



GAMBLING WITH DEATH

A CITY OF MIST CASE

In an attempt to save his life, the ruler of a casino empire who is up to his neck in debt captures a legendary hustler who he hopes could be his salvation. However, not only do her powers fail to stop his debtor, Death himself, from collecting his due, but Death also demands that the ruler sacrifices his fake savior as punishment. Now the casino magnate and his security team scramble to cover up the murder as the crew ventures into the dark secrets behind the glitz and glamour of the Royal Plaza Hotel.

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HOW TO USE THIS CASE

Gambling with Death is an introduction to the Dying branch of Anatoli Vidales' Avatar operation. *Shark Tank*, the case included with the new Starter Set, explores the Living branch of Anatoli's operation.

Anatoli is the Avatar of Hades, Greek god of death and the underworld. In this case, he is referred to only as Death and is represented by K9, the Rift of Cerberus, the three-headed dog that watches over the gates of Hades. Read more about the Living and Dying branches of Anatoli's operation on page 177.

You can use this case as a standalone, or as the opening shot for a season focusing on Anatoli, together with *Shark Tank*.

THE BACKSTORY

Gambling with Death is inspired by the fairy-tale *The Nightingale*, by Hans Christian Andersen. In *The Nightingale*, the Emperor abandons his favorite songbird for a bejeweled mechanical bird, but when Death comes for the Emperor, the real nightingale returns and with her beautiful song convinces Death to let the Emperor live.

THE EMPEROR

Kenny Liu (the Emperor) is a hotel and casino magnate, relatively young at forty years of age. He leads a flashy lifestyle, wearing only the finest garments and jewelry and enjoying every conceivable luxury while entertaining a retinue of gold-digging false friends and business partners. Three years ago, his life of debauchery came to a screeching halt when Kenny was diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer. Rather than allowing the cancer to kill him, the casino tycoon cut a deal with Death's representative, K9 (Cerberus), to pay a stupendous amount of money every month to stay among the living. And so, Kenny Liu became a resident of Hades (see Anatoli's Modus Operandi, page 175).

The payments were taking a toll on Kenny's business, dragging down his hospitality and gambling empire. It was going to end badly for him, if not for the caring love of a Rift named Jenny Applebaum (the Nightingale), a school teacher he met at the hospital where he was diagnosed. Jenny used her special ability to ward off Death's servants with her song, protecting Kenny from his debtors.

Eight months ago, Jenny disappeared. Whether she had enough of Kenny's vain lifestyle or she was spirited away by Anatoli's people remains unknown. Cornered by his angry debtors, Kenny Liu had to start paying three times what he had paid before for his continued life. Needless to

say, his business could hardly withstand the hit and he has been desperately searching for a way out ever since.

THE MECHANICAL BIRD

His salvation presented itself unexpectedly ten days ago, when his casino's Chief of Security, Carlton Cooper (a Chinese dragon), reported to him about a heist team planning to hit the casino. Surprisingly, one of the team members not only had a striking resemblance to Jenny, but she could also mimic any voice and any appearance to the point of fooling the casino's security systems. Cooper was hoping this person, Ashley Lind (the Mechanical Bird) could stand in for Jenny and buy his boss more time against Death.

Last night, during the heist team's planned hit, Cooper seized Ashley Lind and brought her to Kenny Liu's private suite, where he was scheduled to meet Death's representative, K9. Held at gunpoint, Ashley perfectly mimicked a recording of Jenny's song, but K9 was not impressed nor affected: the plan had failed. As retribution for the attempt, K9 immediately upped Kenny Liu's price: if he wanted to live, he had to pay with a life, right there and then. Angry at her failure to protect him and thinking it would be easier to cover up the murder as a suicide, Kenny Liu used his commanding powers to force Ashley Lind to jump to her death from the rooftop of the Royal Plaza Hotel.

THE HEIST

Ashley Lind wasn't even supposed to be there. She was entrapped by a con artist named Marty Brooks (a Sleeper) and forced to take part in his operation. Marty was amazed at Lind's "disguise and impersonation technology and skills" (which, as a Sleeper, he could never accept as a legendary ability), especially the fact she could fake voice and retina signatures.

The casino's cash reserves are kept in a vault in the Box, its security center. When a player wants to withdraw their winnings and the sum is too high for the cash registers on the floor, they are taken into the Box where they are screened for fraud and where their winning money is brought in from the vault, usually personally by Cooper, who is the only one except Kenny Liu who is authorized to open the vault (using his voice and retina signatures).

Marty's heist plan was clever and straightforward:

- He recruited a professional card player, Théo Blanc (Sleeper), to win the minimum amount needed to withdraw from the Box.
- At the same time, Marty planned to supplant the Chief of Security, Carlton Cooper, with a disguised Ashley. That was the most difficult stunt to pull as it depended on his ability to trick Cooper into a trap inside the casino's men's room.

- Once swapped, Ashley would make her way into the box with Marty, who would act as Blanc's representative asking to cash out.
- Disguised as Cooper, Ashley would fool the security guards and systems, fake the fraud screening, and get in the vault, where she would pack Marty's briefcase with all the money she could get in (a lot more money than Blanc won).
- By the time the casino found out the money was missing, the team would be long gone, and either way, Chief of Security Carlton Cooper would take the blame.

