergeants share each office.

JOSIE: “Alright. These aren’t what we want. Look for like a head honcho’s office or something that might keep documents in.”

RHI: Myra had told you previously that this station doesn’t have an archives room. The files, reports would probably end up being kept in the chief’s office.

JOSIE: So probably an office with only one name on it.

RHI: Yes, and you guys actually know, because it would be, it’s good information for a bunch of criminals to have, the chief in Nightmarket is a guy named Edward Mason, and he is well known for his corruption and cruelty.

KIM: Oh, he’s gotta go down.

MADGE: Yeah.

RHI: I mean, the Blue Coats in general are known for their corruption and cruelty, but I mean he doesn’t really stand out. He’s pretty average in terms of Blue Coat levels of corruption. So yeah, but his name is not on either of these doors.

JOSIE: Alright, yeah. Let’s look for his door.

MADGE: Okay.

RHI: So, the two of you sweep the whole upper level.

JOSIE: Oh, should we like be rolling Survey to find his office or something?

RHI: Finding his office isn’t gonna be that hard, because there are nameplates. Finding specific things in any of the rooms will require some rolls. So like, if you guys want to search any of the rooms up here in any detail, like if you wanna check the little small barracks to see if anybody’s got anything valuable.

JOSIE: I think I’m going right for the documents, because time is of the essence here, because I just improvised this distraction.

MADGE: Yeah, same.

JOSIE: It’s not gonna take them long to figure out that no one was out there, so.

RHI: Okay. Blaire and Myra, you guys go running down the hall, and you hear the prisoners shouting after you. “Hey! Who are you? What? Hey, hey help! Let me out of here!” Do you guys respond at all?

MINNA: We just keep running, or at least Myra keeps running.

KIM: Blaire is going to stop for like just half a step. “Who—Who are you?”

RHI: “They call me Fidget. I don’t deserve to be in here. I didn’t kill that guy, or that other guy, or that girl. I just happened to be in the wrong place.”

KIM: “It sounds like you’re accused of being, well, a lot of people.”

RHI: “I—I didn’t kill them though! Come on, just—Just let me out!”

MINNA: I think Myra’s just like, “Psst psst, psst.”

KIM: “I’m sorry. We don’t have time.”

RHI: He just slams a fist against the bars as you go running off. You guys get up to the first floor. I’m gonna start another clock for when they come back in. they’re about half way through their outside sweep when you guys hit the first floor, and you’re not sure if everyone is outside or not. You guys are on the first floor. It’s like a small hallway, but then there’s an open door that looks like it leads out into a bigger room, and then the hallway continues past that with some other doors.

MINNA: I think I’m gonna be looking for the chief’s thing.

RHI: So, you guys kind of check the hallway really quick and then look into this bigger room that has a few desks and some benches and things, and you can see up at the front of the room is the front desk which is facing the front doors. There’s a woman in a Blue Coats uniform sitting there. She’s got a pistol in her hand, like sitting on the desk, and she’s kinda of like leaning over trying to look out the windows, as she has apparently been left behind to keep an eye on things inside, but she is sitting there holding a pistol. She’s got her back to you.

MINNA: We could do a group Prowl.

KIM: Yeah, that sounds better. I can lead. I haven’t taken any stress yet. Eyyy, 6.

RHI: Blaire, you are very stealthy as you sneak across, and you’re going to take a point of Stress. What I’m picturing is that like you crouch down really low and you’re like sneaking from desk to desk, signaling for Myra when it’s safe for her to go. You guys make your way across the room and you get to the desk sort of on the opposite side, and there’s a door in front of you with a nameplate next to it that says Chief Mason. Then we’re gonna cut to the other two that are about to come down the stairs.

Minx and Phin, you guys are coming down the stairs. Are you trying to be particularly sneaky?

MADGE: Nah. I mean, I’m not. I don’t know how Minx is doing.

JOSIE: We’re placing speed over subtlety here, I think.

MADGE: Yeah, which is pretty much always Phin’s modus operandi, so.

