## intro music

RHI: Welcome back to Duskwall. Once again, thank you for joining our band of criminals as they try to talk their way into a fancy party to steal some art.

Also, I forgot to mention this last episode, but we are now on iTunes, Google Play, and Stitcher. Please subscribe and leave us a review, and let us know if there're other platforms you’d like to see us on. You can email us at magpiepod@gmail.com, or tweet at us @magpies\_pod.

Notes on this episode are about the same as last time. No Finn, because Madge was unable to join us for this recording. And, this is the second half of a two-parter, so if you have not listened to episode two, you should go do that.

Next, let me tell you about this month’s featured charity. Our first featured charity is your local NAACP chapter. Last December, the Democratic candidate for senator won a highly-contested special election in Alabama, a victory that has pulled some small amount of power out of the GOP’s hands. This victory was due almost entirely to voters of color who were able to overcome systemic voter suppression thanks to the tireless efforts of the Alabama NAACP. Voters of color face continued challenges to their right to vote throughout the country, and local NAACP chapters are among the leaders in championing those rights. If you’re able, donate a few dollars to your local chapter or see if they need volunteers. A link to the national NAACP website will be in the show notes.

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

## [00:01:45]

RHI: He turns and looks at you, and catches your eyes and smirks, and then looks back at the security staff and says, “Yes, this is the ones that I warned you about. You should have them escorted from the premises immediately.”

MINNA: (gasp)

JOSIE: Alright.

RHI: Desperate. What are you gonna do?

JOSIE: Desperate. Okay, yes, I would like to pull on a flashback. Minx was probably binge studying as best she could on art stuff. Based on results of the earlier roll, that didn’t take. But what did take was all the other stuff she was trying to study up on, learning about his industry, because if there’s something Minx has an eye for, it’s money.

MINNA: Actually, another thing we could do if you want me to do a Flashback Action to give us cover identities?

RHI: Forgery could fall under Study or Finesse.

MINNA: I’m down with either of those. I might wanna push myself ‘cause I only have one die in this. Or accept a devil’s bargain, but I don’t know what that looks like here.

RHI: Your cover identity that you use here is basically not gonna be able to be used for a while because it’s just gonna raise some red flags. You’ll basically have to do an Acquire Asset Downtime Action to get a new cover identity.

MINNA: Okay, I can do that. They both turned up three.

RHI: Since it was controlled, basically, you just work on these documents, and you realize as you’re making them you don’t have enough time. With that in mind, she doesn’t have any documents to back you up. Minx, do you still wanna go forward with trying to bluff your way through this, or do you wanna take another approach?

JOSIE: Yes. I wanna use that flashback of binge-studying things Winfield likes. Perhaps I’ll drop reference to an industry that I’m in, that I’m not actually in, but that would pique his interest.

RHI: Yeah. Basically, you’re doing a flashback as a Setup Action for yourself.

JOSIE: Yes.

RHI: And this is obviously gonna be a Study.

JOSIE: Mm-hmm. I have no ranks in Study, but I’m going to spend two stress to use Rook’s Gambit, and use my best Action Rating, which is Sway, instead. This is a five.

RHI: Okay. So, you can either improve the effect level or improve the position. That basically means it will be a desperate roll with greater effect or a risky roll with standard effect.

JOSIE: I think I’m gonna go desperate, greater.

RHI: Make your roll. Would you like any kind of devil’s bargain on this?

JOSIE: Yeah. I was about to ask what that looks like.

RHI: Yeah. Let’s see here. I mean, it’s gotta be something with Bazso again. He’s just gonna be...

JOSIE: I do keep meaning to go have a scene with him, but things just keep...

RHI: The thing is, his gang is actively engaged in a war right now. You have pissed him off that badly. I think the devil’s bargain will be that this is gonna drop your rating with the Lamp Blacks to -2.

JOSIE: Okay, yeah. You can’t push yourself and devil’s bargain, right?

RHI: Somebody could help you. Somebody could take a point of stress to assist you on this in some way.

MINNA: Yes.

RHI: You could brandish your cover identity, ‘cause then that tracks with your devil’s bargain if that cover identity gets burned.

MINNA: Yep.

RHI: So you’ve got a bonus d6 from the devil’s bargain and a bonus d6 from Myra helping you.

JOSIE: Six and two fives.

RHI: You do it!

JOSIE: Yes!

RHI: You just do it. What do you say that gets Winfield’s attention and gets you out of this?

JOSIE: “Oh, come now. There’s hardly anything to fear from me, unless, of course, you are looking to get into the tailoring business. That’s not gonna be a good time for you right now. I’m Lady Felix, by the way, Tycherosi Imports Industries.”

RHI: As you’re talking, Winfield glances over, sees the three of you, and strolls over, and is like, “Lady Adelaide mentioned you to me. It’s so wonderful to meet you, Lady Felix.” He takes your hand and kisses it. As he does that, he just waves Bazso aside, kind of elbows him out of the way, and Bazso is just staying at you like, “How? How did you do that?”

JOSIE: As we’re walking away with Lord Winfield, I give him a look and a shrug that says, sort of, “Did you expect any different?”