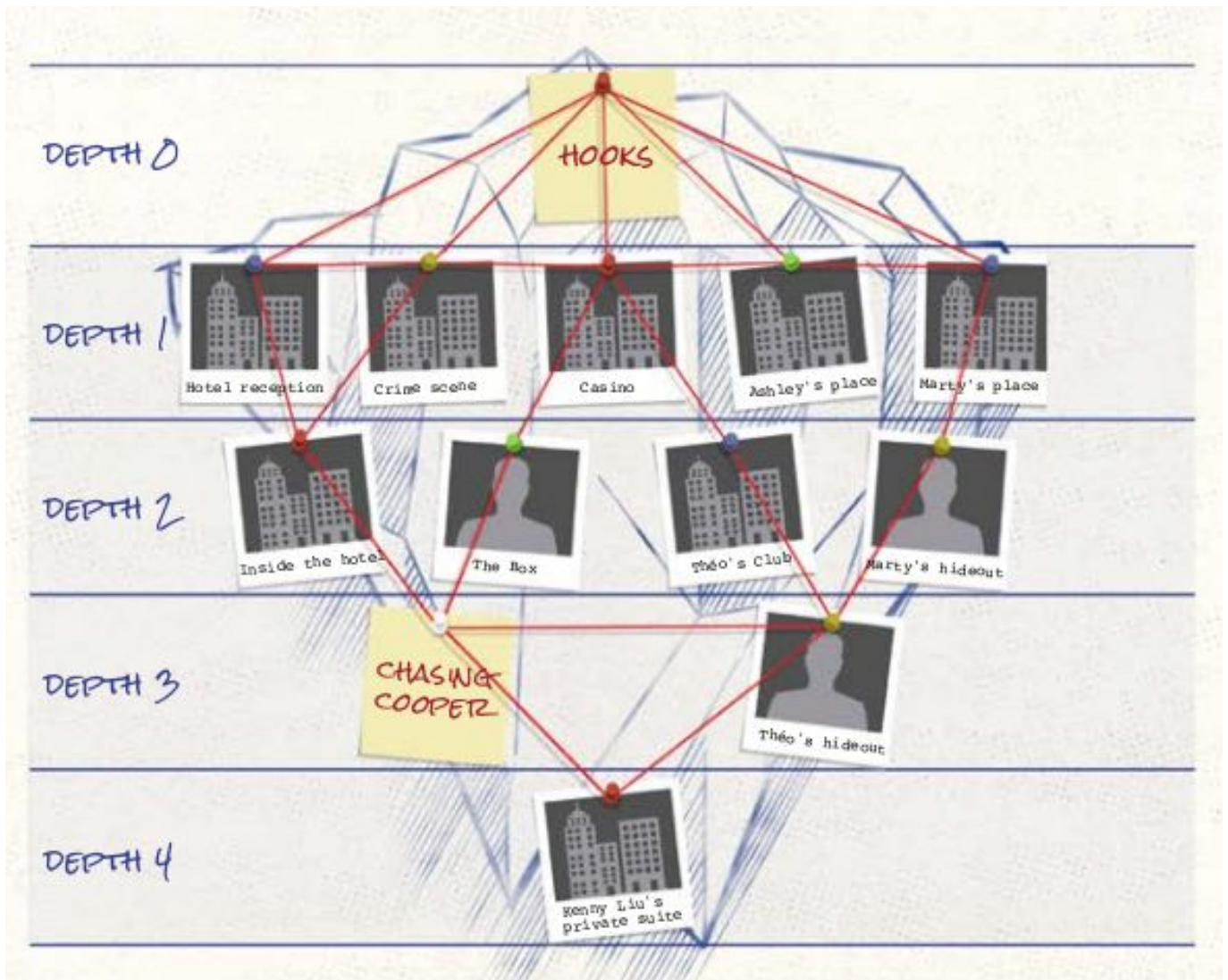
Unfortunately for Ashley, during one of their dry runs the heist team was spotted by Cooper, who followed Blanc, beat the plan out of him, threatened him into playing along with his plan, and ran back to his boss to tell him about Ashley Lind.

On the night of the planned heist, Cooper was ready for them. Blanc walked off into the night, Marty Brooks sensed a turning of the tides and made his usual miraculous escape, but Ashley Lind was apprehended by a not-so-knocked-out Cooper when she made her way to the men's room to take his place. The events that transpired then led to her death.

BATTLE OF THE MINDS

The toughest moment in Marty Brooks' planned heist would have been tricking Cooper into following him into the men's room and taking him out there. Marty noticed Cooper was a very hands-on Chief of Security, who handled many complications by himself. Masquerading as Blanc's lawyer, Marty planned to fake a medical emergency and arouse just enough suspicion to get Cooper involved, fooling Cooper into thinking he was dealing with a small-time con man. Once in the men's room, Marty would shoot Cooper with horse-grade tranquilizer, which he hoped would be enough to knock out the veteran (and strangely durable) security expert for a few hours. Alas, we'll never know which one of them would have emerged victorious from that encounter.

THE CASE ICEBERG



DEPTH 0: THE HOOKS

The case begins immediately after Ashley Lind's death, before dawn or in the morning of the day following the attempted heist. The crew can learn about her death in a number of ways:

- **Watching for crimes:** If the PCs are involved with the police or seek out unusual crimes, they will learn about Lind's death from participating in or tracking police activity, from a police contact, or from the morning newspapers and news reports. This would lead them to [the crime scene](#).
- **A concerned relative or friend** could recruit the crew to help find out what happened to Ashley Lind, or even pay them to do it. This person may not even know that she had died, so they might lead the crew to [Ashley's apartment](#).
- **Tip-off:** An enemy of Kenny Liu could tip off the crew about a link between the suicide and some shady dealings in the casino. It could even be K9, seeking to put more pressure on Kenny while possibly setting a trap for the crew. The tip could lead to [the crime scene](#) or [the casino](#).
- **Mystical source:** Visions or omens revealed to a crew member (perhaps someone walking by the hotel) could indicate that dark forces are at work at the Royal Plaza, perhaps hinting to the nature of the Mechanical Bird. This could lead to [the crime scene](#) or [the hotel reception](#).
- **Invitation from Kenny Liu:** If a crew member has death-defying powers (like Post-Mortem) or has gained a reputation as a miracle worker (like Declan L'Estrange), Kenny Liu may be interested in them as a way to escape Death. He'll have his Chief of Security, Cooper, contact this crew member and offer to do business, giving the crew a chance to snoop behind the scenes. Such a meeting would begin at [the casino](#) and move on to [the Box](#) if Cooper gets the right impression, but could take a bad turn if anyone was caught investigating the Ashley Lind death.

DEPTH 1: BLOOD, GLITZ, AND COGWHEELS

The Royal Plaza Hotel is a historic downtown building that has been a center of revelry and entertainment for the City's socio-economic elite for almost a century. More recently, about a decade ago, it was purchased as a part of a hotel chain deal by then up-and-coming hotel and casino magnate, Kenny Liu. The hotel towers over an open marble plaza, spans over multiple city blocks and is forty stories tall. Its spacious ground floor holds the reception, service area, and the luxurious Royal Plaza Casino.

THE CRIME SCENE

The rain falls heavily from the overcast heights of the Royal Plaza hotel, washing over the marble plaza at the front, swirling with blood and gore. Like the rain, so did Ashley Lind fall the distance from the light-bulb-studded letters at the top, crashing into the hard ground. What was she thinking, in those last moments, as she was plummeting to her death? Was she hoping a miracle would happen and she'd fly away from there? Was she done with the world and readily accepted the end? Did she have someone special in her thoughts? No one will ever know. Soon, Ashley Lind will be an ever fading stain on the worn marble steps. Gamblers in tuxedos and nights gowns will walk all over her. And she'll be forgotten. Maybe that's what she wanted.