JOSIE: (laughs)

RHI: So, you guys come clattering down the steps, and if you guys glance out into that big room you see Myra and Blaire crouched down together behind a desk, woman at the front desk who is now kind of looking around back over her shoulder towards the stairs with the pistol in her hand, seems like she heard you guys a little bit.

MADGE: “Okay. Okay. Okay. I have an idea.”

JOSIE: “Uh-huh?”

MADGE: “You pretend like you’re dying, and we’ll go up to her and distract her while Myra and Blaire are in getting the things.”

JOSIE: “Okay, but she’s gonna be immediately suspicious of how we got in here.”

MADGE: “It’s a police station. We can say we saw that it was a police station, we needed help.”

JOSIE: “Alright. Alright. I’ll do it. I’ll do it.”

MADGE: “Okay. Lean against me. Act like you’re dying.”

JOSIE: Minx puts on the full waterworks and just goes full drama about it, and just very loudly is, oh, woe is me!

MADGE: “My friend is dying!”

RHI: Okay, so are you two making—This sounds like a group check. What--?

JOSIE: Probably Sway, yeah?

RHI: Probably Sway. So who would like to lead this?

JOSIE: Who has less Stress?

MADGE: (giggles) I think you do. How much Stress do you have?

JOSIE: Really? I have 5.

MADGE: I have 7.

JOSIE: Alright, I’ll lead.

(laughter)

KIM: Y’all…

JOSIE: It’s only risking 2.

RHI: Yeah, so both of you go ahead and roll your Sway.

MADGE: (laughs, claps)

MINNA: For the listeners at home, Madge has rolled a 2, and then Minx rolled a 6 and a 1.

RHI: So, fortunately, that 6 is the one that’s gonna apply. Good god. You come running out, Minx just sobbing, like stumbling, falling on desks, knocking things over. The woman initially whips around with her pistol up and then sees you like clinging to a desk crying, and like looks baffled and lowers… “Who—Who are you? How did you get in here?!”

MADGE: “We needed help! They tell us to go to the Blue Coats when we need help, and my friend is dying!” I elbow her.

JOSIE: (laughs) “Oh! It hurts! It hurts so much!”

RHI: “Oh, okay.” She holsters her pistol. “What happened? What’s wrong?” And like, comes over and is like helping you up.

MADGE: Can I knock her out?

RHI: Yeah, yeah. You can make some kind of roll to just try and like punch her out. So, this is gonna be Risky, Standard Effect.

MADGE: What’s a Devil’s Bargain to give me another d6? I mean, aside from the fact that I’m punching a cop.

RHI: Yeah, you’re punching a cop in the police station.

KIM: Damn.

RHI: She’s gonna remember your face.

MADGE: (gasps) Oh my gosh…

RHI: So a 4… You do it, you punch her, but there’s a consequence.

MADGE: One of my arms still has shrapnel in it. Could it be with that one?

RHI: Oh, yeah. Yeah, so it’s Lessened Effect. I was going to advance the clock on the Blue Coats returning and she’s not knocked out.

MADGE: Okay.

RHI: You sock her in the jaw and she kind of staggers, but she’s not out of it.

JOSIE: Trance powder to the face!

(laughter)

MADGE: Pocket sand!

RHI: Go ahead. You’re gonna have to make some kind of roll for it. What do you wanna try and do?

JOSIE: I’ll go with Skirmish, and what’s the Devil’s Bargain here?

RHI: Man, you guys are just hankering for these tonight.

JOSIE: Well, we’re in one of those rare situations where Stress is a more precious commodity.

RHI: She’s gonna remember you, too.

JOSIE: I’ll take that Devil’s Bargain. 5.

RHI: Okay, I’ll give you a choice. Either I fill in the last tick on that clock with the Blue Coats returning and they’re gonna come back, or you hit her with the powder but before it takes effect she is able to take a swing at you and just clobbers you upside the head.

JOSIE: I’ll take that second one.

