

Longevity

A short gamebook by Jason Romein

Version 1.1

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*In this gamebook, the reader makes serious choices that may result
in the harm of innocents, their loved ones, or even themselves.
Some people may find this content uncomfortable.*

An entry for the **2026** Lindenbaum Prize

Rules

You are Vendro Barrost, a noble in the city of Glossmire. Yours is the burden of leadership, where your choices directly impact innocents in the city, people you care about, and yourself. Choose wisely how to guide your house through the years.

You will need **three six-sided dice** (3d6) to play, and a pencil to track game statistics and note down keywords. You begin play with **5 CONTROL**, **5 RESPECT**, and **10 WEALTH**.

KEYWORDS

Throughout the story you may be asked to 'mark **KEYWORD** on your sheet'. These words are always bolded in the text, and help the story keep track of things you've done. When the text asks 'Are you **KEYWORD**?', you qualify as that if you have the keyword written on your sheet. If more than one keyword applies, pick the one that shows up first in the text.

CHECKS

If an outcome is uncertain, you will be asked to make a check. Roll **2d6** and compare the total of both dice with the check's **DIFFICULTY**. If you meet or exceed the number, you succeed. If your total is less than the difficulty, you fail.

You can modify your dice using your CONTROL, RESPECT, and WEALTH.

CONTROL

"The Arbiter knows what I've done for this city. I am owed certain favors."

Your ability to manipulate events to your favor. During a check you may spend one point of control to re-roll a die. **You may only re-roll each die once.**

RESPECT

"Do you know who I am?"

How you're regarded by your peers and the city at large. During a check you may spend points of respect to increase the result of a die (to a maximum of 6). You may spend any amount of respect in this way.

WEALTH

"There is always room for more in the coffers."

Your material wealth. **Before** rolling for a check you may spend one point of wealth to roll a third die. The highest two dice of your roll are counted for determining the total.

You will need wealth to proceed through the game. When the game jumps ahead in time you will be asked to pay an amount of wealth that will double each time.

CHARACTER SHEET

CONTROL	RESPECT	WEALTH	KEYWORDS

You are thirty-four.

A cold gray sky and the tang of peat smoke greets you at the window. Below, thatch and tile roofs lean together towards Tarncroft Hill, a snarl of twisting alleys hidden between them. You hear the hammer of anvils, the creak of wagons, the drunken songs and sawing fiddles; deplorably mundane. It should have been a momentous day, you decide. A dramatic sky would have been more suitable.

A clink of pestle against mortar draws your attention back to the preparations. The robed man leans over the bowl, his gnarled fingers kept steady with a guilded master's discipline. The boy, also robed, holds a tray with reagents, neatly arranged for the master's ancient hands. You've never seen so many dried skril mushrooms ground up in the mortar before, but you've never been transmogrified like this either. The first of many such treatments.

"It is time for you to disrobe, Lord Barrost." The master's voice is still strong. You step away from the window and remove your coat, your vest, your shirt. By the time you set your final layer on the armchair the master has finished. The boy averts his eyes.

You feel the chill from the open window and a whiff of smoke as the master approaches, dipping his finger in the bowl. With precise movements he draws the sigils on your body. The boy, after being cuffed, is watching with the sullen look of a student.

"The body knows what it was like, boy, one year ago. Skril helps the body remember." He marks another sigil on your chest. "See?"

The boy nods, still sullen.

"This is the pinnacle of transmogrification. The sempiternum," the master says, still drawing. "The most skilled can reset a body for an entire year." The guildsman straightens, looking you in the eye. "Lord Barrost, we are ready to begin."

You look around the room. "There are fewer candles lit than I expected," you say with a terse frown.

"Lord Barrost, this is modern transmogrification, in alignment with the guild's best practices. Only one candle is necessary to provide the smoke to ground the proceedings."

It's incongruent to hear such an ancient fossil speak of modern transmogrification, but the master knows his craft. "Very well," you say. "Proceed."

The ritual is surprisingly short. The skril sigils are gone, absorbed through your skin, leaving you standing naked and unmarked. You study yourself in the full length mirror, turning your head from side to side.

"I don't feel any different."

"Of course not, Lord Barrost," the master says. "We have made you thirty-four again. Thirty-five will never come."

You run your finger along your stubble. "And next year, this time..."

"We will make you thirty-four again. Every year, Lord Barrost. As long as you can afford the skril and the guild's fee."

Gathering your clothes, you begin to dress once more. "My family's coffers are deep," you say. "You know I can afford it."

"Fortunes change, Lord Barrost." The words are spoken mildly, but with a hint of melancholy. Or perhaps relish. The boy has stowed the reagents and already follows the master to the door.

For a time, you stand before the mirror, studying yourself. Can you see a change in your eyes? Is there more wisdom? More folly? You've taken the first step on a path that will cast a long legacy.

A knock at the door draws you from your reverie. "Sir, there's a fire in Cairnsmoke." Your valet looks presentable, as always, with his graying hair gathered in a ponytail. There's a tightness to his expression, and a few strands of hair loose.

"Raul, how bad is it?" you ask.

"The conflagration is large. It threatens the district," he says, grimacing. "The Arbiter has asked for help."

You straighten, fastening the last buttons of your shirt. "I will, of course, assist the Arbiter," you say. "Gather the household guards, leave two on the door and have the rest meet me there."

Smoke rises in thick columns, black against the darkening sky. Drawing close it seems like half the city burns. Great gouts of flame snake up in the distance, cresting roofs with ease. The dry spring has made the city like a tinderbox.

People move past you carrying ratty bundles, dusted with ash, eyes glazed with loss. None try to stop you, or indeed, even see you. You glimpse one moving with them who stands out, well-dressed in a black and gold coat with his dark hair swept back, not a hint of soot to be found. Lord Arro Metiri.

"What the hell are you doing, Arro?" you say, stepping into his path.

He straightens, a quirk of a smile on his lips. "Heading to Dockside, Vendro," he says smugly. "I have business."

You grit your teeth. "You have a responsibility to this city," you growl. "Cairnsmoke burns."

"Regrettable," he says, affecting a look of sorrow. "Truly. I wish I could help, but Cairnsmoke seems eager to earn its name today, and it will have to do so without me."

Convince Arro? Turn to [52](#).

Ignore him? Turn to [32](#).

Punch him? Turn to [44](#).

2

The walk back from Cairnsmoke in the too-bright light of morning is pure agony. Your head pounds with every step and the usual sounds of the city are far too sharp for you. A wagon nearly runs you down as you leave the district, earning an angry shout that rings in your skull for the next few blocks.

By the time you reach your manor on Tarncroft Hill you're in a foul mood. You kick off your boots in your well-appointed foyer and demand some food from the cook. Raul, your graying valet, scurries to collect your things. He brings you some wine to take the edge off as you wait for breakfast.

"Your daughter has a new pet, sir," he says. "Here she is now."

"Father! I found a cat," Lianna says, holding a creature as long as she is tall. The feline has given up any hope of escape. Raul discreetly finds something else to do in a different room.

You stare at the mangy animal in your daughter's hands. It looks nearly as miserable as you feel. Your daughter wilts a little at your surly gaze, and you soften with a sigh. "I'm sorry, Lianna. It was a rough night. Where did you get that cat?"

"I found him! He was stuck in a tree so I lured him down with some fish," Lianna says proudly. "And now we're best friends."

You have your doubts. The cat's eyes have a desperate quality, as if it doesn't dare to think about rescue, but can't quite let go of that glimmer of hope. You clear your throat, setting your glass down, and point at the feline. "Is he being fed? Somebody's cleaning up after him?"

"Father, that's why we have staff," she says. "To help take care of cats."

You can't help but chuckle at her pragmatism. She's right, the staff will see to the creature's welfare.

Over the course of the morning your headache fades and you begin to attend to your affairs. You could make time to see the Arbiter? You aren't sure you have enough to win him over. Perhaps it would be better just to attend the Fellowship Ball and leave things be?

Meet with the Arbiter? Turn to [7](#).

Attend the ball? Turn to [33](#).

3

You were careful to hide your business dealings as much as possible before going to the Arbiter. You fabricate, artfully, how you came upon this information, but offer enough details that the Conclave can follow up on it.

The Arbiter takes your words seriously. After your meeting there is a purge in the criminal underworld. Many boots sway beneath the Justiciar's Arch.

Your actions are publicly commended, and the Conclave's gratitude helps offset the money you spent quietly distancing yourself from the smuggling operation. **[CONTROL +1, RESPECT +2]**

Turn to [30](#).

4

Over the next few days you establish a working relationship with Pike. He's the only one you meet with, always at a different coffeehouse, always paying in unadorned golden crowns. Same as you'd get from the bank. You get the sense that Pike is a broker, connecting underworld characters with financiers, so that one never needs to meet with the other directly.

Pike's agent joins you at one of your meetings. A surly woman with half her face tattooed and arms thicker than your thighs, she spits after every sentence as she tells you about Arro's operation. You learn that able-bodied refugees are being sent to a marsh crew lodge owned by the Metiri family while their families are being held as collateral. If they don't go into the marsh, their family disappears. You grit your teeth at the news.

You leave the coffeehouse with a scowl on your face. You knew Arro Metiri had a marsh crew at his disposal, but to have a successful one requires a constant influx of people. The marsh is dangerous, full of crocogaunts, carnivorous plants, and worse, yet the bounty of skril makes it all worth it. If Arro has a ready source of replacement marsh runners, he could be sending out almost constant runs and hoarding enough skril to keep him young for decades to come.

You don't have enough evidence to go to the Arbiter. You could plead your case, but you'll need something other than the word of Pike's agent to sway the Conclave against a powerful noble family. If you can get one of the marsh runners away from the lodge you might be able to get them to talk. But with Arro holding their family, would they cooperate?

The Fellowship Ball is coming at the end of the week, days away now. You still need to mark out some time to prepare. It won't do any good to undermine Arro if you lose points in the social arena.

Investigate the lodge? Turn to [29](#).

Prepare for the ball? Turn to [21](#).

5

Your words fail to sway the Arbiter, who appears distracted. His countenance is hard to read behind that mask, but you can sense his attention shifting to his stack of papers. He dismisses your concerns with a wave of his hand, and you leave in quiet frustration.

Eleanor is waiting at a coffeehouse as you emerge from the Spire. She takes a last sip of coffee then leaves the cup as she joins you on the broad avenue that winds through Pentower.

"You look irate, Vendro," she says. "Were I a churlish sort I might say that I warned you. But I'm not so petty as that."

You snort. "You are the picture of courtesy, Lady Starris."

"Aren't I just?" She tucks a strand of hair back. "You're coming to the Fellowship Ball at week's end, right?"

"I was planning on it."

"Good," she says. "It would be nice to have someone with a head on their shoulders to talk to."

Turn to [33](#).

6

Emberfeast lasts a week, always fiercest when the sun goes down and the fire can shine. Tonight, Cairnsmoke is alive with revelry as you wind, laughing and singing, through its narrow streets. You drink cheap ale and sample street food. You dance to the tune of a fiddle, taking an illicit thrill in the common debauchery. You shouldn't be here, but for a time it's fun to shelve those noble sensibilities.

You lose track of Luther two hours in and don't see him the rest of the night. As you stumble down Willow Road with a song on your lips you catch a whiff of lily in the air, then suddenly Eleanor is beside you. She loops an arm in yours to steady you and arches an eyebrow at your tune.

"Your musical talent should be kept hidden, Vendro," she says. "How much have you had to drink?"

"Enough," you concede with a grin.

She shrinks back at your breath, waving a hand. "I thought you hated Emberfeast. It's in bad taste, you said. What happened to your principle?"

"Sometimes... you need to unwind." You shrug. "Glossmire is tense. With all that's happening, the whole city needs Emberfeast."

"You'll hear no argument from me," Eleanor says. "Are you done for the night?"

"The song has a few verses yet," you say.

Eleanor snorts. "Well, I'm certainly done." You notice, for the first time, the smell of whiskey on her breath, the faint sway of her own step. "I keep an apartment here in Cairnsmoke. When you're finished there's a spare room for you. The doorman knows you."

"Thanks," you mumble.

As the evening stretches into night you spend some time dancing with a dark-haired woman. She's been crafted with ears that taper to points, like an elf from the stories. She suggests it might be time to turn in, and you'd be welcome to join her.

Go with her? Turn to [13](#).

Decline the offer? Turn to [2](#).

7

The Spire rises above the west bank of the river in the district of Pentower. A ring of glass windows at its summit gives the Arbiter a commanding view of the city. The coffeehouses on the approach are stuffed with maroon-clad Conclave scribes and those seeking to curry favor with them.

You see Eleanor leaving the Spire as you approach. She gives you a curious look. "Out on business, Vendro?"

"I need to speak with the Arbiter."

"Well, I hope the Fair Sister smiles on you," she says. "The Arbiter's in a foul mood, not really in the mood to do much arbitrating today."

You press your lips in a frown. "It's important."

"Of course it is," she says, patting you on the shoulder. "Come see me when you're done."

Inside, the Spire is cold and finely appointed in black marble and gold. Even for you, it takes time to reach the upper level. As you enter you take in the sights with approval; this is a man who knows how to look the part. His maroon robe is cinched with the brooch of office, and his gold mask is set with the face of the First. He sits at a desk with neat stacks of paper and a gilded lantern, with the official seal in gold above his head on the back of his tall chair. Six guards loom nearby, each crafted for strength.

"Arbiter," you say, bowing.

"Lord Barrost." His voice is deep and firm. "Speak swiftly. I have many things to attend to."

You clear your throat. Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 9**.

If you are **CRITICAL**:

Success? Turn to [35](#).

Failure? Turn to [11](#).

If you are **TENSE**:

Success? Turn to [3](#).

Failure? Turn to [15](#).

Otherwise:

Success? Turn to [22](#).

Failure? Turn to [5](#).

8

Much later you step onto the balcony to get some air. Your sweat cools on your brow as you sip another whiskey, enjoying the bite of the evening air. You step to the banister, weaving around clusters of conversation to stare out over the lights of the city in celebration.

It's not long before Eleanor joins you at the edge, also nursing a tumbler of whiskey. "Did you hear the news?"

You look over, curious. "What news?"

"There was an attack at the Spire," she says mildly, taking a sip of whiskey for a dramatic pause. "Somebody tried to kill the Arbiter."

You look sharply towards the tower in question, one of the few places not lit for Emberfeast. The festival would offer a good time to strike; chaos in the streets and a skeleton crew at the tower. "Who?" you ask.

"Nobody knows. They didn't take anybody alive to question, is what I heard."

You sip your whiskey, feeling it burn down your throat. You wonder if Pike had something to do with this, if perhaps your meeting with the Arbiter set things in motion that escalated beyond what anyone thought. You're glad the attempt was unsuccessful; you shudder to think what chaos might erupt should the Arbiter be assassinated. Even the attempt brings a tightness to your chest.