RHI: He glares at you and stalks off somewhere.

## [00:06:17]

RHI: Lord Winfield leads you over to the bar, gets each of you a glass of very fine champagne, leans against the bar, and is like, “I have had so many offers for different investments, and you are one of the very few whose actually seemed interesting. Everyone else thinks, ‘Oh, he owns copper factories. He must want to branch out into steel or iron, or...’ (sigh) But you, from what Lady Adelaide told me, have something unique going on.”

JOSIE: “That is indeed accurate. And I must sympathize with that feeling a bit, too. There is a reason I got into this business in the first place.”

RHI: “Of course, of course. Oh, Nessa! Come here, meet these people.” And a young woman... It looks like she has Severosi heritage: very dark skin; dark, wiry hair that has been braided back in this very elaborate hairstyle; wearing a gorgeous gown. Minx, you, at least, can identify this as very fine Iruvian silk. You can also tell the dress is wearing her. She is not comfortable in any of this getup.

She smiles tensely and walks over, and is like, “Yes, Lord Winfield. You have someone else for me to meet?”

He’s like, “Yes, yes. This is Lady Felix and her entourage. They’re setting up some work with Tycheros. Don’t you think that would be such a wonderful place for you to visit, get truly inspired to begin working on your next set of paintings?”

She just smiles nervously and goes, “Yeah. Yes, that would be lovely.”

JOSIE: “Be still my heart. Is this the artist herself?”

RHI: “Yes. Hello.”

JOSIE: “Charmed to meet you.”

RHI: “I’m Nessa Eriks. Hi.”

A couple things that I think Minx and Myra, particularly, pick up on. Minx, you have picked up on: this is not her scene. She is not comfortable here. Myra, you can’t exactly pin it down. Maybe it’s the mannerisms, maybe it’s some of the phrasing she’s using a little bit; an accent. She grew up in the same neighborhoods you did.

JOSIE: Is she sticking around in our conversation with Lord Winfield?

RHI: He is trying to draw her out and seems a little annoyed that she’s being so nervous. He’s like, “Forgive me. I have to make the rounds. I absolutely do want to talk with you later. Please, enjoy yourselves, view the art! She is an incredibly talented young woman.”

JOSIE: Minx is gonna head off to socialize, but before she does, she’s gonna nudge Myra a little bit and nod towards Nessa.

KIM: I think I will go with Myra.

JOSIE: My goal with socializing is to just essentially give cover. I don’t want people coming over and socializing with Nessa or these two. I want to give them space to work.

RHI: Myra and Blaire, you two are there with a very nervous-looking young artist.

MINNA: “Ms. Eriks, before you go...”

RHI: “Yes?”

MINNA: “You’re from Charhollow?”

RHI: “Coalridge, but is it that obvious?”

MINNA: “Oh, I’m sure not to most people, but, you know, those parts of the city call out to their own.”

RHI: This look of utter relief washes over her. She’s like, “Oh, okay. Lord Winfield heard about my abilities and, well, patronizing me, you know, giving me money in exchange for my work, and... It’s gonna help out a lot.”

MINNA: “Something of a devil’s bargain?”

RHI: (laughing) “You could say that.” Myra, you can tell she is not being entirely forthcoming with you here.

MINNA: Is this something I should roll for?

RHI: Yeah, you could try to make some kind of roll to get her to open up. Given the circumstances, this is gonna be controlled. You’re not really facing a threat and you’ve already established that the two of you have this in common.

MINNA: My dice have failed me.

RHI: What’d you get?

MINNA: A three.

RHI: A three. Okay. You’re studying her and the silence goes on a little too long, and she starts to get uncomfortable. She’s like, “I’m sorry, I’m supposed to be mingling with a lot of different people. But it was nice to meet you.” She’s gonna start to walk away. Basically, you can try again with Consort, but it’s gonna be risky. Or you can try a different approach.

MINNA: I think I’m gonna try to get a consort. Five.

RHI: So, you do it but there is a consequence.

MINNA: I think what Myra blurts out is, “Coalridge. It’s not easy to get out of a place like that. You must have done something.”

RHI: She’d halfway turned away from as she freezes in place. She doesn’t turn back, but she glances at you sideways and is like, “You understand, then. People would do anything to get out of a place like that, to get people they cared about out of a place like that. You understand, right?”

MINNA: “Of course I understand.”

RHI: Both of you get this horrible chill down your spine.

KIM: Oh.

RHI: And you see Nessa shivers, too. Both of you, because of your past experiences, you recognize this. There is a ghost somewhere very nearby.

KIM: (gasp)

RHI: She shivers and then looks around very nervously, and is like, “I’m sorry, I have to go.” She takes off.

MINNA: “You felt that too?”

KIM: “Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, I got that.”

MINNA: “Can you tell where it came from?”

KIM: I guess I can roll an attune.

RHI: Does anything happen with your eyes or anything when you’re looking into the ghost field?

KIM: Oh. I like to think maybe they just glow completely blue. I got a one and a five.