RHI: So, you blow the powder, and she just takes a wild swing at you, and just punches you across the jaw. You’re going to take Level 2 Harm, Bloody Mouth.

JOSIE: Ouch.

RHI: You do have the option to Resist.

JOSIE: I do have 3 dice in my prowess Resist, so I think I’m gonna go for it. 5.

RHI: You take one Stress.

JOSIE: Woo!

RHI: And, that’s gonna drop it to Level 1 Harm, Bruised Jaw. It’s gonna make it a little harder for you to talk. You’re gonna be at Lesser Effect on social stuff until you get that taken care of.

JOSIE: Aw, but that’s like my thing.

RHI: Yeah, I know. I know what I did. So while that scuffle is happening, Blaire and Myra, what are you guys doing?

MINNA: I think we’re gonna go into that office, right?

KIM: Right.

RHI: So, you run over to the office, grab the door, try the door, door is locked.

KIM: Would it be a Tinker to pick it?

RHI: Yeah, but it’s gonna be Risky with Zero Effect, because you’re so mismatched in terms of tier. You essentially have Tier 0 tools that you’re trying to use on a Tier 3 lock, so in order to make any progress on it you’re gonna have to push yourself.

KIM: Yeah. That’s fine, I have the Stress to spare.

RHI: Yeah, take 2 Stress, and then go ahead and make your roll. Okay, so you do it, there’s a consequence… I think I gotta finish that clock.

JOSIE: God damn it.

KIM: (sigh)

RHI: And because you’re at lesser effect you don’t have it open yet.

KIM: Yeah.

RHI: So, the scene is, Blaire and Myra are crouched by the chief’s door, Phin and Minx are over by the desk with a blissed out Blue Coat officer who’s like staring vacantly into space, and you guys hear boots on the front steps. You all have about three seconds.

JOSIE: I think we get the fuck out of the entry way. Right? I wanna go find the other two.

MADGE: Yep! I’m ducking behind a desk.

RHI: Yeah. The way that I’m imagining this, there’s not a clear line of sight from the front door to the chief’s door, but also with a little bit of walking they’d be able to see you guys very easily, so you’re only a little bit hidden. So, they come back in, there’s four of them, grumbling to themselves about the hazing rituals. They see the woman just kinda standing, swaying a little bit in place, staring lankly off.

JOSIE: Oh, right. I forgot to do something with her.

RHI: Mm-hmm. A couple of them are just like, (sigh) “Luce? Lucille? What the—What are you doing? Come on, get back to—Lucy?” A couple of them are still sort of up at the front going to deal with the broken window, but two of them come over. They haven’t seen any of you yet, but at this point it’s kind of like if either of them glances over towards the chief’s office they will see all three of you who are huddled there. Right now they’re focused on her trying to figure out what’s wrong. What are you guys gonna do?

JOSIE: How close are you on that door?

RHI: Do you wanna make another roll to try and get the door open?

KIM: Yes. Would I have to push myself again?

RHI: You’d have to push yourself to get effect. If you would like to get 2d6, somebody can take a point of Stress to assist you.

MINNA: Uh, I’m happy to do that.

KIM: Thank you.

RHI: So, Myra takes 1 point of stress, Blaire you take 2, and then you roll 2d6.

KIM: Ugh. Jeez…

RHI: Oh god.

JOSIE: Oh boy.

RHI: Okay. Hoo-boy. Things go badly.

KIM: Yeah…

RHI: God, actually, I forgot to set position again. I gotta get better about that. Well, I’m gonna give you a point of experience, because this was desperate, but they see you guys, and Blaire one of them takes a shot at you.

SEVERAL: (gasps) Nooo!

RHI: And you’re gonna take Severe Harm. It’s gonna be Level 3 Harm, Shot in the Back.

KIM: No, my baby!

RHI: But, you can roll to Resist. If you don’t Resist, like, somebody is going to have to carry you out of here.

KIM: Oh no. I only have like 4 Stress left to spare.

RHI: Well, if you get basically a 4 or higher. You got a 50/50 shot.

KIM: I don’t know if I like those odds.