"Relax, Vendro," Eleanor says, putting a hand on your arm. "It sounds like no damage was done."

"Even the thought of it has me ill at ease," you admit.

Eleanor leans back against the banister, her eyes on the nobles inside. Most of them are speaking in hushed clusters rather than dancing. "One day the Arbiter will die, and there will be another just like him. It's happened before."

"Not in my lifetime," you say with a frown. You tilt your head, then glance shrewdly at Eleanor.

"Don't even think about asking my age, Vendro," she says sharply. "Come on, I need more whiskey."

In the days that follow you learn that the Arbiter survived the attack. Furthermore, your mention to the Arbiter had him double his guard detail, which the assassins clearly hadn't counted on. You are commended quietly for the information, and given a modest reward. **[WEALTH +3]**

Turn to [30](#).

* 9 *

Cairnsmoke is teeming with people. Weary refugees line the streets, clutching bundles and children to keep them safe. Their jade eyes follow the Emberfeast revelers who frolic past, laughing and drinking. More than a few drinks are handed from reveler to refugee, a sordid sort of charity. A welcome, from one forlorn mob to another.

You find the shelter, a converted warehouse on Growler Way. The burly man at the door is crafted with a scaled neck and shoulders and bony ridges on his knuckles. His presence, and his expensive crafting, gives merit to Pike's rumor.

It's easy to slip down an alley with the street so busy. You find the back door closed and barred, but an upper window is ajar. You might be able to climb in and take a look around. If you try, make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 9**.

Success? Turn to [27](#).

Failure? Turn to [38](#).

* 10 *

The Conclave scribes are glad for your aid. Their efforts to triage Cairnsmoke have left them weary, but the task will last many hours yet. You put yourself and your guards at their service, and spend the rest of the night running messages, coordinating efforts, and doing physical labor. It's not glamorous, but it's effective.

In the following weeks you receive several Conclave barristers at your manor. They make sure to let you know the Arbiter is personally aware of your assistance. **[CONTROL +2]**

The rebuilding of Cairnsmoke is marred by conflict, but the city endures. People move on.

Turn to [20](#).

* 11 *

"This has to stop."

The Arbiter's voice cuts you off. "But--"

"I'm well aware of your feud with Lord Metiri," he says. "It's irritating and tiresome. I don't have time to rule on every perceived slight and transgression. Settle it amongst yourselves, I have much to do."

You grip the paper tightly, make a stiff bow, and leave. **[CONTROL -1]**

Eleanor is waiting at a coffeehouse as you emerge from the Spire. She takes a last sip of coffee then leaves the cup as she joins you on the broad avenue that winds through Pentower.

"You look irate, Vendro," she says. "Were I a churlish sort I might say that I warned you. But I'm not so petty as that."

You snort. "You are the picture of courtesy, Lady Starris."

"Aren't I just?" She tucks a strand of hair back. "You're coming to the Fellowship Ball at week's end, right?"

"I was planning on it."

"Good," she says. "It would be nice to have someone with a head on their shoulders to talk to."

Turn to [33](#).

* 12 *

You return to your manor on Tarncroft Hill. You notice the garden is becoming unkempt, and remind yourself to have a word with your gardeners. As you push through the front door you're greeted by Raul, your graying valet. He carefully takes your coat and sets it in the closet. You remove your boots before Lianna comes running to see you.

"I got a cat!" she says brightly, holding a mangy gray creature nearly as long as she is tall. The feline makes a faint distressed mewl but has learned not to try to escape.

You assess the cat with a wary look. "Where did you get this cat, Lianna?" You look over at Raul, who is studiously putting your boots away so as not to be part of the conversation. Convenient.

"He was up a tree in the blue house's yard," she says. "I gave him a fish and he came down and now he's my cat."

"And you're going to take care of him?"

"Of course, Father! The cook already gave him scraps from tonight's dinner."

You meet the feline's weary gaze and share a moment of kinship with the poor creature. "Very well," you say. "You can keep him."

Your daughter squeals with excitement and scurries off to her room to further torment her new pet. You have a few words with your daughter's guards about letting her collect strange animals. You

make sure they're keeping an extra close eye out especially with Pike's words from earlier. You don't expect him to act on it, but you'd be a fool to leave it to chance.

Over the next few days you prepare for the Fellowship Ball. Do you make time to talk to the Arbiter, or focus on your social engagement?

Meet with the Arbiter? Turn to [7](#).

Attend the ball? Turn to [33](#).

* 13 *

It's been years since your wife's passing. You leave the festivity with the woman and accompany her to one of the dirty tenements. You're well into your cups or you'd curl your lip at the small room, but you enjoy yourself all the same.

She's gone when you awake the next morning, along with your coin purse and your nice new coat. [-1 **WEALTH**]

If you are **FANCY**, remove **FANCY** from your sheet.

You're in a foul mood as you get yourself together. You've half a mind to take Pike up on his offer to line your pockets. But maybe you should head back home instead.

Work with Pike? Turn to [34](#).

Go home? Turn to [2](#).

* 14 *

The thick smoke in the district helps hide your activities from righteous eyes, but there are enough refugees who notice your passage, your pockets clinking, to start rumors. In the days following the fire, your name is bantered about in the court of public opinion. Some saw you getting your hands dirty in the effort, others saw your larceny. Nothing official ever comes of it. [**RESPECT -1, WEALTH +3**]

Turn to [20](#).

* 15 *

You were careful to hide anything illicit, but the Conclave scribes are thorough. When they look into the lead you provided they uncover your dealings. Various Conclave barristers have strong words with you, and levy significant penalties.

When the Arbiter purges the criminal underworld, your boots don't swing alongside theirs. Instead you are publicly reprimanded and fined. [**RESPECT -2, WEALTH -2**]

Turn to [30](#).

16

You leave the coffeehouse with Luther, winding through the labyrinth of Cairnsmoke's alleys towards the broader boulevards of Eavecrust. Narrow tenements give way to stately shops, wrought of shale oak and brick, with full windows to display expensive wares. Nobody is so crass as to hawk their wares here; a muted display is the proper way.

Luther's tailor greets you both with a measuring tape. A fine coat wouldn't dent your finances. You could, however, choose to be ostentatious. If you do, mark **FANCY** on your sheet. [**RESPECT +1, WEALTH -1**]

"There," Luther says, admiring his finery as you exit. "That's the coat sorted. Now we just need new boots, gloves, and some new coins. I was going to have a lion on mine, what do you think?"

"I think a lion ill suits you, Luther," you say. "Perhaps a ferret or sparrow would be more appropriate?"

"Oh, very funny," he says with a roll of his eyes. "I've had my current design far too long, I need something new. You always know what to do, Vendro."

Your eyes drift towards Cairnsmoke and the refugees. And Pike's offer. You frown. "I don't know about that," you say.

Investigate the shelter? Turn to [9](#).

Work with Pike? Turn to [4](#).

Head home instead? Turn to [12](#).

17

You meet Arro's gaze across the party and slowly raise your whiskey in a silent toast. He tilts his head, a quizzical look on his face, more troubled by your toast than if you had glared or glowered. You take petty satisfaction in your rival's discomfort as you sip from your glass, already walking towards a group of well-appointed ladies.

"I'm surprised Arro Metiri could make it," you say mildly. "He's been so busy with his hostages in Cairnsmoke. Oh, you didn't know? It's all anyone's talking about."

Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 9**.

Success? Turn to [46](#).

Failure? Turn to [61](#).

18

You follow the thread to its conclusion and uncover a plot to assassinate the Arbiter. Your dock is being used to bring skril into the city, bypassing the guild and the marsh runners to get it directly into the hands of black market transmutifiers. The crafted assassins will strike on the last night of Emberfeast.

This is valuable information, and the Arbiter would pay well for it. Explaining how you came by this information would be difficult, however, and your involvement in smuggling might come to light

during the investigation. You might also work with the dissidents and help facilitate the plot. You could benefit from this too. Mark **TENSE** on your sheet.

Warn the Arbiter? Turn to [7](#).

Help with the plot? Turn to [33](#).

* 19 *

You wage a violent and brutal war in the shadows. Falcon's death sparks off a struggle for control of the illicit skril shipments coming into the city. You funnel a great deal of money into hiring mercenaries who can protect you and destroy anyone who threatens you.

At the other end of the conflict you're a much harder person, but the rest of the criminal underworld knows better than to cross you. While your public image is becoming more and more tarnished, there's no denying your level of influence across the city. Plus, you make a whole lot of money. Mark **RUTHLESS** on your sheet. [**CONTROL +2, RESPECT -1, WEALTH +4**].

Turn to **50**.

* 20 *

Twenty years pass. You remain thirty-four.

You arrange a sempiternum every year. The cost is great. The master who did your first is dead now. His apprentice, now a man grown, conducts the ritual. [**WEALTH -2**]

If **CONTROL**, **RESPECT**, or **WEALTH** is zero or lower, your time in Glossmire has come to an end. Arro Metiri makes his move and you haven't the resources to repel him.

Reborn from the ashes, Cairnsmoke is laced with the saw of fiddles, the sounds of debauchery, and the smell of drying peat. The new district is much like the old, filled with rough people, marsh runners, and refugees from the war across the water. Burlap banners hang from the archways with crude tongues of flame painted on them to commemorate the anniversary of the great fire. An excuse to drink and dance on the grave itself.

"Bright Emberfeast!" A lady with crafted feline ears capers past with a pair of sparking sticks in her hands, laughing as she careens towards the lower market. You shake your head at the wanton excess of the craft. Transmogrification is a staple in Glossmire, in both function and fashion. One might change eyes or grow tails as easily as one changed their hairstyle, so long as one had the skril or the crowns to buy it. Always temporary, often frivolous, never so pure as the sempiternum. You shake your head as you step into a coffeehouse.

Luther sits at a private booth with another man. Your friend looks much the same as he did twenty years ago; one can only resist the siren call of the sempiternum for so long, after all. He fusses with his glasses, the very picture of nerves, while the man across from him radiates an easy calm. He's crafted, with a pair of stubby horns protruding from his forehead and bony ridges along his knuckles. He wears a coat whose quality is a distant memory. Three coffee cups rest on the table; you sit down and claim the third.

"Lord Barrost," the horned man says, his eyes taking your measure. "Well met."

You hold his gaze, measuring him back. He has a dangerous air about him. "You're Pike?"

He takes a long drink from his coffee, unbothered by its heat, letting the silence give the answer for him. "Some of us remember when the Barrost name carried real weight."

The barb rankles. "My crowns are as good as any," you say. "You have information for me?"

"Lord Arro Metiri is keeping refugees."

You stare across the table, unimpressed. "We know that," you say. "It's part of his charity, helping refugees from the war, giving them food and shelter. He's made no secret of—"

"No," Pike cuts in. He leans forward, his eyes intense. "He's keeping refugees. Not letting them go. Using them as hostages."

"For what?" You share a glance at Luther, who is fussing with his sleeves. You take a sip of your coffee while you consider these words. "You know this how?"

"I have somebody inside." Pike takes another gulp of his scalding drink. He lowers the cup with a smile, setting it on the table. You can see the relish on his face at your impatience. "I understand you have a warehouse and a private dock? I have some clients who chafe under those new taxes. Honest merchants who don't want their crowns to fund a foreign war."

"It's not funding the war, though," Luther interjects. "It's a tax to help support the refugees, to offset the cost of food and..."

Pike's glare undercuts Luther's enthusiasm. The noble sips his coffee, then winces at its heat.

"Smuggling, is it?" you say with a frown.

"Call it what you will," Pike says. "You don't have to be involved. But that's my price for the information."

"I'll need to think about it."

"Of course," Pike says, finishing his coffee. "How is your daughter, Lord Barrost? She's nine now, little Lianna? It was a shame about your wife, those wasting sicknesses can be dreadful."

You go cold at the words. Your jaw clenches. "This doesn't concern my daughter."

"No, of course not," Pike says, waving a hand dismissively. "When you've made your choice, leave word with the barman here. I'll expect a response by sundown." He rises from the booth and offers you a mocking bow. "Bright Emberfeast to you both."

In the aftermath, you turn to Luther, who's holding his coffee cup to his lips without drinking. He wilts under your glare. "You wanted to find a way to get back at Arro," he says. "I didn't know he was a smuggler."

"Do you know who he works for?"

Luther sets his coffee cup down and fidgets with his sleeve, not meeting your eye. "No," he says after a moment. "I don't like it, but if we work with Pike, we could make a lot of money." He leans in closer, his eyes wide. "Skrl is expensive, Vendro."

You lift your coffee and take a slow sip. Are you so desperate for wealth that you'd make deals with a smuggler? The new tax is deeply unpopular, even in your circles, but it helps provide for the refugees choking the streets of Glossmire. Arro Metiri made a grand show of his own charity when he opened his shelter. Circumventing a tax to discern the truth of his actions might be justified. The profits would be a just reward for doing the right thing.

"Perhaps we don't need Pike," you say as you set your coffee down. "I know where Arro's shelter is."

Luther keeps tugging his sleeve. "He won't let you just take a look, Vendro."

"There are ways to get a look if you're determined."

"I suppose that's true." Luther's gaze drops to the table. "There's money in working with Pike though. And I don't have a private dock."

You give Luther a shrewd look, getting the sense that he knew all along that Pike was more than just an informant. Perhaps taking Pike's crowns wouldn't be so bad. Tainted money spends the same, doesn't it?

"Maybe you should think about it while we refresh our wardrobes?"

You fix Luther with a flat look. "Really?"

"The Fellowship Ball is at week's end, Vendro. You and I both need new coats at least if we're to make the proper impression." Luther smiles hopefully. "You can always look at the shelter afterwards."

Investigate the shelter? Turn to [9](#).

Work with Pike? Turn to [4](#).

Refresh your wardrobe? Turn to [16](#).

21

You stop at the bank in Eavecrust. You're handed a line of crowns; ten tapered gold coins linked by a brittle rod down the middle. You inspect them, noting their unadorned face, then nod to the clerk. You take the pouch with the rest of your coins and move down the avenue towards your preferred coingraver.

"Lord Barrost! I thought I might see you," the artisan says, pushing her optics up. "New coins for the Fellowship Ball?"

"I need a new design," you say, sliding the unadorned lines from your pouch.

"I've been doing wonderful things with filigreed wings lately," she says, holding up a sample. "Three or four birds per coin, depending on the wingspan, each with raised feathers. For the true expense, eyes of ruby or sapphire and an ivory beak."

You lean in to admire the detailed work. Crowns like these would be expensive, but would demonstrate your quality amongst your peers in an unassailable way. You commission the order.