RHI: You look into the ghost field and you’re able to see, overlaid over the scene, a couple layers of older versions of this hall; you know, lower ceiling, different pillars, things like that. You can see a few of the guests have clearly imbibed some kind of spirit-based drugs and essences, ‘cause they have that kind of aura around them that you can recognize. The more recently a ghost has died, the more it’s able to hold its image that it had in life. This ghost is fairly recent. Woman; was probably a Skovlander, based on her looks. She’s got blonde hair, light skin. She’s wearing decent clothes. They’re not super-fancy; looks kind of middle class-ish. Her clothes, however, particularly the shirt and vest, are soaked in blood from her throat being cut.

KIM: Oh, god.

RHI: As you turn and make eye contact with her, she just screams “thief!” and lunges at you.

KIM: Oh my god.

RHI: You’re gonna take Level 2 Harm, Ghost-Touched. What happens is, she screams that, she lunges at you, and she goes through you towards Nessa. You can roll to resist this. It’s gonna be with Resolve. What’s your highest?

KIM: Three.

RHI: You’ll take three stress to resist it, but you’ll resist the Harm completely.

KIM: That’s good.

RHI: You see her lunge and you just mentally brace yourself. She just passes through you, but is heading for Nessa. As this ghost lunge for her, she turns around and pulls a pin off of her dress, and holds it up. The ghost hisses and recoils, and floats back through the wall. Blaire, now that you’re looking – Myra, you probably recognize this as well, because you have one – it’s a spiritbane charm worked into the shape of this very elaborate jeweled pin. She stands there and pins the broach back to her dress.

KIM: “Hey.”

RHI: She startles and looks at you.

KIM: “Nessa, right?”

RHI: “Yeah?”

KIM: “Are you okay?”

RHI: “Yeah, I’m fine. Everything’s fine. Why wouldn’t I be fine?”

KIM: “Do you wanna sit down?”

RHI: “I’m fine. Lord Winfield said I need to go and talk to people and socialize, so I should go do that.”

KIM: I’m gonna grab her wrist and be like, “Hey, what was that about?”

RHI: “I don’t know what you’re talking about.” She tries to pull her arm away.

KIM: I still hold on. “The ghost just now, what was that about? Are you okay?”

RHI: “I’m not supposed to... I can’t, okay?”

KIM: “Okay, but what can you? Because I might be able to help.”

RHI: “What, like, make it go away?”

KIM: “Maybe.”

RHI: I think you’re gonna need to make some kind of roll to convince her.

KIM: I guess Sway.

RHI: I think it’s gonna be risky, ‘cause she’s very shaken up and is not super onboard with this.

KIM: Ugh. Three.

RHI: I think what it is is this is reduced effect. She jerks her arm from you and is like, “I’m sorry, but I can’t talk about this, and I... If you wanna know more, go look at the gallery.” Then she strides off.

KIM: Oh, damn. I guess I have to look at shitty art.

## [00:15:34]

RHI: So, Minx. What have you been up to this whole time?

JOSIE: I have hopefully been having the time of my fucking life, because Minx lives for this shit.

RHI: Yeah, you’ve been having a good time chatting with people, socializing.

JOSIE: And mostly, I’m having a great time using binge-study business practices, and also just completely making up shit about Tycheros, ‘cause no one knows what Tycheros is about anyway.

RHI: You’re talking to some enraptured nobility. One of them is just like, “So there’s really half-demon spiders that produce the silk?”

JOSIE: “Indeed.”

RHI: “Is that safe to wear?”

JOSIE: “It is quite safe to wear, I assure you. What little danger there is is weaned out through a very extensive process, because while these spiders can produce silk in very large quantities, it takes quite a bit of filtering, as it were, to make it totally safe. But once it is, it is the softest.”

RHI: You hear a bit of a commotion behind you and see Nessa, looking panicked, hustling away from your companions.

JOSIE: I’m gonna politely excuse myself from that conversation. Where is Nessa heading?

RHI: She seems to be heading towards Lord Winfield, who is chatting with some other people on the other side of the room.

JOSIE: Ah, that’s perfect. I’m gonna make my way back towards them again.

RHI: You catch up with the two of them. She pulls him aside. You get close just in time to hear the end of a whispered exchange of her going, “It happened again! How many times is this gonna keep-”

And then he goes, “Don’t worry about it. You are here to play a role. That thing will be dealt with. And you know you’re not supposed to talk about this! Not here.” Then you get up close and he looks up and puts on the smile again and is like, “Lady Felix! Ah, wonderful. I was just going to come over to talk to you.”

JOSIE: “Oh, then this is a fortuitous coincidence. I just wanted to catch your ear one more time before I headed into the gallery.”

RHI: “Oh, of course, of course. What did you want to speak with me about?”

JOSIE: Yeah, I think I’m just gonna shoot the shit with him.

RHI: Talk some more business?

JOSIE: Yeah, again, I’m sort of socially drawing aggro here.

RHI: Yeah, you keep his attention. I think Nessa just keeps standing there awkwardly. He hasn’t given her permission to go off.

JOSIE: “Do you mind if I pull Ms. Eriks away, dear? I’d love to get a tour of the gallery with the artist herself.”

RHI: Yeah. He’s like, “Yes, yes, of course. She would love to tell you all about her works.” He shoots her a pointed look.