RHI: Yeah, well, you can get shot in the back.

KIM: I guess for dramatic purposes, yeah.

RHI: So Blaire gets shot.

KIM: (whines)

JOSIE: No, baby.

MADGE: Cool cool cool cool cool. Um, I’m downing that Rage Essence vile.

RHI: Okay. Rage Essence: Greatly enhances the user’s strength, resistance to pain, and irrational aggression for the span of several minutes. You suffer 2 Consequences, can’t tell friend from foe, and can’t stop until they’re all broken. So, you just stop wailing on them.

MADGE: I’m gonna wreck it!

(laughter)

RHI: Probably with a chair.

MADGE: yes!

RHI: And basically, sort of for narrative, I’m gonna say you get a free round of just beating the crap out of them because they are not expecting this. So, the rest of you can try to figure out how to get into this door. I will remind you, particularly Blaire, you have a ghost key.

KIM: I do.

MINNA: Blaire has also just been shot.

MADGE: Yeah.

RHI: Blaire can act if she pushes herself or if somebody takes Stress to help her.

MINNA: I mean, I’ll take Stress to help her.

KIM: Thank you.

MINNA: I only have 1 Stress right now.

RHI: Okay, so you take a point of Stress to help Blaire up as Blaire I imagine is pulling out whatever the key looks like. What does the key look like?

KIM: Ooh. Alright, yeah. It is glowing green, and fuck it, yeah, it just has a skull at the end of it.

RHI: Excellent. You can look into the ghost field, and it’s actually a little easier for you now because you are so close to death.

KIM: Oh. Great.

RHI: You can look into the ghost field much easier. Myra is kind of supporting you, helping you up. I think it’s gonna need to be an Attune roll to get the door open.

KIM: That is fair.

MINNA: Is that something that Blaire has to do, or could someone else work the ghost key?

RHI: You’re helping Blaire do it by taking that Stress, but Blaire’s gotta make the roll.

KIM: Oh boy. Alright. I got a 2 and a 6.

RHI: 6 is what you needed. So you are able to use your ghost key. Myra gets you up on your feet. You’re holding the mask up to your face with one hand, you’ve got the key in your other hand, you look into the ghost field, and it’s a little brighter and clearer than it normally is, which is worrying, but you’re able to reach out and open up the door, and it swings open, and the three of you can get inside.

JOSIE: Alright. I’m gonna ransack the place.

MINNA: I’m gonna look specifically for that report.

RHI: Okay. What are you guys rolling?

MINNA: Survey, and I’m gonna push myself to get an extra die.

JOSIE: Yeah, it’s all the same for me, so I’m gonna roll Survey as well.

RHI: Did you guys wanna do that as a group action?

MINNA: Oh please. I’ll lead it.

JOSIE: Josie, you rolled a 5? Okay. Myra takes a point of stress. The two of you tear the office apart. So, you find it, but there’s a consequence. The Blue Coats who aren’t involved in the fight just yet are going to start calling for backup. So I’m gonna start a new clock, Backup Arrives. Now fortunately, because you guys picked an hour when not as many people are close by…

JOSIE: Ah-ha!

MADGE: It’s gonna take a while… Yay!

RHI: You’re at 1 out of 6. It’s gonna be a little bit before anybody can get here.

KIM: Good.

RHI: You find the file. Fortunately for you also, the chief’s office has windows.

MADGE: Yes!

JOSIE: Oh, okay, rad.

MINNA: Yeah, let’s just leave through the windows.

MADGE: You guys should leave me, probably.

JOSIE: I mean, I feel like that’s a bad idea, but I also don’t know how to get you out without you attacking us.

MINNA: Do we know about the Rage vile?

RHI: I would imagine you guys saw her down it. She jumped over a desk and started beating people with a chair.

MINNA: Yeah, I’m just wondering if Myra’s seen that in action or something.

RHI: That’s kind of up to Phin. Has she used this in front of you guys before?

MINNA: Especially because Myra and Phin have been working together a while.