If you add the gemstone eyes and ivory beak, mark **FANCY** on your sheet. **[WEALTH -2]**

The rest of the afternoon passes in a blur. Your thoughts keep drifting back to Arro, and the look on his smug face when you show him up at the Fellowship Ball. He has no idea what's coming his way. As you step out of your tailor's shop with a new coat, you catch sight of Luther and some friends walking past.

"Vendro! What fortune," he says, straightening his lensed glasses. "We were just heading to enjoy the Emberfeast in Cairnsmoke, if you'd like to join us?"

Join Luther for Emberfeast? Turn to [6](#).

Head home instead? Turn to [12](#).

22

The Arbiter takes your words seriously, and presses you for details about Pike and his dealings. You tell him what you know, and he relays it to a serious-looking scribe who notes down the information. The authorities will continue their crackdown on smuggling in Glossmire. You are commended for your information. Mark **VIRTUOUS** on your sheet. **[CONTROL +1, WEALTH +1]**

Eleanor is waiting at a coffeehouse as you emerge from the Spire. She finishes her coffee and rises to join you as you walk through the broad streets of Pentower.

"You look pleased," she observes. "Got what you wanted?"

"We had a productive discussion about a topic of interest."

Eleanor gives you a curious look, but you don't elaborate. Your conversation shifts to the upcoming Fellowship Ball.

Turn to [33](#).

23

Your line of discreet inquiry draws the attention of Pike's clients. The next time you meet, he's not there at all. His replacement is a hard woman with a soft voice and twitchy eyes. She calls herself Falcon, and dictates terms of your new arrangement. She tells you there will be consequences if you deal with anyone else. She doesn't elaborate on what those consequences will be, but she doesn't need to. You can put the pieces together.

You won't be making as much money under these new terms, but your criminal dealings will remain hidden. Perhaps it's best to go along with it for now, knowing that an opportunity will eventually come to part ways with Falcon. You might just save your skin.

The bolder plan, however, would be to turn on Falcon and show you're nobody's pawn. It would be dangerous, but you have resources. Perhaps the opportunity for the greatest profit, but the greatest risk as well.

And yet, it would be so much easier to just ignore what's happening and attend the Fellowship Ball. Turn to [33](#).

If you try to take down Falcon, make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 10**.

Success? Turn to [19](#).

Failure? Falcon shows no mercy, and your body is never found.

24

All eyes are on you as you step into the gilded hall. The warmth, along with the earthy smell of burning peat bricks, fills your nostrils.

You are met by a cadre of Gallandar knights, their steel plates polished to a mirror shine. "Sir, you do not merit our hospitality," one says. They make it clear that your presence is unwelcome.

Outside in the snow, you grind your teeth. Things have gone very badly indeed if you're so poorly-regarded as to be thrown out into the cold.

The insult weighs on you as your boots crunch through the snow. Yours is an old house, a proud name in Glossmire, but with your social esteem in such low regard you'll be hard-pressed to find trade partners. Without trade, the coffers run dry.

You glimpse a wagon making its way along the street towards you, its driver hunched on the seat with a cloak wrapped tight to ward off the cold. A fold of the canvas reveals the cargo to be coffee beans, precious in this cold snap.

Your hand rests on the hilt of your sword as you watch the wagon approach. The streets are empty at this hour. Are you so desperate for coin that you'd act the part of a common brigand?

Waylay the wagon? Turn to [37](#).

Walk home? Turn to [53](#).

25

It takes all night to comb through the rubble. You dig out six people and countless dozens of bodies. It's grim work, and the wails of anguish tear at you with every body found. You have to be carried home by your guards after you collapse from exhaustion.

Your name is on everyone's lips over the next few days, held up as a paragon of heroism. One who did their best to help those less fortunate, and was not afraid to get his hands dirty. **[RESPECT +2]**

The rebuilding of Cairnsmoke is beset with trouble, but the city perseveres. People move on.

Turn to [20](#).

26

You're on the balcony enjoying the crisp evening when news reaches the party of the attack on the Arbiter. The strings still play but the dance floor is empty, the nobles in small clusters as they gossip about the news.

Eleanor joins you at the banister, nursing a tumbler of whiskey. "Did you hear?"

"An attack on the Arbiter," you say, shaking your head. "Unbelievable."

There's a curious look from Eleanor as she sips her drink. Does she suspect, or are you imagining things? "Some think this is foreign interference," she says mildly.

You make a noise of agreement. "Makes sense." You take a sip from your drink.

"You don't seem surprised," she says.

"Nothing surprises me these days, Eleanor," you say. "The older I get the further this city slides into the swamp. I don't know who would have the audacity to kill the Arbiter, but it doesn't surprise me that it happened."

For a moment, there's silence from Eleanor, who's watching the nobles inside with a curious look. "You know who else doesn't look surprised? Your good friend Arro Metiri."

You turn sharply, then frown. Sure enough, Arro stands at the fringe of the party, looking at the chaos of the clustered, whispering nobles. You take another sip of your whiskey, and wonder what the future will bring.

Over the next few days the new Arbiter is appointed. She oversees the capture, trial, and execution of the designated scapegoat. Later, in person, she thanks you privately, and assures you her office is aware of your contributions. **[CONTROL +3, WEALTH +4]**

Turn to [40](#).

Your coat nearly catches on the window but you get inside without event. The smell of unwashed bodies is thick in the air, even here in this storage loft. You peek over the railing and see a cramped, crowded warehouse divided into sections with simple ratty curtains. Pallets are strewn everywhere, one per family, and the meager kitchen couldn't possibly provide enough food. There don't seem to be many guards inside the building.

You wrap a blanket over your fine clothes and slip down a ladder to get more information. A few discreet inquiries gives you a picture of events. Refugees are assessed when they arrive, and the strong are sent somewhere else. Sometimes, refugees are taken away from this place and they don't come back. Always in their family groups. **[CONTROL +1]**

You leave the way you came. Asking around on the street you discover where the refugees are going; a compound operated by one of Arro Metiri's marsh crews.

Investigate further? Turn to [29](#).

Prepare for the ball? Turn to [21](#).

You speak with a slight woman wearing a necklace with dozens of sapphires. She has an owlsh way of tilting her head as you speak, but she seems to appreciate your refined manners. She leads you to the table while Arro is still talking with his hook-nosed woman.

"This is Lord Barrost," the slight woman says, introducing you. "I present him as a worthy adversary on the field of negotiation."

The three ladies regard you with measured looks. "We shall test his mettle," says the middle one.

Pinch-face leaves you alone at the head table. You make some headway in your negotiations when you hear Arro walking up.

"Oh, Lord Metiri," you say. "I thought I heard the jingle of keys."

Your rival draws up next to you with a curious look. "Keys, Lord Barrost? Do you need to lie down from the stress of this negotiation?"

"The keys to your slave pens, Lord Metiri. You remember those, don't you? You were quite fond of forced labor a few years back during the refugee crisis."

Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 8**.

Success? Turn to [63](#).

Failure? Turn to [54](#).

Arro Metiri's marsh crew operates out of a lodge on Shiv Lane, set back from the street a little in a walled compound. Through the gate you can see two dozen men and women practicing with weapons, most of them malnourished and in borrowed kit. There's no hope in their haunted eyes.

A scattering of seasoned runners watch over the yard, most of them crafted with horns or scales or extra arms. You know crafting like that doesn't last long, it's likely the crew is preparing for a run into

the marsh. As you watch you see the gate open, and a lean runner heads out, hustling towards the lower market with a sack. Sent to get supplies, no doubt.

You fall into step beside him and try to get some information to confirm your suspicions. You try to be subtle. Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 9**.

Success? His wide-eyed expression tells you he's about to panic, but you manage to calm him quickly and win his trust.

Failure? He shouts in alarm as you try to calm him down. A number of eyes follow you as you convince the man to speak with you, and the murmur of gossip follows at your heels. [**RESPECT -2**]

It takes some time for the runner to trust you, but you convince him you can help. "When they saw I could fight they sent me to the lodge," he says, glancing around for anyone listening. His voice is low and urgent. "They have my wife and son. They said they'd kill them if I didn't bring back skril." His eyes are wide.

You pledge to do what you can to help. Mark **CRITICAL** on your sheet. [**CONTROL +1**]

The man likely won't survive his trip into the marsh, but you can bring down the Arbiter's attention on the operation and get it shut down. Probably not in time to save him, but maybe soon enough to save his wife and son. With everything you can confirm, with specific details, you may be able to persuade the Arbiter to focus the Conclave's justice on the operation.

You still need to prepare for the Fellowship Ball. The struggle to restore the Barrost name to respectability relies heavily on your public appearance, and you'll need a new coat.

Go to the Arbiter? Turn to [7](#).

Prepare for the ball? Turn to [21](#).

30

Twenty years pass. You remain thirty-four.

If you are **FANCY**, remove it from your sheet. Styles change.

You feel the tickle in your spine sooner now. The sempiternum can only hold back your years for eleven months. The cost will continue to double every twenty years or so. [**WEALTH -4**]

If **CONTROL**, **RESPECT**, or **WEALTH** is zero or lower, your time in Glossmire has come to an end. Arro Metiri makes his move and you haven't the resources to repel him.

Glossmire's churn is muffled and still as the snow chokes its streets and piles up against buildings. Your breath fogs in the air as you crunch through the ermine carpet, every stride a struggle. The warmth of the coffeehouse ahead beckons to you like a lover, promising company and caffeine.

Inside, you find Luther at a table, bundled in coats and scarves, holding a cup in his gloved hands. He vibrates with nervous excitement, completely at odds with the cold.

"What's so urgent?" You take the other seat at the booth and claim the second cup.

"The traders from Gallandar found something in the marsh!" Luther leans forward. "They camped at some ruin nobody knew about, a day out, and found it overgrown with skril!"

Your cup stops halfway to your lips. "A ruin full of skril? Every crew in the city will be after that," you say. "Who else knows?"

Luther shrugs. "That's why I wanted to meet. Your daughter is with that marsh crew, isn't she?" You tense. Lianna has been twenty-six for three years now, and she has rejected any notion of feminine pursuits. "That ruin will be a bloodbath if every crew is after it," you say.

"She's a good fighter, isn't she?" Luther says, taking a slow sip. "You can't control her choices, Vendro. If she wants to go, we can give her crew the tip to get them out ahead of the other crews. The rewards would be huge."

You slowly sip your coffee as you consider the problem. Lianna is a good fighter but the marsh swallows good fighters every day. When her crew finds out about the ruin, though, they'll go. Every crew will go. You can't think of a way to keep Lianna in Glossmire without chains.

Before long, you and Luther are crunching through the snow towards Crown Square. "You'd think the marsh crews would find a better place for their lodges than Cairnsmoke."

"It's Karnsmoke now, Vendro," Luther says. His lensed glasses are entirely fogged in the cold.

"Why is it Karnsmoke?" you snap irritably.

"I don't know, it's just what they're calling it now."

"It doesn't make any sense, it's not even a word," you grumble.

You reach the lodge and are brought in out of the cold. There's a bonfire going in the training yard, ringed by rough people maintaining weapons. Lianna is with them, watching you with challenge in her eyes.

You speak with the leader of the crew. Before you finish he's already barking orders and making preparations. There's an energy that fills the lodge as they prepare, fear and excitement and impatience all wrapped up in one.

Lianna joins you beside the bonfire. "I'll be careful, Father."

"I know," you say, your stomach tied in knots. For a foolish moment you consider volunteering to accompany the crew out into the marsh, but you aren't a warrior. You'd only get yourself killed, and likely others alongside. You frown as you consider how you might help the expedition.

"I can speak to the guild," you say. "Arrange a good transmogrifier. You want to be at your best."

Lianna nods, looking over her spear. "That would help," she says.

The transmuter's guild is bustling in the morning despite the snow. By the look of the rough folks around you suspect there's a number of marsh crews seeking urgent transmogrification. You use your noble status to get inside, then try to find someone who will do the work on short notice.

Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 9**.

Success? Turn to [56](#).

Failure? Turn to [42](#).

31

Despite your best efforts you can't win the hooked-nose woman over. She gives you points for the audacity of your ploy against Lord Metiri but condemns the dishonorable nature of your conduct.

You shift your focus to a golden-haired lady in a dress festooned with chiffon roses. She's more receptive to your approach, but her playful manner sidetracks your conversation. By the time she leads you to the head table, Arro Metiri is already speaking with them.

"Oh, Lord Barrost," Arro says off-handedly. "I'm glad to see you could escape your creditors to be here tonight."

You lean towards the Gallandar ladies. "I apologize for my compeer. He may not look it, but Lord Metiri is advanced in age and gets confused. My house's finances are quite sound."

Your barb earns a faint smile from one of the ladies, and a roll of the eyes from your rival. "Please, Lord Barrost," he says, his voice soft and cloying. "You don't need to sling baseless accusations. It's beneath you. I'm sure the delegation will choose whomever they feel is the best match to their priorities."

Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 10**.

Success? Turn to [63](#).

Failure? Turn to [54](#).

. 32 .

"I don't have time for this."

You make a point to slam into Arro's shoulder as you move past him, spinning him about. He scoffs, then calls out to your back. "Such force, Vendro! Are those your real muscles or have you been transmogrified?"

"Perhaps a guildsman could craft you a spine," you say, looking back.

"Oh my, yes. You'll have to tell me who did yours."

You keep walking. **[CONTROL -1, RESPECT +1]**

Turn to [43](#).

. 33 .

If you are **FANCY**, you impress your peers. **[RESPECT +2]**

Emberfeast is celebrated throughout the city, but the fare is different at the Fellowship Ball. Smoked meats and cheeses sit alongside truffles and candied fruit on long trays, and fine whiskey flows like water. Fine strings soothe the chamber as well-dressed nobility, all young, twirl and strut on the dance floor.

You take a glass of whiskey, a local smoky blend, and circle the edge of the party. Brief pleasantries are shared with familiar faces, the empty words that keep society moving. You smile as you see Luther pop an apple slice into his mouth. You close the distance.

"Bright Emberfeast," you say with a quirk of your lips.

Luther makes a noise, putting a finger to his lips, miming an apology for having his mouth full. You sample some of the food as you stand with him, watching the dancers.

"Sorry Vendro," he says after a moment. "You timed that perfectly."

"Any sign of Arro?"

Luther shakes his head. "He'll probably make an entrance later."

You nod as you continue to pick at the snacks. The strings swell as the song rises to a crescendo, the dancers spinning with increased fervor. Your toe taps as you catch the eye of a woman also on the perimeter. She begins to move in your direction.

"We'll catch up later," you tell Luther as you take the lady's arm and join the next dance.

An hour later, Arro Metiri makes an entrance. Tall and sharp, frustratingly dapper in his fine coat and vest, he lingers with his wife at the entry long enough to ensure the party notices. You tighten your grip on your whiskey, knowing just what ill acts lurk beneath that veneer of civility.