At the time of Ashley Lind's death, sometime between midnight and sunrise, the plaza in front of the Royal Plaza Hotel is all but forsaken. Except for a handful of vehicles and pedestrians in the outlining streets, hundreds of feet away, no one is there when she breaks through the roof of the glass canopy above the entrance and hits the ground. Ten minutes later, a small crowd gathers in the rain amidst giant floodlights and glass debris and someone calls the police. Thirty minutes later, the area is closed off by the precinct police, with detectives and a forensics team following suit. The crowd grows bigger and bigger, media teams arrive, and the police orders the casino and hotel to call it a night, sending guests to their homes or hotel rooms. Pedestrian traffic in and out of the hotel is diverted to other entrances. By dawn, the body is already at the morgue and cleaners are scrubbing off the blood in an area delimited by police tape. A beat officer stands guard, ready to collect additional witness reports. Sometime during all that, the crew might arrive at the scene.

Depending on their time of arrival, the crew can find the following individuals hanging around:

- **Detective Johnny Nicholson**, a forensics specialist; a brusque, sturdy, middle-aged man who grunts, growls, and barks more than he talks. He would share the forensic details of the case with anyone who has the authority or some whiskey.
- **Detective Farrah Enkidu** (if she's not a PC), a local detective who is equally rough around the edges as her co-worker, and seems to nervously exchange banter with Det. Nicholson, which does little to hide her heavy heart. She suspects foul play and is more inclined to investigate the case than others in her department, but lacking any evidence, her hands are tied.

- **A hodge-podge of eyewitnesses**, most of whom have seen nothing and are just succumbing to a macabre need to be close to the drama. One witness, Macy Kraus, saw the moment of the fall and can confirm the time and the fact that Ms. Lind was not screaming.
- **Beat officers** patrolling and watching the potential crime scene (use the Beat Cops / Security Guards Danger on page 148). At your option, they may start with a status of **watchful-1**.

The body will remain in front of the hotel, covered in tarp until sometime before dawn when it will be moved to the morgue.

The deceased is a dark-haired, white female, lean, in her late 20s to mid 30s.

She was wearing a **beautiful yet inexpensive evening gown** made of strangely shaped golden sequins (reminiscent of cogwheels).

Her body came crashing through the glass canopy hanging over the hotel entrance. **She died from the impact.**

A careful investigation would reveal **bruising around her wrists**, as if she was restrained by force (but there is no usable DNA).

There is a **concealed loaded pistol** tucked in a holster on her thigh.

Stashed in a **hidden pocket** at the back of the dress, there are her driver's license (identifying her as Ashley Lind) and a few bank notes.

At the crime scene:

One witness, an elderly gambler named **Raymond Frank**, said he noticed Lind inside the casino that night and that she was alone (this was during the heist).

Some of the **golden sequins** from Ashley's dress can be found here.

Policemen say there is nothing on the roof indicating a struggle.

The police think it was suicide, but they don't know for sure.

There was no major event happening at the hotel or the casino.

BEYOND THE MIST

Anyone using their Mythos to **Look Beyond the Mist** could discern a lot of mythical activity around the case, although the earlier this occurs in the investigation, the more vague you should be about what the symbolism truly means.

- **Ashley Lind, Rift of the Mechanical Bird**, is represented by golden cogwheels, precious stones, and copper springs all shifting in an ever-changing array and taking different shapes and forms and echoing beautiful harmonies (she's a mechanical mimic).
- A ruler, such as **a king or an emperor**, represents **Kenny Liu** and his power and influence. As the original story relates to the Emperor of China, you may want to incorporate Chinese symbolism of royalty, such as the color yellow.
- The ruler has a watchful and dangerous **Chinese dragon** in his service: Carlton Cooper, Chief of Security.
- **The presence of Death** hangs over this case, but while Death seems to take a special interest in it, its involvement is unclear. Its representative, if you wish to reveal him, is a vicious black three-headed dog (K9, the Rift of Cerberus).

As a surprising twist, characters who can usually contact the spirits of the dead cannot contact the spirit of Ashley Lind around her body, at the place of her death, or at her grave. Her spirit seems to simply not be there. Read more under **Aftermath** (page XXX).

GOLDEN GEARS

Ashley's Mythos allowed her to shift mechanical parts inside of her to look and sound like other people. The illusion was never perfect: Ashley was Touched but was far too distracted by the everyday world to focus on the mysteries of her Mythos. Still, the parts that shifted and cranked inside her were real, and like with any delicate contraption, gears, pins, and springs popped out of place when handled with force.

Ashley's altercation with Cooper and Kenny Liu left a trail of clockwork pieces all over the Royal Plaza Hotel. It leads from the casino men's room where Cooper apprehended her to the Box, up the elevator, and to Kenny Liu's private suite. It ends at the crime scene below, where her body hit the marble floor and some of her parts scattered. The Mist may mask these as

golden sequins from her dress, but a meticulous awakened investigator can spot the difference.

The best use of this detail is as a sporadically recurring motif that hints at what happened. Don't let the crew trace it all the way to Kenny Liu and give away the mystery. Instead, drop it as a sign now and then that they're on the right track - right before distracting the crew with new complications, as the Mist always does.

THE HOTEL RECEPTION

Looking at the reception hall of the Royal Plaza hotel, you wouldn't know anyone had died just a short distance out the doors. High mirror ceilings and walls refract the luxurious chandeliers into a sea of crystals and gold. Sparkling marble floors echo the art deco glory. Mellow jazz music is playing, lulling you into intoxicated relaxation. Only when your gazes descend to eye level do you notice the hosts of guests accosting the reception desks. Even more guests can be found drinking in the nearby lobby and bar, where the sounds of the live band mix with clinking cocktail glasses.

At the reception, for at least a day after the incident, **the staff is struggling to contain the commotion**. The reception desks are flooded with in-person and phone inquiries about the suicide outside (as the hotel has already labelled the event). Anyone trying to approach the staff during that time will find them **overrun-by-guests-2**.

The security team is closely monitoring the place, with **security guards** and **security cameras** covering the floor. Anyone snooping around who is not a guest will be escorted out, while guests will be warned and asked to return to their room. The security team will protect the interests of the hotel, rejecting any inquisitive persons short of a detective with a police warrant. All access to **the casino** and other areas inside the hotel is strictly limited to staff and guests.