MADGE: Yeah, I think Myra knows. Myra would definitely know that Phin has it on her person all the time.

JOSIE: I wanna make a run for her. I have an unusual weapon left, so I could like drop a smoke bomb or something.

MINNA: If Minx tries to go for it, Myra’s gonna like kinda grab her arm. “No, don’t. there’s nothing you can do.”

JOSIE: “But—What? We can’t leave someone behind, can we? Or is she like the fall girl now?”

MINNA: “Listen, she’s going to keep attacking people, including us, until everyone here is dead, so either she gets out of here or everyone here dies.”

JOSIE: “Alright, well, I guess we better get through this window then. I guess we just hope she shows up later.”

MINNA: “It’s really all we can do. It’s not good.”

JOSIE: “It’s most unseemly to leave a comrade behind, however.”

MINNA: “I’m not happy about it either.”

MADGE: Cut to Phin who is like laughing maniacally. I have like scary weapons, so she has her scary weapon out. Can they be like really freaky looking brass knuckles?

RHI: Yeah, maybe they’re like spiked.

MADGE: Yes! They’re spiked!

JOSIE: “Although I suppose she’s not being very seemly herself. Let’s go.”

MINNA: Myra’s got competing drives right now, help the person you’re loyal to versus preserve your own life. Okay, fuck it, she’s gonna pull out her Slumber Essence vial and run out of the room.

RHI: Okay. Minx, what are you doing?

JOSIE: Yeah, I’ll get Blaire out.

RHI: You pick up Blaire, who is tiny, and climb out the window, and book it. The front desk officer who is on Trance Powder is on the floor. There’s a lot of blood. The other two officers are putting up a fight. Phin, you’re gonna take Level 1 Harm, Battered. They’re getting some hits in, but you’re more resistant to it than usual. Myra, you’re gonna have to get in there and somehow get this into her face.

MINNA: I think what she does is she immediately kind of runs up behind her and goes, “Hey, come with me!”

MADGE: Yeah, and then Phin’s gonna turn around to face her.

RHI: Myra, it’s gonna be your roll.

MINNA: I think what it looks like is she’s going to be trying to basically stuff a handkerchief into her mouth that is soaked in this stuff. What’s a Devil’s Bargain look like?

RHI: You’re gonna take Level 1 Harm, Exhaustion, because this has just been such an awful friggin’ night, that you’re just gonna be really drained after this.

MINNA: I’ll take that Devil’s Bargain.

MADGE: I have made some mistakes this session.

MINNA: Good, I can only roll 2’s.

MADGE: Okay.

RHI: So, I think what happens is you try to get it in her face, she dodges, and you guys are just kind of weaving around each other. Basically, it’s just taking time, so backup is getting closer.

MADGE: So, with resisting, I have a question. Is that a thing I can choose to do at any time? If at this point some inner part of my mind was like, yo, maybe we should not hurt our friend, could I roll for that now?

RHI: If you want to, but be aware that—like, how many points of Stress do you have?

MADGE: (laughs)

RHI: You have like 7, right?

MADGE: Yeah, I only have 2 left.

RHI: Okay. So, if you roll anything other than a 5 or a 6 you’re gonna take Trauma.

MADGE: (exasperated laughter) Oh gosh… But if I take Trauma I have to leave.

RHI: Yes. You can risk that.

MADGE: I GOT A 6!

RHI: Okay.

MADGE: Thank god… (gasps)

RHI: You take no Stress, and you suddenly snap out of it, and realize this is a friend.

MADGE: Oh thank goodness!

MINNA: Myra sees this fist about to come at her, and then stop, and she’s like, “Is it you now?”

MADGE: “Yeah.” (sighs) “That was pretty close.”

MINNA: “Alright, let’s get out of here, because it’s already pretty close in other ways. There’s an open window in that office. I’d rather go out the side.”

MADGE: “Good plan, yeah. Did I actually hit you, at any point?”

MINNA: “No, you didn’t manage it.”