If you are **CRITICAL**, turn to [17](#).

If you are **TENSE**, turn to [26](#).

Otherwise, turn to [76](#).

. 34 .

You hope to turn around your ill fortune by working with Pike. He meets you at the usual place and outlines the plan for your private dock. You meet the next day to collect a tidy sum of crowns. More to come, Pike assures you. **[WEALTH +1]**

Four days into your partnership you see a different side of Pike. He arrives with dried blood on his coat and a black eye, and a scowl on his face. He's surly and curt and bristles at any mention of his state. Something is going on in the criminal underworld.

You sit for a while after your meeting, wondering what you might be involved in. There are people you could ask, though there would be risks. Those people might not like you asking questions. If you let it go, turn to [12](#).

If you'd rather do some digging, make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 8**.

Success? Turn to [18](#).

Failure? Turn to [23](#).

. 35 .

"These are serious charges." The Arbiter is hard to read with his mask in place, but you sense a weariness in his posture and in his voice. "This is an ill time for it."

You clasp your hands in front. "If Lord Metiri is enslaving these refugees, surely this requires action from the Conclave."

"It's not that simple, Lord Barrost." The Arbiter squares up the stacks on his desk. "Lord Metiri is acting poorly, yes. The Conclave will note this, and will deal with it. In time. If we raid his shelter and dismantle this operation, we are left with a hundred more refugees who now need food from the city's finite coffers." He looks up from his desk. "Those coffers are strained, Lord Barrost."

You stand very still. You've put a black mark on the Metiri name in the Conclave's books, but nothing will be done to dismantle the operation. There will be no arrest, and Arro will continue to accrue skril and wealth on the back of the suffering of refugees. "I understand," you say after a long pause.

"Lord Barrost, I appreciate you coming to me with this information, and rest assured the Conclave will look into this matter in due time. You have, once again, been of service to Glossmire."

You take your leave. **[CONTROL +2]**

Eleanor is waiting at a coffeehouse as you emerge from the Spire. She takes a last sip then joins you as you walk the broad streets of Pentower. You tell her about the plot and the Arbiter's response. Her face darkens. "What will you do, Vendro?"

You consider your options. You could reach out to Pike; if the legal approach didn't bear fruit you might be able to use some underworld connections to make something happen. You aren't sure you want to owe Pike anything.

Meet with Pike? Turn to [41](#).

Attend the ball? Turn to [33](#).

* 36 *

The hall is well-appointed in Gallandari style, with crested pennants adorning each wall. Knights, steel plate polished to a mirror shine, make Glossmire's soldiers look like toys. These warrior-heroes are the strong arm of Gallandar, while the women in fine gowns circulating throughout the room are the mind. You notice three ladies in a place of prominence, the leaders of the delegation, though only the one in red has noticed your entrance.

The strings of a lyre fill the hall with soothing music, a soft undercurrent to the murmured conversations. You see Arro Metiri standing to the side, speaking with a hook-nosed woman in purple and gold. They both look in your direction and frown.

You aren't here to deal with your rival, you're here to make a deal. Gallandar's custom dictates that you can't just approach the head table without an invitation to speak. You must speak with the other noblewomen and impress them first.

Be refined and measured? Turn to [28](#).

Be direct and forceful? Turn to [49](#).

Cut in on Arro Metiri? Turn to [55](#).

* 37 *

You fashion a scarf over your mouth to hide your identity. The wagon's driver puts up no fight at all, fleeing the instant he sees your blade. You hide the cargo in one of your warehouses and leave the wagon for the Conclave to find later. **[CONTROL -1, RESPECT -1, WEALTH +3]**

A great shame settles over you as you walk home, but your crime may have secured your future.

Turn to [53](#).

* 38 *

You nearly reach the window, but rip your coat on the way down. You hear somebody coming to investigate the noise. If you are **FANCY**, remove it from your sheet. **[RESPECT -1]**

Frustrated, you emerge from the alley. You could still deal with Pike and see if his agent can help uncover what Arro is up to. You could go to Eavecrust and prepare for the ball, since your coat now certainly needs a replacement. Or perhaps it's time to head home and check on your daughter?

Work with Pike? Turn to [4](#).

Prepare for the ball? Turn to [21](#).

Go home? Turn to [12](#).

39

Hours later you step onto the balcony to get some air. Your sweat cools on your brow as you sip another whiskey, enjoying the bite of the evening air. You step to the banister, weaving around clusters of conversation to stare out over the lights of the city in celebration.

It's not long before Eleanor joins you at the edge, also nursing a tumbler of whiskey. "Did you hear the news?"

You look over, curious. "What news?"

"There was an attack at the Spire," she says mildly, taking a sip of whiskey for a dramatic pause. "Somebody tried to kill the Arbiter."

You look sharply towards the tower in question, one of the few places not lit for Emberfeast. The festival would offer a good time to strike; chaos in the streets and a skeleton crew at the tower. "Who?" you ask.

"Nobody knows. We're not even sure if the Arbiter survived or not. The runner chose speed over veracity."

You sip your whiskey, feeling it burn down your throat. The Arbiter has been in power your whole life, there's a sudden sense of unease as you wonder what might change if they die. Something in your face must betray your concern; Eleanor puts a hand on your arm. "Relax, Vendro," she says. "Try to enjoy the party."

"If somebody killed the Arbiter, a lot of things will change," you say.

Eleanor leans back against the banister, looking at the nobles inside. There are fewer dancing, and many standing around in hushed conversation. "I don't think so," she says. "I've seen it before, when this Arbiter took power. Almost nothing changed."

You tilt your head, giving Eleanor a curious look. "How long has the Arbiter been in power?"

"You can't ask a lady her age, Vendro," she chides, a fey smile on her lips.

Over the next few days you learn the truth of it; the Arbiter is dead. His replacement is sworn in, and she oversees an investigation into her predecessor's death. They find the man who did it, and hang him from the Justiciar's Arch.

Turn to [40](#).

40

Twenty years pass. You remain thirty-four.

If you are **FANCY**, remove it from your sheet. Styles change.

You feel the tickle in your spine sooner now. The sempiternum can only hold back your years for eleven months. The cost will continue to double every twenty years or so. **[WEALTH -4]**

If **CONTROL**, **RESPECT**, or **WEALTH** is zero or lower, your time in Glossmire has come to an end. Arro Metiri makes his move and you haven't the resources to repel him.

A crackling fire and the burn of whiskey keep you warm as you stare out across the frozen city. Snow chokes the alleys and blankets Glossmire in an ermine shawl, even as more drifts softly down. The usual noise is gone, muted by the cold and its trappings. Fitting, since all you can hear is the number Eleanor just voiced.

"That's a lot of money," you say, still at the window. You sip your whiskey, feeling the tension from Eleanor as she sits near the fire. You can picture the look on her face, the desperate composure, the veneer of calm that threatens to crack at any moment.

"Vendro," she says, finding her voice. "We've been friends for decades now. You know my holdings are vast. I just need some crowns until a few deals close."

You keep looking out the window. It's easier than seeing the fear in Eleanor's eyes. "Have you asked Luther?"

A pause. "Yes."

"It's a lot of money," you say again with a frown.

Another pause, then barely a whisper. "Yes."

You turn, slowly, and walk back towards the fire. Eleanor tries to keep a brave face but the signs are there. You can see her hands trembling, can see where her dress is rumpled from long wear, where her eyes are red from tears. You sit in a chair across from her. "This is for your sempiternum," you say. It's not a question. "How long between them?"

"A month," she whispers.

You feel a chill that has nothing to do with the cold. Eleanor must be over two hundred years old. The amount of money she's asking for will only handle two months at the most. Even selling her estate wouldn't give her the capital to keep herself alive for more than a span of years.

You aren't sure you can afford to give up so much of your wealth.

Give Eleanor **4 WEALTH**? Turn to [69](#).

Turn her away? Turn to [47](#).

41

You arrange a meeting with Pike. He arrives with dried blood on his coat and a black eye, and a scowl on his face. He's surly and curt and bristles at any mention of his state. He has no time for any discussion about Arro. Something is going on in the criminal underworld.

You sit for a while after your meeting, wondering what you might be involved in. There are people you could ask, though there would be risks. Those people might not like you asking questions. If you keep your head down and go to the Fellowship Ball, turn to [33](#).

If you'd rather do some digging, make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 8**.

Success? Turn to [64](#).

Failure? Turn to [23](#).

You can't find a transmogrifier despite your best efforts. Your daughter's marsh crew will need to be resourceful and lucky to survive. Frustrated, you turn your attention to the evening's reception. Mark **UNPREPARED** on your sheet.

Smoke rises in tendrils towards the sky as every hearth is lit in Eavecrust. You pass four men pushing a trapped wagon on the rise, their grunts muffled by the falling snow. Frost lines the windows of the fancy shops where assistants are busy clearing entrances, using shovels ill-suited to the task. Your crowns are cool in your hand as you cross the threshold. You may spend **1 WEALTH** to gain **1 RESPECT**.

You know Gallandar puts great stock in dramatic heroism. Theirs is a culture of noble knights and beautiful ladies, of stirring stories and bravery. You commission an outfit in regal blue with silver trim with a matching cape, and arrange a suitable entrance. **[CONTROL +1, RESPECT +1]**

The Gallandar expedition has the use of a hall in Pentower, a gift from the Conclave to help foster trade relations. The falling snow does nothing to deter the arrival of the nobility, eager to secure trade for the wealth of their houses. Your arrival draws eyes, with two white stags pulling an ornate sled. As you cross the threshold into the building, the ripple of conversation follows.

Is your **RESPECT**:

3 or lower? Turn to [24](#).

Between 4 and 8? Turn to [36](#).

9 or higher? Turn to [57](#).

The city glows with ruddy light as night falls. You've been in Cairnsmoke for hours, sleeves rolled to the elbow, coat and face stained with soot. Shouts echo from the winding alleys as fires are chased down, cornered, and quashed. Desperate, dirty people dig through the rubble, searching for valuables. Or loved ones. The cost, both in lives and gold crowns, has been terrible.

"Vendro, there you are!" comes a voice. You turn to see Luther Penn approaching, looking far less disheveled than you as he adjusts his lensed glasses.

"Well met, Luther," you say, a tired smile on your face. "I wish it were under better circumstances."

"Ah, yes," he says, rubbing his hands. "Quite the fire, isn't it? They're still fighting it near Monument Square. I left my guards there to help." A rise of excitement to his voice at the end, as if he were doing something daring. Perhaps walking these streets without guards qualified?

"How noble of you," you say. "Allow me to shake your hand, hero, for your contributions."

You reach out with your sooty palms, and grin as Luther jerks back. "Not all of us can be so... physical. Our duty as nobles is to be strategic, Vendro. By maintaining some distance I can be objective in my efforts."

The scent of lily mingles with the peat smoke as Eleanor Starris appears, in a dress of prescient charcoal gray. "Are my ears deceived, or did I hear Luther making excuses for abstaining from action?" she says in a playful voice.

Luther turns to look. "I don't see any soot on your hands, Eleanor."

"They're called gloves." A smile crosses her lips. "They're for keeping your hands clean when doing your civic duty."

You watch Luther blink, flustered, as he seeks a suitable response. Eleanor's attention has already shifted to you. She tilts her head, curious. "You've been guildcrafted, haven't you, Vendro?"

"I had my first sempiternum today," you say.

"Finally," she says. "I've been doing it for some time. It's wonderful to stay young. Perhaps now that you've acceded, we can convince Luther to partake in our culture's greatest gift?"

"Transmogrification," Luther says, his tone derisive. "It's poison. The sempiternum is supposed to let you live forever, right? Reset your body one year at a time? You know what happens if you miss a dose; all your cheated years return all at once. A horrible way to die."

"Only if you run out of money," Eleanor says.

"It's unnatural," he adds. "If man were meant to live that long the gods would have granted it."

Eleanor snorts. "They did, Luther. They gave us skril. Do you really want to have wrinkles, when we have the means to avoid it? Joints that creak in the morning? Stiffness?" She leans closer, her voice lowering, her eyebrows climbing. "Lack of stiffness?"

As Luther squirms, you taste the smoke on the air. It tastes different somehow, now that you've undergone the sempiternum. Not in any measurable way, but in your soul. You're part of the fabric of Glossmire now, and you will be for decades more. Perhaps even centuries. You have a responsibility.

"The work's not done," you say, rolling your shoulders to limber up. "There's time enough for both of you to show your mettle."

"More than I already have?" Eleanor replies with an even look, as if challenging you to call her false. "I've already discarded my gloves."

"My men are helping in Monument Square," Luther protests. "Surely it's not our place to--"

You cut him off. "I'm going to help. This is our chance to lead by example, to show Glossmire we take our responsibilities seriously."

You walk down Tourney Lane, heading deeper into the district, considering just what your duty is. You could help the common folk dig through the rubble, quite literally getting your hands dirty in a search for survivors. You might instead put yourself at the Conclave's disposal, aiding the Arbiter's people wherever they need. A public display of loyalty might bear dividends in the long run. Or perhaps it's best to safeguard any valuables you find, the sort of things common looters couldn't possibly appreciate like you would.

Save lives? Turn to [25](#).

Assist the Conclave? Turn to [10](#).

Acquire wealth? Turn to [14](#).

There's a satisfying crack as your fist meets Arro's jaw. He staggers back, nearly falling, clutching at his face in shock. You shake your hand as you move closer, watching Arro gather himself.

"I always knew you were a mindless brute, Vendro," he seethes, rubbing his jaw. "Violence is the tool of the ignorant."

You feint forward, taking petty satisfaction as Arro scurries back from you. He opens his mouth to retort, then turns to walk off in a huff. You watch him go, wishing you had punched him harder. **[CONTROL +1, RESPECT -1]**

Turn to [43](#).

. 45 .

Tem rouses you when Lianna's crew returns. You dress quickly and brave the snowfall to reach Karnsmoke, where the crew's hall is loud with celebration. A man, crafted with an enormous crab claw for a hand, brings you inside with a roar. A four-armed woman plays two fiddles in harmony while the surviving marsh crew fill their cups with cheap beer.

Your heart swells with relief as you see Lianna, her arm wrapped in a bloody bandage, a look of triumph on her face. You wrap her in a tight hug before she can even speak, relieved laughter bubbling up from your lips.

"Father, that's enough," she says, laughing too. "I told you we could do it."

"An incredible feat," you say, smiling. "I'm so proud."

The celebration lasts well into the morning. **[WEALTH +8]**

Are you **ALOOF**? Turn to [66](#).

Otherwise, turn to [70](#).

. 46 .

Your words strike a chord with many of your peers, who respond with shock and disgust when they hear the depths Arro has sunk to. The ripple of conversation around the dance floor is electric, as are the glares.