Security camera footage from that night does not show Cooper apprehending Lind.

A professional analysis of the footage will show that it was tampered with and may even reveal it was overwritten with footage from another point in time.

The staff and guests at the reception know very little, but cross-referencing their stories could reveal valuable details:

There was no major event happening at the hotel or the casino.

One or two guests can claim to have seen Ashley Lind at the casino on the night of her death.

One guest has seen her enter the Box with a tall dark-skinned man in an expensive black suit.

Asked for identifying features, the same guest will recall something like a snake embroidered on the man's suit.

If pushed to recall more details, the guest will say Lind seemed distressed, “**like a bird in a cage**”.

If approached indirectly, staff members may unwittingly identify this person as Carlton Cooper, Chief of Security.

A friendly or justice-seeking staff member or guest may help the crew to sneak into the casino or inside the hotel.

THE CASINO

As news of the gruesome death outside spread, the casino staff slowly and reluctantly closed all bets at the tables. The guests left, leaving this glittering hall of exhilaration, occasional victory, and certain demise to stand in silence. But not for long; tomorrow night this place will again be packed wall-to-wall with compulsive risk-takers, ladies of luck, strung out fools, naive beginners, and yes, some drunk on the rush of a winning streak. Nothing can stop this money-making machine, least of all a poor bird caught in its gears.

The Royal Plaza Casino is a fine exemplar of the magic of the gambling industry. Designed by the best, it lures you into the action with bright lights, sparkling drinks, the cheers of the crowd, and the sounds of roulettes, slot machines, and shouting card dealers.

There are three security doors (two on either side of the casino and one at the center) leading into guard rooms and corridors that converge at the Box. Each such door is guarded at all times by security guards (use the Security Guards Danger, page 148) and a sophisticated alarm system (use the Security System Danger, page 150).

On the day following Ashley Lind's death, the casino is empty. This allows for some time to investigate:

There's a trail of golden sequins leading from the casino's men's room to the nearest security door. This is a pretty big clue, so if you'd like to challenge the crew, they could find the sequins in the janitor's mop or vacuum cleaner, not knowing where to place them in the casino.

If the crew has **legendary means of investigation**, such as psychometric abilities or visions of the past (like Flicker, the Starter Set character), they may be able to ascertain that Lind was here on the night of her death, that she was in distress, and that she made her way into **the Box**, accompanied by Chief of Security Cooper.

All data and footage from the casino's security cameras and other monitoring devices are stored in **the Box**, inaccessible from here (and as mentioned later, it was also edited like the footage from the reception area).

On the subsequent night and every night thereafter, the Royal Plaza casino is open for business but its security staff is **on-edge-1** trying to make sure the night goes by uneventfully. Two of the regulars may recall useful details:

- **Rhonda Giles** is a high-society high-roller, a top-of-the-line risk management specialist who gambles as an outlet, usually dressed in a daring black number and sporting a martini. While she is burning through her hard-earned money, Rhonda may be inclined to share information about the night of the incident at the casino, but she will try to counter-investigate the crew and later sell the information to Cooper (use the Reporter or Social Butterfly Dangers, page 144).
- **Billy Cash** (Jin Chan, Chinese Money Toad spirit) is a flashy thrill-seeking gambler from the southern US who works the casino in a lime green sequin jacket and a pair of shades hiding glowing red eyes. He will let the crew know he has something for them, if they care to bet on it. Every time they win, he will let loose an important detail. You can play the gamble as an **Investigate** move using the PCs gambling tags or, if you want to up the stakes, use Billy Cash as a Danger.

Note that Chief of Security Cooper and his team are anticipating someone would be snooping around; if anyone scores 7-9 on their Investigate roll, use the counter question option to allow Cooper to find out important details about the crew.

Here's what the casino patrons can reveal:

Ashley Lind was at the blackjack table as a "floater", hanging around and pretending to be a friend of one of the players.

Ashley's eyes were following a middle-aged man in a mustard-colored suit and big sunglasses, a known sleazebag named **Marty Brooks** (could lead to **Marty's place**).

Marty was representing a professional named **Théo Blanc** who won a nice sum and cashed out soon thereafter, uncharacteristically.

As soon as Théo Blanc and Marty left their table, Ashley made her way to the mens' room.

She was forcibly dragged out of there by Chief of Security Cooper moments later and walked into **the Box**.

Billy Cash knows Théo Blanc and can point the crew to his usual haunt, the **Ace of Clubs** (Théo's club). As for Rhonda, she spent the night with Blanc and found an **Ace of Clubs casino chip** (temporary tag) in his jeans back pocket as she was going through his stuff. She hasn't seen him since.

BILLY CASH (JIN CHAN) ★

LOSING STREAK 5 HURT OR SUBDUE 1

- **Okay, Okay, Maybe I Saw Something:** Every time Billy Cash takes a status on his **losing streak** spectrum, he reveals one item from the list below. When the **losing streak** spectrum maxes out, he reveals everything he knows.
- **Lucky Toad:** When Billy Cash enters the scene or as a hard move, give him **lucky-1**.
- **Sticky Prosperity:** When Billy Cash takes a status that would affect his luck, gambling, or money (including **losing streak** statuses), reduce the tier of the status by 1.
- **Paranoid:** When you try to attack or threaten Billy Cash, he has already signaled security (or the cops). Create a new Danger: Beat Cops / Security Guards.
- Win someone's money in a gamble (**a-little-over-budget-1**, **overspending-2**, or **financial-risk-3**)
- Look at his hand, then set the cards down, eyes flickering in red

ASHLEY'S PLACE

This is where she lived: a crummy studio apartment tucked under the railway in a rundown neighborhood. This place has all the signs of a lost soul: dilapidated walls, dripping faucet, empty fridge, and an eviction notice from six months ago that was never acted on. What happened to you, Ashley? Why did you fall so low?

Ashley Lind lived in the Blue-Collar Residential, in a small apartment she could hardly afford. She survived mostly thanks to her petty scams, using her abilities to steal money from strangers.

Profiling Ashley or **asking around** could reveal she lived mostly on her own; friends and lovers came and went. Though she lacked the clarity to see it, Ashley didn't really know who she was. Perhaps having the ability to become what others wanted her to be made it difficult to truly find her own identity.