She’s like, “Yes, of course. This way.” She does not seem very happy about this, but she’s going.

## [00:18:24]

RHI: All of you end up in the gallery. It is lined with these, actually, quite beautiful... I don’t wanna call them landscapes, because they’re almost exclusively of the Void Sea. They are a little bit abstract, in that if you are painting the sea, which is basically solid black, against the sky, which is also basically solid black, it can be a little hard to distinguish. But there’s really good use of color, and a lot of the paintings have these very detailed, distant ships or shapes moving in the water to break up the difference between sea and sky. There’s also some cityscapes, images of Duskwall. Most of them don’t have people in them; it’s this oddly empty city. There’s about a dozen in the room.

MINNA: Can we see anything ghost-y about them?

RHI: Just looking at them normally, no.

MINNA: Hey, Blaire. Want to attune with me?

KIM: Yes.

RHI: Alright. Group action?

MINNA: It makes sense to me.

RHI: Myra, are you leading it?

MINNA: Sure.

RHI: Go ahead and roll it, and tell me how you guys do.

MINNA: Five.

KIM: I got a six.

RHI: Myra, you take no stress, and you guys just succeed. You guys both concentrate together and look into the ghost field. There’s nothing ghostly about the paintings themselves; they look normal. However, you do see the spirit again. She’s not taking notice of you this time, drifting from painting to painting and standing in front of each and staring at it, and then moving onto the next; just doing a circuit of the room.

MINNA: Oh no. Is she the real painter? Can I go talk to her?

RHI: You can try to, yeah. You two work your way through the crowd over to where the spirit is currently. As she starts to turn to get to the next picture, she sees the two of you.

MINNA: “You care about these paintings, don’t you?”

RHI: “They’re mine! They stole them and they’re mine!”

KIM: “You’re the artist?”

RHI: “Of course I am. I spent my life crafting these, and then he stole them!”

MINNA: “What if we steal them back?” she says very quietly, moving close.

RHI: She just shakes her head and touches her throat. “You can’t steal back what’s been taken.”

MINNA: “What’s your name?”

RHI: She hesitates like she has to think about it for a second. “Thea. Thea Walker.”

MINNA: “What if we put them under your name?”

RHI: She seems to be considering it. You’re gonna have to persuade her.

MINNA: Can that be a consort roll?

RHI: Yeah. This is gonna be risky, because she’s a ghost.

MINNA: One roll is six.

RHI: Oh, okay. She considers you for a long moment. “That would be something. It wouldn’t be enough, but it would be something.” Her gaze flicks up past you. She scowls, then looks back at you and says, “Make both the thieves pay,” then dissipates away. As she had looked up past you guys, Nessa and Minx came into the room.

JOSIE: Minx has no idea as to the specifics of what’s going on, but she did overhear that thing. She’s having a conversation with Nessa. “You know, I have traveled quite far, seen some distressing, frankly strange things in those travels, given where I’ve gone to. I do have considerable resources. If there is something that is bothering you, I would be honored to assist such a wonderful artist in this.”

RHI: She was looking like she was considering your offer until you said “wonderful artist,” and then she cringes and shakes her head. Blaire and Myra, do you wanna join up with them at this point?

KIM: Oh, yeah.

RHI: Okay. You two come over to the conversation. She looks at you two again and is like, “Oh, hello again.” She’s just wringing her hands nervously.

KIM: Blaire just looks at her.

MINNA: “Ms. Eriks! How good to see you again.”

RHI: “Yes, hello. Can I do something for you?”

MINNA: “Oh, you’re with my employer.”

JOSIE: “Ah, yes. We were just discussing strange phenomena of a foreign nature.”

MINNA: “Strange phenomena of foreign nature, you say?”

JOSIE: “Indeed. Is there perhaps an eve or something where we may discuss business?”

RHI: She glances around. There’s a couple of the doors off the gallery that you can head into. The one you go into leads into a study that nobody else is in right now.

JOSIE: We’re gonna take her over and have a seat. Hopefully it’s not too close to the ghost lady.

RHI: “I really am supposed to be mingling with other people for—"

KIM: “You’re mingling with us now.”

RHI: “I’m sorry. I don’t understand.”

KIM: “Good.”

RHI: She just gives Blaire this very confused, frightened look.

MINNA: Myra puts a hand on Blaire’s shoulder and gives her a pointed look.

KIM: Blaire’s pissed!

MINNA: Understandably so. They also have a job to do.

RHI: “What’s going on?”

MINNA: Myra turns to Nessa. “I understand that it’s hard to grow up in Coalridge and to want out. I even understand you might have gone to some quite desperate lengths to do so. However, you have to weigh the risks. This is a city of ghosts, Nessa.”

RHI: When you say that, she just curls in on herself. “No, he made me do it! I didn’t want to be here. I don’t want to be! He didn’t give me any choice. I didn’t wanna end up like her!” Then she touches her throat.

KIM: Oh.

MINNA: I think Myra sits next to her and reaches out, and puts a hand on her shoulder. “You’re mixed up in something a lot bigger than you. The thing is, it’s a about to get a lot more dangerous.”