Arro corners you near the gallery, looking unusually flustered. "Just what do you think you're doing?" he demands.

"Showing everybody the truth, Arro. About the sort of man you are." You sip your whiskey. "It's not a pretty truth."

"You don't know anything, Vendro," he seethes. "You'll see."

You feel a smug sense of satisfaction as he storms off. **[CONTROL +1, RESPECT +2]**

If you are **VIRTUOUS**, turn to [8](#).

Otherwise, turn to [39](#).

. 47 .

You tell her you'll find another way to help. She finds appreciative words but you can hear something in her break. You both know it won't be enough. Mark **ALOOF** on your sheet.

Hours later, Lianna joins you in the study. She has been twenty-six for three years now. "Was that Aunt El?"

"Yes," you say. You stand at the window with a glass in hand, the whiskey in it hardly touched. The worm of guilt writhes in your gut. "I can't help her, Lianna. She's not family, not really."

"There's news, Father," she says. "The trade expedition from Gallandar arrived a few hours ago. Rumor is they camped at a ruin a day out into the marsh. It was overgrown with skril."

You feel a tingle of excitement at the thought, followed by a sudden flash of dread. "You're not going..."

"I'm part of the crew, Father. They need me," she says. The sudden steel in her voice tells you she's been bracing for this confrontation. "Every marsh crew in the city will be going after this when they hear about it. We have a chance to beat them all to it and get a huge score. There will be enough to save Aunt El and set us up for decades."

"Every marsh crew," you echo, turning to face her. "Every one. That ruin will be a bloodbath, Lianna."

"Not if we get there first," she says. "We're faster than the others. We can be in, get the skril, and get out."

You tighten your hand on the glass, but she's right. Despite your concerns, Lianna is a good fighter and has been in the marsh many times. The potential windfall from this adventure is too good to pass up.

"Don't worry about me. You need to focus on the trade delegation. They're having a reception tonight and you need to be there to make a strong impression." Lianna smiles. "We can both do our job for this family."

"At least let me arrange a guild transmogrifier for your crew," you say. "I know people there, I can make sure you have all the transmogrification you need to succeed."

Lianna nods. "Be quick."

The transmuter's guild is bustling in the morning despite the snow. By the look of the rough folks around you suspect there's a number of marsh crews seeking urgent transmogrification. You use your noble status to get inside, then try to find someone who will do the work on short notice.

Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 9**.

Success? Turn to [56](#).

Failure? Turn to [42](#).

. 48 .

Your voice is strong and the crowd listens. Whether it's morbid curiosity or genuine interest you don't know, but you have your opportunity.

You weave a tale of humble beginnings, of a childhood lost to circumstance. You paint the picture of a gentleman rogue and his daughter, never given a fair chance, here at the gallows at the mercy of the cold, callous Arro Metiri and his cruel designs. You only ever tried to look out for your family. Who can't relate to that?

The crowd is swayed by your charm, and they turn ugly at any attempt to proceed with the execution. Angry jeers and thrown objects force the Conclave to abandon the attempt, and only a promise by the Arbiter to look into Arro's activities manages to bring the tension down to a simmer.

Following a lengthy investigation, it's you who watch from the crowd as Arro Metiri swings from the Justiciar's Arch. You are gifted his holdings as recompense for your troubles. **[WEALTH +14]**

Do you have 16 **WEALTH**?

Yes? Turn to [100](#).

No? Turn to [99](#).

49

You approach a slight woman with a necklace that gleams with dozens of sapphires. She tilts her head owlishly at your direct approach and sidesteps your attempts at negotiation. Almost immediately, you get the sense that she's unimpressed with your boldness.

You shift your focus to a golden-haired lady in a dress festooned with chiffon roses. She's more receptive to your approach, but her playful manner sidetracks your conversation. By the time she leads you to the head table, Arro Metiri is already speaking with them.

"Oh, Lord Barrost," Arro says off-handedly. "I'm glad to see you could escape your creditors to be here tonight."

You lean towards the Gallandar ladies. "I apologize for my compeer. He may not look it, but Lord Metiri is advanced in age and gets confused. My house's finances are quite sound."

Your barb earns a faint smile from one of the ladies, and a roll of the eyes from your rival. "Please, Lord Barrost," he says, his voice soft and cloying. "You don't need to sling baseless accusations. It's beneath you. I'm sure the delegation will choose whomever they feel is the best match to their priorities."

Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 10**.

Success? Turn to [63](#).

Failure? Turn to [54](#).

50

Twenty years pass. You remain thirty-four.

If you are **FANCY**, remove it from your sheet. Styles change.

You feel the tickle in your spine sooner now. The sempiternum can only hold back your years for eleven months. The cost will continue to double every twenty years or so. **[WEALTH -4]**

If **CONTROL**, **RESPECT**, or **WEALTH** is zero or lower, your time in Glossmire has come to an end. Arro Metiri makes his move and you haven't the resources to repel him.

"Cold this morning, isn't it?"

You kick the snow off your boots as you enter the workshop. The smith nearly spills his soup as he stands quickly, startled at your arrival. "We're not open." His eyes widen as he recognizes you, and holds up a hand as if he could snatch back his words.

"You're never closed to me," you say, brushing the powdered snow from your jacket's shoulders. Lianna steps in behind you, clad in leather armor and holding a crossbow. She's been twenty-six for three years now.

"N-no," the smith stammers. "Course not. H-how can I help?"

"That's better," you say, picking up a horseshoe. You turn it in your hands, letting the moment linger. "I'm told you had some guests late last night."

"Knights of Gallandar," the smith says, nearly stumbling over his words as he hurries to divulge them. "The trade delegation. They say they found a ruin just choked with skril out in the marsh."

You twirl the horseshoe in your fingers. "Who did you send your boy to tell?"

Outside in Shiv Lane a wagon creaks as it crunches through the snow's icy crust. The only sound in the workshop is the fearful breathing of the blacksmith as he realizes his mistake. "I... I should have told you first, of course. I didn't send him, he went on his own..." His voice trails off as Lianna levels her crossbow.

You hold the horseshoe in your hand like a pair of horns. "You should have told me first. That's the agreement." You step closer. "And now Lord Metiri knows about this ruin. Do you think that's fair?"

"No," he breathes, barely more than a whisper.

The tension stretches so far it's nearly unbearable. At last you shake your head and Lianna lowers her crossbow. "You can thank the Pale Sister I'm in a merciful mood today," you say, raising the horseshoe.

Minutes later you step back out into the peaceful snow and begin to walk back towards Crown Square. "Lianna, let our crew know they'll be going out. I trust you to accompany them," you say.

Your daughter has an eager smile. "This will be a great score," she says. "Are you going to deal with the trade delegation? There's a reception this evening, they'll talk to all the nobles. Arro will be there."

You frown. "I'll need time to prepare. They'll only let respectable folk inside, and I don't always fit that bill. First, I'll get a guild crafter for the marsh run."

Lianna nods. "Be quick."

The guild is bustling in the morning despite the snow. By the look of the rough folks around you suspect there's a number of marsh crews seeking urgent transmogrification. You use your noble status to get inside, then try to find someone who will do the work on short notice.

Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 9**.

Success? Turn to [56](#).

Failure? Turn to [42](#).

51

You try to stay patient. Other marsh crews trickle back in, many of them decimated. You seek out the survivors and hear tales of the slaughter in the marsh, of vicious battles between crews, of terrible beasts drawn by the bloodshed.

After a month, you finally give up hope. Your daughter and crew are lost to the marsh.

Are you **ALOOF**? Turn to [66](#).

If not, the years march ever onwards. Do you have **8 WEALTH**?

Yes? Turn to [60](#).

No? Turn to [99](#).

. 52 .

"What will your fellows say when they hear you've shirked your duty?" You fold your arms. Arro's smile widens. "It's sad, Vendro. You jump whenever the Arbiter calls like some eager puppy." He turns, beginning to walk away. "Some of us have actual businesses to run."

"We're saving lives, Arro," you say. "Are you really going to leave the people of Cairnsmoke without your aid?"

"I'm sure you'll do enough for the both of us," he says. He doesn't stop walking.

You shake your head and keep moving. **[RESPECT +1]**

Turn to [43](#).

. 53 .

The walk back to Tarncroft Hill gives you time to think. It's peaceful here as you walk the curving street, the snow drifting down, your boots crunching through the icy crust. Your thoughts turn to Lianna, who is surely facing the same snow, but out in the mire where a misstep could send one into the murk. Where the white blanket could hide a hungry crocogaunt. You know her quality as a warrior, but that doesn't make it any easier. It's a father's duty to worry.

You shake the snow from your cloak as you step through the door. Your valet takes your cloak and hangs it while you remove your boots, feeling the tingle of warmth return to your fingers and toes.

"Thank you, Raul," you say.

Your valet stiffens. "Raul was my father, sir."

"Tem, sorry," you say. It seems like only yesterday that Raul was your valet, has it really been so long? You brush the snow from your hair. "Is there tea?"

"I'll have the cook prepare some and send it up to your study."

You nod, and settle in to wait. It'll be days yet before you know how Lianna and her crew fared in the marsh.

Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 9**. If you are **UNPREPARED**, reduce your total by 2.

Success? Turn to [45](#).

Failure, but made 7? Turn to [58](#).

Failure? Turn to [51](#).

54

Over the course of the negotiation your temper gets the better of you. Arro's incessant barbs and his soft, mild voice drive you to rash, impulsive remarks. When the deal is finally struck you are part of it, but the Metiri house will profit far more. You leave the party, grinding your teeth. **[CONTROL -1, WEALTH +3]**

Turn to [53](#).

55

"Lord Metiri, it's so good to see you," you say as you draw near with a big smile. "I do hope your physiker was able to cure that contagious rash? You did inform the lady before kissing her hand, I trust?"

The hook-nosed woman stiffens and takes a half step back. "Lord Barrost, you've been misinformed, as usual," your rival says with a dismissive tone.

"Not cured, then? My lady, we should remain at a safe distance," you say, leading her away from the sputtering Arro.

Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 9**.

Success? Turn to [65](#).

Failure? Turn to [31](#).

56

"Where's the lodge?" The guildcrafter trudges through the snow with a heavy bag. You carry the other one.

"Cairns smoke," you say. "Just off Crown Square."

"You mean Karns smoke?" He squints at you.

"Yeah." Who decided to start calling it Karns smoke, you have no idea. Cairns smoke was a name that made sense; the district has great stone cairns where peat is dried. Karns smoke's just a made-up word.

The lodge is bustling with activity when you arrive. A brute of a man in leather armor is packing rations into a miresled out front. You brush off the snow as you cross the threshold and see Lianna honing the tip of her spear. She grins as she spots you.

"Come to see us off, Father?"

The transmogrifier begins to set up his equipment. You step closer to Lianna and put a hand on her shoulder. "Be careful out there," you say.

"You worry too much."

"I'm serious. The other crews won't be far behind, and the marsh is dangerous." You squeeze her shoulder.

She lowers her spear and gives you a flat look. "I'm not a child anymore, Father. I know what I'm doing."

You smile despite yourself, and wrap her in a tight embrace. You wonder if it might be the last time. As you leave, you remain stoic, heading to prepare for the evening's reception.

Smoke rises in tendrils towards the sky as every hearth is lit in Eavecrust. You pass four men pushing a trapped wagon on the rise, their grunts muffled by the falling snow. Frost lines the windows of the fancy shops where assistants are busy clearing entrances, using shovels ill-suited to the task. Your crowns are cool in your hand as you cross the threshold. You may spend **1 WEALTH** to gain **1 RESPECT**.

You know Gallandar puts great stock in dramatic heroism. There is a culture of noble knights and beautiful ladies, of stirring stories and bravery. You commission an outfit in regal blue with silver trim with a matching cape, and arrange a suitable entrance. **[CONTROL +1, RESPECT +1]**

The Gallandar expedition has the use of a hall in Pentower, a gift from the Conclave to help foster trade relations. The falling snow does nothing to deter the arrival of the nobility, eager to secure trade for the wealth of their houses. Your arrival draws eyes, with two white stags pulling an ornate sled. As you cross the threshold into the building, the ripple of conversation follows.

Is your **RESPECT**:

3 or lower? Turn to [24](#).

Between 4 and 8? Turn to [36](#).

9 or higher? Turn to [57](#).

57

The hall is well-appointed in Gallandar style, with crested pennants adorning each wall. Knights, steel plates polished to a mirror shine, make Glossmire's soldiers look like toys. These warrior-heroes are the muscle of Gallandar, while the women in fine gowns circulating throughout the room are the mind. You notice three ladies in a place of prominence, the leaders of the delegation. All three are watching your entrance with great interest.

The strings of a lyre fill the hall with soothing music, a soft undercurrent to the murmured conversations. You see Arro Metiri standing to the side, speaking with a hook-nosed woman in purple and gold. They both look in your direction and frown.

You aren't here to deal with your rival, you're here to make a deal. Gallandar's custom dictates that you can't just approach the head table without an invitation to speak. Before you can choose someone to speak with, a lady in blue appears beside you.

"The leaders wish to speak with you, Lord Barrost," she says. "Follow me."

You take petty pleasure in the look on Arro's face as you're led right up to the head table, where the blue-clad lady presents you. "This is Lord Barrost," she says. "I present a worthy adversary on the field of negotiation."

"We know of him," the lady in red says, focusing keenly on you. "His mettle will be tested."

It becomes clear that the negotiations are a formality. Your reputation has preceded you as a noble and a businessman, and your quality is known. You make a deal that will set your family up very well for a long while. **[CONTROL +2, RESPECT +2, WEALTH +6]**

Turn to [53](#).

58

Tem rouses you when Lianna's crew returns. You dress quickly and brave the snowfall to reach Karnsmoke, where the crew's hall is muted and somber. Less than half the crew made it back after a fight with another crew. Lianna lives, wounded, but whole.

The crew found a small amount of skril on the way back to Glossmire. Not the bounty they sought, but enough to make the sacrifices worthwhile. **[WEALTH +3]**

Are you **ALOOF**? Turn to [66](#).

If not, the years march ever onwards. Do you have **8 WEALTH**?

Yes? Turn to [70](#).

No? Turn to [99](#).

59

Your voice is strong and the crowd listens. Whether it's morbid curiosity or genuine interest you don't know, but you have your opportunity.

You weave a tale of grand betrayal, of machinations to paint you and your daughter with these crimes, all orchestrated by Arro Metiri. You watch Arro try to silence you, try to force the execution to hurry, but you have the ear of the crowd and the Conclave won't pull the lever without letting you speak your piece.

You aren't glib enough to save yourself; the crowd knows the kind of person you are, and even you can't weasel out of the consequences of your actions. You shift tack, painting Lianna's involvement as that of a doting daughter, in over her head to try and save her foolish father. Of Arro's attempt to stamp out the last of your line so he can seize your holdings.