Call records could reveal that Ashley made single calls to many various numbers (her fraud victims) but numerous calls to two numbers: one at **Marty's place** and the other a private number (calls from her sister, see sidebar).

Searching the apartment (or the computer) would reveal a **folder with incriminating photos** of Ashley with her victims, which may have been used to blackmail her. In each photo, Ashley looks completely different, and in some cases it's hard to recognize her (thanks to her mimic powers). These are the photos Marty Brooks used to entrap Ashley, promising to give her the originals and delete all copies if she helped him with the casino heist.

There are **golden mechanical gears** in the shower and on her bed covers.

THE REAL NIGHTINGALE

Ashley's older sister, a school teacher named Jenny Applebaum (she change her last name), was Kenny Liu's real Nightingale. Kenny Liu never cared enough about these women's personal lives to connect the dots, but Chief of Security Cooper had suspected the two nightingales were related.

Jenny's powers have made her a potential threat to Anatoli's (Hades) operation because she could prevent people from dying and ward off Death and its agents. It's possible that she was murdered for that and that she now exists in Hades. Perhaps she made herself disappear because she started investigating the Avatar's operation, and if so, maybe she used Kenny Liu as a platform to learn more about K9 and his superiors. She could even be the same person as Perry Kennedy, once Anatoli's wife and his only love (see Anatoli's History, page

177).

If you choose to incorporate Jenny in the story, her involvement may open up a can of worms much bigger than the scope of this case. Ashley Lind may have been searching for her sister when the heist took place, so she may have had additional motives unknown to any of the other characters (perhaps except Cooper). You can drop some vague clues about the identity of Ashley's sister, such as a photo of the two at Ashley's place; leave the big reveal about her to Cooper, Kenny Liu, or K9 at the end of the case.

MARTY'S PLACE

Marty's dump takes up three store spaces under a cheap tenement. Painted letters on the frontispiece read "Brooks Cleaning and Maintenance Co.," but you can see through the paint that the business was renamed, more than once. No one in this neighborhood would trust Marty Brooks as far as they can throw him. It takes a real scumbag to build a reputation like that.

Marty Brooks worked out of a makeshift office doubling as a mouldy apartment and masquerading each month as a different company. The three rooms he rented out are big enough to store all the crap he accumulated from various fake gigs, such as exterminator gear or a janitor's cart. One of the rooms has a desk, some file cabinets, a sofa to sleep on, and a shower. It seems fortune did not favor Marty lately.

All of the above can be seen through the broken blinds on the windows. Since no one is around, breaking in would entail picking the lock or busting through the door, which may alert the neighbours. Unless disarmed, **a silent alarm** will flash a red light in the office, but it does very little else (it certainly does *not* call the cops).

Good detective work or accounting skills could reveal Marty for what he is: a con man. The **straw companies**, the **disguises**, and the **shady but clever bookkeeping** in his cabinets all show he's an expert in fraud. It can also reveal Marty had some windfall in the past but that his spending spirals out of control every time, sending him back to crime.

Checking Marty's police records shows he's never been incarcerated for more than a couple of months; the police just can't seem to make allegations stick.

There is a photo on Marty's desk of Linda Brooks, his ex-wife. Public records or a quick phone call to her number can show she owns a house in the suburbs, which is currently serving as **Marty's hideout**.

DEPTH 2: A HEIST GONE WRONG

INSIDE THE HOTEL

Up here, the dimly-lit corridors stretch silently forever. On the higher floors, the fancy red carpet muffles the guests' steps and luggage trolleys. Overpriced art, gilded mirrors, and marble tables with mint bowls line the walls. Waiters emerge from hidden elevators, pushing silver room service carts with gourmet delicacies and chilled champagne, reminding you that somewhere below, folks are working hard to produce all this affluence.

The hotel and its rooms can provide very little to further the investigation. If the crew questions the guests, they can reveal the same information available at the hotel reception and at the casino (**Rhonda Giles** and **Jerry Chan** can be found in their rooms until the night after Ashley's death, when they hit the casino). However, access to the Box or **Kenny Liu's private suite** is only available through the hotel and its security systems (although the Box is also accessible through the casino, and boasts even tighter security). If the crew got this far, they also have easier access to **the roof**.

SECURITY!

The main stake of a scene inside the hotel is whether the crew will clash with security or manage to elude them. **Kenny Liu's private security team** is all over the hotel like a cheap suit. There are dozens of them on standby, from the roof to the casino.

- The hotel is equipped with **a sophisticated security system**, both computerized (or electric, if you are playing True Noir) and monitored by security personnel (use the Security System Danger, page 150, but setting off the alarm alerts the security squad as below).
- If the alarm goes off, **a squad of Kenny Liu's private security** (use the SWAT Team / Elite Security Danger, page 150) will show up within minutes and escort the crew out of the hotel, with or without their consent. As a policy set by Cooper, they won't hesitate to injure anyone who resists in order to deter them from any recurring attempts.
- If the squad faces significant resistance, **Carlton Cooper** will show up as support.
- As a last resort, **the police** may be called in (which may alert the Gatekeepers, depending on the mythical nature of the report and the degree of strain to the Mist in the area).
- **The police have no warrant to search any part of the hotel**; **Kenny Liu's lawyer, Trish Maloney** (use the Corporate Lawyer Danger, page 142) will make sure it stays that way, denying any involvement and requiring proof. She will also arrange for detaining orders for any crew members caught in the hotel.

THE ROOF

Access to the roof is limited to staff, going through service stairs, elevators, and corridors. Unless any crew members can fly or magically transport themselves there, the crew will have to break through some security measures to get here.

Up above, the wind is blowing wildly. The exposed roof is surrounded by a stunning panoramic view of the City, accentuated by either a colorful sunset or overhanging clouds and persistent rain. The giant flashing Royal Plaza sign, made out of hundreds of light bulbs, towers over the side of the roof facing the plaza. Vents, air ducts, and AC units dot the naked surface, as well as half a dozen stairwell and elevator entrances. A few security guards may be watching the roof and the plaza for any snoops (especially if the crew had it easy so far).

The famous **golden gears / sequins** show Ashley Lind was here on the night of her death.

Cooper, Kenny Liu, and K9 were also on the roof that night but it will be much harder to place them there. Divination can help, with Cooper being the easiest to scry and K9 the hardest.

No one pushed Ashley Lind off the roof. Kenny Liu threatened her with his gun and used his commanding Emperor voice to urge her to do it. No shots were fired, so **forensics** would come up inconclusive. Only power from beyond the Mist or deduction based on further evidence can expose what happened here.