RHI: Yeah, so you two run for the office, get out. Phin is still feeling the Rage vile, and Myra you basically have to steer her so that you’re not actually seeing any other people.

MADGE: I need blinders?

RHI: Yeah, and she’s just randomly punching walls and shit as you guys are running.

MINNA: I’m holding onto her arm for dear life, and kind of in an undertone the whole time. “Calm, calm, it’s okay, you don’t have to attack anyone. We’re going to go home, and it’s going to be okay.”

MADGE: (through gritted teeth) “I am perfectly calm.”

RHI: You make it back to the lair. Where do you guys take Blaire to get patched up?

MADGE: I imagine Sawtooth would have a practice.

RHI: So, you show up at—

MADGE: The back door of his practice.

RHI: And we’re gonna shift into downtime. So, you guys are gonna get 4 Rep, because that’s all you can get, and now you’re maxed out. We will do Coin next session when you guys actually deliver the report to Lani and Roxanne. Heat…

(laughter)

MINNA: We attacked a police station!

RHI: I’m gonna say, this is, you’re getting a wanted level.

MADGE: Yeah.

JOSIE: Oh dear.

MINNA: Oh good.

RHI: Wanted Level 1. Okay, so now we’re gonna transition into downtime. We’re gonna start with Blaire who is going to be doing Recovery. You can do Recovery as both of your downtime actions, which I would strongly recommend.

KIM: Yes.

RHI: Your first one, you fill 3 ticks on your progress clock. Do you wanna heal again?

KIM: Yes.

RHI: Okay. The second one, you fill 1. That will fill your Level 3 Harm, so it no drops down to Level 2. So, those are your two downtime actions unless you want to later spend Rep to do more. We’ll circle back to that.

KIM: Okay.

RHI: We’re gonna pause now in the rest of the downtime actions. I’m picturing this as while Blaire is being sewn up, you guys start looking over the file.

MINNA: I feel like me and Minx kind of cluster together, like looking over each other’s shoulders basically.

RHI: The file says that a group of patrolmen responded to a request for help at the East Queensway canal dock where two Gondoliers had been severely beaten. They were taken to the station for medical treatment and interrogation. They reported that a group of six individuals came up and started asking them some questions about the sort of things they find on the canals, if they talk to spirits. The two Gondoliers didn’t really wanna talk about it, and when they stopped talking the six people who had shown up started attacking them.

The leader, a woman who was addressed as Thorn, asked what they knew about someone or something called Kotar, someone named Tya Laren, a comment in the document notes that she’s a cultist, and something called a Blood Iron Ring. Both of the Gondoliers were able to identify either via description or by name a few of the attackers, and the report notes that the attackers had past affiliation with a gang called the Umbra Hunters.

The Umbra Hunters, both Myra and Minx, you recognize the name. they were a gang that was active in Nightmarket and Six Towers a while ago, but they got broken up by the Blue Coats about six or seven years ago. There was a raid on their headquarters, all of the leadership got arrested, so the fact that they’re marked as paid up is weird, because they haven’t been doing anything for a long time.

MADGE: With Phin, she’s gonna look over it enough to see the paid up, no charges filed, and then she’s just gonna leave.

JOSIE: That is weird, unless they’ve been around under a different name. I mean, we might wanna be on the lookout for them. You said they used to be active in Nightmarket and Six Towers, right?

RHI: Yeah. Yeah, in your neighborhoods. For now, you guys look over the file, and then you’re gonna be kind of taking care of yourselves before you deliver it.

KIM: That sounds best.

RHI: I imagine that people are going to want to indulge their vice.

JOSIE: Uh, yeah.

MADGE: Heck yes. (laughs)

RHI: You’re gonna heal up.

JOSIE: While she’s healing, Minx is just super pouty and doing everything she can to cover up bruises and stuff like that, wearing heavier makeup than normal.

RHI: You fill 3 out of your 4 on your healing clock.

JOSIE: Can I spend another Rep?

RHI: Yeah. So, that was your two actions, indulging your vice and getting healed up, and then if you wanna do a third…

JOSIE: I think I’m gonna spend my Rep to instead just make sure I’m healed, because Minx is like, no, my beautiful face.