The noose is removed from Lianna's neck. You swing from the Justiciar's arch, knowing you did enough to save your daughter, and perhaps sowed the seeds of Arro's eventual downfall. It's up to Lianna to carry the torch now.

END

60

Twenty years pass. You remain thirty-four.

The tickle in your spine comes sooner every year. You take your sempiternum once every nine months now. **[WEALTH -8]**

If **CONTROL**, **RESPECT**, or **WEALTH** is zero or lower, your time in Glossmire has come to an end. Arro Metiri makes his move and you haven't the resources to repel him.

Life is hollow without Lianna. You know your house will end with you, and as each sempiternum gets closer together, your house's finances are growing dangerously thin. You resolve to enjoy the days you have left. Mark **BROKEN** on your sheet.

The second day of the Fellowship Gala starts late and with a hangover. You pour yourself a whiskey to cope, then put on clothes and wander the manor until you find a servant to fetch some pear juice and syrup to fortify your tonic. Slowly your senses return as other nobles emerge from various rooms in various states of dress.

Your headache gets worse as you see Arro Metiri. He stands in the gallery, sipping coffee as he waits for you. He closes the distance before you can choose another route.

"Lord Barrost, I need your help."

You squint in suspicion. "It's far too early for your trickery."

"It's the priest." Arro's voice is low and urgent. "I made a move and it went badly. He's going to march to the Spire next week and make demands of the Arbiter."

Your fingers tighten on your whiskey glass. "What did you do?"

"It doesn't-"

"Speak, Arro," you hiss. "What did you do?"

"I tried to have him killed." Your rival lowers his gaze, staring into his coffee cup. "The assassin was caught."

A long sip of whiskey is all that stops you from throttling Arro in the gallery, even with all the disheveled nobles shambling about in various states of convalescence. You know the priest; the same who was rousing the downtrodden against the nobles for some grievance. Who now has proof of an attempted assassination, giving him legitimacy before the Arbiter.

"We all suffer, Vendro, if this priest gets his way. You know that."

"I want your warehouses in Dockside," you say.

"What? Which one?"

"All of them." You smile as Arro's jaw falls open. "If you want my help, that's my price. I deal with the priest, I get your warehouses."

For a moment, you think you've pushed him too far. It's gratifying to see Arro so flustered. Eventually, he lets out a long breath and clenches a fist. "Fine. I'll have the Conclave draft the documents when we're done."

Are you **ALOOF**? Turn to [79](#).

Are you **RUTHLESS**? Turn to [74](#).

Otherwise, turn to [80](#).

* 61 *

Your feud with Arro is well-known amongst the nobility. You come off as petty, and what you're claiming sounds like a desperate ploy rather than truth. The sad attempt of a diminished lord to sling mud at his better. **[RESPECT -2]**

Arro corners you near the gallery, his eyes narrowed. "Barrost," he says, his tone low and menacing. "What are you doing?"

"I know your secret," you say with a smile. You have the brief gratification of seeing Arro's eyes widen. "I know," you continue, "about your coerced refugee marsh crews. The people you're holding hostage. And everyone here will know it too."

A patronizing look flickers across Arro's face. He steps a little closer and touches a hand to your cheek. "Oh," he says, his voice soft. "I thought you knew something more consequential than that, Vendro. Tell everyone about my marsh crews, by all means." He pats you on the cheek, then turns to walk away.

If you are **VIRTUOUS**, turn to [8](#).

Otherwise, turn to [39](#).

* 62 *

The crowd flitters away after the speech, seeking various Emberfeast debaucheries. You linger, waiting for the priest to finish with his more persistent admirers. You meet him at the edge of the square. His wild eyes cut through you as you draw near. "Lord Barrost," he says. "I thought I saw you in the crowd."

"We have much to discuss," you say.

You speak for an hour, discussing the issues. It becomes clear that the priest is a true believer, a priest of the Fair Sister, who won't be swayed with money or vice.

RESPECT 4 or lower?

You aren't able to sway the priest in any appreciable way. He proclaims your reputation is so tarnished that only a fool would take your word. You decide to take care of some business while you plan your next move. Turn to [85](#).

RESPECT 5 – 9?

Your words convey genuine care for Glossmire, and you're known as a gentleman of some integrity. The priest considers your words, and whether or not an alliance can be struck.

Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 9**.

Success? Turn to [96](#).

Failure? The priest doesn't trust you. You decide to take care of some business while you plan your next move. Turn to [85](#).

RESPECT 10 or higher?

You are known as a man of integrity and honor in Glossmire and are able to sway the priest. Turn to [96](#).

* 63 *

You focus on the negotiations and ignore your rivals' incessant barbs. Your lack of reaction seems to incense him more than if you engaged, and you manage to outmaneuver him in the negotiations. When you leave, you've secured a lucrative trade deal for your house, and left Arro with only scraps.

[CONTROL +2, RESPECT +1, WEALTH +6]

Turn to [53](#).

64

You follow the thread to its conclusion and uncover a plot to assassinate the Arbiter. Your dock is being used to bring skril into the city, bypassing the guild and the marsh runners to get it directly into the hands of black market transmogrifiers. The crafted assassins will strike on the last night of Emberfeast.

This is valuable information, and the Arbiter would pay well for it. Explaining how you came by this information would be difficult, however, and your involvement in smuggling might come to light during the investigation. You might also work with the dissidents and help facilitate the plot. You could benefit from this too.

Warn the Arbiter? Mark **VIRTUOUS** on your sheet and turn to [33](#).

Help with the plot? Mark **TENSE** on your sheet, remove **CRITICAL**, and turn to [33](#).

65

The hook-nosed woman curls her lip as your dishonorable tactics, but you manage to smooth over the issue and win her over. She leads you to the table while Arro watches, seething.

"This is Lord Barrost," she says in a formal tone. "I present a worthy adversary on the field of negotiation. May the words be sharp and the minds sharper."

The three ladies regard you with a measuring look. "We shall test him," the middle one says.

The negotiations take some time but you find favorable terms. You are able to strike a deal that will be of tremendous benefit to your house. On top of that, you kept Arro entirely out of it. **[CONTROL +2, RESPECT +2, WEALTH +6]**

Turn to [70](#).

66

Eleanor's epiphany is held one quiet morning in her manor's courtyard. The casket is closed, as is customary, with the wooden lid carved in her likeness. There are very few people in attendance, and none who recall seeing her before her sempiternums. You speak a few words to the gathering, remembering Eleanor's wit and her valued counsel.

Her creditors are already packing things up as the epiphany concludes. You speak quietly with Luther as you leave. It was a shame how it happened, you both agree. You wish there was more you could have done. She always did love the snow.

The years march ever onwards. Do you have **8 WEALTH**?

Yes? Turn to [70](#).

No? Turn to [99](#).

The Arbiter herself meets you at your manor on Tarncroft Hill. She leaves her entourage of soldiers at the door. She looks imperious as ever, her maroon robe fastened with her brooch of office, her face hidden behind the gold mask with the face of the First. You pour whiskey for yourself, then offer one to her with a smirk.

"This is not a social call," she says. "I will be succinct. We have your daughter."

You sip your whiskey to hide your reaction. "Why?"

"She tried to assassinate the priest."

You tilt your head, trying to read the woman. Is she lying? It's hard to tell with the mask, but you don't get the sense of a bluff. You wonder how Arro Metiri tricked your daughter into doing something so foolish. It's likely Arro meant to use her to point the blame at you.

"Lord Barrost, this business in Karnsmoke must stop. Do so, and I will release your daughter."

You take another sip, considering the offer. "You realize Lord Metiri was the one who sent the assassin, right? I want recompense for my trouble."

For a moment, the Arbiter is silent. Then she nods. "Very well. You will be compensated," she says.

Arro must have planned to betray you, but you've turned the situation to your advantage. You graciously accept Lord Metiri's financial apology and public reprimand. **[WEALTH +6]**

Do you have **16 WEALTH**?

Yes? Turn to [100](#).

No? Turn to [99](#).

The mood in Karnsmoke is taut with simmering anger. You've worn a drab coat and plain attire but your noble bearing is evident for those looking close. The smell of peat smoke is thick in the air as you approach the gathered crowd near where the priest is speaking.

"How many more lives must be snuffed out in the mire before we say enough?" He stands atop a wagon, wearing tattered brown robes, with a thick black beard and wild eyes. "How many crowns and bits is a son or daughter worth?" There's a ripple through the crowd, angry murmurs. A woman wails in sorrow.

"The Fair Sister weeps to see her children treated so. The nobles of this city are meant to lead, are meant to set an example for us all to follow. To use their wealth for the betterment of Glossmire. To safeguard its people." He pauses, hands held out to encompass the crowd. "Instead they scatter crumbs from their table and expect gratitude. They expect us to throw ourselves into the marsh in pursuit of skril for copper bits, knowing that if we don't go our neighbor will, and we'll starve for our caution."

Are you **BROKEN**? Turn to [91](#).

Talk to the priest? Turn to [62](#).

You furnish Eleanor with enough money to get through her current troubles. She is pathetic in her gratitude. She makes empty promises to repay you and takes her leave. **[WEALTH -4]**

Hours later, Lianna joins you in the study. She has been twenty-six for three years now. "Was that Aunt El?"

"It was." You sip your whiskey.

"There's news, Father," she says. "The trade expedition from Gallandar arrived a few hours ago. Rumor is they camped at a ruin a day out into the marsh. It was overgrown with skril."

You feel a tingle of excitement at the thought, followed by a sudden flash of dread. "You're not going..."

"I'm part of the crew, Father. They need me," she says. The sudden steel in her voice tells you she's been bracing for this confrontation. "Every marsh crew in the city will be going after this when they hear about it. We have a chance to beat them all to it and get a huge score."

"Every marsh crew," you echo, turning to face her. "Every one. That ruin will be a bloodbath, Lianna."

"Not if we get there first," she says. "We're faster than the others. We can be in, get the skril, and get out."

You tighten your hand on the glass, but she's right. Despite your concerns, Lianna is a good fighter and has been in the marsh many times. The potential windfall from this adventure is too good to pass up.

"Don't worry about me. You need to focus on the trade delegation. They're having a reception tonight and you need to be there to make a strong impression." Lianna smiles. "We can both do our job for this family."

"At least let me arrange a guild transmogrifier for your crew," you say. "I know people there, I can make sure you have all the transmogrification you need to succeed."

Lianna nods. "Be quick."

The transmuter's guild is bustling in the morning despite the snow. By the look of the rough folks around you suspect there's a number of marsh crews seeking urgent transmogrification. You use your noble status to get inside, then try to find someone who will do the work on short notice.

Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 9**.

Success? Turn to [56](#).

Failure? Turn to [42](#).

Twenty years pass. You remain thirty-four.

The tickle in your spine comes sooner every year. You take your sempiternum once every nine months now. **[WEALTH -8]**

If **CONTROL**, **RESPECT**, or **WEALTH** is zero or lower, your time in Glossmire has come to an end. Arro Metiri makes his move and you haven't the resources to repel him.

The second day of the Fellowship Gala starts late and with a hangover. You pour yourself a whiskey to cope, then put on clothes and wander the manor until you find a servant to fetch some pear juice and syrup to fortify your tonic. Slowly your senses return as other nobles emerge from various rooms in various states of dress.

Your headache gets worse as you see Arro Metiri. He stands in the gallery, sipping coffee as he waits for you. He closes the distance before you can choose another route.

"Lord Barrost, I need your help."

You squint in suspicion. "It's far too early for your trickery."

"It's the priest." Arro's voice is low and urgent. "I made a move and it went badly. He's going to march to the Spire next week and make demands of the Arbiter."

Your fingers tighten on your whiskey glass. "What did you do?"

"It doesn't-"

"Speak, Arro," you hiss. "What did you do?"

"I tried to have him killed." Your rival lowers his gaze, staring into his coffee cup. "The assassin was caught."

A long sip of whiskey is all that stops you from throttling Arro in the gallery, even with all the disheveled nobles shambling about in various states of convalescence. You know the priest; the same who was rousing the downtrodden against the nobles for some grievance. Who now has proof of an attempted assassination, giving him legitimacy before the Arbiter.

"We all suffer, Vendro, if this priest gets his way. You know that."

"I want your warehouses in Dockside," you say.

"What? Which one?"

"All of them." You smile as Arro's jaw falls open. "If you want my help, that's my price. I deal with the priest, I get your warehouses."

For a moment, you think you've pushed him too far. It's gratifying to see Arro so flustered. Eventually, he lets out a long breath and clenches a fist. "Fine. I'll have the Conclave draft the documents when we're done."

Are you **ALOOF**? Turn to [79](#).

Are you **RUTHLESS**? Turn to [74](#).

Otherwise, turn to [80](#).

71

A quick elbow to the face surprises one of Arro's thugs, and before the other can react you're sprinting down the alley. They clearly didn't expect so much fight from you or you'd be dead.

You keep a sharp eye out as you follow the broad boulevard all the way to the Spire, past the crowded coffeeshouses with diligent Conclave scribes. Inside, the Spire is cold and stately in black marble and gold. You don't let anyone stop you on your way to the Arbiter's office at the top.

She looks up from her desk, clad in a maroon robe with the brooch of office pinned at her shoulder. Her gold mask, set with the face of the First, regards you coolly as you approach her desk. The official seal of the Arbiter is wrought in gold above her head on the back of her tall chair.

"Lord Barrost, this is unexpected," she says mildly.

"We need to speak," you say, offering a quick, stiff bow. "Privately."

After a moment's hesitation she waves a hand, and her maroon-clad scribes leave the room. You tell her about the situation.

Are you **TENSE**? Turn to [83](#).

Otherwise, turn to [98](#).

72

Glossmire loves a good story, and you know just how to spin one. You craft a tale of deceit and espionage, where the priest is a foreign Capa cast out from Dal Corso, trying to weaken his enemies to win back the woman who stole his power. You send your agents into every district, varying the details enough for the tale to be convincing gossip, and watch it spread through the city.

Days later, the priest's crowds have a different tenor. Some are still enthralled by his message, but others shout jeers and throw swamp apples. Brawls in the crowd are frequent, and the crowds grow smaller by the day.

As you leave one of the rallies a familiar marsh runner slams into you. "You're Lianna's father," he says. It's not a question. "Aren't you going to do something?"

"About what?" you ask, narrowing your eyes.

"I thought you knew things," he growls. "She's in the dungeon."

Turn to [94](#).

73

The Arbiter summons you to her office to discuss a truce. She sits in her tall chair, her face hidden by her gold mask, her desk carefully clear of papers.

"We have your daughter in custody," she says.

"Is that so?" you say mildly. "On what charge?"