THE BOX

If you get on the bad side of the house – and make no mistake, that includes winning – burly security guards in tight suits and mirrorshades will walk you down a luxurious hallway lit in red. The next room looks more like an interrogation room than a VIP lounge. Behind the one-way mirror, you can only assume, lies a dark room lit only by screens, where the best minds in fraud detection and casino security watch over Kenny Liu's money.

The Box is the security hub of the casino, holding the command center, the vault, and the security team's facilities. To break into the Box undetected is essentially as challenging as robbing the casino, but if the crew can pull off such a heist, much may be revealed.

Use the hotel security Dangers given on page XXX to represent the Box, but update the Security System Danger's spectrums to **alarm:2** and **override:5** and give it this custom move:

Cutting-edge: When Security System enters the scene, give it **cutting-edge**. The MC can renew this tag as a soft move after a player makes a move without it.

The Elite Security in the Box starts with *watchful-1*. If relevant, security and fraud analysts are monitoring the casino, its entrances, and the hotel perimeter at all times (use the Detective / Investigator Danger, page 148). Note that if anyone moves any money or chips belonging to the casino, Cooper's Dragon powers make him aware of it no matter where he is.

The command center holds the security camera footage from the night of the incident, which has been overwritten with some everyday footage. If the crew can get the tapes to a professional analyst or a Rift with the right powers, they can extract the original footage, showing everything that happened that night except for *Kenny Liu's private suite* (no cameras) and what happened on the roof (which was out of the camera's field of view). This also reveals Marty Brooks and Théo Blanc's involvement if it was not already revealed.

In Chief of Security Cooper's office, there are photos of Ashley Lind in the casino (taken during one of the heist team's dry runs a few days before the heist) and records of *Théo's club* and apartment (not his current hideout). One of Lind's photos is circled with a red marker with a scribble: "Songbird?"

In the private elevator going up from the Box to *Kenny Liu's private suite*, **tiny bronze and gold gears and pins** can be found (or are they golden sequins?).

THEO'S CLUB

It wasn't easy finding the Ace of Clubs. Slipping through the back wall of the sweet old couple's pantry takes you to a speakeasy no bigger than a hotel room, snugly fitted with a bar and two round poker tables. Despicable unshaved gents and sultry women lay your soul bare with their gazes, trying to pick up your tell through the curling smoke.

Hidden in the basement of an Old Quarter townhouse, the Ace of Clubs is a private club for professional gamblers and a favorite haunt of Théo Blanc. Théo is not here, but the owner, **Marla Costa** (the Ace of Clubs Card Soldier from Alice in Wonderland) knows where he is hiding (a stadium by the Industrial Zone) and from who (Cooper, who will be coming to wrap up loose ends now that Théo is a witness in a potential murder case).

Marla is a wiry and intense woman in her 30s, usually sporting a tank top, jeans, high heels, and a leather jacket. Few notice it, but her profile is remarkably thin. The last thing Marla wants to do is give away her pal and occasional lover; she and a few of the less savory patrons will throw punches at anyone looking for the handsome gambler.

Marla's Danger is given below (she's a Hired Thug with a Warrior Mythos Power Set, page 156). For her crew, use the Hired Thugs Danger (page 147).

MARLA COSTA (CARD SOLDIER) ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 THREATEN 4

- **Card Manipulations:** Marla can move cards without touching them, even within a sealed deck. When she plays cards, give her *the-cards-are-stacked-in-my-favor-3*, renewable as a hard move.
- **Trained combatant:** Increase the tier of the mundane physical harm or subdual statuses caused by Marla Costa's moves by one.
- **Unbeatable:** When a Marla Costa enters the scene, give her *parry with club*, *incredibly thin profile*, and *light as paper*.
- **Legendary Clubsmanship:** When you attack Marlo Costa, you first take *blackjacked-3*.
- Bully (*threatened-2*), beat up with a baton (*broken-ribs-4*), or throw a card at an exposed artery (*bleeding-out-4*)
- Warn someone to mind their own business, or else

MARTY'S HIDEOUT

That lowlife Brooks chose a nice place to lay low: a five-bedroom house in Happyville, which he probably bought with money he swindled out of old ladies. Now it's listed under his ex-wife's name. You wonder how he was able to slip the casino security that night. Is he going to pull the same stunt here?

When the crew arrives at Linda Brooks' suburban house, Marty will try to make a run for it by foot through backyards and private homes (he knows Linda's car is compromised). Use the Con Artist Danger (page 145) for Marty, but start him off with *three-steps-ahead-3* thanks to his knack for leaving before trouble starts. If the crew misses one too many moves, **Deny Them Something They Want** and make Marty disappear and skip town.

Marty is a balding middle-aged man in a distasteful cheap suit and large shades. If caught, he will try to con his way out, but threat of physical violence will make him spill the beans fast enough. Note that being off the grid, **Marty still doesn't know about Ashley's death**. Hearing the news will fill him with genuine sorrow and he will burst into tears. For all his lies, the middle-aged con man had a soft spot for Ms. Lind. The crew may also be able to guilt him into helping them.

Marty will share the heist plan and how it all went smoothly until he noticed Cooper was on to them.

He will admit to walking out on Ashley after sensing that something is amiss. He saw her walking to the men's room to replace Cooper as planned, but had no way of warning her without exposing himself.

He will blame Théo Blanc for selling them out, pointing the crew to **Théo's club** or even **Théo's hideout**, depending on your cinematic considerations.

DEPTH 3: THE RUSH TO HUSH

With the details of the heist revealed and the kidnapping of Ashley Lind by the casino private security all but laid bare, the main question on the table is “**Why was Ashley Lind kidnapped?**”. Besides Kenny Liu and K9 (who may yet be inaccessible to the crew), Théo Blanc and Chief of Security Cooper are the only two who know the answer.

THEO'S HIDEOUT

The stadium is remarkably quiet when it's empty, silent except for the rain tapping on tens of thousands of plastic seats. The bright flood lights above the field make it hard to look into the tiers. Somewhere below, a small door leads to a dingy caretaker's apartment, but he won't be there until the season starts. That's where Théo is supposedly crashing. It shouldn't be too tough to bring him in. So why do you have a bad feeling about this?