RHI: “Oh, what? More dangerous than noblemen who sends assassins to kill artists and a ghost who thinks that I stole her work?”

MINNA: “You might be able to help us make this right. Do you know an easy way out of this gallery? A hidden way where no one would see us.”

RHI: “I think there’s the servants’ passages.”

MINNA: “Would they be clear at this time?”

RHI: “Not now. There’s a lot of people moving in and out of them for the party.”

MINNA: “We need to get out secretly.”

RHI: She goes quiet for a minute and is like, “What are you here for?”

MINNA: “We’re here for the art. We’ve reached an accord of sorts with the ghost. I believe that if she sees that you are helping us, that might go some way towards making amends.”

RHI: “Are you trying to steal them?”

MINNA: “Yes.”

KIM: “Yeah.”

RHI: “Oh, okay. I wasn’t expecting you to be that forthright about it, but okay.”

MINNA: “Do they know your crime?”

RHI: “So far, all I’ve done is pretend to be an artist that I’m not. I am an artist, I just didn’t paint these. He wanted me to try to imitate her style and paint more of it. Apparently, it was cheaper to hire me than whatever her asking price was for her art. Maybe I should have asked for more money. Or, I guess if I had, I would have ended up dead.” She buries her head in her hands. “The gallery setup is for tonight. He wanted to have them shown off, but then he’s gonna have everything boxed up and taken to his buyers so he can sell off most of it.”

MINNA: “Do you know where he’ll keep these paintings after they’re boxed up?”

RHI: “Well, they’ll have to be transported out of the gallery. Then he would have them in his vault before they were transported out.”

JOSIE: She wants to get out of here, right?

RHI: “Yeah, out of here would be... Yeah.”

MINNA: “We’ll try and keep you safe if we can get you out of here.”

RHI: She looks over at Blaire and is like, “Is she gonna be okay with that? Cause she seemed really angry at me.”

KIM: “That’s before I knew you weren’t responsible. Don’t worry, it’s fine.”

MINNA: “Blaire, perhaps you can talk to her.”

KIM: “Yeah.”

JOSIE: “I’m afraid I’m gonna have to leave some of that to you two once again. Now that we know who’s to blame, I have something to take care of.”

RHI: Oh, shit.

JOSIE: Yeah. Minx doesn’t get pissed.

RHI: Minx is pissed?

JOSIE: Minx is pissed. He plucks a fucking young, vulnerable girl off the street or out of the slums and is ruthlessly exploiting her.

RHI: Nessa stays with Blaire and Myra, helping you guys figure out the best way to get at the art. Minx?

JOSIE: Mm-hmm. I want to find Lord Winfield again. But once we are talking, I wanna lay it on thick. Just really, really exploit everything I know about him – what I learned from Nyryx and binge studying and stuff like that – and then end the conversation with, it’s overtly having a meeting with the undertone that is a flirt.

RHI: To convince him to go and meet with you alone, you’re gonna have to give me some kind of roll.

JOSIE: That’s gotta be Sway, doesn’t it?

RHI: Yeah. Given you’ve had a bunch of positive interactions with him previously, I think it’s gonna controlled.

JOSIE: Excellent. Six. Yes!

RHI: You talk him up, and he agrees. He says he has to do all this mingling and chatting with people who are so much less interesting with you, but towards the end of the party, he tracks you down again and pulls you off into another private sitting room. He’s gonna walk into the room and he’ll shut the door, like, “Oh, have a seat.” Walks over to the wet bar, gets a couple glasses, and is like, “What’s your poison of choice?” as he’s looking at different bottles.

JOSIE: Can I know his favorite drink?

RHI: Oh, yeah. Nyryx would have definitely been able to get you that.

JOSIE: Yeah. I’m gonna order his favorite drink with one difference.

RHI: You ask for a Dagger Isles rum neat. He’s like, “Oh, I prefer it with a little ice, but I see you are quite a woman of refined taste” as he’s pouring it out. What do you wanna do?

JOSIE: I’m gonna chat with him until he sits down.

RHI: He brings you your drink; sits down on the couch next to you.

JOSIE: I’m gonna give him a look and say, “I’ve been to quite a few places, seen quite a few things, and despite your interests in such cultured things, I don’t think I’ve ever seen an exploitation so brazen.” And that’s when I’m gonna stab him with my sword cane.

RHI: (gasp)

JOSIE: Yeah. I wanna fucking pin him to the couch through the chest.

RHI: You’re gonna have to make a roll. I think you can actually use Finesse for this.

JOSIE: Well, my Finesse and Skirmish are the same.

RHI: Whichever one you wanna roll. It’s gonna be controlled, and I’m gonna give you greater effect, ‘cause he is caught completely off guard by this.

JOSIE: I also have a feeling I know what the devil’s bargain is, but what is it?

RHI: I think the devil’s bargain is you’re gonna leave some kind of evidence behind.

JOSIE: Yeah, I’m gonna take the devil’s bargain. Four.

RHI: You stab him, just run him through the chest, pin him to the couch. He lets out this strangled scream and flails his arm backward and knocks his glass to the floor, where it shatters. He slumps back into the couch and is bleeding out.