RHI: Okay, so you are fully healed. Minx basically sits around in the doctor’s office, and gets healed up, and then goes on a shopping spree.

JOSIE: Mm-hmm.

RHI: Indulges in all sorts of wonderful luxuries, and feels better about things.

JOSIE: (laughs)

RHI: Phin, you have stormed off.

MADGE: Yeah. I feel like after that she just stormed from The Nest to the fight pits, and like doesn’t leave for a day and a half.

RHI: Okay. So, yeah, you indulge your vice. Are you doing that once or twice?

MADGE: I’m doing it twice.

RHI: You got a total of 8, so you cleared all your Stress. Somewhat unsurprisingly, yes, you have overindulged, and so during all those fights you rant about Blue Coat corruption, and how you guys stuck it to the bastards with that raid on Nightmarket station, which ends up bringing 2 more Heat on the crew.

MADGE: Yeah, I should probably spend a Rep and heal up.

RHI: You eventually stagger your way back to your Physicker buddy.

MADGE: yeah, she like gets there, she’s all bruised up and she smiles a bit. She’s like, “Hey buddy…”

RHI: He’s seen this from you a lot, so he just waves you in and starts getting bandages and rubbing alcohol. You’re gonna fill in two of the marks on your healing clock. Myra?

MINNA: I would like to heal, first and foremost. My things are healing Gunshot Leg and Exhaustion. I might just go to my usual guy, because I semi-trust him. I’m still exhausted.

RHI: So then you indulge your vice… 5.

MINNA: God, if I rolled a 6 I would have overindulged as well.

RHI: Okay, so yeah, you clear 5 Stress. Do you want to spend Rep to do anything else?

MINNA: There are some things I can think of to do, I don’t need to do them, but I’ll start a long term project on researching the stuff we just dug up.

RHI: Yeah, if you wanna start doing some research.

MINNA: I’m personally very curious about the Blood Iron Ring.

RHI: Yeah, you can absolutely do that. Mark on your sheet Long Term Project. What did you get?

MINNA: A 4.

RHI: So you’re now at 2 out of 8. Blaire, you wanted to spend a point of Rep to do something else to indulge your vice?

KIM: Yeah.

RHI: Yeah, so just roll 1d6.

KIM: Cool. I got a 2.

RHI: Well, you clear 2 Stress. You feel a little better off. So, you guys basically do this job and then have to hunker down for a while, because it was a bad time, but you have a lot of fairly interesting information now and you do have this connection to these journalists who said they might be able to help you get some more information in the future. I think we’re gonna wrap it up here with you guys gathered back in the lair, licking your collective wounds, and preparing to go out to collect your pay, and hopefully get a little more information about all of these weird things you’ve just uncovered.

##

Thanks for listening. The Magpies will be back in two weeks. In the meantime, follow us on Twitter, @magpies\_pod.

The Magpies podcast is hosted and produced by Rhi. Follow me on Twitter, @rhiannon42.

Blaire Culhane is played by Kim Kogut. Follow her on Twitter, @kimdianajones.

Minx is played by Josie. Follow her on Twitter, @DragonGirlJosie, and watch her art streams at picarto.tv/DragonGirlJosie.

Myra Keel is played by Minna. Follow her on Twitter, @mynaminnarr.

Phin Haig is played by Madge. Follow her on Twitter, @madgequips.

The opening and closing theme music is from ‘Trio for Piano, Violin, and Viola’ by Kevin McLeod, and is used under a Creative Commons license.

The Blades in the Dark roleplay system is the creation of John Harper, and is published by Evil hat Productions.

##

RHI: I think this was a valuable learning experience for everyone.

MADGE: (laughs) Yeah, lesson one, don’t trust the dice roller on Discord, ever.

RHI: Yeah, yeah.

MADGE: Don’t say it can’t get worse.

RHI: Definitely.

MADGE: And… drugs are bad!

RHI: Drugs are bad.