The stadium where Théo is hiding until he can safely get out of town is located somewhere at the edge of the Industrial Zone. It's up to you to determine whether it's abandoned, off-season, active but not right now, or actually hosting a game when the crew arrives. Théo has been hiding in the on-site apartment (a cell would be a more appropriate term) of the stadium caretaker, who owes big money to Marla Costa. The window of the apartment peers out into the stadium. There are other rooms, such as broadcasting rooms, restrooms, locker rooms, stairwells, etc. within the stadium building – all excellent locations for the bloody assassination chase that is about to ensue.

If the crew is looking for Théo here, then so is Cooper. Since Théo may testify how he betrayed Ashley Lind to Cooper, thus linking Cooper to Ashley's death, he's a liability the Royal Plaza Casino can't afford. Shortly before or after the crew arrives, Cooper or a hitman he hired

will show up to (use the Hitman Danger, page 147, or use Cooper's Danger with the necessary spectrums and moves from the Hitman Danger).

However, Théo knows he's in trouble and has planned a gambit of his own. He has the apartment rigged with explosives (*mortally-wounded-5*) in case someone comes after him (crew included), and he is hunkered down somewhere in the stands, watching for pursuers and waiting to make his move. The *heavy rain* and *flood lights* (as well as possibly the *roaring crowd*) make it very hard to locate threats around the stands. By the time the crew locates Théo and the hitman, it may be too late.

If the crew does manage to apprehend Théo, they find the gambler – a boyish man in his 30s – soaked to the bone in a tracksuit and undershirt, a far cry from his dashing casino garb. Théo may reveal that Carlton Cooper caught him after a dry run of the planned heist and forced him to tell him about Marty and Ashley. He will describe Cooper as a 'freak', who somehow knew where Théo hid a few chips he stole from the casino. Finally, he'll describe Cooper's immediate interest in Ashley's mimicry and disguise skills, and how he threatened Théo into betraying Marty and Ashley. With that, Théo confirms that Cooper's kidnapping of Ashley Lind was not merely the casino taking disciplinary steps – it was a premeditated crime.

CHASING COOPER

Cooper steps out of the car, smoke coiling around him like a slippery scaled tail. His jaw clenched, he cuts through the smoke, inhaling it without flinching. As his arm comes up, holding a high-end assault pistol, the embroidery on his black suit starts glowing. Bullets start flying everywhere; but what you should really be watching for is the smoke drawing into his nostrils and the sparks flying out of his mouth...

Carlton Cooper is the focal point of the case. While Kenny Liu is the vile Emperor who decreed Ashley Lind's kidnapping and death, Chief of Security Cooper was his draconic executor, taking care of everything needed to first snatch the Mechanical Bird and then hide his master's crimes. The Emperor is shielded by Cooper, his battery of lawyers, and friends in high places. To reach him and to find out the final details of the case, the crew should first apprehend Carlton Cooper (unless they explicitly decide to tackle Kenny Liu first and find another way to get to him).

Luckily for the crew, the old dragon does get around:

- If he was involved in or even watching the showdown at the stadium (*Théo's hideout*), the crew may want to pursue him there and then.
- The crew may try to follow him in his private life, such as when he leaves the casino to blow off some steam in a downtown bar.
- You can have Cooper attack the crew (in his hitman mode described above) and then flee.

If Cooper thinks the crew will pose a problem in the future, he will try to take them out (and bet on Kenny's lawyers to prove self-defense). However, if the crew proves too difficult to handle, he will attempt to flee. Depending on the outcome of the conflict, Cooper may do any or all of the following:

- Confirm the information gathered by the crew thus far
- Complete the puzzle by telling the crew about Kenny Liu's sickness, his deal with Death, and the real Nightingale
- Laugh cynically, telling the crew that they have no way of proving Ashley was murdered since Kenny only convinced her to jump
- Provide the crew with access to **Kenny Liu's private suite**, such as the codes to override the elevator in the **Box**
- Kidnap one of the crew members, or someone important to them
- Retreat to **Kenny Liu's private suite**

COOPER'S DODGE CHARGER (RELIC) ★★★

CATCH OR OUTFUN 5 DECOMMISSION 4

- **Vehicle:** Cooper can emerge from the car as a soft move. This happens automatically when **decommission** is maxed out.
- **Fear the Dragon:** When you're on a frontal collision course with Cooper's Dodge Charger, you first take **chicken-4**, compelling you to swerve.
- **Burn the Road:** When Cooper's Dodge Charger enters the scene, give it **fast-2**. The MC can renew this status as a hard move.
- **Armored:** When Cooper's Dodge Charger takes a damaging status, reduce its tier by 2.
- Ram into a vehicle (**lose-control-3**), an obstacle (burn two obstacle tags), or a person (**multiple-fractures-4**)
- Race away into the night (hard move)
- Shake off pursuers with combat driving maneuvers
- Accelerate and leave a trail of smoke behind it

CARLTON COOPER, CHIEF OF SECURITY (THE DRAGON) ★★★

Carlton Cooper is a stern, gray-haired, middle-aged black man. A graduate of elite military training, he has served his country for over a decade and then moved to a career in private security. His guardianship of his clients' greatest treasures awakened the Dragon in him and, while he largely remained preoccupied with his duties, he is learning to rely on his legend more and more every day and has already gained a reputation as the City's foremost casino security expert.

HURT OR SUBDUE 5 IMPLICATE 4

- **Ultimate Predator:** When Cooper enters the scene, give him *alert-2*, renewable as a hard move.
- **Servant of the Emperor:** When someone tries to sway Cooper against Kenny Liu for the first time, give him *subservient-5* (he is under Kenny Liu's control).
- **Hoard Keeper:** When you take something of value from the casino, Cooper knows where it is in town.
- **Slippery Scales:** When Cooper takes a physical harm or subdual status, reduce its tier by 1.
- **Bodyguards:** When Cooper takes a status his bodyguards can protect him from, the bodyguards (Elite Security) take the status instead.
- Hide, destroy, or tamper with evidence (*lack of evidence*)
- Keep the private security team efficient (*efficient-2* or remove 2 negative tactical status tiers or 2 impeding story tags)
- Spot a greedy character and offer money (*greased-3*)
- Use martial arts to restrain or hurt someone (*restrained-3* or *painful-injury-3*) or fire accurate bursts with an expensive assault pistol (*multiple-gun-wounds-3* to multiple targets)
- Breathe fire, exhausting himself (*burns-4* to everyone in front of him, giving himself *exhausted-2*)
- Call Kenny Liu's private security (they arrive) (create a new Danger: Kenny Liu's Private Security, or increase its collective size if they're already here)
- Analyze the scene astutely, slowly piecing together the crew's next move
- In the hotel or the casino, vanish into a service elevator or back corridor
- Call Kenny Liu's private security (they're on their way)
- When in trouble, stop everything and inhale deeply (preparing to blow fire)

DEPTH 4: A DEATH OWED

Once the crew connects all the dots, it becomes clear that Kenny Liu pulled the trigger on the legendary power that made Ashley Lind jump to her death or, at the very least, that he was involved in her death and benefited from it.