JOSIE: As he’s bleeding, I say, “You look better in red.”

RHI: The consequence is that he made noise, so people outside are going to be, possibly, coming to investigate.

JOSIE: I’m gonna bolt.

RHI: Are you gonna meet up with the others or are you just gonna bail?

JOSIE: I’m gonna bail.

RHI: I think what we see is you running down out of the manor. In the distance, we hear the tolling of the death bell. You see, across the city, a few crows take into the air and start circling.

## [00:30:33]

We cut to Blaire, Myra, and Nessa. I think that at this point, the party has wound down. Nessa found a place where you guys could hide out and avoid detection until the party is ended. Now there are people out packing up the paintings and wrapping them up, putting them in crates, and stuff. How do you wanna get these paintings out of here?

KIM: How many can we take, realistically?

RHI: If you guys are carrying them out of here yourselves, it’s gonna be one apiece. However, if you want to do a flashback where you’ve arranged for, say, some of your buddies in the cabbies to be hanging out nearby with a cab, you could load up probably six to eight.

KIM: I like that.

MINNA: I can do that if you want.

KIM: Yeah.

RHI: You guys have a member of the cabbies loitering outside, waiting for you. Really, what you need to do is figure out a way to get the employees out of the room. There’s four servants packing up the paintings. Nessa’s peering out there, as well.

KIM: “What’s up, Nessa?”

RHI: “Well, I was just... Do you have any ideas? ‘Cause I kind of have an idea.”

KIM: “What’s your idea?”

RHI: “Well, the ghost, Thea, she’s been around here a lot. The servants have been nervous about her. So, I don’t know if you can find her again and maybe get her to scare her off.”

KIM: “That’s not a bad idea. I’m not sure if she could comply, but it’s worth a shot.”

RHI: “I mean, I was gonna say ‘what’s the worst that could happen?’ but there’s a lot of really awful things that could happen, so I’m just—"

KIM: “I can handle it.” Blaire winks at her.

RHI: It’s still gonna be risky, ‘cause you’re dealing with an angry ghost, even if it’s an angry ghost who’s been a little bit mollified by things. But you’re gonna be at greater effect. Basically, what it’ll mean is, if you’re able to convince her, she will probably be able to scare everybody off very quickly.

KIM: Oh no.

RHI: I think it’s just gonna be you lose this opportunity. You look around for her and she doesn’t seem to be here.

KIM: Shoot.

MINNA: I think Myra’s gonna turn to Nessa. “Is there any sign she usually makes that lets them know she’s here?”

RHI: “Cold wind, chandeliers rattling. Sometimes there’s screaming.”

KIM: “We could probably stage a fake arrival.”

MINNA: Is there a vent in here?

RHI: Yeah, up in the wall.

MINNA: Can we climb into a vent and use the screaming from there?

KIM: That’d be fun.

RHI: I think Blaire’s probably the only one who could fit, but yes.

KIM: Yeah. I don’t mind.

MINNA: I’m trying to think if there’s a way that I could do a fake cold wind. I don’t think there is.

KIM: Wait. I think maybe somehow getting a way to shake the chandelier and also just screaming in the vents would probably, hopefully, be enough.

RHI: The screaming part, I think you can just do. If you wanna shake the chandelier, any kind of physical action, you’re gonna be at -1 die because of that whole recovering gunshot wound thing.

KIM: Right. I can handle the scream. I’m feeling if I do it right, the scream could be enough.

RHI: You clamber up in there. I’m gonna do a fortune role to see how effective your screaming is. Pretty effective! On your couple initial ghostly screams, three out of the four servants just book it. One of them is just like, “No, not again. Not this time. I’m not-“ Then you scream again, and they’re just like, “(whimpering) This is fine! I’m putting this painting in this box.” Third scream (fearful cry), and he leaves.

KIM: Nice.

RHI: The room is currently clear. I think you guys are able to get in there. As you guys are starting to collect the first set of paintings, you hear the death bell. You all realize Minx has been gone for quite a while.

MINNA: Myra just meets Blaire’s eyes. They’ve probably both saw her be angry.

KIM: Yeah.

MINNA: She’s gonna have to make her own way out.

RHI: You guys make it out. You get eight paintings.

KIM: Awesome.

RHI: Are you guys gonna bring Nessa with you?

MINNA: Yes.

RHI: Okay. She goes with you guys. I imagine not back to your lair, but...

MINNA: We take her to Rigney.

KIM: Aw, there you go.

RHI: You guys walk in. He looks you guys up. He’s like, “Well, you guys are very dressed up. I didn’t know you got this dressed up. This is impressive! Where is Minx? This seems like her doing.”

KIM: “Do not get used to this.”

RHI: Alright.

MINNA: “It’s a special sort of night. We have someone we’d like to get to a safe place. Would you be able to help us with that?”

RHI: He looks past you two, very nervous. He starts looking at Nessa and he just smiles, like, “I think so, yes. Let me see if I have some clothes that are a little less conspicuous for you. Here, come and sit down.” He ushers her over to the bar and is like, “I’ve got it, don’t worry.”