"She tried to assassinate the priest."

You tilt your head, trying to read the woman. Is she lying? It's hard to tell with the mask, but you don't get the sense of a bluff. You wonder how Arro Metiri tricked your daughter into doing something so foolish. It's likely Arro meant to use her to point the blame at you.

The Arbiter continues. "Cease your activities in Karnsmoke and she goes free. There won't be a better deal, Lord Barrost."

You accept the terms. Your position is not so strong you can hold out for more. You ensure Arro feels your irritation at his scheming by stealing some of his things. **[WEALTH +2]**

Do you have **16 WEALTH**?

Yes? Turn to [100](#).

No? Turn to [99](#).

All throughout Glossmire hang Emberfeast banners, commemorating that great fire that ravaged the city all those years ago. You wonder how many of those running past with sparkers in hand were there for it. How many, enjoying the music in the streets of Karnsmoke, recall the cost in lives?

There's an anger here too. For every reveler dancing to the fiddles, another sits in sullen silence, sipping from crude clay mugs. Watching any who pass this way with finery, primed to violence by the priest's honeyed words.

You meet with your lieutenants to discuss strategy. Lianna is absent, which is irksome, but your daughter always was headstrong. AT the end of a spirited discussion there are two avenues before you; go after the priest directly, or make it dangerous to be his follower. Both have merits, both have risks.

Go after the priest? Turn to [87](#).

Harass the followers? Turn to [84](#).

"You owe me," you say. "All these years I've asked for very little. This is my price."

The Arbiter is silent behind her mask, her mood inscrutable. She glances down at her papers, shifting a few of them on her desk. "What you ask will upset a great many things."

"I sympathize," you say. "But I must insist. Arro Metiri is dangerous and must be arrested." You lean forward, fingers steeped. "I keep detailed records."

The Arbiter's fingers press hard on her desk. "I see," she says, her voice mild. "I'll detain Lord Metiri for questioning. My finger will be on the scales, Lord Barrost. Justice will be served, but it will take time."

"I'm glad we could be of service to one another," you say smoothly, rising. You don't wait to be dismissed.

In the aftermath, the barristers do find their proof and Arro is kept in the dungeon for a significant length of time. You receive several of his holdings as reparations for his attempt on your life.
[WEALTH +10]

Do you have **16 WEALTH**?

Yes? Turn to [100](#).

No? Turn to [99](#).

It's infuriating to watch Arro descend the stairs into the ballroom, his beautiful wife on his arm, exchanging pleasant greetings with the other nobles. How the others can't see past the façade is beyond you. Arro Metiri has always been a cowardly coxcomb.

You relax your white-knuckled grip on your tumbler and force yourself to take a sip. Your rival glances in your direction. Parting from his wife, he approaches.

"Vendro, you look vexed. What's wrong?"

"The company," you say with a flat look. "I see they'll let just anyone in these days."

Arro puts a hand to his chest in feigned offence. "Oh! Such words," he says. "Hurtful, Vendro."

"I know what you're doing in Cairnsmoke, Arro. With the refugees."

A slow smile crosses his lips. "Ah. That. Do you have any proof? Any evidence?" He takes a few steps towards the snack table while you stew in silence. "Ah, I didn't think so. Well, enjoy the ball, I'm sure there will be a few surprises for you."

If you are **VIRTUOUS**, turn to [8](#).

Otherwise, turn to [39](#).

It's a cold morning when they hang your daughter.

You never manage to get your revenge. Arro Metiri isn't tied to the assassination attempt, and none of your efforts uncover a concrete link. You petition the Arbiter until she bars you from the Spire. You fight until you haven't the strength for it anymore. The priest quietly goes away, and so do you.

You take a few more sempiternums out of habit, but you've stopped caring for your businesses or your holdings. Tem does what he can, but the money runs out and your cheated years catch up with you.

It's a mercy when it finally happens.

- END -

One of your agents finds the man who hired your daughter. You bring him before Conclave barristers, where his sworn testimony points directly to Arro Metiri as the one who set him to his task. Further witnesses are found who saw him meet your captive.

Your rival is arrested at the docks trying to board a ship. If there were any doubts of his guilt, his attempted flight erase them. The Conclave scribes set to work on Arro's estate, digging for evidence. It takes months to go through what they find.

In the aftermath, you are given several of Arro's holdings as a penalty for his attempts to frame you. **[WEALTH +8]**

Securing Lianna's release is much harder. Most of the blame falls on Arro's shoulders, but Lianna's role cannot be overlooked. She avoids the noose, but she serves five years for her part in the scheme. You manage to get her a cell with a window.

Do you have **16 WEALTH**?

Yes? Turn to [100](#).

No? Turn to [99](#).

79

You walk through the manor, nursing your whiskey while you consider the priest problem. There's a keen sense of loss as you think back to all the times you'd discuss problems like this with Eleanor. Even twenty years on it's sometimes hard to believe she's really gone.

Luther appears from a study, tugging his coat on. "Oh! Vendro," he says, straightening his lensed glasses. "How's your morning?"

"Troubled," you say. "Arro Metiri mired up that priest business and he wants me to fix it."

Luther takes off his coat and turns it the right way out before putting it back on. "You mean the priest who's been talking to marsh runners in Karnsmoke? That priest?"

"That one," you say. "Apparently he's going to march to the Spire in a week and demand changes."

"Huh," he says, adjusting his glasses again. "Do you think the Arbiter will listen?"

"There's a greater chance now," you say. "I don't know what Arro was thinking. I can still sort this out, but it will be challenging."

"Well," Luther says. "Let me know if I can help."

You consider staying at the gala to prepare your noble fellows for the idea. Alternatively, you could go to hear the priest speak and perhaps talk with him? Or will you focus on your house's finances to better prepare to weather the storm?

Stay at the gala? Turn to [92](#).

Go see the priest? Turn to [68](#).

Accrue wealth? Turn to [85](#).

80

You find Eleanor in the garden, looking much more put-together than most of the nobles. She nods at your approach. "You look troubled, Vendro."

"Arro Metiri stuck his nose into that priest business and has really mired things." You look around the garden at all the nobles gradually acclimatizing to the daylight once more. You can't remember when the Fellowship Gala became a two-day affair, but partying late into the night to do it again the next day has its disadvantages.

Eleanor follows your gaze. "Maybe the priest has a point," she muses. "Maybe we do need to be curtailed."

“Have you listened to what he says, this priest? I’ve only heard reports.”

A loud yelp and a splash introduce a foppish lord to the garden’s fountain. Eleanor has a fey smile as she turns to you. “It’s not revolutionary, what he’s saying,” she says. “The marsh crews are his biggest concern, the way they send people into the swamp and only half of them come back, day after day. All because the demand for skril is so high.” She tucks a strand of hair behind her ear. “Enforcing some sort of reasonable cost for skril would ruin many nobles. Myself included.”

You tilt your head. “And yet you sound sympathetic to his message.”

“I have lived a long time, Vendro.” Her voice is very soft. She doesn’t look it, but nobody does among Glossmire’s elite. “My sempiternums are weeks apart now. I could scrape and claw for more years but my time is coming, and I feel a great weight of guilt on my soul. How many people have died for me to live my centuries? Maybe the priest is right, and the cost is too great. Maybe I could leave a legacy, where Glossmire would be made better by my actions?”

You take a long sip from your whiskey, the burn soothed by the pear juice and syrup. You tip the glass back and take the last drops, then let it drop to the grass. “You would ruin all of us because of your guilt?”

“You feel it too, don’t you?” she says. “Deep down? That’s why you’re angry.”

You scowl. “It’s too early and I’m too hungover for this discussion,” you grumble. “We can talk to the priest and sort something out. A compromise, where the crews get something but the nobles aren’t ruined overnight.”

Eleanor sighs. “Perhaps it will be enough. I can talk to our peers and get them used to the idea. I’m sure you’ll be busy.” **[CONTROL +2]**

You leave Eleanor to her work while you make some choices. Will you go to hear the priest speak and perhaps talk with him? Or will you focus on your house’s finances to better prepare to weather the storm?

Go see the priest? Turn to [68](#).

Accrue wealth? Turn to [85](#).

* 81 *

A quick elbow to the face surprises one of Arro’s thugs, and before the other can react you’re sprinting down the alley. They clearly didn’t expect so much fight from you or you’d be dead.

You keep a sharp eye out as you follow the broad boulevard all the way to the Spire, past the crowded coffeehouses with diligent Conclave scribes. Inside, the Spire is cold and stately in black marble and gold. You don’t let anyone stop you on your way to the Arbiter’s office at the top.

She looks up from her desk, clad in a maroon robe with the brooch of office pinned at her shoulder. Her gold mask, set with the face of the First, regards you coolly as you approach her desk. The official seal of the Arbiter is wrought in gold above her head on the back of her tall chair.

“Lord Barrost, this is unexpected,” she says mildly.

“We need to speak,” you say, offering a quick, stiff bow. “Privately.”

After a moment’s hesitation she waves a hand, and her maroon-clad scribes leave the room. You tell her about the situation with Arro and your daughter. She listens, her brow furrowing with every word.

Are you **TENSE**? Turn to [83](#).

If not, turn to [98](#).

The people of Karnsmoke are in a frenzy by the time you finish. You aren't sure you can control what you've unleashed as screams for Arro's blood ring out through the lower market. More than a few people call out for the Arbiter's head alongside.

It takes a great deal of effort for Conclave to disperse the mob, but undercurrents of anger still course through the streets. The Arbiter is forced to take the accusations seriously. She directs her barristers to begin an investigation.

Your rival is arrested at the docks trying to board a ship. If there were any doubts of his guilt, his attempted flight erase them. The Conclave scribes set to work on Arro's estate, digging for evidence. It takes months to go through what they find.

In the aftermath, you are given several of Arro's holdings as a penalty for his attempts to frame you. **[WEALTH +8]**

Securing Lianna's release is much harder. Most of the blame falls on Arro's shoulders, but Lianna's role cannot be overlooked. She avoids the noose, but she serves five years for her part in the scheme. You manage to get her a cell with a window.

Do you have **16 WEALTH**?

Yes? Turn to [100](#).

No? Turn to [99](#).

"You owe me," you say. "All these years I've asked for very little. This is my price."

The Arbiter is silent behind her mask, her mood inscrutable. She glances down at her papers, shifting a few of them on her desk. "What you ask will upset a great many things."

"I sympathize," you say. "But I must insist. Arro Metiri is dangerous and must be arrested. My daughter must go free." You lean forward, fingers steepled. "I keep detailed records."

The Arbiter's fingers press hard on her desk. "I see," she says, her voice mild. "I'll detain Lord Metiri for questioning, and I'll begin an official review of your daughter's case. My finger will be on the scales, Lord Barrost. Rest assured she will be freed, but it will take time."

"I'm glad we could be of service to one another," you say smoothly, rising. You don't wait to be dismissed.

In the aftermath, the barristers do find their proof and Arro is kept in the dungeon for a significant length of time. You receive several of his holdings as reparations for his attempt on your life. **[WEALTH +10]**

In light of the clear manipulation of Arro Metiri, your daughter is released with all charges dropped.

Do you have **16 WEALTH**?

Yes? Turn to [100](#).

No? Turn to [99](#).

84

You don't have to go after the priest if you deal with his crowds. You set your followers in motion with orders to harass, threaten, or beat up those who are vocal in support of his message. A few marsh crews, the ones who bring fodder on their runs, join your efforts. Violence and tension ratchet up in Karnsmoke and throughout the city.

The priest tries to speak louder, tries to encourage his followers to stand tall in the face of oppression. The Conclave gets involved. Many of your toughs are captured or killed. Blood is spilled throughout Karnsmoke. Your name is whispered by many who fear your reprisal. You make sure to profit in the meantime. **[RESPECT -2, WEALTH +2]**

Is your **CONTROL**:

3 or lower? The Conclave doesn't fear you. You are arrested and hanged for inciting unrest across the whole district.

Between 4 and 6? Turn to [73](#).

7 or higher? Turn to [67](#).

85

The streets of Eavecrust are flanked with tasteful Emberfeast banners, hung carefully from the eponymous eaves, black cloth splashed with crimson. Many shops have tables out front with festival gifts. Conclave scribes stop any of insufficient caliber to browse.

A fashionable coat in the Gallandar style catches your eye. If you purchase it, mark **FANCY** on your sheet. **[RESPECT +1, WEALTH -1]**

You check in on a few business deals, follow up on some leads, and spend a few days laying the foundation for a profitable future. Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 8**.

Success? Your hard work has paid off. **[WEALTH +4]**

Failure? You need to pull favors to rescue a deal from disaster. **[CONTROL -2][WEALTH +2]**

In the aftermath, you hear that the priest has Karnsmoke in an uproar. The crowds demand to see the captive assassin hanged at Justiciar's Arch. You might be able to speak with the assassin in the Conclave cells and find out what he knows? Or you could try to spread some rumors in the crowds to undermine the priest?

Are you **BROKEN**? Turn to [88](#).

Meet the assassin? Turn to [94](#).

Spread rumors? Turn to [72](#).

* 86 *

The Arbiter keeps her word; your daughter doesn't swing from the Justiciar's Arch. Your agents continue to seek details of Arro's involvement, but with every passing day the trail grows colder. No proof is ever found.

You've done enough to forestall the priest's revolution. There is no march to the Spire, instead there are conversations about Glossmire and its future. Arro Metiri has an esteemed place at the table, while your house's diminished state sees you recused from the discussion.

Arro Metiri's stock has risen in Glossmire, and while you haven't gone away, your house is diminished and shamed. Lianna languishes in prison while you begin the work of decades to wipe the tarnish away.

Do you have **16 WEALTH**?

Yes? Turn to [100](#).

No? Turn to [99](#).

* 87 *

You plan the strike for nightfall. Your people tail him after one of his fiery speeches in Karnsmoke. They catch up near an alley, and if anybody sees what happens, they're smart enough to keep it to themselves. When a wagon dumps a few sacks of bad produce into the river later that night, nobody bats an eye.

The hard part will be managing the outcry in the aftermath. You choose a marsh crew who've been vocal opponents to the priest, the sort of crew who take fodder into the marsh to keep their skilled men safe. A believable scapegoat.

Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 9**.

Success? Turn to [90](#).

Failure? You can't control the response and the downtrodden rise up in a torrent of unrest. The Arbiter is eventually able to regain control of the city, but your house's finances are crippled in the struggle. You are one of many casualties as the priest gets his way even in death.

* 88 *

As you consider your next move you notice the fancy windows of an upscale dress shop, the finest in Eavecrust. A sudden, vivid memory bubbles to the surface of the only time you ever brought Lianna here. She was livid that you wanted to buy her a dress of any kind. A sad smile crosses your face at the memory.

Even twenty years on, you still feel her loss keenly.