The crew may have different plans for Kenny: they may wish to interrogate or interview him, capture him (and perhaps exact vengeance), or incriminate him and leave him to the cops (if they don't know about his powers). But how do you take down an emperor?

The final showdown with Kenny does not have to be a fight. It may very well be **an intense dialog** that will force him to confess, **a legal battle** to get him to pay for his sins, or **a heist** aimed at securing (or planting) evidence, bringing down his casino, or discovering who is pulling Kenny's strings. Use the security specifications in Depth 2 (page XXX) to represent the challenges in getting to Kenny Liu's private suite.

KENNY LIU'S PRIVATE SUITE

Kenny Liu's private suite is a lavish residence of multiple open-plan spaces. Custom lighting accentuates the designer furniture and contemporary art that was thoughtfully placed here to create an impression of elegant power. Kenny Liu entertains guests in a lowered section of the suite, where plush sofas and a cocktail bar await. The unobstructed, full panoramic view of the City hits you with vertigo. The higher they go, the harder they fall.

When the crew arrives to face Kenny, the suite is surrounded by his private security force, with Cooper heading it (if he still can). Depending on circumstances, K9 may also be present, especially if he was the one who tipped the crew off or if the crew is starting to undermine his interests with the Emperor (see K9's Danger on page 182).

Kenny Liu is not going to roll over and give himself to the crew. He has survived worse enemies than them (or so he thinks). Just like when he aspired to escape Death (twice!), he's willing to use any means necessary to permanently rid himself of the crew and weather the Ashley Lind storm. If the opportunity presents itself, he will try to take command of a mentally vulnerable crew member and push the crew into fighting themselves, hoping to later spin a story and tack the Ashley Lind blame on the crew members.

Talking to Kenny Liu, the crew may learn about:

Kenny Liu's history with Death, the real Nightingale, and Ashley Lind

His botched gamble that Ashley Lind will be able to save him from Death and the price Death made him pay by sacrificing Ashley

How he made Ashley Lind jump to her Death

At the apartment, the crew may find:

The **cogwheel, springs, and pins** indicating Ashley Lind was forced to be there

Artifacts of death worshipping, such as an incense holder made of a skull

Medical files about his terminal disease

FLOATING LOCATION

By default, Kenny Liu's private suite is located at the top floor of the hotel and it was there that Ashley Lind was taken before she was forced to jump to her death. However, if the crew somehow penetrates the hotel suite early in the case, you can choose to have Kenny's private suite be in his Downtown penthouse instead. In this variation, the hotel suite where the fateful meeting with Ashley Lind and K9 took place is a separate location from the penthouse, where Kenny Liu usually resides and where the crew finally finds him.

KENNY LIU (THE EMPEROR) ★★★

Kenny Liu is a medium-height, fit Asian man in his 40s, usually wearing a designer suit in gray or black. He has an air of smugness and sophistication about him, but also a certain ruthlessness that comes from a feeling of superiority. He is a personification of the Emperor ideal, and he is very much used to things being done his way. Unfortunately, he does not embody the admirable qualities of the great emperors: he lacks a vision or a desire to serve something greater than himself, so he's been using his powers for nothing more than glorified self-indulgence.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 THREATEN 5 IMPLICATE 4

- **Mandate of Heaven:** When you attack or try to influence Kenny Liu in his presence, you first take *obedient-3*.
- **Make Me an Offer I Can't Refuse:** When you refuse Kenny Liu's offer, you are **Taking the Risk**.
- **Bodyguards:** When Kenny Liu takes a status his bodyguards can protect him from, the bodyguards (Elite Security) take the status instead.
- **Never Rest:** At the end of every downtime or as a hard move, Kenny Liu can give you *besmirched-reputation-2* or *wanted-2*, or create a new Danger to go after you (choose from Corporate Lawyer, Detective, Elite Security, or Hitman)
- **Relentless:** At the end of the scene, remove any statuses on Kenny Liu's **threaten** spectrum.
- Decree the will of the emperor, commanding absolute obedience (*obedient-3*)
- Pull out a hidden pistol and fire (*well-placed-shot-4*)
- Subtly and chillingly threaten someone
- Be suspiciously nice to someone

AFTERMATH

While the case can end in many different ways, here are a few points to consider before wrapping it up:

- **What is going to happen to Kenny Liu?** If he's dead, is he going to come back with the help of Death, or is it the ambrosia refineries for him? If he's in jail, what prevents him from simply walking out using his ability to command others? Or perhaps in jail he gains even more power or has an epiphany about what he should do with his life? If he is free, does he hold a grudge for the crew and continues to haunt them?
- **Where is Cooper at the end of all this?** If his involvement was purely due to Kenny Liu's hold on him, perhaps now he is a changed man. He could be interested in recruiting the crew or help them. Other powers in the Rift underworld may have noticed his capabilities and wish to hire him. And if the casino is finished, perhaps he will ascend to Borderlinehood.
- **Death, AKA Anatoli Vidales**, certainly has the crew on his radar after this. Whether or not K9 became directly involved with the crew, Death will want the threat removed. He may send his people to threaten the lead characters or their loved ones or offer them life beyond death.
- **Marty Brooks**, if he stayed around, could be interested in the crew's abilities and may have a few new heists to propose to them. Though unlikely, his love for self-gain may actually help him awaken and see the potential in Rifts.
- **The police** could take a special interest in the crew, following the unfolding of the investigation. From the beat officer on the street to the head honchos in command, each department may see the crew as a threat, as allies, or as both.
- **And what about Ashley Lind?** Is she really dead? Or has Death simply coveted the Mechanical Bird to himself? The crew members may very well see her again (and possibly her sister) in future cases related to Anatoli's operation. For now, a befitting ending shot could involve one of the crew members seeing someone that looks very much like Ashley Lind, only a little sadder, staring at them in the street as the downtown crowd billows all around... only to disappear in the stream of pedestrians moments later.