As you two are going to leave, Nessa is like, “Like I said, I think I’m gonna have to lay low for a while. But thanks for getting me out of that and away from the ghost, and everything.”

KIM: “Don’t worry about it.”

MINNA: “If you’d still be interested in a bit of painting for profit, let us know later.”

KIM: “Yeah, but you take your time.”

RHI: “Yeah. I think I’m just gonna keep my head down for a little bit. But is here a good place to find you again?”

KIM:” Oh yeah.”

RHI: Rigney comes back over with a drink and is like, “Yes, absolutely.”

MINNA: “You know you love us, Rigney.”

RHI: “Yes, I do! The business you bring in!” Minx, I am assuming you went back to The Nest.

JOSIE: Yup.

RHI: Okay. You get back there first. Blaire and Myra, the cabbie that you talked into helping you out gives you guys a lift back to, I assume, the block.

MINNA: Yeah. I don’t think he goes right up to the tower.

RHI: Yeah. Then, you guys, using your underground passages, carry the paintings into the lair; get them stored. So, Minx, what are you doing when the other two get back?

JOSIE: What I’m doing is, I’m in front of a mirror and trying to put myself together a little bit. Her makeup has been running a little bit, she’s been crying a bit, her hair is all frazzled, there’s blood on her sword cane. She’s just trying to get that cleaned up, so her makeup is fixed by the time you get back, but she’s still doing her hair up again.

KIM: Visually, the way I’m imagining this is that, if the camera is on the mirror and we’re watching Minx do herself up, there’s a tilt shift, and you can see Myra and Blaire over her shoulder as they come in.

JOSIE: “Oh, welcome back, dears. I trust the rest of it went smoothly despite some hiccups. I’m sorry; I had to take a detour around.”

KIM: “Yeah... What exactly did that involve, again?”

JOSIE: “Oh, I just have a bit of a sore spot for bluebloods who are keen on taking in a young girl to exploit her. That’s all.”

MINNA: “We heard the death bells tolling as we left.”

JOSIE: “Oh, really? Did things get violent?”

KIM: “Not on our end.”

JOSIE: “Well, I suppose that makes sense. How many artworks did we make out with? Oh, and where’s Nessa? Is she alright?”

KIM: “Did things get violent on your end?”

JOSIE: “Not particularly.”

MINNA: “Minx, you have to be careful. We can’t be doing this on jobs.”

JOSIE: “Oh, it shall not be a regular thing. Circumstances seemed different this time, though, yes?”

MINNA: “Yeah, he was an asshole. There’s a million assholes in this city.”

JOSIE: “This asshole had someone in his clutches, and he was right there.”

MINNA: I think Myra’s basically gonna roll her eyes and stalk further into the apartment. “Nessa’s fine, by the way. Artwork, fine.”

JOSIE: “Excellent. Glad to hear it.” I don’t think Minx has anything else to say on the matter. If other people want to get her alone or talk about it at all, she might.

KIM: I think Blaire is gonna drop it.

MINNA: Same, although Myra’s clearly making her unhappiness known; just general cold shoulder kinda thing happening.

RHI: Things are a little awkward around The Nest. Probably the next day, I assume, you guys, again, probably wrangle one of your cabbie buddies into giving you a ride with all of your stolen goods over to where Fitz works. You were able to lift eight paintings.

JOSIE: Sweet.

RHI: Fitz will offer you 1 Coin per painting.

KIM: Nice.

RHI: I don’t know if you guys want to keep one as a memento. I know that that was Minx’s-

JOSIE: I would like to keep at least one. We do have a bit of a bare wall.

RHI: If you guys keep one, that’ll be four coin you can put into your treasury, and then one coin for each of you.

MINNA: That sounds good. I assume one of the ones we keep is one of those cool ones of the Void Sea.

JOSIE: Yeah.

RHI: Do you guys tell Fitz about the original artist?

MINNA: Yeah. Myra’s gonna pull him aside. She made that promise.

RHI: You explain that to him. He nods and goes over to one of the desks in his office, pulls out this little kit, takes out a couple little jars and some brushes, mixes some weird oils together, and brushes over the signature on one of the paintings. It was Nessa’s signature. That comes off and reveals Thea’s signature on there. He’s like, “Okay, I see. Yes, I will make sure that these are all properly attributed.” He gives you the money for the seven paintings that you are selling to him. In terms of rep, again, mostly because it’s how much space you have left for rep, that fills up your rep meter. And you’ve got 8 Coin, so you can advance in tier.

JOSIE: Let’s do it.

RHI: You guys are now Tier 1, Weak Hold. That’s your payoff. Now, we gotta talk heat.

JOSIE: Mm-hmm.

RHI: I was gonna say low exposure, except for the fact that Bazso was there and he IDed you. It’s gonna be two for a standard exposure. Brightstone counts as hostile turf, so that’s another one. And another two because Minx murdered a dude in his study and left him to bleed all over a very expensive sofa. That’s gonna be a total of five more heat. Let’s talk downtime activities. Blaire, after this score wraps up, the three of you have drifted off, gone your own directions. What do you do with your time?