You don't feel much like delving into the dungeons, so instead you begin to spread rumors to undermine the priest. You craft a tale of deceit and espionage, where the priest is a foreign Capa cast out from Dal Corso, trying to weaken his enemies to win back the woman who stole his power. You send your agents into every district, varying the details enough for the tale to be convincing gossip, and watch it spread through the city.

Days later, the priest's crowds have a different tenor. Some are still enthralled by his message, but others shout jeers and throw swamp apples. Brawls in the crowd are frequent, and the crowds grow smaller by the day.

It's while you're sowing rumors in Karnsmoke that you end up in an alley with a pair of toughs following close behind. You're busy trying to avoid them when you round a corner and meet Arro Metiri, with two additional thugs.

"Your rumor campaign has been quite effective, Vendro," your rival says in a soft voice. "It doesn't feel sporting to end things like this, but I can't have you talking about my attempts to solve the problem."

"Your warehouses were payment for my silence," you growl.

"Well, I can't lose those either. Sorry."

Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 10**.

Success? Turn to [71](#).

Failure? You try to escape, but you can't get past Arro's toughs. They stab you until you stop moving.

* 89 *

You should have known better than to trust a snake like Arro Metiri. With every new chance he shows his true nature; treachery and cowardice. And now your daughter's life hangs in the balance, depending on you to find proof of Arro's misdeeds.

Tem, your valet, gathers your retainers. You send them to Arro's holdings, to shake down his acquaintances, to find any proof of his scheming. Witnesses or documents or a distinctive cloak, you know there will be something, you just need it found. Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 9**.

Success? Turn to [78](#).

Failure? The search comes up dry. Every lead comes up short, every witness can't recall any details. You can piece together the hiring of the assassin, but you can't prove any evidence of Arro's involvement.

Are you **PARDONED**? Turn to [86](#).

If not, turn to [77](#).

* 90 *

You pin the deed on one of the marsh crews who've crossed you in the past. A fabricated story about jealousy that a rival crew would get more favorable terms, and a juicy bit of carnal infidelity was all it took to have the masses hooked.

It's a surprise when the Conclave scribes come with a warrant for your arrest. Your protests fall on deaf ears as you're ensconced in the dungeon, away from other prisoners. This wing is reserved for

those meant to disappear quietly. Arro's assassin is the only other guest, turned away from you in the next cell.

"Hello Father," she says.

You stare in disbelief at your daughter, and suddenly you realize the extent of Arro's machinations. He has you stitched up well; you and your daughter both guilty of the same crime. You'll both hang for this unless you can conjure up some miracle. You lean back against your cell's wall and give a bitter laugh.

Lianna frowns. "Good to see you too, Father."

"I can't believe Arro's going to get away with this," you say. "That deficient worm. He won."

"It's not over yet," she says.

"Isn't it? What options do we have, daughter? You and I are both imprisoned, and there's enough evidence to tie us to the crime."

You languish for a week before your hanging. Long enough for Arro to prime the crowd of Glossmire for your impending demise. His people prepare you both to look the part of villains, dressing you in finery and applying makeup. You are paraded out onto the scaffold beneath the Justiciar's Arch to a chorus of derision from the assembled crowd.

You have one final moment as the noose is fitted around your neck to sway the crowd against Arro Metiri. To lay bare his crimes and diminish your own.

Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 12**. If you spend your last point of **RESPECT**, this counts as a failure.

Success? Turn to [48](#).

Failure, but made 10? Turn to [59](#).

Failure? Your words are met with jeers and fall entirely on deaf ears. You hang with Lianna to the roar of the crowd.

91

The priest's words find fertile ground in your soul. It's been twenty years, yet Lianna's loss still feels fresh. You linger after the priest finishes speaking and manage to catch up to him.

You pledge your support for his cause and put your family's resources behind him. It feels like the only way you can do right by Lianna is to ensure other sons and daughters don't suffer the same fate. A small, petty part of you enjoys that this will ruin Arro Metiri at the same time.

It takes time, but the Arbiter passes legislation forcing fair compensation for the marsh crews work and sets minimum pricing for skril. Noble families, already stretched to a point they cannot afford to pay, are ruined overnight.

You are among them, but you pass with a smile on your face and the knowledge that you left Glossmire in a better state with your actions.

— END —

The rest of the Fellowship Gala is a blur as you circulate through the crowd, talking to your peers. You try to plant the seeds of compromise, knowing that the priest won't go away without concessions.

RESPECT 3 or lower?

The other nobles hold you in so little esteem they barely pause to exchange words with you. Your entreaties get you nowhere, and seeing you in such a state alienates some of the allies you still have. **[CONTROL -2]**

You leave the gala. You could go listen to the priest, perhaps even talk to him. You'll also need to shore up your finances, especially in light of the forthcoming.

Go see the priest? Turn to [68](#).

Accrue wealth? Turn to [85](#).

RESPECT 4 – 8?

They listen, but raise pointed questions. They articulate the arguments you might have made decades ago, that only a fool gives away their power. Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 9**.

Success? Your noble peers are receptive to your message, and a few will actively aid you in this.

[CONTROL +2]

Failure? You fail to make much headway with your peers. You could go listen to the priest, perhaps even talk to him. You'll also need to shore up your finances, especially in light of the forthcoming.

Go see the priest? Turn to [68](#).

Accrue wealth? Turn to [85](#).

RESPECT 9 or higher?

When you speak, people listen. You plant the seeds in the ears of your noble peers. They are receptive to your message, and a few will actively aid you in this. **[CONTROL +2]**

Go see the priest? Turn to [68](#).

Accrue wealth? Turn to [85](#).

Karnsmoke is a cauldron ready to bubble over. You breathe deep the tang of peat as you climb onto a cart in the lower market. There in your finery you draw attention, but when you begin to shout people stop to listen.

"Bright Emberfeast!" you bellow. "I am Vendro Barrost, a lord of Glossmire." Various jeers. "For too long we have held tight the wealth of this city in our fists, without care for our obligation to enrich every citizen, every district. Our obligation to serve, to make Glossmire better, to steward it to a brighter age."

There's a murmur in the crowd. Exchanged glances, shrugs, and more people stopping to listen.

“There is one lord who seeks only to take. Who tried, days ago, to assassinate the priest who calls for change. Who would take food, land, and shelter from each of you if he could get away with it. I speak of the Dog of Dockside, Lord Arro Metiri.”

The name earns a chorus of jeers and a spirited round of cursing. You hold up your hand dramatically as you continue. “The Arbiter shelters him. The weasel has gifted just enough to her coffers that she won’t hold him accountable. We must cry out against his misdeeds and make the Arbiter enact justice upon him.”

Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 10**.

Success? Turn to [82](#).

Failure? The mood grows ugly, and the calls for justice turn to calls for blood. Karnsmoke is where it starts, but the violent uprising courses through the city. You are its first casualty, but certainly not its last.

94

It takes time to convince the Conclave scribes to let you see the prisoner. The dungeon is dark and the assassin is kept in an isolated cell, away from others. They tell you she’s dangerous, even unarmed.

They admit you to the wing and lock the door behind you. Reaching the cell you see a figure curled up on the bed, facing away from you. Even from behind, you recognize her immediately. She turns to look. “Father?”

You feel your heart sink. “Lianna,” you say. Your mouth is so dry you can hardly speak. “Why?”

She closes her eyes and leans back against the cell wall. Her voice is strained and small. “The priest was going after our way of life. The marsh running, the sempiternum, all of it.” She takes a breath, then lets it out. “He offered a lot of crowns, too.”

You feel an ugly spike of anger. “Why would you take up cause with Arro?” you ask, your voice trembling.

“No,” she says, looking over sharply. “I didn’t. I would never do that.”

“He’s the one who hired you.”

Lianna grits her teeth. Shame and anger war on her face. “I don’t believe it,” she breathes, rising from the bench. She prowls in her cell like a caged predator. “That gods-damned weasel. I don’t believe it. Father, please, I never would have taken the job if I’d known, you have to trust me.”

“I know,” you say, leaning against the bars. “I’m going to sort this out.”

“I don’t think anyone has recognized me yet,” she says. “They haven’t brought me to see anyone important. But once they do they’ll think you’re behind this, Father.”

You frown. “They’re going to hang you, Lianna.”

She snorts. “I’d like to see them try.”

“I need to think,” you say, pacing back and forth. It’s clear that Arro Metiri lied to you. There’s no way he hired your daughter as an assassin by accident. It’s likely he plans to frame you for the attempted murder, which means he always planned to betray you.

Only the Arbiter could give the order to let your daughter go free. You have no evidence of Arro’s involvement, so shifting blame to him is nigh impossible. Unless you could find some proof?

See the Arbiter? Turn to [97](#).

Investigate Arro? Turn to [89](#).

The Arbiter's mask gives nothing away. She is silent for a moment, her gaze towards her windows. When she speaks, her voice is tight. "Arro Metiri has been very generous towards Glossmire's coffers over the years," she says. "These accusations are serious, but due process must be followed."

"He tried to kill me in an alley," you growl. "What if he tries again?"

"You have household guards, Lord Barrost. Use them." She rises from her seat, hands spread. "I don't like the situation either, but my barristers must have time to work. They will discern the truth of the matter."

Ultimately, the barristers find some leads and Arro is detained. The Conclave scribes go through his records, but enough time has passed that your rival has hidden or destroyed the most damning evidence. Without any real proof there are no charges, but his image in the public eye is battered by the spectacle.

The priest, undercut by lurid rumors, leaves Glossmire to try his luck somewhere else. You wish you knew how they started, or who added the detail about the amorous whale.

Do you have **16 WEALTH**?

Yes? Turn to [100](#).

No? Turn to [99](#).

Glossmire's callous disregard for the lives of its marsh runners is a problem, and while this priest seeks to change it overnight, you're able to temper his message. Lasting change will be brought about with a more gradual, nuanced approach.

Over the week you meet with nobles, marsh runners, barristers, and merchants. You act as a mediator between the priest and those his changes would impact. Every diplomatic tool is employed again and again.

You're just emerging from a coffeehouse when a familiar marsh runner slams into you. "You're Lianna's father," he says. It's not a question. "Aren't you going to do something?"

"About what?" you ask, narrowing your eyes.

"I thought you knew things," he growls. "She's in the dungeon."

Turn to [94](#).

The streets of Pentower are broad as you approach the Spire, lined with coffeehouses and offices. Nearing the top you're surprised when a pair of broad thugs step out from behind a wagon and move towards you.

A quick cut down an alley avoids them, but too late you realize that was the intent all along. There's a small courtyard between two alleys where Arro Metiri stands, composed as ever, with two more thugs at his side.

"You didn't really think I'd let you go to the Arbiter, did you? You're more foolish than I thought."

Your hands ball into fists but there's no way you could best Arro's thugs. The other two are behind you now. "I didn't take you for a common thug, Arro," you seethe. "How will you spin this, huh? Everyone knows you have it in for me."

"They do, don't they?" Arro says, his voice infuriatingly calm. "That's just the reason I need to have discovered your plot to assassinate the priest. Admittedly, I thought they'd figure out who they had much sooner, but that's no matter. When I foil your plot to assassinate the priest, I expect the Arbiter to award me with all your holdings. As befits a hero of Glossmire, wouldn't you agree?"

Make a **CHECK** at **DIFFICULTY 10**.

Success? Turn to [81](#).

Failure? You try to escape, but you can't get past Arro's toughs. They stab you until you stop moving.

The Arbiter's mask gives nothing away. She is silent for a moment, her gaze towards her windows. When she speaks, her voice is tight. "Arro Metiri has been very generous towards Glossmire's coffers over the years," she says. "These accusations are serious, but due process must be followed."

"He tried to kill me in an alley," you growl. "What if he tries again?"

"You have household guards, Lord Barrost. Use them." She rises from her seat, hands spread. "I don't like the situation either, but my barristers must have time to work. They will discern the truth of the matter."

"What about my daughter?"

"We can't release her, Lord Barrost, but I can forestall proceedings until we have all the evidence. She will not be hung before this is resolved."

Mark **PARDONED** on your sheet.

You descend from the Spire in poor spirits. You'll be walking everywhere with your guards for the next while, which will greatly diminish your ability to investigate Arro. You could still send your agents to find any evidence they can, but perhaps that wouldn't be fast enough. Perhaps the best way to deal with all of it is to shout Arro's misdeeds to the crowd and try him in the court of public opinion? A risky play, but one Arro wouldn't see coming.

Investigate Arro? Turn to [86](#).

Appeal to the crowd? Turn to [93](#).

At last, the coffers run dry.

Your friends and allies make sympathetic noises and offer blithe excuses. Have you asked your other friend? It's just that finances are tight right now, you know? After that ghastly business out east concludes we might be able to help.

You pour your best whiskey and stare out the window at the cold gray sky, smelling the familiar tang of peat smoke. It should have been a momentous day, you decide. A dramatic sky would have been more suitable. You stand until you can't anymore, then sink into your chair. It's a unique agony to have all your cheated years returned to you over the course of a single evening.

In your final moments, you wonder what your legacy will be. Will people remember you? Will they speak highly of you? Proclaim your accomplishments in verse? Or will you simply disappear into the annals of history?

If only you had a few more years to make things right.

- END -

Twenty years pass. You remain thirty-four. **[WEALTH -16]**

By your count, you've been alive for one hundred and fourteen years. The sempiternum, Glossmire's cherished tradition, keeps you young in mind and body. You still have strength and vigor, still have the appetite for decades to come. Your presence is part of the fabric of this place, enduring the years through wealth and ritual. You ensure the people remember its history, the lessons learned through fire and blood.

Some days you feel the weight of history, the accumulation of memories in your mind. You remember faded names and forgotten places. You walk the streets with ghosts. A great many of your deeds have already been forgotten, and many more will pass into the annals of history.

But not yet.

You are thirty-four.

A cold gray sky and the tang of peat smoke greets you at the window. Below, thatch and tile roofs lean together towards Tarncroft Hill, a snarl of twisting alleys hidden between them. You hear the hammer of anvils, the creak of wagons, the drunken songs and sawing fiddles. Comfortingly mundane. It is a momentous day, you decide. Every day is, so long as thirty-five never comes.

- END -

• **Achievements** *•*

*Congratulations on completing **Longevity**. See how many of these achievements you can complete!
Each of these must be done in a single playthrough.*

Fancy Pants

Gain then lose the **FANCY** keyword twice, then gain it again.

Happy To Be Included

Win the game with 5 or more keywords.

Big Spender

Spend one or more **WEALTH** four separate times (not counting checks or sempiternums).

Overbearing

Win the game with 10 **CONTROL** or more.

Paragon

Win the game with 10 **RESPECT** or more.

Tycoon

Win the game with 10 **WEALTH** or more, after the final sempiternum.