KIM: Blaire goes back to the Physicker. She hasn’t been taking it as easy as she probably should have, but the wound is still healing. I think the Physicker is lecturing her. But Blaire is not really listening. She is very deep in thought. What Minx had said and hadn’t said is very much on her mind. She reaches into her pockets and she looks down, and she just fidgets with one of the acorns she has for a little bit.

RHI: That’s what Blaire is up to, how she’s spending some of her time getting a little bit more patched up. Minx, what do you do with your time?

JOSIE: What neighborhood was Nessa from? Coalridge?

RHI: Yeah. She lives in Coalridge.

JOSIE: Okay. I think this is gonna be what I do to train my resolve. While people are out doing things, Minx is gonna undertake another act that’s a act of pure resolve for her. Very much dressed down, these are just normal clothes, and there’s a pretty heavy hat on top, and a jacket. It’s just black clothing with a little bit of grime on them. She’s cleaned it up a lot, but these are old clothes for her. I think she’s gonna go to Coal Ridge, find a derelict train car or something in the railyard, sit up on top of it with a little waterskin that has wine in it instead of water, and detox for a bit and remind herself of the kind of place she came from and where Nessa came from.

RHI: It’s loud. There’s a lot of noise from the factories, from the carts of coal being hauled away from the mine, and it’s filthy. There’s constant smoke in the air. You know that you are gonna have to bathe for an hour to get all of this off of you tonight. You see a lot of people running around; miners heading to or from the mine. The mine is open constantly. You see people leaving the factories and you see some kids running around among some of the merchants; the people who aren’t from this neighborhood, the people who are passing through, the people with money. You recognize what they’re doing, the ones that all run up. Five of them start tugging on pant legs so that the mark can’t tell which one of them is reaching into a pocket and lifting some coin. It reminds you very much of where you came from, and, in a way, of, on one hand, how far you’ve come, but in another sense, how much farther you still have to go.

JOSIE: Do they fail to get any of their marks?

RHI: Oh, no. They’re pretty successful. These kids know what they’re doing.

JOSIE: Minx smiles a bit at that, actually, but then gets a wave of ennui as she remembers Bazso and all that, and decides it’s time to go.

RHI: Okay. Myra.

MINNA: Which university or which college would be best to go research this at?

RHI: You would definitely be, basically, back at Blaire’s old stomping grounds: Chartehall University, the Morlan Hall of Unnatural Philosophy. The focus of that school is on demonology and the occult, and, officially, their stance is, “We teach people about these things so that they can understand how to defeat them, because demons and spirits are bad.”

MINNA: (laughing) Yeah, right.

RHI: But in truth, that hall of learning is home to at least half a dozen different, competing cults that are all vying to recruit students and teach them their own particular brand of arcane mysteries. You’re not so concerned with all that, though. You’re just concerned with what they have in their library. Not all of the students at Charterhall have access to this library, but you made sure that your forged student pass had all of the right symbols and signatures to make sure you would be able to get in. You ask the right sort of questions to get some books on arcane artifacts and histories of the city. The Blood Iron Ring isn’t a super well-known artifact, so you have to do a lot of digging to find any mention of it. But, in some old histories, you find mention of it, mostly talking about the evils of consorting with spirits, and, particularly, the dangers of vampirism. You know that vampires happen, essentially, when a spirit moves into a dead body and reanimates it and gives it unnatural life and strength and ability. What you’re able to find about the Blood Iron Ring is that it was forged some centuries ago by a sorcerer who was obsessed with the power of vampires. According to the books that you read, which themselves are citing old legends and tales passed down through generations, they say that the iron that made up the ring was drawn from the blood of a single sacrificed human. A lot of the stories say that the human sacrificed was the sorcerer’s son. You’re not quite able to find in these records, at least so far in your research, what the ring does or how it works, but you do find mention in several places that people who have worn the ring have eventually been found, arrested, and convicted of cannibalism. That does seem to have a little bit of truth to it. You look at when some of those mentions are. You’re able to dig back through archives of newspaper reports and criminal reports, and find, oh, okay, yeah, there was somebody around this year who was arrested for murdering 10 people and eating their faces. That’s what you’re able to uncover so far. You’re still not sure what the ring does other than some kind of tie to vampiric powers, which could mean a lot of things. You don’t know what it looks like or, most importantly, where it is right now, but you’re starting to get some information.

MINNA: I think as she reads this, she definitely shudders at least a good few times. But this is the kind of thing you run across when you research the occult.

RHI: Yes.

JOSIE: We just ranked up, right? I think we should do something to assert our authori-tah.

RHI: Planning on, for lack of a better phrase, and I hate myself for this pun, spread your wings a little bit-

JOSIE: Yay!

MINNA: (Cheering)

RHI: Some ideas for next time, and we’ll see what happens.

## wrap-up [00:48:27]

RHI: 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 Kolgut. Follow her on Twitter @kimdiannajones.

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.

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

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

## [00:49:28]

RHI: This, kids, is a story about crediting your artists.

KIM: Hey, hey!

MINNA: (laughing)

JOSIE: Yup.

RHI: Reblog from the source, everyone.

MINNA: And not murdering them in a place where ghosts-

KIM: Don’t move watermarks, assholes.